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Smart cities need more than smart talk



As India urbanises, it will make sense for the authorities to change the way they do town planning. This is the clear lesson from urban sprawl around the developing world, which accounts for the bulk of incremental urbanization that has put more than half the world's population in towns already.

As India's Smart City programme rolls on, it must go beyond making the city safe, productive energy-efficient to include being prepared for future growth as a necessary condition of smartness. And this cannot come from planning just one city. Ideally, a number of urban clusters can be envisaged across the nation and the growth of each cluster planned taking the rest into account.

India values capital too much to adopt a policy of building towns first, expecting them to be filled up sooner or later. Demand has to precede supply.

That is at the level of actual construction. But planning can and should run ahead of actual demand. This is vital, for example, to ensure that a sufficiently large part of the surface of a planned town's future expansion is made up of roads, parks, playgrounds and other public spaces.

This will mean a detailed planning process in the periphery of a new town, such as Andhra Pradesh's new capital Amaravati under construction right now, demarcating areas that cannot be encroached on or utilized for any purpose. Retrofitting vital infrastructure on a densely settled stretch of urban sprawl will be hugely expensive.

The challenge here is not just deploying sound planning expertise but summoning the political will to stop encroachment as well. For example, even after a Supreme Court directive, the government of

Chhattisgarh is finding it difficult to demolish a temple built on unauthorized land. Smart Cities do not come from smart talk.

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National Education Policy 2016: HRD ministry has some sound ideas for schools



The human resource development ministry has put up for public consultation “some inputs” for the draft National Education Policy 2016. It contains some sensible ideas on school and pre-school education.

It lists a comprehensive roster of gaps in the current system. But on possible solutions, the input document seems reluctant to push the envelope. While it breaks new ground in highlighting the need for robust and universal pre-school education or making learning outcomes the core of school performance, it sticks to more traditional prescriptions on teachers.

It recognises the importance of teachers but falls short of identifying policies that would realise that importance in practice.

When the bulk of the schoolgoing population come from homes with low educational achievements, the teacher plays a transformational role. Teachers must be not just proficient but also accountable.

It is practically impossible for a distant education department in the state capital to ensure accountability, even with a phalanx of inspectors and supporting bureaucracy.

Schools and their management committees (of school administrators, parents, senior teachers, local government representatives and independent members of the public) must hire teachers and have disciplinary control over them.

It will improve accountability, do away with transfer politics and ensure that every school has the requisite number of teachers. School administrators, working with the management committee, are best placed to determine the kind of teachers required.

This calls for a process of political and financial devolution to the lowest tier of government and constant public engagement to ensure that local governance does not degenerate into local harassment.

The input document makes many good interventions relating to curriculum, providing for a national core to be complemented with diverse local inputs. To identify the local complement and to let school governance work with both autonomy and accountability, we need functional democracy as well.

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Sunny times for solar

The World Bank's agreement with the India-led International Solar Alliance (ISA) to help it mobilise a trillion dollars in investments by 2030 and [its billion-dollar programme to support Indian initiatives](#) for expanded solar generation are significant steps in the global transition to a clean energy pathway. While the cost of solar power has been declining, one of the biggest obstacles to a scale-up in developing countries has been the high cost of finance for photovoltaic projects. That problem can be addressed by the ISA through the World Bank partnership, as the agreement will help develop financing instruments, reduce hedging costs and currency risks, and enable technology transfer. India has raised its ambitions five-fold since the time [it launched the National Solar Mission](#), and the target now is an installed capacity of 100 gigawatts by 2022 out of a total of 175 GW from all renewables. Strong policy support is also necessary to improve domestic manufacture of solar cells and panels, which has remained unattractive because cheap imports are available. India's efforts have also suffered a setback, with the adverse WTO ruling against the stipulation of a prescribed level of domestic content for solar projects. Developing a strong solar manufacturing industry is essential for sustained economic growth, and to connect those who never had the boon of electricity.

