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CIVIL SERVICE

HINDUSTAN TIMES, SEP 22, 2014

Soon, babus may also work from home

Aloke Tikku

They are already spending longer hours at office but now government officials may soon end up working out of office too.

The Narendra Modi government this week lifted a decade-old restriction on the purchase of laptops, notepads and tablets iPads for central government officials. This comes in the backdrop of the government's Digital India campaign and would ensure the babudom would soon be expected to work on the go.

In a fresh set of rules on Friday, the finance ministry has knocked out provisions that required the administrative secretaries — who head central departments — to justify purchase for each officer.

The earlier version had explicitly barred the purchase of laptops for officers as a matter of routine and required “adequate functional justification” for the purchases.

Deputy secretaries – the first decision-making level within the government – and above are entitled to get the gadgets that should cost no more than `70,000. The heads of departments will decide the device that each officer would be issued.

After using the device for four years, the officer would be permitted to buy it from the government by paying 10% of the original cost.

A government official acknowledged the gadgets riding on the back of wireless technology could radically change the work culture in the public sector.

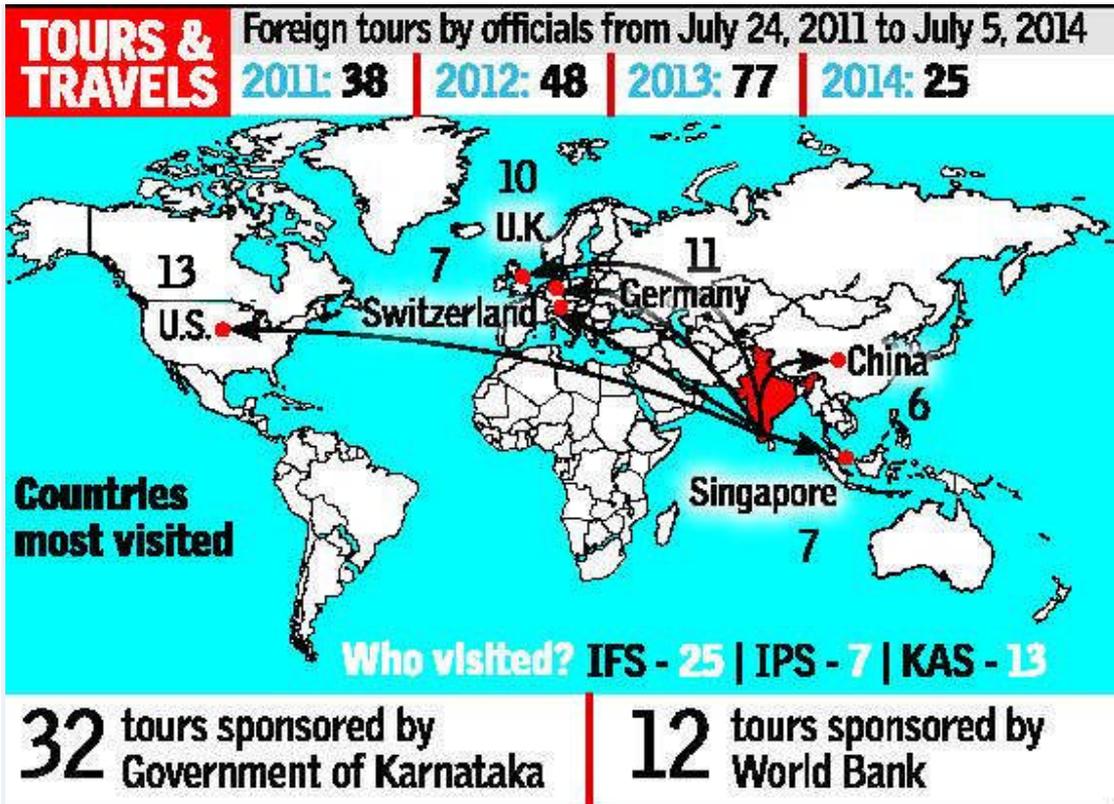
But far from celebrating the relaxation, he worried that technology would blur the line between work and family time.

“It will also mean that we get lesser time for ourselves,” he said.

HINDU, SEP 19, 2014

Bureaucrats not far behind in race to go on foreign junkets

NAGESH PRABHU



Top bureaucrats, who often point a finger at the misuse of government resources by politicians, seem to have outdone legislators in making officially-sponsored trips abroad.

A total of 188 officials — including IAS, IPS, IFS, KAS, and other officials — had gone abroad to attend workshops, conferences and study tours in the last three years, according to sources in the State Secretariat.

This has cost the State exchequer Rs. 1.10 crore for the period 2011 (July) to 2014 (July).

This trend seems to have gone unchecked even as a recent tour of legislators to Europe and other countries came under severe criticism, particularly at a time when the State is facing severe drought and flood conditions.

Of the total 121 foreign junkets undertaken by officials in the last three years, expenses of 32 tours was met by the State government. Expenditure on the rest of the tours was borne by the organisers, such as the World Bank, the Asian Development Bank, Japan International Cooperation Agency, Central government, U.N. bodies such as ILO, IFO, London School of Economics, and trade fairs and travel marts.

Interestingly, an IPS officer visited China for the 26 FIBA, Asia Basket Ball Championship for Men, in 2011. Some officials attended the Geneva Festival in Switzerland, the 19th triennial meeting of the International Association of Forensic Science at Madeira (Portugal), the Indian Tourism Marketing meet in New York, a

conference on advances mid-career VAT and GST Training programme at Duke University, and an agri-business meet in Israel.

Sources said while most such trips are useful to the State, some are sanctioned in the guise of promoting tourism, trade and business, bringing in tech innovations and leadership development.

Interestingly, the U.S., where many bureaucrats have relatives or children studying, topped the list of most popular countries visited.

Government bodies such as the Karnataka State Co-Operative Marketing Federation, the Visvesvaraya Industrial Trade Centre, Department of Agriculture, Karnataka Biotechnology and Information Technology, Jungle Lodges and Resorts Ltd., Karnataka State Pollution Control Board, State Library Authority Fund, Hutti Gold Mines Ltd., Karnataka State Tourism Development Corporation Ltd. and Krishna Bhagya Jala Nigam Ltd. too have footed junkets.

A senior official told *The Hindu* that “officials have to obtain permission from the Chief Minister, the Chief Secretary, and departments concerned from the Centre for embarking on foreign tours. Officials, who go on a study tour, need to submit a detailed report soon after his/her return from the tour”.

ECONOMIC TIMES, SEP 19, 2014

Supreme Court hits back faulting lack of transparency in government appointments

The Modi government has brought in twin bills which would replace the in-house mechanism of the court with a more broad-based selection body.

New Delhi: In public dock over the opaque nature of the functioning of its in-house mechanism to appoint judges, the [Supreme Court](#) on Thursday trained its guns on the government's "in-house" mechanism, to search for potential candidates to be appointed as the vigilance and chief vigilance commissioner, as lacking in transparency.

"In-house mechanisms are being faulted for lack of transparency. If transparency is the hallmark and the existing inhouse systems are being criticized critically, how can your guidelines not be transparent despite the statute saying so," outgoing CJI RM Lodha said in loaded observations against the government's new norms on appointments to top posts.

The top court has been the receiving end of such criticism of late. The Modi government has brought in twin bills which would replace the in-house mechanism of the court, known as the collegium system, with a more broad-based selection body, the National Judicial Appointments Commission.

"The public now demands transparency. India has a huge pool of talent. Why should you not devise a mechanism that reaches a man who has a talent even in the remotest part of the country?"

Sunlight is not reaching some corners. It should not only reach but also be visible," the CJI told the AG who was defending a government circular inviting all central government to suggest names for these posts.

The circular restricts the potential candidates to the central government employees, ignores state level babus, other persons with experience in banking, insurance etc and also does not prescribe the minimum vigilance experience required for these posts, a NGO, which has challenged it, alleges.

AG Mukul Rohatgi contended it was not possible to invite public applications for these top posts. "Lakhs of applications will come," he said. How do you identify someone who has "impeccable honesty and integrity" he asked. But the CJI was not satisfied with his response.

"If such a process had been followed for a small job, it would have been set aside as vitiated," the CJI observed.

INDIAN EXPRESS, SEP 18 2014

Changing Team State

The rationale for a permanent civil service is that it ensures a non-politically aligned cadre with an institutional memory.

Written by [Manish Sabharwal](#)

Jawaharlal Nehru hoped that his legacy would be 40 crore people capable of ruling themselves. As the unrealistic expectations from the first 100 days of the NDA calm down, I'd like to make the case that the government should take the long view and try to create a legacy that makes an impact: four lakh civil servants who are effective, accountable and bold. A more efficient and adventurous state would need radical changes to the policy on human capital architecture. Currently, this policy ensures that our non-elected senior policymakers are mostly permanent, close to retirement, and share thought worlds.

Legacies are complicated concepts and it's probably useful to revisit two views of history. The first view, summed up by Thomas Carlyle, believes that the history of the world is the biography of great men. The second view, championed by Leo Tolstoy, believes that there is no such thing as great men, only great times. For me, the second view is too fatalistic, because leaders like Gandhi, Abraham Lincoln, Akbar and Ranjit Singh clearly bent the arc of history. But accomplishing great things is a team sport. The leaders mentioned above wouldn't have accomplished what they did without what historian Doris Kearns Goodwin calls a team of rivals; Nehru, Sardar Patel and Abul Kalam Azad for Gandhi, Edward Bates, Salmon Chase and William Seward for Lincoln, Todar Mal, Man Singh, and Birbal for Akbar, Zorawar Singh, Hari Singh Nalwa and Fakeer Azizuddin for Ranjit Singh. Nehru's legacy, redeemed not wholly or in full measure but very substantially, did lead to a nation that governs itself. But, according to biographer S. Gopal, Nehru regretted not being able to dismantle the administrative

system set up by the British. It is a system for centralisation, control and suppressing innovation that is inappropriate for today's wicked problems. It is a system for centralisation, control and suppressing innovation that is inappropriate for today's wicked problems.

It may be useful to learn from technology companies in Silicon Valley, the hub of using adventurous, innovative and curious human capital to solve wicked problems. Their first genius is realising that the team you choose is the company you create: an A team with a B opportunity is preferred over a B team with an A opportunity. Their second genius is a bias for youth: wicked problems need a fresh set of eyes not crushed by history or "how things are done". The French statesman, Georges Clemenceau, once said that war was too important to be left to generals, and the third genius of the Silicon Valley companies is ensuring that hyper-intelligent engineers are complemented by narrative-creating marketers and tight-fisted financial controllers. Their final genius lies in leadership transition, as companies shift from the hormonal exuberance of adolescence to the cruising speed of adulthood. Founders step back, or are forced to step back, and are replaced by adult supervision. All four have interesting implications but first let's look at *continued...*

TRIBUNE, SEP 17, 2014

WORST FLOODS IN JAMMU & KASHMIR IN SIX DECADES

Staff resent govt decision to reopen Secretariat tomorrow

Dinesh Manhotra & Majid Jahangir

The seat of the government is under water, but the Chief Secretary wants employees to report on duty on Thursday. Employees across Jammu and Kashmir have resented this move of the government.

Up in arms against the reportedly hasty decision of the government to open the Secretariat, employees of the Jammu region are adamant not to resume duty unless the authorities provide a conducive living and working atmosphere.

Instead of obeying the order, employees seem to be in the mood to confront their seniors. "When we were marooned and struggling to save our lives, no senior tried to know our whereabouts," said a Secretariat employee on the condition of anonymity.

He added, "It was second life for us because we reached Jammu after facing numerous hardships." Employees of the Jammu region pleaded to political leaders to save them from the wrath of their seniors.

Sources said a group of employees met Lok Sabha member and state BJP president Jugal Kishore Sharma on Tuesday and sought his intervention.

