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CIVIL SERVICE

FINANCIAL EXPRESS, JUL 28, 2016

7th Pay Commission: Grade inflation would ensure even bad babus get salary hikes

That would ensure even bad babus get pay hikes

Though the IIM-Ahmedabad study for the Seventh Pay Commission (SPC) made it clear that government employees are much better paid than their private counterparts at the lower levels—with guaranteed, and rising pensions, even salaries at the top level are not as bad as earlier—the fact that around a crore persons were involved ensured SPC had to clear a generous hike anyway. What it did do, though, was to try and bring in some efficiency-related benchmarks, and the government has accepted these. So, SPC asked the government to withhold the annual increments of employees who didn't meet “the benchmark either for Modified Assured Career Progression (MACP) or a regular promotion within the first 20 years of their service”. “There is a widespread perception”, it said, “that increments as well as upward movement in the hierarchy happen as a matter of course ... employees who do not meet the laid down performance criterion should not be allowed to earn future annual increments”. In the event, the government has accepted SPC's recommendation that those getting a 'good' rank would no longer get promoted, but only those who get 'very good' should be considered.

What the government now needs to ensure is that government employees don't start benefitting from grade-inflation—over the years, as can be seen from the marks of students who pass out of school, the average marks seem to be getting higher, which is why you have near 100% marks required to get admission in most top colleges today. If, thanks to the new criterion, even ordinary government employees now get marked 'very good', that defeats the purpose of the SPC recommendations. Indeed, the government needs to be tightening its grading criterion and ensuring that only deserving candidates get annual promotions. It is inconceivable, for instance, that the quality of learning is getting worse in schools—as can be seen from annual ASER

reports—if the quality of the teachers is not also going down. If the number of tax disputes and the tax cases being lost in courts is rising, similarly, it is not possible that the quality of tax personnel is rising. Some serious thought needs to be paid to grading government employees.

TIMES OF INDIA, JUL 30, 2016

Recruitment commission for group ‘C’, ‘D’ posts in pipeline

PANAJI: The state cabinet, on Friday, approved the [Goa Staff Selection Commission Bill 2016](#), to conduct recruitment for group 'C' and 'D' posts for government departments. The bill will be introduced in the ongoing monsoon session.

The commission will be constituted to conduct examinations and select candidates for posts in government departments, organizations, autonomous bodies established by the government, and semi-government organizations. It will be headed by a chairperson and comprise two members. Financial implications will be to the tune of 5 crore.

In the bill, the government stated that the chairperson of the commission should be a retired officer from the [Indian Administrative Service](#) (IAS) or the [Goa Civil Service](#), while the two members should be retired officers of the government, government-aided institutions or semi-government organizations.

Around 200 job categories come under groups 'C' and 'D', including upper division clerk, lower division clerk, peon, sweeper, driver, pump operator and gardener. the commission would be headed by a chairperson and two members.

Presently, every department issues individual advertisements to fill vacancies.

DECCAN HERALD, JUL 29, 2016

Jaitley snaps at I-T officials for protest

Finance Minister Arun Jaitley has taken serious note of a resolution by officers of the Indian Revenue Service (Income Tax), Mumbai branch, against the Department of Revenue (DoR). Tax officials have charged that there is interference from the DoR in their day-to-day activities.

“The finance minister has taken a serious view of such a resolution by officers of the organised Group ‘A’ service to advise the government on what role it should play. This is an act of insubordination. Officers indulging in acts of indiscipline would be subject to conduct rules,” a statement issued by the ministry said.

According to media reports, the officials, in their resolution, have said that the DoR’s interference in “operational matters” have “hurt the morale” of several officials in the income tax department.

The officers have also spoken about severe differences with Revenue Secretary Hasmukh Adhia’s views aired during the weekly video conference he conducts with officials.

Adhia, a Gujarat cadre IAS officer, is considered to be close to Prime Minister Narendra Modi. The all-powerful bureaucrat, who worked closely with Modi when he was the Gujarat chief minister, was brought to Delhi only in November 2014 and was made secretary, Financial Services.

He was subsequently moved to the DoR apparently to firm up measures that can enhance tax revenues for the government. Every Saturday, Adhia has a meeting of senior tax officials via video conferencing and is said to be “stern” with those not performing according to “set parameters”.

The tax officials, through the resolution, had sought to draw the attention of the prime minister and the finance minister to the functioning of the DoR. The finance ministry, however, appeared to have approved the functioning of the DoR and said, “No department of the government has absolute autonomy. It has to serve the larger goal of the government. The supervisory powers of the next higher authority ensures that there is no misuse of power by anyone in the government,” the statement said.

INDIAN EXPRESS, JUL 27, 2016

7th Pay Commission: Finance Ministry notifies pay rise; accepts to withhold hikes for below-par performance

7th Pay Commission: Notifying a 2.57-time hike in basic salary, the Centre accepted pay panel's suggestion to withhold increments of employees whose performance is not up to the mark.

The finance ministry on Monday notified higher salaries for Central government employees in line with the 7th Pay Commission's recommendation — a move that will benefit nearly 1 crore staffers and pensioners, and cost the exchequer an additional Rs 1.02 lakh crore annually.

While notifying a 2.57-time hike in basic salary, the Centre also accepted pay panel's suggestion to withhold annual increment of employees whose performance is not up to the mark. The recommendation of "withholding of annual increments in the case of those employees who are not able to meet the benchmark either for MACP (Minimum Assured Career Progression) or a regular promotion within the first 20 years of their service" has been "accepted", it said.

The pay panel had in its report to the Centre said that there is a widespread perception that increments as well as upward movement in the hierarchy happen as a matter of course. The MACP scheme will continue to be administered at 10, 20 and 30 years of service as before, while the benchmark for performance appraisal for promotion and financial upgradation has been enhanced to "very good" from "good" level.

The entry level pay has been raised to Rs 18,000 per month from current Rs 7,000 with effect from January 1, 2016, while the maximum pay, drawn by the Cabinet Secretary, has been fixed at Rs 2.5 lakh per month from current Rs 90,000. The notification provided for a consolidated monthly pay package of Rs 4.5 lakh for chairpersons of sector regulators and Rs 4 lakh for their members.

These included Telecom Regulatory Authority of India, Central Electricity Regulatory Commission, Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority, Securities and Exchange Board of

India, Competition Commission of India, Pension Fund Regulatory and Development Authority, Petroleum and Natural Gas Regulatory Board, Warehousing Development and Regulatory Authority, and Airports Economic Regulatory Authority of India.

There shall be two dates for grant of increment — January 1 and July 1 every year — instead of the existing July 1 only. Employees will be entitled to only one annual increment on either of these two dates depending on the date of appointment, promotion or grant of financial upgradation, it said.

The Union Cabinet had last month accepted the recommendation of Justice A K Mathur headed panel in respect of the hike in basic pay and pension but a decision on its suggestions relating to allowances has been referred to a committee headed by finance secretary.

The Pay Commission had recommended abolition of 53 out of 196 allowances that the government employees currently get and moderation in several others.

“Till a final decision on allowances is taken based on the recommendations of this Committee, all allowances will continue to be paid at existing rates in existing pay structure, as if the pay had not been revised with effect from January 1, 2016,” it said.

The recommendations cover 47 lakh Central government employees and 53 lakh pensioners. This includes 14 lakh serving employees and 18 lakh pensioners in defence forces. “The recommendations on allowances (except dearness allowance) will be referred to a committee comprising finance secretary and secretary (expenditure) as chairman and secretaries of home

affairs, defence, health and family welfare, personnel and training, posts and chairman, railway board as members,” the notification said. The Committee will submit its report within four months.

TRIBUNE, JUL 28, 2016

Appraisal of civil servants: Political loyalty determines ‘performance’

Given the fiscal impact of implementing the Seventh Pay Commission, the extra money being spent on the bureaucracy must be accounted for. One cannot expect civil “masters” to start behaving like “servants” overnight, but some pressure may be for their own good in pulling them out of the laid-back mould. The pay commission and the government seem to have very high hopes from them. It is said “non-performing” employees will be denied the annual increment. Maybe a small number of powerless, “unconnected” employees still depend on increments for their well-being. Most don’t work for, or look forward to, increments.

Calling for a paradigm shift, the pay commission has said “civil servants today need to be focused on outcomes, not processes, and have to be more accountable for delivery. They have to be agents of change...” They can either work for change or do what the political leadership wants them to do. Who wants change? Civil servants happily carry out the biddings of their political masters and enjoy benefits flowing from obsequious compliance. Babus’ fate is often ‘linked’ with politicians in power. During the recent appraisal of the Modi government only a handful of ministries — Power, Foreign Affairs, Railways and Transport etc — got a good ranking; it does not mean bureaucrats in the non-performing ministries do not work.

The steel frame was expected to stay apolitical but in practice civil servants can be easily identified with the parties and politicians they work for so much so that sometimes it becomes difficult to pin the blame for a glaring lapse. When administrative machinery collapsed in Haryana during the Jat agitation in February this year, the lowliest district-level officials got the blame. They did not know in the battle for survival their own would turn against them. That is the way the system works. Few understand it better than Punjab’s bureaucrats who know how to use politicians to their advantage in getting post-retirement assignments. Far from being “agents of change”, they are the status-quoist. The system suits them. For change, PV Narasimha Rao brought in outside talent in 1991; today the leftist CM of Kerala has hired a Harvard Professor.

[ECONOMIC TIMES, JUL 27, 2016](#)

Not appropriate to compare seventh pay panel with previous ones: Government

NEW DELHI: The government today said it is "not appropriate" to compare the increase in minimum pay suggested by the 7th Central Pay Commission with that of the previous commissions. According to the 7th Pay Commission, the real increase given in 1996 and 2006 in minimum pay was 31 per cent and 51 per cent. As compared to that, the commission recommended an increase of 14.29 per cent. "The 7th Central Pay Commission has worked out its recommendations on pay based on all relevant factors having a bearing on the prevailing circumstances and, therefore, viewing the increase on this occasion in the light of the circumstances obtaining 10 and 20 years ago is not appropriate," Minister of State for Finance Arjun Ram Meghwal said in a written reply to the Rajya Sabha. He further said that the ratio between the minimum pay of Rs 18,000 per month and pay of Rs 2,25,000 per month in the apex grade works out to be 1:12.5. "In order to enhance the income of other categories of workers, both central and state governments are required to fix, review and revise the minimum wages of the workers employed in scheduled employment under their respective jurisdictions at an interval not exceeding five years. "The minimum rate of wages are also applicable for the workers engaged on contract basis," he said while replying to another question. The pay commission, he added, recommends changes regarding the principles governing the emoluments structure of central government employees and allied services. Meanwhile, the government today notified the recommendations of the Pay Commission, which will be effective January 1.

