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## BACKWARD CLASSES

HINDU, AUG 31, 2015

**Rethinking reservations and ‘development’**

INDIRA HIRWAY

Across the country, unless adequate jobs are created for the large labour force, the frustration of the youth is not likely to be contained

LEFT OUT: “The much-discussed Gujarat model has failed to create adequate employment, particularly for the educated youth, despite the rapid growth of the economy.” Picture shows a rally by members of the Patel community in Ahmedabad on August 16, seeking OBC status to ensure reservations in jobs. —PHOTO: AFP

In Gujarat, the Patels or Patidars, who constitute about 15 per cent of the State’s population, are an economically and politically dominant upper caste. As successful farmers, as small and big industrialists, as traders as well as non-resident Gujaratis, spread practically all over the world, they should be the last to demand reservation. The Patel agitation at present, however, seems to be demanding precisely this. Or, if read carefully, the protesters are demanding the removal of caste-based reservation and its replacement with income-based reservation.

The Patel rallies for reservation have been widespread across the State and significantly large in many towns and cities. Though it appears to be an urban movement, rural areas are not totally excluded. The rallies have also spurred other caste rallies and resulted in inter-caste conflicts and tensions. Though there seem to be many weaknesses in the leadership of the agitation and lack of clarity in its objectives, the agitation needs to be taken seriously because it is a warning of the shape of things to come — not only in Gujarat but also other parts of the country.

The agitation has emerged out of the frustrations of the youth on two major counts. First, the existing reservation policy that has failed to assimilate lowest castes/tribes within the mainstream economy and society, has created a sense of dissatisfaction and injustice among those who are denied the benefits of reservation. And second, the much-discussed Gujarat model of development has failed miserably in creating adequate employment opportunities for the growing labour force in the State. This lacuna has particularly affected the educated youth who are unable to find suitable work in spite of the rapid growth of the economy.

The reservation policy which was initiated as a temporary provision (for 10 years) for Scheduled Castes(SC) and Scheduled Tribes (ST) in our Constitution in 1950, has expanded its coverage and contents multifold over the past six to seven decades. It has now become an almost a permanent feature of the national policies. The reservation

policy however, has been used in the State (as elsewhere) mainly in vote bank politics played around the castes and has failed in including the people at the bottom in the mainstream economy and society.

As the creamy layer of the lowest castes and tribes have cornered these benefits to a considerable extent, the policy has ended up as a tool that discriminates against the high caste youths in favour of the low caste youths, sometimes coming from the same economic background. Not only Hardik Patel, the leader of the movement, but large number of participants in the rallies complained of this unfair discrimination. Placards like “I could not get into an engineering college because of low marks though many OBC [other backward classes] students with lower marks got in” or “why should SC/ST/OBC get a job when with better marks and qualifications I cannot?” or “Do away with caste-based reservations” seen in the rallies reflect this frustration. This frustration of the youth, even if the statements in the placards are not accurate, is understandable because it is not the poorest but frequently the non-poor, middle income groups of SC/ST/OBC who are seen to be the beneficiaries of reservations. The tool of reservation has failed miserably in removing caste differences and has promoted the caste divide and caste conflicts.

Clearly, the time has come to rethink our reservation policies, that have ended up giving preference to more or less the same class of SC/ST/OBC in school/college admission, in jobs and in promotions as well as subsidies in innumerable programmes and schemes, leaving out the poorer sections among them at the bottom. Our recent study in Gujarat has shown that the SC, OBC and ST households at the bottom are still left out of the benefits of the rapid growth of the State.

### **Radical rethink**

The radical rethinking on reservation should aim at (i) excluding the entire creamy layer from reservation; (ii) developing the capabilities of the deprived and excluded beyond offering them admission to higher education or jobs on a platter. The underlying principle should be that all the poorest at the bottom get support and all the poorest — excluded socially and economically — get a preference.

Secondly, the failure of development model in Gujarat (and for that matter India as a whole) to create massive, productive employment for the youth is another reason for frustration of the youth. The labour market in Gujarat has behaved in a peculiar manner in the recent decades. On the one hand, large-scale in-migration of unskilled and low-skilled workers is observed in a wide range of sectors such as agriculture, construction, brick kilns, power looms, small engineering, garments etc. At the other end, the posts of highly-skilled professionals in the fast-growing, technology sector have also been largely filled by professionals and high-skilled workers from outside the State. A significant number of the educated youth in the State does not find suitable employment in the State because i. the growth of the modern sector has been highly capital intensive, where jobs

generated are relatively few and local youth frequently do not qualify and ii. other employment opportunities for the educated youth are fewer and not remunerative. As per the official data, the number of educated unemployed i.e. the number of educated job seekers above the Senior Secondary Certificate (SSC) level has increased from 6.7 lakhs in 1995 to about seven lakhs in 2014 while the number of graduate job seekers has increased from 12,184 to 40,781 in the same period— an increase of 3.6 times. Clearly the educated youth is left high and dry, and excluded from the benefits of the rapid growth of the State. The reservation policy in government jobs has added to this frustration.

The danger of the demographic dividend turning into a demographic disaster is looming over the State. And similarly across the country, unless adequate jobs are created for the large labour force, the frustration of the youth is not likely to be contained.

In short, the Gujarat protests should be treated as a warning against the reservation policy and the State's growth model. It is also a warning to other States.

The best that the Gujarat government can do immediately is to hold meaningful discussions with the Patels to understand their concerns. For the medium and long term however, the State has no choice but to redesign its development model to create large scale productive employment for the youth with what the International Labour Organisation (ILO) calls "decent work conditions" and to radically revise the reservation policy.

(Indira Hirway is Director and Professor of Economics at the Centre For Development Alternatives, Ahmedabad.)

The underlining principle of rethinking reservation should be that all the poorest get support and benefits from affirmative action

**BUSINESS LINE, AUG 27, 2015**

### **Caste conundrum**

Inclusive growth is the way to achieve empowerment of the disadvantaged, not quotas and reservations

Caste politics in Gujarat has come full circle. Three decades after it led the agitation against reservations for what are now called Other Backward Castes, the State's relatively prosperous and politically powerful Patel community has launched an aggressive agitation to press its demand to be included in the very same category, in order to be entitled to caste-based quotas in educational institutions and government jobs. Since the community accounts for around 15 per cent of the population in Gujarat, the movement threatens to dominate the State's politics in the near future; the issues raised by the agitation have implications for the national polity as well. India Inc too is not

immune. In Gujarat and elsewhere, quotas, or the demand for quotas, are currently restricted to government jobs and educational institutions. But with the State playing a decreasing role as the primary provider in both areas, it is but a matter of time before industry too feels the heat of agitational politics on this issue. In fact, India Inc has only postponed the day of reckoning by assuring voluntary affirmative action when the UPA government threatened to impose quotas. Unless it can offer visible proof of having followed through on this promise, the demand is bound to be raised again.

The politics of reservations has morphed far beyond the original goal of providing social justice and righting historical wrongs, the basis for providing reservations to Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. What was intended as a short-term corrective has now become an entrenched and unquestioned part of our national fabric. Over the years, with more and more sections of society elbowing for the perceived spoils of reservations, and political parties ever willing to play the caste card for electoral gain, caste has become central to politics as we know it. In Gujarat, the Patidar Anamat Andolan Samiti, which is spearheading the agitation, seems unconcerned that its demand cannot be legally met, as any further reservations would breach the Supreme Court cap of 50 per cent.

The battle for quotas is no longer about social dignity and is caught in a quagmire of competitive casteism. In its recent order striking down reservations for the powerful Jat community under the OBC quota, the Supreme Court observed that “the identification of a group as backward solely on the basis of caste” may not be sufficient and called for “new yardsticks” to be developed, which include social and economic criteria and even class as “an identifiable section of society”. But given the militant growth of identity politics, this would require singular vision and resolve to achieve. Narendra Modi, as the BJP’s Prime Ministerial candidate, offered an alternative model: of empowerment through economic growth and development. As Prime Minister, he now has to deliver on that promise, lest India moves backward on the path of development.

(This article was published in the Business Line print edition dated August 27, 2015)

INDIAN EXPRESS, AUG 27, 2015

### **Patels and the neo-middle class syndrome**

Gujarat, the first state to fight caste-based reservations, may also be the first to re-invent the system.

At first sight, the current mobilisation of Patidars in Gujarat for their inclusion in the OBC list is paradoxical.

This group, which forms 14 per cent of the state population, is over-represented in the elite groups that dominate the economy and polity of Gujarat. Historically, as the career of Sardar Patel shows, it was the first rural community to transition to the city. After

Independence, those among them who, as agrarian capitalists, were good at commercial agriculture, invested in industrial ventures such as diamond-cutting in Surat. They were clearly the main beneficiaries of the business-friendly state policy supporting small-scale enterprises while resisting the licence raj. Patels are probably better represented among professionals and industrialists than any other peasant caste in the whole of India. As a result, Gujarat is one of the few states where non-ST, non-SC and non-OBC groups represent a minuscule minority of those below the poverty line. In 2004-05, according to the NSS, only 4.2 per cent of those living in rural Gujarat and 7 per cent of urban dwellers were in this category, of which Patels are the largest component.

Patels have also made a fortune overseas. They are probably in a majority in the Indian diaspora in the United States. There are about 1.7 million Patels in the US, working primarily in hotels and motels (sometimes nicknamed “potels”). Gujarati politicians have cultivated relationships with these non-resident Gujaratis who send money back home, making local Patels even richer.

Politically, Patels are also dominant. Not only the chief minister, Anandiben Patel, but seven senior members in a ministry of 27, the [BJP](#) chief in the state, five MPs and over three dozen MLAs also come from this group.

Another paradox is that Patidars shifted loyalty from the [Congress](#), their traditional party since the Sardar’s days, to the [BJP](#) because of their rejection of the very idea of quotas. This movement took place after Madhavsinh Solanki, a Kshatriya (OBC), initiated a formidable alliance that included Kshatriyas, Harijans, Adivasis and Muslims during the electoral campaign of 1977. This KHAM coalition could not, then, deal with the unpopularity of the post-Emergency [Congress](#), but the party successfully repeated this strategy in the 1980 elections. For the first time, OBC MLAs formed the largest group in

the legislative assembly, with 24 per cent; Patidars came second with 21 per cent. Solanki's government was overwhelmingly lower class in composition: 13 of its 22 ministers were either Kshatriya, OBC, Dalit or Adivasi. None was Patel, as Patidars started to be referred to 1980s onwards.

