

LIST OF NEWSPAPERS COVERED

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HINDU

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FINANCIAL EXPRESS

INDIAN EXPRESS

PIONEER

STATESMAN

TELEGRAPH

TIMES OF INDIA

TRIBUNE

CONTENTS

	PAGE
1. BACKWARD CLASSES	3-4
2. BLACK MONEY	5-7
3. CIVIL SERVICE	8-15
4. EDUCATION	16-27
5. ELECTIONS	28-32
6. EMPLOYMENT	33
7. GOVERNORS	34
8. HEALTH SERVICES	35-37
9. LIBRARIES	38-41
10. MONEY	42-43
11. NEWSPAPERS	44-46
12. PARLIAMENT	47-49
13. POLITICS AND GOVERNMENT	50-54
14. TRANSPORT	55
15. WASTE TREATMENT	56
16. WOMEN	57

BACKWARD CLASSES

TRIBUNE, MAR 3, 2014

Cabinet clears reservation for Jats

Rahul's anti-graft Bills put on hold ■ Seemandhra gets special category status

Ahead of the General Election, the Congress-led UPA government today came up with sops for the Jat community and SC/STs and approved changes to the Andhra Pradesh Reorganisation Bill to give Seemandhra "special category status".

It decided against taking the ordinance route for anti-corruption Bills being pushed by Congress vice-president Rahul Gandhi.

The long-drawn out "special meeting" of the Union Cabinet ahead of Prime Minister Manmohan Singh's visit to the BIMSTEC summit in Myanmar did take up the pet issue of the Congress vice-president's push for the anti-graft Bills, but decided against taking the "ordinance" route apparently due to the reservations expressed by President Pranab Mukherjee.

The Cabinet decision on Jats makes them part of the OBC list and gives the community reservation in central government jobs and educational institutions, a demand that came from nine states -- Gujarat, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Delhi, Uttarakhand and Bihar.

The Union Cabinet also cleared amendments to the SC/ST Act. It will take the ordinance route in this regard. The decision regarding the division of Andhra Pradesh gives special status to Seemandhra -- the region that will form the residuary state once Telangana is carved out as India's 29th state.

As reported first by The Tribune, the government would also take the ordinance route for these changes in the Andhra Pradesh Re-organisation Bill.

The government made three amendments to the Andhra Pradesh Re-organisation Bill which includes giving the special category status for five years to the successor state of Andhra Pradesh or the Seemandhra region and directed the Planning Commission to implement the decision.

The special meeting of the Union Cabinet had been called ostensibly for taking up the anti-graft Bills which could not be cleared in the extended winter session of Parliament due to disturbances which marred the proceedings in both Houses forcing the government to think of taking the ordinance route to clear them.

However, developments through out yesterday and today finally forced the government to decide against taking the short route to clear the Bills, which was also being objected to by the Opposition parties.

Addressing the media after the meeting, Information and Broadcasting Minister Manish Tewari, while blaming the Opposition parties for not allowing the passage of the anti-graft Bills in the just-ended Parliament session, said, “There was a discussion on the anti-graft Bills and since they are very important legislations, it was advisable and decided that full deliberations be allowed on them by the legislature before they are translated into reality”.

The anti-graft Bills were being seen as Congress last-ditch efforts to reclaim the anti-corruption plank, seen to be appropriated by Arvind Kejriwal's Aam Aadmi Party and Narendra Modi's BJP in the run-up to national elections due by May.

Rahul had called for the ordinance route to get these legislations into effect. The UPA had tried hard to pass the Bills on the last day of the extended winter session of Parliament but the House was adjourned sine die.

The Cabinet decisions came after hectic consultation between the top UPA ministers and Congress leaders during the weekend. AK Antony, Sushilkumar Shinde and Ahmed Patel met PM Manmohan Singh at his residence before the meeting. The Prime Minister's Principal Secretary Pulok Chatterjee also attended the meet.

Yesterday, Shinde and Law Minister Kapil Sibal met President Pranab Mukherjee who had expressed his reluctance to sign the legislations days before the announcement of Lok Sabha elections.

Jat vote bank

- Jats are mainly spread over Haryana, Rajasthan, Punjab, UP, Delhi, MP and Uttarakhand. The community's population is over 8 crore
- Jats are a deciding factor in 30 Lok Sabha seats
- In Haryana, Jats have a sizeable 22% vote share
- Justice KC Gupta as the Haryana State Backward Classes Commission's head called for 10% quota for five castes, including Jats
- In Rajasthan, the community comprises 11% of voters
- In western UP, the community is 17% of the population

Jats have been demanding reservation since the days of Mandal Commission. They have strived hard. I am grateful to the Prime Minister for accepting their demand.
—**Bhupinder Singh Hooda**, haryana cm

It's an election stunt. Why has the government chosen to accept the demand on the eve of elections?
—**Ram Bilas Sharma**, haryana bjp chief

BLACK MONEY

ECONOMIC TIMES, MAR 1, 2014

Black money: Switzerland refuses to share information on bank account holders, Delhi mulls strong response

By *Ajmer Singh*

The Swiss authorities have told the Indian government they will not be able to share information on bank accounts without the consent of the account-holders.

NEW DELHI: The Swiss authorities have told the Indian government they will not be able to share information on bank accounts without the consent of the account-holders. In a letter last month, Switzerland's finance minister also told her Indian counterpart that the 2011 Double Taxation Avoidance Agreement, under which India had sought information, applies prospectively, thus ruling out access to information about accounts opened before that date, said a senior official familiar with the letter's content.

The missive from Swiss Finance Minister [Eveline Widmer-Schlumpf](#) comes in the wake of an aggressive drive by Indian tax authorities to unearth information on offshore accounts held by Indian citizens. In the recent past, these efforts have focused on the so-called [HSBC](#) list — which was passed on to India by the French authorities, who in turn obtained the names from a disgruntled employee of the British bank.

In his budget speech on February 17, Finance Minister [P Chidambaram](#) had spoken of "several hurdles" in obtaining evidence from foreign countries about offshore accounts held by Indians.



The letter from the Swiss finance minister said notifying the account-holder of the fact that tax authorities of a foreign country were making enquiries is in line with Swiss bank secrecy laws. If the account-holder declines to part with the information, the Indian government could challenge such non-cooperation in Swiss courts, the official familiar with the communication said.

India is likely to reject this stance of the Swiss authorities and may even declare the Alpine nation a Non-Cooperative Jurisdiction, which would result in suspending tax benefits available under the bilateral tax treaty. "A reply has been sent. We have informed the [Swiss government](#) that this (seeking information on bank accounts) is a sovereign request and individuals can't be notified. And information has to be shared under Article 26 of the treaty signed between the two countries, which overrides Swiss domestic laws," said the official cited earlier.

"India is also trying to bring pressure on [Switzerland](#) through [G20](#). And if even that doesn't work out, we have the option of invoking Section 94(A) of the Income-Tax Act and declare Switzerland a Non-Cooperative Jurisdiction," added this official. ET reported in January that the finance minister had written a strongly worded letter to his Swiss

counterpart requesting cooperation. The letter from the Swiss finance minister is in response to this missive.

Last year, India had declared Cyprus a Non-Cooperative Jurisdiction and suspended tax benefits available under the bilateral tax treaty signed in 1994. Under bilateral tax agreements, countries have a legal obligation to exchange such information as is necessary, in particular for the prevention of fraud or evasion of taxes.

"Since Cyprus has not been providing the information requested by Indian tax authorities under the exchange of information provisions of the agreement, it has been decided to notify Cyprus as a notified jurisdictional area under Section 94(A) of the Income-Tax Act," said the official, explaining that the provision could be invoked against Switzerland too. A senior official contrasted the non-cooperation of the Swiss authorities with what he described as their willingness to share information with the US authorities.

"The government has succeeded, through alternative methods and special efforts, in obtaining information in 67 cases and action is underway to determine the tax liability as well as impose penalty. Prosecution for wilful tax evasion has been launched in 17 other cases. More enquiries have been initiated into accounts reportedly held by Indian entities in no-tax or low-tax jurisdictions," Chidambaram had said in his budget speech.

CIVIL SERVICE

HINDU, MAR 6, 2014

Outsourcing in govt. departments may go

The State government may decide to do away with outsourcing its works in various departments and instead fill the existing vacancies by recruitment, according to Minister for Law and Parliamentary Affairs T.B. Jayachandra.

Briefing presspersons on the decisions taken at Monday's Cabinet meeting, he said there were complaints that there was a big lobby of private agencies promoting outsourcing and they get huge margins at the cost of poor workers. There was neither quality nor accountability in their works.

He said the Cabinet approved a proposal to recruit 990 posts, including municipal cleaners to work in 10 corporations, in Tumkur, Shimoga and Bijapur. However, there are 3,811 posts to be filled. He said a hasty decision would not be taken on the issue.

Mr. Jayachandra said the system for issuing possession certificates to about two lakh forest dwellers — Scheduled Tribes and traditional residents — would be done as per the decision of the gram sabhas. Another decision pertained to raising rate for Hamalis at wholesale markets from Rs. 6 to Rs.10. This would come into effect from April. The Minister said the Cabinet had decided to issue notices to department secretaries if file clearance falls below 50 per cent. He said this would be extended to districts, taluks and village panchayats.

DECCAN HERALD, MAR 5, 2014

Secretary 'forced' to go on leave

Shruthi HM

Speculation is rife that the government has asked Medical Education Secretary Rashmi V "to go on leave" following pressure from private medical college managements, who were unhappy with certain changes to an agreement on seat sharing and fee structure, suggested by the IAS officer. She went on leave on Tuesday.

Incidentally, the next seniormost official in the medical education department, Deputy Secretary K Vidya Kumari, was transferred on Tuesday.

"Rashmi has been requesting leave for some time and hence it was sanctioned. Health and Family Welfare Principal Secretary N Sivasailam has been placed in command until the secretary is back," Chief Secretary Kaushik Mukherjee told Deccan Herald. Medical Education Minister Sharan Prakash Patil said: "There has been no official direction to send her on leave."

Sources said private medical colleges were unhappy with Rashmi's plans to make changes to the consensual agreement.

Rashmi proposed that the private colleges should follow reservation roster and include the Hyderabad-Karnataka quota, they should not collect excess fee from students, linguistic minority colleges should return unfilled seats in the linguistic minority quota to the government and not convert them into management quota and they should give subject-wise seat share to the government in postgraduate courses. At present, the colleges do not give seats for subjects like radiology, which are in demand.

The private colleges, however, wanted the government to return the “unfilled management surrendered” seats to them after the counselling process. Rashmi is said to have taken a stand against this, saying once surrendered to the government, the seats could not be reverted to the managements. Incidentally, most medical colleges are owned by influential politicians, some of them being ministers.

DECCAN HERALD, MAR 5, 2014

Age-limit in IAS exams relaxed

After increasing the number of attempts for civil service aspirants, the government has now raised the age limit for appearing in the examination for which over two lakh people appear every year.

Last month, the government had announced the increase in the number of attempts by two in all categories, but had left open the issue of increasing the age limit.

The Department of Personnel and Training on Tuesday announced the decision on the extension of age limit.

According to new provisions, a general category candidate will have six attempts in place of the previous four. The age-limit for a general candidate has been increased to 32 years from the existing 30.

For an SC/ST candidate, the number of attempts is unlimited and the age limit has been raised to 35 years.

Until last year, the stipulation was for seven attempts and an age limit of 33 years for aspirants belonging to the Other Backward Classes (OBCs). However, as per the revised norms, an OBC candidate will now get nine attempts until 35 years of age.

Physically challenged candidates in the general and OBC categories will now be eligible for nine attempts as against the seven. The revised age-limit will be 42 years for general and 45 years for OBC candidates.

There is no cap on the number of attempts for physically handicapped candidates in the SC/ST categories, while there will be an age limit of 47 years for them as against the present 45 years.

The Civil Services Examination (Preliminary), 2014, is tentatively scheduled to be held on August 24. The examinations are conducted in three stages-- preliminary, mains and interview.

As per norms, a candidate who has attained the age of 21 years can apply for the examination.

PIONEER, MAR 5, 2014

IAS V LALREMTANGA APPOINTED AS UT SECY

AGMUT cadre IAS officer V Lalremthanga has been given the post of UT Secretary on Tuesday. Lalremthanga is the second AGMUT cadre IAS officer who is given a Secretary-level post in the UT Administration after Purna Puri, who is holding the charge of UT Secretary Information Technology.