[ECONOMIC TIMES, JUL 27, 2016](#)

Government raises appraisal benchmark for hikes and promotions to 'very good' from 'good'

NEW DELHI: The government has prescribed a stiffer benchmark for annual increments for its employee and approved a provision to withhold benefits if performance is not up to mark after first 20 years of service while notifying the Seventh Pay Commission award, which lifts lowest level salary to Rs 18,000 a month from Rs 7,000. The benchmark for performance appraisal for promotion and financial upgradation has been raised to 'very good' from 'good' under the Modified Assured Career Progression (MACP) scheme, putting pressure on employees to better their performance. This follows as strong recommendation from the Pay Commission that had even suggested more stringent criteria such as clearing of departmental examinations or

mandatory training before grant of MACP. "The commission recommends that this benchmark, in the interest of improving performance level, be enhanced from 'good' to 'very good', the commission had said in its report. The government has also accepted the Pay Commission's proposal of withholding annual increments in the case of those employees who are not able to meet the benchmark either for the Modified Assured Career Progression (MACP) or a regular promotion within first 20 years of service. "There is a widespread perception that increments as well as upward movement in the hierarchy happen as a matter of course," the commission had said while suggesting this measure as a "deterrent for complacent and inefficient employees". "The perception is that grant of MACP, although subject to the employee attaining the laid down threshold of performance, is taken for granted. This commission believes that employees who do not meet the laid down performance criterion should not be allowed to earn future annual increments," it said. The MACP scheme will continue to be administered at 10, 20 and 30 years of service as before. Under the revised scheme, the highest cabinet secretary level salary will rise to Rs 2.5 lakh a month from Rs 90,000. In actual terms, the increase is not that steep as it subsumes 125 per cent dearness allowance that was rolled into the salary along with the Pay Commission increase. The proposals will benefit over 47 lakh central government employees and 53 lakh pensioners. The government has deferred a decision on allowances, giving it some wiggle room in the current financial year. The impact will be less than Rs 1.02 lakh crore because of delay in roll out of allowances. "The recommendations on allowances (except dearness allowance) will be referred to a committee comprising finance secretary and secretary (expenditure) as chairman and secretaries of home affairs, defence, health and family welfare, personnel and training, posts and chairman, Railway Board as members," the notification said. The committee will submit its report in four months. Package for regulators The chairpersons of key regulatory bodies will get a consolidated pay package of Rs 4.5 lakh a month. These include Trai, Sebi, IRDA, among others

[ECONOMIC TIMES, JUL 27, 2016](#)

Haryana makes LED mandatory in government buildings

CHANDIGARH: Haryana government has made it mandatory for all central and state government offices, public sector undertakings, institutions and establishments in the state to use LED (light emitting diode) lamps. The directive also applies to electricity consumers in industrial,

commercial and institutional sectors having connected load of 30 kilowatt or more. The decision will save 380 MW of power, said Ankur Gupta, principal secretary, renewable energy. Gupta said there is potential for 2560% energy saving if LED lighting systems are used in place of T5 lights or CFLs. The figure would be higher if incandescent bulbs or ordinary tube lights are replaced with LED lights, he said, adding that LED lamps have the advantage of having a longer life, being nontoxic unlike fluorescent lighting that uses mercury. The principal secretary said all defective conventional bulbs, conventional tube lights, CFLs and T5 tube lights in central and state government offices and PSU institutions, would be replaced only by LED lamps or tube lights or other energy efficient lighting systems. However, the industrial, commercial and institutional sectors having connected load of 30 kilowatt or above would have to replace all conventional bulbs, conventional tube lights, CFLs and T5 tube lights in their establishments with LED lamps or tube lights or energy efficient lighting systems at their own cost within one year. He said the state government has also banned purchase of new sodium vapour lamps and lights having efficiency less than that of sodium vapour lamps by government sector or government aided sectors or boards and corporation or autonomous bodies in the state. He said in sectors under Haryana Urban Development Authority (HUDA), municipal areas, areas developed by Haryana State Industrial and Infrastructure Development Corporation (HSIIDC) or the industries department, the installation of automatic switching system—either solar based or timer based—for dusk to dawn operation has been made mandatory. It is for existing as well as new street lighting rows where a common switch for more than 25 lights are required.

[ECONOMIC TIMES, JUL 27, 2016](#)

7th CPC: Govt to set up anomalies committees

NEW DELHI: The Centre will set up anomalies committees to examine individual, post and cadrespecific anomalies arising out of implementation of the recommendations of seventh Central Pay Commission. The Department of Personnel and Training (DoPT) has been authorised to take action regarding pay and related issues concerning officers of all India services Indian Administrative Service (IAS), Indian Police Service (IPS) and Indian Forest Service (IFoS). "Anomalies committees will be set up by Department of Personnel and Training to examine individual, postspecific and cadrespecific anomalies arising out of implementation of the recommendations of the Commission," the Finance Ministry said in an order notifying

implementation of the pay panel's recommendations. The threemember Seventh Central Pay Commission, which had submitted its report on November 19, 2015, was divided over the issue of financial and careerrelated edge given to IAS officers as against those belonging to the other services. IAS officers presently get a twoyear edge over other services for getting empanelled to come on deputation at the Centre. Besides, they also get two additional increments at the rate of 3 per cent over their basic pay at three promotion stages i.e., promotion to the Senior Time Scale (STS), to the Junior Administrative Grade (JAG) and to the NonFunctional Selection Grade (NFSG) after putting in about four, eight and 13 years of service, respectively. A confederation representing thousands of officers of 20 civil services, including the IPS, have been demanding pay parity and other benefits enjoyed by IAS officers. "Regarding pay and related issues concerning all India services, appropriate action will be taken by Department of Pers

[ECONOMIC TIMES, JUL 27, 2016](#)

SC representation in state government services inadequate: report

NEW DELHI: Chhattisgarh is the only state which is providing adequate reservation to Scheduled Castes in government jobs, statistics compiled by National Commission for Scheduled Castes (NCSC) have revealed. The report shows the Scheduled Castes representation in state government services is inadequate and is showing a decreasing trend over the years in almost all other states. Chhattisgarh, which provides 12.82 per cent reservation for Scheduled Castes, finishes on top of the chart giving representation to Dalits in all cadres posts. The NCSC report reveals that the state is showing an increasing trend with more number of Dalits occupying government posts compared to last year. Bihar and West Bengal, according to the report, finish at the other end of the spectrum with representation of SCs much below the expected percentage of reservation. Though data provided by Bihar is incomplete, the report observes that there is a shortfall of SC representation across cadres in the range of 2 to 8 per cent. West Bengal, which provides 23 per cent reservation for SCs, shows a shortfall of 1 to 10 per cent across different groups. The report observes there is no improvement of shortfall over the last one year in the state. "There is a shortfall of SC representation in the cadre of Group A, B, C and D, approximately 10 per cent, 8 per cent, 2 per cent and 1 per cent respectively as per prescribed percentage of reservation for SCs in the state," report says. Other states that have inadequate

representation of SCs in government services include Haryana, Madhya Pradesh, Karnataka, Odisha, Himachal Pradesh, Rajasthan, Telangana, Punjab, Tamil Nadu and Uttar Pradesh.

[ECONOMIC TIMES, JUL 27, 2016](#)

No annual increment for nonperforming employees: Government

NEW DELHI: Nonperforming Central government employees will not get annual increment if their performance is not upto the mark, the Centre has said. The benchmark for performance appraisal for promotion and financial upgradation has been enhanced to "very good" from "good" level, the Finance Ministry said in an order notifying implementation of Seventh Central Pay Commission's recommendations. The Modified Assured Career Progression (MACP) scheme will continue to be administered at 10, 20 and 30 years of service as before, the Ministry said as it "accepted" the pay panel's recommendations. The recommendation of "withholding of annual increments in the case of those employees who are not able to meet the benchmark either for MACP or a regular promotion within the first 20 years of their service" has been "accepted", it said. The pay panel had in its report to the Centre said that there is a widespread perception that increments as well as upward movement in the hierarchy happen as a matter of course. "The perception is that grant of MACP, although subject to the employee attaining the laid down threshold of performance, is taken for granted. This Commission believes that employees who do not meet the laid down performance criterion should not be allowed to earn future annual increments. "The Commission is therefore proposing withholding of annual increments in the case of those employees who are not able to meet the benchmark either for MACP or a regular promotion within the first 20 years of their service. This will act as a deterrent for complacent and inefficient employees," it had said. There are about 50 lakh Central government employees.

DEFENCE, NATIONAL

STATESMAN, JUL 26, 2016

Indian polity must trust armed forces

Harsha Kakar

The attempted coup in Turkey last week would have impacted democratic nations with large militaries. While India has been immune and secure, its neighbourhood has witnessed regular military takeovers. Pakistan has been ruled by the military for over half of its existence. Graffiti on the walls of Karachi during the premiership of Benazir Bhutto stated, "Sorry for the interruption, military rule will be back shortly". The military still rules from the back seat and all important decisions are taken in Rawalpindi, rather than Islamabad. The army chief even calls cabinet meetings in Rawalpindi, rather than attending them in Islamabad. Myanmar is still under army control, though a civilian government has been established. Complete transfer of power and true democracy is still a distant dream. Bangladesh has also experienced a military takeover but presently the military remains in the back seat.

The fear of a military coup in India has existed since independence. Nehru fearing such an attempt removed the post of the Commander-in-Chief of the military and appointed individual service chiefs. At regular stages in Indian history there were similar rumours, however each time false. The government moved the military out of the government machinery by making service HQs as attached offices while simultaneously continuing to degrade the standing and importance of the military. The move of two army units, during the tenure of General VK Singh, was the latest in coup rumours. The government raised Central Police Forces, directly under the home ministry while keeping the military at arm's length.

Even the Subrahmanyam Committee report, post Kargil, was accepted in part. The appointment of a Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) was ignored only on the ground that a single entity, commanding the military, could be a source of threat. This continued fear in the minds of the polity has impacted management of defence, especially at a time when the military needs a joint approach to multiple challenges facing national security.

Lessons from Turkey may help stem the fear in the minds of the politicians. The first lesson is that a coup can never occur unless the public desires it. It implies a situation of complete failure in governance and national economy. The arrival of people on the roads can prevent the movement of even heavy equipment and forces. The famous photograph from China of an individual who stopped a column of tanks being moved to crush the Tiananmen Square agitation would remain etched in memory. Similarly, in Turkey the public stood and blocked movement of armoured vehicles on the roads. Popular support is essential for a coup to succeed.