After Solanki's victory, OBCs were admitted to quotas that had been decided in the 1970s for postgraduate medical faculties. In response, students from B.J. Medical College in Ahmedabad launched an agitation in December 1980 and submitted to the government a memorandum to dilute the reservation policy. Solanki immediately made concessions, but these were rejected by the students, who demanded the abolition of all employment and education reservations.

Solanki continued with his "quota politics" during the 1985 elections. He supported an increase in quotas up to 28 per cent for OBCs. This 28 per cent, added to the 14 per cent reservations for STs and 7 per cent for SCs, meant that 49 per cent of positions in higher education and state government employment were now "reserved". These decisions partly explained the success of the [Congress](#) in the March 1985 state elections, in which it won a record number of seats: 149. In his ministry, 14 of 20 ministers were Kshatriya. Anti-reservation demonstrations multiplied after the formation of the government, in which only one Patidar had a senior post. Once again, students were at the forefront of the protests. Their leader, Shankarbai Patel, was a member of the Janata Party — the party of Chimanbai Patel, who became CM in 1990-94. Students took their protest to the streets. It was the first time that middle-class men and women took to the streets in this context, displaying no apparent qualms about targeting their low-caste neighbours.

Eventually, Solanki had to resign. Over 100 people had died and thousands made homeless. The memory of this violence probably explains Prime Minister [Narendra](#)



[Modi](#)'s recent call for calm. Solanki accused the Patels of ousting him, an interpretation that is corroborated by the fact that the Patels shifted massively to the [BJP](#) in the following years. First the [BJP](#) joined hands with Chimanbhai and then, in the 1995 elections, the party nominated many Patidar candidates and projected one of its senior leaders, Keshubhai Patel, as the new leader of the Patidars. While in the 1995 state elections, according to CSDS data, as many OBCs (38 per cent) supported the [BJP](#) as the [Congress](#), 67 per cent of Patidars voted for the [BJP](#) (against 20 per cent for the [Congress](#)). Patidars now represented 30 per cent of the [BJP](#)'s 121 MLAs (up from 28 per cent in 1990), while the OBCs had declined by 5 per cent (43 against 48). The Patels remained solidly behind Modi when he became CM. In 2002, 82 per cent of them voted for the [BJP](#).

While the Patels' demand to be recognised as OBCs is paradoxical, it can be explained. Like in the 1980s, politicians play a role. The [Congress](#) is probably trying to destabilise the CM and replace communal polarisation with caste-based social polarisation to consolidate its support among the OBCs, from where come party leaders like Shankersinh Vaghela and Shaktisinh Gohil. Anandiben may exacerbate passions she thinks she will be in a position to pacify in order to assert her authority vis-à-vis the [BJP](#) president, Amit Shah. Her opponents within the state [BJP](#), and even the government, play with fire in the usual factional manner.

But while these three scenarios are plausible and not mutually exclusive, it is difficult to imagine that hundreds of thousands of Patels could be so manipulated. There is always some substance in mass movements. In that case, the Patels may well be victims of the neo-middle-class syndrome. Those who have not yet arrived, who are part of this aspiring class, and find it difficult to achieve their goals because jobs are scarce, education is expensive (especially if you can't buy your degree), buying a car is hard, to say nothing

about a home. The so-called Gujarat model has not favoured the SMEs as much as the capital-intensive industries that do not create as many jobs. Frustrations are particularly acute when expectations have been fanned in the name of “achhe din”. As a result, young Patels fall back on the old issue: reservations. Not necessarily to get their share of it — even if they try, they know it will be hard — but to destabilise the system and dilute it. In that sense, their movement is not too different from the “aandolans” of the 1980s.

This agenda is in tune with the views of the [BJP](#) and Modi, the OBC leader who did not need reservations to rise. For them, reservations, if any, should be on a socio-economic basis. Gujarat, the first state to fight caste-based reservations, may also be the first to reinvent the system. But following such a path may result in counter-mobilisations from the OBCs and resurrect the ghost of Mandal, as clashes between Patels and OBCs in some villages already show.

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STATESMAN, AUG 27, 2015

#### **Cabinet nod to add 4 castes in OBC list**

The union cabinet on Wednesday gave its approval for amending the central list of Other Backward Classes (OBCs) to include Sipai and Patni Jamat or Turk Jamat (all Muslims) of Gujarat and Kahar and Tanwar Singhariya of Uttarakhand.

The decision in the meeting chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi was taken as per the advice received from the National Commission for Backward Classes (NCBC).

"The amendments will enable the persons belonging to these castes/communities to avail the benefits of reservation in government services and posts as well as in central educational institutions as per the existing policy," said an official statement.

"They will also become eligible for benefit under various welfare schemes, scholarships etc. being administered by the central government, which are at present available to persons belonging to the OBCs," it added.

The cabinet also proposed to notify a total of two changes recommended by NCBC in respect of two states.

## **CIVIL SERVICE**

BUSINESS LINE, AUG 27, 2015

### **7th Central Pay Commission gets four more months to submit report**

The Seventh Central Pay Commission has been granted a four-month extension to submit its recommendations, after the Union Cabinet approved the decision on Wednesday.

The commission, which reviews pay scales of about 48 lakh Central government employees and 55 lakh pensioners, was constituted on February 28, 2014 by the UPA government and was supposed to submit its recommendations by August 27.

However, the commission had asked for a four-month extension due to the 'volume of work' and 'intensive stakeholder consultations'. As a result of the Cabinet decision, the request stands granted.

### **Royalty to States**

In a separate decision, the Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs approved a proposal for differential royalty payment to State governments of 28 discovered oil fields in Arunachal Pradesh, Assam and Gujarat.

The fields were awarded in 1994-95, 2001 and 2004. The differential royalty is the difference between the rates as per provisions in the respective production sharing contracts.

"The payment shall be through budgetary allocation instead of through Oil Industry Development Board (OIDB) fund from the year 2015-16," an official statement said.

The expected expenditure for 2015-16 has been estimated at Rs. 56 crore comprising Rs. 30 crore for Arunachal Pradesh and Rs. 26 crore for Gujarat. The calculations from the government are based on the assumption of crude oil price being \$50 per barrel and one US dollar being equal to Rs. 60.

The Standing Committee on Petroleum & Natural Gas had also recommended such a move to ensure proper utilisation of OIDB fund.

### **Arbitration Bill**

The Cabinet also approved amendments to the Arbitration and Conciliation Bill, 2015, by taking into consideration the Law Commission's recommendations and suggestions from stakeholders.

As per the amendments, the government proposes to ensure neutrality of arbitrators by making it mandatory for the person to disclose any relationship or interest of any kind before being appointed as an arbitrator.

Further, the arbitration tribunal shall make its award within 12 months, although parties may extend such a period by up to six months. Further extension can only be done by the Court, on sufficient cause.

### **Other decisions**

The Union Cabinet also approved the agreement on legal and judicial cooperation in civil and commercial matters for the service of summons, judicial documents, commissions, execution of judgements and arbitral awards between India and Afghanistan. Approval was also granted to a similar agreement with Oman.

Further, the Cabinet, on the advice from the National Commission for Backward Classes, agreed to include two castes/communities from Gujarat and Uttarakhand into the Central list of other backward classes.

DECCAN HERALD, AUG 26, 2015

### **Seventh pay panel to submit report by September-end**

The Seventh Pay Commission set up by the government to revise remuneration of about 48 lakh central government employees and 55 lakh pensioners will submit its report next month, said its chairman Justice A K Mathur.

The Union Cabinet, according to sources, is expected to extend the term of the commission by two months until October 31 at its meeting on Wednesday. The term of the commission ends this month.

“The commission will submit its report by the end of September,” Justice Mathur said.

The commission, which was set up by the UPA government in February 2014 to revise remuneration of central government employees, Defence personnel and pensioners, was required to submit its report by August-end.

The government constitutes the pay commission almost every 10 years to revise the pay scale of its employees and often these are adopted by states after some modifications.

### **Talks over**

The commission has already completed discussions with various stakeholders, including organisations, federations, groups representing civil employees as well as defence services. It’s now in the process of finalising its recommendations.

The recommendations of the Seventh Pay Commission are scheduled to come into effect

from January 1, 2016. The other members of the commission are Vivel Rae, Rathin Roy and its Secretary Meena Agarwal.

The Sixth Pay Commission was implemented with effect from January 1, 2006, the fifth from January 1, 1996 and the fourth from January 1, 1986.

ASIAN AGE, AUG 26, 2015

### **New board to fix tenure of Delhi bureaucrats**

[SANJAY KAW](#) |

In an attempt to bypass lieutenant-governor Najeeb Jung in transfers and postings of senior bureaucrats, the AAP government has set up the Civil Services Board to fix the tenure of bureaucrats in the national capital.

The city government has appointed chief secretary K.K. Sharma as the board's chairman, principal secretary (urban development) Chetan B. Sanghi as its member and principal secretary (services) Rajendra Kumar as its member secretary. A notification to this effect has already been issued to empower the board to recommend and fix transfers and postings of the officers. The board can examine the cases of officers who are proposed to get transferred before the completion of their minimum tenure. It can recommend the names of officers to the competent authority for transfers before completion of their minimum tenure by placing all the reasons on record in writing. It can also consider the report of the administrative department along with any other inputs it may have from other reliable sources.

Recently, deputy chief minister Manish Sisodia said that "transfer-posting" had become a big industry in Delhi. A section of the officers, who have been upset over the "treatment being meted out to them" by the newly-elected government, feels that the board could finally mitigate their problems. A senior bureaucrat said that the board could play a key role in bringing transparency in transfer and postings of cadre officers.

The transfers and postings of many senior officers had turned into a major battlefield as both Mr Jung and chief minister Arvind Kejriwal claimed to be the last authority on such issues. The contentious transfers and postings of the ACB chief and the city's home secretary had even unnerved a large number of government officials. The AAP government had even directed joint police commissioner M.K. Meena not to take charge of the anti-corruption branch.

The government also transferred its home secretary Dharam Pal for signing Mr Meena's posting orders at the behest of the L-G. Mr Pal was shunted out for not following the CM's directions. However, some bureaucrats are apprehensive whether the three-member body would be able to take independent decisions. A senior officer said the city government has already incorporated Mr Kejriwal's two key lieutenants in the board. "Both Mr Sangi and Mr Kumar are very close to Mr Kejriwal. The presence of both the

officers has raised questions whether the board will function freely without any political interference.”

