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CIVIL AVIATION

TELEGRAPH, MAR 25, 2014

DGCA directive

New Delhi, March 24 (PTI): The Directorate General of Civil Aviation today came out with a list of dos and don'ts for business jet operators who fly VIPs for campaigning and warned them and their pilots of penal action if safety guidelines were not adhered to.

The guidelines direct the operators and flight crew to ensure that no unauthorised cash, narcotics or arms are carried on planes. The rules also include submission of passenger details to the aviation regulator a week in advance.

A special cell has been set up within the DGCA to monitor flights of non-scheduled charter operators, official sources said.

PIONEER, MAR 25, 2014

JET CRASHED IN INDIAN OCEAN: MALAYSIAN PM

Wreckage yet to be found, UK satellite data makes breakthrough

Malaysia Airlines jet with 239 people on board, including five Indians, missing for 17 days crashed in the southern Indian Ocean with no survivors and their families have been informed, Prime Minister Najib Razak stated on Monday, citing new satellite data.

“With deep sadness and regret that I must inform you that, according to this new data, flight MH370 ended in the southern Indian Ocean,” a grim-faced Najib told a specially convened Press conference.

The announcement came on the fifth day of an international search effort in the southern Indian Ocean, with Australian and Chinese planes reporting spotting of several floating objects, about 2,500 km west of Perth.

There is no official word yet on the wreckage of the Boeing 777-200 that went missing on March 8. Najib said he will hold a Press conference on Tuesday, indicating that he will then come out with more information on the aircraft.

Based on new analysis UK's Air Accidents Investigation Branch (AAIB) and Inmarsat, the British company that provided satellite data, “We have concluded that MH370 flew along the southern corridor, and that its last position was in the middle of the Indian Ocean, west of Perth,” he said.

“This is a remote location, far from any possible landing sites.” “We share this information out of a commitment to openness and respect for the families, two principles guiding this investigation,” he said.

He said Malaysia Airlines officials have already spoken to the families of the passengers and crew to inform them of the new development. “I urge the media to respect their privacy, and to allow them the space they need at this difficult time.”

His announcement came 17 days after the Beijing-bound plane with 239 people, including five Indians, on board disappeared mysteriously from radar screens, one hour after taking off from Kuala Lumpur.

The list of passengers on board included 154 Chinese, 38 Malaysians, 7 Indonesians, 6 Australians, 5 Indians, 4 Americans and 2 Canadians.

Indians, including three from one family, were identified as Chetna Kolekar, 55, Swanand Kolekar, 23, Vinod Kolekar, 59, Chandrika Sharma, 51, and Kranti Shirsatha, 44.

Meanwhile, an Australian ship was trying to retrieve objects located in the area earlier in the day. Two objects - the first grey or green and circular and the second orange and rectangular - located by an Australian P3 Orion aircraft in the area, Australian Premier Tony Abbott said.

A Chinese Ilyushin-76 plane reported spotting “white and square” objects in the same location. Malaysia Airlines in a statement said, “We humbly offer our sincere thoughts, prayers and condolences to everyone affected by this tragedy.”

The firm said the ongoing multinational search operation will continue, as authorities seek answers to the questions which remain. “Alongside the search for MH370, there is an intensive investigation, which we hope will also provide answers,” it said.

Authorities believe, based on radar and satellite data, that the plane was deliberately taken off-course after the communication system shutdown by someone on board.

Based on information, the search has been in two distinct corridors - one stretching to the north-west of the last known location in the Malacca Straits and one to the south-west.

Since none of the countries on the northern corridor have reported any radar contact with the missing plane or satellite images, the search for possible debris has been concentrated in the southern Indian Ocean.

CIVIL SERVICE

FINANCIAL EXPRESS, MAR 29, 2014

IRS officers brought on spl secy pay scale; on par with IPS,

Government has appointed eighteen senior Income Tax department officers to the rank of principal chief commissioners

Government has appointed eighteen senior Income Tax department officers to the rank of principal chief commissioners in the top pay scale of R80,000 per month, bringing them on par with top secretaries and DGPs.

The step was much awaited as the IRS had made a long time demand to bring their seniormost officers on par with those in the IAS and IPS.

The finance ministry issued an order appointing 18 principal CCs of I-T on Thursday. The top post in the Indian Revenue Service (Income Tax) cadre till now used to be either a chief commissioner (CC) or a director general (DG) which is equivalent to an additional chief secretary rank officer but the government last year approved a massive cadre restructuring of the I-T department after which the senior most officers stand to get a pay scale on par with the DGPs and top secretaries of the government.

“A total of 18 chief commissioners, including three women officers, have been appointed and posted as principal chief commissioners with a salary of R80,000 per month. Till now, an Income Tax department officer could only rise upto a chief commissioner level which is an addl secretary rank post,” a senior official told PTI.

As the restructuring of the Income Tax department is still being done by the Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT), the 18 officers will officiate from their incumbent posting as there are no new charges to be held.

Sources said, close to a dozen more senior CCs and DsG are expected to be appointed as the principal CCs in the near future.

At present there are about 40 CCs and DsG in the I-T department spread across its various wings like investigation, intelligence, vigilance, HRD and administration, among others.

The central government in May last year had sanctioned a large-scale cadre restructuring of the I-T department and created 20,751 posts, in various ranks.

According to the new blueprint of the CBDT in this regard, the step will also bring in a number of new changes aimed at taxpayers' comfort.

While the number of assessment units of the department would be "increased by 1,080 from 3,420 to 4,500 for strengthening the tax administration" the step is expected to "bring additional revenue of R25,756.04 crore per annum against an expenditure of R449.71 crore per annum".

BUSINESS STANDARD, MAR 26, 2014

Takru is new revenue secretary, Sandhu gets financial services

After Bose's retirement, senior most among all five secretaries in finance ministry will be appointed Finance Secretary

The government on Tuesday appointed [Financial Services](#) Secretary [Rajiv Takru](#) as revenue secretary. He will take over charge from [Sumit Bose](#), also finance secretary. Bose retires on March 31.

[Gurdial Singh Sandhu](#) from the Rajasthan cadre was named financial services secretary. He will take over from Takru when the latter relinquishes his charge, the appointments committee of the Cabinet said on Tuesday.

After Bose's retirement, the senior most among all five secretaries in the finance ministry will be appointed finance secretary. Economic Affairs Secretary Arvind Mayaram is a 1978 batch officer from the Rajasthan cadre. Expenditure Secretary Ratan P Watal, from Andhra Pradesh cadre, is also from the batch. As such, seniority in terms of the merit list in that year's Indian Administrative Service (IAS) examination may form the basis of the appointment of the finance secretary. Chances are Mayaram may be appointed.

With Sandhu's appointment, the finance ministry will have three secretaries from the Rajasthan cadre. Divestment Secretary Ravi Mathur also belongs to the Rajasthan cadre of the 1979 batch.

Takru, a 1979 batch IAS officer of the Gujarat cadre, took charge at [department of financial services](#) (DFS) on the retirement of D K Mittal. Before becoming secretary, Takru was additional secretary and financial advisor in the ministry of health and family welfare.

Sandhu, a 1980 batch IAS officer, comes to DFS at a time when the banks are seeing

huge bad loans and the Reserve Bank is in the process of issuing new bank licences. At present, he is principal secretary in his state and had his last stint with the Centre during 2003-2008 as joint secretary in the chemicals and fertilisers ministry.

Bose, a 1976 batch IAS officer from the Madhya Pradesh cadre, is handling the revenue portfolio. An alumnus of Doon School, St Stephen's College in Delhi and the London School of Economics, he served in key roles such as expenditure secretary, divestment secretary, secretary in 13th Finance Commission, and principal secretary, finance, in Madhya Pradesh.

HINDU, MARN 26, 2014

Govt. employees to get e-mail accounts

AKANKSHA JAIN

External service providers to be prohibited from official purposes: Centre to HC

Five million government employees will now be given e-mail accounts and it will be mandatory for them to use the same for all official communications while the use of external service providers will be prohibited for all official purposes to ensure secure access and usage of data, the Centre told the Delhi High Court on Tuesday.

The Department of Electronics and Information Technology has told the Court in an affidavit that “The Policy on Acceptable Use of IT Resources of Government of India lays down the guidelines with respect to use of all Information Technology resources. This would apply to all IT resources, owned or leased by Government of India, and services accessible on or through them. The objective of this policy is to ensure proper access and usage of Government of India’s IT resources by all its users and protect the Information and Communications Technology infrastructure of the Government from any misuse.”

“The infrastructure will be scaled up to address the requirements of issuing e-mail ids to 5 million Government employees and to cater to a larger user base as and when required,” it said.

The affidavit has been filed in response to a PIL filed by former BJP leader K. G. Govindacharya through advocate Virag Gupta raising a series of issues relating to operation of websites, tax being paid by them, their use by children below 18 years and also highlighted that the government officials usually use Gmail accounts, whose servers are outside India, and transfer the official data through them is violative of the Public Records Act.

The department has said in the affidavit that it has framed “E-mail Policy of Government of India” and “Policy on Acceptable Use of IT Resources of Government of India” and

they were considered by the Committee of Secretaries (CoS) headed by the Cabinet Secretary on March 14 and requires augmentation.

In a separate affidavit, the service tax department said the service tax rules are applicable to Facebook India and Google India and that “Respondent No. 3 (Google) is registered with the Office of the Commissioner of Service Tax, New Delhi, for providing various taxable services and is paying Service tax on a regular basis.”

It said in year 2009-10, Google paid service tax of Rs.61.52 crore, in 2010-11 Rs.40.47 crore, in 2011-12 Rs.58.34 crore and up to September 2012, it had paid service tax of Rs.32.53 crore.

“The field formulations of Central Board of Excise and Customs, Department of Revenue, Ministry of Finance have already initiated enquiries against M/s Google India Pvt. Ltd. and others for detecting evasion, if any, of Service Tax and recovery thereof,” the affidavit said.

In another affidavit, the Income Tax department told the High Court that the incomes of Facebook India and Google India are subject to Indian tax regime and their foreign counterparts did not fall under the Indian taxation net.

“It is pertinent to mention that the private respondent nos. 2 and 3 (Facebook India and Google India respectively) are residents of India and their income is subject to taxation in accordance with the provisions of the Income Tax Act, 1961,” it said.

“Private Respondent Nos. 9 and 10 (Google Inc and Facebook Inc) are foreign companies which are not residents of India and only that income of these respondents which is taxable in accordance with the provisions of the Income Tax Act, 1961, and the India-USA Double Avoidance Agreement will be taxable in India.....” the affidavit said.

- Bid to ensure proper access and usage of Government of India’s IT resources
- Infrastructure to be scaled up to cater 5 million Government employees

TIMES OF INDIA, MAR 24, 2014

War over posts of secretaries far from over

CHANDIGARH: Slugfest between officers from Arunachal Pradesh, Goa, Mizoram, Union Territories (AGMUT) and Punjab and Haryana cadres over posts of secretaries seems to continue as highlighted by a recent letter written by UT home secretary Anil Kumar to the Haryana government.

Kumar has urged the state government to take up the issue with the Union ministry of home affairs (MHA) besides the state Assembly as discontent has been brewing among bureaucrats from the neighbouring states after UT's move to get three more posts of secretaries sanctioned last year.

It started with the charge of an Additional Deputy Commissioner that was being held by Punjab Civil Service (PCS) and Haryana Civil Service (HCS) officers being handed over to an IAS officer of the AGMUT cadre in January this year. The charge at that time was being held by an HCS officer.

The appointment of AGMUT cadre officer Prerna Puri as IT secretary had led to a controversy with the then IT director Yogesh Kumar, who is an HCS officer, writing to the UT administrator over the secretary moving into his office.

While other officers don't come out openly to criticize this, they rue that the charges traditionally held by Punjab and Haryana bureaucrats are being given to AGMUT officers.

Since the present structure of the UT administration came into place, the departments in the Chandigarh administration have been either held by the home secretary (Haryana cadre) or finance secretary (Punjab cadre) with no UT-cadre officers entrusted with the charge of the administrative secretary.

