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BLACK MONEY

DECCAN HERALD, OCT 6, 2015

Black money, a shame for govt

The poor response to the one-time compliance window under a scheme for disclosure of black money kept abroad is a setback and an embarrassment for the government. When the scheme ended last week, only 638 declarations had been made, yielding just Rs 4,147 crore. This should be contrasted with the claims made by the BJP and Prime Minister Narendra Modi during the campaign for the 2014 elections that the billions of crores of black money stashed abroad would be brought back to the country. Modi's promise that every Indian would get Rs 15 lakh from the retrieved wealth still haunts the party, though it has tried to wriggle out of it. The government has also given excuses for its inability to recover the black money kept by Indians in foreign bank accounts whose details are known. It has given the same excuses as were given by the UPA government.

There are many reasons for the failure of the disclosure scheme. Though the government has promised to keep all information disclosed under the scheme confidential, many didn't believe it. There were fears of harassment and prosecution by tax officials in future. It was also felt that there could be follow-up disputes which would not come under the protection provided by the scheme. Another, and perhaps, more important reason was that 60 per cent of the disclosed income had to be paid to the government as tax and penalty. Why would people pay such a huge part of their black money to the government and invite possible trouble too, when there are better ways of turning it white or to bring it home? The hawala system is still strong and devices like participatory notes are in common use to bring black money from abroad into the stock market.

When there are painless, risk-free and even more profitable ways to keep, enjoy and sanitise black money, schemes like the one announced by the government would have no attraction. The environment in the country is suitable for generation and wide use of black money. The government has not taken any steps to curb it in areas like real estate and construction, imports and exports and party finances and elections where it is most rampant. Unless black money is curbed and eliminated in these and other fields, any initiative that the government takes to fight it will not carry conviction. It will not be effective too. The warning that those who did not come clean will regret it later will not be taken seriously as long as the nexus among politics, business and government exists and is strong.

CIVIL SERVICE

BUSINESS STANDARD OCT 1, 2015

Ministries can't miss two-week deadline for Cabinet note inputs

The Centre on Wednesday told all secretaries across [ministries](#) and departments that the two-week time-frame for inter-ministerial consultations for preparing [Cabinet notes](#) cannot be breached.

Soon after coming to power in May last year, the government had issued a directive to top [bureaucrats](#) that discussion between ministries must be completed within two weeks. However, 15 months later, the government finds gaps in adherence to the directive.

"Preparation of notes for consideration of the Cabinet and Cabinet committees has to be completed in two weeks' time," the [Cabinet Secretariat](#) said in a memo to all secretaries on Wednesday, reiterating the philosophy of ease of doing business and quick decisions that Prime Minister [Narendra Modi](#) has talked about time and again.

The memo also states that the sponsoring ministry or department is required to indicate in the body of the note the date on which comments were sought from different ministries and departments as well as the date on which their inputs were received.

In June 2014, the Cabinet Secretariat had told secretaries in a similar memo to follow the deadline for "expeditious decision-making".

Before that, a time-frame was rarely set for inter-ministerial consultations, officials said. Often, the process took at least three months, they said. But there have been times when consultation was speeded up.

According to the memo, ministries that don't give their inputs within the time-frame must be present at the Cabinet meeting to give their views.

Many bureaucrats, however, are of the view that complex subjects need more time beyond two

ECONOMIC TIMES, OCT 1, 2015

Government undertakes reshuffle of senior bureaucrats

After the unceremonious repatriation of senior IAS officer Pravir Kumar to his state cadre Uttar Pradesh, the central government today gave additional charge to Anoop Kumar Srivastava as Secretary, Inter-State Council Secretariat, for a period of three months.

NEW DELHI: After the unceremonious repatriation of senior [IAS](#) officer [Pravir Kumar](#) to his state cadre Uttar Pradesh, the central government today gave additional charge to Anoop Kumar Srivastava as Secretary, Inter-State Council Secretariat, for a period of three months.

Srivastava, a 1981 batch IAS officer from Assam-Meghalaya cadre, will be holding the new charge in addition to his duties of Secretary, Border Management, in the Union Home Ministry, according to the government order.

Kumar, an IAS officer of 1982 batch, was suddenly repatriated back to his home cadre on September 22 after having been appointed as Secretary of ISCS barely three weeks ago on August 28.

While the reason for his shifting was not known, it was speculated that one of his kin was a political activist working for a senior Congress leader.

In other orders issued today following retirement of bureaucrats, [Sanjay Kumar Srivastava](#), posted as Secretary in the Cabinet Secretariat, was given additional charge of Chairman of National Authority for Chemical Weapons Convention and Secretary (Security) following superannuation of Gurdial Singh Sandhu and D P Sinha, respectively.

Srivastava, according to the order, has been asked to look after both the posts for a period of three months or till appointment of regular incumbent.

Secretary, Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises Anup K Pujari was given additional charge for three months as Steel Secretary following retirement of Rakesh Singh.

Law Secretary P K Malhotra has been given additional charge of the Legislative Department for a period of three months or till a regular appointment is made following retirement of Sanjay Singh as Legislative Secretary.

Ameising Luikham, Secretary, Department of Public Enterprises, has been given the additional charge of the post of Secretary, Ministry of Development of North Eastern Region.

ECONOMIC TIMES, OCT 1, 2015

After Yoga, Modi govt wants babus to take up adventure sports

By [Aman Sharma](#)

Modi government now wants babus to take up adventure sports like rock-climbing, trekking, paragliding, rafting and snorkelling so as to "create and foster spirit of risk-taking".

NEW DELHI: After Yoga, the Modi government now wants babus to take up adventure sports like rock-climbing, trekking, paragliding, rafting and snorkelling so as to "create and foster spirit of risk-taking" and tackle the "impact of sedentary life".

The government will also set up a gymnasium in each of its central department as it believes "healthy employees are happy employees".



Let The Fun Begin

- DoPT would sponsor programmes of **5-7 days** | Every department will have to name **2 officials each year**
- There's will be **₹20,000** spending cap per person per camp
- Special casual leave will be granted to eligible participants
- The officials to be nominated must have been awarded for excellence in service
- Six institutes have been nominated to run these special adventure sports courses

This is part of two new schemes drawn up by the PM-headed Department of Personnel and Training (DoPT) for promotion of adventure sports and physical fitness amongst central government employees. All ministries were informed of the same on Wednesday.

"The scheme would tackle the alarming situation of stress and impact of sedentary life on government servants as highlighted in several studies. It would provide a creative outlet to central government employees..." the scheme on promoting adventure sports reads.

The government will also spend up to Rs 10 lakh on each gymnasium which employees can use after work hours . "Constant work stress and frustration can lower productivity, so giving employees a convenient means through fitness programmes can result in decreased absenteeism and reduced usage of sick leave," the scheme reads.

"The workload of government servants has increased manifold. Their sedentary behaviour can have many detrimental effects," the scheme document on gymnasiums says.

CONSTITUTIONS

TRIBUNE, OCT 5, 2015

Devender Singh

The new Nepal constitution

Let democracy prosper in the Himalayan state

The test will be to accommodate the needs, and fulfil the aspirations of the people.

THE landlocked Himalayan state of Nepal, eventually, adopted a new constitution on September 20, 2015, after protracted acrimony, violence and political paralysis. India longs to see enduring peace and tranquility in the new-born Himalayan democracy. Nepal is demographically multilingual, multi-ethnic and has a predominant Hindu majority. The constitution declares Nepal an independent, sovereign, secular, democratic republic. An India-based Nepal diplomat, in an ecstatic moment, described the Nepalese constitution as “better drafted than the Indian Constitution”. The remark is reminiscent of the words of Dr Ambedkar that ring through time: “All constitutions in their main provisions must look similar. The only new things, if there be any, in a constitution framed so late in the day, are the variations made to remove the faults and to accommodate it to the needs of the country.” The test of a constitution is whether it accommodates the needs, and fulfils the aspirations of its people.

The constitution of Nepal, containing 302 Articles and 9 Schedules, enshrines the principle of parliamentary democracy with certain innovations and novel features, a Himalayan brand of parliamentary democracy. The President is the ceremonial head of the state. The executive power vests with the Council of Ministers headed by the Prime Minister. The most noteworthy feature of the constitution is (and a cause of upheaval) the provision of a mixed electoral system comprising direct election and proportional representation. The Prime Minister and the Council of Ministers shall be collectively and individually responsible to the Federal Parliament but must enjoy the majority support in the House of Representatives for their survival. A motion of no-confidence or the “Abiswas ko prastab” cannot be brought against the Prime Minister for the first two years after his appointment, and if the motion of no-confidence fails, another motion cannot be tabled within a year of its failure.

The political structure is divided into federal, provincial and local governments. The judicial system is unified with the Supreme Court at the apex, a high court for each state and a district court for each of the districts. The country is divided into seven provinces

numbered consecutively. The preamble to the constitution declares Nepal a multi-caste, multilingual, multi-cultural state and resolves to end all forms of discriminations, promote unity in diversity, create an egalitarian society on the basis of the principle of proportional inclusion and participation, and ensure equitable economy, prosperity and social justice. The solemn resolve to establish a multi-party democratic governance system, guarantee civil liberty, fundamental rights, human rights, adult franchise, periodic elections, free press, and an independent and competent judiciary is fortified by explicit constitutional provisions. The national flag, national anthem, coat of arms, national colour, national flower and national animal (cow) are indicated in the constitution. Persons of the same gender and community cannot occupy the post of the President and Vice-President at the same time.

The Federal Parliament comprises the House of Representatives and the National Assembly. The House of Representatives shall consist of 275 members, of which 165 shall be elected through the “first-past-the-post-electoral system” comprising the whole of Nepal, divided into 165 electoral constituencies based on geography and population. As many as 110 members shall be elected through proportional representation, under which the electorates vote for the parties treating the whole of Nepal as a single electoral constituency. The National Assembly, representing the provinces, shall consist of 59, including three nominated, members. The legislative power is divided between the Federal Parliament, Provincial Legislatures and local governments. The constitution provides for the setting up of various commissions for the protection of human rights and for dealing with issues relating to fiscal and natural resources, Dalits, women, language and social inclusion. There are also provisions regarding the constitution, registration and operation of political parties, with the explicit objective of promoting competitive party politics.

The Madeshis and the Tharu, who populate the Tarai and constitute nearly 40 per cent of Nepal’s population, are deeply incensed with the manner the boundaries of the seven provinces are proposed to be drawn. The dilution of the element of proportional representation from 58 per cent, as contemplated in the interim constitution of 2007, to 45 per cent, has fuelled further resentment among low-caste groups and the marginalised sections. Women’s rights activists are critical of the provision dealing with citizenship being backward and discriminatory against women. They lament that Nepal has not come out of the strong tentacles of a patriarchal society. There is a widespread seething discontent among the Janajatis (hill tribes), Tharus (plains tribes in Tarai), Dalits and

Madeshis (majority electorate) that they would be marginalised politically by the new constitution scripted by the ruling clique of high-caste hill elites. They are piqued that the ruling Brahmin-Kshatria (Bahun-Chettri) coalition, comprising less than 30 per cent of the population, will continue to have a dominant control over the state apparatus, as the leadership of the major political parties — NC, CPN (UML) and UCPN-Maoist — belongs to the same minority upper caste clique. Unfortunately, the unrest in the Tarai region is being viewed by vested political interest in Nepal, as though India has played a spoiler. Perhaps democratic politics finds similar ruse — “blame the neighbour for internal failures”.