The UT Administration on Tuesday appointed V Lalremthanga as Secretary Social Welfare, Cooperation, Animal Husbandry, Labour, Employment, Agriculture and chairman of Child and women Development Corporation, chairman of SC, BC and Minorities financial & Development Corporation relieving UT Home Secretary Anil Kumar and UT Finance Secretary Sarjit Singh of the said charges.

Lalremthanga is a 2004 batch IAS officer. In 2011, the Centre had approved two new posts of secretaries for the UT Administration. Earlier, the UT Administration had two secretaries including UT Home Secretary and UT Finance Secretary. The UT Administration had in 2012, given the charge of Secretary, Information Technology to the Arunachal Pradesh-Goa-Mizoram-Union Territories (AGMUT) cadre, ADMUT cadre IAS officer Purna Puri.

At present, UT Home Secretary and Deputy Commissioner posts are reserved for Haryana IAS officers while the UT Finance Secretary and Commissioner MCC posts are reserved for Punjab cadre IAS officers. The Adviser and Chairman Housing Board are appointed from the AGMUT cadre officers.

BUSINESS STANDARD, MAR 4, 2014

States want Centre to share burden from 7th pay panel

Sanjeeb Mukherjee

The government has cleared the terms of reference for the [seventh pay commission](#) for central [government employees](#), but the [states](#), which usually follow central norms in fixing [pay scales](#) for their employees, want to be adequately compensated for the hit they would have to take on their exchequer.

They want the [Centre](#) to direct the [14th Finance Commission](#) to compensate states for implementing pay scales, to be recommended by the pay panel.

Although implementing central pay panel's recommendations is not mandatory for the states, most states might do so given the precedent. As such, they sought assistance from the Centre, while sending their inputs on the Commission to the Union government.

In fact, some of them such as Punjab have even demanded the terms of reference of the pay panel and also its final recommendations should be discussed in a meeting of the National Development Council (NDC), which comprises all chief ministers and the Central government.

Interestingly, Bharatiya Janata Party's (BJP) Prime Ministerial candidate and Gujarat Chief Minister Narendra Modi said the constant increase in salary of government staff through pay commissions has led to a lot of distortion in the labour market. He wanted the panel to look at restructuring and cutting administrative flab rather than rewarding them through higher pay.

Modi, who in his recent interactions have been advocating the philosophy of maximum governance and minimum government, said any drastic increase in pay structure of central government employees and their corresponding adherence by states would impact their financial condition. According to him, high pay structure creates social and legal problems since the government have to resort to contract employment. Thus, two different categories of employees are created, which is bound to create "social and legal problems".

Congress-ruled state governments such as Assam, Karnataka, Manipur and Himachal Pradesh wanted the 14th Finance Commission - which would submit its report later this year - to adequately compensate those state governments which wish to implement the recommendations of the seventh pay commission.

INDIAN EXPRESS, MAR 3, 2014

Panel suggests reduced training period for IAS

Raghvendra Rao

A Committee constituted by the Department of Personnel and Training (DoPT) has recommended that the total training period for IAS officers be brought down from two years (103 weeks) to one-and-a-half years (75 weeks), despite opposition from the director of the Lal Bahadur Shastri National Academy of Administration (LBSNAA) towards the move.

The Kiran Aggarwal Committee, tasked with reviewing the content and duration of induction training of IAS officers, has recommended reducing the district training from the current 54 weeks to 33 weeks “in view of the strong feedback received from recent batches of IAS officers about the relatively sub-optimal effectiveness of attachments in the district and the relatively higher utility of independent charges for on-the-job learning.”

It has been argued that, given the rising median age of IAS officer trainees (around 28 years), the training duration must be reduced as many enter service with significant work experience and less potential years of service.

Introduction of a structured mid-career training programme and opportunities to avail short-term refresher courses after four years of service have also been cited to back the case for the reduction in training period. It has also been argued that any reduction in training or probation period would be welcomed by state governments given the general shortage of junior-level IAS officers. This would allow for longer tenures of IAS officers as SDMs, the report says.

LBSNAA director Padamvir Singh has expressed reservations against the move. “I do not entirely endorse the decision to reduce the duration of training period from 2 years to 1.5 years or thereabouts,” he wrote in an email to Aggarwal in January.

“The reason is that the feedback received from various quarters has not pointed in any significant manner to the need to reduce the duration from 2 years. Even in our discussions with State Government, and ATI representative and pass-outs from recent batches, the general refrain was more towards improving the content and delivery of training and refocusing it to the needs of adult learning.”

FINANCIAL EXPRESS, MAR 1, 2014

Centre mandates 7th pay panel to revise salaries, bring in talent

The Cabinet on Friday set the terms of reference for the newly constituted 7th Pay Commission, mandating it to review the government employees’ salary structure, incentives and bonuses in a bid to attract the most suitable talent in public services, enhance productivity and improve governance.

The panel, headed by former Supreme Court judge AK Mathur, has been asked to suggest ways to train government staff to improve their efficiency.

While the Sixth CPC suggested a performance-related incentive scheme (PRIS), the terms of reference for the new pay panel mandates it to "examine the existing schemes of payment of bonus, keeping in view, among other things, its bearing upon performance and productivity and make recommendations on the general principles, financial parameters and conditions for an appropriate incentive scheme to reward excellence in productivity, performance and integrity."

The government's additional annual outgo due to the sixth CPC has been about Rs 22,000 crore.

Bureaucratic delays in decision making and red tape has taken a heavy toll on the investment climate and the economic growth that has almost halved to 4.6% during the first three quarter of 2013-14 from over 8.9% during 2010-11.

Although government employees' salaries have been tripled every decade following the recommendations of successive pay commissions, there is little incentive for bureaucrats to take bold decisions and adhere to timelines than their counterparts in private sector. One of the reasons often cited by experts is the huge pay differential between government and private jobs and the unavailability of requisite skills and lack of professionals in public sector.

Accordingly, the new pay panel has been asked to work out the framework for a salary structure that is "linked with the need to attract the most suitable talent to government service, promote efficiency, accountability and responsibility in the work culture, and foster excellence in the public governance system. It will also recommend appropriate training and capacity building through a competency based framework".

Apart from the salary structure, the new pay panel will also examine the principles that should govern the structure of pension and other retirement benefits, including revision of pension in the case of employees who have retired prior to the date of effect of these recommendations, keeping in view that retirement benefits of all Central government employees appointed on and after January 2004 are covered by the New Pension Scheme (NPS).

The Seventh CPC will submit its report within 18 months of its inception and the new pay structure is expected to be implemented from January 2016.

Cabinet nod for Rs 1,000 minimum pension under EPS The Cabinet approved a minimum pension of Rs 1,000 per month for employees covered under EPFO that would benefit 28 lakh pensioners but will cost the exchequer an extra Rs 1,217 crore in 2014-15. The EPFO trustees had approved the proposal earlier this month.

HINDU, MAR 1, 2014

Constitute Pay Grievance Redressal Committee: HC

The Madras High Court has directed the State government to constitute a Pay Grievance Redressal Committee for its employees within three weeks.

The panel will be under the Chairmanship of Justice A.S. Venkatachalamoorthy, a former Chief Justice. The government could nominate one or two senior level IAS officers at the level of Principal Secretary on the committee. It should give specific terms of reference with a request to submit a report for taking a fresh decision regarding the enhancement/reduction of pay scales/grade pay of 52 or more categories of 20 or more departments.

The government should prescribe the time limit within which the report/recommendations should be submitted by the committee for taking a fresh decision. In view of the formation of the committee, the implementation of two GOs of February 2011 and July 2013 in so far as it affected any category of government servants/pensioners/family pensioners, which were not implemented as on today, should not be effected till a fresh decision is taken.

If any category of government servants of any department, which had been offered higher scales of pay as on date, it was open to the government to implement the same in so far as the pay scales which were beneficial to the employees.

A Division Bench comprising Justices N. Paul Vasanthakumar and P. Devadass passed the common judgment on a batch of writ petitions and appeals.

A grievance of petitioners was that the State government which implemented the VI Pay Commission benefits from January 1, 2006, notionally with monetary benefits from January 1, 2007, merely because some anomaly was pointed out by some association and prayed for enhancement of pay scale, was not justified in reducing the pay fixed thereby causing monetary loss.

Panel will be under Chairmanship of Justice A.S. Venkatachalamoorthy, a former Chief Justice

HINDU, MAR 1, 2014

Union Cabinet rolls out benefits package, hikes DA

J. BALAJI

PARTING GIFT

KEY DECISIONS OF UNION CABINET JUST DAYS AHEAD OF ELECTION DATE
ANNOUNCEMENT AFTER WHICH MODEL CODE OF CONDUCT WILL KICK IN

1 Dearness Allowance hiked to **100%** from **90%**. DA to be merged with basic salary. To benefit **50 lakh** employees and **30 lakh** pensioners. Hike will be effective from **January 1, 2014**.
• **7th Pay Commission** to be established

2 **Rs.1,000** per month minimum pension under Employees' Provident Fund scheme with effect from April 1. To benefit **28 lakh** pensioners, including **5 lakh** widows

3 Poll expenditure limit for each Lok Sabha candidate set at **Rs.70 lakh**. Limit for Assembly candidate is **Rs.28 lakh**

AID FOR EDUCATION & INDUSTRY

- Financial support for setting up **4 National Institutes of Design; 54 new Kendriya Vidyalayas** to be opened
- Boost to exports as spices sector gets aid. Special package for HMT, ITI, Hindustan Photo Films
- Work days under MGNREGA raised from **100 to 150** for tribal people
- National mission for sustaining Himalayan ecosystem

Just days ahead of the announcement of the Lok Sabha elections, the Union Cabinet on Friday increased the dearness allowance (DA) of Union government employees and dearness relief (DR) of pensioners by 10 per cent of the basic pay, taking the rate to 100 per cent.

It fixed the minimum monthly pension paid by the Employees Provident Fund Organisation at Rs. 1,000. The new rate, effective from April 1, is expected to benefit 28 lakh pensioners.

Further benefiting government employees, the Cabinet approved the terms of reference for the Seventh Pay Commission set up to suggest wage and allowance revision.

The increased DA and DR, which will benefit 50 lakh employees and 30 lakh pensioners and family pensioners, will be given with retrospective effect from January 1 in cash, but not before the disbursement of March salary.

The decision to increase the amount will cost the exchequer Rs. 11,074.8 crore a year and Rs. 12,920.6 crore for 14 months from January 2014 to February 2015).

EDUCATION

HINDU, MAR 5, 2014

No more dissection of animals in varsity labs

VIJETHA S.N

Dissecting any living thing in a zoology or life science class to study muscular movement or a beating heart will soon be a thing of the past. The UGC has reiterated its directive to stop dissection of any “live animal” in any university. A letter to this effect was received by some Delhi University colleges this past week.

“In zoological parlance a live animal will include even cockroaches and earthworms,” explained zoology professor P. K. Sinha, adding that the whole issue has placed teachers in quite a predicament as the very essence of zoology involved learning about the anatomy of animals and this cannot be replaced by any software.

“Students from the first year will have to be taught something or the other that involves experimenting with at least rodents or vermin,” he said, adding that they had stopped experimenting with frogs about a year ago since it was an endangered species and they had also received a notification to this effect.

“We will be stopping procurement of all animals from suppliers,” said Hindu College Principal Pradyum Kumar, adding that his college had received the letter last week.

The letter addressed to Vice-Chancellors and directors of educational institutions forbids dissection and experiments on live animals.

Plastinated specimen

“You are requested to come up with alternate modes of dissections using digital/plastinated dissected specimen. The expenditure for this purpose may be met out of the UGC block grants provided to the university during the XII plan period,” said the letter dated February 20.

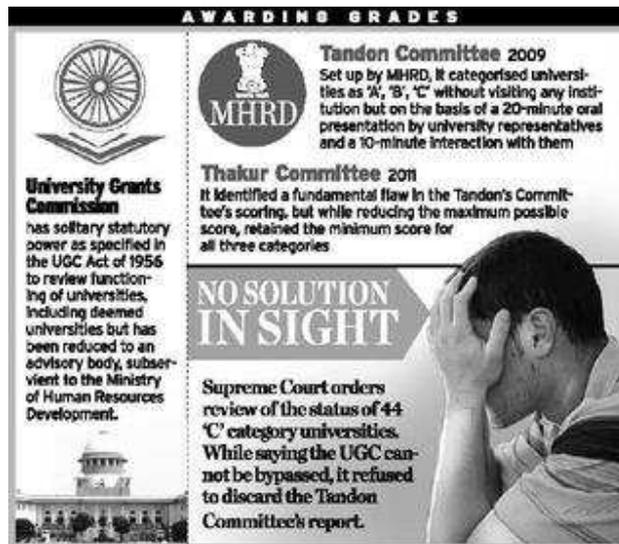
The UGC had prescribed guidelines for stopping dissections in a phased manner and suggested alternative methods of experimentation in November 2011, and the letter had also asked colleges and departments in every university to comply with it.