INDIAN EXPRESS, AUG 25, 2015

**About 4.65 lakh appear in civil services prelims exam: UPSC**

A total of 4,65,882 candidates took the civil services preliminary examination this year as compared to 4,51,602 examinees last year. Many young IAS officers often fall prey to the incompetency of the framework. Once inducted, postings and training seem to turn them into generalists rather than specialists.

About 4.65 lakh candidates on Sunday appeared for civil services preliminary examination across the country.

“There were no untoward incidents reported from any of the centre in the country,” Union Public Service Commission (UPSC) Secretary Ashim Khurana told PTI.

A total of 4,65,882 candidates took the civil services preliminary examination this year as compared to 4,51,602 examinees last year, an increase by 14,280, he said.

As against a record number of 9,45,908 candidates who have applied for the exam, 6,81,549 of them had downloaded their e-admit card, Khurana said.

Out of these candidates, 4,65,882 candidates took the examination, which is about 49 per cent of the total candidates who had applied, he said.

The civil services examination is conducted by the UPSC annually in three stages—preliminary, main and interview –to select candidates for prestigious Indian Administrative Service (IAS), Indian Foreign Service (IFS) and Indian Police Service (IPS) among others.

The preliminary examination consists of two papers– Paper I and Paper II of two hours duration each. The first paper began at 9:30 AM and second started at 2:30 PM.

There were 2,186 venues in 71 centres (or cities) across the country.

“At Delhi centre, 70,642 candidates took the examination as against 1,17,312 who have registered for Delhi as their centre,” said Khurana, a 1983 batch IAS officer of Gujarat cadre.

In order to facilitate the visually impaired candidates, the Commission has increased the number of venues (cities) to 72 in 71 centres as compared to eight venues in seven cities in 2014, he said.

There were 2,137 venues in 59 centres for 2014 prelims exam.

ECONOMIC TIMES, AUG 24, 2015

**Centre strikes down Delhi government salary hike for officers  
Kejriwal said that the central government did not want his government to work.**

NEW DELHI: Signalling a fresh confrontation, the Narendra Modi-led central government has rejected Arvind Kejriwal-led Delhi government's decision to hike the salaries of its mid and senior-level officers.

In a letter, the union home ministry has expressed its displeasure over the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) government's decision to grant time-bound pay scales to Delhi, Andaman and Nicobar Islands [Civil Service](#) (DANICS) officers, declaring it as "ultra vires".

On August 11, the [Delhi government](#) had ordered that pay scales of DANICS officers be revised after they complete 13, 18 and 21 years of service which was not the case earlier.

Asked about the home ministry reaction, Kejriwal said that the central government did not want his government to work.

"They will not do good work neither will they let us," Kejriwal told IANS, while confirming the information.

The home ministry, in its communication to Delhi chief secretary, asserted that it was the "competent authority to make any amendments in the DANICS Rules" and the Delhi government did not seek its approval.



"The prescribed procedure had not been followed and the approval of the competent authority has not been obtained. As such, it has become ultra vires," the letter said.

"Further, the proposal relating to creation of all posts carrying Grade Pay of Rs 10,000 in Pay Band - 4 and above are required to be brought before the union cabinet," it added.

DANICS is a civil service whose officers are deputed to serve the middle level and senior level administration of the Delhi government as well as union territories like Andaman and Nicobar Islands, [Lakshadweep](#), Daman and Diu and Dadra and Nagar Haveli.

The decision was taken to boost the morale of these officers who were unhappy over pay structures. According to officials, DANICS officers are eligible for promotion to the [Indian Administrative Service](#) after completing eight years of continuous service but this actually been taking on an average of 27-28 years.

The central government's decree will come as a blow to over 200 DANICS officers who have long demanded parity in pay structure.

"It was after a long struggle that Delhi government had passed the order of fair revision of our salary scale," a senior DANICS officer told IANS.

"There was no scope of promotion. The decision was aimed at removing disparity in salaries. Even the salary of a head clerk was equal to that of a DANICS officer," he added.

The central and the Delhi governments are locked into a bitter battle over a host of issues.

## CONSTITUTIONS

STATESMAN, AUG 27, 2015

### **Constitution & Ethnicity**

Ethnicity has assumed mortal proportions in Nepal days ahead of the ratification of the new Constitution. Indeed, the bedrock of the new arrangement - the creation of seven provinces and the devolution of power - has been greeted with knives, spears, and sickles, with nine people killed in furious protests amidst curfew since Monday. The disaffection of the tribal segment remains ever so pronounced. The proposed changes in the structure of governance signify a watershed development post-monarchy and must seem still more remarkable four months after the devastating earthquake. It would be deeply unfortunate if the political consensus - the Maoists included - gets frittered away in the raging turmoil; Prime Minister Narendra Modi has conveyed a timely word of caution, one that ought not to be accorded the spin of India's intervention in domestic affairs.

Political and social unrest in the Himalayan country can have dire implications on South Asia and stability in Nepal is critical in terms of geopolitics. It bears recall that after the bloody strife in the palace in 2001, India had made its position clear on the imperative of democratic governance. Central to the conflict within is the sub-regional jingoism being articulated by two ethnic segments - the Tharu and the Madhesis, the common grouse being that they have lost out in the ethnic bargain. The Tharus have been agitating for weeks for the creation of a separate province in western Nepal where they live, chiefly to ensure that they are entitled to political representation. At another remove, the restive Madhesis have vehemently opposed the way lawmakers have been redrawing the country's political map. When lawmakers presented a revised draft of the new Constitution to the Parliament on Sunday, the document envisaged the division of the country into seven provinces... without a separate state for the Tharus.

The sharp ethnic divisions do pose a threat to the constitutional development of the country. The Constitution may yet be approved in Parliament, but the simmering discontent is bound to persist as a forbidding challenge. And should the ethnic upheaval persist, the in-built fragility of the Constitution will almost inevitably have an impact on democratic governance. The government has authorized the affected district authorities to call in the army and troops have already been deployed in Kailali.

Arguments over the administrative division of Nepal, centrally governed for more than two centuries, have been a major impediment to the adoption of a new Constitution. Nepal is home to more than 100 ethnic groups and castes, and there is deep disagreement

over how to combine its districts into a feasible number of provinces, and whether to do so along ethnic lines. The violence at a critical juncture does suggest that the fundamental irritants remain unaddressed.

## ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

STATESMAN, AUG 27, 2015

**This isn't Ram Rajya!**

**Bharat Jhunjhunwala**

The story goes that when Ram was expelled from Ayodhya, Bharat went to Chitrakut to persuade him to return. Ram took the opportunity to give some lessons on governance to Bharat in the form of certain questions - "Is your income more and expenses much less? Is your treasury in the hands of undesirable persons?"

Here "undesirable persons" is a euphemism for undesirable expenditure. Revenue expenditure such as paying ever-increasing salaries to the government servants is "undesirable" while capital expenditure in the form of building highways is "desirable." The share of revenue expenditure in the total government spending has increased under Prime Minister Narendra Modi, while capital expenditure has declined. Of late, prices have risen but slowly. This has been touted by the Government as a "great" achievement. The unstated point being that this has come at the cost of reduced public investment. I am not convinced of the Government's claim that growth rate has reached 7.5 per cent. There is nothing on the ground to show an increase in growth rate. Shops have fewer customers than last year. So where is the growth? Also, it is true that the Government's debt as a percentage of GDP has declined from 84 per cent in 2003 to 66 per cent in 2013. However, this debt has been reduced entirely by cutting productive expenditure while revenue expenditure continues to gallop as previously.

The economy is in a mess because the Government is not following Ram's advice. If unproductive expenditures were less, as advised by Ram, then the dismal economic scenario could have been averted. Ram had asked Bharat, "Those earning livelihood from agriculture and animal husbandry are supporting you?"

This does not appear to be the case today. The basic problem of the farmer is that the price of his produce is less while the cost of production is higher. Farming has become a losing proposition. Farmers are not able to repay the debt because prices are low and tragically, some are committing suicide. The remedy is to increase the price of agricultural produce. Mr Modi continues to pursue the UPA government's policy of importing food items to keep domestic prices low. Recently the Government has decided to import urad daal. This will deprive the farmer of high prices. The Prime Minister is flaunting such useless schemes as "Soil Health Card." The farmer will know which brand of fertilizers to buy. But where is the money? The increase in Minimum Support Price

announced recently should not be regarded as a pro-farmer step. It only follows the previous trend and does not go beyond the rate of inflation. How will the farmers support Mr Modi in the absence of such policies? He is only fooling the farmers by touting insurance schemes and the Soil Health Card. The farmer does not have the money to buy fertilizers.

Ram asked: “Have you appointed brave, learned, and self-controlled persons as your advisors?” Modi’s advisers are government servants manning the PMO. They serve the government at the end of the day. Their worldview is limited to their personal gains. They don’t care a whit about what happens to their master. Once an employer lost his job. He asked his servant to stop using ghee on roti. Yet the quantity of ghee in the bottle continued to get depleted. When the servant was asked how this could happen, he replied: “Sir, you have lost your job, but I have not lost mine. I do not apply ghee on your roti as once directed by you, but I do apply it on my roti.” Such is the attitude of servants.

A senior IAS officer, working in the PMO, once told me that he was only pushing papers. Such are Modi’s advisers. They will happily mislead the Prime Minister to keep him in good humour so that they could become Governors after retirement. Indira Gandhi - during the Emergency - and Vajpayee, when Prime Minister, were misled by these pliable officials. Sonia Gandhi had adopted the correct strategy. She had appointed independent persons to the National Advisory Council. The success of the UPA in 2009 and its failure in 2014 are attributable in part to the effectiveness of the NAC in 2009 and disbanding of the same before the 2014 elections.

Ram once asked, “Do your judges decide without being swayed by allurements of money etc. if a poor person approaches the Court in a dispute between rich and poor?” Ram assumed that it was possible for the poor to approach the Court. Modi wants to take away this right from the poor. The present position is that an aggrieved person can approach the National Green Tribunal (NGT). Modi had set up a Committee under the chairmanship of TSR Subramanian to suggest changes in the environmental laws. The Committee has suggested that the right to approach the NGT may be abrogated. Instead the poor should be asked to approach an Appellate Board constituted of one retired judge of the High Court and two government officials. Instead of judges, the same Government officials who are the culprits will deliver justice. The proposed amendments to the Land Acquisition Act are designed to disempower the poor. The requirement of consent from the affected farmers is sought to be hugely diluted. That is hardly the justice that Ram had in mind.