The relations between India and Nepal go to a hoary past, fused together as they are by strong civilisational ties, the legend of the Buddha and the propinquity of blood and kinship. This cannot be allowed to wilt, wither and assume unfriendly overtones. Our close cultural ties and friendship cannot be held hostage by parochial politics. The erroneous perception of “big brother” and the hypothetical view that India is trying to “micromanage their polity” must be dispelled. Nepal and India are civilisational twins. Even the Himalayas did not divide them. The people of Nepal have come out of the throes of monarchy and the Maoists after a long and bloody struggle. Let democracy thrive and prosper in Nepal and let their democratic politics mature and find amicable solutions to redress the legitimate urges and aspirations of all sections of the people, within their own flexible constitutional framework, and resolve the acrimony over geography vs demography in the interest of a stable, peaceful and prosperous Nepal.

— The writer is the Additional Secretary, Lok Sabha. The views are personal.

EDUCATION

ECONOMIC TIMES, OCT 1, 2015

NIT's proposal: Admit students to both IITs & NITs through JEE Advanced By Anubhuti Vishnoi

The IIT council will take up next week a proposal of the NIT council's standing committee to admit students to both IITs and NITs through a single entrance examination.

NEW DELHI: The IIT council will take up next week a proposal of the NIT council's standing committee to admit students to both IITs and NITs through a single entrance examination — the JEE Advanced. The move is likely to trigger a controversy in the IIT system. The proposal will be taken up by the NIT council at its October 1 meeting first, following which it will be taken to the IIT council — the apex body chaired by the HRD minister that coordinates between all IITs — at its October 6 meeting.

It is learnt that the Smriti Irani-led HRD ministry favours the proposal for a single exam for IITs and NITs. IITs have traditionally resisted any move to grant NITs parity and the HRD ministry had to take considerable efforts to make IITs agree to joint counselling with NITs.

"IITs and NITs draw from the same pool of students. IITs already draw the best of students through the JEE Advanced which has a reasonably high difficulty level. If the NITs — which are also excellent engineering institutes — are allowed to draw from that pool, the overall quality will improve. The aim is one exam, one ranking system and one counselling for both IITs and NITs. We hope that a final decision will be taken on this at the IIT council meeting," a member of the IIT council told ET.

While the JEE Advanced helps select about 10,000 students to enter the famed portals of India's 16 IITs, if the entrance exam is opened up to NITs, this number will go up to 34,000. The Joint Entrance Examination (JEE) alone determines admissions to prestigious IITs. While it was the All India Engineering Entrance Examination (AIEEE) that earlier determined admissions to the National Institutes of Technology (NITs) and all other engineering colleges, the format was changed when Kapil Sibal was HRD minister in UPA-II.

HINDUSTAN TIMES, OCT 6, 2015

IGNOU offers free courses to central govt employees

The central government employees keen to pursue higher studies will now be able to do so from Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU) and that too, free of cost. IGNOU has devised a special course for them called -- Distance and E-Learning

Programmes for Government Employees (DELPGE). The programme is open only to Central employees, working in ministries, departments and attached offices.

Coordinator of IGNOU study centre in Jamshedpur, Vijay Kumar 'Piyush' said these courses would help enhance central government employees' performance skill. IGNOU will offer 140 courses, including - Certificate Courses, Advance Certificate, PG Certificate, Masters, Post-Graduation Diploma, Advance Diploma, Diploma and Select/specialized module.

The number of seats in each programme would, however, be limited to 50 and offered on a first-come-first-served basis, he said, adding the course would begin from January 2016.

The employees enrolled under this programme would have to pay the fees to IGNOU, which would later get reimbursed on his/her successful completion of the course. However, those failing to complete the course in the given time limit and with the minimum qualifying grades would not be eligible for any reimbursement.

Reimbursement for the Masters programme would be available to an employee only once. Each government employee would be allowed to enroll for only one programme at a time.

HINDUSTAN TIMES, OCT 6, 2015

German makes a comeback in govt schools after a year

India and Germany signed an agreement on Monday for teaching German as an additional foreign language in the Kendriya Vidyalayas a year after it was controversially replaced by Sanskrit at these schools.

Indian languages including Sanskrit will be taught in Germany in reciprocity. A separate agreement will be signed between the Kendriya Vidyalayas (KVs) and the Max Mueller Bhavan later to work out the modalities for implementation.

“German will be taught as an additional foreign language,” foreign secretary S Jaishankar told reporters and added that modern Indian languages will be taught in Germany simultaneously.

“We have a lot of scholars who are interested in that (learning Indian languages),” German Chancellor Angela Merkel said during a joint media interaction with Prime Minister Narendra Modi earlier.

The agreement, however, will not violate the three-language formula and Sanskrit will continue to be taught as the third language in KV schools. Under the formula, a student has to study any modern Indian language along with English and Hindi.

A huge controversy erupted a year ago when the KVs decided to stop teaching German as a third language and replaced it with Sanskrit. The governing board of the KVs in its meeting in October last year directed that teaching of German as an option instead of Sanskrit be discontinued as it violated the formula.

The KVs had signed a memorandum of understanding that made German a third language without taking the HRD ministry on board; so the ministry directed them not to renew the memorandum.

STATESMAN, OCT 5, 2015

Campus resignations

The resignations of two Vice-Chancellors on the same day - one of a state university and the other central - are symptomatic of the canker that has permeated higher education in West Bengal. And the canker has spread from Jadavpur to Presidency via Calcutta, if to a lesser degree. Militant unionism by students against the respective VCs and the pronounced tendency of students and “outsiders” (euphemism for Trinamul cadres) to set the terms of engagement form the common strand that binds the campuses although the compulsions were different at the central university. The Vice-Chancellor of Kalyani University, Rattan Lal Hangloo, resigned after a 19-hour gherao. His counterpart at Visva-Bharati, Sushanta Dutta Gupta, put in his papers in the wake of alleged irregularities in appointments and fiscal fozzles, not least the acceptance of pension and the salary of a central VC.

It is pretty obvious that he has opted for what he perceives is a gracious exit after the HRD ministry’s indictment and the President (the university’s Visitor) having forwarded the report to the judiciary. The nub of the matter must be that Prof Dutta Gupta - now with his back to the wall - has let down Tagore’s creation. The serial scandals, including a case of molestation, have served to deepen the muck in this central university that was never known for academic excellence. His resignation on Thursday reaffirms the institutional failure. To put it bluntly, Tagore’s legacy has been trashed yet again, and sadly in the manner of the fish that rots from the head. The theme song, Amader Santiniketan, rings hollow.

That institutional failure is manifest no less acutely at Kalyani University where the resignations of the VC, the Deans, and the Chief Proctor were provoked by student unrest, now endemic across the state. The fee structure of a university is largely determined by the UGC, and the 19-hour confinement of senior officials over a fee hike was unwarranted, most particularly the resort to arm-twisting and the “customary” demand for the Vice-Chancellor’s resignation. Prof Hangloo’s statement is in itself a giveaway. In effect, he has let it be known to the Governor/Chancellor and the education minister that the restive students were backed by “outsiders”, notably a member of the Trinamul’s state secretariat.

The involvement of the ruling party and “outsiders” is yet another common factor that runs through Presidency, Calcutta, Jadavpur... and now, as it turns out, Kalyani. There is little doubt that last Thursday’s agitprop was malicious; the students had refused to pay their fees at the start of the third semester, insisting instead on a waiver - a thoroughly unreasonable demand raised by those sponsored by the party. More fundamentally, Prof Hangloo’s clean-up drive in the university had ruffled the party’s feathers, the previous agitation in February being a pointer to the shape of things to come. From Kalyani to Santiniketan, learning is the casualty.

ELECTIONS

HINDU, OCT 1, 2015

Scripting clean polls, via Aadhaar

N. GOPALASWAMI

The Election Commission (EC) starts its annual revision of electoral rolls throughout the country in September every year. The exercise becomes more significant for the States going to the polls the following year. Elections are due in Assam, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, West Bengal and Puducherry in the first half of the next year.

Except in the States where polls are scheduled, the political parties and the voters are generally apathetic to the roll-revision work. In the poll-bound States, however, the political parties can be hyperactive, as happened in Tamil Nadu prior to the 2006 Assembly elections when party leaders were given targets for registration of voters, leading to allegations of malpractices and, as a result, filing of cases by the EC against some party functionaries.

Multiple enrolments by voters

The EC's efforts to have a clean electoral roll with full enrolment often falters due to a variety of reasons. Relentless urbanisation and inter-and intra-city movements pose a challenge to having an updated and accurate electoral roll in urban areas. A study carried out in Bengaluru prior to the 2008 Assembly elections in Karnataka revealed that the year-on-year change varied from 6 to 8 per cent.

Since, in the non-election years, there is little incentive for either the voters or the political parties to track such movements or, for that matter, for the staff to effectively capture the changes, there is a huge pile-up of distortions, which peak in the pre-election year.

In the rural areas, though the Booth Level officer (BLO) system works better in tracking changes, the problems there are of a different kind. The election law is clear that a person can be registered as a voter in a place where he is ordinarily resident. However, thanks to various 'collateral' issues, persons who are not 'ordinarily resident' at a place continue to be on the electoral rolls. For instance, come election time, there is an exodus from Chennai to the southern districts of Tamil Nadu as people from these areas who have settled in Chennai flock to their respective native places to exercise their franchise.

The duplication due to their enrolment in electoral rolls of both their respective native places and Chennai is an invitation to bogus voting.

In the run up to the Uttar Pradesh Assembly elections in 2007, an intensive checking of rolls revealed many cases of people who had migrated to Mumbai decades earlier but continued to be on the electoral rolls in their native place as, for them, having their names on the electoral rolls was an additional proof for claims on family property.

Prior to the Gujarat elections of 2008, a Member of Parliament from Mumbai had brought to the EC's notice names of voters found on the electoral rolls both in Mumbai and in a constituency in north Gujarat. The Chief Election Officer (CEO) of Gujarat issued a warning that being listed in more than one place was an offence and his vigilant efforts to prevent any large-scale duplication proved to be a sufficient disincentive, except for a dozen or so voters.

Seasonal migration of labour from Bihar, eastern UP, Jharkhand and Madhya Pradesh is a well-known phenomenon; some may even stay back much longer as is the case in Jalandhar where, after getting jobs in the textile industry there, migrant agricultural labourers from Bihar have continued their stay. According to a recent report, in Tamil Nadu alone, there is a labour force comprising nearly 10 lakh people hailing from northern states. They constitute a potential bogus voter pool in their native places.

Duplication of names on electoral rolls is prevalent in places like an urban area and its neighbouring villages as well as in villages on either side of State borders. Recently, a voter proudly told me that he has two Voter Identity Cards, one with the address of his rural home near Chennai and the other with his city address.

Prior to the 2006 Assembly elections in Kerala, the then CEO found an abnormal increase in the voter population in two constituencies, one in the Palakkad district and the other in the Kasargod district. He traced it to a duplication in registration — the voters had been on the rolls of both the districts and the adjoining areas of Coimbatore and Mangalore. In the Manjeshwar constituency of the Kasargod district, the names of nearly five thousand such bogus voters were struck down, which, incidentally, had been the margin of victory in the previous elections.