But UT home secretary Anil Kumar's wings were clipped soon after he joined in 2011 on deputation as charges of some of the important departments like the chief vigilance officer, education, personnel, technical education, house allotment committee, food supplies, law and justice, urban local bodies and tourism were not given to him.

Meanwhile, charges of the departments with the finance secretary from Punjab have not been changed.

TRIBUNE, MAR 24, 2014

Cadre row reaches Centre
Rajmeet Singh

The controversy in the Chandigarh Administration over curtailing the powers of the Haryana-cadre officers has reached the Union Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA). Taking a serious note of the issue raised by the UT Home Secretary and other Haryana-cadre officers on deputation in Chandigarh, the Haryana Chief Secretary has taken it up with the Union Home Secretary.

Though the issue has been brought to the notice of the Haryana Chief Minister, Bhupinder Singh Hooda, the matter is now being pursued at the level of the Chief Secretary as the model code of conduct is in force.

Sources said the Haryana officials had taken a serious note of actions by the UT-cadre officers, who were harming the interests of Haryana. The matter is expected to be taken up more vigorously with the Centre after the elections in Chandigarh and Haryana come to an end on April 10.

In a recent letter written by the UT Home Secretary to the Haryana Chief Secretary, the UT Administrator and the UT Adviser have been blamed for sidelining the Haryana-cadre officers.

The withdrawal of key departments from Haryana officials and these being given to junior level UT-cadre officials has led to heartburn among the Haryana-cadre officers.

It was learnt not only the Haryana-cadre IAS officers, but also the Haryana-cadre HCS officers, who are on deputation in Chandigarh, were unhappy with the past developments.

A number of senior bureaucrats, who have had stints in Chandigarh, had been consulted about their experiences before taking up the matter with the MHA.

The sources said after clipping the portfolios of the Home Secretary, there was a reported move to clip the portfolios of another Haryana-cadre officer.

The UT-cadre officers in the Chandigarh Administration have gone a step ahead in accommodating UT-cadre officer Tanvi Garg, Additional Deputy Commissioner (ADC). “While taking away the charge of Additional District Magistrate and SDM (Central) from her in view of the model code of conduct, the top brass made sure the key departments remained with her,” said a senior official.

The post of the ADC, previously held by a Punjab-cadre PCS or a Haryana-cadre HCS officer, has been given to UT-cadre officers.

Union Territory cadre to have more say in Chandigarh Police

It is learnt the UT's top brass was contemplating posting Parvinder Singh, a 2011-batch IPS officer who recently joined the Chandigarh Police as ASP, as SP (City). This could curtail the powers of the SSP, who is on deputation from Punjab. The UT Home Secretary has already raised the issue of bringing a DSP from Delhi instead of Haryana.

BUSINESS STANDARD, MAR 24, 2014

A K Bhattacharya: The IAS strikes back

Under attack from the investigative agencies, the civil service is asserting its right to be heard

A K Bhattacharya

In the beginning, there were only murmurs of protest. But as the days passed and the attack became relentless with no respite in sight, the protests got louder and took the form of counter-attacks.

This broadly sums up the past few weeks' story of India's [civil servants](#) or more precisely the elite club of the country's top administrators - also known as the Indian Administrative Services ([IAS](#)).

The resurgence of the civil servants in the face of an onslaught is an unusual phenomenon. Members of the IAS are reputed for their formidability and a strong network of connections they build over time - both while in service and after retirement. Many of those who retire continue to enjoy powerful positions long after their official age of superannuation. They are truly a part of the country's power elite. Thus, rare has been the occasion when members of the IAS have come under attack.

But in the past few years, things have changed a bit. The equations seem to have altered. Thanks to the revelation of several cases of financial impropriety in the execution of government schemes, programmes and policies exposing poor governance norms, the powerful IAS club has come under attack along with their political bosses - the ministers. Add to this the [Supreme Court's](#) exhortation to the country's top investigating agency, the Central Bureau of Investigation ([CBI](#)), to act independently and quickly bring the guilty to book, the IAS fraternity's peace has been shattered. The CBI, too, has gone out with unprecedented zeal to start inquiries or file cases against many former [bureaucrats](#).

The initial response to the CBI actions was rather muted. When a case was filed against former telecom secretary, [Shyamal Ghosh](#), last year for his alleged improper decision on spectrum allocation, taken more than a decade prior to that, the lunch rooms and lounges of India International Centre were abuzz with mild surprise over why a former civil servant should be asked to defend actions he had taken in 2002. Many civil servants even questioned the logic of such CBI action. But that was all.

The mood changed when the CBI went after former coal secretary, [P C Parakh](#), for his alleged role in changing a decision of an empowered committee on allocation of coal blocks that ultimately benefitted an Aditya Vikram Birla group company. Parakh did not take long to retaliate with an effect that virtually silenced all his critics and even the CBI. Known for his integrity and straightforward manner of dealing with policy matters, Parakh made it public that if he were found guilty of impropriety for what he did, even Prime Minister [Manmohan Singh](#) should be hauled up for similar charges.

That stunning statement seemed to be enough to stop the CBI in its proposed action plan at least vis-à-vis Parakh. It was also the first time that a former civil servant had hit back at the political system, in reaction to the collateral damage civil servants had begun suffering on account of their involvement with and implementation of decision taken as part of the government.

A few days ago, the media reported about the CBI having launched a preliminary inquiry into former chairman of the Securities and Exchange Board of India ([Sebi](#)), [C B Bhav](#),

for his alleged role in giving permission to the Multi Commodity Exchange or [MCX](#) to start currency derivatives trading. The reported CBI suggestion was that the permission came in spite of some tax-related investigations being undertaken against MCX at that time.

Bhave also did not take the CBI move lying down. He told the media that the CBI must complete the investigation soon and if it found no charges against him, it should offer a public apology. What's more, Bhave said if he were to be found guilty of having cleared MCX, the CBI should have gone after his predecessor and successor as well for giving what he thought were similarly improper clearances.

Not to be left behind, [Venkat Chary](#), a retired IAS officer who was chairman of MCX for more than a decade until last year, also challenged the CBI to explain why his name was being dragged into the MCX controversy. And then, Chary asked why similar action should not be taken against other former officers of the [finance ministry](#) who had directed state-owned financial institutions to reduce their equity stake in the National Commodity and Derivatives Exchange ([NCDEX](#)), so that the National Stock Exchange could increase its stake in it to help it compete against MCX.

It is important to note the common element in the manner in which three former IAS officers raised their voice against the CBI. All of them named others in the system who, too, should be implicated if they were accused of the charges levelled against them. Parakh named the prime minister, Bhave talked about his predecessor and successor as Sebi chairman and Chary referred to some other IAS officers in the finance ministry.

The rise of the civil servants has another implication. Several industry leaders have complained about the demoralised state of the civil service, which under such attack, is now reluctant to take decisions on the ground that while they could be penalised for what they do, they would go scot-free even when they refuse to take any decision. That indeed is another aspect of the kind of policy paralysis that affected governance in the last couple of years.

Whatever may be the implications, the sight of civil servants asserting their basic right to be heard and their genuine grievances addressed will be a welcome sign for the new government.

BUSINESS STANDARD, MAR 24, 2014

Income tax department cancels all leaves

The direct taxes target for the current fiscal is Rs 6.36 lakh crore

The [Central Board of Direct Taxes](#) (CBDT) has cancelled leave of all officials on tax collection duty and ordered 24x7 functioning of its offices till March 31 to ensure the remaining revenue of Rs 50,000 crore is collected before the end of the current financial year.

The direct taxes target for the current financial year is Rs 6.36 lakh crore.

According to official data, as of March 20, the department needs to further achieve a net collection of Rs 50,204 crore before the current financial year closes this month-end.

CBDT, in a recent meeting with [I-T](#) chief commissioners and directors-general, ordered that all “assessing officers and additional commissioners, commissioners and chief commissioners, involved in assessment work and collection of taxes shall not leave their headquarters till March 31”.

In case of an emergency, the CBDT directed, the board member in-charge of the respective I-T zones will be the only authority empowered to sanction leave or any other sort of detachment of the concerned official.

The video conference was chaired by CBDT Chairman [R K Tewari](#), who has taken over the top job recently.

“It is positively believed the targeted direct taxes kitty would be achieved by March 31 as the growth trends have been encouraging. Everyone has been asked to tighten their belts. The department is also hopeful about the advance taxes payment,” a senior official privy to the development said.

The apex body of the I-T department (CBDT), has also issued orders that all I-T offices will be kept open on March 29 (Saturday), March 30 (Sunday) and 31st (Monday).

All head offices of the department were open yesterday to take a final decision on all cases of penalty and compounding of offences which will bring in additional and long-awaited revenue.

"Close to 5,000 crore could be achieved from under this head," the official said.

COMMUNICATION

FINANCIAL EXPRESS, MAR 26, 2014

Revamp wireless administration

SUMMARYThere is a need to move the Wireless Planning and Coordination up in the organisational chart, even placing it in the PMO. The time has come to make this a reality

The recent auction of 900 MHz and 1800 MHz bands garnered R62,162 crore for the government and underscored the value of spectrum for the Indian economy. But the jubilation over revenue collection has to be tempered with a sober reflection of the high level of spectrum prices in India compared to global benchmarks.

The winning bids for 900 MHz in Delhi, Mumbai and Kolkata were, on average, about 75% more than the reserve price and about 1.25 times the price of 3G spectrum auctioned in 2010; at about 3 euros per MHz per population, the prices were about 3 times more than the price discovered in recent auctions for similar bands across many European countries and even in the US.

The high prices for spectrum in India as compared to other jurisdictions, despite much lower per capita incomes, reflects the much lower amounts of spectrum released for commercial use. For instance, of the 75 MHz spectrum block in the International Telecommunications Union (ITU) recommended 1800 MHz range, only 55 MHz is available for mobile services. Similarly in 2100 MHz band (used for broadband services), only 25 MHz is available with the Department of Telecommunications (DoT) while ITU recommends allocating 60 MHz for mobile services. Thus the major portion of spectrum used worldwide is not available for mobile services in India.

In India, the Wireless Planning and Coordination (WPC) wing of the DoT is the National Radio Regulatory Authority—responsible for frequency spectrum management, including licensing—and caters to the needs of all wireless users (government and private) in the country. The WPC is headed by a Wireless Advisor.

The National Frequency Allocation Plan (NFAP) is the key policy document which outlines the allocation of different parts of the frequency spectrum for various services and applications. The process of the formulation of the NFAP is not without its share of disagreements. However, in almost all cases, the WPC is able to resolve the issues. The bottlenecks arise when the WPC has to adjudicate between different ministries who are claimants for the same bands of spectrum assigned by the NFAP for a

CONSTITUTIONS

HINDU, MAR 26, 2014

An under-defined Constitution

The draft of a new Egyptian Constitution, which according to the national electoral commission was approved by 98 per cent of those who voted in the January 14-15 referendum, is more problematic than it seems to be at first sight. For the record, the turnout of 38.6 per cent, in a total electorate of 53 million, was higher than the 33 per cent in the referendum held by the elected and now overthrown President Mohamed Morsy. The head of the Supreme Electoral Commission, Nabil Salib, hailed the result as an “unrivalled success” with an “unprecedented turnout”, but the participation rate was lower than the 41.6 per cent recorded for a similar referendum after the uprising which removed the dictator Hosni Mubarak in February 2011. The draft gives the President up to two four-year terms, and grants the national Parliament powers to impeach the head of state. It also guarantees equality between men and women, and says the state will be bound by international human rights treaties which Egypt has ratified. Furthermore, it bans the closure of media bodies and replaces administrative court removals of programmes or individuals with criminal procedures, and in effect ends prison sentences for press and other public-expression offences. Significantly, artists, writers, and filmmakers will no longer be liable to lawsuits by individuals who find their work irksome.