HINDU, MAR 5, 2014

A prescription for the ailing education sector

R. SETHURAMAN

The Supreme Court has missed an opportunity to clean the dirt that stains the University system, both public and private



The Supreme Court's 2014 new year order in the form of a University Grants Commission (UGC) review of 44 deemed universities has ensured more mental trauma for lakhs of students and applicants. Though it has not approved or disapproved of the infamous Tandon Committee, it has made a statutory body, the UGC, subservient to the Ministry of Human Resources Development (MHRD).

In June 2009, the MHRD rightly empowered the UGC, which had inspected the deemed universities before, to review the maintenance of standards in these institutions. The UGC had appointed different committees consisting of former vice-chancellors, senior professors from IITs and nominees from relevant statutory bodies. The committees visited all the deemed universities, and after a comprehensive analysis, submitted detailed reports on each university to the UGC. The inspection reports were accepted in the UGC's meetings in October and November 2009, and copies were sent to the concerned universities for immediate follow-up action and compliance within three months. The joint secretary of the MHRD represents the Ministry at the UGC meetings and is party to all these proceedings.

An arm-chair report

Despite the UGC having solitary statutory power as specified in the UGC Act of 1956 to review functioning of universities, including the deemed universities, the MHRD arrogated itself the authority, and during July 2009, constituted the Tandon Committee comprising four retired academics. The Tandon Committee directed the deemed

universities to make an oral presentation in New Delhi for 20 minutes and interacted for about 10 minutes with the representatives. The committee considered nine parameters for review and awarded scores of 5, 3, 1 and 0. It did not visit any institution and, on an arm-chair basis, categorised the universities as either 'A' (scores greater or equal to 30), 'B' (greater or equal to 18), or 'C' (less than 18).

The details of the entire process was not shared with the universities. Only when the committee recommended withdrawal of the deemed university status for those placed in the 'C' category were the universities rudely informed of the decision. They immediately filed writ petitions in the Supreme Court in 2009 challenging the constitution of the committee and the method adopted by it in awarding grades, alleging arbitrariness and discrimination. The Supreme Court restored status quo ante in its order in January 2010. Since then, the matter has been heard over 20 times and over two dozen interim orders have been passed with no conclusive decision in sight.

Based on one of the orders passed by the Court in April 2011, the MHRD constituted another committee — the Thakur committee — headed by the Secretary of the Ministry, Ashok Thakur, to individually review the 44 deemed universities and submit a report. The MHRD ensured that the process adopted by the Thakur Committee had the direct effect of the Tandon Committee's findings. This was a rude shock to all the deemed universities as the Thakur Committee pointed out a fundamental flaw in the Tandon Committee's scoring. It wrote in its report: "The rationale of weight of 5, 3, 1 and 0 for 'very good', 'good', 'fair' and 'unsatisfactory' was also looked into carefully. Since this had a deficiency — that [the] 'fair grade' was only one point ahead of the 'unsatisfactory' grade whereas other grades had a two-point difference with their next lower grade — instead of assigning 5, 3, 1, 0 weights to the four grades, 4, 3, 2, 1 weights have been assigned to all the points calculated for the 126 deemed universities."

Unfortunately, the Thakur Committee did not set right the "deficiency" by recategorising the deemed universities based on the new scoring. Having reduced the maximum possible score from 45 to 36, the committee stunned everyone by choosing to retain the Tandon Committee's minimum score of 30 for 'A', 18 for 'B' and less than 18 for 'C'. This was supported by unacceptable and inaccurate theories and clearly indicated that the committee did not wish to alter the findings of the Tandon Committee. Will anyone accept a theory where the maximum marks are reduced considerably but the passing mark is not reduced in the same proportion?

Acting strange is not new for the MHRD which embedded the innocuous Thakur Committee report as a 'bystander entity' in the Tandon Committee's chaotic report of glaring arbitrariness and bias, some of which have been highlighted.

An institution which was conferred with the deemed-to-be-university status in March 2009 was granted the 'A' grade (maximum score of 5 for admission), even when it said voluntarily that it did not admit any students under the deemed university mode. Likewise, in the research parameter criterion, impact factors or h-index are taken into account along with SCOPUS/SCI data for assessing an institution for its research output.

The Tandon Committee conveniently ignored these parameters and awarded institutions with higher impact factor and/or h-index scores of 3 and 1 and those with lesser impact factor with a maximum score of 5. The partisanship continues. In the case of one deemed university, a member of the committee declared it unfit to be granted that status and asked for it to be an autonomous institution. However, to everyone's shock, the university was placed in the 'A' category.

The entire Tandon Committee mechanism was kick-started because of a media sting operation exposing the admission malpractice in two deemed universities in Tamil Nadu, now being investigated by the Central Bureau of Investigation. To these universities, the committee awarded the 'B' grade for their admission procedure. The ongoing second review to upgrade them from 'B' to 'A', despite the matter being *sub judice*, is liable for contempt of court, and is also infested with faults.

The Supreme Court missed an opportunity to clean the dirt that stains the university system — public & private. Passing an interim order on January 9, 2014, the Court ordered review of the 44 'C' category universities and made it abundantly clear that the MHRD is not bound by the UGC review findings, thus reducing the UGC, a statutory body, to an advisory one. It may be legally correct but it has provided the much needed oxygen for the Tandon Committee, which submitted its resignation.

The country needs a systemic overhaul. The Supreme Court has prolonged the issue without reaching any finality. The MHRD must order for review of all the deemed universities, as undeserving ones have been placed in the 'A' category and deserving ones in the 'B' and 'C' categories. Also, the Tandon Committee's report is not an elixir of immortality. It has expired but is still used, causing damage to policy making. Before policy making dies of harmful dosage of expired academic steroids, the MHRD must provide the antidote and reform the entire deemed universities and public universities system. The right prescription needs to be written.

TIMES OF INDIA, MAR 3, 2014
Govt sends VC of DTU on leave
[Manash Pratim Gohain](#)

NEW DELHI: The Delhi government asked the [vice-chancellor of Delhi Technological University](#) (DTU) to go on leave from Saturday. A section of teachers had complained of violation of DTU Act and other rules in the recruitment process of 2012-13 at the behest of the VC, P B Sharma.

According to sources from the directorate of training and technical education, Sharma has been asked to proceed on medical leave as the department plans to probe the allegations against him. "But, on Thursday, Sharma resumed his duties saying he is medically fit. The directorate asked him to go leave, on Friday.

University Forum for Democracy and Innovations (UFDI), a teachers' body of DTU, had

made representations to the Delhi government under Sheila Dikshit, alleging irregularities in recruitment. UFDI also questioned the appointment of the pro-VC. The teachers had accused Sharma of resorting to a pick-and-choose policy in the appointment and removal of department heads.

Refuting all charges and terming the government's decision to send him on leave "unfortunate", Sharma told TOI: "All appointments had been made on the basis of advertisements and rules in keeping with DTU Act, with a list of subject experts from IIT, BHU and other prominent institutions approved by academic council and the former [lieutenant governor](#). All the appointments also got the approval of the board of management, the final authority. I don't see a reason why appointments made through statutory one and a half years ago should be the basis for sending the VC on leave. This is in violation of the Act."

Sharma has been the head of the institution, earlier known as [Delhi College of Engineering](#), for more than 24 years, and was supposed to superannuate on July 22, 2014 from the VC's pos .

TELEGRAPH, MAR 1, 2014

Nalanda gets funds & global status

New Delhi, Feb. 28: The Union cabinet today agreed to provide Rs 2,727.10 crore to Nalanda University to meet its financial requirements till 2021-22 and extend tax exemptions to the institution which will ensure it enjoys international status.

The decision comes within days of an interview Chancellor Amartya Sen gave to **The Telegraph** in which he spoke out over bureaucratic hindrances that were holding up the funds. Sen, an economics Nobel laureate, had also raised concerns over attempts by some mandarins in the finance ministry to alter the international character of the institute by questioning the privileges to be accorded to the university and its staff.

The university, coming up near the site of the ancient seat of learning in Nalanda, about 100km from Patna, is scheduled to begin classes in autumn this year.

The cabinet had in June last year approved the Nalanda University (Amendment) Bill, 2013. After it was tabled in the Rajya Sabha, it was referred to a Parliamentary Standing Committee which submitted its report recently. The matter was again brought to the cabinet as the government wanted to accept a few suggestions of the committee.

The cabinet today approved expenditure of Rs 2,727.10 crore that would help the university meet its capital and recurring expenses till 2021-22. However, there is no clarity about the funding for the institution after 2021-22.

The university board of governors is confident the institute will become much more financially robust by 2021-22. The blueprint for Nalanda University envisages that it will fund at least 50 per cent of its expenditure itself by 2021 — through donations. This, Sen and others are arguing, shows that Nalanda will not be a permanent financial drain on the government.

Vice-chancellor Gopa Sabharwal expressed happiness over the cabinet's decision for funding and bringing amendments to the Nalanda University Act. "The amendments approved have retained the international character of the university," Sabharwal said.

A media statement issued by the Press Information Bureau said the preamble of the University Act would include that it is a "non-state, non-profit, self-governing international institution having academic freedom for attainment of these objectives".

To further buttress the international stature of the institution, the cabinet also gave the go-ahead to the Headquarters Agreement, which has been signed between the ministry of external affairs and the Nalanda University for giving privileges and financial immunity like tax exemptions to the university and its staff. The agreement has been partly notified pending clearance from the cabinet.

Section 21 of the Nalanda University Act says members of all academic staff and their dependents shall enjoy privileges like exemption from taxation in respect to salaries, honoraria, allowances and other emoluments in connection with their services.

However, the central government had to enter into an agreement with Nalanda University to ensure such privileges are made available. The MEA had prepared a Headquarters Agreement in this regard which was signed in July last year.

Under this, the foreign academic staff will get appropriate visas and be exempt from foreigners' registration.

The agreement said the foreign faculty and staff members will enjoy the freedom to maintain within India movable and immovable properties. They can purchase, hold or dispose of any currencies, securities and funds through authorised channels.

Such privileges are extended only to the personnel of other international organisations such as WHO,

The Act will have a provision to extend similar immunities to the university. This means the assets of the university and its income will be exempt from all direct taxes, customs duties and prohibition and restriction on imports and exports in respect of articles imported or exported by the university.

The amended bill will now be brought to Parliament for passage.

STATESMAN, MAR 1, 2014

Educating educators

In the absence of a policy at the national level, the role of the National Council of Teacher Education has been reduced to that of an affiliating and inspecting entity without a built-in mechanism to enforce standards throughout the country ~ RUDRASHIS DATTA

There has been a significant evolution of the history of teachers' education ever since Edward Carleton Tufnell, a civil servant, established the Battersea College in England in 1840 in order to equip tutors with the methods of handling children living on the streets of London. It is recognised the world over that teaching children requires empathy, dedication, and methodological and psychological inputs.

The concept of teacher-education is only a few decades' old in India though individual efforts to train teachers in accord with the needs of children can be traced to Maria Montessori's efforts when she was in Madras in 1939. The setting up of the National Council of Teacher Education, through an Act of Parliament in 1993, marked the first step in the institutional control of teachers' education. The objective of the NCTE was 'to achieve planned and coordinated development of the teacher education system throughout the country, and the regulation and proper maintenance of norms and standards in the teacher education system'. In the absence of a policy at the national level, the NCTE's role has been reduced to that of an affiliating and inspecting entity without a built-in mechanism to enforce standards throughout the country. Effectively, the relationship between NCTE and teacher-education institutions has evolved from that of equal stakeholders to a cat-and-mouse game. Institutions are decked up before an 'inspection'. Things are back to square one once the 'inspection' process is over. The result of this glaring deficiency has led to the mushroom expansion of privately-managed teacher-education institutions with little concern for quality and a total disregard of the norms once the NCTE's recognition comes through. Its role has been crippled over the past decade with the proliferation of teacher-training institutions, effectively forcing it to adopt a 'recognize and forget' policy.