For the 2008 Assembly elections in Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh, the Election Commission, fearing a similar occurrence in the border villages, scheduled the polls on the same date in all adjoining constituencies .

Aware of the large-scale migration of labour for Surat's diamond industry from districts in Saurashtra, the CEO of Gujarat did a name comparison of voters in the Varachha constituency of Surat district — largely inhabited by migrants from Saurashtra — and a couple of constituencies in the districts of their origin, and found out 50,000 potential cases of duplication. An advertisement for voluntary declaration led to only 2,000 disclosures. Appreciating the impossibility of physically verifying the rest of the 48,000

entries, the EC opted to schedule polls in Surat and in the selected districts of Saurashtra on the same day, though they were not contiguous areas.

It was the redoubtable T.N. Seshan, former CEC, who conceived the idea of an Electors Photo Identity Card (EPIC) issued by the Election Commission to contain bogus voting. His diktat of 'No ID card, No polls' was opposed by politicians in several poll-bound States, citing a lack of funds. Ultimately peace was brokered under the Supreme Court's directions and, ever since, photo ID cards have come to be the mainstay in establishing a voter's identity. However, from time to time, innovative excuses are proffered to prevent their use. In the run-up to the 2007 Punjab Assembly elections, the then Chief Minister sought exemption from production of photo IDs by voters, alleging that the Opposition party was purchasing cards to prevent voting by a section of the population.

Reference point to avoid duplication

Having photos printed on the electoral rolls was a step towards making identification easier at the polling station. But even photo ID card is no answer to the problem of duplicate registrations. The photo ID card was designed to have a unique number but there was no way to prevent a second card from being issued to the same person if he/she did not voluntarily disclose information as there was no reliable reference point against which checking could be done. A matching of photos was the only option but it is enormously time-consuming and needs physical verification before coming to a final conclusion. It is here that Aadhaar provides a clean and easy solution.

Since Aadhaar has a reliable backing by way of fingerprint and iris scan for identification, the scope for duplication is next to nil. Further, and more importantly, to verify for duplication, election officials will require nothing more than an Aadhaar number — not even the fingerprint or iris scan — and, where necessary, will have to query the Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI) website for just a 'Yes' or 'No' answer for the authenticity of the number.

The question of a breach of privacy is a complete non-starter in this arrangement. As the role of Aadhaar goes up, the system of an Elector's Photo Identity Card (EPIC) can be phased out, saving cost. With Aadhaar, it is possible to enrol a person in a polling station/constituency and simultaneously remove his name from a different polling station/constituency, thus avoiding duplication and also making voter enrolment simpler.

The use of Aadhaar will have another important advantage. Since, unlike EPICs, Aadhaar cards can be issued to even minors, their incorporation into the electoral roll once they turn 18 will be seamless. This is significant since it is the 18-25 age group that is woefully under-enumerated. If the introduction of EPIC by the EC was a significant step towards preventing impersonation at the polling booth, incorporating Aadhaar will help prevent bogus enrolment and duplication while, at the same time, making updating of

electoral rolls easier and far more accurate. The bonus is that Aadhaar has the potential to facilitate e-voting as and when it is embarked upon.

However, a recent Supreme Court order embargoed the use of Aadhaar, except in the cases of Public Distribution System (PDS) and kerosene and cooking gas subsidies.

Periodic elections, conducted in a free and fair manner are the very backbone of an effective democracy and clean electoral rolls form the very foundation for such an exercise. The EC owes it to itself and to the electors to move the Supreme Court to allow an incorporation of Aadhaar numbers into the electoral rolls, considering the tremendous advantages of such a move.

(N. Gopalaswami is a former Chief Election Commissioner of India .)

A person can be registered as a voter in a place where he is ordinarily resident. However, thanks to factors like seasonal migration and relentless urbanisation, he can end up being on more than one electoral roll

Free and fair elections form the bedrock of a democracy and clean electoral rolls are

a vital part of it. The use of Aadhaar numbers to identify voters will not just make the enrolment process simpler, it will also help avoid the duplication of voter names across constituencies

Having photos printed on the electoral rolls was a step towards making identification easier at the polling station. But even photo ID card is no answer to the problem of duplicate registrations

The election law is clear that a person can be registered as a voter in a place where he is ordinarily resident. However, thanks to various factors like seasonal migration and relentless urbanisation, people end up being on the electoral rolls of more than one polling booth

INDIAN EXPRESS, OCT 1, 2015

Ministers' panel to examine NRI voting rights

The PMO directed that the Inter-Ministerial Committee “examine the feasibility of extending the voting rights to migrant labourers/ workers within the country”.

Written by [Amitav Ranjan](#)

The issue of voting rights to NRIs has been referred to an 11-member panel of ministers, which would examine its feasibility. The panel will also examine similar rights to migrant labour — a move opposed by the Election Commission.

The Law Ministry, which in August circulated a Cabinet note on bestowing voting rights on NRIs, has been directed by the Prime Minister's Office to first refer the proposal to "an Inter-Ministerial Committee of Ministers". The PMO also directed that the Inter-Ministerial Committee "examine the feasibility of extending the voting rights to migrant labourers/ workers within the country".

Both groups are denied voting because the Representation of the People Act mandates that "a citizen, to avail voting rights, should be an ordinary resident in his constituency".

A letter dated September 1 from the Law Ministry's Legislative Department says that it has been directed to constitute the ministers' committee with Finance Minister [Arun Jaitley](#) as its chairman and the Law Secretary as its member secretary. [Nitin Gadkari](#), [Sushma Swaraj](#), Piyush Goyal, Nirmala Sitharaman, Ravi Shankar Prasad would be among the members.

Soon after taking office in May 2014, Prime Minister [Narendra Modi](#) had abolished the practice of creating Group of Ministers (GoMs) and Empowered GoMs, which had become a symbol of policy paralysis during the previous UPA government. Many such panels hardly ever met.

The Law Ministry's Cabinet proposal had sought amendment in the laws to "amplify the existing modes of voting available to overseas electors and service votes" by permitting electronic and postal ballots. But it did not move a similar proposal for millions of

domestic migrants based on EC's admission that it was logistically incapable. An estimated 12-15 per cent of the 815 million voters fall in this category.

Sources said the PMO's decision to link migrant labourers with NRIs was taken following widespread opposition in Rajya Sabha – where the NDA is in minority — over the government's rush to include rich NRIs while neglecting the poor domestic migrants.

EMINENT PERSONALITIES

STATESMAN, OCT 6, 2015

Tagore and Buber: A meeting of souls

Abhik Roy

Although India's myriad-minded literary genius, Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941), and the renowned, highly revered Jewish philosopher and religious thinker, Martin Buber (1878-1965), met only three times, they had the utmost respect for each other's philosophical and political views. Despite their religious and cultural differences, both Tagore and Buber had much in common concerning their philosophical views about humanity.

In his magnum opus, *Ich und Du* (I and Thou), Buber expressed with great poetic power that dialogue is at the heart of human existence. According to him, we all live in a world of two-fold reality. One "fold" is based on our interactions with objects in this world. In this fold "objects" include both humans and otherwise. In this mode of living, which Buber characterized as the 'I-It' relation, we use and experience the other person as an object for our profit or self-interest. But the second "fold" occurs when we become fully human by entering into genuine relationships with others; when we meet another and make "the other present as a whole and unique being as the person that he is". This second fold, which Buber characterized as the 'I-Thou' relation, is based on respect, empathy, mutuality, directness and love in the sense of responsibility of one human for another. Thus, his 'I-Thou' relation is one in which an individual is appreciated in all his or her uniqueness and is not objectified.

Although Tagore did not directly address the Buberian notion of "I-Thou" relation, he wrote about the need to make genuine connections with others in rich and profound ways. Tagore explored the idea of approaching the other person as a soul instead of as a means to an end. For Tagore, the soul involved "the faculties of thought and imagination that make us human and make our relationships rich human relationships, rather than relationships of mere use and manipulation". Tagore's relationship with the other's soul echoes Buber's idea of genuine dialogue. Their ideas reorient toward the humanizing dimensions of social relations (I-Thou) rather than the instrumental (I-It) relations.

Both Tagore and Buber believed that it is in establishing genuine relations with others that we get to be complete beings. This emphasis on a wholeness of engagement extended from other individuals to the world around us. For Buber, it was "only by looking at the world as a world can man grasp being as a wholeness and unity". This is done not by observing our world as an object from a distance; neither can it be

accomplished by classifying and generalizing what we observe as science does, or by analyzing it with logic but by entering into a relation that is without any reservation or preconditions. Akin to Buber's idea of relations, Tagore stated:

"[M]y world exists in relation to me, and I know that it has been given to the personal me by a personal being. The process of the giving can be classified and generalized by science, but not the gift. For the gift is the soul unto the soul, therefore it can only be realized by the soul in joy, not analyzed by the reason in logic."

Thus, both Buber and Tagore provide us with models for understanding our relations with others and to our larger world in terms of mutuality, respect, and authentic engagement.

In 1921, Buber saw Tagore for the first time when he attended one of Tagore's public lectures in Darmstadt, Germany. Buber wrote to his friend, Louise Dumont, about his encounter with Tagore, whom he found to be a "lovable, innocent, venerable" individual "with a touchingly beautiful faith ...". It is recorded that in the meeting with Buber, Tagore had expressed his profound appreciation of the Jewish people for their love of peace and intellectual accomplishments. Tagore shared with Buber his sympathy for the Zionist settlement in Palestine but entertained serious doubts about its alignment with Western powers. Buber was also concerned about the implications of the unbridled westernization of Zionism. Yet he chose to disagree with Tagore saying that Tagore was "removed from the reality of the hour in which we live". Buber confided in his friend, Louise Dumont, that he didn't agree with Tagore's views on Zionism.

Buber wrote: "Tagore wanted to relieve the burden of the Jews in Palestine by getting them to lay aside modern Western techniques. But we must bear the full weight of our burden and either carry it to the heights or plunge into the abyss with it".

Buber met with Tagore again in Düsseldorf in 1926 when he attended Tagore's lecture. He wrote to Louise Dumont once again: "how much the sound of his [Tagore's] voice and his glance brought alive his younger (or elder) brother, Martin Buber. His personality, more than his thoughts, made a deep impression. Thus he left behind healing strength ... How much this man must be suffering from the idiocy of Europe ..." (cited in Kämpchen, 1991, p. 95). As Kämpchen has observed quite accurately, it was Tagore's charismatic personality that resonated more powerfully with Buber than Tagore's ideas at the time of their second meeting.

Tagore and Buber were to meet for the last time in Prague again in 1926 to discuss Zionism and Jewish settlement in Palestine at the request of Tagore. Tagore expressed his deep concern that Zionism was likely to weaken the Jewish people's reverence for the spirit and universalism that he considered as the "finest, most valuable characteristics" of the Jewish people. Buber agreed with Tagore about the potential danger that Jewish people faced if they were to embrace a "narrow-hearted nationalism" of the Western nations under Zionism. Although the danger was quite real, Buber responded by saying that to evade this danger by abandoning the Zionist project would possibly expose the Jewish people to possibly more harm: "If in this pressing historical hour one flees from danger," Buber told Tagore, "one loses the capacity for advancing further, becoming paralyzed, and expires". Buber clarified his position by stating that the threat of danger must be confronted on two fronts: "internally, to fill Zionism ... with that inherited treasure, reverence for the spirit and universalism, and thus to install the antidote within it (against narrow-hearted nationalism)".