While such measures have been welcomed, the draft leaves crucial areas under-defined. It gives absolute freedom of religion and bans political parties based on “religion, race, gender or geography” — but the latter may serve to exclude the Freedom and Justice Party, which has close links to the banned Muslim Brotherhood. Secondly, the military will appoint the Defence Minister for the next eight years; that shows the reluctance of the military, which forms the current interim government, to relinquish control. Such nervousness is underlined by the wider context of the referendum; 160,000 soldiers and 200,000 police personnel were deployed during the vote, and turnout was far higher in northern than in southern Egypt, where the Brotherhood’s support is the strongest. The new document even keeps Mr. Morsy’s clause giving the government legal powers regulating the right to strike; the trade unions have strongly criticised this. In addition, the overall current evidence is not encouraging. For example, on March 24 a court sentenced 529 Morsy supporters to death for killing a police officer in August 2013, after the coup which deposed Mr. Morsy, but 382 of the accused were tried in absentia, and the defence arguments were not heard. The verdicts will be appealed. In sum, the draft Constitution leaves far too much to executive and legislative discretion.

DISASTERS

TIMES OF INDIA MAR 27, 2014

Kolkata emerges as the world's 7th riskiest city

[Kounteya Sinha](#)

LONDON: Kolkata has emerged as the world's 7th riskiest city - the only entry from India, when it comes to being under threat from all types of natural disasters.

An assessment of 616 cities around the world for their risk of earthquake, hurricanes and cyclones, storm surge, river flooding and tsunami has found that 17.9 million Kolkatans face the serious risk from natural disasters.

When it comes to only the threat of river floods, 10.5 million Kolkatans are at risk but the eastern Indian city is also fifth in terms of tsunami risk, with more than half a million people exposed. It is also threatened by hurricanes.

When the analysis looked at urban storms only as a form of natural disaster, two new Indian cities figures in the list as most threatened — Mumbai is ranked 8th with an expected 4.3 million people at risk while Chennai is ranked 9th most threatened with 4 million people expected to bear the brunt.

Tokyo has emerged the riskiest city in the world from all types of natural disasters. With 37 million inhabitants living under the threat of earthquakes, monsoons, river floods and tsunami, 29 million people in this region are potentially exposed.

Manilla is the second riskiest city followed by the Pearl River Delta in China, Osaka, Jakarta, Nagoya, Kolkata, Shanghai, Los Angeles and Tehran.

The report released on Wednesday show that storms endanger mostly urban areas on the coast. The danger of wind storms is most acute in the metropolitan areas of eastern Asia.

Across the 616 cities assessed, river flooding poses a threat to over 379 million residents. Over 283 million inhabitants could potentially be affected by earthquakes, and 157 million people are at risk from strong winds.

Across the 616 metropolitan areas included in this study, river flooding poses a threat to over 379 million residents. That is more than the 283 million inhabitants potentially affected by earthquakes and the 157 million people at risk from strong winds.

In contrast, coastal storm surge potentially affects only about 33 million urban dwellers, and tsunamis pose a risk to just over 12 million people. This is because only about 220 million - or 13% - of the metropolitan areas' residents actually live in coastal plains.

More people live in larger and more condensed metropolitan areas located along the coast than they do anywhere else in the world.

Eight out of the ten most heavily exposed urban communities are therefore all in East Asia.

When looking at winter storms in Europe, London (2.2 million), Paris (1.1 million), the Rhine-Ruhr area in Germany (1.0 million) and Amsterdam- Rotterdam (0.9 million) assume the top four spots.

Since most major cities developed along the sea or waterways, flood risk threatens more people than any other natural catastrophe.

According to the World's Riskiest Cities 2014 report, for the first time in human history more people live in cities than in rural areas. The United Nations expects 6.3 billion people or 68% of the world's population to be living in urban areas by 2050. Many of these cities are located on the coast and are threatened by floods, storms, earthquakes and other natural hazards.

Based on Swiss Re's risk modelling expertise and the latest hazard information, the report focuses on the most severe natural disasters confronting 616 of the world's largest urban areas and assesses the potential impact they have on local residents and the wider economy.

ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

FINANCIAL EXPRESS, MAR 26, 2014

Revitalising growth

SUMMARY India has to increase its foreign inflows by around 5-7 times the current level to sustain a growth rate of 8-9% for the next 20 years or it will languish at 4-5%

The government that takes office in May 2014 needs to realise that it needs to restore India's growth to 8-9%; reduce inflation to below 4%; create 25 million new jobs a year, with at least 15 million of those in manufacturing and provide India with the infrastructure it so desperately needs. For that it will need money for investment—vast amounts of it.

The new government will need to learn that, all other things being equal, India's gross capital investment needs in 2014-2020 will amount to over \$6 trillion. That amount will be needed for:

- * infrastructure investment, in which a backlog of \$800 billion has accumulated,
- * financing India's urbanisation given over 50% of its population (650 million vs 420 million now) being non-rural by 2020, requiring investment in housing, recreational, commercial, industrial real estate,
- * recapitalising the burgeoning but over-stressed (with NPAs) publicly-owned financial system adequately, under Basel III and eventually Basel IV rules,
- * repairing the balance sheets of the private and public companies which are incapable of investing as much as they need to, given that they are over-leveraged with both domestic and foreign banks,
- * rejigging its energy production infrastructure and reducing its chronic energy dependence and,
- * revamping its food production system and its manufacturing as well as farm-to-consumer logistics supply-chain and food storage frameworks.

India's total GDP for the six-year period 2014-20 is unlikely to exceed an aggregate \$16 trillion. Domestic savings of 30-35% of GDP may translate to less than 25% in financial form, allowing for continuing private accumulation in gold, jewellery, property, as well as the acquisition of net assets abroad as inflation hedges. The Indian economy will

therefore be incapable of generating more than \$4 trillion of the aggregate amount of financial capital needed in 2014-20 for gross domestic capital formation to sustain a growth rate of over 6%.

To create a sufficiently strong economic springboard for India to sustain annual growth of 8-9% for the next 2-3 decades, India's capital requirements may exceed \$7-8 trillion in aggregate over those same six years taking into account the accumulated investment and financial system-cum-corporate recapitalisation backlogs. Thus, India will need to look abroad for \$3-4 trillion of its capital needs in 2014-20 or an annual average of \$500-700 billion. That annual figure is daunting, if not impossible to achieve, given that the current net FDI inflows are around \$25 billion, net FII flows are around \$25-30 billion while net foreign borrowings are around \$50 billion annually.

The implication of this simple arithmetic is that India will either need to (a) increase its foreign inflows by a multiple of around 5-7 times the current level to sustain a growth rate of 8-9% for the next 20 years or (b) accept that its growth rate will languish at 4-5% for the duration. The latter will ensure that India doesn't achieve the 'escape velocity' needed (of over 8% growth over 20-30 years like China) to exit the lower-middle-income orbit.

Simply put, that provides the most compelling argument for policy-makers to stop playing at the margins with arguments about controlling, limiting and micromanaging foreign inflows/investment to suit antediluvian domestic political preferences.

Instead, India now needs to take the opposite risk, i.e., to make itself the most-open large economy in the world to foreign investment. That is the minimum necessary for genuine (non-MGNREGA) employment to be generated. It is also the minimum necessary for India's rapid urbanisation to be accommodated without risking social and political turmoil to a degree of unmanageability.

In taking that risk, India needs to change its strategy from going to extraordinary lengths to pre-specify, micromanage and block FDI/FII from coming in, other than on the most restrictive terms. Instead, India must accept the realities of economic and financial globalisation. It must open up completely to foreign capital inflows. It must entirely stop discriminating as absurdly as it does between foreign and domestic investment. But, in doing so, it must also put in place safeguards to prevent abuse. It must do so on an ex-post basis that can be justified with legitimate national interest arguments rather than on an ex-ante basis that prevents FDI/FII from coming in to the extent it can and wants to.

From being ranked among the five most attractive emerging markets (EMs) in 2000-07, India is now ranked 30th to 38th—out of the 40 EMs regularly evaluated by global asset managers and credit rating agencies—in realising sufficiently attractive risk-adjusted returns for FDI and FII. Foreign inflows into India are being affected much less by the US tapering than by its own self-harming policies. If India always offered a better risk-adjusted return on investment than other countries, it would not need to worry about foreign investment ever drying up.

In 2000-07, India was rated among the five best EMs when it came to ten key risks—country risk, political risk, policy-risk, corruption-risk, legislative-risk, conflict-resolution risk, recourse-risk, operational-risk, implementation-risk and currency-risk. Sadly, it is now rated among the worst EMs on these counts.

The Centre had once (pre-2007) advertised that while it was difficult for a foreign investor to get into India, no foreign investor in India had ever lost money. The post-2008 story has been one of foreign investors losing money hand over fist in India and investing only to chase yield in an era of cheap, QE-fuelled global money creation.

For even 2-3 times the present level of foreign investment and foreign capital inflows to be attracted into its stagflationary economy—let alone 5-7 times—it is clear that India's economy needs to be revitalised through the resurrection of capital investment. Its financial system needs to be liberalised swiftly to a degree beyond the ambitious targets implied by the Mistry (2007) and Rajan (2008) reports.

That, in turn, means India needs to emit signals entirely different from those it has been sending since 2009. Then, Pranab Mukherjee, as the Finance Minister, single-handedly antagonised the world and the foreign investment community at large.

Since September 2012, when P Chidambaram took over as FM, the government's signals have been relatively moderate. But not enough has been done to walk the talk. India still suffers from a large credibility deficit on delivering on its promise. The failure of the FM to get long overdue insurance legislation passed in the last Winter Session of Parliament has severely damaged his international credibility. No one believes India any longer when it talks about liberalisation or reform in any context. If the next election does not change that ethos and dynamic, then India's future will be bleak indeed.

(This is the first in a three-part series)

Percy S Mistry

The author is chairman, Oxford International Associates Ltd. Views are personal

EDUCATION

HINDU, MAR 26, 2014

Teachers on duty to set Delhi University examination papers allege non-payment

VIJETHA S.N.

Dean of Examination says no one has complained, even as social media is abuzz with such rumours

Rumours have been abuzz that teachers put on duty to set the examination papers in Delhi University were being made to sign receipts for money they never received from the Examination Department.

“My last bill was about Rs.4,000. Under the new scheme, three teachers have to set four sets of papers each and each of us should be paid around Rs.1,000 to Rs.2,000. I have not been paid since last year, though we are compelled to sign a pre-receipt stating that we have already received the money. I tried to find out more from my Department since I had submitted my bills there, but the Department said it had forwarded the bills to the Examination Department along with our signed pre-receipts,” said a teacher in the Psychology Department. She has been setting papers for the past two years, but has never received any money till date.

Her friends from the Computer Science and Political Science Departments said they had received money for one or two examination papers from last semester, but their full due has not been paid till date.

“We are ordered to do set papers and we spend our time and resources on the same. We have to provide one English set and one Hindi version. We have to find and pay a translator and get the papers typed. We cannot use typists from the market due to fear of leaks, so we need to pay extra for an internal typist. Besides, we spend money on transport for ourselves as well as the translator in some cases. The Examination Department is supposed to reimburse us for these expenses as well,” she added.

Dean of Examination, Professor Rup Lal said he had not heard of such a thing.

“Nobody has complained to me about this. I am not aware that such a problem even exists,” he added.

“We have not received a formal complaint from any teacher, although the social media has been abuzz for many months with rumours of how a scam was waiting to happen in the Examination Department, with teachers alleging they haven’t been paid for several years for setting examination papers. However, no one has come forward and asked us to make enquires with the Department,” said Delhi University Teachers’ Association president Nandita Narain.

□ ‘We were made to sign receipts for money we never received from Examination Department’

□ ‘We have to provide an English set, a Hindi version, pay a translator, get the papers typed’

HINDU, MAR 28, 2014

DUTA protest for academic freedom

VIJETHA S.N

Music, dance and art – long used to express freedom – were again used by the Delhi University Teachers' Association on Thursday for “academic freedom and fearless exchange of ideas” and to protest against the alleged continuous assault on these freedoms by the university administration. The concert, “*Jashn-e-Azadi*” or “Freedom”, is a first-of-its-kind protest for the DUTA, with alumni who have made it big in the music world performing for free.

“The university tried to stop our protest but they do not own the streets outside the colleges and hence could not stop it. An entire street was cordoned off from traffic and the local police provided us security since we were told that some people who had earlier vandalised our office were planning to strike again,” said DUTA president Nandita Narain, adding that the university's spaces were no longer open spaces where one could freely dissent and that this event was organised to highlight the fact that nobody could take away their freedoms.