Ram was conscious of the need to protect the environment. He asked, “The Kosala country that has a large number of ponds is congenial. Are the forests, where elephants grow, protected by you?” Modi has no time for the traditional water harvesting technologies. His policy is to construct large dams like the Lakhwar Vyasi, which has recently been cleared by his Government. Such large projects provide huge opportunities to the big companies to make profit and also destroy the environment and culture of the country. Modi’s advisers do not want to revive the ponds because there is nothing to be gained. Big dams, on the other hand, provide opportunities to the officials to make money on the sly. The Prime Minister finds the forests useless. The Subramanian Committee has recommended that 90 per cent of the country’s forests that do not have dense cover be opened to cutting and mining.

Ram asked, “Do you respect the honourable elders, Vaidyas and Brahmins?” The treatment meted out to elders like Advani and Murli Manohar Joshi speaks for itself. Modi’s emphasis is on cosmetic exercises. Cow slaughter has been banned in those states where the BJP is in power. The Prime Minister exploited the photo-opportunity by performing yoga in public. He is intent on promoting the Sanskrit language. Such fringe activities do not find any mention in the discourse given by Ram to Bharat.

STATESMAN, AUG 24, 2015

**Indian economy is in much better position: Rajan**

As stocks and rupee hit new lows, Reserve Bank Governor Raghuram Rajan on Monday allayed fears citing strong macroeconomic fundamentals of the country which are much better than many others.

"I wish to reassure the markets that our macroeconomic factors are under control as the economy is in a much better position relative many other economies," Rajan told the national banking summit organised by the IBA and Ficci here.

Rajan said the country has \$380 billion in forex reserves to be used as and when the need arises.

The Governor also hinted at lower rates, saying the RBI will look at emerging room for more accommodation on the back of lower commodity prices, astute food management by the government and strong anti-inflation policy stance of the central bank.

"Falling commodity prices and astute food management by the government should help RBI (lower rates)", said Rajan.

He also said he sees oil prices remaining at low levels at for a year or two.

Amid free fall in stock markets, the rupee today crashed to 66.49 against the dollar, plunging a whopping 66 paise. The rupee has not seen such a low level in almost two years in opening trade on sustained capital outflows even as the US currency weakened overseas.

The RBI Governor said that turmoil in currency market has been long-coming and China is only the last step in it.

Rajan however said rupee has strengthened against yen and euro, and RBI has resources to deal with rupee volatility.

In its biggest intra-day crash this year, the market benchmark Sensex plunged by 1,006 points while Nifty fell below 8,000 level in early trade today due to heavy selling by funds amid global sell-off as worries about China's economy deepen.

Asian markets were also in deep red with Shanghai shares crashing 8 per cent on concerns that the Chinese economy was slowing more than previously thought. Taking cues from global markets, the Sensex nosedived 1,006.54 points, or 3.67 per cent, to 26,359.53-- the biggest fall in day trade in 2015.

The broader Nifty also dipped below the 8,000-level by tumbling 309.05 points, or 3.72 per cent to 7990.90 in early trade. All 50 constituents of Nifty are in red with Tata Motors and ONGC losing the most up to 6 per cent.

Brokers said sentiments suffered a jolt following a sell-off in other Asian markets with over 8 per cent plunge in Shanghai index.

Meanwhile, crude prices fell after slipping below \$40 barrel for the first time in six years after weak Chinese manufacturing data.

## EDUCATION

DECCAN HERALD, AUG 26, 2015

### **Stimulating syllabus can spark learning**

A large proportion of our school-going population, especially those at the secondary and high school levels, is dropping out. According to the data collected by the National University for Educational Planning and Administration, which the Ministry of Human Resource Development made public recently, dropouts at the secondary school level in 2013-14 were higher than that at the primary level. Odisha stood first with the highest dropout rates in the country; 50.09 per cent of boys and 49.62 per cent girls dropped out at Class IX and Class X in 2013-14. Karnataka emerged runner up with 40 per cent of its boys and 39 per cent girls dropping out at the secondary school level. The situation across the country is worrying as it threatens to undo the significant gains made in the educational field in recent decades. Thanks to the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan, for instance, school enrolment is almost universal. However, while children are joining primary school, the system is not able to retain them.

A year ago, HRD Minister Smriti Irani promised to provide school dropouts with an incentive to return by offering them financial support. Has there been any progress in fulfilling that promise? Importantly, does the HRD ministry have a comprehensive strategy to address the dropout problem, one that goes beyond monetary handouts? While financial assistance will provide poor families with some relief, this is not the best solution as the dropout problem has its roots in a complex web of issues. Students are not staying in school as the curriculum does not stimulate them and is unrelated to their lived reality. They fear it will not prepare them for a job. Teachers in rural schools rarely show up, lack teaching skills and are uninspiring. School infrastructure is way below par; many schools still do not have toilets for girls, an important reason for the high dropout rate among girls. Caste discrimination in schools is forcing Dalit and tribal children to quit school.

Addressing the problem of school dropouts thus requires a multi-pronged approach. It is a pity that instead of giving this problem the priority it deserves, the government is frittering away funds to rewrite history and science books to further its communal agenda. It should be updating curriculums in a way that stimulates the curiosity of children and sparks their desire to learn. If children are encouraged to think, question and challenge and learn via exploring rather than rote learning, they will want to come to school to discover the world. Else, the quitting will continue.

ECONOMIC TIMES, AUG 26, 2015

### **President Pranab Mukherjee to be a teacher for one day**

Pranab Mukherjee will be holding a joint class for class XI and XII students of Dr Rajendra Prasad Sarvodaya Vidyalaya at the school which is located in the Presidential Estate.



NEW DELHI: Students of XI and XII standard of a Delhi school will have a special class on September 4, the eve of 'Teachers' Day'. They will get lessons from none other than President [Pranab Mukherjee](#).

Mukherjee will be holding a joint class for class XI and XII students of [Dr Rajendra Prasad Sarvodaya Vidhalaya](#) at the school which is located in the Presidential Estate.

The students will assemble on the 'Knowledge floor' and listen to their new teacher. Later, the President will address nearly 100 teachers also.

This idea was given by Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal and his Deputy Chief Minister [Manish Sisodia](#) to the President, who liked it and gave his consent for the same.

Mukherjee's focus has been on providing quality education and in his address to the nation on the eve of Independence Day earlier this month, he had laid special emphasis on "guru-shishya" (Teacher-Student) relation.

"...what has happened to quality (education), from base to apex? We recall the guru-shishya parampara with legitimate pride; why then have we abandoned the care, devotion and commitment that is at the heart of this relationship?" he had asked.

He believes that a teacher is like a potter, who, with his soft and skillful hands, moulds the destiny of the student and the society should recognise and find merit and scholarship of the teacher.

"Is that happening in our education system today? Students, teachers and authorities must pause and introspect," he had said in his address.

The President was requested by the [Delhi Government](#) under its prestigious programme 'Be a Teacher' in which renowned personalities from different walks of life like art, culture, sports, business, politics and civil services take class for students and inspire kids to achieve excellence in life.

While this is for the first time that any President will don a cap of a teacher on a 'Teachers Day', on earlier occasions Mukherjee and his predecessor A P J Abdul Kalam have been meeting and interacting with students.

September 5 is celebrated as [Teachers Day](#) in memory of birth anniversary of former President S Radhakrishnan.

TRIBUNE, AUG 27, 2015

### **UGC forces JU to close 2 unapproved PG courses through distance mode**

After protests by affected students, varsity decides to treat them as 'private candidates'

The University of Jammu was caught on the wrong foot after it recently got snubbed by the University Grants Commission (UGC) for starting two postgraduate (PG) courses through the distance mode without its mandatory approval last year.

On the account of punishment, the university had to close both the PG courses — political science and economics — from the current academic session that subjected around 1,500 students to umpteen hardships.

Following massive protests and hullabaloo, the university devised an “extraordinary mechanism to save the future” of the affected students and decided to treat them as “private candidates” so that they are able to complete their two-year degree programme.

Various student organisations, supporting the affected students, have been demanding that the university should provide admission to all the affected students as “regular student” in the university “to rectify its blunder”. The university Syndicate in its 101st meeting, under the chairmanship of then Vice Chancellor Prof Mohan Paul Singh Ishar, had recommended starting of PG courses in economics and political science in the Directorate of Distance Education (DDE) on March 15, 2013.

Following the decision, the university had introduced these two subjects in the DDE last year. Nearly 1,500 students (1,000 in political science and 500 in economics), who had taken admission in these courses, have completed first and second semesters. Before admission in the third semester this year, the university was forced to close these courses subjecting students to a great inconvenience.

A senior faculty member of the university said, “Earlier, there was a provision where the varsity could introduce any subject on the recommendations of the Syndicate or any other body. The mandatory approval from the Distance Education Council (DEC) — an all-India governing body for regulation of distance education programmes in higher education — could be sought later. The UGC made certain rigorous and strict amendments to its existing rules and it made mandatory for universities to get prior approval from the Distance Education Bureau (DEB), which replaced the DEC, for starting any course in the distance mode.”

This time, when the university approached the DEB for approval of these two courses, the latter refused the varsity request and snubbed it for starting courses without its

mandatory approval, the member said, adding that “the DEB punished the university by directing it to stop both the courses through the distance mode, which led to the present crisis.”

Another faculty member said, “We have decided to treat all the affected students as private candidates, but they would be provided study material besides the varsity would arrange Personal Contact Programme (PCP) for them on the pattern of DDE students.”

Fairoz Khan, national secretary, NSUI, said, “Students have been suffering due to the blunder of the university. It is the responsibility of the university to take care of all affected students and accommodate them as regular students to save their future. We will fight it on roads if the university does not accept our demand.”

## ELECTIONS

ASIAN AGE, AUG 24, 2015

### **Saudi Arabia women to vote for the first time**

In a historic new policy, women in Saudi Arabia will be able to vote and run for office in the Kingdom's municipal elections for the first time.

Voter registration that lasts for 21 days for the December 12 polls began on Saturday but started a week earlier in Mecca and Medina, in what officials describe as a "significant milestone in progress towards a participation-based society".

Candidate registration will start on August 30 in all regions except in the two holy cities, where the process began on Sunday.

Last Sunday, Safinaz Abu al-Shamat and Jamal al-Saadi became the first Saudi women to register for voting.

Ms Shamat had described it as a national duty for women to participate in the elections. "There are 1,263 election centres in all regions and provinces of the Kingdom — 839 of the centres are for men, 424 centres for women," Saudi Gazette quoted a source from the ministry of municipal and rural affairs as saying. The December election will be the first opportunity for women to vote since a 2011 order by the now deceased King Abdullah that is aimed at granting women some political participation.