Secondly, other central police forces have to be a part of the military or under military control. The police in Turkey was never a part, though a number of police officers are also being purged. They were against the coup planners, hence denied them a free run. In India, all central forces (BSF, CRPF, ITBP, CISF, SSB etc), numerically greater than the military, function under the Home Ministry and hence would never support any such attempt. Similarly, state police forces function under the state and have no connection with the military. In Pakistan, the Janbaaz and Rangers, the two major para military forces are directly under the army. The police too function under them, as the army handles security. Thirdly, the nation has to be controllable. To do so, the military has to have its presence across the length and breadth of the country. This did not exist in Turkey. The same is the state in India. It is too large a nation for the military to even attempt a takeover and control simultaneously. With a large part of the military deployed along the border, as also on counter insurgency tasks, there is limited availability of forces. With other security forces not being on the same wave length, India has the remotest chances of a coup. On the other hand, in Pakistan the military is spread across the length and breadth and controls all major cities and allied services.

Fourthly, for any attempt to even be partially successful, the coup leaders need to control media and communication centres. Considering the spread across the country, this was neither possible in modern Turkey nor would it be possible in India. Coordination and cooperation is another aspect. The coup planners in Turkey could never get the support of the entire military establishment. Even if one man on the top in India desires such an action, he would need the support of a number of subordinate commanders, something well nigh impossible in our context. In Pakistan the military controls the state and central forces, even when it is in the back seat driving mode. Their 111 Infantry Brigade is designated the coup brigade and its commander is always the Chief's own man. Ironically, it is responsible for the protection of the president and the prime minister.

Most importantly, there is no tradition nor even the remotest perception of such an action in India. The sacking of a service chief, the resignation of another and the supersession of a vice chief to an army chief's appointment never impacted the military. The voices that were raised were from veterans and well-wishers of the military, not those in service. Though the government decision was questionable, as it sent a wrong message, it was accepted as it was in a democracy. Therefore, the government needs to overcome this fear and seriously consider reforms which can truly change the concept of management of defence. It needs to look at the military with more positivity and involve it in discussions concerning international relations and national security. It should support the military by enhancing its status, equating it with other central services, inducting the CDS and closing the gap between the political leaders and strategic military decision makers. A nation which trusts and supports its soldiers will always be a proud and strong nation.

ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

HINDU, JUL 28, 2016

India still needs to go the distance

N.K. SINGH

MILESTONE:“Twenty-five years of India’s reforms cover at least three more periods beyond the Manmohan-Rao era.” Picture shows a stretch of NH45 in Tamil Nadu, part of the Golden Quadrilateral. —PHOTO: BIJOY GHOSH

N.K. Singh

Macroeconomic compulsions and preconditions of multilateral institutions triggered the first wave of reforms in the '90s. The onus is now on Narendra Modi to finish the unfinished agenda

Analysing 25 years of India’s reforms presents an enigma. Why was India such a latecomer to embracing economic changes? If the Asian Tigers had course-corrected earlier and China commenced significant changes in 1974, why did we wait till 1991?

In seeking an explanation, I came across an interesting comment in I.G Patel’s book, India still needs to go the distance. In this he describes how the U.S. and multilateral institutions, particularly the International Monetary Fund (IMF), succeeded in persuading Indira Gandhi to undertake what was distinctly an unpopular devaluation decision on June 6, 1966. There were many important promises which had been made by way of enhanced economic assistance programmes and significant structural adjustment loans from the World Bank. These never materialised. Dr. Patel says in his book: “The much advertised non-project assistance of a billion dollars did not materialize and there was the usual wrangling about projects and denial by delaying. The hoped-for liberalization of imports could not be attempted, with the result that there was no spurt on growth from greater utilization of capacity... President [Lyndon] Johnson’s ‘ship-to-mouth’ policy on food aid created considerable resentment. All this created a climate for despair for Mrs Gandhi, her first test of popular disenchantment.”

It is a matter of conjecture if India would have embarked on an altered strategy had the promises been kept, but this was a watershed moment in many ways. Indira Gandhi never trusted the West again and instead moved towards an even more regulated economy by way of nationalising banks, populist measures like abolishing privy purses and managing agency houses.

It was much later that Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee took the major initiative of building a strategic economic and political partnership with the U.S. The disintegration of the Soviet Empire had anyway circumscribed options in a transition to the altered economic considerations.

The steady slide

Recourse to borrowings from the IMF was not new to India. We had borrowed over SDR 500 million in the seventies and around \$5.8 billion in the eighties. However, during the period of

Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi, recourse was taken to substantial borrowing to support development programmes, prompted in no small measure by S. Venkitaramanan, earlier Power Secretary and later Finance Secretary. It is another matter that these very problems gave him sleepless nights when somewhat later as Governor of the Reserve Bank he was forced to arrange short-term liquidity accommodation for preventing debt default almost on a day-to-day basis. The immediate impact of the extended borrowings of the eighties was a significant deterioration in our macro fundamentals. The fiscal deficit crept up (from 8 per cent in 1984-85 to 10.4 per cent in 1991) with a yawning Current Account Deficit (3.1 per cent of GDP), the Soviet Union broke up, the Gulf War broke out and there was a sharp fall in inward remittances — which became the more proximate reasons for the balance of payments crisis which surfaced during the period of Prime Minister Chandra Shekhar with Yashwant Sinha as Finance Minister. Earlier borrowings by Madhu Dandavate of \$550 million (from the IMF in September 1990) during Prime Minister V.P. Singh's time proved inadequate to stem the deterioration.

Given political uncertainties, members of the Aid India Consortium and the IMF had hesitation in making deeper commitments. Many of the deeper commitments sought by multilateral entities were contained in the Budget which never got presented by Mr. Sinha in March 1991. In substance, many of the changes were no different from the Budget presented by Manmohan Singh on July 24, 1991. Mr. Sinha, in a recent interview, attributed this to the common authorship of the then Chief Economic Adviser Deepak Nayyar. This perhaps is a somewhat simplistic explanation; the deeper one is that these changes were necessitated by the macro compulsions but more importantly by the preconditions sought by the IMF and the World Bank for additional financial accommodation for the upper credit tranche and the structural adjustment loan respectively.

This also addresses somewhat the oft-repeated question on whether the economic reforms of 1991 were an act of choice or a *fait accompli* because of the compulsions of the time.

It is important to recognise that the far-reaching changes of 1991 were embedded in strong bipartisan support. Dr. Singh had the fullest support of Prime Minister P.V. Narasimha Rao, who sagaciously kept major Opposition leaders — particularly Mr. Vajpayee and L.K. Advani — in the loop on the proposed changes.

The reforms continuum

Twenty-five years of India's reforms cover at least three more periods beyond the Manmohan-Rao era. During the period of Prime Minister H.D. Deve Gowda with P. Chidambaram as Finance Minister, far-reaching changes were introduced in India's tax regime. As Revenue Secretary at that time, I had accompanied Mr. Chidambaram for discussions with the Prime Minister with multiple tax options, the most audacious of which was the recalibration of income tax rates to the three slabs of 10 per cent, 20 per cent, 30 per cent for rationalising tax rates and ushering in a culture of compliance. The tax reforms of 1997 have endured the test of time. The audacious Voluntary Disclosure of Income Scheme, notwithstanding questions of morality raised by the Supreme Court and others, widened the tax net and secured idle wealth into the economic mainstream.

The Vajpayee era, which followed the Deve Gowda and I.K. Gujral governments, unleashed in many ways India's comparative factor advantages. This was especially so in telecom, which Mr. Vajpayee perceived even then to be the single biggest catalyst in our reforms story, but was equally true of his Golden Quadrilateral project. The highways project, coupled with the Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana and the commencement of the Delhi Metro, was early recognition of the fact that for a country of this complexity, connectivity was necessary to trigger and support other growth initiatives. Much later, virtuous circles have sought to be built around both these initiatives. One day Mr. Vajpayee had asked me for the creation of wider consultative mechanisms to reach multiple stakeholders. The constitution of the Prime Minister's Economic Advisory Council and the Council on Trade and Industry enabled the Prime Minister to seek domain advice and interact directly with potential investors.

Unfinished agenda

Regrettably, the 10 years of United Progressive Alliance rule were a classic example of the old Manmohan maxim that "governments must first survive before they can reform".

History has cast on Prime Minister Narendra Modi the obligation to both finish the unfinished agenda in multiple directions and also to make the reforms process employment-centric, undertake changes in agriculture untouched by the earlier reforms and improve the quality of governance based on technology. The Aadhaar platform, rural empowerment and wealth creation through Jan-Dhan Yojana and improving the quality of project monitoring and implementation can prove decisive. India has been a latecomer but traversed a credible distance. Mr. Modi realises that global considerations, both economic and political, are more favourable than ever before.

To the rhetorical question of whether India only acts in a crisis, a rational answer must necessarily be in the negative. India needs to act by consensus but more forcefully than ever before. Maximising its human development skills when technology is increasingly labour-displacing needs innovative solutions. Skills must be matched with emerging demands. Technology must be used to improve quality of life and create different patterns of gainful economic activity. This will be the unfolding drama of the next decade of our reforms. It is for good reasons that Mr. Modi is in a hurry to make the next decade of reforms truly transformative.

N.K. Singh is the chairman of the Fiscal Responsibility and Budget Management Review Committee and a former Rajya Sabha MP.

It is important to recognise that the changes of 1991 were embedded in strong bipartisan support. Major Opposition leaders were kept in the loop

HINDU, JUL 25, 2016

How the economy found its feet

DEEPAK NAYYAR

It is 25 years since July 1991, etched in memories as a watershed, when economic liberalisation began life in India. The story starts earlier. I lived through that era as Chief Economic Adviser to three successive governments in a span of two years marked by economic crises and political uncertainties.

During the 1980s, the competitive politics of populism led governments into a spending spree. But it was not possible for the government, or the economy, to live beyond its means year after year. The fiscal regime was unsustainable. The inevitable crunch did come. The minor oil shock of 1990 following Iraq's invasion of Kuwait was the last straw that broke the camel's back. The balance of payments situation became almost unmanageable.

We simply could not default on our international payments obligations. It would have turned us into a basket case. It was firefighting day by day, surviving month by month, while working at solutions, whether borrowing from the International Monetary Fund (IMF), imposing massive cash margins on imports, or selling gold confiscated from smugglers. This provided breathing time, enabling us to strategise for what needed to be done when an elected government assumed office. This happened in late June 1991.