“In our previous protest in February against the university's new four-year undergraduate programme (FYUP), a lot of students took part and it was their suggestion that we organise a cultural protest. A lot of politicians, activists, writers and academics have supported our cause, it was now time for the musicians,” she said.

Recently the university took the UGC's professional code of ethics, which has general moral instructions like: “You shall not incite students against other teachers and the administration”, and made them part of the university's constitution, which is actionable.

“So, if we protest or even express our dissent against anything unfair that the administration wants to impose, and the students agree with us, it allows the university to take action. In fact, there are some teachers who are already being told by principals that they cannot dissent against the new four-year undergraduate programme.”

The concert had “Sushmit Sen Chronicles” as the main artistes of the programme with their high-octane fusion music, while folk singer Ratan Gambhir seemed to strike a chord with the audience with his powerful political message against the commercialisation of education.

TIMES OF INDIA, MAR 24, 2014

DU VC asked to look into jobs quota scheme

[Manash Pratim Gohain](#)

NEW DELHI: The chancellor's nominee has called into question the scheme drawn up by Delhi University to implement the union government's reservation policy during fresh appointments. Former union health secretary Javid Chowdhury has written to the vice-chancellor of DU, asking him to immediately take up the matter, stating that the "position taken by the university in high court seems unsustainable and I, as the chancellor's nominee in the executive council, cannot be a party to a scheme for fixing the roster points in conflict with DoPT guidelines".

"It has now come to my notice that the scheme drawn up by the university administration for application of Government of India's reservation orders has been challenged in the high court of Delhi by the Delhi University SC/ST/OBC Teachers' Forum on the ground that the reservation scheme adopted does not conform to the DoPT guidelines on the subject. The petitioners have contended that the scheme deprives the reserved category candidates from certain opportunities that would be available to them under DoPT guidelines. The interim order of the court reveals that the university administration has filed an affidavit that it is not bound by DoPT guidelines for determining the reservation points for the university/college cadres," said Chowdhury.

The letter specified that, during the discussion on this item at the EC meeting dated September 28, 2013, it was never mentioned by anyone from the university administration that the scheme for determination of reservation points that was under consideration departed from the DoPT guidelines in any respect. The DoPT guidelines were also not circulated at the time of the meeting, thus obviating any possibility of the EC members discovering this by chance in the course of going through the papers. The minutes relating to this item also do not mention any departure from the DoPT guidelines.

TIMES OF INDIA, MAR 31, 2014

One-year PG in DU?

Aaditi Isaac,

Postgraduate curricula in the University of Delhi (DU) are up for change. If a DU proposal goes through, students pursuing the four-year undergraduate programme may be able to complete their Masters degree in a year through a credit-based system allowing more flexibility in choosing courses. Education Timestalks to a cross-section of people about the proposal

The system has been put through continuous restructuring without any review of the previous 'reforms.' The OBC expansion, a welcome step, was implemented in 2007. However, no study was conducted on the changes required to make the inclusion policy meaningful. To date, the promised infrastructure and teachers have not been provided. Before implementing FYUP, no study was conducted on its desirability and availability of infrastructure. No extra grants have been promised by the government. There are no national surveys or reports, which recommend FYUP or oneyear PG courses. These

changes are of great consequence and have to be determined at national level. Further, the structure and content of FYUP does not make a case for one-year PG courses. The extra year in FYUP has basically gone to 12 compulsory foundation courses, which repeat school curriculum. The suggested restructuring of PG courses will destroy the sought-after courses. It is true that mathematically $2+3 = 4+1$ but not content-wise — it will mean that foundation courses have come at the expense of intense discipline-oriented studies in postgraduate courses where many research areas are introduced as special papers. It will adversely affect students' performance in research and in exams like the National Eligibility Test. One needs to look at one's context and start work and not blindly follow the West.

Abha Dev Habib, member, executive council Delhi University

I think cutting down the Masters programme from two years to a one-year programme is a good move. Four years at the UG level gives enough time and space to get a substantive education. There will be no difference between students who graduate from the 3+2 system or 4+1 system because the final year of the four-year undergraduate programme (FYUP) allows students to pick up projects and work on them, giving them enough time to specialise. Four years also ensure that students can intern and get an idea of what they want to pursue after they graduate. Right now, under the three-year UG programme, all subjects are given equal importance but the four-year programme will give enough time for students to figure out what they wish to do next. What is the point of a two-year Masters programme if you can get the same rigour in a year?

Surbhi Grover, third year, Bsc (hons) chemistry, Hindu college

I feel that the proposal to make changes to PG programmes is not a good idea. It will not allow students to pick up a specialization; they will just get to study core subjects in their PG programme. I wouldn't know what to choose for my higher education if the focus of my study is just foundation courses. When I complete my degree would I, having completed a two-year Masters programme, get the same job opportunities as compared to a student who has studied the same subject in a one-year programme? Also, in a two-year programme, generally, one can intern in the holidays before the second year. Under the one-year PG programme, we would not get an opportunity to do that.

Gurman Bhatia, third year, BA (hons) journalism Lady Shri Ram College

The idea of introducing a one-year Masters programme is not new. Many countries give students the option to apply for their PhD directly without going for an MA programme. The university has specified that there would be no difference between the FYUP graduates and the ones graduating from a 3+2 format, as both would be awarded a degree and not a diploma from a recognised institute under the University Grants Commission. The fourth year at UG level will give students time to work on projects, get a deeper

understanding of the subjects, and develop research skills. The one-year MA programme will help them consolidate those skills.

Shashi Tyagi, principal, Gargi College

TIMES OF INDIA, MAR 26, 2014

Delhi University likely to limit applicants to 10 colleges

[Manash Pratim Gohain](#)

NEW DELHI: Students seeking admission in Delhi University this year may have to restrict their applications to 10 colleges and six courses. They may also not be permitted to change colleges more than once.

These are some of the proposals the university is likely to implement in a bid to limit the chaos that prevailed during admissions in previous years. DU administration has also said it would not allow colleges to enroll students beyond sanctioned strength.

The changes were proposed by a committee set up last year to improve the admission process. According to a member, the committee has also recommended that students coming in from other streams have a 2% higher cutoff.

Last year, aspirants could take admission in any college provided their scores were higher than the cutoff and also change colleges as subsequent cutoffs were announced.

"The proposed changes will be considered by the university administration soon. Although online and offline centralized application process will continue, the proposal is to limited the number of applications and change in colleges. These will shorten the admission process. In the last two years, there were 10 cutoff lists for general candidates," said a south Delhi college principal, who was in the committee.

There is also a proposal to base the cutoff on the best of three subjects, in what could benefit students with vocational subjects.

So far, cutoffs in DU are based on the aggregate in best-of-four subjects which includes one language. Here too, it has been proposed that the cutoff be based on best-of-three subjects. For students from vocational courses, the proposal is to deduct 10 marks while calculating the best of four/three aggregates.

The changes may bring cheer to aspirants with a gap year or those wishing to shift courses mid-way. One of the proposals wants to do away with an age bar for admissions and says no college should deny entry to aspirants because of gap years.

ELECTIONS

STATESMAN, MAR 25, 2014

SC nod for def employee voters

New Delhi, 24 March: The Supreme Court today paved the way for defence personnel in peace stations to get registered as voters in the constituency of their posting and pulled up the EC for its "rigid stand". The apex court said "this (order) is subject to such service personnel being posted at peace station on 1 January, 2014 and continued to be posted till date. "We further record and accept the statement of the senior counsel (of EC) that in that situation the tenure posting of three years for such services personnel and their family shall not be insisted upon," a Bench of Justices R M Lodha and Kurian Joseph said.

STATESMAN, MAR 25, 2014

Admin to issue free bed rolls pump pillow mosquito coils

Raiganj, 24 March: North Dinajpur district administration has decided to provide a bed roll pack, containing a pump pillow, a 'Dhokra', a bed sheet and a mosquito coil, to all the polling personnel, including the presiding officials. The district magistrate said such an arrangement for the polling personnel is "perhaps" the first in the country.

It is learnt there are total 1950 booths covering all the seven Assembly segments - Islampur, Chakulia, Goalpokhar, Karandighi, Hemtabad, Raiganj and Kaliyaganj- under Raiganj Parliamentary seat. There would be a total of 7800 polling personnel, including presiding officers. The bed roll packs would be distributed along with the polling materials.

DM, North Dinajpur, Smita Pandey said: "As per our experiences, the polling officers and other polling staffs suffer across the rural belts in the absence of the right infrastructure for the polling stations. We hope they work better this time."

PIONEER, MAR 25, 2014

WOMEN POLLING STAFF SHOULD REACH BOOTHS TWO-HOUR BEFORE ELECTION BEGINS: EC

The Election Commission has issued directives about randomisation of women polling staff for Lok Sabha elections. Office of the Chief Electoral Office has conveyed these directives to district election officers.

As per the directives, women polling staff should be selected so that they can reach their respective polling booths 2 hours before start of polling.

For this, the Commission has prescribed four categories. In the first category, women employees will not be deployed on poll duty in rural Vidhan Sabha constituencies in the Gram Panchayat where they work or reside.

In this second category, which covers urban Lok Sabha constituency having two or more Vidhan Sabha constituencies, women employees' randomisation should be done on alternate Vidhan Sabha constituency-wise.

In the third category covering Vidhan Sabha constituencies having some parts in rural areas, women employees should not be deployed on poll duty in the area where they live or work.

Regarding the fourth category, the Commission has clarified that in Vidhan Sabha constituencies having both urban and rural areas, women employees should not be deployed on poll duty in the Gram Panchayat where they live or work.

But special attention should be paid that they are not deployed out of the block where they live or reside. Meanwhile, All India Forward Bloc has been allotted election symbol "Sher" by the Election Commission in five Lok Sabha constituencies in Madhya Pradesh.

The constituencies where the Commission has directed to reserve/ allot 'Sher' symbol are Satna, Rewa, Jabalpur, Balaghat and Chhindwara. It is noteworthy that All India Forward Bloc is recognised as a State-level party in West Bengal

INDIAN EXPRESS, MAR 25, 2014

J&K first to declare all Election booths as 'No smoking Zones'

Jammu and Kashmir on Tuesday became the first state in the country to declare all election booths in the coming Lok Sabha polls as no smoking zones.

It will now be mandatory for all election booths to display the 'No Smoking Area' warning.

Chief Electoral Officer of Jammu and Kashmir Umang Narula issued a circular, directing that all election booths in the state shall be 'No Smoking Zones'.

An official spokesman said instructions in this regard have been issued to all returning officers and district election officers of the State by the Chief Electoral Officer.

Narula issued the directions following a representation made J&K Voluntary Health Association through its Executive Director A M Mir.

Mir had requested the Chief Electoral Officer to declare all election booths as No-Smoking Zones in accordance with Section-4 of Cigarettes and Other Tobacco Products (Prohibition of Advertisement and Regulation of Trade and Commerce, Production, Supply and Distribution) Act 2003, which prohibits smoking at all public places.

HINDU, MAR 26, 2014

Model code as a moral code

GARIMELLA SUBRAMANIAM

With a growing number of political parties and candidates, a stronger Election Commission would serve the larger purpose of conducting a free and fair poll

The External Affairs Minister's recent criticism of the election Model Code of Conduct (MCC), and the counter from senior leaders of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), is but one more instance of the ongoing war of words among political parties during the poll process. There is at another level a constant tug of war between political parties and the Election Commission (EC) on the question of their respective jurisdiction — one that extends well beyond the poll timetable. While the tussle along these twin-tracks would undoubtedly have implications for the democratic process, resolving the latter conflict could well be the more significant.

The burden of Salman Khurshid's attack on the EC — in a lecture at London's School of Oriental and African Studies — was along the following lines. "You should do or say nothing that wins you an election," he said, meaning that the three-member body would not allow politicians to perform their normal and legitimate functions during poll campaigns — of making promises, as prospective representatives, to potential voters.