Support from the World Bank for large-scale and rooftop solar deployments, innovative and hybrid technologies, and storage and transmission lines presents an opportunity for India to go the German way and achieve energiewende, or energy transition. For instance, the \$625-million grid-connected rooftop solar fund could help strengthen State-level programmes for net metering. A transparent regime that enables individuals and communities to plug into the grid without bureaucratic hurdles would unlock small-scale private investment. There are several pointers from Germany's experience as a leading solar- and wind-powered nation to prepare for a major ramping up of these green sources. Arguably, the strength and reliability of a power grid capable of handling more power than is available are fundamental to induct higher levels of renewable power. The emphasis here must also be on improving transmission lines: the World Bank programme promises to provide the necessary linkage to solar-rich States. Making power grids intelligent to analyse and give priority to use the output of renewables, accurately forecast the weather to plan next day generation, and viability mechanisms for conventional coal-based plants are other aspects that need attention. Innovation in battery technology is a potential gold mine for the solar alliance and for India to exploit.

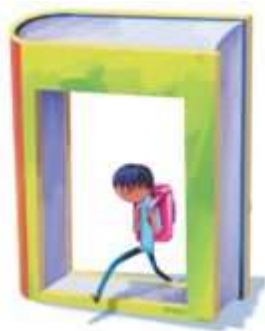


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School for the future

Education needs to be delinked from ideology and the job market.

Post-independence India adopted, and to some extent, adapted an educational system bequeathed by the British to meet its own need for engineers, doctors, civil servants — a whole array of professionals who would, in the Nehruvian vision, help India catch up with the “developed” world. While we have more than succeeded in achieving that goal, the requirements of the new global marketplace are constantly being redefined. If we are to keep abreast and compete, it is vital that our education system respond appropriately.



What are the specific changes we are looking at? First of all, education must be delinked from any ideology. An education system, so trapped, can never deliver the real goods. School education must also be delinked from the job market — at least in the very direct manner that it is today. The current ethos seems to be to use schools to prepare for a career, mainly in engineering and medicine.

Unless this mindset changes, school education will remain a slave of the “tuition mafia”. Schools must provide a liberating experience, not a confining one. The child must be able to explore the wonderful world around, be it through poetry, math, music or history, or indeed all of them. She or he will then be equipped to make a choice of career, based on a real and deep understanding of the world.

This, in turn, will call for a serious revamping of curriculum to move away from the current content and test and teacher-driven model to one that enhances curiosity, creativity, and sharpens the ability to apply that knowledge to the real world.

We will have to invest heavily in teacher-training. Teaching should be an “aspirational” career and those making that choice must be professionally trained and handsomely remunerated. Perhaps there is some merit in the idea of creating an “elite corps” like the IAS with several top-class training academies all over the country. The private sector must be encouraged, but closely monitored. Today’s investors unfortunately view a school only through the profit-prism.

And if we are to fulfill our oft-declared ambition to be a global leader, we cannot afford to be steeped in the prejudices of caste, class, region and religion. To be politically, economically and civilisationally global, we will have to globalise our souls. School education is where this crusade begins. Teachers and parents together will have to be the crusaders.

Dishonesty and greed are great barriers to growth, and our education system will have to hammer home the fundamental truth that genuine wealth creation happens only when resources are equitably distributed. And for those who like to invoke religion for everything including greed, I can only quote my old professor, the late Randhir Singh, who often said, “I am constantly told that god helps those who help themselves. But every scripture I have read tells me that god is on the side of the helpless and the fallen!”

Along with honesty go many other attributes that make a country truly “evolved”. Simple things like observing civic niceties with regard to traffic rules, public property, environment, respecting diversity, empathy and gender sensitivity must become part of the DNA of school education and not just a boring lesson in a civics book.

The time has come, as the jargon goes, to make a “paradigm shift” in the way we view school education.