Meeting the challenge

It was the worst crisis in the economy of independent India. The prospect of default hung over our heads, much like the proverbial Sword of Damocles, for almost 12 months. The continuing political uncertainties compounded difficulties. Yet, there was a strong determination to meet the challenge. It is mirrored in three stories.

In mid-October 1990, a month before it fell, the V.P. Singh government decided to approach the IMF for a loan. This step was recognised as essential despite caricature perceptions of the IMF as a moneylender in the Shylock tradition. The successor Chandra Shekhar government, hesitant to begin with, quickly endorsed the idea. Over the next two months, I led our negotiations with the IMF for borrowing under the first credit tranche and the Compensatory and Contingency Financing Facility (designed to help meet the increased cost of petroleum imports). It was a tough process, but we obtained \$1.8 billion with minimal conditions in late January 1991. The resolve of the government to avoid default and the stature of the Republic of India, even in deep crisis, helped us drive a hard bargain.

The comfort did not last long. The Congress party withdrew support and the Union Budget could not be presented in February 1991. We had a caretaker government and a general election to come. But the liquidity crunch was on. Foreign exchange reserves were perilously low. There was capital flight from non-resident deposits. In this milieu, restoring international confidence was imperative. In the midst of the election process, the caretaker government decided to ship 20 tonnes of gold, confiscated from smugglers, to raise \$200 million from the Union Bank of Switzerland through a sale-with-a-repurchase option. In a society where only a bankrupt household would mortgage its gold, it was a brave decision that was also high risk. The shipment

process had a script that could match a thriller. It was kept secret. And it bought us most valuable time.

The election process, prolonged by the assassination of Rajiv Gandhi, was completed in June 1991. The situation was dire. P.V. Narasimha Rao was Prime Minister designate but had not yet been sworn in. Late at night on June 20, 1991, Cabinet Secretary Naresh Chandra, Finance Secretary S.P. Shukla and I met him at 12, Willingdon Crescent. For the meeting, I had prepared a note on the crisis in the economy with a handwritten annexure on a strategy outlining measures that needed to be announced before the Budget, plus what needed to be done in the Budget, setting out alternatives and their implications. He read the note and spent some time with us in discussion. The resolve to do whatever was essential came through clearly.

Making tough decisions

These events do highlight the resilience of the political process despite all its flaws and warts. Two short-lived governments that inherited an economic crisis made tough decisions instead of postponing the day of reckoning. The governmental system and its institutions did everything to avert default even when there was no elected government that could make policy decisions. A minority government that had not yet won a vote of confidence in Parliament acted promptly and decisively. Cynics might think it was the crisis that focussed minds. But there was more.

In the eventful month that followed, between June 24 and July 24, 1991, critical decisions were made: sharp depreciation in the exchange rate of the rupee, using gold held as reserve assets by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) to borrow, announcing dramatic changes in economic policies, presenting a Budget that delivered the much-needed fiscal adjustment, inter-alia by slashing subsidies and raising prices of petroleum products. The decision to negotiate a Stand-By Arrangement with the IMF and a Structural Adjustment Loan from the World Bank was also made around then. I led these negotiations, which were concluded in late September 1991.

In my view, any government that came to power in mid-1991 would have done almost the same. The blueprints existed. There was little choice. Even so, the outcome was possible only because we had an elected government after months of political instability, and a Prime Minister, Narasimha Rao, who was most decisive in this crisis situation and quietly persuasive in political management. There were dissenting voices, rather than consensus, both in the Congress Party and in the Opposition. But there was recognition of the deep crisis in the economy among politicians across parties. And no one was willing to bring down the minority government to force yet another election on people.

Effective governments

At this juncture, 25 years later, it must be stressed that reforms are means, not ends. The essential objective is the well-being of our people. In this quest, markets and governments are complements, not substitutes. There are many things that only markets can and should do.

However, there are some things that only governments can and must do. If governments perform these tasks badly, it is not possible to dispense with governments and replace them with markets. Governments must be made to perform better. Indeed, efficient markets need effective governments.

Deepak Nayyar is Emeritus Professor of Economics, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi. He served as Chief Economic Adviser, Government of India, from 1989 to 1991, and as Vice Chancellor, University of Delhi, from 2000 to 2005.

Reforms are means, not ends. The essential objective is the well-being of our people. Markets and governments are complements, not substitutes

[TELEGRAPH, JUL 26, 2016](#)

Capital gains and losses: - Class contradictions under globalization

Prabhat Patnaik

The phenomenon of globalization encompasses at least three distinct economic processes. The first of these is an enormous increase in the weight of the financial sector, so much so that many have talked of the current period as one of 'financialization', analogous to the 'industrialization' that had occurred earlier. The increase in the weight of the financial sector is ubiquitous, though obviously far more pronounced in the advanced countries, from where industrial and certain service sector activities have even been shifting out to third world economies like China and India.

The second process under globalization is in fact this very shift in the location of a whole range of activities from high-wage advanced countries to low-wage third world countries, for meeting not local but global demand. Such a shift in response to wage differences is precisely what had not occurred historically, for then we would not have had the sharp dichotomy that exists today between the developed and the underdeveloped countries. Central to this dichotomy is a difference in the average living standards of the people, an expression of which is the wage difference. If labour had been legally allowed to move freely from the underdeveloped to the developed world, or if capital, which *was* legally allowed to move freely from the developed to the underdeveloped world, had actually done *so*, then these wage differences would have disappeared.

But this did not happen. Capital from the advanced countries moved to the colonized or semi-colonized economies only in sectors like plantations and mining, which produced primary commodities, or sectors like trade and finance which were required for servicing this international division of labour, but not in core manufacturing activities during the entire colonial period (barring some value addition to primary products, like jute). The current globalization has meant a break with this pattern, with international capital now locating manufacturing activities in China, and 'outsourcing' several service sector activities to India. The activities spontaneously diffused in this manner still constitute mainly 'lower order activities' in terms of technological

intensity; but this diffusion nonetheless is a significant fact.

The third process under current globalization is a large-scale assault by capital on traditional petty production including peasant agriculture. This takes the form of outright dispossession of such producers (buying their assets at throwaway prices, usually with the connivance of the State), or a squeeze on their incomes, which is merely a slower process of dispossession. If outsourcing of activities from the metropolis to the third world marks a *break* with the colonial pattern, the dispossession of petty producers (what Marx would have called a process of "primitive accumulation of capital") is a continuation of the colonial pattern. It had been interrupted under post-colonial *dirigisme* because newly independent third world States had sought to protect, promote and defend petty production against the onslaught of capital (though allowing an internal differentiation among such producers); but with the neo-liberal agenda being adopted under the regime of globalization, such protection by the State is withdrawn, a direct consequence of which is the agrarian crisis and the mass peasant suicides we see in India today. The crisis is not confined only to the agrarian economy; it afflicts the entire range of traditional petty producers, from fishermen to craftsmen to textile weavers.

These features of globalization have a profound impact on the conditions of the various classes and hence on the overall class configuration within economies. The most significant gainer from the regime of globalization is of course the corporate-financial oligarchy within each country which is integrated into global capital flows. These oligarchies constitute the proverbial 'one per cent' which have been the target of 'Occupy' and other such movements. The recent concern over growing inequality in wealth and income within most countries of the world, of which the reception accorded to Thomas Piketty's book, *Capital in the Twenty-First Century*, is an indicator, has to do with the immense enrichment of these oligarchies in the period of globalization.

At the other end, there has been an absolute worsening in the conditions of vast masses of the 'working people', among whom I count the workers, both employed and unemployed (including those suffering from 'disguised unemployment'), the peasants, the agricultural labourers, and the traditional petty producers. For the workers in the advanced countries, this is both clearly established and also expected, since the shifting out of certain manufacturing and service sector activities to third world countries because of their low wages necessarily puts a downward drag on these workers' wages, by generating unemployment among them. In fact, Joseph Stiglitz has suggested that the real wages of an average male American worker in 2011 were marginally lower than in 1968.

The more intriguing case is of the working people of the third world: why should their conditions worsen under a regime of globalization? The simple reason is that the squeeze on traditional petty producers because of the withdrawal of State support (in the form of cuts in subsidies on their inputs, and of denial of assured prices such as what the commodity boards had provided in India in the pre-liberalization days), force many of them to abandon their occupations and seek employment outside. But the removal of restrictions on technological-cum-structural change in the economy (of which allowing foreign direct investment into multi-brand retail is a recent example) raises the rate of labour productivity growth, constricting the rate of growth of employment, which falls short of the rate of growth of those seeking employment owing to both

the natural increase in workforce and the displacement of traditional petty producers. This increases the size of the labour reserves relative to the workforce (though unemployment does not necessarily manifest itself in an open form), which not only is a cause of impoverishment *per se* but also pulls down the real wages of even organized workers. The privatization of essential services like education and health, the costs of which increase as a consequence, adds to this process of impoverishment. The increase in hunger in India over the period of neo-liberal policies testifies to this. (Evidence of this based on Utsa Patnaik's research is provided in my article, "Road map to a failed state", Frontline, June 24).

Between these two groups, however, there is a 'middle class' (I use the term only in a descriptive sense) which has done well for itself in the period of globalization and become its votary. In advanced countries, those engaged in the financial sector constitute its core, while in third world countries, apart from this segment, those engaged in sectors to which activities are being outsourced from the metropolis, belong to its 'core'. The demand for a range of goods and services (especially services) which arises because of the higher incomes of this 'core' typically generates further middle-class employment (as a 'multiplier' effect), so that a relatively affluent middle class develops under globalization, and constitutes a major source of social support for it, not just by itself but also by generating expectations among those below that their progeny may move up to its ranks some day.

Whether the *proportion* of this 'middle class' in the total workforce has increased during globalization remains unclear. But since almost half of India's workforce is still engaged in agriculture, and since the service sector's growing weight in output is not matched by any similar growth in its weight in employment (and, besides, it is a heterogeneous sector which is also a repository of labour reserves), there is unlikely to have been much of an increase in the proportion of the middle class in the workforce. Its greater visibility is because it has detached itself from the rest of the workforce in terms of its relative income.

The period of globalization in other words is marked by an intensified contradiction between the working people on the one side and the middle-class beneficiaries of globalization on the other. This is a phenomenon visible everywhere. In the United Kingdom, the working people voted for Brexit while London, where the affluent 'middle class' is concentrated around the City, voted otherwise. In India, land acquisition from the peasantry, using varying degrees of coercion, for a 'development' the main drivers and beneficiaries of which are the middle class, exemplifies this contradiction. In West Bengal itself, the Left Front's 'industrialization' drive, perceived as an attempt to woo the middle class, entailed land acquisition that alienated the peasantry.