For his part, the Leader of the Opposition in the Rajya Sabha, Arun Jaitley, took exception to Mr. Khurshid's remarks, as also to the fact that they were aired on foreign soil. The BJP's prime ministerial candidate Narendra Modi even claimed that the minister denigrated the image of a constitutional body.

But both the Congress and the BJP may have already forgotten that they were on opposite sides vis-a-vis the EC during the 2013 elections to State Assemblies. On that occasion, the EC, acting on a complaint lodged by the Congress, issued a notice of violation of the MCC against the Madhya Pradesh Minister of Industries for his remarks on the code. The commission found the latter guilty of precisely the kind of routine poll promises that Mr. Khurshid felt were not illegitimate for candidates to make.

As one of the custodians of the country's democratic institutions, the EC cannot afford to object to expressions of divergent opinions on either the code of conduct or its application in specific instances. Indeed, the core objective of the code is the conduct of free and fair elections. The model code of conduct is perhaps best viewed as a moral code during electioneering and the EC would do well to err on the side of caution when applying its provisions. Conversely, it would be a self-defeating exercise for rival parties who have assented to its adoption, to regard the model code either as an impediment or as a subterfuge to settle mutual political scores.

Statutory backing

Despite its prima facie plausibility, the 2013 recommendation to accord statutory backing to the MCC, made by a Parliamentary Standing Committee on Law and Justice, seems

erroneous. The Committee has held that most of the stipulations of the MCC are already contained in various laws and are therefore enforceable. To be sure, the violation of secrecy of voting, causing enmity among communities, the prohibition of public meetings 48 hours prior to the conclusion of polls, besides other offences, are covered by the Representation of People Act, 1951. Besides, impersonation at voting, offering inducements to voters, or accepting gratification to do something they never intended, amount to bribery under the Indian Penal Code. To threaten or to intimidate voters and candidates is an act of interference with their respective free electoral rights. The Parliamentary panel further points out that the EC invokes its 1968 order which pertains to the allotment of election symbols, either to suspend or to derecognise political parties for violations of the code.

On the basis of the above, the Standing Committee contends that the MCC as a whole could not be construed merely as voluntary in its application. Furthermore, since most of its provisions are enforceable, the remaining stipulations in the MCC should also be accorded statutory backing.

The bar on the ruling party from the use of its position for electioneering to combine official work with campaign activity, the exercise of monopoly over public places and transport facilities are important non-statutory stipulations in the code. It is self-evident that the latter are substantially different from the category of legally defined violations. Extending these facilities to various political parties on the same terms and conditions create a level playing field and increase the efficacy of the poll process. Conversely, the legal codification of these norms would be a potential nightmare, exposing the entire electoral process to needless litigation. These broad objectives are best achieved by oversight of an impartial election watchdog.

Need for a resolution

In fact, the Parliamentary Committee makes a pointed reference to its dissatisfaction with the existing legal remedy. This pertains to the absence of a procedure of immediate appeal where the nominations of candidates are rejected by returning officers. The decisions of the latter can, under the current system, only be challenged in the High Courts after the announcement of election results. This is an area where, in view of the Constitutional authority invested in the EC, with quasi-judicial powers, political parties could work out an amicable resolution.

It would be fair to say that, with a growing number of political parties and candidates in the fray, there is greater need for impartial oversight of the electoral process today than a few decades ago. A stronger EC would therefore best serve the larger purposes of the conduct of free and fair elections. Parliament could ill-afford to contemplate a legislation that seeks to accord legal status to the model code in its entirety. That would inevitably circumscribe the role and functions of the EC.

The Election Commission cannot afford to object to expressions of divergent opinions on the code of conduct

EMPLOYMENT

FINANCIAL EXPRESS, MAR 29, 2014

Survey: Indian firms created 81,000 jobs in US in 2013

Indian firms, through massive \$17-billion investment in the US, have collectively generated employment opportunities for more than 81,000 people in the country, according to a survey. The annual CII survey of 68 Indian companies in 40 US states for 2013, made public on Thursday at an event at Capitol Hill, showed that New Jersey, California, New York, Texas and Illinois have the largest concentration of Indian firms.

"According to the survey, the collective investments amount to a whopping \$17 billion as of today and together they generate employment for more than 81,000 people in the US," said the report. In fact, in recent years, India has emerged as one of the 10 fastest growing sources of FDI into the US, according to data from the US department of commerce.

Data from RBI shows the US features among the top five destinations for FDI from India. "All these factors point to the growing prowess of Indian industry in the US, in terms of investments, job creation and thus, overall economic impact. The US-India economic relationship is poised for further growth, though awaits more impetus," the CII report said.

ENVIRONMENT

HINDU, MAR 31, 2014

Delhi has the worst air quality across India

BINDU SHAJAN PERAPPADAN

Air pollution is known to cause shorter and sicker lives and Delhiites never seem to have had it so bad. The Capital has been listed as the worst performer across the country with respect to the presence of alarmingly high level of Particulate Matter up to 10 micrometer in size (PM10) concentration. This exposes residents here to a host of diseases including respiratory disease, chronic obstructive pulmonary disorder and lung cancer.

A position paper (2014) on “Ambient Air Pollution and Public Health – A Call to Action” by non-government organisation Public Health Foundation of India (PHFI) noted: “The Central Pollution Control Board’s report on National Ambient Air Quality Standards in India states that the worst performers with respect to PM10 were the Northern States including Delhi (highest PM10 concentration), Jharkhand (maximum sulphur dioxide level), West Bengal (highest nitrogen dioxide level).”

Giving details of the deteriorating air quality in the Capital PHFI researcher Bhargav Krishna said: “Introduction of the Compressed Natural Gas (CNG) in 2004 was the last major intervention to deal with poor air quality in the Capital. Since then the regulatory and policy mechanisms in Delhi have been unable to keep up with the growth in vehicular population and construction activity in the city. These are the primary causes of poor air quality, in addition to industrial emissions.”

“The poor air quality is affecting children the most. For those born in the city, sustained exposure to high levels of PM10 makes them vulnerable to high risk of contracting bronchitis and asthma in addition to irreversible deficits in lung capacity/function,” said Mr. Krishna.

Understanding the co-relation between poor air quality and diseases, the Union Ministry of Health and Family Welfare recently took the first step towards tackling the issue. “The Ministry convened a steering committee meet on health issues relating to air pollution trying to take a multi-sectoral approach. The hope is that over the course of its year-long mandate, the committee can provide a set of actionable policy options to deal with what is a burgeoning public health issue,” Mr. Krishna said.

Meanwhile according to a recently released Environmental Performance Index study, India officially has the worst air pollution beating China, Pakistan, Nepal and Bangladesh. It ranks last on ambient air quality of all 170 plus countries surveyed.

Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Professor of Environmental Economics, Michael Greenstone speaking on ‘Shorter lives due to air pollution and some potential solutions for India’ at a lecture organised by the PHFI earlier this week noted: “There is new evidence on people’s exposure to ambient concentrations of airborne Particulate Matter

the most dangerous form of air pollution in India, China, and other countries. For much of India's population, these concentrations greatly exceed India's National Ambient Air Quality Standards and levels that the World Health Organisation consider safe."

HINDU, MAR 26, 2014

Seven million deaths caused by air pollution in 2012: WHO

NITIN SETHI

Approximately seven million people died of air pollution around the world in 2012, the World Health Organisation (WHO) has estimated in its new study.

The finding, more than doubling the previous estimates, means that one out of every eight deaths occurred due to outdoor or indoor air pollution. With these updated figures, air pollution has become the single biggest environmental health risk across the world.

The whopping jump in estimates (the last estimates were for 2008) are based partly upon better understanding of how air pollution causes cardiovascular diseases and cancer, and partly reflective of better monitoring mechanisms in place.

Key cause

The increase in pollution is not the key cause for increase in numbers. The number of outdoor air pollution linked deaths has jumped from previous estimate of 1.3 million (in 2008), partly due to the inclusion of rural population data. Outdoor air pollution caused 3.7 out of the seven million deaths, the study from WHO noted.

The authors of the WHO report said, "About 88 per cent of these deaths occur in low- and middle-income (LMI) countries, which represent 82 per cent of the world population."

Approximately 80 per cent of the deaths caused by outdoor air pollution were caused by strokes and heart disease, about 11 per cent fatalities came from lung diseases and another six per cent due to cancer.

ETHNIC GROUPS

HINDU, MAR 26, 2014

Australia to water down race discrimination laws

Australia moved on Tuesday to water down its race discrimination laws, saying hurt feelings were inevitable during robust debate and the government would not legislate to protect them.

Attorney-General George Brandis said the government planned to repeal a section of the Racial Discrimination Act that makes it illegal to “offend, insult or humiliate another” because of their race.

“Laws which are designed to prohibit racial vilification should not be used as a vehicle to attack legitimate freedoms of speech,” he said.

Mr. Brandis said a new clause would be inserted into the law to ban racial vilification, defined as inciting hatred against racial groups, rather than simply offending them.

The change honours an election promise made in the wake of a court case when a conservative newspaper columnist criticised “white Aborigines” who claimed grants and scholarships meant for indigenous Australians. The columnist, Andrew Bolt, was found guilty of racial discrimination when a group of the people targeted in his article took him to court saying they had been offended and insulted. Mr. Brandis said it was impossible to discuss difficult issues without occasionally causing offence to those who held a different view.

“It is not, in the government’s view, the role of the state to ban conduct merely because it might hurt the feelings of others,” he told reporters.

The Opposition Labor Party said the changes would give a “green light” to racist hate speech.

“There is very little that is going to be prohibited,” Labor’s legal affairs spokesman Mark Dreyfus said. — **AFP**

FINANCIAL MARKETS

STATESMAN, MAR 29, 2014

Companies to have at least one woman, 2 independent directors

Most companies now need to have at least one woman and two independent directors, while the listed entities will be required to have a director to represent the interests of small shareholders if they demand.

The new requirements are part of the rules related to the appointment and qualification of directors under the Companies Act, 2013. Applicable to certain class of companies. the norms will be operational from 1 April.

Under the rules notified by the corporate affairs ministry, every listed company and those public firms having paid-up share capital of Rs 100 crore or more should have at least one woman director on their board.

It will be also applicable to entities with a minimum turnover of Rs 300 crore. “Any intermittent vacancy of a woman director shall be filled up by the board at the earliest but not later than immediate next board meeting or three months from the date of such vacancy whichever is later,” the corporate affairs ministry has said.

Besides, certain class of corporates are required to have at least two independent directors on their respective boards. The rule would apply to public companies having minimum paid-up share capital of Rs 10 crore and those where their aggregate “outstanding loans, debentures and deposits” exceed Rs 50 crore, according to the notification dated 27 March.

With regard to independent directors also, the vacancies should be filled up at the earliest ~ not later than the next board meeting or three months from the date of the post falling vacant.

For the purpose of complying with the rules, the paid-up share capital and turnover, among others, as recorded in the latest audited financial statements should be taken into consideration by the companies.

To make it easier for corporates to choose the independent directors, a government authorised agency will maintain a database of “persons willing and eligible to be appointed as independent director”.

The data base, to be placed on the corporate affairs ministry's website, will have details about potential candidates such as their qualifications, experience and whether they face any legal proceedings.

Information about their tenure in listed companies and nature of directorship will also be made available. The ministry has mentioned that a company must carry out due diligence before deciding to choose a person.

That apart, a listed company will be required to have a small shareholders' director.

INDIAN INSTITUTE OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

STATESMAN, MAR 31, 2014

Prez praises CAG, EC's impartiality, independent decision making

New Delhi, 30 March: Institutions like CAG and CVC may have drawn flak from the government which blamed them for policy paralysis but President Pranab Mukherjee today praised these bodies and the Election Commission for their impartiality and capacity to take decision with independence. "The institutions of CAG, Election Commission, various statutory regulators, those established by an Act of the Parliament, at least I feel quiet happier today that their impartiality, judgement, assessment of situation, capacity to take decisions with complete independence has strengthened the Parliamentary institution," Mr. Mukherjee said.

The UPA government has often accused institutions like Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG), Central Vigilance Commission (CVC) and CBI of precipitating "policy paralysis" with their actions on issues like coal blocks and 2G spectrum allocation.