Until even a couple of decades back, a modicum of learning and a willingness to work in an ill-paid and highly idealized occupation formed the criteria for teaching. With the increase in emoluments, the focus has shifted to the vital issues of standards of instruction and efficiency. It is recognized the world over that while the exceptional teacher is born, teachers in general are made. The path to the 'making' of a teacher goes through critical parameters such as pedagogy, teaching of children, acute awareness of teaching methods and the mechanism of learning and instruction. Clearly, teacher-education programmes are meant to provide such vital inputs to a teacher both at the time of entry into the profession and throughout the professional career. Such programmes have advanced and diversified with more educational opportunities,

although actual practices vary from country to country. In the United States, for example, each state is allowed flexibility and freedom to devise a curriculum that takes care of local conditions. In the United Kingdom, there is a national level uniformity in courses and curriculum. The Indian condition is similar with the exception that it is fairly easy to join up a teacher-education programme and easier still to complete the course. With no provision for a compulsory update of resources and knowhow, our school teachers, though trained at the entry level or soon after entry, stagnate throughout their career leaving their students without the advantages of updated pedagogy and advanced instructional models.

Another drawback of the Indian system is the marked emphasis on theory, against practical components. This leaves teachers with little knowledge of the actual situation in the classroom. While they clear a theory-dominated training programme through learning by rote, they run short of practical teaching skills. This lacuna was noticed as early as 2003 by Malcolm Skilbeck and Helen Connell in their report to the Australian government titled 'Attracting, Developing and Retaining Effective Teachers'. The report noted that 'professional standards in teaching should not only typically refer to the content or subject-matter knowledge of teachers, but their communicative capability, their ability to organize, monitor, assess and evaluate learning and their practical competence as managers of learning in the school and the classroom.'

India realized this as late as 2010 when the 'National Curriculum Framework of Teacher Education' declared that 'teacher-education must engage with theory along with field experiences to help trainees to view knowledge not as external to the learner but as something that is actively constructed during learning. Teacher education should integrate academic knowledge and professional learning into a meaningful whole.' On a modest estimate, the country will require at least a decade to translate this critical observation to reality.

The school education scenario has changed considerably since the passing of the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009. Since the Act requires school enrolment of all children up to the age of 14, it is only a matter of time before three crore children who have been out of the school education system, shall knock on the doors of nearby schools for admission. Teachers will be left with little professional expertise to manage and educate such a large number of children in addition to the present strength. With teacher-education institutions lacking both in numbers and quality of instruction, it is a foregone conclusion that the standard of education for our children might be below par. The after-shocks of such a severely compromised school education shall be felt universally in our socio-cultural, economic and technological spheres for decades to come. It is another matter altogether that some states are circumventing the need for serious full-time teacher-education programmes with hastily planned, sketchily executed and cursory training courses under the open and distance mode with a view to attaining the required 'number' of 'trained' in-service teachers to satisfy the requirements of the

Right to Education Act. With the target of such 'programmes' being numbers, the quality of instruction and methodology adopted fall far short of acceptable standards in teacher-education.

It is apparent that India's teacher-education scenario is an unenviable mix of poor quality and equally poor numbers. Since one comes at the cost of the other, the fact that both quality and numbers are stacked against us points to the difficulties that lie ahead. One plausible model might be to shift the stress from pre-service to in-service teacher-education in a staggered manner that would last the entire stretch of a teacher's career rather than aiming to 'train' all teachers in a hurried manner. The Indian Education Commission, chaired by D S Kothari, famously declared in 1964 that 'the destiny of India is now being shaped in her classrooms'. It remains to be seen how our policy planners address the crucial challenges faced by teacher-education. These challenges are threatening to denude the national intellectual wealth.

PIONEER, MAR 5, 2014

NATIONAL SKILL QUALIFICATION FRAMEWORK TO BE IMPLEMENTED
The State Government has decided to implement the National Skill Qualification Framework (NSQF).

A high-level meeting to this effect was held under the chairmanship of Chief Secretary JK Mohapatra on Tuesday where Director General National Skill Development Agency (NSDA) JB Roy presented the objectives and utilities of the NSQF. Roy said that since Odisha has taken a number of initiatives in skill development, the NSDA would be happy to have active participation of the State in the National Skill Qualification Committee (NSQC).

The NSQF aims to integrate general and vocational streams of education. The State Government has earlier decided to have an enabling framework for entry and exist between general education and vocational training. The NSQF would provide impetus to it. This would help in alignment of Indian vocational qualifications with international standards.

Roy said the NSQF would be implemented through the National Skill Qualification Committees, which would comprise representatives from key Central Ministries concerned with skill development and State representatives. The sector-specific experts, representatives of regulatory bodies, training providers would also be there in the committee. The NSQF would supersede all other vocational training frameworks in due course.

Within three to five years, all Government-funded training and educational institutions would define eligibility criteria for admission to various courses in terms of the NSQF levels.

The Chief Secretary advised the Department of Employment, Training and Technical Education to work in close collaboration with the NSDA for qualitative skill development

in specific sectors like healthcare, pharmaceuticals, construction and mining. It has been decided to start with skill development training programmes in the health sector in the first phase.

HINDU, MAR 7, 20145

DU V-C all set for second term

VIJETHA S.N

Delhi University might continue to have Professor Dinesh Singh as its Vice-Chancellor, making him the first person in its 92-year-old history to get a second term in office. In the university's Executive Council meeting held on Thursday, an amendment was made to Statute XII-F (4) which contained a clause stating that a Vice-Chancellor is not eligible for a second term. This amendment qualifies him to re-apply for the post.

Prof. Dinesh Singh has been mired in controversy because of the intense opposition to most of his reforms and initiatives. The most vociferous opposition, however, came from the Delhi University Teachers' Association when he replaced the university's three-year undergraduate course with a new four-year undergraduate course that was interdisciplinary in nature and also had some compulsory subjects.

Even on Thursday, after the meeting ended, there were several cries of foul-play in the manner in which the Executive Council meeting was called using his emergency powers. "It is the blackest day in the history of the university. We are going to oppose him tooth and nail if he does get appointed again," said DUTA president Nandita Narain, explaining that the appointment was given since the three-member committee to appoint the next Vice-Chancellor would have two of the current V-C's nominees.

Another proposal that was accepted is to attach the UGC Code of Professional Ethics to Ordinances XI and XII to enforce as an actionable code of conduct. "This will also allow the V-C or the university administration to take direct action against established professors in the colleges based on personal prejudices or on account of not toeing the administration's line," Ms. Narain said.

The DUTA is also worried about the code since many of its clauses are so subjective that if they are made actionable, they may be misused through biased interpretation. "For example, there is a clause that says 'Teachers should refrain from inciting students against other students, colleagues or administration', which may be used by the Vice-Chancellor to punish any democratic expression of disagreement or criticism of the administration," said Ms. Narain.

HINDUSTAN TIMES, MAR 7, 2014

DU colleges need to apply for accreditation: UGC

Delhi University colleges will have to be cleared by the National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC) if they want to continue receiving grants from the University Grants Commission (UGC).

The commission has written to the vice chancellor of DU, asking him to inform all colleges about the public notice it issued in December last year. The notice says that the university and all colleges must apply for accreditation by June 1.

In case the application is not submitted in time, their funding may be discontinued in 2015.

The university has been asked to put the notice on its website.

Accreditation has been a point of contention in DU for quite some time now with detractors saying that it could hamper the growth of smaller and newer colleges.

“Accreditation will basically look at the infrastructure in college, the results, etc. There are still many colleges in DU that do not have the best of these things but they serve a very important role. We have seen in the past that such accreditation will lead to ranking which will create an imbalance. In DU, we tell students that every college is the same. Once accreditation and ranking is in place, we won’t be able to say that,” said a senior professor on condition of anonymity.

Others pointed out how accreditation can lead to fund cuts on the basis of ranking.

“This will be damaging to institutions that need the extra money to make sure they do better,” said another teacher.

INDIAN EXPRESS, MAR 7, 2014

DU clears code of ethics for teachers, 2nd term for V-C

Shikha Sharma

Delhi University’s executive council on Thursday approved the passage of professional code of ethics for teachers — an exhaustive set of guidelines created by UGC in 2010, detailing the ideal code of conduct for higher education teachers. The council also amended a university statute making the sitting Vice-Chancellor eligible for another term of office, instead of the prescribed “five years of office”.

The decisions received strong opposition from some teachers’ groups, who are “against the very idea of codification of professional ethics for the teaching community” and feel that “a five-year term is good enough for any Vice-Chancellor”. While students don’t agree with the decisions entirely, most believe that the power to take major decisions should not rest with a single individual.

The Code of Professional Ethics are general guidelines, that make “violations by teachers” punishable. “If the circumstances so warrant, the V-C may direct the governing body of the college to initiate action against a teacher on the grounds of misconduct, failing which the V-C may take such action as provided for in the act, statutes and ordinances of the university,” the agenda states.

“The guidelines are generalised, broad, and quite ambiguous. ...they can be easily misused by people in authority. Our contracts already have service conditions laid down in them. What is the requirement of additional instructions?” Aditya Narayan Misra, member of the university Executive Council (EC), said.

However, other EC members clarified that the fears were misplaced because the action taken by the V-C would be “guided” by the acts and statutes of the university. The code will also discourage absenteeism amongst teachers, another EC member said. “Besides, teachers should understand that extending second term for V-C does not mean the sitting V-C will get an additional term. Due process will be followed in the appointment,” an EC member said.

“According to the council’s decision, principals will now have a five-year term, with eligibility of reappointment for one more term after the due selection process is followed,” Abha Dev Habib, an EC member, said.

ELECTIONS

INDIAN EXPRESS, MAR 4, 2014

Blank column in affidavits will disqualify candidates

Raghendra Rao

All Returning Officers have been asked to carefully scrutinise the affidavits when candidates file their nomination papers.

Nominations without full details will be rejected: SC

Reject nomination papers if criminal past, assets not disclosed: Supreme Court
Apex court poser to Centre on poll panel view

Candidates often choose to withhold “inconvenient information” while filing the mandatory affidavit along with their nomination papers for elections, but now it will not be viable.

The Election Commission of India has decided that a candidate will have to fill every column with relevant information while filing the affidavit. “A candidate who chooses to leave any column blank in the affidavit will be liable to be disqualified. We plan to enforce this in the coming Lok Sabha polls,” a top EC functionary told The Indian Express.

All Returning Officers (RO) have been asked to carefully scrutinise the affidavits when candidates file their nomination papers. “ROs will inform the candidate about it (incomplete affidavit) and provide him or her an opportunity to fill any column that may have been left blank. If a candidate fails to complete the affidavit, the nomination papers will be rejected,” a senior EC official explained.

Information relating to criminal background, assets, liabilities and educational qualifications are sought in the affidavit. “Past experience has shown that many candidates chose not to fill some of the columns they found inconvenient at times. The columns they chose to leave blank were often related to their educational qualifications, liabilities and the market value of their immovable properties. It was felt that by withholding such inputs, the candidates were denying the voters information that could be critical for them to make a right choice,” a senior EC official explained.

Most of the major political parties, including the Congress and the BJP, had expressed strong reservations against the move, but the EC rejected their arguments.

HINDU, MAR 1, 2014

Poll expenditure ceiling raised

J. BALAJI

In a move that could be considered a relief to candidates in the Lok Sabha and Assembly polls, the Union Cabinet on Friday agreed to the Election Commission's suggestion that the ceiling on poll expenditure be raised. .

The government agreed to amend Rule 90 of the Conduct of Election Rules, 1961, increasing the ceiling for the Lok Sabha poll to Rs.70 lakh per candidate from Rs.40 lakh, and for the Assembly poll to Rs.28 lakh from Rs.16 lakh. However this is applicable only in the bigger States.

Increase in the number of electors and polling stations, and increase in the cost inflation index were some of the reasons cited for hiking the expenditure ceiling.

In Arunachal Pradesh, Goa, Sikkim, the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, Chandigarh, Dadra and Nagar Haveli, Daman and Diu, Lakshdweep and Puducherry, the ceiling for LS poll is Rs.54 lakh.

For the Assembly elections, the new ceiling in Arunachal Pradesh, Goa, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Sikkim, Tripura and Puducherry is Rs.20 lakh.

TIMES OF INDIA, MAR 6, 2014

Lok Sabha polls: Nine days that could shape or shake India

[Bharti Jain](#)

The gong's been sounded for one of the most exciting battles in Indian elections. It will be a longdrawn out contest, to be held in nine phases, spread over 36 days from April 7 to May 12.