The current crisis of world capitalism, the end of which is nowhere in sight, is likely to cause middle-class disenchantment with globalization, and hence make possible a coming together of these two social groups. But, for the Left to lose sight of the *existing* contradiction between them, and be insensitive to the conditions of the working people in the quest for middle-class support, will be suicidal.

The author is Professor Emeritus, Centre for Economic Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi

EDUCATION

PIONEER, JUL 28, 2016

AMBEDKAR UNIVERSITY GETS NEW CAMPUS

Ambedkar University, the State funded varsity in the national Capital, got its new campus on Wednesday with the Government planning to come up with two more by 2020.

BR Ambdekar University, which was established by Delhi Government in 2008, is a State funded university with student strength of 1,800. So far, the varsity has been operating from its campus in Kashmeri Gate where 40 undergraduate, postgraduate and research programmes are offered.

“More than half of 2.5 lakh students, who pass out of schools every year, are not able to make it to the colleges for higher studies. They either dropout, or make it to the colleges outside Delhi or get admission into the private colleges paying a hefty amount. How can we accommodate them,” asked Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia while inaugurating the BR Ambedkar University campus at Karampura area.

Two new campuses in Rohini and Dheerpurare are scheduled to function from 2020.

“The proportion of increasing the seats every year by 10 to 100 will not work. Over 2.5 lakh students out of 26 lakh, including that of 16 lakh from the Government schools, pass out every year from the schools,” he said.

He also stressed upon improving the quality of education and increasing the seats. Speaking on the occasion, Punya Salila Shrivastava, Secretary, Education, elaborated upon the key initiatives taken by the Delhi Government this year by opening Delhi Pharmaceutical Sciences & Research University, 9 polytechnics that were upgraded to Institutes of Technology and affiliated to IP University and are running BVoc courses with over 900 seats.

INDIANN EXPRESS, JUL 25, 2016

Little elbow room for education in Delhi government schools

Several schools with thousands of students and inadequate infrastructure are being forced to adopt unheard of measures such as calling boys and girls for classes on alternate days.

Written by **Shikha Sharma**

Without adequate infrastructure, many schools are being forced to adopt uncommon measures to teach students.

For the last 2 years, more than 6,000 students of Sarvodaya Kanya Vidyalaya and Sarvodaya Bal Vidyalaya in Burari are attending school thrice a week on alternate days. The reason: the schools that function from the same building in morning and evening shifts do not have enough rooms for all students to attend all classes on a daily basis.

Incidentally, these are not the only schools in Delhi facing such a plight. Dealing with staff crunch and inadequate infrastructure, many schools in areas such as Sonia Vihar, Sunder Nagri and Karawal Nagar are being forced to adopt uncommon measures to teach students.

The Delhi government had announced construction of 8,000 classrooms and the plan was to start work in January, but it was postponed to the summer vacations to enable students to finish their examinations. With construction yet to end, students are being forced to attend classes in courtyards and corridors.

While students at the Sarvodaya Vidyalayas in Burari come to school on alternate days, those at the government school in Karawal Nagar are called on schedules determined by teachers. At Sunder Nagri, the government school was calling girls and boys for classes on alternate days until last week, while at Sonia Vihar, students from Class VI to Class VIII were also being called on alternate days until last Thursday, and given homework for days they did not have classes. This stopped after directions from the education department. Here is what stakeholders at the schools encountering a raft of problems have to say.

SARVODAYA KANYA/BAL VIDYALAYA, BURARI

“While students from nursery to Class VIII attend school on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays, those in Class IX to Class XII come on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays. There are 52 sections, and only 24 classrooms. So everyone cannot come to school every day,” says Shashi Mohan, member of the School Management Committee(SMC).

The school complex, constructed in 1989, has around 40 rooms and three clusters of classrooms. In August last year, the Directorate of Education had declared a building in the school as 'dangerous' and directed the school authorities to vacate the place. The ground reality, however, is the principal and teachers are still working from this 'dangerous' building.

"We have ignored the directions of the directorate and are working from here because if we don't, the school will only function two days a week. We don't want to violate guidelines, but what option do we have? We have written to the PWD and even the Education Minister, but nothing has come of it," says a senior teacher at the school.

Construction of 76 rooms has started, but school authorities cannot say with certainty when the work will finish. "Ministers, MLAs come and promise things will be done, and leave," says Nagmani Roy, another member of the SMC. "The government had promised 50 rooms to the school by the end of March, but construction began in March. It hasn't even bothered to make an alternative arrangement for our children," Roy adds.

With half the time, teachers have been forced to adopt 'speedier' ways to finish the syllabus. "It's called the capsule approach. There is no time for details. As far as possible, the focus is on teaching topics that are important for examination," says a teacher. Incidentally, the Right To Education (RTE) Act mandates 200 working days for students studying in Class I to Class V, and 220 working days for those studying in Class VI to Class VIII.

The school's problems are also compounded by inadequate number of toilets. "There are around 3,000 students in one shift, and only two toilets. So the children have to use steel portable cabins that were supposed to be used as classrooms for toilets," says SMC member Mohan. The cabins

stink badly. Officials at the Directorate of Education say they are aware of the situation and are working to create more rooms.

GOVT BOYS/GIRLS SR. SECONDARY SCHOOL, SONIA VIHAR

Since the time they joined the school, Class VII students don't remember having benches to sit on in class. The school has 5,000 girls attending classes in the morning and 3,800 boys in the afternoon. All of this is done in just 32 rooms. With little space and thousands of students, the school was recently forced to ask students from Class VI to Class VIII to come on alternate days. This ended last Thursday after the government asked the school to stop the practice. Now, apart from hundreds of students sitting in small, cramped rooms, classes are held in the open and in the dirty, musty corridors, where students sit on rugs.

“The school does not have enough rooms to teach all students so it was decided to call students from Class VI to Class VIII on alternate days to reduce congestion. Teachers were asked to teach the students for a day, and give them homework for their day off. What else could the school do? There is no way so many students can fit in such space,” says Afsana, a member of the SMC. “The children were studying in cold corridors the entire winter last year. They are studying in the heat in this weather. What option do they have?” Afsana adds.

Construction of a new school block has given parents hope, but the work will take time. The school, in the meantime, is taking on more students. “The school has no choice since one can't deny admission to anyone, as mandated by the RTE Act. For now, things will have to continue the way they are,” says a senior teacher.

GOVT GIRLS/BOYS SR. SECONDARY SCHOOL, KARAWAL NAGAR

The school witnessed violent protests this year on account of unprecedented failures in Class IX. While many attributed this to systemic flaws, the school also battles infrastructure problems. Teachers give students holidays when they want, and students are called to school when teachers think classes can be held. Parents are angry, yet helpless.

The school has more than 7,000 students and they are accommodated in four shifts. A few classes have more than 12 sections. Classes are mostly conducted outdoors because the 69 classrooms in one of the most crowded government schools in the city are not enough.

“ We are hearing since the last two years that rooms will be constructed and then the situation will change, but nothing seems to be happening. Construction is taking forever. Meanwhile, teachers call the children as per their wish. Ek din school bulate hain aur phir teen din chutti de dete hain (They call them one day and then give a three-day holiday). If classes are not held, how will children pass? We are fed up,” says Pappu Sharma, a member of the SMC. A parent says, “In the three-hour shifts, classes are taken for two hours, and even in those hours, at times, there are no teachers. There are no teachers for some subjects. How can students be expected to study under such conditions?”

Members of an inquiry panel who had visited the school to assess the reasons for 1,500 students failing in Class IX and Class XI had attributed the poor performance to primarily “lack of infrastructure” and “overcrowding”. Two wings of the school building have been declared dangerous and the PWD is working on them.

GOVT SR. SECONDARY SCHOOL, SUNDER NAGRI

Facing double shifts, a high number of students and shortage of teachers, the school came out with its own measure — calling girls and boys for classes on alternate days. When this came to

the notice of the education department, the school was forced to withdraw the order. It is now functioning in two shifts.

Until the last academic year, the school was co-educational. This year, the government ordered the school be bifurcated and run in two shifts to increase student enrollment. But the school did not make arrangements for transfer of teachers, and, as a result, teachers refused to teach in the evening shift. “After the bifurcation, teacher transfers were not cleared and we had to find an alternative system. Now that the order has been issued, the school has started running in double shift again,” says Rajiv Kumar, a member of the SMC.

More than 4,000 children study in the school in both shifts. There are 22 sections in the morning shift and 32 in the evening shift.

The school is also facing another battle. While the government has sanctioned construction of rooms on the school’s playground, the school has passed a resolution that it has enough rooms and does not require more. The SMC even went to the high court to stop construction. The court directed the education director to take the final call. The construction is underway.

Incidentally, the government school in Nand Nagri faces a similar situation. The SMC has urged the deputy director education to halt construction to save the school playground. “... The situation could have been avoided if the government had at least consulted the principal before going ahead with the construction,” says Mohammad Arif, a member of the SMC.

DECCAN HERALD, JUL 28, 2016

UGC notifies online course norms

The UGC has made it mandatory for all universities to bring amendments to their respective ordinances and rules by August 19 to facilitate transfer of credits of their students for the degree programmes to be offered under Swayam, a massive online open courses (Moocs) platform.

The higher education regulator has notified the UGC (Credit Framework for Online Learning

Courses through Swayam) Regulation, 2016, recently to ensure that Swayam takes off soon after it is launched as the Human Resources Development Ministry races against time to complete all preparations for the roll out of India first Moocs platform next month. The programme, which seeks to fill the gap created by the acute shortage of quality teachers in the country's higher educational institutions, is likely to be dedicated to the nation by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on August 15.

The Swayam will offer a virtual class room to students with structured lectures by subject experts.

“An institution can only allow up to 20% of the total courses being offered in a particular programme in a semester through the online learning courses provided through Swayam platform,” the UGC regulation stipulates.

Students, registered with the Swayam, can complete their entire programme by attending classes online and take “proctored” examinations at the end of each semester to move to the next level. For the proctored examinations, centres with adequate facilities will be opened in universities.

The credit earned by the students will be transferred to their parent university by the one conducting the programme at the Moocs platform.