Yes, we do need our doctors, engineers and lawyers. But equally, if not more importantly, we need a society based on honesty, equity and justice. It is not enough to “make in India”. We must “make good people in India”.

Written by [Dev Lahiri](#), the writer, a teacher for nearly four decades, is ex-director, international curriculum, Wasatch Academy, USA



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New Age Terror

Tackling IS requires modern tools and a multidimensional approach

The Dhaka terror attack on an upscale restaurant has reinforced the image of the new age terrorist. Three of the Dhaka attackers apparently were from well-to-do families and studied in elite schools. They did not have previous criminal records and were active on social media. At some point they appear to have been radicalised, most likely over the internet. Once indoctrinated, they turned killers for their extremist ideology.

This pattern is in stark contrast to the earlier perception of terrorists exploiting the poor and the illiterate to recruit them for their radical cause. Given the increasingly ubiquitous nature of IT-enabled communication mediums, groups like IS can motivate and harvest recruits over the internet. In India, security agencies have unearthed IS modules in places like Roorkee and Hyderabad that were formed along similar lines. These groups received instructions from their handlers online,

obtained money through hawala networks, and were themselves in the process of formulating plans to attack public targets.

In light of this, security agencies need to adopt a multidimensional approach to tackle terror. First, monitoring online activities of suspected terror recruits and their handlers will help in nipping nascent extremist modules in the bud. Hitherto Indian security agencies have managed to do this with some success. But they can't afford to drop their guard. Second, counter-radicalisation programmes with the help of community leaders and clerics need to be pushed to counter extremist ideology. It's welcome that many Indian Muslim clerics have openly denounced terrorism and IS. However, more needs to be done in this direction.

Third, IS modules too are funded through clandestine financial channels and hawala networks. Cracking down on these is crucial to disrupting terror plans. Fourth, IS has shown the propensity to create discord in society and take advantage of the resulting chaos – the Hyderabad module was planning to stimulate riots by placing beef in temples. Hence, Hindutva groups must refrain from their cow vigilantism and whipping up passions over beef – this plays right into the hands of terrorists and their divide-and-exploit strategy. A great deal will also depend on how the battle to recapture core territories held by the caliphate in Iraq and Syria goes. Success here would substantially diminish the caliphate's brand value and ability to inspire terror attacks across the world over the long term. This does not, however, diminish the necessity of extreme watchfulness in the short term.

TOI Edit in TOI Editorials

बिज़नेस स्टैंडर्ड

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अतिशय गरीबी से कैसे मिल सकती है निजात

गहन राजकोषीय समायोजन का प्रतिरोध अवश्य होगा लेकिन इसके फायदे इतने ज्यादा हैं कि नीति निर्माताओं को इसे शीर्ष वरीयता देनी चाहिए। इस बारे में विस्तार से बता रहे हैं विजय जोशी