"BJP leaders spoke to Chief Secretary Mohammad Iqbal Khandey, who assured them that he would adopt a lenient approach," the sources said.

Most employees based in Jammu demanded that ministers and senior bureaucrats should spend at least a couple of days in the Secretariat before asking them to resume duty.

“Where will the government accommodate us?” asked an employee. He added, “Most hotels and buildings where employees have been accommodated are still marooned.”

The employees had a reason to oppose the government’s decision. On the one hand the health authorities were issuing advisories and on the other the government was asking them to return to Srinagar.

Government offices, including the Secretariat, housing the office of the Chief Minister and Cabinet ministers, were still inundated.

Other major offices still submerged included the Divisional Commissioner and Deputy Commissioner’s office, the High Court complex, the police control room, the zonal police headquarters and office of fire and emergency services.

“The offices will reopen on Thursday as the situation will improve. The water level is receding,” said Satish Nehru, Commissioner Secretary, Urban Development.

He said the move to open offices and ask employees to report on duty was aimed at giving the sense that the government had started taking control of things.

Most employees said they were keen to resume duty, but it would be possible only after there was no water on roads and office complexes were cleaned of slush.

“I tried to reach my office at Lal Mandi today. One storey of the office is still under water,” said Mushtaq Ahmed, an employee of the Horticulture Department.

Employees adamant on not rejoining duty yet

- Chief Secretary issues order asking employees to report on duty on Thursday, but staff across state in no mood to obey
- Secretariat employees of Jammu region adamant on not resuming duty yet. May confront their seniors
- Employees say even when the health authorities are issuing advisories against travel to Srinagar, government wants them back
- A group of employees meet Lok Sabha member Jugal Kishore Sharma, seek his intervention; BJP leaders speak to the Chief Secretary

BUSINESS STANDARD, SEP 16, 2014

No ban on recruitment: Kerala FM

The state is in a deep financial crunch and has opted for an overdraft facility to raise around Rs 250 crore to meet salary and pension expenses

[Kerala](#) finance minister [KM Mani](#) has clarified that there was no ban on recruitment, and only an interim stay on creating new posts had been recommended.

He said youth organisations of various political parties, including Youth Congress, had mistook it as a blanket ban of fresh recruitment to government services in the light of the latest financial crisis. The government also had no plans to raise the pension age from the existing 56 years, he said.

"There will be no decision on the part of government that will adversely affect employment opportunities," Mani added. He also said promotions and appointments in existing designations won't be affected by the decision.

Meanwhile, Youth Congress and Youth League, the youth organisation of Indian Union Muslim League (IUML), have strongly protested against the government's proposed plan to impose an embargo on appointments in view of the financial crisis.

The state is in a deep [financial crunch](#) now and had opted for an [overdraft facility](#) to raise around Rs 250 crore in order to meet salary and pension expenses during the Onam season.

The government has asked additional chief secretary KM Abraham to submit a report recommending various avenues to raise the revenue of the state.

DEFENCE, NATIONAL

ECONOMIC TIMES, SEP 17, 2014

Crucial file on procurement of jet trainers goes missing from Defence Ministry

The MoD has ordered an inquiry into how exactly the file went missing, which will lead to a major delay in the aircraft acquisition.

NEW DELHI: In an unusual development which has raised eyebrows, a crucial file connected to the procurement of additional British Hawk advanced jet trainers (AJTs) has gone [missing](#) from the [defence ministry](#).

The MoD has ordered an inquiry into how exactly the file went missing, which will lead to a major delay in the aircraft acquisition, and the officials found guilty of "acts of omission or commission" will be punished, said sources.

India had first ordered 66 twin-seat Hawk AJTs in March 2004 and then another 57 in July 2010, at a combined overall project cost running into Rs 16,000 crore, to train rookie IAF and Navy pilots in the intricacies of combat flying.

The file that has now gone missing dealt with the procurement of another 20 AJTs for IAF's famous Surya Kiran aerobatics team, which has not flown for the last three years due to a lack of proper aircraft.

The overall AJT project, with the first 24 trainers supplied directly by [BAE Systems](#) and the rest 119 being progressively manufactured by [Hindustan Aeronautics Ltd](#) under licence in India, will cost well over Rs 20,000 crore by the time it's fully completed by 2017-2018.

This is the second time in recent years that a crucial procurement file has gone missing from the MoD. A key file connected to the \$20 billion MMRCA (medium multi-role combat aircraft) project for acquisition of 126 fighters had also vanished three years ago, just when the high-voltage competition was coming to a close.

It was later found from a locality in New Delhi under mysterious circumstances and handed over to the IAF by a civilian.

DISTRICT ADMINISTRATION

HINDU, SEP 18, 2014

Move to involve public in administration begins

Deputy Commissioner to hold meeting with NGOs once in three months

The district administration would hold meetings with non-governmental organisations (NGOs) once in three months to get suggestions on better governance and redress grievances of the public. The NGOs hailed this as a right move towards involving the public in administration.

Deputy Commissioner A.B. Ibrahim announced this chairing a meeting of representatives of NGOs at his office here on Wednesday. Representatives of several NGOs from different walks of life, including child and women development, senior citizens, transgenders and others attended the meeting providing suggestions and pouring out grievances.

Responding to G. Hanumanth Kamath of Nagarika Vedike, Mr. Ibrahim directed the Mangalore City Corporation (MCC) to take immediate steps to form ward committees. Mr. Kamath said absence of committees had prevented participation of the public in local governance.

NGOs representing women and children rued that travel by city buses had been a nightmare for women, children and the elderly. They cannot easily board and alight from buses as footboards are at higher level and urged the administration to get them right. They also highlighted the plight of women passengers due to nuisance created by a few male passengers in overcrowded buses.

Issues pertaining to absence of footpaths in the city also came up.

Many urged the Deputy Commissioner to invite representatives of NGOs to meetings of different departments convened at the district level — Mr. Ibrahim said he would consider the request. He also directed the MCC to regularly hold meetings with NGOs.

Mr. Kamath questioned the rationale of making Mangalore kerosene-free when sufficient LPG cylinders were not available. An official from the Food and Civil Supplies Department said the government would ensure proper supply of cylinders. The Democratic Youth Federation of India (DYFI) issued a separate statement saying the kerosene-free project was impractical as thousands of migrants from north Karnataka and north India had no identity documents.

Representatives from about 40 NGOs attended the meeting. K. Ashok Bhat, district convener of Apna Desh told *The Hindu* that the NGOs would continue to support proactive moves, he said.

ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

BUSINESS STANDARD, SEP 18, 2014

Nitin Desai: Planning Commission Mark II

If in 2017 yet another five-year Plan has to be formulated, then the new institution will not be very different from the present Planning Commission

Nitin Desai

The government's decision to wind up the [Planning Commission](#) and replace it with another institution has led to a spate of suggestions in this paper and elsewhere. So many and so diverse are these suggestions that the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) will probably end up ignoring most of them and doing what the prime minister has had in mind for years. Despite this apprehension of futility, let me, as a veteran of the old Planning Commission, add my bucketful to this flood.

A change in the structure of the Planning Commission is not possible without a change in the process and content of the Plan. If in 2017 yet another [five-year Plan](#) has to be formulated on the same lines as earlier Plans, then the new institution will not be very different from the present Planning Commission, with perhaps some operational entities like the [Aadhaar](#) authority being shifted out. Hence, a radical restructuring of the Planning Commission will require an equally radical restructuring of what it does.

The case for change in planning rests on the changed environment for development. The Commission and the planning methodology it follows was set up at a time when, for ideological and practical reasons, development policy involved large-scale investment in public-sector projects for [infrastructure](#) and industry. Even agriculture and the [social services](#) required investments and institution building by the public sector. The Commission was akin to a corporate strategy department that sought to plan and coordinate these investments in the context of a long-term perspective of the economy. Again, for ideological and practical reasons this perspective focused on self-reliance as a key goal that translated into an import-substitution strategy, with poverty eradication being added explicitly later.

Today, the [Indian economy](#) is very different. Both the ideological and practical constraints on development are a world away from the ethos of the Nehru era. The economy is more open with a rising trade ratio, and large inward and outward flows of investment. The private sector has expanded far beyond the limited confines within which it operated in the 1950s and 1960s, and even the public-sector companies are getting integrated into the capital market and the market economy. The instrumentalities

of policy are different with the big bang liberalisation of the 1990s and the dependence on [public-private partnerships](#) (PPPs) for infrastructure growth. Public spending has shifted sharply towards subsidy-oriented anti-poverty programmes and social services, where the locus of action is in the states.

In an open and liberalised economy, planning can be useful both for public policy and for private-investment planning. But it has to be different from the target-setting frameworks that have been the staple diet so far. It should involve:

Medium- and long-term assessment of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats to development, and innovative suggestions for addressing these;

Integrative strategies for issues that cut across ministerial responsibilities;

Consistent frameworks for PPP agreements across infrastructure sectors;

Evaluation of actual outcomes against accepted goals of poverty eradication, regional balance, self-reliance, global competitiveness, etc, and needed course corrections.

The focus should be on specific issues rather than general-purpose economy-wide perspective planning, for example:

Implications of the rise of China as a key player in global trade, investment and technology transfer;

The impact of declining United States interest in West Asian oil on prices, availability and security of supply;

Integrative energy and transport policies that look beyond investment planning to coherent price regimes for a competitive market;

Investment and municipal reform to cope with rising pace of urbanisation and industrialisation;

Implications of development trends for environment and resource conservation;

Region-specific implications for employment, education, health, skill development of varying demographic trends - a younger population in some parts and an ageing population in others.

Studies of the type listed above can be done by the many think tanks that exist today. The value of a governmental body doing this can only come from its proximity to decision making, more particularly to the PMO. Hence, the new secretariat should be structured around the cross-sectoral divisions in the present Commission (but with fresh expertise added) and be headed by a national development advisor located, like the national security advisor, in the PMO. It should serve as the secretariat for a revitalised National Development Council, which already exists and is chaired by the prime minister and includes Union Cabinet ministers and chief ministers.

The national development advisor should be assisted in his or her task of advising the government and managing the new secretariat by a [national development advisory board](#) (NDAB), with non-official members including economists, social scientists, development activists - some full-time, but mostly part-time - to advise on medium- and long-term development.

The [NDAB](#) should be the vehicle through which the government structures its dialogue with business associations, trade unions, academics and civil-society groups on development issues. Its studies should be widely available, as they are meant to influence private decisions as much as public policy. Should these studies include a macroeconomic frame of projected growth rates, investment rates and so on? Perhaps yes, because if we don't do it, the projections of the World Bank and others will grow in influence. But this macroframe should not be treated as setting targets but as an intelligence estimate to guide public and private decisions.

A structure on these lines cannot take on any role in resource allocation either at the Centre or between the Centre and the states. Yet someone, somewhere has to take on this task. Centre-state financial transfers should take place largely within the parameters set by the Finance Commission, whose remit can be broadened to include predictable development requirements. Conditional transfers through centrally sponsored schemes should be greatly reduced and transfers beyond those recommended by the Finance Commission should take the form of block grants based on the Gadgil-Mukherjee formula. The finance ministry can do the needful for allocations to central ministries as the distinction between Plan and non-Plan is quite tenuous with public-sector investment shifting out of the Budget. Planning simply means thinking ahead, and that is useful however liberalised and market-oriented an economy may be. A national development secretariat designed as a think tank with privileged access to centres of power can serve this purpose not just for the public but also the private sector.

EDUCATION

HINDUSTAN TIMES, SEP 23, 2014

IIT allows board exam marks; 20 percentile to stay

In a significant decision which is set to benefit students aspiring to enter the IITs, the Council meet of the prestigious institutions here on Monday decided to consider students with 75% and above in Class XII board examinations, provided they have cleared Joint Entrance Examination (advanced).