HINDUSTAN TIMES, JUL 26, 2016

SCs, STs, OBCs with 50% marks in Master's eligible for NET: Govt

The HRD ministry today said that the candidates belonging to the SC, ST and OBC categories who have secured at least 50% marks in Master's degree from recognised institutions are eligible for appearing in the National Eligibility Test (NET).

This information was shared by minister of state in the HRD Mahendra Nath Pandey in a written reply in Lok Sabha.

The University Grants Commission (UGC) has informed that the candidates belonging to the Scheduled Castes (SCs), Scheduled Tribes (STs) and Other Backward Classes (OBCs) categories, who have secured at least 50% marks (without rounding off) in Master's degree or equivalent examination from universities or institutions, recognised by UGC, are eligible for appearing in NET, he said.

[Read more: Eligibility test not needed for those who registered for PhD before 2009](#)

The UGC (Minimum qualifications for appointment of teachers and other academic staff in universities and colleges and measures for the maintenance of standards in higher education) (4th Amendment), Regulations, 2016 prescribe 5% relaxation in minimum eligibility marks of 55% marks for candidates belonging to SC, ST and OBC categories for direct recruitment to teaching positions, he said.

PIONEER, JUL 26, 2016

FROM AUG 15, MP TO BEAR TUITION FEE OF TALENTED COLLEGE STUDENTS

Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan has said that from August 15, 2016 the state government will bear tuition fee of talented students of all sections in the state in the higher education institutions. He said that the government would not allow economic backwardness to impede education.

Chouhan was launching Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana and Aawas Mission at Shahganj in Sehore district on Monday.

He distributed 2218 gas connections and 1438 housing pattas.

PWD Minister Rampal Singh, Marketing Federation's Chairman Ramakant Bhargava, Forest Development Corporation's Chairman Guru Prasad Sharma, State Warehousing Corporation's Chairman Shri Rajendra Singh Rajput and Minor Forest Produce Federation's Chairman Ram Narayan Sahu were present on the occasion.

The Chief Minister said that Ujjwala Yojana launched by Prime Minister Narendra Modi will help women, especially in rural areas to get rid of smoke.

He said that this scheme will turn out to be milestone for women's health and forest conservation. He said that benefit of the scheme will be extended to every eligible family in the state during next 3 years.

He said that no family in the state will remain houseless by year 2022.

Launching Pradhan Mantri Shahari Aawas Mission at Shahganj, the Chief Minister laid foundation stones for construction of 563 houses costing Rs 24.35 crore. The Chief Minister also laid foundation stones for development works costing Rs 9.37 crore. He dedicated construction of Siyagahan piped water supply scheme costing Rs 21.50 lakh.

On girl students' demand, the Chief Minister announced opening of science faculty in Shahganj College. He gave away letter of citation for excellent performance under Swachchh Bharat Abhiyan to Nagar Parishad's CMO Ramanuj Mishra.

TRIBUNE, JUL 25, 2016

32 education channels by Sept: Govt

Seema Kaul

Watching television will soon be edutainment for students across India who can now switch on the idiot box for lessons on performing arts, science, technology, law, medicine and agriculture.

The Swayam Prabha project involves 32 educational channels going on air by September to provide curriculum and content to Indians keen on lifelong learning, HRD Minister Prakash Javadekar said in a written reply in the Lok Sabha.

The channels will initially broadcast fresh content for four hours a day and subsequently give lessons in regional languages also. The four-hour content will be telecast six times a day allowing the student to choose the time of his/her convenience. Students will just need a set top box to receive them.

The channels will go on air by September and lessons will initially be in English. The plan is to include lessons in regional languages like Punjabi, Hindi, Bengali, Gujarati, Tamil, Telugu, Malayalam, Oriya, Kannada and Marathi.

“There will be recorded lectures from IITs as per schedule communicated 15 days in advance. The uplinking station is at the Bhaskaracharya Institute of Space Applications and Geo Informatics at Gandhinagar in Gujarat,” a senior ministry official said, adding the NCERT, IGNOU (vocational subjects), UGC and AICTE are the nodal institutes for the project.

HINDUSTAN TIMES, JUL 25, 2016

Kendriya Vidyalayas to crack whip on VIP push for staff transfers

Neelam Pandey

The Kendriya Vidyalaya Sangathan, which runs more than 1,100 schools in India and abroad, will punish its employees if their transfer requests are endorsed or proposed by VIPs and influential relatives.

Sources said the rot in the system runs so deep that besides rampant requests for favourable transfers, employees use VIP references for incentives and to apply for national awards.

The Sangathan has warned teachers and members of the non-teaching staff of strict action if they indulge in any such practice.

“Some employees of KVs are bringing outside pressure or extraneous influence for getting transfers at their choice of station/place. They are approaching higher authorities and other important persons for recommending their cases to KVs for consideration. This practice is a clear violation of CCS conduct rules ... and must be stopped immediately,” states a letter in May by Santosh Kumar Mall, commissioner of the Sangathan.
Ads by ZINC

There are 1,128 Kendriya Vidyalayas in the country with more than 55,000 teachers. These Centre-run KVs are considered premier schools, and their pass percentage is above the national average.

Sources said every year, mostly at the beginning of an academic session, teachers apply for transfer and new postings, and usually attach a VIP reference to their request.

TSR Subramanian, former cabinet secretary who headed the committee that prepared a blueprint of the new national education policy, had also referred to such political interferences that affect the quality and credibility of education.

He recommended that transfer, selection and promotion of teachers should be more transparent. Explaining the current system, a senior official said the Sangathan has modernised the transfer process this year, and efforts have been made to make it employee-friendly and transparent. In May, the assistant commissioner (establishment) had cautioned teachers against lobbying for incentives and awards.

“Applications of employees for the purpose of awards through recommendations and references of VIPs will not be considered. In such cases, they will be barred for three years from applying for an award,” an official said.

EMINENT PERSONALITIES

STATESMAN, JUL 27, 2016

Remembering an unworldly man

Ambarnath Sinha

At the drop of a hat he could deliver a flawless, inspiring speech. He could wind himself up into blazing passion, his body leaning forward, his long white locks swaying over his brow, his fingers prodding the air, his whispering voice wavering with emotion as he called the faithful to serve his country...yet with a smile lingering on his lips. It is impossible to forget a man like Dr. APJ Abdul Kalam.

Just before the fall of 2009, our documentary film on the National Defence Academy, My Flag, My Life was ready for release. I had taken great care to write it, often spending hours refreshing the entire script to match the sincerity and credibility that ran high with the institution. Long before the script was ready, I had placed two requests with the producers. First, India's first cosmonaut, Wing Commander Rakesh Sharma, should anchor the film and second, the film must be released at the hands of Dr. APJ Abdul Kalam.

Dr. Kalam's tenure as the president was already over. But none of us had an iota of doubt that president or no president, it would suit be the best to have the film released by him.

Getting the first cosmonaut aboard looked at little difficult initially. But being a graduate of the NDA, Wing Commander Sharma readily agreed. He liked the script and then there was no looking back.

As far as Dr. Kalam was concerned, the sponsors and producers thought it would be easier. So, it was a month before the release that the authorities and promoters decided to get in touch with his office. No one could have imagined that his schedule was packed until the middle of March next year – six months later.

Two years into retirement he was still crisscrossing the country and even the world talking to people, especially to the younger generation. His nonchalant disposition and his childlike exuberance juxtaposed with the content of his addresses complemented the thoughts that he wanted to share.

We lost all hope. After doing all the hard work in writing the script, I was disappointed. The request was still forwarded to him with a copy of the film.

As the producers started preparing for the release without pinning much hope on his acceptance, Dr. Kalam's office called us just a week before the release to confirm his participation as he liked the film and thought it would be of great importance to motivate the youngsters to join the services.

It was at Ganesh Kala Krida auditorium in Pune that the event was planned.

The event was scheduled to start at 10 a.m. and people were still entering the auditorium when at 9.45 a.m. Dr. Kalam's motorcade entered the premises. Chaos descended and a huge commotion took place backstage as the last thing we expected was the guest of honour being amongst the first to reach.

The majority of the audience was still queued up to get in and the ones supposed to be on the dais with Dr. Kalam were still on their way. While all of us were apologetic for the delay and were trying to bring to the fore all kinds of nervous excuses, Dr. Kalam by then was sitting in a corner, comfortable, smiling as everleast bothered about his position or protocol. Before anyone could say a word he looked up and said, "Just give me a glass of water. I am comfortable here. Don't worry. Carry on with your preparations."

He waited patiently for the event to start. Soon Ms. Sumitra Mahajan, the current Lok Sabha Speaker, the recently retired Navy Chief, Admiral RK Dhowan, actor Nana Patekar and Wing Commander Rakesh Sharma arrived. But by then, the backstage was already crowded. As soon as people heard that Dr. Kalam was present, there was a serpentine queue of guests waiting to shake hands with him. He obliged all with a smile.

Dressed in a grey suit, his white locks falling over his forehead, he was in his element while talking to kids. He was comfortable with them and so were the kids. They were having their little chats and were bursting out into uncontrollable fits of laughter now and again. It was as if they were all of the same age and that they were sharing their little secrets with each other. You'd hardly believe that here was a man who had been the president of India and had been instrumental in designing missile technology laughing and joking away with kids as if they were his best buddies.

The event started with a short screening of the film and then, there were a few felicitations at the hands of Dr. Kalam before he would address the audience.

I was also scheduled to receive felicitations at the hands of Dr. Kalam. And as I walked up to him, he moved forward and held my hand tightly. His soft hands pressing against mine, he said in a low voice with his twinkling eyes fixed on me, “You have done a wonderful service to the country, my boy. I have seen the whole film and your words would definitely inspire a lot of young fellows to join the services and serve our country. God bless you, my boy.”

I went closer to him and said, “Thank you so much Sir... But Sir, it’s a very small thing.” I couldn’t complete my sentence. I meant to say that someone whose contribution to the country was Himalayan was magnifying such a miniscule contribution. But he took both my hands into his own and said, “No contribution is small. You did it in your way, my boy. Keep up the good work... keep on contributing towards the good of this country in your own way. That will do” My eyes welled up. Somehow I managed to walk off the dais.

It was a short conversation. But whenever I look back to that day, a blinding insight emerges. If anything, what struck me was just how modest the man’s disposition was. At the age of 78, how hopeful he was of our character and ability, and how much of what he believed seemed to hold true for each one of us – to honestly contribute towards the growth of this country. Here was someone who still had faith in everything and thought that anybody willing should be able to deliver for his country, however negligible it might be.