King Abdullah issued a royal decree in 2013 saying that the Consultative Council, a royally-appointed body that advises the king, should have at least 20 per cent women, according to the state department.

Neither male nor female candidates will be allowed to use pictures of themselves in the campaign and there will be separate polling centres for men and women. Women's rights activists had long demanded the right to vote in the oil-rich Gulf kingdom. The decision to grant voting rights to women will help the country come closer to its democratic allies, particularly the US which first allowed women to vote in 1930.

Saudi Arabia has regularly been derided for its strict interpretation of Sunni Islam which prohibits women to get behind the wheel.

## FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS

INDIAN EXPRESS, AUG 24, 2015

**Bandhan joins banking league: Political difference won't hamper Bengal's growth, says Arun Jaitley**

Arun Jaitley said "doing away with some of the policies of the past and realising the potential is of extreme importance".

Calling for more economic activity in the eastern states, Finance Minister [Arun Jaitley](#) Sunday said political differences between the [BJP](#) and the Trinamool [Congress](#) would not come in the way of West Bengal's development as he lamented "obsolete policies" of the past, which, he said, should be done away with.

"The party to which I belong ([BJP](#)) and the party which rules Bengal (TMC) are strongly opposed to each other and that probably will continue. But in terms of development of this country and this state, the political differences will not matter and we will fully cooperate with Bengal for its growth," he said at the inauguration of Bandhan Bank, which launched its operations with 501 branches across the country, 220 of which are in Bengal alone.

Jaitley said "doing away with some of the policies of the past and realising the potential is of extreme importance".

The Centre and the state are cooperating towards greater enhanced growth rates that will eventually bring prosperity in the state, he said, asserting that the change in developmental politics and developmental environment would be created by institutions like Bandhan Bank.

Reiterating Prime Minister [Narendra Modi](#)'s statement that growth of India would not happen unless the eastern parts of the country also grew, Jaitley said, "There has to be more economic activity in eastern UP, Bihar, Odisha and Bengal. Cooperation between the Centre and state will work towards that," he said, and added that Bengal would get "all the financial benefits as announced earlier as well as the proceeds from coal auctions".

West Bengal, which has seen the birth of many scientists, economists, academicians, authors and writers, was now creating the Bangla entrepreneur and "this is a great beginning," the Finance Minister said. "I think this beginning is also important in terms of the return of entrepreneurship which was otherwise fleeing from the state."

Referring to the shift in regime from a long-running Left rule to Mamata Banerjee-led Trinamool [Congress](#) government, Jaitley said the city has changed its colour from red to blue.

"In my younger years, I used to see this city painted red (referring to the past Left rule). (At that time) new institutions were not born and the existing ones shifted. Even (Bandhan Bank chairman) Ashok Lahiri and (State Finance Minister) Amit Mitra shifted out. (But) this pleasant change of colour has brought back both of them," he said, and termed the launch of the bank under the leadership of Chandra Shekhar Ghosh, its managing director and the CEO, as the "birth of a Bangla entrepreneur".

CPM MP Md Selim criticised Jaitley for his statement over the regime change, saying the Union minister has sent a message to Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee that he was against the Left. "The event was the inauguration of a bank but Jaitley used the platform

to do politics. What he overlooked is that Bandhan was not formed in these four years of TMC rule. It had come to existence in the last decade when our government had facilitated micro-financing in rural areas,” he said.

The state’s finance minister said: “Bandhan started with the twin objective of women empowerment and poverty eradication. With a repayment record of 99 per cent, the organisation has been successful in its objectives. Now, the challenge before it is to push Bengal’s credit deposit rate from around 68 per cent to the national average of over 76 per cent.”

## FINANCIAL MARKETS

BUSINESS STANDARD, AUG 24, 2015

### **Red tape of Indian bureaucracy poses hurdle to red carpet, says senior US official Says the Indo-US equation after Modi became Prime Minister is excellent**

Prime Minister Narendra Modi has made "remarkable" progress in his first 15 months in office by rolling out a red carpet for foreign companies, but the infamous red tapism of the Indian bureaucracy continues to pose hurdles to investments, the White House has said.

"You can say that," Peter R Lavoy, Special Assistant to US President and Senior Director for South Asian Affairs at the National Security Council said, when asked if his assessment of the Modi government means both red carpet welcome and red tapism are running parallel to each other.

"I have never seen any Indian government make such quick progress on so many issues, in such a short time. So it is truly remarkable," Lavoy told PTI. "That said, your bureaucracy has a certain worldwide reputation. I think, it has standards that are really unparalleled worldwide. Even though India continues to make progress, we are confident the government recognises their opportunities to move much more quickly to achieve the potential and the vision of the Prime Minister," he said replying to questions on the new government's policies.

The Indo-US equation after Modi became Prime Minister is excellent, he said.

"This is by far the strongest the relationship has ever been. Not only that, it's our leaders President (Barack) Obama and everyone else, Prime Minister Modi and his cabinet look at the future - both sides here see a very bright future where we see a deep opening and expansion of bilateral cooperation and working together to solve regional problems and international problems. We think the relationship is excellent," he said.

Lavoy, who joined the National Security Council early this year, is the White House's point person for all of South Asia, including Afghanistan and Pakistan.

The wide ranging interview, on various issues of India-US ties, policies of the NDA Government and India's role in the region and the world was held in the historic War Room of the Eisenhower Executive Office Building of the White House.

During the interview, Lavoy praised Modi Government's outreach to its neighbours to resolve outstanding bilateral and border issues and in particular mentioned the recent resolution of the border dispute with Bangladesh.

"We still have a situation where we have unresolved border disputes between India and few of its neighbours.



Fortunately India has resolved its dispute with Bangladesh that was a very positive and a very sudden development. But it still has tensions with China. It still has tensions with Pakistan. So if you look at the overall regional situation. I think there are a lot of positive trends, but there are still some challenges that need to be worked out," he said.

## GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENTS

ECONOMIC TIMES, AUG 26, 2015

### **Rs 986 crore earmarked to 32 departments in Arunachal Pradesh by SDC**

Rs 986 crore has been earmarked for 32 state government departments for development activities by the State Development Council.

ITANAGAR: Rs 986 crore has been earmarked for 32 state government departments for development activities by the [State Development Council](#) (SDC) during its first phase of meetings, which had started since August 18 and concluded here this evening under the chairmanship of [Chief Minister Nabam Tuki](#).

The decision to switch over from the erstwhile [State Planning Board](#) (SPB) to the SDC marking structural changes in the planning process, has been showing impressive results with many departments witnessing quantum leaps in their budget estimates for 2015-16 from the previous years.

Ministers, Parliamentary Secretaries, Commissioners, Secretaries and Head of Departments expressed satisfaction over the outcome of the first phase of the SDC meetings and exuded confidence that the second phase would be equally fruitful, an official release said.

"Replacement of AOP system by [State Annual Development Agenda](#) is another important step by the government, making space for the departments to work efficiently to realise the desired goal of overall development," said a senior official.

The SDC had initially directed the departments to formulate broad guidelines for implementation of various schemes incorporating monitoring mechanism to ensure transparency and accountability.

Skill development and employment generation got the major stake during the week long meetings as maximum schemes and programmes were targeted to provide self employment to unemployed youths, the release said.

Winding up the first phase of meeting, the Chief Minister appealed all the departments to make the state and central government programmes cent percent successful with fruits of development reaching every nook and corner of [Arunachal Pradesh](#).

He called for concerted and dedicated workforce of the state machinery to embark on a new and fresh development journey, the release said.

The first phase SDC meetings chalked out an one year road map for departments having no or very small component of Centrally Sponsored Schemes (CSS).

## INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

TELEGRAPH, AUG 25, 2015

### **Modi and the world: Foreign policy annual report**

Krishnan Srinivasan

Rarely, if ever, has any prime minister's foreign policy after only one year in office been scrutinized and analysed at home and abroad in the manner that Narendra Modi's has been. While apologists of the Congress claim that there has only been continuity in the policy and that the positive aspects were a legacy from the United Progressive Alliance's decade-long tenure, it is clear to any dispassionate observer that the feature of Modi's policy has been his departures from the received wisdom and traditional footprints.

Few could have anticipated the vigour that Modi has injected into Indian diplomacy: no one expected him to move so far or so fast. He was believed to have limited exposure to international affairs, though known to have travelled to China and some other countries in Asia and to have contacted the Indian communities in the United States of America. The Bharatiya Janata Party's election manifesto devotes only one anodyne page out of 52 to foreign policy. The invitation to South Asian heads of government to attend his swearing-in was a welcome surprise, and the most distinctive feature of the Modi premiership so far has been in foreign affairs.

Modi has been accused of travelling abroad excessively during his first year. In the financial year 2014-15 - and Modi took office only on May 26, 2014 - of all the major nations, meaning the permanent members of the United Nations Security Council, and Germany, Japan, South Africa and Brazil, Modi visited fewer foreign countries than any of his counterparts other than President Dilma Rousseff of Brazil, who would also have surpassed Modi had it not been for the American spying revelations exposed by Edward Snowden that forced her to cut short some of her projected visits. Modi's travels were in contrast with the lack of energetic engagement by his predecessor, Manmohan Singh, who went to as few as ten countries in 2013-14. Modi's visits were necessitated by the economic and strategic agenda he set out for India to press its suit as a major player, to impress the economic factor into diplomacy, and to connect strongly with the Indian diaspora. By reconnecting with Indians overseas from Canada to Fiji, Modi has invoked the political geography of the British Empire, which caused huge movements of populations around the world.

With the power of influence tilting adversely for India on account of China's rapid rise, and the fact that Pakistan and China have drawn even closer together as a result of the Silk Route proposals, Modi understood the need for his personal involvement to build partnerships, and it is not without meaning that his first bilateral visits outside the subcontinent were to Japan, the US and Australia. At the same time, Modi has been careful not to initiate any cold-war atmosphere into Indian relations with China. On the long-standing border dispute, the former national security adviser, Shivshankar Menon, stated in December, 2014, in China, "I think all the technical work has been done... this

border can be settled. It is time we settle, the quicker we do it the better". This intriguing statement, full of implied connotations, has strangely passed unnoticed in India though it seems to suggest that only the manifestation of political will remains in order to conclude a border settlement.