The 48th meeting of the council of the IITs, chaired by Union HRD minister Smriti Irani, took the decision and prescribed minimum percentage in Class XII boards' examination for admission to IITs.

The issue was taken up after some 200 students, who cleared the JEE examination, could not get admission in the ongoing academic session as they did not figure in the top 20 percentile, which is a must as per current norms.

“In addition to the top-20 percentile condition, it has been decided now to give another provision [to aspirants seeking admission], which is the marks secured in the board exams,” Ashok Thakur, HRD secretary told press persons here.

As per the new norms, an aspiring OBC and general category candidate should have secured 75% marks and those belonging to SC, ST, and physically challenged categories should have got 70 per cent marks.

The HRD ministry is also working on a ranking system for institutes of higher learning in the country and has given the responsibility to prepare a framework for evolving a system to the heads of IIT Chennai and IIT Kanpur.

STATESMAN, SEP 22, 2014

Regulated learning

MANOJ KUMAR PAL

Going by an official definition, higher education in India begins after the Higher Secondary stage. The most accessible channel is available through one of the nearly 20,000 undergraduate colleges, each affiliated to a university. The colleges offer three-year courses leading to a Bachelor's degree with a major in a branch of basic science, social science or humanities. Thereafter for the Master's degree, students can enter the universities to complete the remaining two years of the system of higher education approved by the University Grants Commission.

More glamorous channels leading to more lucrative career opportunities are offered by the IIMs, IITs, the recently established Indian Institutes of Science Education and Research (IISER), and the state-level engineering and medical colleges. All these institutions have stiff centralised admission tests at the entry point which cannot be scaled

unless the student goes through very expensive special coaching. A student's annual fees in these institutions range between Rs one lakh and Rs 15 lakh.

There is a second tier of state-run technical schools and colleges that are not very expensive and have more relaxed entry standards. They provide higher education to a large number of students and train them for a middle-level professional career.

By and large, the majority of students who get themselves admitted to the affiliated colleges and from there to the universities are of a mediocre calibre. However, some rare exceptions of the very best also join this stream because they are genuinely motivated to pursue a career devoted to academic pursuits at the higher level. This trend is noticeable even among IIT entrants; many of them opt for basic science. Apart from the quality of student input, the state-level colleges and universities suffer from many other maladies: (1) paucity of developmental funds; (2) decline in the number of accomplished faculty members with the best opting for research institutes; (3) lack of good technical staff; (4) lack of imaginative updating of student-level laboratories; (5) political interference. Despite these handicaps the affiliated colleges do provide higher education in basic science and humanities at the least cost to a maximum number of students.

A large number of privately owned institutions, managed solely by their owners, operate in diverse fields ~ management and commerce, information technology (IT), engineering, medical and basic sciences and humanities too. Some of the glamorous ones have set up campuses with particularly attractive infrastructure; they maintain transparency and claim to provide good education. The academic standard can be mediocre, even low; these institutions are run with the singular motive of earning a profit. A few of them have incurred notoriety in recent years for malpractices; 44 such institutions have been asked to close down by the UGC.

The diverse branches of higher education are funded and regulated by regulatory agencies that are statutorily created with mandates that are often overlapping, even contradictory. Some of the major players are the Ministry of Human Resource Development for the Central universities, IITs and IISERS; the UGC for other universities, the All India Council of Teachers' Education (AICTE), the Medical Council of India (MCI), the Bar Council of India, the National Council of Teachers' Education (NCTE), the Council of Architecture, Distance Education Council and many more depending on specialisation. Disputes have often arisen between the UGC and AICTE, between MHRD and MCI, and very recently between the UGC and the IIT Council. A few years ago, the National Knowledge Commission (NKC) made a scathing observation ~ "The present regulatory system is flawed in some important respects. The barriers to entry are too high. The system of authorising entry is cumbersome. The system as a whole is over-regulated but under-governed". These authoritative observations can

be relied upon while making some suggestions for reform of the present regulatory regime.

In recent years, the government has been anxious to innovate education in natural sciences and technology in order to meet the demands of the 'knowledge economy'. In 2008, Arjun Singh, the then HRD minister, had formed a committee under the chairmanship of Yash Pal. It was asked to review the functioning of UGC /AICTE 'in the wake of changes in higher, technical and professional education in India' and the ability of these agencies to cater to the 'emerging needs of education in keeping with the principles of access, equity, relevance and quality'. The terms of reference also included the need to amend the Acts of the Regulatory Agencies so that 'clashes in assignments / jurisdictions' can be avoided. The committee carried out an exercise in what it called 'Renovation and Rejuvenation of Higher Education'.

Based on arguments on holistic acquisition of knowledge, the committee observed that "coordination amongst agencies that have different views of knowledge and education is extremely difficult, if not impossible. It would, therefore, be necessary to have a single apex body which treats all knowledge areas in an integrated manner." The name 'National Council of Higher Education and Research (NCHER)' for this 'overarching' agency was coined by Yash Pal, who also recommended the abolition of all the present agencies. On 3 May 2010, Kapil Sibal, the first HRD minister in the second UPA government, submitted the NCHER Bill to Parliament. It was clubbed with four other related bills on: (i) accreditation of universities; (ii) educational tribunals; (iii) entry of foreign universities; and (iv) regulation of unfair practices in technical, medical and higher education.

The proposed NCHER is a huge entity with constitutional status, equivalent to that of the Election Commission. It will have four full-time and three part-time Commissioners who will be advised by a collegium of dignitaries, pre-eminently Nobel Laureates, Jnanpith award-winners, national professors, senior members of National Academies etc. They will be the core members with one representative from each of the states and Union Territories acting as ordinary members. The entire collegium is required to meet only once a year to discuss generalities about the status of education and research; to advise the commission on the annual budget proposals; and to appoint a four-member Executive Committee to act as the face of the collegium for the rest of the year. These four persons will advise the commission on the nitty-gritty of decision-making. Clearly, the stress is on formalities, centralisation of power, and efficacy of decision-making behind the facade of integrating 'knowledge'. The romantic theory of the 'holism' of knowledge behind this lofty edifice does not stand any serious scrutiny.

Present trends do suggest that the NCHER Bill will lapse in due course of time and the prime regulatory role will be bestowed on the UGC with further expansion of its jurisdiction and power. Apart from the wisdom of this policy at the cost of the autonomy

of educational institutions that forms a major ingredient in the successful education policy of any country, several other relevant issues like the entry of foreign universities; strict accreditation procedure by the National Assessment and Accreditation Committee (NAAC); and the emphasis on 'innovative' skill in the reformed education system deserve closer attention.

Already the portents are ominous. The UGC has infringed upon the academic autonomy of Delhi University, the Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore, and the IITs. The meddling in the affairs of IIT Kharagpur is ludicrous. Since their inception in the 1960s, the IITs have always been kept outside the ambit of the UGC. The commission has suddenly discovered that the IIT Act of 1961 does not 'define' any degree that can be awarded by them. And on the basis of this specious argument, the UGC now wants to inflict a uniform (3+2) system on the IITs as well. The absurdity is obvious ~ once accepted, the conclusion could be that all IIT degrees over the past 50 years are invalid. Our regulators must learn how to respect the autonomy of institutions that are imparting higher education.

HINDUSTAN TIMES, SEP 22, 2014

Finally spotlight on students' safety

Vandana Ramnani

The Centre has called upon the apex body of higher education, the University Grants Commission (UGC), to frame guidelines to ensure safety of students in and off campuses across the country. These include special measures for women students, to fix accountability.

At least 24 students from an engineering college in Hyderabad were drowned in the waters of the Beas in Himachal Pradesh's Mandi district in June this year. The incident raised pertinent issues, the foremost being that of students' safety, something which HT Education, too, analysed in its story titled 'Safety first for students' (June 18, 2014).

"The need of the hour is to have the HRD ministry frame an overarching policy framework on students' safety on campus and during excursions. Enforcing the rules should be an education regulator's responsibility, when it is set up," the article had said.

An expert committee will be set up to frame guidelines for which the UGC has invited suggestions from the public and stakeholders. "It will take about a month to come up with the guidelines," sources said on conditions of anonymity.

A public notice was recently published by the University Grants Commission following directions by the HRD ministry. It said, "The safety of students in and outside the campuses of higher educational institutions (HEIs) is a matter of paramount importance. Some incidents of the past have necessitated the review of the measures already in place in HEIs for the safety of students. The UGC has decided to frame

comprehensive guidelines for all to ensure the safety of students with the help of an expert committee for study tours, field visits, excursions, industrial visits or engaged in adventure sports and other activities in particular,” the notice says.

The UGC notice seeks the views of the general public as well as vice-chancellors of all universities in this regard. It invites suggestions from the public and stakeholders, including parents, students and teachers, on measures to ensure safety of students both on and off campus – for day scholars while on campus, for students residing in hostels, for those commuting to and fro from campus, those on educational tours, study tours, field visits, adventure sports and any other activities involving travel within and abroad, special safety measures for women students and those with special needs.

Currently, most schools, colleges and educational institutions take an undertaking from students countersigned by parents that absolves them of any responsibility in case of an untoward incident during a tour or event.

INDIAN EXPRESS, SEP 17, 2014

No more holidaying for teachers in name of meets

Written by [Dipti Singh](#)

Teachers will no longer be allowed to extend their leave granted for a state-level academic meet and convert it into a sight-seeing tour.

According to a Government resolution (GR) dated September 15, such meets can now only be organised by registered associations of teachers with prior approval and that too when schools are closed for long vacations. To ensure strict deadlines, no non-educational activity or discussion should be allowed during the meet. Schools will not be granted any financial aid or facilities from the state government for organising such meets.

The GR also says that state-level meets should not be of more than three days. At the Zilla Parishad level, it should not exceed two days.

The GR also makes it mandatory for the organisers to issue a participation certificate to teachers who attend the meet.

According to state education department officials, teachers often apply for a four-day or even a week-long leave to attend such meets.

“While schools function during this period, very few teachers are found working, which affects the study schedule. Now on, teachers will be sanctioned leaves only for the convention or meet,” an official said.

According to education officials, it’s like an official holiday of sorts at the government-run schools across the state when lakhs of teachers affiliated to various federations go on leave for five-six days to attend convention and meets every year.

Private, aided, unaided, primary, secondary and junior colleges under various local bodies altogether have six lakh teachers and 74,000 non-teaching staff, all of them affiliated to some or the other federations, unions and associations.

These federations and associations organised state-level meets and conventions to discuss various issues every year.

Officials say these meets are often organised at hill stations and other vacation spots. “In 2013, some of the federations organised the meet in Sindhudurg. However, after a two-day convention, most of the teachers headed to Goa. In January this year, Maharashtra State Primary School Teachers association organised a meet in Mahabaleshwar and teachers across the state had applied for a six-day leave, which will not be allowed henceforth.”

Prashant Redij, convenor of the Maharashtra State Secondary and Higher Secondary School Principals’ Association (MSSHSSPA), said, “ If these meets are organised during vacations, the education officer and other officials of education department in the area where the meet is organised do not attend the meet. Why is their attendance not made mandatory in the GR?”

Another teacher Manik Surve said, “This is state government’s plan to stop us from meeting and discussing our issues. Four-five days of leave does not affect students or lead to any loss of academic days. We will meet the education minister on this issue.”

HINDU, SEP 17, 2014

DUTA set to take on DU administration again

Stating that the university administration was guilty of resorting to the worst form of vindictive behaviour after they had successfully agitated for the roll-back of the four-year undergraduate programme, the Delhi University Teachers’ Association (DUTA) is all set to take on the varsity administration again — and this time until there are concrete resignations.

The first is a dharna which they intend to carry out at Jantar Mantar on Wednesday to demand the “removal of the Vice-Chancellor so that normalcy can be restored at Delhi University,” along with some of the other long-standing teacher issues that they want to be resolved.