After the felicitation, he spoke to the crowd. Around 3,500 students and cadets listened to him in absolute rapture. Once on the podium, he instructed the light men to put on all the lights so that he could see the students and the cadets. He wanted to have eye contact. There was pin drop silence and yet it was more a conversation than a lecture.

I don’t know how the rest who heard him speak on that day remember him. But even today, a year after Dr. Kalam passed away, whenever I find my shoulders drooping, I take a walk along Marine Drive and most of the time I think of Dr. APJ Abdul Kalam and how his warmth, his words inspired me. Sometimes I push on...sometimes I imagine it to be way too absurd to have met someone like him. He was so unimaginably out of the world. Almost divine, yet so real. The writer is an independent,

EUROPEAN UNION

STATESMAN, JUL 25, 2016

Brexit crisis gets ugly

Kurt Jacobsen, Sayeed Hasan Khan

Politics, as French poet Paul Valery figured out, “is the art of preventing people from taking part in affairs that properly concern them.” Anyone wondering whom the European Union serves has to recall how the Troika (the European Commission, the European Bank, and the IMF) pillaged Greece and what it is doing to cripple Portugal, Spain and Ireland too. The EU revealed itself as having evolved not into an enlightened organization safeguarding living standards of all citizens but instead as a brutal collection agency for reckless mega-banks. The European Union is as kindly and reasonable as a swarm of sharks towards any vulnerable bleeding member. Yet the mass media brushed that searing story aside to blame racism and “Little Englandism” alone for the referendum result.

Forget frothy dreams of European solidarity. That was a sales pitch for the gullible. The European project’s idealistic element, always thin and mostly decorative, receded long ago before the power of financial and corporate magnates who have no place in their philosophy for average citizens except as submissive marks to be drained to top off profits. These elites are unmistakably in charge. So the widely decried ‘democratic deficit’ of the EU was never intended to be remedied during decades of bitter complaints and, if anything, worsened. The surprise over the Brexit vote is what ought to be the surprise.

Is a British departure the apocalypse that the pro-EU enthusiasts predict? Smug commentators chortle that many voters would recast their vote if they knew it actually meant exit. Perhaps. On the other hand, these mostly working class voters knew perfectly well that they cast ballots against an organization whose elitist priorities relentlessly inflicts harm on their lives and livelihoods. The pro-EU forces rankle at the reality that the citizenry had a right to object in a way that impedes the plans that technocrats devised for them. Bear in mind, of course, that the EU has a habit of sending voters again and again to polls until they deliver the answer it wants. So don’t imagine there aren’t back-room schemes under way to generate a means to nullify this unwanted display of democracy.

The case for Brexit was badly muddied up by prominent rightwingers scapegoating immigrants, an ugly if common tactic which the media fastened on and used to skirt deeper reasons for Euro-skepticism. Yet “freedom of movement” is indeed tied to employer interests. If every immigrant

were handed a compulsory trade union membership card upon arrival, the business world would lobby hysterically for strict immigration controls and likely get them.

In a sagging economy immigration is a handy means for nudging up demand for goods without employers having to boost workers' pay. By contrast, a high growth economy with rising wages has in the past provided a tolerant enough environment for migrants of all kinds. Since the 2008 crash, however, austerity-saddled EU leaders have steered a costly low-growth course with absolutely no end in sight.

The Tories, who imposed 20 to 25 per cent cuts in public service spending, need no prodding to bring in cruel policies. But every EU state except Sweden, regardless whether they lean Left or Right, is being compelled by EU directives to cut spending to meet the EU's 3 per cent deficit spending limit and the limit of national debt to GDP of 60 per cent. The rule bans Keynesian remedies, except when it comes to injecting hundreds of billions in state and Central bank money into ailing big banks. The public gets to pay for the deficits created by this magnanimous exception to the anti-Keynesian creed. The result of eight years of austerity is a rising euro zone debt level, stagnant growth, double-digit unemployment and a combined GDP below its 2008 level.

Pitifully and ruefully, the only way some sufferers from these policies could grasp them was through the distorting lenses of race and nationality. Few, if any, Western newspapers cared to address the refugee crisis as human 'blowback' from the unnecessary wars that NATO and the US waged throughout the Middle East and parts of South Asia so as to stoke the military-industrial complex, and generate the enemies this complex conveniently will demand to be funded to fight in future.

Austerity happens to be a perfect pretext for redistributing income and wealth from the bottom to the top, so no one at the top is complaining. The xenophobia motivating part of the Brexit vote has surely been ugly, but there is another ugliness in play, exemplified in the indignant people who decry Brexit proponents as nothing but ignorant deluded racists.

This chorus of erudite squeals arises principally from strata of the professional classes, the top fifth or so, the Oxbridge educated, those who can afford a London property or two, and blithely dispatch offspring to other countries to snap up jobs they apparently do not anticipate getting at home. They are oblivious to, or unconcerned about, the mounting evidence that the EU is failing the working class majority. These folks don't look quite so virtuous when one considers the privileged status they enjoy or are striving to hang on to at anybody else's cost. But, oh yes, they are sophisticated.

Yanis Varoufakis, the charismatic former Greek Finance Minister, may well be right that although the EU is a “monster,” it is one that can and must be tamed. Unfortunately there wasn’t the ghost of a chance of such a thing happening without a shock like Brexit. For nothing less than that will do to raise the question for remaining members of a total reorganization that answers to peoples’ needs and not to those who want to fleece them.

The writers are authors of No Clean Hands and Parables of Permanent War.

FLOODS

STATESMAN, JUL 25, 2016

Flooded cities and climate change

Bharat Dogra

Chennai, Mumbai and Srinagar are some examples of cities in India which have been badly devastated by floods in recent times. Only a few days ago just a day's heavy downpour led to a threat of serious floods in Bhopal.

The threat of floods in many cities of India, including some of the largest and most densely populated like Delhi and Kolkata, has been increasing despite the fact that flood-protection works in our country are generally biased in favour of urban areas compared to surrounding rural areas. As there has been a tendency to accord more importance to more prosperous and densely populated areas, flood protection embankments are often designed to provide protection to urban areas. But this has to be achieved at the cost of increasing the vulnerability of surrounding areas. In effect some of the so-called flood protection embankments merely divert floods from urban to rural areas.

Despite this strong bias in favour of urban areas, the bitter reality that confronts us is that more and more cities are experiencing serious flood situations. This is happening largely because of neglect of the most basic norms of urban planning under the pressure of influential builder interests and also the dictates of populist policies aimed at giving short-term gains to one group or the other, ignoring the longer-term interests of the city.

This is a matter of serious concern as in times of climate change instances of very heavy rainfall are likely to be concentrated in shorter time spans increasing further the risk of sudden and heavy floods. Climate change-related risks have increased the most in coastal cities because of the additional and most serious problems created by the rise in sea-level and the increasing intensity and frequency of storms and cyclones. This is therefore a time for the most careful urban planning but actually the most careless urban mismanagement has been seen in recent times.

Urban flood situations of recent times reveal that many critical situations resulted from careless building over areas of natural drainage of rainwater and storm water as also on floodplains of rivers and natural catchment areas of tanks, lakes and other water bodies. Some waterbodies and wetlands which used to absorb a lot of the flood-flows were filled up and then encroached upon for various kinds of buildings. Due to arbitrary cost-cutting and corruption, adequate provision

for drainage was not made when building roads and flyovers. As the landscape of several cities changes in a hurry and everything looks more attractive, basic issues like drainage are not getting due attention.

Builders make their millions and politicians gather their votes. But in the case of many dubious projects they leave behind high-risk situations that are capable of unleashing disruptive floods on huge urban areas at times of concentrated heavy rains (the possibility of which is increasing in times of climate change). Such factors have been listed time and again in specific contexts in the analysis of recent urban flood situations like those of Chennai, Srinagar and Mumbai.

Despite this there is no indication yet that necessary corrective action has been initiated yet at a wider level to reduce the risks of floods in many cities. In fact, some of the most populated cities like Delhi and Kolkata are becoming more vulnerable. In Delhi there have been several instances of the Yamuna floodplains being used in ecologically destructive ways, ignoring opposition and protests by environmentalists and even in violation of concerns expressed by courts.

Even more serious damage may be caused by recent moves to get permission for building over large parts of the famous wetlands on the eastern side of Kolkata. These wetlands and their canals are very useful for absorbing the storm water of Kolkata and building over these wetlands can make the city more flood-prone than before. In addition these wetlands and the fish farms (bheris) located there provide enormous amounts of fresh food, particularly fish and vegetables, to the people of Kolkata, apart from being very helpful in disposing the city's wastes.

Such ecological and livelihood systems are a great asset to any city and their significance in these difficult times of climate change has increased. But politicians and builders guided by short-term economic and political objectives may not be able to recognize the importance of such systems or may not even care. So it is important for citizens' campaigns, guided by those who have studied these problems in detail, to keep alive issues such as the protection of Kolkata wetlands. At a wider level also we need citizens' initiatives in various cities so that reluctant authorities can be brought under pressure to initiate timely steps for protecting cities from destructive floods.

The writer is a freelance journalist associated with several social initiatives and movements.

HEALTH SERVICES

ECONOMIC TIMES, JUL 27, 2016

Niti Aayog panel recommends replacing MCI with National Medical Commission

NEW DELHI: A highlevel panel set up by government thinktank Niti Aayog has recommended replacing the Medical Council of India (MCI) with a National Medical Commission. This would end the muchcriticised inspector raj, presenting a major reform of the medical education system and the profession . The setting up of a new institution would require BJPled NDA government to frame a new law, something which has been attempted several times in the past but no government has succeeded. "Currently there is huge inspector raj in the whole system and the new institution will end this besides bringing in substantial improvement in quality of the medical education system," a senior government official told ET. According to official sources in the Aayog, the biggest change under the new system would be that its members would be selected on merit by a high powered searchcumselection panel and would not be elected, as in the past, by MCI. "The selection process will be transparent and would ensure that the best of brains in the medical fraternity are members of the commission," the source said, requesting anonymity. Niti Aayog panel led by its vicechairman Arvind Panagariya is in the process of finalising its recommendations on the structural reform of MCI and would soon submit its report to Prime Minister Narendra Modi. The commission is expected to have 20 members and would be advised by another parallel body — the Medical Advisory Council — which would have representatives of all states and two union territories. The commission would have four boards with enough autonomy to decide on the curriculum while the macro policies would be framed by the commission. These would include undergraduate medical education board, PG medical education board, accreditation and rating board. "The idea of setting up a new body is to simplify the norms of recruitment and make the process performance based so that the medical institutes either perform or perish," the official said. A major initiative under this is to introduce the system of exit exams for private and government medical colleges.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT

BUSINESS LINE, JUL 28, 2016

South Delhi civic body to use LED lamps for street lighting

The South Delhi Municipal Corporation (SDMC) will cut its electricity and maintenance bill for street lighting by almost 50 per cent due to the installation of LED lamps.