Buber also opined that Zionism needed to form a spiritual alliance with the Orient on the external front. While Tagore agreed with Buber's ideas, he once again expressed his hope that the Jewish people would sever their ties with the West rejecting their "machines and canons" and opposing it with the "genuine meditation of the East, demonstrating to the Occident the emptiness and meaninglessness of its freneticism and teaching it, together with the Orient, to immerse itself in the vision of the eternal truth". Buber gently indicated that such a radical rejection of the West is "a chimera, an exalted but ultimately untenable vision". Buber politely reminded Tagore that there was no choice for the Jewish people but to embrace the West but at the same time not forgetting for a moment Western civilization's ugly side by directly confronting it in order to avoid its pernicious consequence and, then, Buber entreatingly added, "and in this we need your brotherly help." In response, Tagore held out his hand to Buber. Buber recounted that very special moment with Tagore, which was silent yet very poignant: "I am sure he (Tagore) felt no less than I did that amidst all the perils inherent in the history of nations there remains, inviolable, that fact of facts: human brotherliness".

While some may regard these meetings between Tagore and Buber as a historical event without any relevance to contemporary times, I contend they are of great significance, especially in light of the current political climate in our nation, where a culture of disrespect and intolerance predominates. These meetings show us how to have a productive dialogue with someone whose views differ from ours. In their all-consuming desire to win in a conflict, our political leaders often forget to treat their adversaries with respect, openness, reciprocity, and mutuality. The outcome that they look for is win/lose

and not win/win, resorting to crass and unrestrained behavior. However, the meetings of these two intellectual and spiritual giants demonstrate that it is quite all right to disagree with another's perspectives and still enjoy a strong sense of connection. This is precisely what happened in those magical moments that Tagore and Buber shared in Prague. They engaged in genuine dialogue that was marked with respect, mutuality, and directness, and even though Tagore did not agree with Buber, by holding Buber's hand he showed respect for their kindred spirits.

HEALTH SERVICES

HINDU, OCT 1, 2015

Cabinet approves Delhi Healthcare Corporation

BINDU SHAJAN PERAPPADAN

The AAP-led government approved creation of the Delhi Healthcare Corporation to provide centralised support services like procurement of drugs, consumables, surgicals, equipment, and nursing orderlies to the Health Department.

The decision was taken at a Cabinet meeting chaired by Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal. The proposal was based on the recommendation by the Delhi Dialogue Commission.

“The purpose of this corporation is to make available non-clinical services like generic drugs, equipment, and quality sanitation services on a 24x7 basis to the those, who go to the health institutions controlled by the Delhi government,” said a senior government official.

The official said the department of Health and Family Welfare will enter into an MOU with the corporation. .

“The administrative expenditure of the corporation will be met by charging for the services rendered at a rate not exceeding five per cent on the value of works executed successfully. The authorised share capital of the corporation will be Rs. 5 crore,” the official said.

INDIAN EXPRESS, OCT 5, 2015

Govt mulls umbrella body to regulate conduct of healthcare professionals

The Allied and Healthcare Professionals Central Council (AHPCC) Bill 2015 has provisions for setting up a body that will maintain a register of all such professionals.

The government is planning to set up an umbrella council for regulating “the professional conduct” of healthcare staffers, including those working in allied fields.

The Allied and Healthcare Professionals Central Council (AHPCC) Bill 2015 has provisions for setting up a body that will maintain a register of all such professionals.

According to the draft Bill, AHPCC will “regulate the professional conduct of allied and healthcare staff by specifying the standards of professional conduct, code of ethics and

etiquette to be observed by staffers of each cadre as prescribed under the Rules by the Central Government; create and maintain a national live register as prescribed in the Rules; Prescribe the minimum standards of education, courses, curricula, physical and instructional facilities, staff pattern, staff qualifications, quality instructions, assessment, examination, training, research, continuing professional education...”

It will also provide for a uniform entry examination for allied and healthcare educational institutions at the graduate, postgraduate and doctoral level.

The proposed council may have a different name, but its umbrella nature and roles are similar to that of the proposed National Commission for Human Resources in Health, mooted by the UPA. NCHRH was given a quiet burial after it was rejected by the Parliamentary standing committee for health and family welfare.

The principal objection against NCHRH was that it sought to disband existing councils. Taking that into account, the new plan aims to incorporate members of these councils into its decision-making process.

The council will have representation from the Medical Council of India, Indian Nursing Council, Pharmacy Council of India, Atomic Energy Regulatory Board, Rehabilitation Council of India, National Board of Examination, NIOS/IGNOU and the UGC, besides ex-officio members from the central and state governments. The draft Bill is ready and the ministry has invited stakeholder comments.

The proposed law requires states to set up their own state councils. In states where a paramedical council already exists, it will be subsumed under the Act and be restructured/renamed as the State Allied and Healthcare Professionals Council.

INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

TELEGRAPH, OCT 7, 2015

Assembly time: - India must learn not to be too loud with the trumpet at the UN

- K.P. Nayar

At first mention, it has shades of the impossible. Of all the South Asian leaders who gathered in New York for this year's general assembly, it was Sri Lanka's recently elected president, Maithripala Sirisena, who scored the most impressive diplomatic goals. He punched way above the weight of a small island's head of state - so much so that many of the other heads of state and government, who had gathered in New York for the 70th anniversary of the United Nations, willingly suspended disbelief. A year ago, Sri Lanka was squarely in the dock by the standards that the UN had prescribed for civilized members of the international community.

This year, Sirisena had a seat at the high table at the UN secretary general's customary annual lunch for attendees at the general assembly's general debate. In a capital like New Delhi, which values a state dinner in the White House as the high point of a bilateral engagement, the importance of Sirisena's seating at the lunch will not be lost.

Sirisena knew precisely how to play Santa Claus at the UN. For the world body's peacekeeping operations, which face a crisis of confidence and credibility, Sirisena offered five battalions of troops. The irony was lost on most people that, on the one hand, Sri Lanka's troops have proved their worth by winning a decisive victory over Tamil Tiger forces, which bled the island for decades and held it back in every way. On the other hand, these troops are part of a defence establishment accused of human rights violations, now the subject of a judicial process in which the UN has taken a lead.

Prasad Kariyawasam, Sri Lanka's man in Washington accredited to President Barack Obama, is also a former permanent representative to the UN, both in New York and in Geneva, who knows the kind of legwork that will leave his president's imprint on a multilateral gathering. In last month's setting, at the UN, where Obama led a special summit on peacekeeping, Kariyawasam had the recipe to bridge the aberration of a mismatch between the United States of America's financial contribution to peacekeeping and Washington's unwillingness to put its own boots on the ground.

In a situation where the United States of America contributes more than a quarter of the entire cost of UN peacekeeping but provides just 82 troops, Sirisena had the answers. A Sri Lankan commitment of soldiers was precisely what Obama wanted to hear. A better example to explain the phrase, "striking while the iron is hot", would be hard to find in contemporary South Asian diplomacy. It is not that India has not scored similar goals at the UN or in Washington. But such gains now seem to be from a bygone era - from a time when substance was more important than form in this country's diplomacy.

India cannot be wished away from UN peacekeeping. The prime minister, Narendra Modi, who spoke at the same Obama-led summit pointed out that "over 180,000 Indian troops have participated in UN peacekeeping missions - more than from any other country. India has participated in 48 of the 69 UN peacekeeping missions so far. One hundred and sixty one Indian peacekeepers have made the supreme sacrifice while serving in UN missions." But unlike the Sri Lankan announcement of new troop induction into global peacekeeping - *The New York Times* ran a long story on Sirisena in its first section - nobody took any notice of Modi's speech at this summit; not even many in the Indian media. It is a classic example of misidentifying priorities, because India too announced a landmark peacekeeping initiative around the same time - at the wrong place though.

For the first time India and the US are to jointly train soldiers of six African countries for UN peacekeeping, which was announced in Washington by Sushma Swaraj, the external affairs minister, and John Kerry, the US secretary of state. For years, a joint mechanism has been in existence for institutional cooperation between New Delhi and Washington on global peacekeeping. It is a welcome change in the operation of this mechanism that it has gone beyond routine annual meetings and at last produced something tangible. But if such an announcement had been made, instead, at the UN by Obama and Modi by prior agreement in their statements at the peacekeeping summit led by the US president last week, the world would have taken note of the initiative. As it is, this was a high opportunity cost that New Delhi forked out, prompted by the mistaken belief that the US should get priority over the UN on Modi's just-concluded trip to the US. Foreign policy has charted new paths under Modi's leadership, but it is yet to find a right mix of realpolitik and idealism. With Modi's acute sense in spinning to maximum effect, it may come yet as he gains more experience in running international affairs.

If Sirisena was the 'star' South Asian in New York during the general assembly season this year, Vladimir Putin towered over everybody else at the annual UN gathering. To begin with, he was the cynosure in the general assembly hall when he walked up to the speaker's lectern if only because he had not cared to address the general assembly in the last 10 years. Among those who intensely dislike him, many grudgingly admire his grit and clarity of purpose.

Of all the leaders who descended on New York in the last week of September, the Russian president went home with the maximum gains. For want of a more elegant phrase, Obama ate crow in his dealings with Putin. The US administration's sustained effort to corner, contain and destabilize Russia ever since the crisis in Ukraine ended disastrously in New York when Obama met Putin.

Like the White House "red line" on Syria some years ago, the bilateral meeting between Obama and Putin undercut the US bravado that its president will not meet his Russian counterpart. The two men had not met in two years, a record worse than the Indian prime minister's engagement of his Pakistani counterpart. However, today the US position on Syria is closer than ever to Moscow's consistent policy towards Damascus. On Ukraine, too, the Americans see the folly of what they are doing there, although nobody in

Washington will admit it on record. Don't go by what Washington says, watch what they do.

September at the UN is like December in the Christian societies of Europe. No effort is spared to promote peace and goodwill. The sacrifices that governments would otherwise hesitate to make are offered in the annual general assembly debate. Just as appeals for compassion or charity during sermons in churches that go unheeded year-round suddenly begin to tug at heartstrings - and, in turn, at purse strings - in communities as December makes its approach.

It is a sentiment that has gained acclaim in New York as the "Christmas spirit". Such a description will not find acceptance, though, at the UN where more than a third of its membership belongs to faiths other than Christianity. Yet, there is no better way to describe the spirit that dominates the general assembly during its general debate. In "special" years such as the golden jubilee of the UN in 1995 or this year, which marks the 70th year of the UN, such altruism can be a magnet for as many as 140 to 150 leaders to attend the general assembly and offer at least generous lip service to selflessness and the greater good.

It is a lesson that India must not forget as Modi ushers in his brand of multilateral diplomacy. The appointment of a young permanent representative to the UN with a different persona than most of his predecessors signals such a change, the ownership of which is entirely Modi's. Every single statement by Modi and Swaraj at the UN this year began with self-praise for India. Howsoever appropriate the trumpets may be, blowing them too loud in September at the UN goes against the spirit of the month in the general assembly. It can put off people to the extent that Modi's dream of a permanent seat for India in the security council could be stalemated forever.