Speaking at the inaugural function for diamond jubilee celebrations of Indian Institute of Public Administration (IIPA) here, the President stressed for "urgency in decision-making" to achieve a faster growth trajectory.

"But that does not imply that decisions have to be taken in haste or without adequate debate and discussion. It only implies that there should be no undue delay in decision-making and delivery of services," he said.

The President said that democracy is the soul and the core of our nation-building.

"No meaningful growth or governance can be achieved without the preservation and nurturing of this basic grid of our polity. All the three structures of governance, the Legislature, Executive and Judiciary would need to continue striving to strengthen the democratic foundation," he said.

He emphasised on improving quality of public service through transparent governance to meet people's increasing expectations. sns

CAG under fire from govt, but comes in for praise from President

TIMES OF INDIA, MAR 31, 2014

NEW DELHI: The government may have blamed institutions like Comptroller and Auditor General for the 'policy paralysis' during UPA-2 but on Sunday, President Pranab Mukherjee was all praise for CAG, Election Commission and Central Vigilance

Commission, saying they were strengthening democracy by their "impartiality and capacity to take decision with independence".

Speaking at a function of Indian Institute of Public Administration (IIPA) here, the President stressed on "urgency in decision-making" to achieve a faster growth trajectory.

"The institutions of CAG, EC, various statutory regulators, those established by an Act of the Parliament, at least I feel quiet happier today that their impartiality, judgment, assessment of situation, capacity to take decisions with complete independence has strengthened the parliamentary institution," Mukherjee was quoted by PTI as saying.

The UPA government has often accused institutions like CAG, CVC and CBI of precipitating "policy paralysis" with their actions on issues like coal block and 2G spectrum allocations.

The President, however, said the government should be careful in decision-making. He advised adequate debate and discussion. "It only implies that there should be no undue delay in decision-making and delivery of services," he said.

He added, "No meaningful growth or governance can be achieved without the preservation and nurturing of this basic grid of our polity. All the three structures of governance, the legislature, executive and judiciary would need to continue striving to strengthen the democratic foundation."

Mukherjee emphasized on improving quality of public service through transparent governance to meet people's increasing expectations.

The President said for inclusive growth and development, the importance of quality and efficient delivery of public services could not be exaggerated. "The people are demanding better and more efficient administration. They will no longer tolerate non-transparent and unresponsive administration. They expect the benefits of welfare measures to reach them efficiently.

"The increasing expectation of the people can only be met by improving good governance practices for on it hinges the welfare of the people," Mukherjee said.

The President said the absence of good governance had been identified as the root cause of many societal shortcomings. "It adversely affects their security, social and economic rights when ironically the governance structure is established for their welfare and collective good. Good governance permeates virtually all aspects of human life. It is important at the local, national and international levels," he said.

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

HINDUSTAN TIMES, MAR 24, 2014

Russia forces its way into Ukraine marine base in Crimea, seizes control Simferopol

Russian troops forced their way into a Ukrainian marine base in the Crimean port city of Feodosia early on Monday, overrunning one of the few symbols of resistance left after Moscow wrestled the peninsula away from Kiev, defending soldiers inside said.

The Russians used stun grenades and fired automatic weapons as they charged in, a Ukrainian military official said. Ukrainian flags had been taken down from flagpoles inside the base.

Ukrainian army officer, First Lieutenant Anatoly Mozgovoy, told Reuters by phone from inside the compound that the Russians had fired shots and the Ukrainian soldiers were unarmed. Asked if the base had been taken over, he said: "Yes".

"The invading troops were using stun grenades and also firing automatic weapons. The interior of the compound is full of Russian troops," said Vladislav Seleznyov, a Ukrainian military spokesman in **Crimea**.

Russian forces had already captured part of the base, used by the 1st Separate Marine Battalion, Ukraine's top military unit, earlier this month.

But Ukrainians had previously appeared to be in control of the armoury, the barracks and other facilities in the compound.

Russia's seizure of Crimea, a Black Sea peninsula of two million people with a narrow ethnic Russian majority, has been largely bloodless.

Moscow formally annexed Crimea on March 21 in a move not recognised by Kiev and the West, prompting sanctions on Russia over the Cold War-era style conflict.

HINDU, MAR 26, 2014

Russia suspended from G8 over Ukraine crisis

The G8 group of top economic powers has suspended Russia for annexing Crimea, and has threatened to impose far-reaching sanctions if Moscow continued its incursion into Ukraine.

JUDICIARY

HINDU, MAR 29, 2014

Justice R.M. Lodha to be next CJI

J. VENKATESAN

He banned over-the-counter sale of acid at retail outlets

Justice R.M. Lodha, the seniormost judge of the Supreme Court, has been recommended to be the 41st Chief Justice of India to succeed CJI P. Sathasivam, who retires on April 26.

The Union Law Ministry has received a communication from the CJI, recommending Justice Lodha's name. Ministry sources told *The Hindu* that the recommendation would be processed and the notification for appointment issued within a fortnight.

Justice Lodha became judge of the Rajasthan High Court on January 31, 1994. He was transferred to the Bombay High Court on February 16, 1994, where he served for 13 years. In February 2007, he was re-transferred to the Rajasthan High Court. He became Chief Justice of the Patna High Court in May 2008 and was elevated to the Supreme Court in December 2008.

During the past five years in the apex court, he has passed several landmark judgments. He banned over-the-counter sale of acid at retail outlets and ordered a compensation of Rs. 3 lakh to each acid attack victim. He held that approval of the Central Government was not necessary under Section 6A of the Delhi Special Police Establishment Act (which governs the CBI) for probe and prosecution of senior level officials in a matter where the inquiry/investigation into the crime under the Prevention of Corruption Act is being monitored by the court.

Justice Lodha headed the three-member panel which inquired into the allegations of a law intern against the former Supreme Court judge, A.K. Ganguly. The committee held that the statement of the intern, both written and oral, prima facie disclosed an act of "unwelcome behaviour."

The report resulted in Justice Ganguly resigning as Chairperson of the West Bengal State Human Rights Commission.

In key judgment, he banned over-the-counter sale of acid

DECCAN HERALD, 24, 2014

Positive step

The Central government's decision to increase the number of judges in high courts by 25 per cent is a positive step which can help in dealing with the increasing problem of judicial backlog. As a result, the total number of high court judges in the country will go up from 906 to 1112.

The strength of the Karnataka High Court will increase from 48 to 60 each and so is the strength of the Delhi High Court. With the filling of the 206 new positions and the existing 250 vacancies, it is hoped that high courts will be able to better tackle the huge pile of 40 lakh cases pending with them. The government's decision has come in response to an initiative taken by the Supreme Court. The law ministry has also written to the high courts for recommendations to fill up the vacancies and on the required follow-up measures.

The number of judges in the country at all levels of the judiciary is low in relation to the population when compared with other countries. That is one reason for the ever rising arrears of cases. Increasing the strength of the judiciary is not enough. How will the new vacancies be filled, if it is difficult to fill even the existing vacancies, as seen by the current backlog? Experience shows that it is not easy to find the right, capable and willing persons for judges' positions.

Controversies like the recent one over recommendations for appointment as judges in the Madras High Court are also delaying factors. It is also not enough to have sufficient number of judges. Courts should have the required infrastructure also, including physical facilities, to support the increased judicial strength.

Information technology is used in courts to reduce delays and to increase efficiency. But there is more scope to use it for modernisation of systems in many ways. Many rules and procedures of courts are still archaic and they need to be changed. Delays due to frequent adjournments and long hearings are common. There have been many proposals to improve the functioning of courts and to reduce delays and they should receive better attention.

The strength of the lower judiciary should also be increased and their working should be improved. There are more cases pending at that level and many of them go to higher levels, putting pressure on higher courts. State governments should take the initiative in this respect.

MONEY

BUSINESS STANDARD, MAR 29, 2014

Black money: Swiss to soon respond to FM's letter

FM had said India could take legal action against Switzerland if continued to deny information

The government of [Switzerland](#) will soon respond to India's threat of taking legal action against it for not sharing information on Indians who appear to have stashed away money in [HSBC](#), Geneva.

"We confirm that we have received a letter from India's finance minister. He will receive an answer soon," a Swiss embassy spokesperson said.

Earlier this month, Finance Minister P [Chidambaram](#) had written to Swiss counterpart Eveline Widmer Schlumpf that India might have to consider the options available under its laws if Switzerland continued to deny information to India.

India had requested Switzerland to share information in 562 cases of accounts in HSBC Bank, Geneva. An employee of HSBC Bank, Geneva had obtained the information on tens of thousands of accounts through unauthorised means before it landed with the French government. The government then passed the information to India, the US, UK, Australia and Canada.

However, Switzerland called the data "stolen" and closed the request.

India wants Switzerland to reconsider its move.

The issue assumes importance in India, particularly when political parties are scoring points over each other on the issue of corruption. The Supreme Court had also pulled up the Centre earlier this week for its failure in bringing back [black money](#) stashed abroad.

INDIAN EXPRESS, MAR 26, 2014

Currency to go plastic soon starting with R10

Surabhi

Five cities Kochi, Mysore, Jaipur, Bhubaneswar and Shimla have been identified for the pilot test where 1 billion notes will be issued.

Plastic currency notes may soon be a reality with a pilot test set to be undertaken later this year.

“A pilot study will be started soon in five cities of plastic banknotes of Rs 10 denomination. It has been a long delayed process and we hope to start it this year” said a senior government official.

Kochi Mysore, Jaipur, Bhubaneswar and Shimla have been identified for the pilot test where one billion plastic currency notes will be issued.

The Reserve Bank of India has floated a tender for printing the bank notes, which is likely to be opened soon.

“Security clearance was given last year and about eight firms have shown interest,” said the official, adding that the notes may have to be printed abroad as India does not have the technology.

Based on the results of the pilot test, the government will take a call on the introduction of plastic notes.

The plan, at present, is to gradually phase out paper notes across the country, possibly starting with lower denomination notes and then moving on to high value notes of Rs 100 and above.

The finance ministry and the RBI have been working on the concept of polymer or plastic currency notes since 2010 since these are more durable than their paper counterparts.

Another advantage with such notes is that they are more difficult to counterfeit. However, since the technology is new and not available in the country, polymer notes are more expensive to print than paper currency. Further, the notes also have to be tested for their durability in hot weather.

“These are factors that are in consideration. The pilot study will throw more light on these issues,” said the official.

Plastic notes have gained currency in over 30 countries in the past few years. Australia was the first country to introduce plastic bank notes in 1968.

Since then, others including Canada and Singapore have also switched to plastic notes.

PARLIAMENT

TRIBUNE, MAR 24, 2014
30% MPLAD fund 'unused'

Only 70 per cent of Rs 93.75 crore that was made available to the Lok Sabha MPs in Delhi under the Member of Parliament Local Area Development (MPLAD) fund, was utilised, leaving around Rs 28.80 crore unspent, according to the data of the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation released for 2009-2013.

Delhi has seven constituencies and all of them are represented by the Congress members.

The Congress' media in charge and MP from the New Delhi constituency, Ajay Maken, spent around Rs 16.61 crore out of Rs 20.96 crore allotted to him.

Women and Child Development Minister Krishna Tirath, who represents North West Delhi, has spent Rs 5.66 crore out of Rs 9.99 crore funds allocated to her.

Mahabal Mishra from West Delhi and Jai Prakash Agarwal from North East Delhi have been able to perform comparatively better than their counterparts, but none of the MPs could manage to spend 100 per cent of the allotted amount.

Jai Prakash Agarwal has best spent the funds allocated to him under the MPLAD while his South Delhi counterpart Ramesh Kumar has barely utilised the money for development of his constituency.

While Agarwal, the former president of the Delhi Pradesh Congress Committee (DPCC), has spent Rs 16.69 crore out of Rs 18.39 crore available with him, Mishra brought Rs 10.26 crore to use out of total Rs 13.31 crore.

Ramesh Kumar is the worst-performing MP when it comes to the utilisation of the MPLAD funds. He managed to spend only Rs 3.71 crore till date out of a total sum of Rs 10.32 crore.

The residents of the areas of Kumar's constituency allege that the basic infrastructure is in appalling conditions.

