



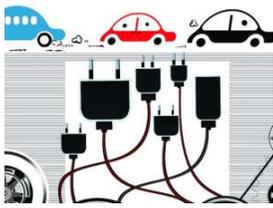
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Electrifying India's Transport

An action plan for leapfrogging towards a clean, connected and shared future

Amitabh Kant, [The writer is CEO, NITI Aayog.]



India's urban population will nearly double in the next decade. More than half a billion people will live and work in Indian cities. Travel within and between cities will grow exponentially. This rapid growth poses several social, economic and environmental challenges. To convert these challenges into opportunities, India needs to prioritise shared and public modes of transportation and turn to new sunrise industries that can help combat pollution, reduce congestion, strengthen energy security and also create jobs.

Recently the Union government approved the second phase of the Faster Adoption and Manufacturing of Electric Vehicles scheme (Fame-II) and the National Mission on Transformative Mobility and Battery Storage. Both these actions signal India's commitment to transforming its mobility system. The focus on electrification as the primary technology pathway to achieve this transformation presents India with a powerful opportunity to emerge as a leader in clean, connected and shared mobility solutions, battery manufacturing and renewable energy integration.

The cost of key components for electric vehicles (EVs), most notably, lithium ion batteries, have been falling at rates comparable to declines for LED lamps, solar panels and integrated circuit chips; and rapid scaling of the manufacturing of these components in India will further drive down costs, making EVs the most cost efficient solutions for intracity travel. Renewably supplied electricity can deliver long-term, fixed cost power supply for mobility services throughout the economy, and solar electrons can become a transportation fuel.

From the perspective of energy security and competitive advantage too, new mobility solutions will reduce oil import costs, lower trade deficits, and limit vulnerability to oil supply disruptions and process shocks. Finally, shared, connected and clean mobility solutions will deliver a host of environmental benefits, including cleaner air so Indian citizens can breathe more easily.

Addressing the Global Mobility Summit, Prime Minister Narendra Modi had outlined a vision for the future of mobility in India based on 7Cs, which are common, connected, convenient, congestion-free, charged, clean and cutting-edge. How can India achieve these objectives?

First, India's per capita car ownership is quite low with fewer than 20 vehicles per 1,000 persons, as compared to 900 per 1,000 in the US and 800 per 1,000 in Europe. India has an opportunity to leapfrog ahead of the legacy model of individually owned internal combustion engine (ICE) vehicles that are utilised by only around 5% of the people. India's low per capita car ownership affords it the chance to pursue a different model from the western world. Our emphasis must be on shared, connected and electric transportation.

Second, two and three wheelers constitute almost 80% of India's domestic automobile sales. India must leverage this and provide impetus to electrification of these two segments to provide size and scale to India's e-mobility efforts.

Third, India must push for public transportation to become the preferred mode of travel. At present, India has only 1.2 buses per 1,000 people, which is far below the benchmarks of developing nations. Only 63 of the 458 Indian cities have a formal city bus system and 15 cities have a bus or rail based mass rapid transport system. Public transport must become the core focus area for municipalities and state governments.

Fourth, as we shift from ICE vehicles (2,000 components) to EVs (20 components) India must create a unique ecosystem to encourage and ensure Make in India as far as possible. This would require a phased manufacturing programme across the entire value chain, an efficient fiscal and tax structure, and size and scale aligned to India's ambition to produce world class vehicles for domestic and global markets. This ecosystem should also be able to attract global OEMs for manufacturing.

Fifth, batteries account for almost 40% of the total purchase cost of EVs today. Domestic battery manufacturing is a massive market opportunity for India to rapidly enable the transition to EVs. A recent study by Rocky Mountain Institute and Niti Aayog concludes that India has the opportunity to pursue manufacturing of both battery cells and packs while importing only raw materials. With this India can capture nearly 80% of the total economic opportunity. New battery technologies, like solid-state lithium ion batteries, sodium ion batteries and silicon-based batteries, are under development. India needs to vigorously pursue research and development in these areas and have a clear roadmap for manufacturing on a mega scale.

Lastly, India's cities must build charging infrastructure to remove range anxieties. The existing network of our marketing oil companies must be fully utilised to ensure charging facilities in urban areas and highways.

Forecasts indicate that EVs can reach price parity with ICE vehicles by 2024. India must therefore explore newer models of swapping batteries and pay as you go, and facilitate startups like Ola, Ather, Sun Mobility, Zoomcar, Shuttl, Rivigo, who are innovating and disrupting status quo in mobility. Our IITs and engineering institutions must also include courses on new technologies as an essential component of their curriculum. States must drive uptake of these solutions by dynamic models of charging a fee for polluting combustion vehicles, while providing rebates on electric vehicles, and tightening norms of fuel efficiency across vehicle segments.

A recent report by Morgan Stanley titled India's Transport Evolution, has highlighted that on account of rapid spread of digitisation and mobile telephony and low per capita car usage, half of India's car fleet will be EVs and half of all miles driven will be on shared platforms by 2040. This new sunrise area can emerge as the biggest catalyst of clean environment, lower trade deficit and new jobs for India.