INTERNATIONAL RELATION

DECCAN HERALD, OCT 1, 2015

India rejects Sharif's 'peace initiative' to demilitarise Kashmir

India has rejected Pakistan Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif's "peace initiative" saying that de-terrorising Pakistan is the answer, not demilitarising Kashmir.

After raising the Kashmir issue at the General Assembly on Wednesday, Sharif proposed a four-point peace initiative for India that embraces demilitarising Kashmir, renouncing the use or threat of use of force, withdrawal from Siachen Glacier and formalising ceasefire along the Line of Control.

In a rapid response, External Affairs Ministry Spokesman Vikas Swarup tweeted, "To demilitarise Kashmir is not the answer, to de-terrorise Pakistan is."

"Peace can be achieved through dialogue, not disengagement," Nawaz said in his address to the General Assembly. "Cooperation, not confrontation, should define our relationship."

But before proposing the peace initiative, Nawaz made the acrimonious reference to Kashmir, equating it with Palestinian and portraying it as a religious issue.

"Muslims are suffering across the world: Palestinians and Kashmiris oppressed by foreign occupation," he said.

"The international community must redress these injustices against the Muslim people." Swarup replied in a Tweet, "Pak(istan) PM gets foreign occupation right, occupier wrong. We urge early vacation of Pak(istan) occupied Kashmir."

Just after trying to internationalise Kashmir, Nawaz tried to couch the peace proposal as a bilateral move since India's condition is that the Kashmir dispute is a bilateral one and there should be no outside involvement. However, it did include a request to increase the UN Military Observers Group in India and Pakistan (UNMOGIP).

Although, Nawaz tried to strike a conciliatory note with his proposal and its phrasing, he insisted elsewhere in his speech on "consultations with Kashmiris, who are an integral part of the dispute."

New Delhi considers Kashmir an integral part of India and any such move an interference in internal affairs and counterproductive to a dialogue. Recent attempts at holding bilateral talks have been sabotaged by Pakistan bringing in the Kashmir question or engaging Kashmiri separatists.

Sharif referred to the recent ceasefire violations along the Line of Control and asserted, "Wisdom dictates that our immediate neighbour refrains from fomenting instability in Pakistan."

He said that "the two countries should address and resolve the causes of tension and take all possible measures to avert further escalation" and for this he asserted he was making the peace initiative proposal.

These were the four points in his proposal:

- Pakistan and India formalise and respect the 2003 understanding for a complete ceasefire on the Line of Control in Kashmir with increased monitoring by the UNMOGIP
- Pakistan and India reaffirm that they will not resort to the use or the threat of use of force under any circumstances.

- Demilitarise Kashmir

- Unconditional mutual withdrawal from Siachen Glacier,

"An easing of threat perceptions through such peace efforts will make it possible for Pakistan and India to agree on a broad range of measures to address the peril posed by offensive and advanced weapons systems," Sharif said.

However, beyond the international publicity that Nawaz hopes his announcement could generate for him, his initiative has internal contradictions.

As Swarup said in his tweet, demilitarising Kashmir would not be possible unless there was an end to terrorists backed by elements in the Pakistani government crossing over, which would be an unlikely development.

Similarly, the border tensions have been a result of cross-border terrorism.

Nawaz did not offer any credible solutions to terrorism directed against India, including a crackdown on anti-India terrorists or handing over to India those wanted for terror in India.

Swarup noted in a Tweet, "Pakistan's instability arises from its breeding of terrorists. Blaming neighbors is not a solution."

Nawaz tried to portray his country as "the primary victim of terrorism" and said, "We will fight terrorism in all its forms and manifestations, irrespective of who their sponsors are." He referred to Operation Zarb-e-Azb, which, he said, "has made substantial progress in cleansing our country of all terrorists and will conclude only when our objective has been accomplished."

On Monday, Afghanistan CEO Abdullah Abdullah, however, accused Pakistan on being a sanctuary for terrorists and of going back on its word to stop terrorism against his country.

Nawaz said Islamabad supported Security Council reforms. He did not make any direct mention of India's quest for a permanent seat. But in a snide remark that can be interpreted as directed against India, he said what was wanted was "not a Council, which is an expanded club of the powerful and privileged."

PARLIAMENT

ECONOMIC TIMES, OCT 1, 2015

3-member panel to fix pay, perks of MPs to be set up soon

The government is all set to constitute a 3-member Emoluments Commission to determine the salary and allowances of MPs after the All India Whips Conference endorsed a proposal of the Parliamentary Affairs Ministry in this regard.

VISAKHAPATNAM: The government is all set to constitute a 3-member Emoluments Commission to determine the salary and allowances of [MPs](#) after the All India Whips Conference endorsed a proposal of the Parliamentary Affairs Ministry in this regard.

The proposal was widely supported at the Conference which discussed a large of number of issues concerning [Parliament](#) and state legislatures.

The move comes in the backdrop of a controversy over a parliamentary panel's recommendations to double the pay and perks of lawmakers.

The Conference also urged the central and the state governments to take lead in establishing inter-party forums in Parliament and state legislatures for enabling regular dialogue to tackle contentious issues.

These forums would work informally and enable better performance of the Houses. The move comes in the wake of frequent disruptions marking Parliament's functioning since the NDA took office and a near washout of Monsoon Session over Lalitgate and Vyapam issues due to which the government could not push its legislative agenda and failed to pass key reform measures.

The Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs proposed Emoluments Commission to determine the salary and allowances of MPs keeping in view their responsibilities in a fair, transparent and equitable manner, which got "wide support" after extensive deliberations, sources in the ministry said.

The confrence also adopted a resolution in this regard and urged the states to ensure uniformity in salaries of legislators across the country with varying allowances depending on [the situation](#) in each state.

"The setting up of an independent Emoluments Commission for recommending the salaries and allowances of the Members of Parliament will not only put to rest the public outcry and media criticism over MPs themselves deciding their salaries, it will also provide an appropriate opportunity to take into consideration the huge responsibilities and the important role they play in our representative democracy," sources in the ministry said.

"It would ensure that recommendations on Parliamentary salary are reached in a fair,

transparent and equitable way. Once there is consensus on setting up of the Commission, the Salary, Allowances and [Pension](#) of Members of Parliament Act, 1954 will be suitably amended," sources added.

In June, a parliamentary panel had pitched for 100 percent hike in salary and daily allowances of MPs and 75 percent raise in pension of ex-MPs apart from facilities for their 'companions' in place of 'spouses'.

The panel, headed BJP MP Yogi Adityanath, had also sought doubling of the existing Rs 50,000 salary of MPs and favoured increasing the pension of former parliamentarians from Rs 20,000 to Rs 35,000. This had led to a controversy and the ministry rejected most of the panel's recommendations.

The general principle suggested by the Parliamentary Affairs Ministry for determination of emoluments is that the salary should not be so low as to deter suitable candidates or should not be so high as to make pay the primary attraction for the job "but reflect level of responsibility".

It says those with outside interests should not be deterred from entering Parliament, and those who choose to make Parliament a full-time career should be adequately rewarded to reflect their responsibilities.

As per Article 106 of the Constitution, salaries of MPs are determined by the Act of 1954, amended from time to time. The last revision in their salary was made in 2010 under which MPs presently get a basic salary of Rs.50,000 per month. Salaries of Members of State Legislatures are decided as per Article 195 of the Constitution.

As per a comparative analysis of Members of Parliament in 37 developing and developed countries, basic salary of MPs are in the range of a meagre Rs 7,952 in Tunisia to a high of Rs 6,16,675 per month in Israel. MPs of only in six countries -- Tunisia, Venezuela, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Haiti and Panama are drawing salaries less than that of Indian MPs.

According to a survey conducted by Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) of 138 chambers from 104 Parliaments, 69 chambers indicated that it is Parliament which determines the salaries of members. 31 of these stated that MPs' salaries are determined in reference to the [Civil Service](#) salary scale. In case of Bhutan, Namibia and the UK's House of Commons, salaries are determined by independent bodies.

An MP in India gets a salary of Rs 50,000 per month. In addition, Rs 2,000 per day is paid as daily allowance when the MP signs the register while attending Parliament sessions or House committee meetings. The MP is entitled to Rs 45,000 constituency allowance every month -- Rs 15,000 for stationery and Rs 30,000 to employ secretarial assistance staff.

MPs are also entitled for a government accommodation, air travel and train travel facilities, besides three landline and two mobile phones.

They also get a loan of Rs 4 lakh to buy a vehicle.

Participating in the conference, the Chief Whips and Whips of various parties from legislatures across the country also sought revision of guidelines for implementation of MPLADS (Members of Parliament Local Area Development Scheme) and analogous schemes in the states to make them more flexible for effectively catering to the needs of local people by addressing infrastructure gaps.

The Conference noted there is too much of bureaucratic control at present in the implementation of these schemes. The delegates discussed the utility and shortcomings of the MPLADS in the light of its implementation over the last 32 years and made suggestions and recommendations, sources said.

DECCAN HERALD, OCT 1, 2015

Make transparent MPs' pay panel work

The proposal to set up an emoluments commission to recommend the salaries and allowances of members of parliament is welcome. According to the proposal made by the Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs, it will be an independent three-member panel, though the details of its composition are yet to be known. It is not a new proposal. In 2005, then Lok Sabha Speaker Somnath Chatterjee had written to the government about it and a meeting of political parties had supported it. But the UPA government did not pursue the proposal. The Delhi assembly has actually set up in August an independent three-member expert panel to decide on the legislators' pay and allowances under the chairmanship of a former Lok Sabha secretary general. It is yet to make its recommendations. The proposal for such a commission should be accepted and implemented in the case of members of parliament and other state assemblies.

The fixation and periodical revision of MPs' salaries have invited much criticism. Legislators are the only category of people who decide their own pay and perks. This is in accordance with an Act of parliament of 1954 enacted under Article 106 of the Constitution. The criticism is mainly on account of the popular perception that MPs do not deserve the high salaries and perquisites they give themselves because they disrupt parliament and persistently fail in the discharge of their duties and responsibilities. There are also those who question the need to increase the remuneration of MPs and MLAs as their positions offer them the power, privileges and opportunities to make money and it is the rare legislator who does not misuse his position. But MPs and MLAs need to be paid for their work and the issue is how a fair system can be put in place for this.

The principle suggested by the ministry can serve as a guideline. The salary and allowances should not be so low as to deter people from aspiring to be an MP and should not be so high as to make the salary the main attraction of the job. The remuneration of MPs in India, which has not been revised since 2010, is not too high by world standards. But they should get it through a credible procedure and be seen to be earning it. There are

countries like the UK which have independent committees to decide the pay and allowances of MPs. The committee, if it is set up in India, should be truly independent and its working should be fair and transparent. Only then its recommendations will carry credibility.

HINDU, OCT 7, 2015

Panel proposes 400 % hike in salary of Delhi MLAs

JATIN ANAND

An experts' panel has recommended a whopping 400 per cent increase in the basic salary of Delhi MLAs – from Rs.12,000 to Rs.50,000 per month – together with a slew of allowances for purposes ranging from travel to office furniture.

The touchy issue was broached by a handful of MLAs in the Delhi Assembly two months ago, leading to the setting up of a three-member committee under the former Lok Sabha Secretary General P. D. T. Achary.