यदि देश की किसी भी सरकार में गहन राजकोषीय समायोजन को अंजाम देने के साथ-साथ सभी नागरिकों के लिए पूरक आय तैयार करने की कल्पनाशक्ति, साहस और राजनीतिक कौशल हो तो वह इसके ढेरों राजनीतिक फायदे उठा सकती है। संबंधित दलीलों का एक खाका इस प्रकार है। उसे मैंने अपनी आगामी पुस्तक में अधिक विस्तार से पेश किया है। गहन राजकोषीय समायोजन से मेरा तात्पर्य है सरकारी व्यय के तौर तरीकों में आमूलचूल बदलाव लाना। फिलहाल गरीबों की मदद करने के नाम पर सब्सिडी पर बहुत अधिक राशि खर्च की जा रही है। कई अन्य जिंसें जो पूरी तरह सार्वजनिक उपयोग की वस्तु नहीं हैं, उनको भी नियंत्रित मूल्य पर बेचा जा रहा है। यह मूल्य लागत से भी कम है। कुछ अन्य सब्सिडी एकदम स्पष्ट हैं जिनका सीधा संबंध बजट से है। परंतु कुछ सब्सिडी ऐसी भी हैं जो छिपी हुई हैं और घाटे के रूप में या सरकारी कंपनियों के कमजोर मुनाफे के रूप में सामने आती हैं। बिजली इसका प्रमुख उदाहरण है। इन सब्सिडी की वजह से न केवल राजकोषीय बोझ बढ़ेगा बल्कि इससे संसाधनों का गलत आवंटन भी होता है। यह आर्थिक किफायत को प्रभावित करता है। चूंकि मूल्य नियंत्रण से मुनाफे पर असर पड़ता है इसलिए निवेश भी हतोत्साहित होता है। इससे नियंत्रित जिंसों की आपूर्ति में अत्यधिक कटौती होती है जबकि मांग में भारी इजाफा देखने को मिलता है। इतना ही नहीं सब्सिडी की व्यवस्था प्रतिगामी भी है। इसका लाभ भी अधिकतर समृद्ध वर्ग के लोग ही उठाते हैं, न कि गरीब। इसके अलावा सब्सिडी का एक बड़ा हिस्सा प्रशासनिक लागत, लीकेज और भ्रष्टाचार की भेंट चढ़ जाता है।

वर्ष 2014-15 की आर्थिक समीक्षा में अनुमान लगाया गया है कि निम्नलिखित पदार्थों की सब्सिडी जीडीपी के 4.2 फीसदी के बराबर है: अनाज, दालें, चीनी, तेल संबंधी उत्पाद, लौह अयस्क, उर्वरक, बिजली, पानी और रेल सेवाएं। अतीत में राष्ट्रीय लोक वित्त एवं नीति संस्थान का शोध बता चुका है कि सभी गैर जरूरी सब्सिडी को खत्म करने भर से इतने राजकोषीय संसाधन तैयार होंगे जो जीडीपी के 8 फीसदी के आसपास होंगे। ध्यान रखें गैर जरूरी सब्सिडी में शिक्षा, स्वास्थ्य, पोषण और ग्रामीण विकास जैसे अहम क्षेत्र शामिल नहीं हैं। इसके अलावा अगर कंपनियों को दी जाने वाली कर रियायत में कमी की जाए तो संभावित राजकोषीय बचत और भी ज्यादा यानी जीडीपी के 10 प्रतिशत तक हो सकती है। कृषि आय पर कर लगाने की दिशा में कुछ पेशकदमी हुई और

घाटे में चल रहे सार्वजनिक उद्यमों में हिस्सेदारी बेचने के लिए बड़े पैमाने पर निजीकरण कार्यक्रम चलाया गया। अगर हम बेकार सब्सिडी को खत्म करें और रेखांकित राजस्व उपायों को अपनाएं तो हमें चार गुना लाभ हो सकता है। सबसे पहले वृद्धि दर तेज करनी होगी क्योंकि सब्सिडी समाप्त होने के बाद कीमत और लागत में तालमेल होने से किफायत बढ़ेगी और निजी निवेश भी आएगा। दूसरी बात, वृद्धि में आगे और इजाफा होगा क्योंकि राजकोषीय संसाधन सार्वजनिक निवेश उपलब्ध होगा। तीसरी बात, राजकोषीय बचत का कुछ हिस्सा राजकोषीय घाटा कम करने के काम में लगाया जा सकता है। इससे वृद्धि में तेजी भी आएगी और स्थायित्व भी। इससे निजी निवेश में भी इजाफा होगा। चौथी और सबसे अहम बात, वृद्धि में समावेशन आएगा क्योंकि सभी नागरिकों के लिए अनुपूरक आय का मार्ग प्रशस्त होगा। इस तरह अत्यधिक गरीबी से निजात की जमीन तैयार होगी।