The votes will be counted on May 16 and on that day or in the next few days it will become apparent who will form the next government — Narendra Modi, Rahul Gandhi or a surprise Third Front satrap.

Along with the Lok Sabha election, three states — Andhra Pradesh, Odisha and Sikkim — will also go to the polls.

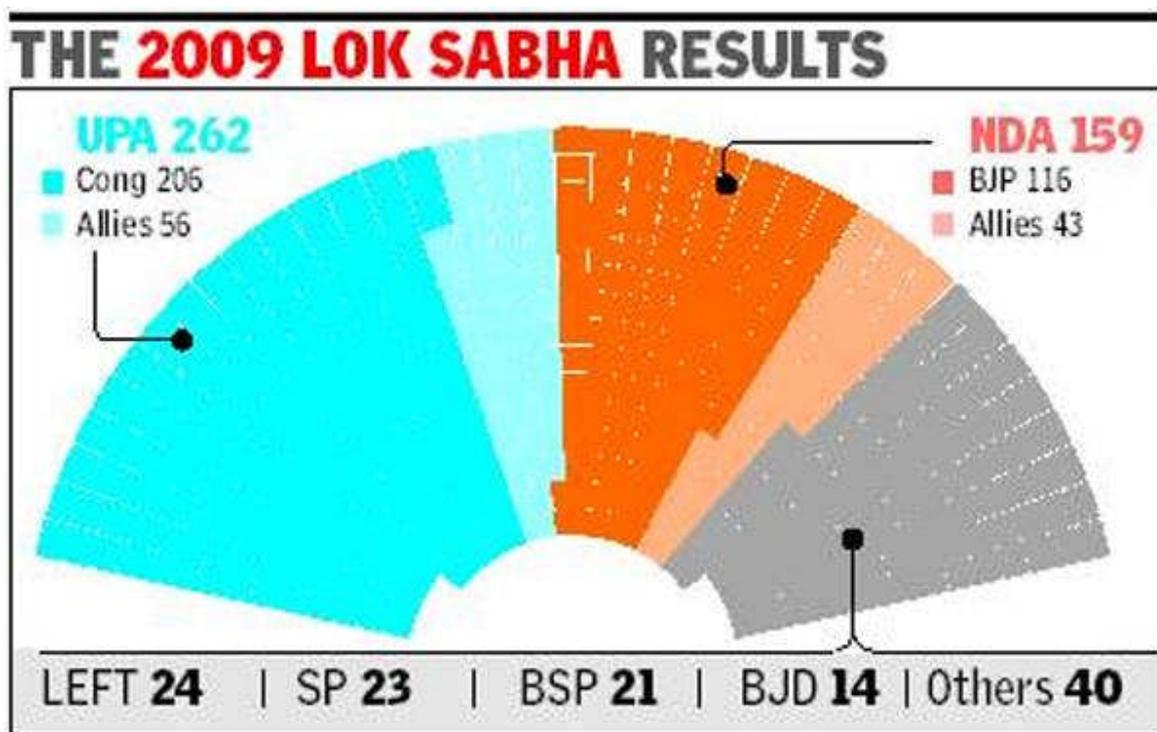
Assembly elections in Delhi will have to wait till a new government at the Centre has been formed. The nine days when polling will be held are April 7, 9, 10, 12, 17, 24 and 30 and May 7 and 12. The model code of conduct has kicked in with immediate effect.

Indian elections have been essays in uncertainty since 1967 when Congress's hegemony

faced its first serious challenge. However, indications are that the coming election may be even more exciting. While [Congress](#) and [BJP](#) are locked in a gladiatorial contest, the entry of AAP has inserted an X factor in the battle.

Going by opinion polls, Congress seems to be heading for its worst-ever performance with some estimates indicating that its tally may shrink to double digits. If that were to happen, the transition of the Congress leadership to Rahul Gandhi could become a wrenching process.

BJP appears poised to make big gains this time. Narendra Modi's arrival has energized the party's base and triggered hopes of a comeback after a decade-long power drought at the Centre . Unless BJP falls victim to its historical inability to live up to its promise, this Modi-led resurgence, coupled with a deep disenchantment with Congress, raise the possibility of his rightwing, growth-centric political model spreading to new constituencies.



The Aam Aadmi Party's stunning debut in Delhi has been a testimony to its success in tapping into the popular resentment against established parties in a remarkably short time. The coming election will show to what extent this fledgling party led by [Arvind Kejriwal](#) can convert its appeal into votes in other states. What's , however, already apparent is that AAP is fast becoming a thorn in BJP's flesh — the party it is now targeting after having routed Congress in Delhi.

Soon-to-be-born states, FB, Twitter add zing to 2014 polls

It has been reported that Kejriwal will contest from Varanasi if Modi fights from there. And on Wednesday, he was in Gujarat, queering Modi's pitch in his home state.

This election will also be different because of the spread of social media as a political tool. If the 2004 polls saw parties using mobile phones to reach out to voters, this poll will see Facebook, Twitter and various apps being used to mobilize the techsavvy among 149.5 million new voters.

The assembly election in Andhra Pradesh carries the possibility of two new parties forming governments in the about-to-be-born states of Seemandhra and Telangana. YSR Congress and Telangana Rashtra Samiti respectively are regarded as the frontrunners for the two states which will come into being after June.

KEY CONSIDERATIONS WHAT WILL BE ON TOP OF VOTERS' MINDS WHEN THEY PRESS THE BUTTON?	
<p>ALLIANCES Every government formed since 1996 has been a coalition. But this time, both Congress and BJP seem to be running short of partners, though the saffron camp has gained a couple lately. Post-poll alignments are likely but will be determined by how Congress and BJP score. Only if they can muster convincing numbers will the two parties get regional allies who might otherwise be tempted to take a shot at forming a govt on their own</p>	<p>leases and a tug-of-war over environmental clearances. Policy logjams held up projects and further undercut investment. Combined with price rise, it has stoked a sense of despair and resentment</p>
<p>PRICE RISE UPA escaped the adverse fallout of inflation in 2009 on the back of a strong stimulus package to beat the economic slowdown together with sops for farmers. This time, Congress seems to be paying the price for inflation along with corruption scandals that have soured the public mood. With bills soaring, the poor as well as the middle class voted against UPA in the assembly elections in December and the resentment is seen as a key driver also for what is being called the 'mood for change' at the Centre</p>	<p>MODI FACTOR The Gujarat chief minister's emergence as a prime ministerial candidate revved up the poll scene. He first beat a determined in-house bid to scuttle his candidacy and has since posed a challenge to Congress and regional rivals. Though seen as a polarizing figure, well-attended rallies have put his opponents on alert. He is creating waves, but the crucial test lies in BJP's capacity to convert sentiment into votes. This is a big challenge for BJP's creaky organization</p>
<p>JOBS The slowdown in India's economy has taken a toll on employment. Pink slips became common in the 2009-14 period. As growth dipped below 5%, even the services sector felt the pinch. Manufacturing has remained sluggish. Mining was badly hit in the wake of irregularities in allotment of coal</p>	<p>CORRUPTION Just as it seemed that corruption had ceased to hurt political parties, cynics had to beat a retreat. Commonwealth Games, 2G and coal mining scams hit UPA like a succession of tidal waves, leaving the Manmohan Singh government floundering in its second term in office. This provided the setting for Anna Hazare's Lokpal protests that left Congress gasping. The party's slow response to public anger made matters worse. In fact, the stunning debut of AAP showed that the anti-corruption sentiment covers the political class as a whole</p>

Among the states, UP and Bihar will vote on six days; West Bengal and Jammu & Kashmir on five; Assam, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra on three; and Andhra Pradesh, Manipur, Odisha, Rajasthan and Tripura on two days. There will be a single-day poll in Gujarat, Haryana, Punjab, Himachal Pradesh, Karnataka, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Uttarakhand and Goa, a majority of northeastern states and Union territories including Delhi.

Announcing the schedule, chief election commissioner V S Sampath, flanked by election commissioners V S Brahma and Nasim Zaidi, appealed to all political parties and

candidates to "uphold the peerless democratic traditions by maintaining high standards of political discourse and fair play in the course of their election campaigns". Sampath said, "We appeal to the leaders of all political parties, especially their star campaigners , to refrain from using language that is against decorum and decency".

EMPLOYMENT

HINDU, MAR 1, 2014

Cabinet raises number of workdays for tribals under MGNREGA

The new initiative will help counter left wing extremism: Jairam

In an effort to consolidate the tribal vote ahead of the general elections, the Union Cabinet on Friday increased the number of workdays under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) from 100 to 150 for those who have received land rights under the Forest Rights Act, 2006, provided they have no other private land and have already completed 100 days of work under the scheme in that financial year: the decision will come into effect from April 2014.

To distinguish this category from regular MGNREGA workers, they will be given a job card of a different colour.

Of the 14 lakh individual and community titles distributed under Forest Rights Act, 2006, eight lakh individual titles have been given in Andhra Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand and Orissa.

Rural Development Minister Jairam Ramesh told journalists that though the tribals would benefit most from this change, those belonging to other communities who are also beneficiaries under the Forest Rights Act, 2006 would also be covered by the decision.

“Through this decision of the Cabinet, this guaranteed employment will increase from 100 days to 150 days in the tribal areas of the country and in the districts, which are declared Maoist affected,” Mr Ramesh said here.

Mr. Ramesh said that the new initiative would help counter left wing extremism. “Not only will tribal families benefit from 150 days of employment, but it will also help in increasing the green cover in forests,” he added. The additional person-days through MGNREGA would also help the tribals to undertake additional work on their own land.

Going by the MGNREGA records for this category of tribals — who have been granted land rights under the Forest Rights Act, 2006, during the period 2011-12 and 2012-13, this will entail forking out an additional Rs. 206.70 crore every year at a time when the average annual expenditure under the scheme is roughly Rs. 40,000 crore each year. The government estimates that a maximum of 1.56 lakh tribal and other beneficiaries will be able to work to a full 150 days.

The government hopes this measure will stop migration, increase forest cover, revive degraded forest lands and prevent these families from being exploited by Naxalites.

GOVERNORS

HINDU, MAR 5, 2014

Sheila Dikshit to be Kerala Governor

Former Delhi Chief Minister Sheila Dikshit is all set to be appointed Governor of Kerala.

Ms. Dikshit, who led the Congress to a record three consecutive victories in the Delhi Assembly elections and remained the Chief Minister from 1998 to 2013, will replace Nikhil Kumar, former Delhi Police Commissioner, sources said.

Mr. Kumar, earlier appointed Nagaland Governor, is expected to contest the coming Lok Sabha elections on a Congress ticket from Bihar. He was earlier a member of the 14th Lok Sabha from the Aurangabad constituency in Bihar, representing the Congress.

PTI adds: Ms. Dikshit met Union Minister Sushilkumar Shinde in the morning and the decision to make her Kerala Governor was conveyed to her, they said.

During the Delhi Assembly elections last December, Ms. Dikshit suffered an ignominious defeat in the New Delhi seat at the hands of Aam Aadmi Party leader Arvind Kejriwal.

She had also represented the Kannauj Parliamentary constituency of Uttar Pradesh between 1984 and 1989.

HEALTH SERVICES

TIMES OF INDIA, MAR 5, 2014

Private hospitals to stop CGHS cashless scheme from March 7

[Sunitha Rao R,](#)

The move will affect 50 lakh serving employees and over 30 lakh pensioners, as well as their family members.

BANGALORE: In a blow to government employees, including those who have retired, the [Central Government Health Service](#) has announced withdrawal of cashless medical service in private hospitals empanelled with the CGHS scheme from March 7. Patients will henceforth have to cough up hospital charges and later claim the amount from the government, according to the new rule.

The move will affect 50 lakh serving employees and over 30 lakh pensioners, as well as their family members. At a conservative estimate, the total number of persons affected could well be over two crore.

The move was necessary, said the Association of Healthcare Providers India (or AHPI, the nodal body of private empanelled hospitals) for a number of reasons, the main ones being CGHS owes these hospitals around Rs 200 crore in unpaid services as well as "unreasonably low" CGHS tariffs that haven't been revised for the last four years. A doctor's consultation fee, for example, remains Rs 58.

Also, AHPI says CGHS makes "illegal" deductions of 10% on all payments leading to losses for member hospitals. AHPI claims the amount runs up to Rs 180 crore.

In Karnataka, 20 hospitals, all in Bangalore, are empanelled with AHPI. HCG, [Apollo hospitals](#), MS Ramaiah Memorial Hospital and [Bangalore Baptist Hospital](#), among others, will not provide the cashless health scheme from March 7.