In its report submitted to the Delhi Assembly, Speaker Ram Niwas Goel, on Tuesday, the panel said the revised salary and allowances should be effective for one term. It also recommended raising the basic salary by 10 per cent, or Rs. 5,000, every year from the date on which the new pay and allowances come into force to “neutralise the impact of inflation”.

A similar exercise at the beginning of the third and final term of Chief Minister Sheila Dikshit in 2011 had resulted in a two-fold increase in the MLAs' salaries. However, the Union Home Ministry had curtailed the recommendations to increase allowances.

“The committee has recommended increasing the existing salary of MLAs from Rs.12,000 per month to Rs. 50,000 per month. Also, the total salary and allowances of MLAs have been recommended to be enhanced from the present Rs. 88,000 per month to Rs. 2.10 lakh per month,” Mr. Achary said.

Apart from basic salary, the committee has recommended increasing constituency allowance from the current Rs.18,000 to Rs.50,000. A reimbursable sum of Rs.70,000 per month, up from Rs 70,000, has also been recommended as allowance under ‘Secretarial, Research and Office Assistance’, an ‘office rental and related utilities’ allowance of Rs. 25,000, a communication allowance of Rs.10,000 per month as well as Rs. 30,000 as monthly conveyance allowance for each MLA.

POLICE

ECONOMIC TIMES, OCT 6, 2015

Uttar Pradesh to have separate police stations for SC/STs

in the state police headquarters said that in the first phase such police stations will be set up in major cities and, thereafter, in the rest of UP.

LUCKNOW: With Uttar Pradesh seeing a high rate of crime against SC/ST community members, the state government is mulling a proposal for setting up separate police stations to deal with such cases.

Such police stations already exist in states like [Bihar](#), [Jharkhand](#), [Madhya Pradesh](#), [Chhattisgarh](#) and [Andhra Pradesh](#), official sources said, adding that UP government plans to set up at least one such police station in every district.

Sources in the state police headquarters said that in the first phase such police stations will be set up in major cities and, thereafter, in the rest of UP.

"The police stations will come up under a scheme in which the Centre and the state will bear the expenditure for setting up of such units," said a senior officer in the social welfare department.

Once the blueprint is ready, it will be forwarded to the Principal Secretary (Home) for formal clearance and the notification of the police stations.

As per the draft, these police stations will initially come up at the district police headquarters or the reserve police lines and will operate from the office of the Special Enquiry Cell in every district.

The police stations will be headed by an inspector or a station officer. It will have two head constables and constables, apart from [women](#) police personnel. They will also offer counselling when required to find an amicable solution to disputes before going in for registration of a criminal case.

As per the provisions of the draft, there is a proposal to reimburse the victims for conveyance in case they are summoned to the police station in connection with their complaint.

A DSP-rank officer will act as the nodal officer while an Additional SP (ASP)-rank officer will be the zonal in-charge of such police stations.

"Those police officers without posting and attached to police lines will be posted at these units," said a senior officer at the DGP headquarters.

According to [National Crime Records Bureau](#) (NCRB) data, UP sees a high percentage of crimes against SCs and STs.

As per the recently-released data for 2014, the state reported 8,072 such cases during the year, accounting for 17.2 per cent of all cases in the country.

POLITICS AND GOVERNMENT

TELEGRAPH, OCT 5, 2015

Much talk, little action: - The surprising weakness of Narendra Modi Politics and Play - Ramachandra Guha

Many of the news headlines in the month of September were sparked by the utterances of a single minister of the government of India. Oddly, this minister was not one of the cabinet's heavyweights, nor was he an established Bharatiya Janata Party stalwart. He was, in fact, a first-time member of parliament, in charge not of one of the Big Four portfolios - finance, defence, external affairs, or home - but of the less significant culture ministry.

Mahesh Sharma (to give this minister his name) dominated September's headlines, and the opinion pages too. Many solemn (and occasionally not so solemn) columns were written examining his various attention-grabbing statements. Mr Sharma's remarks occupied hundreds of hours of television prime time as well.

In print, and on air, the minister was characterized as a reactionary xenophobe, for believing that a girl must not venture out of the house, for insisting that the wife's place was in the kitchen, for demanding that Indian culture be cleansed of polluting Western influences, for recommending that the *Ramayan* and the Gita (but not the Bible or Quran) be taught in schools. Turning from criticism to analysis, the commentators argued that the fact that Mr Sharma spoke as he did suggested that the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh was exercising an increasing influence on the government's agenda.

I do not dispute this analysis. The minister's statements reflected a world view that is reactionary and patriarchal. In my view, however, what was significant was not that these statements were made, but that they were made so regularly by a junior minister, and that they were completely unchecked by the prime minister. That the RSS has antediluvian views is not new, and should not be news. What may be new, and hence news, is the fact that a prime minister presumed to be all powerful is in truth far weaker than previously assumed.

When Narendra Modi took office last May, he was seen as being his own man, and as such radically different from his predecessor. Manmohan Singh was diffident in speech and manner; and had no independent political base. He deferred to his party president in most (some would say all) matters. Narendra Modi, on the other hand, was emphatic in speech and manner. He had won three elections in Gujarat, where he was the sole voice of the party and the government. He had also marginalized the RSS, which in other BJP ruled states had the chief minister at its beck and call.

The election campaign of 2013-14 seemed to confirm these conceptions. The manner in which Narendra Modi vanquished opposition within his party, and then opposition from other parties, was seen as further proof of the power of his personality. Critics and admirers agreed that not since Indira Gandhi in 1971 had an Indian politician exercised so

dominant a presence in an election. When Narendra Modi and his party won, critics and admirers were once more agreed that his style of governance would be far more focused, hands-on, than Manmohan Singh's. To be sure, they disagreed about the likely consequences. Admirers thought that this Lion of Gujarat would authoritatively stamp his style on governance, shaking up a somnolent bureaucracy; critics worried that he might turn authoritarian, emulating Indira Gandhi in silencing the press and the political Opposition as well.

In the first weeks and months of Narendra Modi's prime ministership, the buzz in Delhi was that his ministers were terrified of him. Stories were told of how one minister was denied permission to attend his own son's graduation, another instructed on what dress to wear when on holiday. Delhi is a city rife with gossip and fantastic speculation, and it may be that these (and other such) stories were merely the handiwork of a fertile imagination. Yet their circulation (and ready acceptance) suggested that this was indeed a prime minister able to command unswerving obedience from his colleagues.

Back in May 2014, an experienced technocrat with many decades of public service behind him, a man who had worked with United Progressive Alliance, Congress, and Third Front regimes, told me that his main worry was that while Manmohan Singh's regime was without a locus of authority, with ministers doing as they pleased, Narendra Modi's regime would be excessively centralized, with ministers given no discretion or autonomy to make decisions or to push programmes on their own. Meeting the technocrat now - after a gap of 16 months - I was told that it appeared that the Narendra Modi government was, surprisingly, as directionless as Manmohan Singh's. Here, too, the ministers said pretty much what they pleased, and the bureaucrats did nothing at all.

In the UPA regime, the ministers most prone to making controversial statements were English-speaking types, educated abroad or in St Stephen's College. In this regime, they tend to be those close to the RSS - such as Rajnath Singh and Mahesh Sharma. But there remains one similarity - then, as now, ministers are emboldened to make statements that embarrass their prime minister because they sense that they will go unchecked by him.

As Narendra Modi completes a year-and-a-half in office, one can see other respects in which he is akin to his predecessor. In his first months in office, Manmohan Singh announced some bold new initiatives, among them an administrative reforms commission to modernize governance and a knowledge commission to modernize education. But when these steps were challenged by his own ministers, he quickly withdrew, allowing his initiatives to wither on the vine. With much fanfare, Narendra Modi announced a Swachh Bharat Abhiyan and a Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao Abhiyan. But there has been little follow-up, even as a raging dengue epidemic shows how much needs to be done on these fronts.

A third respect in which Narendra Modi is akin to Manmohan Singh is in his love of foreign travel. He has already visited around 25 countries as prime minister. Certainly, our prime minister needs to be in touch with other world leaders. But it seems that both Singh and Modi enjoy travel for its own sake - in both cases, they appear to have given it

priority over working on improving governance at home. Indeed, it may even be that for Modi, as for Singh, travel overseas provides them gratification and ego-booster denied them at home. Manmohan Singh revelled in being called a friend by George W. Bush and in Barack Obama calling him a sage-like statesman; Modi in being cheered by delirious crowds of non-resident Indians from whom he can draw the comforting conclusion that (in his own words, as uttered at Madison Square Garden) no other leader has been so loved in and by the diaspora as he.

To be sure, Narendra Modi differs from Manmohan Singh in one crucial respect. His predecessor was a poor public speaker, whereas he is a brilliant orator. Singh chose to impress foreign counterparts with his scholarly knowledge in private. For the same reason, Singh also played a relatively minor part in Congress election campaigns. However, as his party's star speaker, Modi has had to play a leading part in garnering BJP support in assembly elections held in Maharashtra, Haryana, and Jammu and Kashmir, and now, Bihar.

When one adds the time spent overseas to the time spent campaigning in other states of the Union, it becomes clear that Narendra Modi is even more of an absent prime minister than Manmohan Singh was. When he is so rarely in Delhi, how can he monitor what his ministers say, what his ministries do? No wonder his government is so palpably without direction. With Manmohan Singh, one had little talk and still less action; with Narendra Modi, a great deal of talk and yet, as little action.

STATESMAN, OCT 6, 2015

Democracy crippled

Democracy has been crippled. And Saturday's tragedy in West Bengal must transcend the outcome of the municipal elections in Salt Lake. That outcome is of lesser moment than the conduct of the election which was emblematic of the gradual evolution of anarchy. The State Election Commissioner having kowtowed to his political masters ever since he took over, has now decided to keep the counting in abeyance - a decision that has caught the Trinamul Congress with its pants down. The SEC's stand is in itself a virtual indictment of the electoral process, such as it was... masterminded as reports suggest by a certain Sujit Bose, CPMturned Trinamul MLA from Bidhannagar.

Minister Partha Chatterjee has attempted a feeble obfuscation of an ugly truth when he wonders why the ruling party should indulge in malpractices. It begs the query - when was the last time the Opposition rigged an election? True it is that rigging was introduced by the Congress in the 1972 Assembly election when Jyoti Basu was provoked to withdraw at midday. It was finetuned by the CPI-M during its 34 years in power. Saturday's election under the Trinamul Congress continues the assault on democracy. Quite the most distressing feature has been the induction of "outsiders", a phenomenon

that has been extended by the Trinamul from the college/university campuses to the polling centres.

Will a fundamental question get to be asked and answered before the SEC takes a look at the video footage? Who authorised the entry of thousands of intruders into Salt Lake from far-flung areas? The “invasion” of the area was tacitly condoned. Visuals suggest that the brutal attack on voters and the media was perpetrated by these “outsiders” in Salt Lake’s first election since it graduated to a municipal corporation. The sinister goalposts were obvious - to scuttle the vote and to airbrush the truth. The takeover of the area has no precedent even during the high noon of CPI-M rule. The other intriguing feature must be the voter turnout, which touched 76 per cent in the evening - up from barely 38 per cent at noon.