“Rules”

Withdrawal of the University Grants Commission (UGC) code of conduct that has been made actionable is one of the main demands of the teachers.

The DUTA says that some of the “rules” that are mostly moral in nature are so hazy that it leaves room for interpretation, a tool that has already been made use of by the university administration to victimise teachers.

“The word actionable means termination. The manner in which the teachers have been victimised for their normal duties has worried us all. It is only going to get worse. We have been individually targeted for the agitations we carried out for the roll-back of the four-year undergraduate programme,” said DUTA president Nandita Narain.

Pay cut

The teachers this past year have had their salaries cut every time they took part in a protest.

“Even on public gazetted holidays our salaries were illegally cut. This is only part of the victimisation that the university has been indulging in,” the DUTA president added.

Immediate appointments with the correct rooster system, where teachers are hired when reservations are made on a department-wise basis; and no retrospective implementation of the points system when it comes to promotions are some of their other main demands.

Removal of the V-C, withdrawal of the UGC code of conduct that has been made actionable are some of their main demands

HINDUSTAN TIMES, SEP 16, 2014

Central govt lays stress on BEd, MEd reforms

The government is planning to increase the duration of the B.Ed and M.Ed programmes from one year to two, as part of a broad set of reforms to improve teachers’ training.

The decision came after human resource development minister Smriti Irani met vice-chancellors of more than 250 central and state universities on Monday.

Irani discussed ways to bring the courses at par with humanities and science curricula in universities. The present one-year format for B.Ed and M.Ed programmes was inadequate to train teachers, the V-Cs said.

“There was consensus on both issues, bringing all the teacher’s training programmes under the ambit of universities and extension of duration of the B.Ed and M.Ed courses,” a V-C who attended the meeting told HT.

The extension should be implemented in phases over five years, beginning with the academic year 2015-16 and ending in 2019-20, a committee set up by the National Council for Teacher Education (NCTE) in July had said.

The Poonam Batra committee also directed teachers' education institutions to offer multiple programmes in social sciences, sciences, humanities.

To improve quality of teachers' education, the NCTE signed a MoU with the National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC) for evaluation of training programmes.

Irani also called for teachers' education to be integrated with the higher education system. At present, though training programmes for teachers for secondary and higher-secondary levels are part of the university system, those for elementary schools are under the state boards.

The move follows Prime Minister Narendra Modi's focus on teachers' training during his Teachers' Day address. The idea for reforms was first recommended in 2012 by the Justice Verma Commission.

Training teachers in information and communication technology (ICT) was also discussed in a meeting between the HRD ministry, the UGC, the NCERT and the NCTE. PM Modi had advised teachers in his September 5 address to train in ICT so that they could impart it to students.

TRIBUNE, SEP 19, 2014

UGC retracts on Hindi circular

Under attack from Tamil Nadu Chief Minister Jayalithaa and political parties in the state, the UGC today decided to withdraw its controversial circular directing universities to teach Hindi as one of the primary languages in undergraduate courses.

The University Grants Commission will now issue a revised circular on the subject tomorrow, UGC Chairman Ved Prakash said today, hours after Jayalithaa wrote a letter to Prime Minister Narendra Modi opposing "imposition" of Hindi and that the directive was "not binding" on the state.

"The last circular was issued inadvertently mentioning that Hindi be taught along with English as a primary language. UGC has decided to issue a circular tomorrow saying that Hindi is not mandatory. It is the prerogative of the university concerned to decide how to teach, who to teach and what to teach," Prakash said.

The circular became public earlier this week and was attacked by political parties in Tamil Nadu, including the DMK, MDMK and PMK, which said they would resist all attempts to "impose" the language on Tamil Nadu.

In her letter to Modi today, Jayalithaa said the circular, amounting to "imposing Hindi", had been initiated during the previous government.

She said the two institutions - Anna University and Alagappa University - had received the circular on September 16 where it was stated that Hindi be taught as a primary

language along with English in undergraduate courses, besides following it in Law and Commerce streams also. — PTI

HINDU, SEP 22, 2014

Annamalai University attendance goes bio-metric way

A. V. RAGUNATHAN

Staffers have to stay on the campus for eight hours, regardless of the number of classes they handle

Annamalai University, now under the governance of the State government-appointed administrator Shiv Das Meena, has started introducing the smart photo identity card and biometric attendance systems in all its departments in a phased manner.

The new facility would enable the university to do away with the bulky and unwieldy registers handled manually. Moreover, it would facilitate the university to compile the database on all the teaching and non teaching staff and feed this into a centralised server for easy access.

The smart photo identity cards would have an embedded chip containing the details such as name, department and service details of the staff. The bio-readers would be installed at every department for the staff to punch the incoming and outgoing timings.

The bio-reader could be activated by the production of the smart photo identity card and putting the thumb impression on its screen.

As the system would enforce the rigours of discipline and punctuality there exists muted resentment among a section of staff.

Earlier, certain teaching faculty used to take attendance for granted by turning up at the departments just minutes before their classes were due. For instance, those who had to handle the second hour class would be absent in the first hour and those who had free hours in the evenings would leave early.

However, with the introduction of the new system a sense of accountability has been induced upon the staff. For, it has made it mandatory for the staff to stay on the campus for eight hours, regardless of the number of hours they handle the classes.

As per the new regimen it is required upon the faculty of engineering to report for duty from 8 a.m. onwards but before 8.31 a.m. and leave the departments from 4.31 pm onwards.

The office staff would have to be present in their seats from 9.15 am onwards but before 9.46 am and take leave from 5.46 pm onwards.

There is an opinion among the teaching staff that in terms of attendance they could not be equated with the non-teaching staff because those handling the professional courses are fully alive to their responsibility and work beyond stipulated hours.

When contacted, Mr. Meena told this correspondent that the new system had many advantages. Earlier examining the manual registers of all the departments was a time-consuming and exhausting affair.

Under the new system the attendance details of any staff could be obtained in a trice.

PIONEER, SEP 18, 2014

TN GOVT DIRECTS 2 UNIVERSITIES NOT TO IMPLEMENT UGC CIRCULAR

Maintaining its opposition to "imposition" of Hindi in the state, the Tamil Nadu government today directed two universities not to implement the UGC circular and said the decision taken by the previous UPA government would not be binding on it.

Chief Minister Jayalalithaa said the move, amounting to "imposing Hindi", had been initiated during the previous government.

She said the two institutions - Anna University and Alagappa University - had received the circular on September 16, 2014 where it was stated that Hindi be taught as a primary language along with English in undergraduate courses, besides following it in Law and Commerce streams also.

She said this decision had been taken at the meeting of the Kendriya Hindi Samiti (National Hindi Council) on July 28, 2011 under then Prime Minister Manmohan Singh.

The Council then said that students in Gujarat either graduated studying English or Hindi, thus resulting in lack of translation skills in Central departments and UGC had been asked to ensure Hindi was also taught along with English, she said in a statement here.

"From this, it is clear that the effort to impose Hindi basically stemmed from the decisions taken in this July 28, 2011 meeting of the Kendriya Hindi Samiti," she said.

Jayalalithaa also questioned why DMK, then a part of the Congress-led UPA, remained silent, though it opposed the move now. She said her party's stand was consistent and Hindi should not be imposed on non-Hindi speaking states.

The Official Languages Act, 1963, made it clear that Hindi should not be imposed on states not speaking the language, while the communication between Centre and such states, classified as 'Zone C', should only be in English, as mandates later.

"Therefore, the UGC circular will not at all apply to universities in Tamil Nadu," she said.

At a time when she raised demands like Tamil being made official language and being accorded the same status in Madras High Court, such a directive asking universities in the state to teach Hindi along English "is not only unacceptable, but also against the law," she said.

She said that in various streams in the universities, Tamil or other languages would continue to remain under Part I, English Part II and other related ones Part III.

"I have asked the Chief Secretary of the state to advice universities in the state to convey to UGC that the decisions taken in the Kendriya Hindi Samiti on July 27, 2011 will not be binding on them," she said.

ELDERLY

TIMES OF INDIA, SEP 16, 2014

60% of elderly malnourished: Study

[Janani Sampath](#)

CHENNAI: Dental problems are often taken for granted at old age. Now, doctors are seeing a common sense link that was mostly ignored: Most of the senior citizens going to physicians are malnourished because they can't eat properly, and they are often depressed.

The trend in Chennai, a retirement metro, is in tune with the results of a study by the University of North Carolina that found many elderly who visit emergency units in hospitals were malnourished or at the risk of being so soon. The study conducted on 141 elderly people who visited emergency rooms over two months found that almost 60% were didn't have enough nourishment. Malnutrition was highest among patients with symptoms of depression, those living in assisted facilities, those having trouble buying groceries and patients who had difficulty eating or swallowing due to denture problems.

Senior geriatrician Dr V S Natarajan says: "In our state, while 40% of the elderly population lives in an urban set up, the remaining 60% are in rural areas. Those in rural areas suffer more as they live in isolation and are bound by financial constraints." For example, when they end up losing their teeth, instead of buying dentures, they would cut down on eating solid food and stick to a liquid diet which leads to malnourishment, the doctor added. The main factors that push elderly people into malnourishment are failing health, economic insecurity, dental problems, isolation and depression.

Dr Krishnaswamy, head of the department of geriatrics at Government General Hospital says "The geriatric ward in GH sees close to 150 out-patients everyday. Most of them suffer from malnutrition as they eat less which is a result of no physical activity. On the other hand, because they do not eat, they cannot indulge in any activity. It is a vicious cycle," he said.

The doctor said that many old people suffered from chronic illnesses that reduce their appetite. "Patients who come to us have multiple ailments. But depression is common among all of them," he said. Most of the patients live alone because their children are away and this limited their accessibility to buy grocery or get treatment.

Dr Natarajan said that the government should introduce schemes that ensure proper nutrition for old people. "The geriatric units can distribute vitamin supplements and schemes like 'meals on wheels' which are popular abroad where the government takes a count of the geriatric population and distributes one full meal at noon at their doorstep," he said.

EMPLOYMENT

HINDUSTAN TIMES, SEP 16, 2014

Govt to change job exchanges to career centres

Brajesh Kumar

The central government is all set to restructure the defunct employment exchanges of the country and turn them into career centres on the lines of online job portals like naukri.com and timesjob.com, likely from next month.

Finance minister Arun Jaitley in his maiden budget speech in June had spoken about restructuring the 956 exchanges that have more than four crore registered job seekers but a very low placement record.

As a first step towards their modernisation, all exchanges will be linked via web based computer system creating a virtual job market for employers and job seekers.

The access and use of the portal would be easy and user friendly and jobseekers will be able to upload their biodata on the portal through common service centres or kiosks.

The government is considering setting up such kiosks at every technical/professional institutes so that students can easily use them.

The employment exchanges would also launch training programmes for skill development of job seekers in the PPP (Public Private Partnership) mode with government likely to provide subsidy for both the trainees and training providers.

Recruitment through local employment exchanges would be encouraged by offering incentives for the employers like tax exemptions.

According to the ministry of labour and employment, the problem behind the poor performance of these exchanges is lack of information regarding the demand and supply of the labour market.

The employment market information system run by the exchanges is ineffective in most of the states with delayed publication of employment market report.

Again, most of the candidate registered with the exchanges are unskilled with no academic or technical qualifications.

The success rate of these exchanges in respect of placement, the ministry noted, is below 0.5 % as compared to a leading online job website that claims to place 10-15 % of the total jobseekers registered with it.