"The locality lacks parking lots, places for garbage to be dumped and proper urinals, and many stretches have missing lampposts," said Ashish Batra, a resident of Chhattarpur which is under Kumar's constituency.

POLITICAL PARTIES

TIMES OF INDIA, MAR 27, 2014

Congress manifesto swings rightward on economic policy and yet promises to push ahead with populism

The Congress manifesto is the polar opposite of policies pursued by UPA-II. It promises to undo measures that clogged the economy and make economic growth the "overriding priority". Congress has finally come out and said there can be no social transformation without economic growth and, therefore, promised to push ahead with reforms. These include politically sensitive ones such as prioritising subsidies and amending legislation to ensure fiscal prudence. While such an emphasis is welcome, does the party have the political will to see it through?

This question keeps coming up when the manifesto promises to expand the rights-based legislative framework to include health, pension and housing. Spending schemes to provide these exist, but they take a different dimension when they are made into a legal right. This is where the tension between fiscal prudence - critical to push up growth rates - and legal rights to a range of things will show up. There is nothing intrinsically wrong with a rights-based legal framework, but India can ill afford to expand its rights-based commitments at this stage of development.

Another area where Congress's manifesto could have done better is reservation. It commits to extending reservation to economically weaker sections of all communities without cutting into existing quotas. Unless the extent of reserved quota is increased, it is difficult to see how this can be actualised. Similarly, the promise to build a consensus on "affirmative action" for dalits and scheduled tribes in private sector is puzzling when there are simply not enough jobs being created. No other country, even the most left-wing, has similar legislation because it could cripple the economy if realised. The moot point is the Congress manifesto promises too many things at once - in an attempt to cover all bases but at the cost of credibility.

BUSINESS STANDARD, MAR 31, 2014

BJD manifesto promises Food Security Act, health cover for all

A [Food Security Act](#) for Odisha, health cover for all and loans at one per cent interest for farmers and the self-help groups (SHGs) are the key takeaways of the ruling Biju Janata Dal's ([BJD](#)) election [manifesto](#) that lacks a vision for industrial growth and is instead replete with interventions planned to woo targeted voter groups.

Infrastructure remains largely underplayed in the manifesto though the party has vaguely promised roads, electricity, irrigation and drinking water for all regions.

Also, the party's promise to make it mandatory for industries to allot shares to landlosers has been termed 'legally untenable' by the Opposition [Congress](#).

On road connectivity, the BJD has assured an expressway connecting the state's northern and western regions and four-laning of important roads in western Odisha.

For farmers, the poll manifesto has announced depositing of subsidy directly in their bank accounts. Identifying housing as another key plank, the ruling party has promised to convert all kutcha houses into pucca ones and envisaged a Security Shelter Mission to be chaired by the chief minister.

"The BJD has promised a minimum guarantee of infrastructure including roads, electricity, education and irrigation in all regions. Farmers will be provided loans at one per cent interest. An additional 10,00,000 hectares of land will be brought under irrigation. The state will enact its own Food Security Bill and a second agriculture university will be established in the KBK (Kalahandi-Bolangir-Koraput) region", chief minister and BJD supremo Naveen Patnaik said unveiling his party's much awaited manifesto.

On the economic front, Patnaik claimed Odisha has turned a revenue surplus state under his party's reign and there has been a substantial reduction in poverty.

Trying to strike a chord with the voters in western Odisha, the BJD has promised to make efforts for including Koshali language in the eight schedule of the Constitution.

The regional party has also vowed to raise the pitch for a special category status for Odisha.

In order to placate the tribal voters, the BJD assured to grant funds for maintenance of tribal sacred grooves and places of worship. It assured to scale up multilingual education facilities and develop tribal education complexes.

To safeguard the interest of slum-dwellers, the party promised to form a slum rehabilitation board.

In order to boost rural connectivity to all villages having a population of at least 100, the party assured to launch a "Chief Minister Sadak Yojana". Besides, all villages with a population exceeding 1000 would be upgraded to gram panchayats.

The party assured to have a historic women policy that would facilitate economic and social empowerment of women.

In order to generate employment among youths, the party assured to introduce a 'Chief Minister Employment Guarantee Scheme' under which a minimum of 150 youths from each gram panchayat will be imparted training. Besides, an Orissa Youth Innovation Fund would be created to assist young entrepreneurs, the manifesto said.

The BJD said it would constitute a separate board for all types of organised workers. Small farmers and street vendors would be registered to cover them under various social security measures.

POLITICS AND GOVERNMENT

HINDU, MAR 29, 2014

5-member panel to identify new capital

The Centre has constituted a five-member committee to study alternatives for new capital of Andhra Pradesh.

According to official sources, the committee members are: K. Sivaramakrishnan (retired IAS officer), Prof K.T. Ravindran, Prof Jagan Shah, Aromar Revi and Dr. Rathin Roy. In another development, the Centre has appointed two advisors to the Governor. S. Salahuddin Ahmed, former CS of Rajasthan and A.N. Roy, former Commissioner of Police, Mumbai, have been appointed as the advisors.

HINDU, MAR 26, 2014

In 2014, Hindutva versus caste

VARGHESE K. GEORGE

Of the numerous public appearances by the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) prime ministerial candidate Narendra Modi over the last year or so, two have been strikingly inconceivable. Both happened in Kerala, often projected as a politically progressive State. In February 2014, Mr. Modi addressed a meeting of Pulayas, a Dalit community that has been for years a bedrock of support for the Communist parties. In April 2013, Mr. Modi was chief guest at the Sivagiri Mutt, founded by Kerala's legendary social reformer, Sree Narayana Guru who led the backward Ezhava community to social awakening. The Ezhavas too have been largely supporters of the Left. At both the platforms — events separated by more than a year — Mr. Modi made a similar pitch. "Social untouchability may have ended, but political untouchability continues," he said, referring to the continuing isolation that he faces from various quarters.

"The next decade will belong to the Dalits and the backwards," he said, emphasising his own lower caste origins, at a rally in Muzaffarpur in Bihar on March 3. That event too was significant as he was sharing the stage with Lok Jansakti Party chief Ram Vilas Paswan, who returned to the saffron fold 12 years after he quit it over the Gujarat riots. And there is more to it. Dalit leader Udit Raj, who has been fashioning himself as the new age Ambedkar, joined the BJP. So did Mr. Ramkripal Yadav, who has for years been a shadow of Rashtriya Janata Dal chief Lalu Prasad Yadav, a champion of backward class politics in Bihar.

The issue of caste identity

The BJP's efforts to overcome caste barriers in its project to create an overarching Hindu identity are showing signs of success, though it is still far from being a pan-Indian phenomenon. "Mr. Modi has broken the stranglehold of caste. The affinity of these Dalits and backward leaders for the BJP is a clear indication of his acceptance among them," says Mr. Dharmendra Pradhan, BJP general secretary.

Among the several factors that slowed down Hindutva politics in India, caste identity has been prominent. Politically empowered sections of the backwards and Dalits viewed the Sangh project of a unified Hindu society with suspicion, as its insistence on traditions implied sustenance of the hierarchical social structure that disadvantaged them. One of the most pronounced examples of this was Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, who concluded that Dalit emancipation would not be possible while they remained within the Hindu social order. In turn, Baba Saheb — portrayed with considerable fulmination in Arun Shourie's book, *Worshipping False Gods* — has been a villain in the Sangh discourse. But in 2013, an article in the *Organiser*, the mouthpiece of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), portrayed the Dalit icon as someone who contributed to Hindu unity.

The Hindutva project tried a combination of aggressive integration, sometimes accommodating Sanskritising demands from below and constantly working on the fear of an "Other." But until they hit upon the idea of replacing a mosque in Ayodhya with a temple, all of this could not gather enough strength for the BJP to win a majority in any region of India. But coinciding with the Ayodhya movement was also a great upsurge of backwards, triggered by the implementation of the Mandal Commission report. Subsequently, caste and religion alternated as the prime moving force of politics, depending on the particularities of the time and place, in parts of northern and western India. The BJP gained power in several States. But except in Gujarat, the debate has not been settled conclusively in favour of Hindutva.

The question, therefore, in this election is whether Hindutva will triumph over caste. There are at least three factors clearly nudging politics towards Hindu consolidation.

Debate on Muslim reservation

Hindutva politics in Gujarat rode on violent anti-reservation agitations spearheaded by the Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad (ABVP) in the 1980s. Though the agitation was against the reservation for backwards, the targets were Dalits. Almost immediately after the agitation, Hindutva politics struck roots, co-opting vast sections of the lower castes into its fold, even as a rising portrayal of Muslims as the "other" unified them. But the trajectory in Uttar Pradesh and Bihar that together elect 120 members of Parliament has been different, as strong backward politics suspected the RSS on the question of reservation and found Muslims as allies. Ironic as it is, quota politics is dividing them now. The lower castes see the demand for Muslim quotas as detrimental to their interests. The case for affirmative action for Muslims is strong, no doubt, but the politics over it has played out much to the advantage of the Hindutva project. A social coalition that has been a bulwark against Hindutva in U.P. and Bihar for the last two decades is showing signs of unravelling.

The Dalit participation in the Muzaffarnagar riots in U.P., and the numerous Yadav versus Muslim skirmishes in Bihar over the last two years have strained the solidarity among the poor and the disadvantaged. Lower caste movements that challenged caste structures have also had a streak of Sanskritising aspirations that seek a better place

within the Hindu hierarchy. When the image of the “other” is clearer, this streak becomes prominent.

Willingness to concede leadership

The lower caste sympathy towards the Hindutva project has been matched by a willingness among the upper castes to be content under the leadership of the lower. The turning point was the 2005 Assembly election in Bihar, when the BJP-JD(U) alliance sought a mandate, with Mr. Nitish Kumar being declared as the chief ministerial candidate. Only six months prior to that, when the alliance vacillated over projecting him — because the upper caste segments were not comfortable with the idea of a backward caste CM — it could not win and there was no clear majority for any formation. In 2007, the upper castes voted for Dalit leader Ms. Mayawati in U.P. who won a clear majority, the first for any since the Ayodhya movement. In 2010, the rainbow caste coalition voted for Mr. Nitish Kumar again; in 2012, another variant of the coalition voted for backward caste leader Mr. Akhilesh Yadav in U.P.

This change in the upper caste attitude can dramatically turn round the fortunes of the BJP. The BJP has been responsive to the leadership ambitions of the backwards and Dalits, but the upper caste support to leaders such as Mr. Kalyan Singh and Ms. Uma Bharti has been tentative. “We have the so-called backwards and lower castes standing up and wanting to be counted as Hindus. Sangh has empowered them. Even the communist movements could not accommodate these sections of the society in their leadership,” says Mr. Ram Madhav, senior RSS leader. “In 1998, the BJP had 58 MPs who were SCs and STs, possibly the highest for any party ever as a proportion of its strength,” he says. With Mr. Modi at the helm and the change in upper caste attitudes, the Sangh’s efforts have got a major fillip.

Media-propelled popularity

A third factor that has developed over the last decade is the dramatic popularity achieved by several lower caste gurus, aided by the visual media. To cite two examples, both Swami Ramdev, who was born a Yadav in Haryana and Mata Amritanandamayi, born in a fisherman’s community in Kerala, have attained such a huge following that their caste origins have been eclipsed. TV evangelism, as opposed to scriptural Hinduism controlled by priests, has enrolled a large section of poorer and lower caste people into thinking as Hindus. This may be a rerun of how TV serial “Ramayan” contributed to the Ayodhya movement; and lower caste Hindu gurus are not unprecedented. What makes it all extremely potent is the context of a certain level of economic prosperity among the lower castes, media penetration and the Sangh propaganda.

The terms of engagement between the state and the poor, between the upper and the lower castes, and between Hindus and Muslims could change further in the emerging scenario. “Lalu and Mulayam had managed to command backward castes support with a the promise of share in power. Mr. Modi’s politics for backwards and Dalits is not based on doles and welfare schemes, but overall development,” says Mr. Pradhan.