"When we were empanelled with the government, it was agreed upon that we will get 10% rebate on treatment charges if the government pays within seven days. But now, this deduction has been made applicable even when the amount is unpaid for years. That's illegal. This has led to huge losses for member hospitals amounting to over Rs 180 crore over the past three years," says Dr Alexander Thomas, CEO, Bangalore Baptist hospital, who represents AHPI in Bangalore.

Some hospitals have put up a public notice to this effect, reading, "CGHS tariffs are unreasonably low and not been revised for the last four years, threatening the very existence of the medical service providers."

Dr Naresh Shetty of AHPI said, "The empanelled hospitals have been providing services

under most difficult circumstances. They had to deal with steep hikes in electricity and water tariff, consumables, wages, taxes. We've been requesting a revision since June 2013 but there's been no response."

Official speak

The dues are just one issue. The bigger issue is that a doctor's consultation charge of Rs 58 is appalling. The fees for several procedures are abysmally low. We don't want to let down our beneficiaries but we have no choice. We ask the CGHS to consider the rates of the National Accreditation Board for Hospitals & Healthcare Providers. We've suggested that if at all CGHS were to take tender route, let CGHS decide the rates based on lowest bid received from NABH - accredited hospitals. Adopting rates like this would be logical and rational. Treating a patient can't be made similar to selling onions and potatoes.

STATESMAN, MAR 7, 2014

Centre did not do enough in health sector: Planning commission member

Pradip Chatterjee

During the last Five Year plan, the Centre did not allocate much money for the health sector and failed to fulfil its promises to enhance health infrastructure. It could not even deliver what it intended to do in the last five years, said Ms Syeda Hameed, member, Planning Commission.

While speaking at a global health conference in the capital, she said that with the growing number of cases of non-communicable diseases in the country the Centre should have done otherwise. It had promised that 3.5 per cent of the GDP would be spent for the health sector but failed to achieve the target.

The government has been able to deliver a road map for faster, more inclusive and sustainable growth which would be fulfilled in the next five year plan (2012-17), Ms Hameed said.

While discussing the challenges of health care services in India, she said that tackling the non-communicable diseases (NCDs) is really a tough challenge before the government. The number of patients suffering from diabetes will be nearly doubled in 15-20 years. It has been observed that children are being affected by disease in large numbers in the rural areas where they do not get access for treatment. In the last two years 55 million people have been affected by diabetes, among which 30 million are women.

She stressed upon the need to tackle life-style diseases and mental health. "I have seen a large number of people suffering from life style diseases at Bilaspur in Chhattisgarh. Awareness must be spread among the people specially in the villages to fight the diseases caused by the life style disorders. The mental health is another sphere where the doctors

need to look into,” she said. With stresses having gone up, taking care of mental health is very important, specially at a time when the atrocities on women are on the rise. She laid emphasis on building up better infrastructure in primary, secondary and tertiary health centres. Lack of screening due to the shortage of health centres in the rural areas and the lack of awareness leading to the rise of NCD cases.

“All the stake holders should come forward and strengthen the hands of the government as it alone could not bring in the changes in the health sector,” Ms Hameed said. Prof Srinath Reddy, President of the Public Health Foundation of India said that NCD is the biggest threat to public health.

“Primary Health Care must be good, otherwise national health schemes cannot be implemented. 90 per cent deaths in poor countries like India are caused by NCDs below the age of 60. Around 101 million people will be suffering from diabetes in India by 2030 while the number was 61 million in 2011. Tamil Nadu is a model for treating patients suffering from high blood pressure, cervical cancer and for screening of NCDs in the district level,” Prof Reddy said.

INCOME

HINDU, MAR 5, 2014

Interest rates of small savings schemes raised

MORE FOR SMALL SAVINGS		
SCHEMES	EXISTING	FROM APRIL 1
Savings deposit	4	4
1-year time deposit	8.2	8.4
2-year time deposit	8.2	8.4
3-year time deposit	8.3	8.4
5-year time deposit	8.4	8.5
5-year recurring deposit	8.3	8.4
5-year SCSS	9.2	9.2
5-year MIS	8.4	8.4
5-year NSC	8.5	8.5
10-year NSC	8.8	8.8
Public Provident Fund	8.7	8.7

Rate of interest (in %)

The Union government has raised the interest rates on select fixed deposit schemes offered by post offices.

Interest rates on time deposits of various maturities have been raised by 10 to 20 basis points.

The rate hike comes just ahead of the Lok Sabha poll announcement by the Election Commission. The rate hike will come into effect from April 1, 2014.

The interest rates on the five-year senior citizens savings scheme, the five-year monthly income scheme, five-year and 10-year National Savings Certificates and Public Provident Funds have been kept unchanged.

A communiqué from the Ministry of Finance has stated that necessary notifications will be issued separately in due course.

The rate hike decision is in line with the recommendations of the Shyamala Gopinath Committee for Comprehensive Review of National Savings Fund (NSSF).

LIBRARIES

HINDU, MAR 5, 2014

'State fails to claim rare Telugu works lying in Thanjavur library'

The Sarasvati Mahal Library and Research Centre at Thanjavur in Tamil Nadu.-Photo:
By Arrangement

One thousand and forty three Telugu palm-leaf manuscripts dating back to several centuries are lying in Sarasvati Mahal Library and Research Centre at Thanjavur in Tamil Nadu and they should be brought back to the State, Central Sahitya Akademi Yuva Puraskar recipient Vempalli Gangadhar said on Tuesday.

The invaluable palm-leaf manuscripts included Telugu Mahabharatham, Andhra Bhagavatham, Sri Kalahasteswara Mahtyam, Amukta Malyada, Kumara Sambhavam, Haya Lakshana Vilasam and Kiritabhiramam. The manuscripts were left in the library at Thanjavur when Andhra Pradesh separated from Combined Madras State in October 1953.

K. Balakrishnan, Administrative Officer of Sarasvati Mahal Library and Research Centre and Personal Assistant (General to Thanjavur District Collector, furnished information sought under Right to Information Act by Dr. Gangadhar that 1,043 titles containing 708 original manuscripts and 78 manuscripts collected from scholars were available in the library. Telugu manuscripts in good condition were kept available for bonafide scholars doing research in recognised universities, the letter added.

Thanjavur Maharaj Sarabhoji II (1798-1832) founded the library. Though the Thanjavur Maratha royal family members filed petitions on sharing property in 1918, they unanimously took a decision not to claim any stake on the library. On the royal family's request, the Madras Government took over the Sarasvathi Mahal and renamed it as Maharaja (Sarabhoji) Sarasvati Mahal Library.

The Union Government declared it as a national project in 1986 and running it with Central and State Government representation. The Thanjavur District Collector and a five-member governing body were overseeing the functioning of the library, he said.

Dr. Gangadhar urged the State government to get back the manuscripts and publish the valuable works, without neglecting the manuscripts dating back to several centuries. Thousands of original works such as 'Andhra Dheeropakosam, Annapurna Parinayam, Nrutya Ratnavali, Bhama Kalapam' were among those that need to be published to preserve the rich literary heritage.

HINDU, MAR 1, 2014

Libraries to get books worth Rs. 50 lakh

Zilla Grandhalaya Samstha Chairman I. Raghu Raju has said that it would buy books worth Rs. 50 lakhs for all the 42 libraries in the district shortly.

It is being done under the title ‘Laksha pusthakala sekharana’ (procurement of one lakh books). He said that the samstha had received 2,200 books so far from various publications for reference. The committee of Grandhalaya Samstha comprising secretary Kumara Raja, and members, Principal of Government Sanskrit College Swapna Hyndavi, Deputy DEONagamani, DPRO Govindarajulu, and faculty members from DIET, Polytechnic and Sanskrit College met on Friday and inspected the books .

Speaking on the occasion, Mr. Raghu Raju said that the samstha would order books for reference, competitive examinations, science, and books of interest for all ages. The books would be in Telugu, Hindi and English languages.

The committee members selected books from the reference books. The Chairman appealed to people to donate books to the library.

HINDU, MAR 3, 2014

Tiruvannamalai library goes for online public access catalogue

A.D. BALASUBRAMANIYAN

Helps locate the books of your choice easily

Optimising technology: Colour coding helps in preventing mix up of books from different categories at Tiruvannamalai District Central Library.— Photo: C. Venkatachalapathy

If a reader wants to know if a book of his/her choice is available in a central library with one lakh and odd books on shelves they would have to browse through the manual catalogue, which would be a laborious task.

Tiruvannamalai District Central Library with 1.12 lakh books have done away with this hurdle by properly utilising the Online Public Access Catalogue (OPAC) solution. They update the database immediately after receiving a book and properly arrange books in shelves, to make it easy to find out.

With the help of OPAC solution, provided by directorate of public libraries, people can check <http://thiruvannamalai.tnopac.gov.in> and know if certain book is available in the library.

Search can be done by using author’s name, books title etc. The result will show if the book is available with the library or not.

If available, the result will also show the category of the book, if it is a reference book or if it is available for lending, if presently available in shelves or lent to readers, if lent, date due for its return and the call number of book which will help the librarian to easily locate it.

Central librarian in charge of the library A. Sairam told *The Hindu* that they have employed an innovative method to easily identify books of each category and prevent their mixing up with others.

“We have given colour code for every type of book and stuck colour tapes accordingly on the cover of every book. For example, if you see red tape on the cover of a book that is novel, yellow means religion, silver colour means book on self improvement etc. It helps us prevent mix up. Coupled with colour coding we can effectively implement OPAC. This is in open domain and anybody can search and find out if book of their choice is available in our library. If members came to library and registered themselves for OPAC they can login, find out and reserve a book for themselves. We would not lend a book reserved by another member,” he said.

“Though only a few use this facility currently, some readers from places like Tirukkoilur, Manalurpet found a few books they need available in our library and asked us if it could be lent to them. Sensing their interest in the book I have sent those books to their own library and asked them to get it lent from there,” Mr. Sairam added.

A. Vasudevan, president of readers’ circle of the library said that Tiruvannamalai District Central Library stands first in updating books and implementing OPAC.

The library received awards from the government for enrolling maximum number of members and donations among other district libraries in the State, in the year 2012. It received award for enrolling maximum number of benefactors (Puravalars) in the year 2013, he added.

District Library Officer K.N. Rajendran said that the library was doing excellently with regard to OPAC.

MONEY

FINANCIAL EXPRESS, MAR 4, 2014

Pre-2005 notes can now be exchanged till January 2015

SUMMARYThe Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has extended the date for exchanging the pre-2005 banknotes to January 01, 2015, from the earlier deadline of July 1 this year

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has extended the date for exchanging the pre-2005 banknotes to January 01, 2015, from the earlier deadline of July 1 this year. The banking regulator has also advised banks to facilitate the exchange of these notes for full value and without causing any inconvenience to the public.

“This withdrawal exercise is in conformity with the standard international practice of not having multiple series of notes in circulation at the same time. A majority of such notes have already been withdrawn through the banks and only a limited number of notes remain with the public,” RBI said in a notification on its website on Monday.

In January, this year, RBI had issued an advisory saying it is withdrawing all notes printed before 2005 and asked the public to exchange such notes for newer ones at bank branches. The move had invited ire from various fronts and was viewed as being strategically timed ahead of the general elections.

Also, the instruction that individuals will have to produce proof of identity if they turn in more than 10 currency notes of denominations of R500 and R1,000 had prompted many to infer that the central bank is trying to curb illicit money flow into the formal financial system.

Following this, governor Raghuram Rajan had clarified that there is no attempt to demonetise the currency notes and has nothing to do with the elections. To curb illicit money flow, the RBI will have to announce demonetisation of currency notes and give a deadline beyond which these cease to be legal tender. However in the current case, the central bank has not given such a deadline.

HINDUSTAN TIMES, MAR 4, 2014

Take note: Reserve Bank of India goofs up, invalid notes in circulation

The next time you withdraw money from your ATM, you could well get currency notes that are not valid.

In an embarrassing goof-up, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has issued currency notes in 2014 carrying the signature of its former governor D Subbarao, who retired last year.

HT could not ascertain the exact denomination and total value of these flawed currency notes but sources said they are high denomination notes.

“These notes are not legal tender as they carry the signature of a retired RBI governor. To be valid, they ought to have carried current RBI chief Raghuram Rajan’s signature. However, they can be exchanged at any commercial bank,” said a senior bank official.