FEDERALISM

HINDU, SEP 17, 2014

Federalism in judicial appointments

KALEESWARAM RAJ

States should have a say in any major constitutional amendment concerning the judiciary

EQUAL ROLE:It is erroneous to conceive the issue of judicial appointment as a tussle between the executive and the judiciary for a final say in the process of selection to the higher judiciary. Picture shows the Madras High Court.— PHOTO: V. GANESAN

The Supreme Court has dismissed a few writ petitions challenging the constitutional validity of the Constitution (99th Amendment) Bill and the National Judicial Appointments Commission Bill, 2014 (NJAC Bill). The judgment is correct, but not for the reason that the Bills are faultless. The Bills are yet to attain the status of law as defined under Article 13 of the Constitution. A premature opposition to the legislative move is antithetical to the facets of deliberative democracy. Article 111 of the Constitution empowers the President to return the Bills for reconsideration, which implies the possibility for modifications. Article 368 says an amendment of the Constitution could be done generally when a Bill is passed by “a majority of not less than two thirds of the members present and voting” in each House. Proviso to Article 368(2) clarifies that in certain cases, ratification by the legislatures of at least one half of the states is mandatory. The Union judiciary and the High Courts in the States come within the ambit of this proviso. This would mean that in a federal system, despite the clearance by Parliament, States do have a say in any attempt for a major constitutional amendment concerning the judiciary. It is therefore incorrect to think that the Bills mark an end in themselves. As such, there is scope for further debate and a need for it.

A failed experiment

The collegium is not just a failed experiment, but has also been undemocratic. Therefore, the real issue is whether the proposed amendment by way of Article 124A, B and C would really democratise the method of appointment. It is erroneous to conceive the issue of judicial appointment as a tussle between the executive and the judiciary for a final say in the process of selection to the higher judiciary. The present Bill is designed in such a way that both the judiciary and the executive have a role in the process. It is generally perceived that just two members can veto the majority decision in the NJAC and therefore the mechanism is defective. I would, however, say that this is a scientific device to oust the ineligible — provided the system is fair and transparent.

But the system is not supposed to be transparent, going by the text of the proposed amendment. Functionally and structurally, the NJAC would perpetuate many of the basic deficits and perils of the collegium in a different manner. A secret process without any benchmark that does not even accept the need for assessment of *inter se* merit would be constitutionally legitimised. No discussions, no notifications, no applications, no interviews, no consultations and ultimately no democratisation either in the process or in

the institution. Openness and transparency are the *sine qua non* for any fair method of selection.

Conceptual flaws

There is a serious conceptual flaw with the present legislative design. An uncomfortable dichotomy between the constitutional provision and statutory scheme emerges through the new move. While the 99th Constitution Amendment Act would create space for the new NJAC, its composition and voting pattern are designed not by the amended Constitution, but by a statute, namely the NJAC Act. This would indicate that even the sole advantage of the NJAC i.e., the requirement for support of five out of the six members for a valid selection is vulnerable to statutory amendment by a simple majority in Parliament. Thus, even without a constitutional amendment, the limited virtues of the proposed NJAC would be taken away.

Federalism is a basic feature of the Indian Constitution as held by the Supreme Court in *S.R. Bommai* (1994). On account of the NJAC, it is not the “basic feature” of judicial independence that is endangered, as is widely misconceived. The judiciary and the executive at the centre will annihilate even the limited role for the States in the selection process in the High Courts. Going by the text of Article 217 of the Constitution, even after its alteration by the Supreme Court in the *Second Judges case* (1993) and *Third Judges case* (1998), the Governor of the State and the collegium at the High Court level have a participative role in selection of judges in the High Courts. In the system now proposed, the NJAC or the President of India is not bound by the recommendation of the Chief Justices of the High Courts or the Governors. Section 6(4) of the NJAC Bill envisages consultation with senior-most judges and eminent advocates in the High Courts. But their opinion is not binding on the NJAC. Section 6(7) says the views of the Governor will be elicited but, again, those are not binding. Thus those at the Centre, through the NJAC, will select the High Court Judges, despite their lack of familiarity with the institutions of High Courts and lack of State-level mechanism for an open system for assessment of individual merit. This nullifies the constitutionally guaranteed federal traits in the realm of judicial appointments.

The NJAC thus needs to be restructured and its procedure revamped. Before ratifying the Bills mechanically, it is for the State legislatures to seriously ponder over the matter, for the issues are closely associated with the state’s role in the appointment process.

The illustrative case of the U.K. needs to be emphasised in the Indian scenario, for it shows how the federalist values are incorporated both in the structure of the Commission and in the procedures adopted. The Constitutional Reforms Act (CRA), 2005 in the U.K. was substantially altered by way of the Amendment in 2013. At present, there is a 15-member Commission doing the job of selection of judges to the higher judiciary and tribunals. Selection commences with an open vacancy notification.

It is again a paradox that despite the promise for equality of opportunity in public employment guaranteed under Articles 14 and 16 of the Constitution, an eligible person

in India cannot apply for judgeship in higher judiciary. Nor is there any system of open nomination. In the U.K., the concept of equal opportunity is not alien to judicial appointments. The notification is followed by a series of statutory consultations. The criteria for appointment as a Supreme Court judge are indicated in Sections 50 to 52 of the statute. The Appointment Commission has a participative, representative and a democratic character. England and Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland are properly represented in the process of consultation.

Federalism is, therefore, not just a matter of Centre-State relation. It is, on the other hand, a device to ensure participative role for the representatives of the States constituting the nation, in the decision-making process. The larger the body, the greater the democratic content. In a vast country like ours, a six-member committee is undemocratic due to its centralist features. Even the laymen are part of the Commission in the U.K. It is no more an employment generation scheme. Continued and repeated consultations and screening in the British system ensure that no ineligible hand is inducted to the higher judiciary. The only valid criticism against the method in the U.K is that selection becomes a time-consuming process. But there is no allegation of judicial corruption. Nor is there allegation of sycophancy or nepotism. India too can afford such procedural fairness, for the same would ensure a clean judiciary, which is a constitutional imperative for any working democracy. But the Bills in their present form are conceptually sterile and incapable of bringing in radical reforms. This situation calls for dynamic legislative activism at all levels.

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A clean judiciary is a constitutional imperative for any working democracy

GOVERNORS

STATESMAN, SEP 18, 2014

Governors in Uniform

ASHOK KAPUR

It is a public spectacle no democracy can be proud of. Least of all a Constitutional democracy that boasts to be the world's largest. A long procession of policemen in uniform in quick march to enter various Raj Bhavans across the country, to the blowing of trumpets and the beating of drums. Even uniformed bands in attendance and uniformed minions bowing in respectful welcome.

Suddenly, all is quiet ~ the tumult and the shouting dies, as Kipling would have put it. These Governors are asked to pack up and depart ~ before their term ~ through the side-gate. This was one of the first policy decisions taken by the new dispensation after the change of guard at the majestic South Block. It was a bold reversal of the earlier dispensation that had virtually encadred, so to say, the post of Governors ~ heads of state ~ for policemen.

During the last, or more appropriately the dying stages of the earlier dispensation, a large number of Raj Bhavans across the country came to be occupied, quite literally, by the police. At one stage, largely unnoticed by the lay public, it appeared that the post of the head of state had been reserved for the police. And most of the Governors appointed during the last few years of the erstwhile main ruling party were either retiring or retired heads of the Intelligence Bureau.

Admittedly, the manner of virtual sacking of so many Governors is not a very edifying spectacle in any democracy. But a relevant question may be raised here ~ what were they doing in the Raj Bhavans in the first place? It is an indefensible practice to post policemen as heads of state. It goes against basic democratic norms that implicitly conveys a message to the man in the street that unless policemen are put in charge, things will not work.

Whistleblowers are the flavour of the season. It is now out in the public domain, thanks to the revelations of the country's most famous whistleblower who was in the PMO, that top-level official appointments were being decided, maybe even dictated by the head of the ruling party, and not by the head of the Government. This was truly a throwback to the erstwhile Soviet system. Such unconstitutional practices tore apart the Soviet empire, just as it was one of the main reasons for the decimation of the former ruling party. In India, the practice has a sinister dimension. The first Police Commission in independent India, that dwelt on the question of police reforms, had reported that arguably the main reason for politicization of the force was the tendency of some retiring

senior police officers to “hobnob” with ruling politicians in the expectation of post-retirement rewards.

The Police Commission was dominated by policemen, and wrote a voluminous report largely in favour of its own brethren. But on one issue it was spot on ~ politicization of the force was a serious problem, and a drastic remedy was suggested... ban post-retirement rewards by law. Evidently, it was all too aware that mere exhortations or administrative instructions to influential policemen would be a waste of effort. The inference is, therefore, inescapable that the ‘top cops’ who were thus honoured with gubernatorial assignments were rewarded not so much for serving the government of the day faithfully and loyally as for serving the ruling party, particularly the head of the main ruling party. In the bargain, these top cops have set a bad example before their juniors that the highest rewards in their career flow smoothly from nurturing the right political connections. It is no coincidence that now most of these policemen-turned-Governors are guests at the CBI headquarters over allegations of tweaking a deal in favour of a foreign supplier of choppers. Sounds like a sequel to the Hollywood blockbuster ~ these ‘not so magnificent men in favour of a particular brand of flying machines’. Little wonder that the intelligence agencies are persistently accused ~ by their own uniformed brethren ~ of collecting and passing on intelligence that is seldom “actionable”.

A serious issue needs to be debated widely in context. Two Prime Ministers of India, ironically from the erstwhile ruling party, were assassinated while in office. It is now in the public domain ~ thanks again to a cop-turned-whistleblower ~ that in both cases there was a serious failure of intelligence agencies. Till date, it is not known if any action was taken to fix responsibility on the policemen who were criminally negligent. The top cops were so busy collecting political intelligence that they had little or no time to collect foreign intelligence to safeguard the security of the State. One of the Governors shown the door recently is a former Director of the CBI. He was rewarded several years after retirement. Incidentally, it was not the first case involving former Directors of the CBI. Evidently, they had carefully nurtured their political contacts cultivated during service, and well into retirement. And when no one was particularly looking, quietly walked tall into the Raj Bhavan. All this while the CBI has been openly lamenting before the highest court in the land about “political interference”.

There was another grave impropriety committed by the earlier dispensation in virtually reserving the office of ~ no less ~ the head of the state for retiring policemen. The Supreme Court is concerned over the issue of widespread politicization of the police force. It has often expressed its concern openly. Let alone the question of eroding democratic norms, the government of the day disregarded, somewhat brazenly, the spirit if not the letter of the court’s rulings. In sum, if the present dispensation is serious about the question of police reforms and the widespread politicization of the force, the first step should be to amend the Conduct Rules for the police to bar post-retirement rewards to the top cops.

HEALTH SERVICES

TELEGRAPH, SEP 16, 2014

Post-retirement health cover for govt employees

Senior citizens can avail free diagnosis, cashless hospitalisation at 100 select hospitals from November

SHAMBHAVI SINGH

Come November, the retired state government employees would be able to avail cashless healthcare services. The Mukhyamantri Chikitsa Sahayata Kosh entails free medical services for them at state-run hospitals.

Former government employees can avail of the facility for their spouses too. Apart from free diagnosis, they can expect cashless hospitalisation at 100 specified hospitals across the state, most of which are government run.

“The new scheme would come into existence from November 1. Those who want to avail of it will have to fill up a form and opt for the scheme. We will bring out an advertisement naming the centres where these forms will be available. Those who are retiring after October 31 will have to choose this option while filling up their pension forms,” said Rajendra Prasad Ojha, additional health secretary.

The scheme is optional for former government employees. Those who continue to take health allowance in their pension would not be made beneficiaries of this scheme. Former government employees get Rs 200 a month as health allowance.

The grant-in-aid for hospitalisation within and outside the state starts from Rs 15,000, for knee replacement (see chart). It is also available for diseases like cancer, cardiac problems, kidney problems, brain tumour, AIDS, spinal surgery, bone marrow transplant and major vascular surgeries.

Committees would ensure smooth functioning of the scheme. “The panels are being formed at the district- and sub-division-level. The district committees would comprise six members, including the civil surgeon,” Ojha said.