POSTAL SERVICES

BUSINESS STANDARD, MAR 26, 2014

India Post trying to increase biz

India Post plans to network 25,000 urban post offices by the end of this year and open 2,800 additional ATMs by March 2015

Vrishti Beniwal & Surabhi Agarwal

[India Post](#) is trying to increase business by pushing customers to open post office savings accounts upon maturity or early withdrawal of their small saving schemes. This comes at a time when its chances of securing a banking licence from the Reserve Bank of India ([RBI](#)) appear bleak due to inadequate infrastructure for banking operations.

While India Post, which has about 155,000 branches across the country, has a wider reach, compared with 98,000 bank branches, it has only 287 million accounts, compared with 903 million bank accounts. Considering the entity's banking aspirations, more regular customers are significant.

"The process is complicated. They (India Post) have applied under the new guidelines. So, they have to satisfy the new criteria. Also, they will have to do what private banks do," said a finance ministry official.

After the formal launch of core banking solutions (CBS) for networking 100-odd branches last month, post offices have apparently stopped issuing cheques to customers upon maturity of their deposits in small savings schemes, National Savings Certificates and public provident funds. The move is aimed at encouraging customers to transfer these funds to post office savings accounts.

An official in the Department of Posts, however, said there was no directive to force people to open savings accounts in post offices. Customers were being encouraged to withdraw money from automated teller machines (ATMs) so that they didn't crowd post office counters, he added. "There are many senior citizens, etc, who come to withdraw their money at the end of the quarter or the year. So, it is better to withdraw from ATMs."

Postmasters could be encouraging those who didn't have accounts to open those, as this didn't involve costs and the money was automatically transferred to the savings account on the same day, the official said. "So, it is easier and faster."

Customers, however, argue managing multiple accounts was inconvenient. They also

reject the perception that adopting CBS is leading to non-issuance of cheques. “The argument given by the postal department is since it has moved to CBS, it cannot issue cheques. However, banks that have had CBS for several years are still issuing cheques using the same technology platform, Finnacle,” said Rajesh Kumar, a post office customer from Assam. According to RBI guidelines, withdrawals exceeding Rs 25,000 have to be carried out only through cheques or transfers to savings accounts.

India Post plans to network 25,000 urban post offices by the end of this year and open 2,800 additional ATMs by March 2015. Better last-mile connectivity would help it strengthen its case for securing a bank licence.

Private sector entities such as Reliance Group, Aditya Birla Group, Bajaj Finance, Muthoot Finance, Religare Enterprises and Shriram Capital have also applied for bank licences.

The Ministry of Communications and Information Technology is planning to move the Cabinet to seek approval for the funds required to India Post’s banking operations, in case it secures a licence. Though the ministry has urged its finance counterpart to allot Rs 623 crore to finance the proposed banking debut, the funds have not been approved yet.

PUBLIC UTILITIES

DECCAN HERALD, MAR 25, 2014

Withdraw order making Aadhaar mandatory: SC

The Supreme Court on Monday directed the Centre to immediately withdraw orders, if any, issued for making Aadhaar card mandatory for availing government services like registration of marriage or securing gas connections.

The apex court's direction came while staying the order of the Goa bench of the Bombay High Court directing sharing of data collected for issuing Aadhaar card to citizens with the CBI in a rape case. The Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI) had challenged the High Court order.

"If there are any instructions that Aadhaar is mandatory, it should be withdrawn immediately," a bench of justices B S Chauhan and J Chelameswar said. The bench said biometric or any other data should not be shared with any authorities unless the accused gives consent in writing.

The Supreme Court had in September last ordered that Aadhaar card should not be made mandatory for availing government services and nobody should be deprived of such facilities for want of the card. UIDAI came into existence on January 28, 2009, for providing 12-digit Aadhaar number to those citizens who register themselves.

The CBI had sought the database, including biometrics of persons from Goa, so that those could be compared with the ones obtained from the crime scene for investigating rape of a minor girl on a school premises in Vasco.

RAILWAYS

DECCAN HERALD, MAR 28, 2014

Metro Phase II trains to run driverless

The Namma Metro Phase II trains will be completely driverless, as against the present trains, which have a driver supervising them though they run automatically.

The Bangalore Metro Rail Corporation Ltd (BMRCL) authorities will soon get the technology wherein the trains will be programmed. BMRCL Managing Director Pradeep Singh Kharola noted on Thursday that the present trains require no effort from the driver and only his supervision. "But for phase II, we will get superior technology which will allow the automated train to run on its own after being duly programmed," he added.

However, he said he cannot give further details on the plans and said it is too early to tell on which routes the trains will be driverless. Kharola said the Union cabinet had recently approved an estimated cost of Rs 26,405 crore for Phase II with a total length of 72 km, which will have four extensions on the North-South and East-West corridors as well as two new lines.

He said the BMRCL will also have to raise loans up to about Rs 12,000 crore for Phase II and is considering the JICA (Japan International Cooperation Agency) once again for the international funding. The JICA has associated itself with the BMRCL and has been funding the first phase.

BUSINESS STANDARD, MAR 24, 2014

Now, book coaches in Delhi Metro for Rs 30,000

[Tourists](#), foreign travellers and government or private school children and non-governmental organisations ([NGOs](#)) running schools for differently-abled children can book coaches for metro tours at a cost that ranges between Rs 30,000 and Rs 50,000.

[Delhi Metro](#) Rail Corporation ([DMRC](#)), under its Policy on Reservation of Car(s)/Train, allows booking of [cars](#) or [trains](#) from any station of the metro network, including the [Airport Express](#) line.

The booking rate consists of the fare for the number of [passengers](#) and charges towards offering special facilities to the group, consisting 45-150 passengers.

The booking facility is available only on trains with eight coaches.

DMRC does not charge facilitation charges from government schools and NGOs running special schools.

These facilitation charges, in addition to the applicable fares, consist of Rs 50,000 for each coach on Line 1, 2, 3/4, Rs 30,000 for Line 5 and Rs 40,000 for the Airport Express line.

These fares will be escalated at the rate of 10 per cent on April 1 of each financial year.

However, if the originating and terminating stations are on different lines, the booking on multiple lines will be treated as multiple car booking.

Some special facilities offered by the DMRC are viewing the Metro Museum, textiles, handicraft exhibition at nominal charges, free parking facilities at the station for the group, welcome message or special announcement for the group, besides presenting mementos to travellers. A DMRC will also guide them through the journey.

WOMEN

HINDU, MAR 25, 2014

The statistics of gender bias

SATYABRATA PAL

The extent of violence against the girl as foetus and infant shows how deep the bias against women is and why they will be secure only if India introspects and changes

Over the next few weeks, there will be many tussles between our mostly male politicians over India's security. But almost no one will ask if a country can be secure when half its citizens live in deepening insecurity, threatened not by terrorists or enemy soldiers but by the society into which they are born. We seem to forget that India's security must encompass the security of 48 per cent of its citizens — women — and urgently address the endemic threats they face, ranging from entrenched discrimination to violence.

This starts with the mass murder of female fetuses. In its 2012 report on "Gender Equality and Development," the World Bank estimated that over the last two decades, around 2.5 lakh girls were killed in India each year because of their sex.

When infant and child mortality are driven by biology, fewer girls die than boys, but the third National Family Health Survey (NFHS-3) found that the postneonatal mortality rate for Indian girls is 21/1000, compared with 15 for boys. For the age group 1-4 years, "the child mortality rate for girls, at 23/1000, is 61 per cent higher than for boys, at 14." The World Bank report estimated that, as a result, India lost another 2.5 lakh girls in 2008.

These figures put us to shame as a society. This systematic massacre could not happen unless society accepted it and governments turned a blind eye to it. Sections 312 to 317 of the Indian Penal Code list the punishments for causing miscarriage, injuring unborn children, preventing a child from being born or causing it to die after birth, and abandoning a child under 12 years. Over the last 20 years, how many prosecutions have there been under these provisions of the law? There should have been 10 million.

Entrenched bias

The extent of the violence against the girl as foetus and infant shows how deep the bias in India is against women and why women will be secure only if we as a nation introspect and change. Not only is this not happening, but the 2011 census shows that the sex ratio in the age-group 0-6 had fallen in 27 States and Union Territories from 2001.

Millions of girls who are allowed to live are fed and educated less than their brothers. The United Nation's Human Development Report 2013 estimates that 42.5 per cent of our children suffer from malnutrition (as against 3.8 per cent in China). There is also great irony in this because NFHS-3 established that when mothers were undernourished, 54 per cent of their children were stunted and 25 per cent wasted. The more educated they were, the lower the chance of their children being either stunted or wasted. By starving millions of girls so that their brothers can eat marginally better, and by taking

them out of school, we have condemned each new generation – boys and girls – to a fresh cycle of malnutrition.

The treatment of little girls moulds the psyche of their brothers, who internalise the view that their needs — as males — have preference over those of their sisters. What we have come to thereby is the socialisation of violence against women.

There are no estimates of the extent of physical violence against the girl child but it would be reasonable to assume that it is extensive.

In 2007, the Ministry of Women and Child Development published a “National Study on Child Abuse,” which reported that 53 per cent of the children interviewed had suffered one or more forms of sexual abuse. It would be dangerous to extrapolate from this limited study that over half our children suffer sexual abuse, but it is clearly far more widespread than we admit. What should be of the gravest concern was that in most cases the children reported that the attack was by someone they knew, often a close relative.

Data from the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) confirms that this pattern continues as the girl becomes a woman. Since the NCRB can only collate cases registered, its data represent just the tip of the crime iceberg. But it reports that in 2012 there were 24,923 cases of rape registered. In 98 per cent of the cases, the victims knew the offenders. This is a logical outcome of a nurturing process in which boys grow up believing, from what they see in their families, that women exist only to satisfy the needs of men.

Society still resists change. NFHS-3 found that the median age for marriage for girls is still just over 16, and commented that this “is an indicator of the low status of women...it is related to lower empowerment and increased risk of adverse reproductive and health consequences.” There is enough data to show how adverse these are.

Women, particularly poor women, are most insecure in childbirth when they fulfil the role society has set for them. According to the Millennium Development Goals, maternal mortality in India which was 301 per lakh of live births in 2001 should be down to 75 by 2015. This will not happen. We are perhaps down to a maternal mortality rate of 200 now. At 27 million live births in India each year, at least 54,000 women die in the process.

We also perhaps do not realise how other problems have a compounding effect. We are, for instance, the world leaders in open defecation. That is being perpetuated in most States where, despite a requirement that all houses built under the Indira Awas Yojana must have a toilet, very few do. Open defecation is also an open invitation to rape. Complaints to the NHRC show how many women are abducted or raped when they go out into the fields at night. In many States, teenage village girls either refuse to go to school or are taken out by their parents because the building has no toilet and their right to education suffers.

It is sad but to be expected that women have also been indoctrinated to believe that their security depends on good behaviour, as mandated by men. NHFS-3 found that 40 per cent of married women have been subjected to spousal violence. But it also found that 54 per cent of the women it surveyed agreed that wife-beating was acceptable if the wife went out without telling her husband, argued with him, refused sex, neglected the children, did not cook properly, was suspected of being unfaithful or showed disrespect toward her in-laws. On this, NFHS-3 said: “Violence is more likely to be justified if the described behaviour violates what is perceived as acceptable behaviour for women in their gendered roles as wives, mothers and daughters-in-law.”

Obvious acts of violence

And then there are the more obvious acts of criminal violence against women. There is the enormous problem of trafficking; the special insecurities of women in conflict zones. Adivasi and Dalit women are branded as witches. There are the continuing tragedies of forced marriages, of girls being killed for marrying boys of their choice or for not bringing in enough dowry, the needless hysterectomies under the Rashtriya Swasth Bima Yojana.

Within society as between states, security depends on power. The weakest are the most insecure. Women in India are insecure and remain at risk because in this patriarchal society they are children of a lesser god. For women to be secure, the country must change — there should be more women in Parliament and in positions of political and executive authority. Every election brings with it hope of renewal, but India will not be transformed, it cannot be secure, developed or respected if the democracy in which it takes pride does not bring about urgent and fundamental change in the lives of its women.

(Satyabrata Pal was a Member of the National Human Rights Commission.)

It is sad that women have also been indoctrinated to believe that their security depends on good behaviour, as mandated by men