आखिरी बिंदु सबसे अहम है। जैसा कि मैंने अपनी पुस्तक में भी दिखाया है। राजकोषीय रूप से व्यवहार्य मूलभूत आय योजना चरम गरीबी का अंतर कर सकती है। इस योजना के तहत देश के हर परिवार को उसकी आय के अलावा एक समान और बिना शर्त आय सुनिश्चित की जाएगी। अत्यंत गरीबों की श्रेणी में वे लोग शामिल हैं जो सन 2011 में सुरेश तेंडुलकर समिति ने चिह्नित किए थे यानी 27 करोड़ लोग। मेरे आकलन में माना गया है कि मनरेगा एक खास अवधि के लिए परिचालन में रहेगी। यह हस्तांतरण अधिक से अधिक जीडीपी के 3.5 फीसदी के बराबर होगा। यानी गहन राजकोषीय समायोजन के जरिये बचाई गई राशि की तुलना में काफी कम। चूंकि एक खास आय हर परिवार को दी जाएगी (अगर वह स्वैच्छिक रूप से इसे त्याग न दे तो) तो यह योजना गरीबी निवारण में बहुत हद तक योगदान करेगी।

इससे गरीबी रेखा के ऊपर के उन परिवारों को भी बड़े पैमाने पर मदद मिलेगी जिनका आजीविका खर्च सब्सिडी समाप्त होने से बढ़ जाएगा। इससे उनकी आय में अतिरिक्त इजाफा होगा। यह बात महत्वपूर्ण है क्योंकि देश में लाखों लोग हैं जो अत्यधिक गरीब भले ही न हों लेकिन गरीब हैं। चूंकि आय अनुपूरक राशि एक समान होगी इसलिए लाभ समान रूप से वितरित होंगे। गहन राजकोषीय समायोजन और एक सार्वभौमिक आय

अनुपूरक योजना का मिश्रण हासिल करने के लिए एक जटिल बहुवार्षिक कार्यक्रम तैयार करना होगा। इसके लिए तीन तकनीकी जरूरतों की आवश्यकता होगी। पहला, आधार समर्थित बैंक खातों की पहुंच हर घर तक पहुंचाना ताकि प्रत्यक्ष नकदी हस्तांतरण किया जा सके। अच्छी बात यह है कि यह प्रक्रिया पूरी होने के कगार पर है। दूसरी बात, सब्सिडी समाप्त होने के बाद बदलते हालात में मूल्य-वेतन के भंवर को दूर रखने के लिए एक मजबूत मौद्रिक नीति की आवश्यकता होगी। तीसरी बात, सब्सिडी समाप्त करने की प्रक्रिया को सावधानीपूर्वक तैयार करना होगा और केंद्र व राज्य सरकार के स्तर पर तमाम मंत्रालयों को इसमें तालमेल की भूमिका निभानी होगी।

इसमें दोराय नहीं कि राजनीतिक बाधाएं सामने आएंगी। एक सार्वभौमिक आय योजना कुछ आम गतिरोधों को दूर कर सकती है। वह गरीबों को चिह्नित करने की एक विशिष्ट समस्या को पूरी तरह समाप्त कर देगी। इससे उन लोगों का विरोध भी समाप्त हो जाएगा जो अन्यथा ऐसी योजनाओं के दायरे से बाहर रह जाते हैं और इनका विरोध करते हैं। गहन राजकोषीय समायोजन के मामले में जरूर निहित स्वार्थी तत्वों का विरोध देखने को मिल सकता है। लेकिन इसके लाभ इतने अधिक हैं कि नीति निर्माताओं को इसे शीर्ष वरीयता देनी ही चाहिए।

लेखक मर्टन कॉलेज, ऑक्सफर्ड के अवकाशप्राप्त फेलो हैं। उनकी नई पुस्तक 'इंडियाज लॉन्ग रोड- द सर्च फॉर प्रॉस्पैरिटी' अगले माह पेंगुइन से प्रकाशित होगी।