BRIDGE PITCH

Figures in rupees

Name of disease	Category	Grant-in-aid (state)	Grant-in-aid (outside state)
Cancer	With operation	40,000	60,000
	Without operation	20,000	25,000
Cardiac Surgery	Double valve replacement	-	130,000
	Mitral valve replacement	90,000	91,000
	Stenosis	25,000	25,000
	Coronary artery bypass grafting	60,000	60,000
	Percutaneous transluminal coronary angioplasty	85,000	85,000
	Atrial septal defect	35,000	37,000
Kidney disease	With operation	-	150,000
Brain tumour	-	25,000	25,000
AIDS	-	50,000	50,000
Knee replacement	-	15,000	20,000
Spinal surgery	-	10,000	15,000
Major vascular surgery	-	20,000	25,000
Bone marrow transplant	-	25,000	25,000

The scheme would be of great help to people like Bimla Singh, a 72-year-old retired government employee and Jagdeo Path resident. Bimla has been trying to make both ends meet from the pension she gets. Her husband has been suffering from coronary artery disease for the past four years. “Medication and surgery for this disease are quite expensive. This scheme will be a big relief for me,” said Bimla.

Some retired employees are not as upbeat about the scheme. “The condition of government hospitals is a serious issue. Before implementation of the scheme, the services and facilities available at the government hospitals should be improved,” said Ramanuj Singh, a retired government employee.

A separate counter and sitting area would be set up for senior citizens in the hospitals across the state. Diagnosis facilities outsourced to private companies would be free for former government employees.

“The senior citizen counter and sitting space would come up before October 31,” Ojha, the additional health secretary, said.

Hassle-free advance fund would be sanctioned to patients’ welfare associations at hospitals across the state to help retired government employees avail of paid services.

The exact number of retired employees, however, is not known. “We are compiling the details. It is difficult to say at this point what their exact number is,” finance department principal secretary Rameshwar Singh said.

HOUSING

HINDU, SEP 18, 2014

Convert property even without sanctioned building plan

In keeping with its efforts towards easing the process of property conversion, the DDA on Wednesday allowed with immediate effect conversion of leasehold property into freehold even in the absence of a sanctioned building plan.

All the applicants, who could not get the conversion earlier due to lack of a sanctioned building plan, can now give an affidavit in this regard saying the plan is not available with him.

In the absence of the plan, the DDA has said the applicants will need to submit a copy of the building plan from a registered architect in conformity with the building by-laws.

The building plan shall consist of all the necessary information required for sanction of building plan including FAR, number of permissible floors, number of actual floors, and actual plinth area constructed at the site. Photographs of the building should also be attached.

As collateral evidence of construction of building, a copy of the house tax assessment order or grant of permanent connection from the electricity authority is also to be submitted.

However, if it is found that a false certificate/information/undertaking has been furnished by the registered architect/applicant, the DDA will be at liberty to cancel the conveyance deed without any notice and initiate proceedings for cancellation of registration of the architect.

The land agency clarified that property should be converted into freehold only in case of self-contained dwelling unit in respect of a residential property or a functional unit in case of industrial/commercial/mixed land use, as the case may be, and the construction is not less than 1/3 of the permissible ground coverage.

HINDUSTAN TIMES, SEP 22, 2014

DDA revises price of 41 housing scheme flats

Twenty days after it launched its biggest ever housing scheme and halfway through it, the Delhi Development Authority (DDA) has realised that the prices of some flats have been wrongly printed in the scheme brochure.

DDA had launched the scheme on September 1 and it is supposed to remain open till October 9. The number of flats on offer is 25,034, which are mainly located in Rohini, Narela and Dwarka, apart from a few other areas.

In a public notice on Sunday, DDA announced that the prices of 40 one-room, extendable type flats in Rohini's Sector 20 and 25 should be read as `21.40 lakh instead of `19.80 lakh, as printed in the brochure. One three-bedroom flat in Shalimar Bagh is actually priced at `46.50 lakh instead of `37.50 lakh, it said.

In the brochure, these flats are shown at serial number 5 and 17 and have the locality code of 15 and 51, respectively. In the corrigendum, DDA has asked applicants to take these changes into consideration while applying for these flats in the housing scheme form.

“Flat prices provided in the housing scheme brochure are always indicative and tentative, which we have mentioned in the brochure. DDA has not revised prices of any flat and the corrigendum has been issued because an inadvertent error had crept in,” said a DDA spokesperson. “It could be a calculation or clerical error but DDA has not recalculated prices of any flat, otherwise prices of only 41 out of 25,034 flats only would have not been revised” she said.

As of date, DDA has sold approximately 14 lakh forms but the number of applications received is not very high.

TIMES OF INDIA, SEP 23, 2014

Steep 20% hike in circle rates for Delhi properties

[Ambika Pandit](#)

Circle rates, the minimum valuation at which a property can be registered, have also been revised upwards for apartments.

NEW DELHI: At a time when the real estate market is in a slump, Delhi government has notified a revised circle rate regime that is 20% higher than the existing rate structure across the municipal valuation colony categorization from A to H.

Circle rates, the minimum valuation at which a property can be registered, have also been revised upwards for apartments. The rates are decided by the government and the new regime, approved by lieutenant governor Najeeb Jung, comes into effect in Delhi from Tuesday.

Buyers in category A colonies such as Vasant Vihar, Maharani Bagh, and Golf Links will now have to pay stamp duty on property valuation of Rs 7.74 lakh per sq metre as against Rs 6.45 lakh so far.

Market experts say the hike will adversely impact the property market particularly since circle rates in some colonies such as Friends Colony and Maharani Bagh appear to be higher than the actual market rates.

For instance, in Maharani Bagh, the market rate is around Rs 6 lakh per sq metre and a 500-sq-metre plot would sell for roughly Rs 30 crore. But the new circle rates value the same plot at Rs 37 crore. This means, a buyer will have to pay a stamp duty of Rs 2.22 crore for registering the deal although the price at which the property was bought (Rs 30 crore) entails a duty of Rs 1.8 crore.

Registering a property at higher than the transaction value may also put the buyer under scanner of the tax department, experts said.

Instead of rationalizing the rate structure, the hike this time has added to the many discrepancies and gaps in the market. The gap between A and B category colonies continues to grow. In Friends Colony, the circle rate is Rs 7.74 lakh per sq metre. However, its immediate neighbour, New Friends Colony, which figures in B category, has a much lower circle rate of Rs 2,45,520 per sq metre.

There are other discrepancies as well. The going rate in a category A locality such as Friends Colony is Rs 5-7 lakh per sq metre, which is comparable to Greater Kailash (category B), where it's Rs 4-8 lakh.

The gap in the circle rate and market rate is also evident in category C colonies such as Panchsheel Extension, C R Park and Lajpat Nagar where the revised circle rate will now be Rs 1,59,840 per sq m. Here the market rate is much higher at Rs 4-8 lakh.

Even in D category colonies like Kalkaji DDA flats, Srinivaspuri, Sarita Vihar, Rajouri Garden and Jankapuri, the gap is glaring. While the market rates here are between Rs 4 lakh to Rs 6 lakh, the circle rate is a mere Rs 1,27,680.

The circle rate hike is seen as an interim arrangement by a cautious administration led by an LG under President's Rule. The revenue department's recommendations for variable circle rates for different categories ranging from a steep hike of over 50% for B category colonies like GK and Defence Colony to the creation of a new A-1 category for the super rich areas have been set aside to make way for a largely uniform hike of about 20% across the board.

According to sources, the hike reflects the mood of the state administration which does not appear keen to take high-risk decisions in the absence of an elected government. It is also learnt that with revenue collections down from registration of properties and the rate structure far from rational even after this 20% hike, any government that takes charge in Delhi will have to further enhance the rates while making changes in the categorization.

Market experts say only the rationalization of circle rates with actual market prices in reclassification of colony valuation category would help bridge the gap in the case of upscale neighbourhoods.

As the minimum circle rates for land and construction costs have risen, the minimum value of apartments at which a transaction can be registered will also go up by around 20%.

The committee on circle rates revision constituted by the revenue department delivered its report at the end of February. Recommending a revision of rates, it suggested a uniform 20% to 30% hike for the lower categories and a steeper hike for A and B category areas. However, since parliamentary elections were declared on March 6 and the code of conduct was announced, a decision was put in abeyance.

Even after the Lok Sabha poll results, the circle rate revision proposal shuttled from the revenue to the finance department many times before it was sealed on Monday evening with the formal approval for notification by LG Najeeb Jung.

The last circle rate revision happened in 2012 when the minimum rates for valuation of land and immovable properties were increased substantially. For the revenue department, enhancing revenue generation is critical. In financial year 2013-14 that ended on March 31, the department had a target of Rs 3,800 crore. However, it could only collect around Rs 3,000 crore.

The reason for the slump in collections is attributed to market slowdown and fewer property registrations. Also, the government had pinned its hopes on enforcing an e-court fee order which has been stayed by the high court and that has impacted revenue collections.

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

PIONEER, SEP 18, 2014

GUJARAT GETS CLOSE TO CHINA VIA 3 MOUS

A new chapter in the bilateral relations between India and China has begun from Prime Minister Narendra Modi's home State on Wednesday when the two countries inked three MoUs.

Additional Chief Secretary of Government of Gujarat DJ Pandian informed that first MoU was signed to established sister province-state relations between Guangdong and Gujarat to carry out cooperation in the fields of economy and trade, education, culture, sports, youth affairs, urban planning, waste water management, infrastructure, environment, public health and trade delegations.

“Another MoU was signed between Guangzhou city and Ahmedabad to establish sister city relations to carry out cooperation in the same areas. The third MoU was signed between China Development Bank (CDB) and iNDEXTb — the nodal agency of Government of Gujarat for investment promotion,” said Pandian.

As per the agreement, iNDEXTb will provide favorable conditions to attract Chinese enterprises to invest in setting up of industrial parks.

CDB will actively guide and introduce Chinese enterprises to set up industrial parks in Gujarat and also provide financial support to them, he said, adding that iNDEXTb will facilitate approvals in land matters.

As of now Chinese investment in Gujarat is around Rs. 700 crore but with the beginning of new chapter on the sidelines of Chinese President Xi Jinping's visit, many Chinese companies were expected to invest further not only in Gujarat but across the country, said Pandian.

HINDUSTAN TIMES, SEP 16, 2014

Modi-Xi agenda: Work for 'Hindi-Chini buy-buy'

Kanwal Sibal

Prime Minister Narendra Modi is receiving the visiting Chinese President Xi Jinping in Ahmedabad on the former's birthday. If symbolism mirrored reality, then we should see the birth of new relations between India and China under the two leaders.

Relations between countries marred by conflict and distrust cannot, however, change abruptly unless new challenges emerge, surpassing bilateral differences, and a strategic shift becomes necessary to cope with them together.

In our case, the fundamentals of the relations have not changed. China still claims large parts of Indian territory, with new maps issued recently showing Arunachal Pradesh as Chinese territory. It has repeatedly said that the resolution of the border issue should be left to future generations. Xi has declared firmly that China will never compromise on

territorial issues. China is confronting Japan and the US with its aggressive maritime claims and also intimidating its Southeast Asian neighbours as well. It seems confident that despite huge investment and trade ties with Japan and the United States and the vulnerability of its export-based economy in a conflict situation, it can assert its regional hegemony incrementally. Why should it be more accommodating with India when the cost of strong-arming us is much less?

China's territorial provocations — even questioning our sovereignty over Jammu and Kashmir — have occurred even as our Special Representatives (SRs) have been talking of solutions. China has hollowed out the original mandate of the SRs to 'politically' resolve the border issue by extending its scope to the entire gamut of relations. We should wind up the SR mechanism and revert to the exercise earlier agreed upon — unilaterally renounced by the Chinese — to define on the ground the Line of Actual Control so that repeated atmosphere-fouling 'incidents' on the border are avoided.