Modi's arrival into office has witnessed huge, perhaps unrealistic, expectations that under the most business-friendly leader that India has ever had, the perennially underperforming Indian economy would at long last register a greater momentum. Massive investment is required in infrastructure, manufacturing and industry, and by conspicuously harnessing Indian diplomacy to the cause of Indian economic progress, the prime minister has been able to secure some major commitments at the inter-governmental level. He clearly wishes without ideological considerations to leverage other countries, including, above all, the big economies of the US, Japan, China and Germany, to benefit India's economic growth pattern.

In the course of a short time-span, Modi has organized bilateral visits with all of the permanent members of the Security Council other than Britain, India has resolved its differences with the US on the civil nuclear agreement and finalized other nuclear agreements with Australia, France and Canada. The 'strategic vision statement' with Obama last January broke new ground, reflecting a previously unacknowledged convergence of views on the Asia-Pacific and the Indian Ocean. The prime minister's decision to visit Israel is new, and the closer security contacts with Japan and Australia are also new.

Within the immediate neighbourhood, Modi has made it clear that India is ready to share its prosperity because he senses the benefits of non-reciprocity. He wants to give a lead in keeping with India's size and resources to construct a more integrated and inter-connected subcontinent, in which India can resume its role as investor and security provider. He was able to break from his party's line and the state governments regarding matters concerning Sri Lanka and Bangladesh. With Pakistan, in spite of innumerable provocations, he has held steady to the prospect of bilateral negotiation and agreed to visit Pakistan. Single-handedly, he has changed perceptions in Nepal and allayed accusations of India's allegedly unfriendly attitude. He has understood the value of ties with small island nations like Mauritius and Seychelles, Fiji and the Pacific Islands Forum in contesting the rapid development and outreach of China's blue-water navy.

Modi has brought boundless energy and personal charisma, along with obvious self-confidence in himself and country, to the conduct of foreign policy. He wants India in synchrony with the rest of the world, not a marginal receiver of the dispensation of the international system. This reflects India's changing mood regarding the trade facilitation agreement in the World Trade Organization and a new readiness to move with other major powers on Climate Change. As Kishore Mahbubani, a prominent intellectual in Singapore, has written, "With Narendra Modi in charge, we are finally getting glimpses of what the new strong India will look like." And the world has welcomed the sight.

Modi has brought to the forefront not only India's tremendous potential but its many inbred institutional weaknesses. Modi is an outsider to Delhi's power-broking circles, the central bureaucracy or even to many of the BJP's hardcore constituencies. Therefore the Modi foreign policy is not a BJP policy, but Modi's personally, without any overarching foreign policy framework. This is a disadvantage in a fractured and envy-riven BJP. Not all the state governments are on the same page as Modi in regard to economic reform and investor-friendly approaches. Too much power has been leached in the past to the judiciary, media and regulators, and ranged against Modi are mediocrity and worse, both in his party and the Opposition, bureaucratic inertia and lack of institutional capacity. Foreign policy is often declaratory, but to be effective it has to be supported by rigorous implementation. Modi has an agenda with the best chance of transforming India, but he has to achieve a change in attitude among the unresponsive bureaucracy. At the same time, the right-wing rhetoric and actions of some BJP stalwarts generate a toxic atmosphere of social disharmony. These factors are impossible to overcome without a dramatic change in mindset, led by the prime minister himself.

Modi is not the first world leader to find foreign fields more comfortable than the hurly-burly of a disorderly democracy at home; nor is he the first to have his efforts vitiated by domestic dissonance. The eminent political analyst, C. Raja Mohan has just published a book titled *Modi's World*. If Modi is subverted by these domestic obstacles, it will turn out not to be Modi's world but the world minus Modi's India, and the expectations aroused by the first months will be dissipated.

## LIBRARIES

INDIAN EXPRESS, AUG 29, 2015

### **L-G nod to Rs 3-cr fund to restore public library**

“The Hardayal library is an important signpost of our city’s history. We need to ensure that it is restored to its erstwhile glory,” said Jung.

In a meeting on Friday, Lieutenant Governor [Najeeb Jung](#) approved a Rs 3-crore grant for the restoration of the ailing Hardayal municipal public library in Chandni Chowk.

The meeting was attended by Commissioner (North corporation) representatives from the South and East corporations, the secretary and librarian and senior government officers.

“The Delhi Urban Heritage Foundation (DUHF) will look into the restoring the library’s outer and inner structure. A joint inspection shall be undertaken immediately to chart out the course to be taken and for removal of encroachments. Work shall also be undertaken to help digitise rare and old books in the library’s collection,” stated the Lt-Governor.

“The Hardayal library is an important signpost of our city’s history. We need to ensure that it is restored to its erstwhile glory,” said Jung.

Established in 1862, the library is more than 150 years old and is presumably the oldest one in Delhi. It has a collection of extremely rare and precious books, including books dating back to the 16th century.

It has a collection of more than 1,70,000 books in different languages, with 8,000 of these in the rare category section. It has 28 branches which are spread all across the three municipalities of Delhi.

## POLICE

INDIAN EXPRESS, AUG 24, 2015

### **Village of the faithful to get a police station, without doors and a lock-up**

Shani Shinganapur in Ahmednagar houses a shrine for Shani and has no doors on houses.

**ZEESHAN SHAIKH**

The pilgrimage town of Shani Shinganapur in Ahmednagar district, famous for its tradition of not installing doors in its houses, is finally getting a police station.

The new police station will be operational next month but like most of the structures in the village, it will be without doors and interestingly, without a lock-up as well.

The villagers who rely on the deity Shani to thwart possible thefts realised the need for a police station due to the burgeoning population and increasing instances of crime.

The village, located 265 kilometres West of Mumbai, houses one of India's most famous temples of Lord Shani. A five-and-a-half-foot long rock that represents Lord Shani is installed on an open-air platform, and the place of worship believed to be over 500 years old. In Hindu mythology, Shani is known as a well-wisher for the righteous as well as a punisher of evil.

On an average, 40,000 pilgrims visit the shrine every day and on Saturdays, the number swells to over a lakh.

Locals believe that Lord Shani keeps a mindful eye on the village. A generations-long practice has ensured that there are no doors in the village homes. Most of the houses have door frames sporting curtains to offer a measure of privacy. It is a local belief that

whoever steals from the village faces bad luck or “sade-saati”, as the villagers like to describe it.

However a burgeoning population which grew by nearly 30 per cent over the last decade and the growing number of pilgrims has made people realise the need for a police station.

“Earlier, there was no police station. Policemen from Sonai Police Station had jurisdiction over the village and would patrol the city,” Appasaheb Murkute, an activist from the village said.

However, of late, there have been instances of theft in the village.

With the Kumbh Mela starting in Nashik, lakhs of pilgrims are expected to roll into Shani Shinganapur as well.

Permission for setting up a police station was granted by the previous [Congress](#)-NCP government, but the work had not begun on the project. In anticipation of the burgeoning crowd during the Kumbh period, work on the police station is now being expedited. The station will have a 25-member staff.

“The Temple Trust has given its own land for setting up of the police station, which is necessary to maintain the security of the large number of people who come in to village. The station will, however, respect the traditions of this village and will be built accordingly,” Mohan Bankar, manager of the Shri Shaneshwar Devasthan Trust, said.

The station will not have a door or a conventional lock-up.



“Those who need to be detained or locked up can be detained at the Sonai police station, which is hardly five kms away. It may sound crazy but you cant go against the wishes of local people,” an officer at the Sonai Police Station said.

## POPULATION

HINDUSTAN TIMES, AUG 26, 2015

**Muslim population grows marginally faster: Census 2011 data**

**Aloke Tikku**

The share of Hindus in India's total population has shown a marginal decline between 2001 and 2011, while that of Muslims has increased slightly in the same period, according to census data on the country's religious profile released by the government on Tuesday.

Hindus now make up 79.8% of India, a slight decline of 0.7 percentage points, while Muslims, the largest minority, make up 14.2% of the country, up 0.8 percentage points.

While the Muslim share in population has increased, their 10-year growth rate has shown a sharp decline. In fact, the decadal growth rate of all communities has slowed down, suggesting a stabilising trend for fertility rates, the data showed.

The religion-based data was ready to be released in January 2014 but the then UPA government chose not to make it public ahead of the general elections that year. The NDA government's decision to make it public comes weeks before crucial assembly elections in Bihar.

Tuesday's release came after home minister Rajnath Singh's approval.

In absolute numbers, the country's Hindu population stands at 96.63 crore and Muslims at 17.22 crore. There are 2.78 crore Christians, 2.08 crore Sikhs and 0.45 crore Jains.

The share of Sikhs fell by 0.2 percentage points to 1.7% of the population in the 2001-11 decade, while Buddhists showed a decline of 0.1 percentage points to 0.7% of the population. There was no significant change in the proportion of Christians and Jains, who make up 2.3% and 0.4% of the population, respectively.

Muslims have historically witnessed a higher population growth rate than other major communities. But this rate has been on the decline for the past three decades. The Muslim

growth rate was 34.5% in the 1991 census, which slowed down to 29.5% in 2001 and furthermore to 24.6% in 2011.

<b>CENSUS 2011: RELIGIOUS PROFILE</b>			
India's population data based on religion, which was part of Census 2011, was released by the government on Tuesday			
	<b>Population in 2011 (cr)</b>	<b>Proportion of population in %</b>	<b>Decadal change in proportion in % pts</b>
Hindu	96.63	79.8	-0.7
Muslim	17.22	14.2	+0.8
Christian	2.78	2.3	No change
Sikh	2.08	1.7	-0.2
Buddhist	0.84	0.7	-0.1
Jain	0.45	0.4	No change
Others	0.79	0.7	-
Religion not stated	0.29	0.2	-

Earlier, the government used to provide religion-wise break-up of population data. The practice was discontinued in 2011 because of a controversy that followed the 2001 Census, which showed a relatively high growth of Muslim population primarily on account of the inclusion of Jammu and Kashmir. The comparison was skewed because the militancy-hit state was not covered in the headcount for 1991.

Data released on Tuesday show Assam and West Bengal witnessed the sharpest increase in the Muslim population during the 2001-2011 decade, a change that is being linked to the illegal migration from Bangladesh.

Gujarat is the only Indian state where the Muslim population has fallen. The census data showed a decline of 34% for Muslims whereas the percentage of Hindus increased by 18.5%.

Incidentally, Tuesday's statistics give the religious composition down to the sub-district level for all states but does not give any idea about the socio-economic status of various communities.

"In the absence of cross-tabulation of the religion data with, say, literacy, sex ratio and work participation, the debate around this census report would be very limited," a government official said.