In effect, the turnout had doubled during the three hours of a sultry afternoon. The police inaction was part of the furniture with the Chief Minister doubling up as the Home (police) minister. No less inactive on Saturday was the State Election Commission. The decision to keep the counting on hold comes 24 hours after a thoroughly farcical exercise, specifically after the Governor called for severe action against the hoodlums. It will be hard to dispel the impression that Mr SR Upadhyay has had an aforethought. The second bout of municipal elections is an exemplar of what Bengal can look forward to eight months from now. The portents are dire if constituencies are “invaded”.

POVERTY

HINDUSTAN TIMES, OCT 6, 2015

Besides measuring poverty, India should not overlook inequality

For policymakers, it would be heartening to note that India had the lowest poverty rates among countries that housed a large number of poor people.

The bad news, however, is that India also accounted for the largest number of poor people in any country in 2012, a latest World Bank report has said. While varying estimates of poverty muddy the picture, as does a perverse fiscal incentive for states of claiming inflated incidence, India should not miss the larger issue of inequality.

Economists set a poverty line, or a threshold income, to get a headcount of poor people in a country. Households earning below the threshold, or the poverty line, are considered poor.

Different countries have different methods of defining the threshold income, depending on local socio-economic conditions. In India, a couple of years ago, the national poverty line was fixed at Rs 27.2 a day for rural dwellers and Rs 33.3 for those residing in cities. The erstwhile Planning Commission's estimates, based on the Tendulkar Committee methodology, show that there were 269.7 million people in India — or 21.9% of the population — that live below the poverty line.

According to a study by a panel headed by C Rangarajan, former chairman of the prime minister's Economic Advisory Council, there were 363 million people, or 29.5% of India's 1.2 billion people, who lived in poverty in 2011-12.

The Rangarajan panel considers people living on less than Rs 32 a day in rural areas and Rs 47 a day in urban areas as poor. This World Bank report uses an updated international poverty line of \$1.90 a day, incorporating differences in the cost of living across countries as well as country-level living standards data. The new projections suggest that there are 231.3 million poor people in South Asia, down from 309.2 million in 2012. Going by the size, it is only logical to assume that the bulk of these people are living in India.

One of the primary objectives of poverty estimates is to provide subsidised entitlements to the poor. The question is: How does one define the poverty line in India in which old yardsticks may not hold good, either in terms of buying food or defining the poor? Do these statistics accurately measure poverty, and what is the next step in poverty reduction for middle-income countries like India?

Just as a way of an example, it is difficult to argue that a family of five members with an income, of say, Rs 5,000 is poor and another with an income of Rs 5,200 is not. It appears certain that the focus should now shift to reducing inequality. Absolute poverty is an economic concept, but inequality is a sociological construct. On the development priority scale, reducing inequality should be accorded as much priority as clocking higher national income or GDP growth. In the final analysis, it would be foolhardy to ignore that yesterday's luxuries are today's necessities.

PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

ECONOMIC TIMES, OCT 5, 2015

Mention timeline on inter-ministerial consultations: Cabinet Secretariat

The directive has been issued to check delays in inter-ministerial consultations in finalising a Cabinet note, officials said.

NEW DELHI: All central government secretaries have been directed by the Cabinet Secretariat to mention the timeline on inter-ministerial consultations while preparing notes for the Cabinet.

The directive has been issued to check delays in inter-ministerial consultations in finalising a Cabinet note, officials said.

As per the existing guidelines on preparation of notes for consideration of the Cabinet or Cabinet Committees, the process of inter-ministerial consultations has to be completed in two weeks' time and the sponsoring ministry is required to indicate in the body of the note the date on which comments were sought from the departments consulted.

"It is further mentioned that the sponsoring ministry or department should also indicate the date(s) on which the comments are received from the various consulted ministries or departments either in the body or the annexure to the Cabinet note where the details of the inter-ministerial consultations are reflected," the Cabinet Secretariat said in a recent directive to Secretaries of all central government ministries.

Officials said instructions have been issued to ensure that the process of inter-ministerial consultations does not get delayed.

"At times, secretaries blame other ministries for delay in finalising a Cabinet note in case of inter-ministerial consultations.

"Now they have been asked to mention the date on which the comments were sought and also the date on which the comments were received. It will help in checking the delay. They must also follow the two weeks' guidelines to complete the consultation process," a senior official said.

PUBLIC FINANCE

DECCAN HERALD, OCT 6, 2015

7th Pay Commission award will not impact fiscal deficit target

The government on Monday made a solemn pledge to stick to the fiscal deficit target of 3.9 per cent of GDP, despite an expectation of a slight revenue fall, and said that the 7th Pay Commission award will not impact this year's target and the glide path for fiscal deficit laid in the Budget.

Finance Secretary Rattan Watal said that the 7th Pay Commission award will not impact FY16 fiscal deficit target. While there is fear of some revenue shortfall, especially on the direct tax front, Watal said that the government does not want to go in for any expenditure cuts to meet the deficit target. The FY16 plan spending target is realistic and reasonable, he said.

Watal said the government's capital expenditure has improved significantly and will have a multiplier effect on the economy.

Chief Economic Adviser Arvind Subramanian said that the government was absolutely committed to fiscal glide path. The revenue assumptions have been very realistic this year. Tax revenue collections so far have been satisfactory, except for some shortfall in April-September direct tax growth which is around 12 per cent.

"There may be a short-fall in direct tax collection," Revenue Secretary Hasmukh Adhia said, but added that it will be compensated by indirect tax receipts. There may be 5-7 per cent shortfall in tax

RAILWAYS

BUSINESS STANDARD, OCT 6, 2015

Railway unions defer Nov 23 stir

Protesting private participation in railway projects and FDI in the sector

Somesh Jha

The railway unions feel they were not prepared to go on an indefinite strike. They will now organise campaigns to mobilise workers.

“It was also noted that there are states which have not held state-level conventions and consequently have not brought into being the state apparatus required to spearhead a serious action like indefinite strike,” said the resolution of the unions’ National Joint Council of Action, which held its meeting on September 30.

The unions felt no serious programme of action was undertaken by state leaders, “which has created a certain complacency in the movement”.

“The meeting also noted that after the impressive march to Parliament held on April 28, no serious programme of action was undertaken, which has created certain complacency in the movement. The meeting noted the necessity to rejuvenate the NJCA functioning at all levels,” the resolution further stated.

However, [railway union](#) leaders said the [strike](#) was deferred mainly because of the government’s decision to extend the term of the [7th Central Pay Commission](#) Report by four months up to December 30 this year.

This was contested by the Bharatiya Mazdoor Sangh, which claimed the move to call off the strike was a “face saver”.

The trade unions of the Indian Railways, which employs 1.31 million workers, had called an indefinite strike after 41 years. This was to mark their protest against government’s plans to bring private participation in railway projects and foreign direct investment in the sector.

The strike was supposed to affect around 23 million passengers that travel daily through railways and cost the railways Rs 2,400 crore.

“We want to examine the 7th Pay Commission Report before going ahead with the strike,” Shiv Gopal Mishra, general-secretary of All India Railwaymen’s Federation, told Business Standard.

The unions will take a call on the next strike date during the Budget session of Parliament to be held in February next year.

SOCIAL PROBLEMS

DECCAN HERALD, OCT 1, 2015

Haryana villages offer solution to chronic bachelorhood

Gautam Dheer

Unable to find brides for their bachelor sons in sex-skewed Haryana, hundreds of villages are breaking the stereotype by resolving to allow inter-village matrimonial ties.

Many Haryana villages are ushering in this reform phase with a hope to get brides and find a durable solution to increasing number of chronic bachelors surpassing the “marriageable age” without tying the nuptial knot.

Recently, village elderly and panchayat’s representing at least a hundred villages in Jind district resolved to allow inter-village marriages by lifting centuries old ban on marriages between villages in the block.

Eligible bachelors in a set of villages known as Panchgami will now be able to marry girls in nearby villages like Mengalpur in the block.

The self-imposed prohibition against marriages within these nearly villages had been a part of the village tradition on the rationale, or otherwise, that the ban was necessary in the interest of “brotherhood”. Earlier, 42 other villages under the aegis of Satrol Khap had resolved to lift the ban on such marriages.

Despite such bans becoming increasingly redundant in wake of prevailing circumstances, khaps in Haryana are still unbending on the issue of marriages within the same Gotra. There have been many cases where diktats by self-styled khaps, that often draw political patronage on account of vote bank considerations, have announced married couples as brothers and sisters.

The concern over the growing trend of chronic bachelorhood had also been a political issue in the run up to the Assembly elections last year. d which is what offered food for thought for the village elderly.

The fact remains that Haryana villagers have often looked for brides from other states to address the problem of chronic bachelorhood.

TAXATION

TRIBUNE, OCT 1, 2015

I-T Dept simplifies form for interest income

The Income Tax Department has simplified the procedure for filing of self-declaration by individuals in 15G and 15H forms.

These forms are filed by persons whose incomes are below the taxable threshold, to seek exemption from TDS on interest income.

Under the simplified procedure, a payee can submit the self-declaration either in paper form or electronically. The deductor will not deduct tax and will allot a Unique Identification Number (UIN) to all self-declarations in accordance with a well laid down procedure to be specified separately.

The particulars of self-declarations will have to be furnished by the deductor along with UIN in the Quarterly TDS statements. The requirement of submitting physical copy of Form 15G and 15H by the deductor to the income-tax authorities has been dispensed with. The deductor will, however be required to retain Form No.15G and 15H for seven years. The revised procedure shall be effective from October 1.

ECONOMIC TIMES, OCT 5, 2015

Pending tax issues will be referred to Shah panel: Arvind Subramanian

Legacy tax issues like those involving Cairn and Shell can be referred to AP Shah panel for quick resolution, says Chief Economic Advisor Arvind Subramanian.

NEW DELHI: Legacy tax issues like those involving Cairn and Shell can be referred to AP Shah panel for quick resolution, says Chief Economic Advisor [Arvind Subramanian](#) who feels the old issues that have held back private investments also need to be worked out.

Moving to defuse a row with overseas funds about back-dated tax demands, the government had last month spared foreign portfolio investors (FPIs) from minimum alternate tax (MAT) for the years prior to April 1, 2015.

This followed recommendations of the A P Shah Committee.

"The government set up AP Shah Committee and the MAT on FII thing has been put to rest. The Minister ([Arun Jaitley](#)) has also said that we will address legacy issues (like Cairn and Shell," Subramanian told PTI in an interview here.

He said progress has been made on legacy tax issues and hoped to resolve them in the next few months.

[Cairn Energy](#) plc had on March 10 this year slapped an arbitration notice against the tax demand with regard to 2006 internal business reorganisation. The government has decided to join the arbitration initiated by British oil explorer over a Rs 10,247 crore tax demand and is considering to appoint its arbitrator.

As regards Shell, in November 2014, the Indian unit of Royal Dutch Shell Plc won Rs 18,000 crore transfer pricing cases against I-T department at the Bombay High Court and the government is yet to take a view on appeal in the case.

Asked if transfer pricing cases will also be referred to Shah Committee, he said, "The remit of Shah panel is open to all legacy issues.... so on need to address basis I think other issues could be taken by Shah panel."

He said the legacy issues that have held back private investments need to be worked out.