Commenting on the issue, RBI explained in an email: “Currency note production is a manufacturing process. Making changes in the process takes time... Changing the governor’s signature on the banknotes is one such process. To complete the process in all the banknote presses for all denominations of banknotes is a programme which is underway and is expected to be completed in due course.”

NEWSPAPERS

TIMES OF INDIA, MAR 3, 2014

Newspaper industry faces existential crises

RAVINDRA KUMAR

Beyond the rituals of a landmark celebration, there are important facets of our life as a society of [newspapers](#) that must be acknowledged. We are 75. By virtue of our age, and our experience, we must be presumed to possess a mature appreciation of the needs of the newspaper industry. We have faced several crises in the years gone by. We have dealt with these with equanimity and occasionally, even with a degree of skill.

But it must be noted that this jubilee is being celebrated even as the newspaper industry faces an existential crisis, one whose contours haven't quite been appreciated by various stakeholders — including government and newspaper employees. A recent judgment of the Supreme Court, upholding the validity of an Act that ought to have been circumscribed or even repealed by the legislature for its lack of relevance to 21st century India, threatens to drive many of us to closure and it may do so after it has taken a severe toll on the industrial peace we have so carefully nurtured. Our forbearers crafted beneficial legislation that took into account the newspaper's capacity to pay. In other words, it was aimed at being a sustainable model of wage determination. Now, in the hands of authority, it has empowered a prescription that is far divorced from even the newspaper's capacity to earn.

It ill behoves me as head of a premier industry body to wonder on its 75th birthday if it will survive until its 100th. Such dire thoughts might even be considered inauspicious. But the crisis that looms and the storm clouds that have gathered, are direly ominous and therefore these fears must be voiced. Someone wise once said books and minds work only when they are open; both literally and metaphorically this is valid for newspapers as well.

There are other challenges, too. The health of newspapers is undermined by the presence of other media. It is undermined by occasionally intrusive policies of the government that impact our sustainability. It is undermined by rising costs, especially by the fall in the value of the rupee that directly impacts our cost of production, since a large quantity of newsprint that we consume is still imported. It is undermined by advertisement policies of central and state governments that elevate to a fine art the subvention by newspapers of the state's messages to citizens.

Equally, it must be admitted that the health of newspapers is also undermined by the actions of some of us, especially by a phenomenon such as paid news that strikes at the very roots of an independent press. Unhealthy competition, predicated on the desire to consolidate [media](#) power, assails the democratic commandment to present a plurality of

views.

These challenges too must be addressed. The point i wish to emphasise though is that the Society, as a responsible body of newspapers and periodicals, is quite capable of dealing with challenges, provided it is allowed to do so. The fact that we are 75 underlines our maturity; it ought not to give rise to the belief that we either need assisted living or judicially-directed [euthanasia](#).

We note with some alarm and considerable dismay that the solution of those in authority is to legislate or to impose regulations on us, when we are quite capable of determining solutions and imposing these on ourselves. Amendments to the [Press and Registration of Books legislation](#), especially moves to link content to licensing, are a case in point. The continuance of the anachronism of wage boards, withdrawn from every other industry, is another. Artificial and arbitrary fixation of government advertisement rates, is yet another.

Newspapers disseminate knowledge. They empower citizens. They play a critical role in nation-building. They nurture the intellect, and offer a cerebral counterpoint to the occasionally mindless shenanigans of other media. A democracy thus owes it to itself to ensure that its newspapers are empowered to be free, to be fearless.

A jubilee is a milestone and our commemorative book to mark this milestone, quotes the first prime minister of India, [Jawaharlal Nehru](#), extolling the virtues of a free press in these ringing words:

"To my mind, the freedom of the press is not just a slogan from the larger point of view, but it is an essential attribute of the democratic process. I have no doubt that even if the government dislikes the liberties taken by the press and considers them dangerous, it is wrong to interfere with the freedom of the press. By imposing restrictions, you do not change anything; you merely suppress the public manifestation of certain things, thereby causing the idea and thought underlying them to spread further. Therefore, i would rather have a completely free press with all the dangers involved in the wrong use of that freedom, than a suppressed or regulated press."

These are the words of a liberal; they are words that deserve to be cast on tablets and placed in every newspaper office and in various nodal ministries of the press. But it is the slow poisoning of the well of liberalism that has compromised the completely free press Nehru had envisioned. On this occasion, our platinum jubilee, it is important for all of us — those inside newspapers and those responsible for policy — to revisit the basics of freedom and liberalism, and to craft a path that makes newspapers both relevant and viable.

In presenting the first copy of this book to the nation's first citizen, it is this Society's

earnest wish and prayer that winds of change will fan the fires of freedom, and cleanse us of the occasional intolerance that has dogged the polity. As [James Madison](#) said more than 200 years ago, "I believe there are more instances of the abridgment of the freedom of the people by gradual and silent encroachments of those in power, than by violent and sudden usurpations."

It is these silent encroachments that we must cast aside as we chart a course for the future.

The writer is president, [Indian Newspaper Society](#). These are excerpts from a speech by him on February 27.

PARLIAMENT

HINDU, MAR3, 2014

When Parliament fails to act

ARUNA ROY AND

As the people of India have been faced with a Parliament that has been deliberately non-functioning, they have no choice left but to demand that the President promulgate ordinances to bring in laws on which there was a clear consensus

NO END IN SIGHT:By not passing the Grievance Redressal law for example, every Indian citizen will continue to be frustrated by an unaccountable delivery system.—

The demand for ordinances to be promulgated on consensus legislations such as the Grievance Redressal Bill, has to be seen in the context of the failure of the 15th Lok Sabha to function. In the midst of statements from some Opposition parties that the government should not promulgate ordinances, there is a persistent demand from some people's movements and campaigns that consensus legislations should be promulgated as ordinances. One of the major reasons for using the ordinance provision of the Constitution with caution is to make sure the government does not use it to impose a law that Parliament may have disapproved of. The ordinance as a short route has therefore often been criticised, even by us for bypassing Parliament. In this case it does not. On the contrary, it takes already deliberated and examined Bills on which a consensus has been reached, but is marred by Parliament's failure to legislate.

Lapsed Bills as betrayal

There are no absolutes in procedure, so long as they do not violate laws, and the Constitution. According to the rule book, Bills pending that were initiated in the Lok Sabha have lapsed. The cost of the loss to human effort, money, and time especially in cases where there is broad agreement on the laws, is colossal. The passage of these laws would on the one hand have benefitted everyone, including the most marginalised, and on the other not wasted the efforts of parliamentary process: endless presentations in front of standing committees and hours spent on formulating and drafting and redrafting them.

The provision of Article 123 of the Constitution states that ordinances can be passed when Parliament is not in session and "circumstances exist which render it necessary for him (the President) to take immediate action." We believe that when the people of India have been faced with a Parliament that has been deliberately non-functioning, they have no choice left but to demand that the government and President use these provisions to bring in laws on which there was a clear consensus. This demand is made in a context where Parliament has barely functioned for five years and met in its last special session essentially to adjourn. The contentious Telangana Bill, and a few other important Bills were passed with great difficulty; 68 Bills lapsed with the proroguing of the parliamentary session. The demand for ordinances is limited only to a few Bills. A coalition of citizens groups actually implored Parliament to at least pass those in which there was agreement. By not passing the Grievance Redressal law for example, every Indian citizen will continue to be frustrated by an unaccountable delivery system with no

redress or recourse. Many of these concern life and livelihood issues such as food, water, health, education, etc.

Not by choice

Interestingly, within this Parliament and outside, the Grievance Redressal law had the greatest support. It went through every process of consultation including full discussion in the Standing Committee which unanimously and strongly recommended immediate passage. All of Parliament included this as a part of the sense of the house resolution — a solemn assurance from Parliament that along with the Lokpal, a Citizen's Charter and Grievance Redressal Bill would be passed with urgency. Continual pressure then led to passage of the Lokpal Act. Members across parties called upon the government to pass both the Whistleblower's Protection Bill and Grievance Redressal law without which they pointed out that the passage of the Lokpal would be incomplete. Not passing these consensus Bills amounts to a betrayal of the people.

Parliament carries a solemn responsibility to carry out its mandate of making laws that are needed. The demand from the coalition was for a full-fledged legislation; not an ordinance. Seeking recourse to the exceptional route of the ordinance is not by choice.

Not a permanent fiat

Why did Parliament fail to pass these laws? All through this last session, going from one party to the next, leaders expressed support and agreed that there was a pressing need for passage, while they blamed other parties for not cooperating. There was a definite sense that petty politics and political one-upmanship were holding the immediate legislative needs of the people to ransom. Day after day, with the clock ticking, the desperation of citizens' groups mounted as it seemed clear that assurances outside, and behaviour on the floor of the house did not match. Years of work, discussion on every point — within and outside Parliament — Bills going back and forth between Parliament and the Government were all going to be lost. As a country, we were facing a completely unjustifiable legislative vacuum. In the last week of the final session of Parliament, the "coalition for passage of consensus laws" began to demand ordinances in the event that Parliament failed to carry out its promise.

Article 123 must be seen as a recourse open to people just as much as it is open to the government of the day. Therefore, to project this only in political terms as we approach an election is unfair to the justified demands of people waiting for legal recourse. Not passing a law in a matter like Grievance Redress is a huge loss to uncountable citizens, many lives and an entire generation.

While making this demand for an ordinance, one must also recognise that it is not a permanent executive fiat. In fact, even more than in a case of an executive decision which the government of the day is free to continue with or change, an ordinance is necessarily subject to parliamentary approval. If ordinances are promulgated, when the 16th Lok Sabha reconvenes, it will immediately have to examine them and ensure that the law is

enacted or amended as per laid down parliamentary process. By promulgating an ordinance now, citizens could begin to use the provisions to access their entitlements, seek redress, and even point out possible shortcomings that the law might have. Those shortcomings could be removed by the 16th Lok Sabha.

The President has expressed anguish at the non-functioning of Parliament. Unfortunately, Parliament paid no heed to the appeal from him or anyone else. The President now has an opportunity to send a clear message that if Parliament fails to legislate, people will demand their right to legal remedies. It is now incumbent on the government and the President to meet that demand.

Passing an ordinance in this case does not subvert the parliamentary process. In an incremental process of building law and subordinate legislation, this would only be one tentative step forward. For the citizens' right to the redress of their grievances, not having the ordinance would be six steps backwards.

The promulgation of ordinances must be seen as a recourse open to people just as much as it is open to the government of the day

POLITICS AND GOVERNMENT

ASIAN AGE, MAR 5, 2014

June 2 fixed as formation day for Telangana

The Centre has fixed June 2 as the formation day for Telangana, the country's 29th state. The Union home ministry is issuing a formal notification late Tuesday night announcing June 2 as the "appointed date" when the states of Telangana and residuary Andhra Pradesh formally come into existence, splitting the undivided state of Andhra Pradesh. The decision came after a meeting between home minister Sushilkumar Shinde and President Pranab Mukherjee late on Tuesday evening.

In an effort to set in motion the process of fulfilling the promises in the Andhra Pradesh Reorganisation Act, the home ministry sent a letter to all Central ministries telling them to kickstart work on various initiatives proposed for the development of Telangana and the successor state of Andhra.

The Centre has decided to establish institutions of national importance in the successor state of Andhra Pradesh, that includes one IIT, one NIT, one IIM, one IISER, one Central university, one petroleum university, one agricultural university and one IIIT. The Centre will also establish one AIIMS-type super-specialty hospital- cum-teaching institution in Andhra, and one tribal university each in Telangana and the successor state of Andhra.

HINDU, MAR 1, 2014

Andhra Pradesh to be under President's Rule

B. MURALIDHAR REDDY & ANITA JOSHUA

Ending days of suspense, the Union Cabinet on Friday recommended imposition of President's Rule in Andhra Pradesh while keeping the Assembly in suspended animation.

There was political uncertainty after Chief Minister N. Kiran Kumar Reddy resigned and quit the Congress in protest against the decision to bifurcate the State. Placing the Assembly under suspended animation is a mere technicality as its term ends on June 1. Andhra Pradesh will have simultaneous Assembly and Lok Sabha elections.

While the Congress, the TRS and the YSR Congress justified the decision, TDP chief N. Chandrababu Naidu called it a blot on democracy.

Former Finance Minister Anam Ramanarayana Reddy said installation of a new government ahead of the election would have been irrational. Another former Minister, J. Geetha Reddy, said the Congress high command had opted for President's Rule taking into account all aspects.