<b>DECADAL POPULATION GROWTH RATE IN PERCENTAGE</b>			
	<b>1991</b>	<b>2001</b>	<b>2011</b>
Hindu	25.1	20.3	16.8
Muslim	34.5	29.5	24.6
Buddhist	35.3	24.5	6.1
Christian	21.5	22.6	15.5
Sikh	24.3	18.2	8.4
Jain	4.6	26	5.4

## **PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION**

BUSINESS STANDARD, AUG 24, 2015

### **Odisha to spend 2% of Plan Budget on e-governance**

Sources said, the total spending by the government departments for providing public services on electronic platform would be around Rs 800 crore annually

The Odisha government has made a resolution to spend two per cent of the Annual Plan budget of various departments for providing services to the citizens on the electronic platform.

"With the intention to utilize e-governance as a tool for bringing better transparency, responsiveness and accountability in governance, the government, after careful consideration, has decided that all government departments will earmark two per cent of their Annual Plan budget or one per cent of their overall budget (whichever is higher) for IT spending so as to provide services through the electronic mode", stated an IT department resolution. The decision to earmark funds is in line with the promise made in the state ICT (Information and Communication Technology) policy-2014. The policy says that the state government will introduce e-governance in every department so that the citizens will avail most of the government services locally without any hitches.

Sources said, the total spending by the government departments for providing public

services on electronic platform would be around Rs 800 crore annually.

As per the resolution, the departments are needed to publish their annual e-governance action plan, monthly e transactions and milestones containing details of investment planned in the IT infrastructure, application development, business process re-engineering, capacity building of the personnel at different levels that would make the department's e-governance initiatives sustainable.

## URBAN DEVELOPMENT

TRIBUNE, AUG 25, 2015

Sushma Ramachandran

### **Smart cities need smart policies**

Similar programme is required for villages to bridge the digital divide

EVER since the NDA came to power, the concept of smart cities has been highlighted and spoken about at many fora. The question is what precisely is a smart city? There seem to be many definitions, according to a search of the Internet. One is that it is a city equipped with basic infrastructure to give a decent quality of life, a clean and sustainable environment through application of some smart solutions. Another says a smart city uses digital technologies or information and communication technologies to enhance quality and performance of urban services, to reduce costs and resource consumption, and to engage more effectively and actively with its citizens. This is indeed a description of an ideal world, greatly to be desired by global citizens.

These idyllic smart cities are proposed to be set up at an enormous cost of Rs 50,000 crore according to the Urban Development Ministry. The goal is to create 100 smart cities with this huge outlay. One cannot deny that the urban landscape needs to be improved, both in major metros and smaller towns, but it must be recognised that it is this vast improvement in the quality of life in urban areas that has fuelled the current mass migration from rural to urban conglomerations. There is a stark contrast in basic facilities and infrastructure between rural and urban areas. The solution, of course, is not to stop improving urban facilities, but to ensure that rural areas get as much attention. It would be timely for us to recall a concept promoted by the late President, Dr APJ Abdul Kalam, called Providing Urban Amenities in Rural Areas (PURA). It was launched by the Rural Development Ministry over a decade ago, but the scheme seems to have languished despite a revised version having been initiated during the time of the UPA government.

This is the approach needed right now to upgrade infrastructure in the rural hinterland. That is, to provide the same amenities in the rural heartland as in metropolitan areas. In contrast, the policies being devised by the present government, including the ambitious smart cities plan, seem to be aimed only at those with access to information technology. The digital divide in the country is extremely large at this stage as has been made all too evident by the recently released socio-economic and caste census. This needs to be

bridged in the shortest possible time. So, along with the smart cities project, a smart villages programme needs to be launched simultaneously, if the digital divide is not to become a chasm.

A similar ambitious plan aiming more at urban than rural needs is the 'Housing for All'scheme. It seems to lack the much-needed focus on the requirements of the weaker sections of society. In such a housing plan it is critical to ensure the complexes have access to infrastructure like sewage and sanitation, clean drinking water, schools and health facilities. It is not yet clear whether this approach will be taken to ensure that quality of life is adequate in these mass housing schemes.

As for the housing shortfall, it is enormous as 60 million housing units are estimated to be needed for the entire population. This is expected to rise to 110 million units by 2022. The investment needed is \$2 trillion while land requirement is pegged at 1.7 to 2 lakh hectares just for urban areas. Under the new scheme, 20 million new houses are proposed to be set up over the next seven years. Besides, a central grant of roughly Rs 1 lakh per house will be provided for slum rehabilitation, apart from interest subvention of 6.5 per cent on housing loans for weaker sections.

A major issue that has not been addressed, however, is the need to include rental housing in the scheme. The mission was originally meant to cater for rental housing, but this element has been excluded. Media reports indicate that rental housing for the masses will be launched as a policy later, but apparently this does not entail allocation of funds, as is the case with the national housing mission. The urban rental housing component was meant, and rightly so, for the population of homeless and migrant workers. The availability of affordable rental housing is bound to help curb the creation of slums that have so far provided cheap housing to those who cannot afford to buy shelter. By limiting the housing scheme to ownership only, the government has effectively shut out the floating population of migrant workers who move from state to state, depending on the work availability during the year. This is a group that does not require a permanent dwelling and cannot afford it as well in the numerous places that it will be going to in the course of its search for casual employment. The net result is that construction workers and their families will continue to live on the rubble of half-built apartment complexes.

Both smart cities and the housing scheme need to be reconsidered and reworked so that the aspirations of those at the bottom of the pyramid are taken into account. The smart



city project envisages the creation of metropolitan areas, putting an elaborate system of e-governance in place. It would really be simpler and probably cheaper to direct municipal agencies to put all functions online, especially licensing and approvals which generate corruption. The recent decision of the AAP government in the Capital to eliminate the excise licence renewal system for alcohol vendors, replacing it with an annual fee, is a case in point. As for the housing scheme, it is certainly a commendable plan, but it needs to cater to all segments of society. The eminent economist, the late CK Prahlad, always highlighted the need to focus on the bottom of the pyramid. It is time for the government to do the same and ensure that the poorest of the poor, both in rural and urban areas, are given the same opportunities to upgrade the quality of their lives.

## WILDLIFE CONSERVATION

STATESMAN, AUG 23, 2015

**Ethnicity & Wildlife-I**

**Kisor Chaudhuri**

I was utterly confused while reading the report prepared by the committee appointed by the Government of India to review the Acts governing our environment. Many Constitutional experts, sociologists as well as ecologists believe that an assessment report of such complexity deserves extremely skilful handling by specialists. As if to prove the point, the naivety of TSR Subramaniam, a retired bureaucrat who headed the group, betrayed his ineptitude in handling a subject with which he and the team are unfamiliar.

In its preamble, the report concedes that the principal aim of environmental laws should be to ensure enhancement of environmental quality and maintenance of ecological balance. It contends that conservation management remains an interface of natural sciences with an awareness of the social science perspective. One wonders whether the report means what it states or whether it is just a jumble of words to confuse readers.

If undesirably, the recommendations of these 'experts' find their way then all existing conservation laws would be replaced by the all-encompassing Environmental Laws (Management) Act or ELMA to ensure "fast-track" access of industry into forest lands. The impact of industry on the geographical or social spheres will not be scrutinised by any government agency but by promoters who will be expected to give clearance. Aberrations, if any, will be dealt with solely under ELMA, while the existing appellate authorities dealing in environmental laws shall be stripped of all powers. The interests of industry will be safeguarded by re-alignments "through a series of structural and process-oriented changes".

Mr Subramaniam has spared the forests with 70 per cent canopy cover as "no-go" zones for industry, while the rest will be marketable. He should have known better, specifically that forests with 70 per cent crown density are usually treated as "no-go" zone by the majority of wild animals especially the mega fauna of our country. The reason being the trickle of sunlight that seeps through the closed canopy does not encourage proliferation of ground flora, the source of survival for grassland species - the prey for carnivores. Almost 85 per cent of India's vertebrate species survive in 40 per cent or even less forest cover. The same is true even for the tribals who live in forest areas. Indiscriminate access of industries to these habitats, as recommended by the Subramaniam committee, will result in considerable distress to tribals and wild animals.

While pursuing a lifetime concern for conservation of elephants, a grassland species, I have come across instances of failed governance arising out of knee-jerk forest management practices that have eventually resulted in loss of vast swathes of wildlife habitat. In Odisha, in the name of wildlife management within the Chandka Wildlife Sanctuary, traditional forest-settlers were uprooted and dumped in places that were not suitable for agriculture and without access to irrigation, drinking water etc. Such efforts ultimately encouraged the forest settlers to return to their original places. As a result, there have been recurrent conflicts with officials. In another part of this sanctuary, large areas were 'de-notified' to accommodate several industrial units. Elephants were unable to access the only perennial river in the vicinity because of three of these industries.

The British had designed appropriate strategies for the handling of this ethnographical issue of considerable importance. They realised that conflicts originate from efforts at integration of close-culture societies with dominant cultures and this prompted them to guarantee cultural autonomy for them. After a series of rebellions, several laws were enacted. The Ganjam and Vizagapatnam Act, 1839, was particularly significant. It was intended to remove entire hill tracts of the coastal province from the purview of general laws. The district collector was allowed to impart civil and criminal justice. The British introduced the Inner Line Regulation and the Scheduled District Act 1874. It was aimed at delineating specified 'zones' for tribals to facilitate an uninterrupted flow of life. Subsequently, however, this legislation was criticised as too 'isolationist' in nature. Ethnic boundaries, that were planned to offer protection against non-tribal land-grabbers, were slowly erased. The agents of market forces, money-lenders etc gradually dominated the rural scenario, aided and abetted by the expansionist state machinery of free India.

Verrier Ellwin, the last of the protagonists for tribal causes in India, played a major role in drafting the tribal policy that had, to a great extent, formed the foundation of the Nehruvian policy. Of the five provisions, two were relevant to the cause - i) tribal rights in land and forests should be respected; and ii) we should not over-administer these areas or overwhelm them with a multiplicity of schemes. We should rather work through their own social and cultural institutions. The other three provisions were essentially bureaucratic jargon.

Our present-day lawmakers, who are totally ignorant of the distribution geography and ways of life of the tribals, conveniently confuse ethnicity with nationality. It is quite irrelevant to them that the forests and mountainous regions of our country are the traditional moorings of these pre-literate societies where sinful intrusions by the state machinery provoke violent resistance from these otherwise timid people.