Ironically, our attachment to 'strategic autonomy' gives China a freer hand to calibrate the levels of friendliness and tensions with us as opportune because, behind us, they are not confronting any alliance arrangement. China's interest is to encourage us to pursue an independent foreign policy. It is concerned about our growing strategic ties with the US and Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's wooing of India. Its current smiling-face diplomacy towards us is to raise our awareness of the opportunity cost of discounting China in favour of Japan, besides encouraging us to distance ourselves from the US re-balancing towards Asia. Paradoxically, if there is concern that closer strategic ties with the US and Japan may leave us open to more Chinese pressure on the border, our independent posture actually relieves China of any pressure to resolve the border issue.

China will not dilute its strategic ties with Pakistan in order to build bridges with us. If we could not persuade even the US to cease bolstering Pakistan, how can we expect China to heed our sensitivities? Pakistan and Pak-occupied Kashmir play a key part in China's 'connectivity' strategy to our west. Through nuclear cooperation with Pakistan, China balances strategically the India-US nuclear deal. China's intrusions into our broader neighbourhood will remain a challenge for us.

All this does not preclude India and China working together in areas of common interests, whether on climate change and WTO issues, in BRICS and the Russia-India-China format, at the G20 and Shanghai Cooperation Organisation. Both countries have interests in reforming the international financial institutions. But then, the biggest beneficiary of a shift of power to Asia is China. Our dilemma is whether an increasingly strong China sitting atop us is better for us than the erosion of the West's long domination of global affairs necessary for a more equitable international system.

China's strongest card in international relations, as the world's largest exporter with humungous reserves of \$3.8 trillion, is the economic one. It has built enormous capacities in infrastructure and India, with its poor infrastructure and in desperate need of upgrading, is a huge market. India-China economic relations are unbalanced, with China enjoying a huge trade surplus and restricting the entry of our internationally

competitive products into the Chinese market, while capturing key areas of power and telecommunications in India. China's investments in India remain minuscule.

Modi's development agenda and his pragmatic approach to China create opportunities for Xi to play the economic card with India more vigorously. It is unclear, however, whether China has definitively concluded that it has earned enough Indian trust to invest heavily in India, and that tensions on the border can be isolated from burgeoning economic ties. Talk of China investing \$100 billion in the next five years is unreal, as China's total investment abroad so far is about \$80 billion. Bagging projects in India, supplying equipment and financing Indian companies is not investment. Will China spend its own money to build industrial parks in India? We should be open to benefiting from China's ability to undertake projects and supply equipment very competitively, but we should not start believing that if China makes more money in India, it is doing us a favour. Concepts such as the Silk Road, the Maritime Silk Route and the Bangladesh-China-India-Myanmar Economic Corridor are intended to promote China's commercial interests and divert attention away from its disruptive territorial and maritime claims by propagating the notion that China is merely proposing cooperative moves to enhance prosperity for all.

While testing whether China's moves towards us are strategic or tactical, we should seriously build synergies with it in areas where both sides benefit. Hindi-Chini Bhai Bhai proved illusory; Hindi-Chini Bye Bye is not feasible, given the reality of our neighbour's powerful international role today; Hindi-Chini Buy Buy is a reasonable objective for the Modi-Xi tandem to work for. But we should not be sweet-talked again into believing a Hindi-Chini Lie Lie.

Kanwal Sibal is a former foreign secretary, Government of India. The views expressed by the author are personal.

JUDICIARY

HINDU, SEP 22, 2014

U.P. sacks 11 trainee judicial officers

The Uttar Pradesh government has ordered termination of the services of 11 trainee judicial officers for indecent behaviour and indiscipline.

The order came on Saturday night following recommendation of the Allahabad High Court to the State government that “these trainee judges are not fit for becoming judges.”

This is probably the first time that such mass scale termination of judicial officers has been ordered in the State.

The allegations against these trainee judges, who were selected through the State Judicial Services Exam 2012, were that they created a ruckus in a hotel on the day of completion of their training last month.

They skipped their farewell party at the Judicial Training Research Institute and instead visited a hotel to celebrate.

On September 16, a Full Bench of the Allahabad High Court had recommended sacking of the 11 trainee judges. It also ordered shifting of three senior judicial officers of the JTRI for the incident.

LIBRARIES

HINDU, SEP 22, 2014

Battling bans on books

ALISON FLOOD

September 21- 27 is celebrated as Banned Books Week

Jeff Smith, with his controversial comic series 'Bone'. File Photo: K. Bhagya Prakash
"The point," says cartoonist Jeff Smith, whose multiple award-winning comic Bone was one of the books that parents tried hardest to ban in America last year, "is that they are trying to take away someone else's ability to choose what they want to read, and you can't do that." Smith was speaking as the forces of free speech mobilised in the U.S. for Banned Books Week, the annual festival that was to open on 21 September and which, in the wake of attacks on acclaimed books from Bone to Alison Bechdel's Fun Home and Marjane Satrapi's Persepolis, is taking a special focus on comics and graphic novels this year. The most challenged book of 2013 — the book that received the largest number complaints in schools and libraries across America — was Dav Pilkey's children's graphic novel Captain Underpants. Smith's Bone came in 10th, with the series — described as "one of the 10 greatest graphic novels of all time" by Time — drawing fire over its "political viewpoint, racism, violence", according to the American Library Association.

"I'll be honest, I had two simultaneous reactions when I heard Bone was in the top 10," said Smith. "First, that I was being attacked and I didn't know why. Then a thought like: hey, this isn't the worst thing that can happen. A lot of my heroes are on this list. Mark Twain, Melville, Bradbury, Steinbeck, Vonnegut; authors whose work is about something — that do the kind of writing I aspire to." According to Smith, this year's focus on comics "matters a great deal".

Comics under spotlight

"Comics are now part of the literary scene, part of the discussion, and it shines a spotlight on these kinds of attacks," he said. "That doesn't mean the people who want to ban these books are malicious; in fact just the opposite. They have a concern which to them is legitimate. But that isn't the point. The point is that they are trying to take away someone else's ability to choose what they want to read, and you can't do that." As libraries, schools and bookshops in the U.S. prepare for a week-long wave of events and exhibits on the perils of censorship — since 1990, the American Library Association has seen more than 18,000 attempts to remove materials from schools and libraries — the Comic Book Legal Defense Fund's executive director Charles Brownstein said that comics and graphic novels were seeing "an increasing amount of challenges".

"Comics are one of the most commonly attacked kinds of books. They're uniquely vulnerable to challenges because of the medium's visual nature and because comics still carry a stigma of being low-value speech. Some challenges are brought against comics because a single page or panel can be taken out of context, while others come under attack because of the mistaken notion that all comics are for children," said Brownstein.

At the American Library Association, the Office for Intellectual Freedom director Barbara Jones called it a “tragedy” that “some parents, pressure groups and educators remove the freedom to read comics and graphic novels from those who love them and share them”.

Banned Books Week, which has been running for 32 years, “is a necessary reminder of Thomas Jefferson’s admonition that eternal vigilance is the price of liberty”, said executive director Joan Bertin, National Coalition Against Censorship.— © Guardian Newspapers Limited, 2014

HINDU, SEP 22, 2014

Library body puts on-demand scheme on hold

ASIF YAR KHAN

WHAT IT MEANS

MOST MEMBERS OF HYDERABAD CITY GRANDHALAYA SAMSTHA WHO AVAILED THE SCHEME HAILED FROM POOR BACKGROUNDS

With the scheme on hold, they will be forced to purchase the books they require from the market.

READERS DEMAND BOOK SCHEME

- 1 Members can submit names of the titles that are unavailable
- 2 Branch librarian then forwards the request to the HCGS office
- 3 It would be processed and book made available for the members
- 4 Members should deposit the cost of book, which would be refunded once the book is returned
- 5 The scheme was made available at all 80 libraries of the HCGS

WHAT'S HAPPENED NOW?

- Shortage of funds has forced the HCGS to put the scheme on hold

MEMBERSHIP FEE

HCGS	Rs.100 for branch library	Rs.150 for City Central Library, Chikkadpally
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The GHMC has stopped transferring the library cess to HCGS for last two years. No new books were purchased in the current financial year. We will resume the Readers Demand Book only after adequate funds are available

NIRAJA HCGS IN-CHARGE SECRETARY

HCGS blames fund crunch; poor take the hit. Ever since the concept was introduced, several hundred of books of various subjects were sought by members and visitors, and made available.

Book lovers across the city are annoyed with the Hyderabad City Grandhalaya Samstha (HCGS). The reason: the ‘Readers Demand Book’ scheme has been on hold for the last few months, forcing them to buy the books from the market.

The HCGS introduced the scheme a few years ago at the 80-odd branch libraries across the city after people complained of shortage of books on certain subjects. About 10 per cent of the budget meant for purchase for new books was earmarked for the scheme.

The libraries kept a separate register where members or visitors could write down details of the title that was unavailable, such as the name of the author, publisher and so on. This request would be forwarded by the branch librarian to the HCGS head office. The book

would then be acquired and made available. Members could then take it home and return it within the stipulated time.

Ever since the concept was introduced, several hundred of books of various subjects were sought by members and visitors, and made available.

A librarian pointed out that most of those availing the facility happened to be those from poor and lower middle-class background, who could not afford to buy personal copies for themselves. However, for the last four months, such requests made by the public are being turned down due to a shortage of funds.

“The Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation (GHMC) has stopped transferring the library cess to the HCGS for last couple of years. No new books were purchased in the current financial year due to fund crunch. We will resume the Readers Demand Book only after adequate funds are available,” says HCGS In-charge Secretary Niraja.

TIMES OF INDIA, SEP 17, 2014
Cuncolkars urge govt to set up library

Cuncolim: Four thousand odd students and general public of Cuncolim are waiting for a municipal library for years. Cuncolkars are demanding from the BJP government to set up a well-equipped library with newspapers and books.

In spite of the Cuncolim municipal council (CMC) having a fullfledged building, it has not taken the initiative to start the library in the last 16 years.

In 1998 former MP Francisco Sardinha constructed a building for a library close to the municipal building under the MP scheme. But, it is surprising to know that this building was never used by the council for a library, but has been used as a godown and a changing room for municipal labourers.

This building is now in a dilapidated condition and central auditors, in their audit report, have put strong remarks for failure to utilize the library building.

Local resident and retired teacher Kamlaksh Prabhu Gaonkar has said "Probably our city heads have not understood the meaning of a library. A library is like a temple of knowledge. You may have all infrastructure in place and if there is no library it shows the intellectual and cultural bankruptcy of the government. I strongly demand that the municipal heads and local MLA Rajan Naik must look into this matter and must try hard to get a well-equipped library with reference books and other books and magazines required."

Local activist Oscar Martins said that Cuncolim is a historical village. "We have submitted many memorandums to both local municipal body as well as the government

but nobody shows any concern about a library. They think development means only construction, but they must not forget that reading habit can build a intellectually strong generation," he said.

Former chairperson Devendra Dessai told TOI that the council has initiated action to build a well-equipped library. The council has asked the WRD department to hand over the land close to the council building to construct the library since the old building is not in a good condition. Dessai said that the WRD has not even bothered to reply to their proposal.

During Congress regime, the then urban development minister had even floated tenders to repair and develop the present library building but after change in government this project was put into cold storage.

For some reason or the other, the local self-government body and the local MLA have failed to provide the library for Cuncolim students and readers. Cuncolim citizens action committee president Oscar Martins demanded the construction of a well equipped library as fast as possible.

In 1998 former MP Francisco Sardinha constructed a building for a library close to the municipal building under the MP scheme. But, it is surprising to know that this building was never used by the council for a library, but has been used as a godown and a changing room for municipal labourers

PARLIAMENT

STATESMAN, SEP 18, 2014

Advani new chairman of ethics Committee

New Delhi, 17 September : The BJP veteran Mr L K Advani has been named the new chairman of the prestigious Ethics Committee of the Lok Sabha. The former deputy Prime Minister, 86, has been appointed to the post by the Lok Sabha Speaker Ms Sumitra Mahajan, an official announcement said.