Seemandhra Congress leaders had lobbied for postponement of the Assembly elections, saying it would help cool tempers over the creation of Telangana. But the proposal was not legally tenable.

(With additional reporting by Ravi Reddy in Hyderabad)

ASIAN AGE, MAR 3, 2014

LS passes bill to create 29th state amid din, TV blackout

[K.S. JAYASEELAN](#) |

The Congress and BJP came together in the Lok Sabha on Tuesday to pass the bill to carve out a separate Telangana, that will become the 29th state of the Indian Union, by splitting Andhra Pradesh, amid din and chaos and an unprecedented blackout of television coverage.

The Andhra Pradesh Reorganisation Bill 2014 was passed by voice vote after Leader of the Opposition Sushma Swaraj lent support to it in a debate.

The passage of the bill, after 90 minutes of pandemonium through which the clause-by-clause amendments were piloted by home minister Sushilkumar Shinde, brings to fruition the process set in motion on December 9, 2009 by then home minister P. Chidambaram.

The Lok Sabha's decision was greeted with celebrations in Hyderabad, the nerve centre of Telangana and the most sought after capital by rival Seemandhra, where protests erupted immediately. The government has promised to set up an expert committee within 45 days of formation of Telangana to give suggestions for a new capital of the residuary Andhra Pradesh.

The home minister promised to give a special financial package to Seemandhra to address its concerns. The bill was introduced on February 13 amid bedlam, including the use of pepper spray, fisticuffs and breaking of House property.

The bill is now expected to go to the Rajya Sabha for its approval, perhaps as early as Wednesday, during which the BJP has promised to move some amendments.

Andhra Pradesh's Congress chief minister Kiran Kumar Reddy, who has all along been resolutely opposing the creation of Telangana, may submit his resignation on Wednesday, it is learnt. Sources close to him also hinted he may leave the Congress and float a new party.

YSR Congress leader Jagan Mohan Reddy termed the passage of the bill as a "murder" of democracy and called for a bandh in Andhra Pradesh on Wednesday in protest. The Lok Sabha resembled a battlefield when the House assembled at 3 pm with Congress MPs like Aaron Rashid, Lal Singh, Bhakta Charan Das, Hamdullah Syed, Mahabal Mishra, besides others, forming a shield to protect Mr Shinde and other senior leaders seated in the front row from protesters. Strangely, the CPI(M) and the Trinamul Congress came together, and that too into the well of the House, to protest against the bill, obviously keeping in mind the demand for "Gorkhaland" in West Bengal. Congress president Sonia Gandhi, Union ministers P. Chidambaram and Kamal Nath were seated in the front row. Union ministers Chiranjeevi, K.S. Rao and D. Purandeshwari were in the well of the House

demanding “justice.” Pallam Raju and Killi Kruparani were seen standing in the aisle. MPs held placards that read “Save Andhra Pradesh”, “We oppose bifurcation of Andhra Pradesh” and “We want a un-divided Andhra Pradesh”. Slogans were raised repeatedly protesting against the division of Andhra. TMC members were heard shouting “Aaj ka din kala hai, Congress-BJP joda hai”; “Aaj ka din kala hai, Rahul-Modi joda hai” and “Sushma-Sonia jodi hai”. The DMK, protesting over the manner in which the bill was being bulldozed through, also staged a walkout.

Even outside the Parliament complex, heavy security was deployed in its vicinity to prevent any untoward incident.

Telangana Congress MP Ponnam Prabhakar touched the feet of Sonia Gandhi when she briefly left the House for a while. Even after passage of the bill, he tried to take out a poster of Sonia, but was told not to do so.

Leader of the Opposition Sushma Swaraj lashed out at the government at the manner in which the bill was being passed, and said: “I and my party support the bill. Telangana should be formed. We rise to prove our credibility and to see the wishes of the youth of Telangana are fulfilled.”

Accusing the Congress of not only delaying Telangana’s formation but also mishandling the situation, she recalled how the Atal Behari Vajpayee government had created three states without any disturbance in any region. “You have been in power in the last 10 years, but you did nothing. You just sat over it”, she told Congress president Sonia Gandhi.

Rejecting Kamal Nath’s charge that BJP was playing a “double game” by supporting the bill and also calling it unconstitutional, she told the media later the provision giving law and order powers to the governor was “unconstitutional”. She said it was the Congress which was playing a double game. Its own CM was staging a dharna in the state opposing the decision of the Centre headed by his own Prime Minister, she pointed out.

Union minister S. Jaipal Reddy, who spoke for Telangana, said that the demand had been there for 60 years. He said: “I don’t think any demand has been raised for such a long period with such an intense feeling.” He wondered if the Seemandhra leaders were “sleeping like Kumbhakarna” all these years. But he was promptly told by Mrs Gandhi not to use harsh words.

Deploring the manner in which the bill was pushed through amid complete blackout of the proceedings on Lok Sabha TV, the Trinamul Congress said the incident reminded one of Emergency days. The home minister justified passage of the bill in the din, saying: “Aise cheeze hoti rahti hain (Things like this keep happening).”

When asked about passage of the bill, TRS MP and actress of yesteryears Vijayashanthi said: “Seemandhara people have lost; we have won.” At the end, TRS chief K.

Chandrasekar Rao walked up to Ms Sushma Swaraj and thanked her, to be followed by Vijayashanthi.

Fearing trouble in Andhra Pradesh, the Centre deployed nearly 10,000 additional Central forces to deal with pro-and anti-Telangana agitations. This is besides the Central forces already deployed in state for anti-Naxalite operations. Sources said more forces were kept on standby to tackle any situation arising out of any fresh outbreak of clashes and law and order problems. Of the 10,000 personnel, nearly 4,800 belong to the CRPF and the Rapid Action Force.

INDIAN EXPRESS, MAR 3, 2014

President's rule imposed in Delhi, L-G likely to hold key meeting today

Ruhi Bhasin

Delhi Lieutenant Governor Najeeb recommends President's rule

With President's rule imposed in Delhi on Monday, Lt-Governor Najeeb Jung has become the direct administrator of the National Capital Territory. While he can appoint a group of advisers, who essentially act as a council of ministers, the L-G is unlikely to do so, sources said.

“The Lt-Governor feels the daily functioning of the government can be handled without appointing a council of ministers. At most, two to three officials of IAS or DANICS rank may be appointed to ensure better coordination between the L-G's secretariat and the Delhi Secretariat,” a source said.

Meanwhile, the chief secretary met the Lt-Governor on Monday along with other senior government officials. Sources in the L-G's office said it was a regular meeting, which takes place every Monday.

The L-G is expected to hold a meeting of all heads of departments on Tuesday. “The heads of departments are expected to apprise the Lt-Governor on decisions taken by the AAP government in the 49 days it was in power. Also, the future course of action will be discussed,” the source said.

Earlier, files related to policy decisions used to be forwarded to the L-G, but now all files relating to the functioning of the government will have to go through him. “All decisions taken in the Cabinet in the last 49 days will have to be studied by the L-G's office to ascertain whether they had the required financial clearance and were within the framework of existing laws,” an official said.

According to the Constitution, President's rule cannot last beyond six months. Sources said under President's rule, there will be no major development work and it will just manage day-to-day affairs of the government. Moreover, powers of the legislature will be exercised by or under the authority of Parliament.

President's rule was imposed after Arvind Kejriwal's resignation as Chief Minister on Friday, hours after his government's move to introduce the Jan Lokpal Bill fell through in the state Assembly.

According to a statement issued by the L-G's office, the President will now act through the Lt-Governor for administering the NCT.

A statement, issued by the L-G's office on Monday, said, "The President of India, on the advice of the Union Cabinet, has imposed President's rule in the National Capital Territory of Delhi under Article 239AB of the Constitution. The resignation of Arvind Kejriwal along with his council of ministers has been accepted by the President of India with immediate effect..."

The government is expected to get the notification regarding President's rule in Delhi ratified by Parliament on Wednesday, a senior official said.

TRANSPORT

HINDU, MAR 4, 2014

Trams coming back to Chandni Chowk

In the 1960s, the humble tram plying on Delhi's roads for over five decades came to a grinding halt for the simple reason that there was no more space for it. The growing vehicular traffic that threatened its existence then will now have to make way for it with the Lieutenant-Governor Najeeb Jung approving a proposal to bring back trams that were first introduced in Delhi on March 6, 1908, at the behest of Viceroy Lord Hardinge.

Part of a proposal for redevelopment of the Chandni Chowk area, Mr. Jung on Friday approved a design to introduce trams in the 3-km stretch that connects Subash Marg with Fatehpuri Masjid. The meeting was attended by officials from the Public Works Department, civic bodies and representatives from traders and non-motorised vehicle users of the area.

“The design involves a tram service that will connect the stretch linking Red Fort with Fatehpuri Masjid and will run alongside wide footpaths like the ones in Connaught Place,” said a senior Delhi Government official. “Vehicular traffic will be restricted in the area and only non-motorised vehicles will be allowed. However, there will be an emergency lane for ambulances,” said the official. With the design approved, the next step is to call the tender for it, the official added.

In its heyday, trams were the “most convenient and cheap means of conveyance” said Delhi chronicler R.V. Smith. “The tram tickets were priced at half an anna, one anna, two annas and four annas (the ticket for the longest route),” he said. “It used to move so slowly that people could easily jump off and buy biryani and snacks and then board the tram again,” he added.

The trams that ran from 1908 to 1963 connected Jama Masjid, Chandni Chowk and Sadar Bazaar and were just half as big as a Metro train, said Mr. Smith. “In 1921 the popularity of trams was at its peak but soon after there was a general strike in which the tramways were also badly affected and this probably led to rethinking and introduction of city buses for an expanding Delhi a decade or so later,” he said. “Trams were discontinued simply because there was no space for them due to the growing number of vehicles in Delhi.”

It will connect the stretch linking Red Fort to the Fatehpuri Masjid

WASTE TREATMENT

BUSINESS LINE, MAR 1, 2014

DRDO brings high altitude waste disposal technology to homes

The biodigester technology turns human waste into biogas and odourless compost. It was developed by the research team of the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) several decades ago.

The technology was used by defence personnel operating at high altitudes.

The technology, to accelerate microbial degradation of organic waste, has now been used in a residential complex for the first time.

The entire water would be recycled for various purposes. "Nature is not something that we have inherited, for our own consumption. Nature is what is entrusted to us to be passed on to our children and future generations," said Avinash Chander, Scientific Advisor to the Defence Minister, and Secretary, Department of Defence Research and Development.

He made the remark while inaugurating 'Anusandhan Vihar', the first-of-its-kind modern, sophisticated and self-contained residential complex at DRDO Estate in Timarpur.

A biodigester park was also inaugurated by Amitabh Kant, CEO, Delhi Mumbai Industrial Corridor Development Corporation.

(This article was published in the Business Line print edition dated March 1, 2014)

WOMEN

HINDUSTAN TIMES, MAR 6, 2014

Women should be home by 8pm: LSR students

Students of Lady Shri Ram College for Women, one of the most progressive colleges in the country, think that women should be inside their homes by 8pm.

This irrespective of whether they live with their parents or on their own. This, along with various other findings, have been thrown up by a survey carried out by the institution, released at the college's academic congress on gender. More than 1,000 respondents took part in the survey. All the respondents were from LSR but from varied regions and backgrounds.

The time interval, considered safe to travel at night, is determined by the diktat issued by parents and self-imposed by the respondents. The respondents were re-categorized into students staying with parents and students not staying with parents. As per parents' expectations, daughters should be home by 8 pm. The pattern of responses in both the categories is similar.

"Hence, it may be deduced that denial of access to public spaces meets with the tacit approval of young women, as they impose restrictions upon themselves" the report says.

The survey asked respondents what their most significant identity was. According to 63% of the respondents, profession was the most significant identity, followed by 27% choosing gender. Only 1% women identified themselves on the basis of caste, 4% on the basis of religion and 5% on the basis of region.

The correlation between gender and profession, however, is a deeper one, the survey shows.

"It is interesting to note that when mothers are home-makers, 64% daughters prefer to take up teaching as a career. This may be attributed to the fact that though young women want to be financially independent, they continue to associate women with the role of home-maker," the report says.

Fathers, too, affect the choice of their daughters' profession. "About 50.3% daughters are motivated to work in the IT sector, banking etc if their fathers are professionals (in similar fields)," the report states.

The freedom in choosing their profession, then the report counters, is not very simple and depends on a number of other factors including gender.

The data reveals that for young women, career-choices are explored from the vantage of the impending familial roles.