According to Energy Efficiency Services Ltd (EESL), SDMC will cut its electricity and maintenance bill for street lights to Rs. 56 crore from Rs. 104 crore

Further, the total investment of Rs. 172 crore for installing 1.88 lakh LED street lights, funded by Energy Efficiency Services Ltd and SDMC, will be recovered over a period of seven years, said Saurabh Kumar, Managing Director of EESL. He was speaking at an event to reveal the results of a social audit which revealed that 99.5 per cent of the people of SDMC feel safer with LED streetlights in their areas. However, on the issue of complaints against non-functioning of LED lights, Kumar said the problem is due to poor connections and not poor quality. He added that each complaint would be redressed within 48-72 hours.

Huge energy saving

For the problem of non-functioning and multiple helpline numbers, Puneet Kumar Goel, Commissioner of SDMC, said, "From August 31, there will be only one helpline number which will comprise a 5-member team and a supervisor monitoring them."

Under the Street Lighting National Programme, over 10,80,000 conventional street lights have been replaced with LED across India leading to an annual estimated energy savings of 143 million units.

(This article was published in the Business Line print edition dated July 28, 2016)

MUSEUMS

STATESMAN, JUL 25, 2016

New 'story-telling' museum to wow visitors at Rashtrapati Bhavan

A new high-tech, "story-telling" museum is all set to wow visitors at Rashtrapati Bhavan, and would be inaugurated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday in the presence of President Pranab Mukherjee, Vice President Hamid Ansari and other dignitaries, officials said.

“This is the first sunken museum in the country with two storeys underground. This is a high-tech and green museum,” said President's Secretary Omita Paul.

The museum would be thrown open to the public from October 2 this year, she said.

The museum, which has a whopping 1,20,000 square feet carpet area between its three floors, could not be constructed on the ground floor as it was difficult to occupy such a huge area in the Rashtrapati Bhavan premises, according to curator Saroj Ghosh.

“So we made it two storeys underground,” he said.

Some of the key features of the museum include an augmented reality hall where the visitors can virtually walk alongside Mahatma Gandhi as the Mahatma comes out of Rashtrapati Bhavan (then Viceroy's House) after signing the historic Gandhi-Irwin Pact on March 5, 1931 with then Viceroy, Lord Irwin.

Also, the visitors can pose with President Pranab Mukherjee and hitch a ride in the President's buggy through augmented reality.

A theatre in the museum shows a 3D animated film on Mahatma Gandhi starting with the famous Dandi March in March 1930 and taking the viewers through various milestones in India's Independence struggle.

There are other attractions as well, such as a 3D holographic projection of all the 13 Presidents giving short speeches, various artefacts and gifts received by different Presidents over the years and things associated with them and interactive digital interfaces showing art works and pictures housed in Rashtrapati Bhavan.

“The visitors would be allowed in from gate number 30 and would be welcomed at the reception inside the clock tower. From there, they can take a bus or ride a bicycle to reach the museum,” Paul said.

POLITICS AND GOVERNMENT

HINDU, JUL 27, 2016

The crisis of Indian democracy

India has failed to nurture individual and collective capabilities. There has been far too little effort in public policy to create spaces where citizens interact freely and peacefully

While India's economy has received periodic attention, mostly during critical moments defined by food shortages and foreign exchange outages, the workings of its democracy have received next to none. This reflects a complacency.

Interestingly, the neglect is evident in every angle from which the country has been approached, applying to observers located both within and without its society. Thus while the rulers of the western world berate India for its deviance from the apparently superior norms of a free-market architecture, India's nationalist elite traces her pathologies to western hegemony. Both lose the narrative by refusing to see that its condition is related to the failings of its democracy, which in one dimension has remained more or less unchanged since 1947. This dimension is that the majority of the population has been left with weak capabilities.

Unfree after Independence

Capabilities are what enable individuals to pursue the lives that they value. This, Nobel laureate Amartya Sen has suggested, is true freedom and should therefore be the focus of all developmental effort. The idea is foundational in that it vaults over narrow economic or political definitions of development. It is irrelevant to it whether we have more or less of the state or the market or whether we insert 'socialist' and 'secular' into the Constitution so long as large sections of our people are unfree in the sense that they cannot lead lives that they value. Jawaharlal Nehru, though perhaps elliptically, had expressed this in his famous speech on August 14, 1947.

He had seen Indian Independence as an opportunity to build a "prosperous, democratic and progressive nation and to create social, economic and political institutions which will ensure justice and fullness of life to every man and woman". B.R. Ambedkar, with legal acumen and a practical bent of mind, had defined democracy as a means to bring about a significant change in the living conditions of the depressed without resorting to bloodshed. These ambitious programmes and the hard work they would have entailed fell by the wayside in the practices of India's political class and in the discourse of its intellectuals.

Whatever may have been the vision of India's founding fathers, Indian democracy has not lived up to their expectations. As a matter of fact, it has done far worse. In the past year it appears to have added heightened violence towards the marginalised to its sedentary character. The incident of four Dalit youth being beaten in full public view in Gujarat is only the most recent instance of this. Parliament reportedly heard accusations and defences the next day but it is not yet clear

what impact it will have and how civil society will respond. India's middle classes are quick to be hurt when news of Indians subjected to racial indignity in the West is beamed into our living rooms. No one could have missed the irony of Prime Minister Narendra Modi earlier this month travelling by train in South Africa where about a century ago M.K. Gandhi was thrown out of a first class carriage because of the colour of his skin.

The scenes from India come a full century later. And the Dalit youths had, going by public sources, only skinned a dead cow, a task to which Indian society historically confined them. By assaulting them for undertaking it, not only has their dignity been denied but their livelihood snatched away. In any civilised society the perpetrators of this crime would not just be grasped by the long arm of the law but publicly shamed.

Gujarat is of course only one of the sites of violence against Dalits. It is important to recognise that it has been widespread across northern India and not absent from the south either, with Tamil Nadu featuring prominently. It is also important to recognise that acts of violence against Dalits are not of recent origin. Their oppression is systemic and deeply rooted in India. Non-Congress parties with leadership drawn from the middle castes have long ruled Tamil Nadu, Bihar and Uttar Pradesh, among India's most populous States, all of which have witnessed violence against the Dalits for some time. When in power, middle caste-based parties have replaced their invective towards the top of the caste pyramid with suppression of those at its bottom.

The socialist chimera

So what can we do now? For those outside the corridors of power the task is to shape the discourse on Indian democracy. Its goal must now be redirected towards human development while ensuring the security of all vulnerable groups. This need not in any way conflict with growing a strong economy. In fact, a strong economy, including a vigorous market, is one element in furthering development as the expansion of freedoms. Opposition to the market, which has in certain contexts come equally from the Right and the Left in India, misses this point entirely. Restriction of private enterprise does nothing to empower the marginalised in a society. Their empowerment can come about only via direct public action to build their capabilities.

In fact, a genuine commitment to socialism should have helped here. Karl Marx had defended communism as the principle "from each according to his ability, to each according to his needs". Instead, socialism as the official ideology of the Indian state for close to three decades got trapped into expanding a public sector producing goods regardless of outcome and independent of its consequences for the historically outcast. The state prided itself in being interventionist in the economy and laissez faire in the social sphere. The task, envisaged by Nehru, of creating the institutions necessary to support individual freedom, did not materialise. The historically outcast were left to fend for themselves, a stance morally equivalent to allowing the devil to take the hindmost.

Reorienting public policy

The chickens have finally come to home to roost. India today hosts the world's largest number of the poorly educated and prone to poor health, a development disaster in spite of being the world's third-largest economy in purchasing power terms. One need only occasionally travel third class on the Indian Railways in most parts of the country, which, recall, Gandhi did, to comprehend the scale of the deprivation and estimate how close public policy today comes to addressing it. As a quarter century has been spent focussing on India's economic architecture in the name of 'economic reforms', it would be profitable to now devote the next decade to mounting an assault on human deprivation. The development of the capabilities of India's women and Dalits, by virtue of their being the most deprived, would merit the first draft of attention and resources thus expended.

For a democracy to be complete, however, something more than just focus on the individual, however deserving they may be, is necessary as members of a democracy must engage with one another lest we remain equal but separated. Here public goods come into the reckoning. Public policy should engineer spaces where Indians meet on the basis of a participatory parity. Widespread public services from schools and hospitals to parks and crematoria are one way to bring individuals together as they struggle from birth to death in this country. Repeated interaction in public spaces would make us realise our common humanity and enable us to see any residual identity for what it really is.

There has been far too little effort in Indian public policy to create spaces where citizens may interact freely and peacefully. Many other countries have done so. For instance, the provision of public housing in 'capitalist' Singapore comes with the proviso that it should be shared between people of all 'races', namely Chinese, Indian and Malay.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi has often spoken in global fora of the unacceptability of terrorism. He is right to do so. Now the incidents of assault on Dalits in Gujarat, rape of women across the country and intimidation of Muslims in Uttar Pradesh bring home to us the presence of terrorism among us. While some of this predates his arrival in Delhi, there is reason to believe that fascist forces have been encouraged to act with impunity since then.

In its inability to contain these forces, India's democracy can be seen to be flailing. Bertrand Russell had remarked that we can never guarantee our own security if we cannot assure that of others. Tired of oppression the Dalits have finally risen in what was once the land of Gandhi. They at least have recognised our common humanity. They only dumped dead cattle at the collectorate. They did not poison the water supply.

Pulapre Balakrishnan teaches economics at Ashoka University, Sonapat, Haryana. The views expressed are personal. Bertrand Russell had remarked that we can never guarantee our own security if we cannot assure that of others. Tired of oppression Dalits have finally risen

RAILWAYS

HINDU, JUL 28, 2016

Pay Re. 1, get insurance cover for train travel

Train passengers booking their tickets online through the IRCTC website will be able to opt for travel insurance cover from September for a premium of just one rupee.

The scheme offers travellers or their families compensation of up to Rs. 10 lakh in the event of death or permanent total disability, Rs. 7.5 lakh for permanent partial disability, up to Rs. 2 lakh for hospitalisation expenses and Rs. 10,000 for transportation of mortal remains in the event of death or injury from an accident or other untoward incident including terrorist attacks, dacoity, rioting, shooting or arson, said a senior IRCTC official. — PTI