Mr Manikrao Gavit of the Congress party was heading the Committee in the last Lok Sabha.

Other members of the Committee are A Arunmozhithevan, Ninong Ering, Sher Singh Ghubaya, Hemant Tukaram Godse, Pralhad Joshi, Bhagatsingh Koshyari, Arjun Ram Meghwal, Bhartruhari Mahtab, Kariya Munda, Jayshreeben Patel, Malla Reddy, Sumedhanand Saraswati and Bhola Singh.

The BJP patriarch Mr Advani, who missed berth in the BJP's highest policy making body, the parliamentary board and BJP parliamentary party executives, is also a member of the Committee on Public Undertakings headed by Mr Shanta Kumar (BJP) and Committee on Information Technology headed by young BJP MP Mr Anurag Thakur.

Another BJP veteran Dr Murli Manohar Joshi was last month named as the chairman of the Committee on Estimates.

The Ethics Committee examines every complaint relating to unethical conduct of a member referred to it.

It is also free to take up suo motu investigation into matters relating to ethics, including matters relating to unethical conduct by a member wherever felt necessary and make such recommendations as it may deem fit. SNS

POLICE

ECONOMIC TIMES, SEP 22, 2014

Police forces could see biggest recruitment drive over 5 years

By [Aman Sharma](#)

The country's police forces could see the biggest recruitment drive over the next year following the Centre's directive to fill up about 5.5 lakh vacancies.

NEW DELHI: If you are among India's teeming educated unemployed, bagging a cop's job may well be your best bet.

The country's police forces could see the biggest [recruitment](#) drive over the next year following the Centre's directive to the state governments to fill up about 5.5 lakh vacancies. Unemployed youths in Uttar Pradesh and Gujarat stand the best chance since these two states need over one lakh and 45,000 new police personnel respectively.

Of every 1,000 persons in 15-29 age group in India, 133 are without jobs, according to a recent labour ministry report.

[Union home secretary Anil Goswami](#) on September 9 wrote to chief secretaries and police chiefs of all states, urging them to take timebound action to fill all vacancies "preferably" in the next one year as there are 5.48 lakh vacancies in police forces against a sanctioned strength of 22 lakh.

"This shortage has the potential to adversely affect the efficiency and effectiveness of the law and order machinery and the confidence of the citizen in the capacity of the police to protect property and lives of people," Goswami wrote.

However, the employment drive could get even bigger since Goswami also urged the states to review the sanctioned strength.

The home secretary also underlined the importance of a cop's job.

"The [policeman](#) is one of the most visible representatives of the government and in times of crisis and danger, he is also the first responder," Goswami wrote. He also pointed to the rising number of crimes, saying the figure of cognizable crimes in 2013 was over 26 lakh. "Provision of adequate manpower in state police organisations is one of the prerequisites to arrest such a trend. Further, as complex internal security challenges like Left-wing extremism, terrorism and women related crimes require focussed and undivided attention, it is critical that not only existing vacancies be filled up but a comprehensive review of sanctioned strength of police personnel in the state is carried out," the letter said.

The home secretary asked the states to review the existing sanctioned strength at all

levels in light of the crime rate, available technology and national and international benchmarks for police-population ratio.

"While reassessing the strength of police personnel, it is also imperative to take into account emerging mobile and IT applications such as enterprise resource planning, GIS based computer aided dispatch, online complaints system, electronic record keeping, CCTV surveillance, CCTNS etc which can help the state governments to rationalise the manpower requirement for routine and record keeping duties and deploy the forces for core policing functions," Goswami wrote.

POLITICS AND GOVERNMENT

ECONOMIC TIMES, SEP 19, 2014

Scottish referendum: Scotland rejects independence & decides to stay with the UK

Scotland rejects independence, to stay with UK

With 26 of 32 regional electoral centers reporting, the No side had about 54 per cent of the vote to 46 percent for the Yes side.

EDINBURGH: [Scotland](#) spurned independence in a historic [referendum](#) that threatened to rip the United Kingdom apart, sow financial turmoil and diminish Britain's remaining global clout.

A vote for the 307-year union is a relief for millions of Britons including Prime Minister David Cameron, whose job was on the line, as well as allies across the world who were horrified at the prospect of the United Kingdom's separation.

Unionists won 55 percent of the vote while separatists won 45 percent with 31 of 32 constituencies declared.

Political leaders of all hues agreed that Britain would be changed for good nonetheless.

Unionists cheered, kissed and drank wine and beer in Glasgow, Scotland's biggest city where secessionists won, while nationalist leader Alex Salmond conceded defeat in Edinburgh, which supported the United Kingdom.

"Scotland has by a majority decided not, at this stage, to become an independent country. I accept that verdict of the people and I call on all of Scotland to follow suit in accepting the democratic verdict of the people of Scotland," Salmond said.

Cameron, speaking outside his official London residence in Downing Street, said the question of Scottish independence had been settled for a generation.

"There can be no disputes, no re-runs, we have heard the settled will of the Scottish people," said Cameron. Queen Elizabeth II, who is at her Scottish castle in Balmoral, is expected to make a rare comment on Friday.

The campaign for independence had electrified this country of 5.3 million but also divided the passions of friends and families from the remote Scottish islands of the Atlantic to the tough city estates of Glasgow. \

Sterling strengthened sharply against the dollar and the euro while British share prices rose. Royal Bank of Scotland

said it had scrapped plans to move its registered office to England.

Though the break up the United Kingdom, the world's sixth largest economy and a permanent member of the United Nations Security Council, has been avoided, Britain's rulers admit the Scottish vote will lead to a reshaped the union.

Speaking in front of an image of a giant white on blue Scottish flag, Salmond laced his defeat with a warning to British politicians in London that they must respect their last minute promise of more powers for Scotland.

"Scotland will expect these to be honoured in rapid course," he said before walking off the stage, his head bowed.

FEDERAL KINGDOM?

Opinion polls showing a surge in Scottish separatist support in the two weeks leading up to the Sept. 18 vote prompted a rushed British pledge to grant more powers to Scotland, a step that has angered some English lawmakers in Westminster.

In an effort to deflate that anger, Cameron vowed to forge a new constitutional settlement that would grant Scotland the promised powers but also give powers to England, Wales and Northern Ireland.

"Just as Scotland will vote separately in the Scottish parliament on their issues of tax, spending and welfare, so too England, as well as Wales and Northern Ireland should be able to vote on these issues," Cameron said.

"All this must take place, in tandem with and at the same pace as the settlement for Scotland."

Cast as a constitutional revolution, commentators said Cameron's pledge of more powers to the constituent parts of the United Kingdom was aimed at sedating 'the slumbering beast of English nationalism'.

Cameron's Conservatives have seen members seep towards the United Kingdom Independence Party, an anti-European Union party, ahead of a referendum on EU membership that Cameron has promised by the end of 2017 if he wins the 2015 election.

"I'm not convinced by what I've heard this morning from Mr Cameron this morning that he seriously wants to address that," UKIP leader Nigel Farage said.

TRANSPORT

TIMES OF INDIA, SEP 16, 2014

Govt notifies 'sample test' norms for e-rickshaws

[Dipak K Dash](#)

NEW DELHI: Coming to the rescue of e-rickshaw owners in Delhi and across the country, the road transport ministry on Monday notified norms for registration of such vehicles based on "sample testing" of each e-rickshaw model that was plying before the Supreme Court ban.

Within hours of the scheme being notified, road safety activists said they would challenge it in the Supreme Court because the norms would put "unsafe" vehicles on the road.

TOI had on Monday given details of the new rule, which comes into effect immediately. Once a sample vehicle clears the tests, all e-rickshaws of that particular model would become eligible for registration. The registered body of e-rickshaw manufacturers will submit a list of certified models to state transport departments by November 30 and later provide a sample of each model for testing.

The testing of sample e-rickshaws would take place at a government-approved facility. The standards and testing norms will be same for both existing and new e-rickshaws. Ministry sources said they had come out with the best possible norm and mechanism.

But those fighting for safety of commuters are up in arms against the provisions. "This mechanism would in effect give legal sanction to unsafe e-rickshaws because there's no standardization in these vehicles," said S P Singh of IFTRT, a think tank on transport issues. "Ironically, this comes only two days after the ministry came out with the draft road transport and safety bill to bring in world class vehicle safety and road traffic management systems."

Giving an illustration of how rules should have been followed, Singh said that a leading manufacturer of four-wheeled quadrilateral vehicles wanted to bring its vehicle to India as a rickshaw, but was not certified by the testing agency as there was no such description under the CMVR.

"That company waited till the time provisions were incorporated in the Central Motor Vehicle Rules. It did not use the absence of legislation to to bypass the law and sell its four-wheel vehicles. How could all e-rickshaw manufacturers, despite public warnings issued by the administration, avoided taking quality certification of road worthiness of their proto-type? Instead, they kept selling their vehicles in the market causing a grave danger to public safety?" Singh said.

URBAN DEVELOPMENT

INDIAN EXPRESS, SEP 18, 2014

Gandhi Bhavan returns 25-acre lease land to govt

The Mahatma Gandhi Samarak Nidhi had taken the land on lease nearly 21 years ago.

[Nisha Nambiar](#)

Nearly 25 acres of government land from Dehugaon's Vitthalnagar area, given on lease to the Mahatma Gandhi Samarak Nidhi (Gandhi Bhavan), has been returned to the government after it was found that the trust did not use the land for the purpose it was allotted, thereby flouting the lease norms.

The land taken on lease nearly 21 years ago was returned as the administration found there were encroachments and that the condition of 'plantation' on the land was not met within the given time-frame.

The issue was under the scanner of the Comptroller and Auditor General and discussed by the Public Accounts Committee. The administration requested the government to cancel the lease and take back the land.

"The land in Vitthalnagar area in Dehugaon was allotted to the Mahatma Gandhi Smarak Nidhi Trust (Gandhi Bhavan) on August 27, 1993, and was formally handed over to them on July 21, 1994. We had issued notices to them earlier for non-use of the land and now finally the land has been deposited to the government. With the overall development of the area, especially the Dehu Alandi pilgrim centre, the land can now be utilised by the government for the same purpose," said an official.

Gandhi Bhavan president Kumar Saptarishi said the trust never wanted the land as it was highly undulated and even for planting saplings and watering them they required a highrise tank. "Moreover, there are huge encroachments in the area and we could not carry out the work according to the agreement. The land was taken by my predecessors, so I have been issued the notice," said Saptarishi.

CAG had brought 11 trusts from the district under its scanner mainly for non-use of land for the purpose it was allotted by the government in the stipulated time-frame of two years. The administration had submitted a detailed report on these institutions as the CAG pointed out "misuse" of the plots.

Among the other trusts issued notices is the District Judge Society that has land in Karve Nagar. The administration said the district collector and the district judge will hold a discussion on the matter shortly.

The Pune Marathon Trust, the Bharat Dalit Seva Sangh and the Trimurti Adivasi Society are also under the lens. "We have issued showcause notices in these cases and the government will take a final decision as was done for Gandhi Bhavan," said an official. The trusts violated the Maharashtra Land Revenue (Disposal of Government Lands) Rules 1971.

Two years ago, the CAG had slammed Bharati Vidyapeeth for sitting on 19,200 sq m land allotted to it in 2004. The administration, after verifying it, said work was on at the institute in Lohegaon. The government land was allotted to it to start an English medium school.

As per the Maharashtra Land Revenue Code (MLRC) 1971, the district collector is given the authority to lease out government land for various purposes. Land is given to trusts/individuals/institutions and others by the collector on receipt of application. The lease agreement between the government and the party in question spells out conditions, purpose, time rent and other specifications.