CEC, Democracy is Spirit, Not Just Form

Fear of sunlight only arouses dark misgivings

ET Editorials



Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) Sunil Arora violates the core spirit of democracy, a gigantic exercise of which he presides over, when he says that dissent within the commission on key decisions should be kept secret. One member of the commission, Ashok Lavasa, is reported to have argued for reasoned orders by the commission on key questions raised before it, complete with dissenting opinions, if any. Arora argues that the commission's

decisions are executive in nature rather than quasi-judicial, and, therefore, need not specifically set out a dissenting opinion in the decision-making process. It is possible to dispute this technical interpretation of the commission's role, but that is not the point.

Elections lose their very purpose of constructing popular choice of the next government with legitimacy, if the conduct of elections is seen to be less than fair. Reasoned decisions that are transparently made public are the surest way to convince the wider public of fairness in the institution. The commission would strengthen itself and make the entire election process more credible by making it a practice to issue detailed, reasoned arguments in support of its decisions, appending dissenting views, if any.

Democracies have legislatures that debate policy, laws and conduct, even after having formed an executive government, instead of leaving all decisions to the executive government, because of the clarifying power of debate and scrutiny. The CEC's view of executive decisions would appear to be inconsistent with the need for parliament after the electorate has chosen a government by majority.

That the Supreme Court had to urge the commission to act on some matters has not exactly raised its institutional prestige under Sunil Arora's leadership. The decision to shut sunlight out of the commission's decision-making process is distinct from the soundness of its decisions, but has a bearing on public perception of the fairness of these decisions. The commission would do well to demonstrate that it is capable of doing better, in the remaining days of these elections.

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For Harmony Between Politics and Business

ET Editorials

Demonising business for political advantage is bad — in principle and in practice. True, Indian business has not always conducted itself as a paragon of virtue. It has sought favours from the government, diverted funds raised from the public and the banks to private coffers without building the business for which the money was raised, is chary of competition from the world's best, produces goods and services of variable quality and, before the enactment of the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code, blithely lived out a

philosophy that holds profits to be private entitlement even as losses are a contingent liability that society has to absorb.

But this is not all that is there to business. It is business that provides jobs and incomes, pays taxes, produces goods and services to meet society's needs, converts savings into productive capital that generates fresh income, creates avenues for creative minds to produce innovation, ventures abroad to expand the scope of Indian creativity and, in the process, strengthens the bones and builds the sinews of what had for long been an emaciated nation. The human capacity to alter nature to meet humanity's needs and wants finds expression through business, in present conditions. No government can honour its commitment to improve the lot of the people, in the absence of a vibrant business community. So, politicians should neither treat business as a supplicant nor trash it for its presumed vices.

Business will conduct itself according to the incentives laid out for it in formal policy and informal working of the policy. It is in the matrix of incentives that politicians have to locate solutions for business misconduct. Breeding public distrust of business might win some brownie points in the short run but would harm society in the long run.

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For an Innovation Nation

Sachin Jain , (The writer is president, Bennett University)

The combined market cap of three largest IT companies of the US, Apple, Microsoft and Amazon, is equal to India's GDP. Even if we don't go that far, Chinese ecommerce major Alibaba's market cap equals 20% of India's GDP, or the same as Maharashtra. In comparison, at home, there are only two companies, Reliance Industries and TCS, which are part of the \$100-billion market cap club.

It's evident that for India to become one of the top three economies in the world in the next five years, it has to transform itself from services and consumption-based economy to an innovation-led and knowledge-based economy.

While entrepreneurs will continue to find their way through the complex maze to identify the next set of opportunities that will turn the current business models upside down, the government and policymakers have a key role to play both in supporting entrepreneurs and creating an environment that fosters research and innovation.

Though US has always been the epitome of research and innovation, China embarked on this journey just a decade ago and has already started reaping great dividends. China is ranked 17th in the Global Innovation Index versus 57th rank for India. China's share in international patent filings is at 21%, compared to less than 1% from India.

NITI Aayog, in its Vision 2030 report, highlighted the dismal state of research in India. As compared to 2% of GDP spends on research and 1,113 research professionals per one million population in China, India spends 0.7% of GDP with just 218 research professionals per one million. While in US and China,

only 30% of spending on research is done by the government, the situation in India is opposite, where 75% of spending is done by the government.

Given that it's virtually impossible for India to raise public expenditure for research to China levels, it is vital to incentivise private sector to increase investments on research and innovation either in-house or through collaboration with research institutions.

The government spends Rs 37,000 crore, or 1% of GDP, every year on higher education, the large part of which is spent to support operating expenditure at central or state universities. While the current government has taken some progressive steps in instilling fiscal accountability among public institutions to manage their operating expenditure independent of government support, a reallocation of a portion of government grants from operating grants to research will result in asset formation that will give rich dividends to institutions and government in the long run.