For the past six decades, India's planning regime reflected a passion for industrialisation at the cost of considerable administrative and legislative changes. In the net, the rural masses suffered further deprivation. The human response to state control over land resources has been extremely unpleasant. There have been frequent conflicts rooted in the denial of claims of the forest communities and forceful eviction from traditional habitats. This is true both for tribals as well as terrestrial biodiversity.

In Jharkhand, alienation of tribal communities from their land is not a recent phenomenon. Contrary to the truth, we are now asked to believe that tribal unrest in this region has been instigated by the Maoists who are, according to the previous Prime Minister, the "biggest threat to India's internal security" and hence, perfectly disposable. It would be useful to recall that in the face of tribal rebellions, the British had introduced a series of laws to curb the transfer of tribal land to non-tribals. The principal objective of these laws was to prevent alienation of tribal land, allow traditional self-governance and preservation of their unique culture.

However, these laws have been seriously violated since the day India attained independence. Tribals are once again demanding, often violently, immediate action against violation of the law that has resulted in the loss of over 22,00,000 acres of land (only in Jharkhand) since Independence. Alas, history never finds a place in the minds of modern-day planners.

The National Advisory Council, constituted by the Government of India, had sent a recommendation on 9 January 2005 to address the issue. The council suggested that there should be no displacement of tribals for any project (mining, energy or any other) in scheduled areas. The sacrosanct 'linear projects' had not been conceived by the planners. The Council also suggested that the Land Acquisition Act may be amended in line with the PESA Act, 1996, so that the rights of people are protected in Fifth Schedule areas. The setting up of industries in such zones, without assessing their impact on the tribal economy, should stop forthwith. No agricultural land or land used for community purposes may be allowed to be transferred or purchased to set up industry. At no cost should the laws of the Fifth and Sixth schedules of the Constitution be considered for amendment to open up areas of control or ownership to private non-tribal individuals, industries or institutions.

The British had identified the rural poor as the factor behind deforestation, soil degradation, groundwater depletion and decline of biodiversity. Unfortunately, such a

deplorable legacy was accepted by the rulers of modern India. Environmental laws were scripted without considering the ground realities. Sweeping changes in biological geography were brought about through changes in land use from agriculture to industry. This entailed the conversion of natural forests for commercial forestry. Among the first legislative changes in newly-independent India was the Zamindari (Landlord) Abolition Act in 1952 that was implemented in great haste. Without considering the consequences, the Board withdrew occupancy and subsistence rights of the forest dwellers and allowed three months to erstwhile zamindars to remove the trees that “lay on the floor”. Beyond this period, all standing trees would be treated as State property. Forest tracts were denuded. Even today, these homeless people or their descendants are forced to survive on the margins of life far away from their original hearth and home.

(To be concluded)

STATESMAN, AUG 24, 2015

### **Ethnicity & Wildlife-II**

**Kisor Chaudhuri**

The United Nations has tried to fathom the complex relationship between survival and use of resources in a global perspective. The World Commission on Environment and Development produced the document titled “Our Common Future”, generally referred to as the Brundtland Paper. The document dealt largely with the concept of sustainable development and anticipated that equitable resource management would form the basis of planning development strategies. It preached that a “new era of economic growth can be attained, one based on policies that sustain and expand the earth’s resource-base; and that progress that some have known over the last century can be experienced by all in the years to come”. The document was based on the assumption that progress has benefited “some” and its aims - enlarging the area for others - were noted with enthusiasm. Curiously enough, at one stage the document agreed to accept the fact that environmental stress has often resulted from the demands of high living standards of the affluent while, at a later stage, the author contradicted her earlier observations by failing to resist the temptation to blame the poor and hungry for destroying their immediate environment in order to survive. Once again prejudice of a citizen of the richer part of the world made its glaring presence felt. Even Ms Brundtland failed to conceal her elitist bias by overlooking ecological history.

While considering the threatening predictions of allowing industrialisation of open-canopy forests, I recalled some of my most memorable experiences in the wilderness of India. Twenty years ago, being a “wildlifer” was not as despicable a choice of profession as now. Questioning an irresponsible decision of the government did not incur the ruler’s

wrath as now. Suggestions on action that could mitigate the misery of the people and wild animals were not viewed from a political perspective.

My wife and I crossed the halfway mark of three kilometres in three hours to cover a gruelling track in order to reach Toya Ching, a hillock in the centre of Kaibul Lamjao wetlands in Manipur. We reached the only floating forest of the world to take a head-count of the sanghai or dancing deer (*Cervus eldi eldi*). The sanghai is known to be the world's most endangered species surviving in a constricted habitat of only 40 sq km.

It was the month of March, the dry season in the North-east when the floating clusters of vegetation mostly composed of *Sacharam munja* and *Diaseronia bulbifera* - food for the sanghai - were supposed to be settled below on the bottom of the lake during the entire rainless six-month period when the nutrition cycle is completed. More than three feet of water even in these months was the result of confinement of water by the Itahi Barrage, created to harness water to run turbines for the Loktak Hydel Power Station of NHPL. This project was designed to generate five times more power than the entire state's demand of 50-60 MW, which was secured from other sources.

Lack of awareness among forest officials as well as policy-planners in those early years of wildlife conservation produced several such examples of foolish initiatives capable of wiping off a critically endangered species from the earth. I don't see any difference even now. Consider a scenario where the new Act is allowed to operate in these wetlands where canopy density is almost zero. What will happen to the lions of Gir? Their habitat is in a semi-arid region where in larger areas tree cover is scanty. Will you permit establishment of industries within this only lion habitat of the nation?

Rawghat hills of Matla Reserve Forest in Bastar district of Chhattisgarh are the home for ethnically sensitive and furiously independent forest-dwelling Maria tribes, who are aggressively opposed to state efforts for cultural substitution by the ruling class since the mid-18th century. These dense jungle clad mountains carry a long inventory of endangered fauna along with several plant species listed in the Red Data book, while below its floors lie an enormous quantity of high grade iron ore. While making an Environmental Impact Assessment for this ore repository to be soon mined by the Steel Authority of India, I found the forest ecosystem to be 'unique' in several respects including higher productivity and low anthropogenic interventions. Diversity of species and other biological attributes confirm the compact ecosystem to be a cradle that can act as a gene pool reserve.

In 2006, I had suggested that the operating ore mines in Bailadilla lying only 70 km away from Rawghat could be a better option from where 21 million tons of ore are extracted every year. Here too, “profitability” to promoters was an impediment. The needs for conservation of this ecologically extremely sensitive forest should counteract the implications of a financial difference, and NMDC (Bailadila operators) and SAIL should be able to offset the difference through mutual consent.

Apart from SAIL, Esaar and Tatas are also queuing up for a share of the loot. I am not trying to promote the concept of “no industry”. I am only trying to suggest that planners must consider other available environment-friendly options that could address the problems for men and animals. On the other hand, industry must be allowed to flourish. As regards mining for coal, there are other environment-friendly options. Miners are aware of these options, but will not pursue them because they are less profitable to the promoters of industry. An example: in contrast to an open cast mine, that strips the forest-floor of all vegetation and displaces thousands of people, underground mining for coal allows the forests on the surface to remain untouched as coal is found in ‘seams’ that run underground for miles. Miners climb down the shaft to dig through the seams and keep vegetation and its dependents over-ground, intact. It is unfortunate that only the cost to the promoter is calculated while none bothers to ascertain the cost to society through the removal of forests, drying of river sources and the frightening level of environment pollution that is caused by open cast mines.

Way back in 2002, the United Nations Working Group on Indigenous Peoples met in Geneva and reiterated the fact “that the traditions of indigenous people in the Chhotanagpur Plateau remains threatened from North Karanpura Coalfield Project. These proposed mines will completely destroy the hundreds of villages and displace their population, replacing them with vast open pits hundreds of feet deep and several miles across. In post-independence India coal and iron ore mines have displaced over 30 million tribals only in Jharkhand. The dignity and pride of these once-proud forest people (with whom I spent two decades of the most rewarding period of my life) has been inhumanly abused by the lenders of the First World countries who are still greedily eyeing these forests as target for ever greater lending opportunity”.

The link between conservation science and industrialisation has traditionally remained a dominant feature of discourse and an area of dissent between users of wildlife habitats and those who seek wealth. One hopes that T S R Subramaniam and the present rulers will realise that conservation and development can be matched to assure better quality of life to all inhabitants. It is time we understand the true meaning of conservation and

ensure a habitable earth to the generations to come. Why organise a pan-India session to weigh the evils and virtues of promoting the nuclear power option for this vast country with the potential for phenomenal growth in the demand for clean energy.



## WOMEN

DECCAN HERALD, AUG 25, 2015

### **Gender equity must define police force**

A Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative report has drawn attention to the deep prejudice against women in the police forces of South Asian countries. The report explored the situation of women in the police forces of Bangladesh, India, Maldives and Pakistan in 2014-15, and found that the Maldivian police force was the most inclusive with 7.4 per cent of its police personnel comprising women. Women accounted for just 6.1 per cent of the police force in India, 4.6 per cent in Bangladesh and an abysmal 0.9 per cent in Pakistan, the study found. Of the states and Union Territories in India that were surveyed, Chandigarh fared the best with women accounting for 14.16 per cent of its police force and Assam the worst with 0.9 per cent. Besides their small numbers, women cops are perceived as less tough and unwilling to work. This perception appears to be the outcome of negative stereotypes of women, rather than based on their performance at work. While a male cop in an inebriated state at work doesn't raise eyebrows, and may even prompt a chuckle, a women cop who asks for leave is accused of being disinterested in her work, as having other priorities and so on. There is discrimination in the kind of work allotted too. Generally, women are restricted to woman-related tasks such as policing other women or accompanying women detainees to court. Even the infrastructure available in a police station is hostile to women; most police stations do not have a separate toilet for women.

That India's police force is overwhelmingly male is well-known. That it is so despite the Union Home Ministry issuing an advisory to the states and Union Territories five years ago calling on them to ensure that women constitute 33 per cent of their police forces indicates the intensity of resistance to including women. While such resistance is evident in all professions, it is stronger in law enforcement agencies and security forces that are widely seen as 'tough' jobs that are best done by men. Underlying the perception of the unsuitability of women for these jobs is misperception of women as weak. All police personnel, men and women, need to be put through gender sensitisation programmes. More women must be recruited across ranks and they need to be assigned not just to policing women but appointed to decision and policy formulating positions as well. India's police are often criticised for their crude, insensitive and often tactless conduct. That could change if gender equity defined our police force.