"I think two sectors holding back the economy are private investments and exports. We have discussed this several times. We have discussed this in the Economic Survey as well that the corporate sector is still challenged. It has legacy issues and those that are holding back private investments need to be worked out," Subramanian said.

Ease of doing business, [taxation](#), public investment and [GST](#) law are on all part of the agenda of reforms before the government.

To a question about the complaints from the industry despite a number of measures that have been taken by the government to resurrect confidence, Subramanian said the point is the extent of problem is quiet deep.

He said getting back the economy to 8-10 per cent growth trajectory was possible within the NDA government's tenure.

"The external environment is quite challenging and our exports have come down. So, these are two factors that are still holding back the economy. That is why... public investment is going to fill in the gap," he said.

He, however, ruled out possibility of a fiscal stimulus to prop up the economy.

"Fiscal stimulus you provide when you think economy is cyclical and is operating at low potential. But when we are talking about 8-10 per cent sustained growth, we need much more structural policy then cyclically policy. That's the clear distinction we need to make," Subramanian said.

He said the government has a "very good" [fiscal deficit](#) target. "It is very important for

maintaining macro economic stability that we should meet that and I don't think there is any need for any fiscal stimulus at this stage."

Finding resources for a fiscal stimulus could be difficult and it could jeopardise macroeconomic stability.

"And as I said we don't need fiscal stimulus for structural reforms. Fiscal stimulus is not part of our agenda," he said.

On the priorities for the next Budget, Subramanian said it was a little bit premature to speculate on the proposals.

"In the last Budget the big idea was how to improve investment and we need recalibrate the fiscal path. I think that was the big idea for that budget.

"For the next Budget there are many many important issues and in many areas we need to move forward. So we will be thinking about that. We have lots of consultations and discussions at this stage. We will be making a list of possible ideas. It's premature to talk about (that)," he said.

Asked about the impact of deficient monsoon on agriculture production, he said it was difficult to assess the situation now but "it would not be like 4 per cent (growth of previous year)."

He said except fruits and vegetables, agriculture commodity prices would not be a source of major concern this year.

"Overall what we need to worry about is not so much huge price inflation but how the farm incomes do because monsoon has not been as good as we hoped and prices are actually down. We need to think carefully about farming," he said.

On the sectors facing problems, he said power distribution companies and steel sector are stressed and are getting focused government attention.

"But the point is the extent of problem is quite deep, I think there are legacy problems. And specially when economy is slowing down there is still lot of debt," he said.

Also, roads projects are getting attention and steel is being unblocked.

Despite deficient rainfall, he said late rains have increased the levels. "I think overall, the late rains have helped the reservoir level so rabi (crop) is going to be better than we had feared in September. So overall its very difficult to say but I think growth in agriculture will be more than last year."

WASTE TREATMENT

HINDU, OCT 7, 2015

The politics of waste management

BARBARA HARRISS-WHITE

Human society has always produced waste and always will. Waste materials — substances without value — are constantly generated in all production, all distribution and all consumption processes. The time waste spends without any value may be a few minutes at the minimum and, at a maximum, eternity. Nature, the key provider of resources, is not simply a tap. In subjecting waste to the physical laws of decomposition and re-composition, it also acts as a sink. Many bio-physical processes take place at an extremely slow rate, compared to the rapid physical cycles of the economy. My 2015 fieldwork on the waste economy of a small town indicated that about half the waste could not be recycled and was left to nature's sinks.

A 2013 paper in *Nature* describes India's waste production as the fastest growing in the world and set to peak a century into the future. In the small town I studied, there is no proper waste management mechanism — waste is too costly to control, engulfs all open spaces and is beginning to lead to a public health catastrophe.

Waste management in a small town

Take human waste, since everyone is talking about it. In the town I studied, the abolition of manual scavenging in the early 1990s led to the abolition of jobs reserved for women scavengers. This means that these horrible but comparatively well-paid jobs depend on official patronage and discretion more than ever. The municipal labour force is becoming more male than ever and the disposal of 'wet waste' is now men's work.

By now, half the town's houses have septic tanks. However, the owners of the small fleets of septic tankers report that very few households empty them regularly — they might be cleared once in a generation or when they break down. And there are no facilities for the treatment of faecal sludge when it is pumped out — it is all dumped into a nearby lake and the river bed; the lorry drivers are fined by the police when caught in the act.

Meanwhile, human waste from the other 50 per cent of the households and almost all commercial buildings finds its way into the open drains and urban drainage ditches where it joins general consumption waste. By all accounts, this also includes medical waste leaking from private hospitals. Impossible to separate from the other waste, its final resting place is the dangerously toxic dumpyard, where entire families of indigent scrap-gatherers survive by sifting the putrid surface. Meanwhile, though it is illegal, someone

may try containing the mess by systematically — maybe on a weekly basis — setting fire to portions of it. I don't see these difficulties being recognised in the public debates on defecation.

Over the last quarter-century while the volume of waste has increased by a factor of 8-10 times and shifted decisively towards being non-biodegradable, the labour force engaged in sanitation work has shrunk by 60 per cent.

Tax evasion starves the local government of resources. On the other hand, technologies have hardly changed, leading to a burgeoning informal economy that has become indispensable to the waste management system, and hence, to the rest of the economy. The compulsions of the new public management structure and privatisation have resulted in a replacement of secure jobs with a guaranteed minimum wage, as per the International Labour Organisation (ILO) norms, with jobs which can sometimes be labelled as bonded labour and are purely on the basis of verbal contracts. While a secure job guaranteeing a minimum wage would fetch the employee anywhere between Rs.15,000 and Rs. 25,000 a month, with commensurate rights and benefits, a job based on contract would hardly give him Rs.4,000-Rs.7,000 a month with few benefits.

Not only is this work informalised in itself but to supplement his low pay, he also has to carry out other side jobs. The labourers, working in long shifts, sort the waste and pack it for the wholesaler. Apart from this, scores of gatherers scour the town before dawn — mostly on foot and sometimes using cycle or cycle carts — to supply the scrappers who sort it and send it to a massive depot. Recyclable waste there is slotted into hundreds of categories for further re-processing. And small fortunes are made by the few at the top.

Most work involving waste products is hard, dangerous and oppressive. A 2014 Human Rights Watch report stated that 90 per cent of India's sanitation workers die before they reach retirement age. This kind of work is stigmatised throughout the world. Many people think it is the Dalits who are made to handle the waste but in the town I studied, about a third of the municipal workforce was not Dalit or Adivasi. It was getting cosmopolitan and being labelled as a municipal labourer did not cause shame.

The informal waste management economy, by contrast, still consists almost entirely of Dalits and Adivasis. It is socially stratified. Indeed people belonging to one tribe are shunned as 'animals' and socially ostracised, as are people who have forfeited the social right to be dependent upon others due to an addiction, disease, elopement or crime. The neediest people work in waste management and the neediest waste workers are the ones least entitled to the social safety net.

The entire social structure is experienced as one filled with violence that consigns people who have the least choice or mobility to work in the informal waste management industry. While few among those we interviewed complained of discrimination at work,

more instances of abuse were reported when it comes to their interactions with the rest of society. For example, passengers expressed annoyance at the cleaners in trains if they even touched their seats. Hospital housekeepers were often abused by patients. There is a long way to go before discrimination is eliminated while preparing for what the governor of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) recently described as an economy where people have access to quality housing, schooling health and transport facilities.

Though one section/tribe is routinely abused as a group, many others are also experiencing discrimination — not as a result of their ascribed group-based identity like that of caste, tribe or gender but as a result of their social condition resulting from factors like poverty, illiteracy, the dirt they come into contact with during work and a need to drink alcohol. Individual discrimination exists alongside group-based discrimination and may be replacing it.

Technology not in short supply

What is to be done? Construction of toilets and management of air pollution are, for sure, only a tiny part of the waste management economy and there is no shortage of technological solutions on offer. Human waste can be also detoxified and recycled. The technologies involved are not rocket science. However, how to customise them — scaling up for towns and scaling down for places at the outskirts — is a thorny question. Further, why should it be assumed that the upgraded technology will be operated by the same Dalits and Adivasis? And, if not, will there be plans for compensating and re-training the existing informal labour force when it is displaced? If not, why not?

India's waste management economy is clearly and uniquely impregnated with caste. Research suggests that to break this down modern jobs that are caste-neutral are needed, along with opportunities for education and migration. The workers I spoke to agreed and added that there was a need to provide opportunities for self-employment, which they felt gave them some much-desired independence. They also expressed the need for greater state intervention.

However, while the state represents progress to the workers, as a source of both jobs and welfare provisions like subsidised rice, its role is complicated. Workers also encounter it as a bastion of the upper class that discriminates against them. Achievements such as establishing bank accounts with nationalised banks now come with new sites of discrimination. Stigma can also be addressed through political activism — through trades unions, political parties and social movements.

However, in my research, I came to understand that while there has been some sporadic empowerment, it both results from and reinforces a politics of social identity. Whether there is a Swachh Bharat programme or not, the dignity and social condition of workers involved in waste management figures right at the bottom of the political agenda.

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Work involving waste products is tough, dangerous and oppressive. A report found that 90 per cent of India's sanitation workers die before they reach retirement age

The production of waste in India is growing at an exponential rate. However, the welfare and dignity of the informal workers involved in the stigmatised sector of waste management remains at the bottom of any government's political agenda

While the media is full of facts, figures, intentions and achievements about cleanliness and pollution, let's try to set toilets, open defecation and air pollution in their real context

The formal workforce getting cosmopolitan and being labelled as a municipal labourer does not cause it shame. The informal economy, by contrast, consists almost entirely of Dalits and Adivasis

Over the last quarter-century, while the volume of waste has increased by a factor of 8-10 times and shifted decisively towards being non-biodegradable, the labour force engaged in sanitation work has shrunk by 60 per cent

WOMEN

ECONOMIC TIMES, OCT 6, 2015

Gujarat to get its first all-women police band

State Home department has recently given its nod to form the first only-women police band at Ahmedabad city police HQ through a notification.

AHMEDABAD: The [Gujarat](#) government is set to form the state's first all-women [police](#) band at the city Police Headquarters.

State Home department has recently given its nod to form the first only-women police band at Ahmedabad city police HQ through a notification.

Police bands are a male bastion show comprising 15 to 20 trained personnel who perform on special occasions such as VIP visits, parades, official ceremonies and Independence and Republic Day celebrations.

Each police HQ in all districts along with 18 SRP platoons in Gujarat have their own police bands.

Besides, city commissinates including Ahmedabad, Surat and Rajkot also have their own police bands which only have male personnel.

"Usually, only male candidates with inclination towards music are recruited for police bands under constable and sub-inspector grade. At present, all police and SRP bands across the state have male personnel. When the [women](#) police bands would be formed here, they will become the first ever all-women band in Gujarat," Deputy SP, City Police headquarters, P V Raval said.

As per the notification issued by Home department, 18 women candidates will be recruited for the upcoming band in the city.

Apart from playing at government functions, citizens and police staff can hire the band for shows and at a reasonable price, it said.

Home department directed the officials concerned to form the 18-member band by February 2016 and a fund of Rs 33 lakh has been allocated for the purpose.

Out of 18 women candidates to be selected, three will be of assistance sub-inspector (ASI) grade, three head constable grade and 12 constable grade personnel.