Similarly, successive governments have promoted private participation in higher education that has resulted in more than 340 private universities in India catering to more than 70% of total enrolments in higher education. However, there has been a consistent policy bias towards private universities when it comes to government support in research and development despite some of the private universities breaking into the top rankings, be it the National Institutional Ranking Framework (NIRF) or QS World University or Times Higher Education rankings.

Government research grants, be it through ministries or Higher Education Financing Agency (Hefa), if provided based on merit instead of ownership with defined objectives and outcomes, can help leverage a vast pool of research talent in private institutions that can accelerate the pace of research and innovation in India.

Application of research outcomes is equally important. While higher education institutions are meant for creation of knowledge, a handshake with industry is equally important for application of such knowledge in real world. The National Assessment and Accreditation Council and NIRF have created a data-backed objective assessment and ranking framework with a clear focus on research.

However, the dismally low number of patents granted to Indian universities suggests some tweaks in the definition of research is required so that the research is not just academic but also has real-world applications. Societies like Fraunhofer in Germany have evolved as the critical missing link between industry and academia when it comes to applied research, and a similar model should be adopted in India to foster industry-academia partnership.

Before the dust settles on the elections, policymakers must start focusing on fostering innovation that will lead to reversal of brain drain, job creation and FDI in Indian startups. A separate department at the central and state levels as a nodal office to drive research and innovation along with systemic changes to include private participation on the lines of minimum government maximum governance can help India become a \$5-trillion economy in the next five years.

आपदा प्रबंधन की मिसाल

अवधेश कुमार

भीषण चक्रवाती तूफान फोनी के आने की जैसे ही भविष्यवाणी हुई, उड़ीसा में तो भय की लहर पैदा हुई ही, पश्चिम बंगाल और आंध्र प्रदेश के तटीय इलाकों में भी लोग अनहोनी के साये में जीने लगे और स्वाभाविक ही पूरा देश चिंतित हो गया। आखिर इन चक्रवातों का भारत में भारी तबाही मचाने का रिकॉर्ड तो है ही। 20 साल पहले आए ऐसे ही तूफान से उड़ीसा तबाह हो गया था। लगभग 10 हजार लोग मारे गए। तूफान के बीच और जाने के बाद के दृश्य भयावह थे। उसे प्रलय का तूफान कहा गया।

फोनी चक्रवात भी अपने पूरे प्रकोपकारी ताकत के साथ ही आया। 240 किमी प्रतिघंटा की रफ्तार से चल रहीं हवाएं और भारी बारिश क्या कर सकती थीं इसकी कल्पना करिए। तूफान के बाद तबाही का मंजर राज्य की सड़कों पर साफ दिखाई देने लगा। भारी बारिश में राज्य की सड़कें पानी में डूब गईं। हालांकि प. बंगाल और आंध्र प्रदेश तो बच गया। हां, बांग्लादेश को अवश्य तबाही का सामना करना पड़ा है, किंतु इतने भीषण चक्रवात और उसके द्वारा मचाई गई तबाही के बावजूद भारत जन और धन के महाविनाश से बच गया और यह पूरी दुनिया के लिए मिसाल है। वास्तव में आपदा प्रबंधन में आपदा आने के पूर्व विनाश को कम करने के लिए उठाए गए कदम, आपदा के बीच उसका सामना करना और आपदा चले जाने के बाद राहत, बचाव और पुनर्वास तीन बातें आती हैं। पुनर्वास तो आगे की बात है लेकिन अन्य मामलों में भारत ने आपदा प्रबंधन की मिसाल पेश किया है और दुनिया इसकी वाहवाही कर रही है।

फोनी के आने की सूचना के साथ ही सारी दुनिया की नजर लग गई थी कि तबाही कितनी ज्यादा होती है? किंतु सब आश्चर्यमिश्रित नजरों से देख रहे हैं कि यह कैसा भारत है, जिसने प्रकृति के ऐसे तांडव का भी सफलतापूर्वक सामना कर लिया। संयुक्त राष्ट्र तक भारत के प्रयासों की जमकर तारीफ कर रहा है। आपदा के खतरे में कमी लाने वाली डिजास्टर रिस्क रिडक्शन फॉर यूनाइटेड नेशंस महासचिव की विशेष प्रतिनिधि और जिनेवा स्थित यूएन ऑफिस फॉर डिजास्टर रिस्क रिडक्शन (यूएनआईएसडीआर) की प्रमुख मामी मिजोटरी ने कहा कि भारत का कम-से-कम नुकसान के दृष्टिकोण ने तबाही में काफी कमी ला पाने में सफलता पाई। उन्होंने भारतीय मौसम विज्ञान विभाग की फोनी के बारे में सटीक चेतावनी की भी जमकर तारीफ की है। मौसम विभाग की सटीक चेतावनी की वजह से ही उड़ीसा के तूफान में जनहानि कम हुई, क्योंकि हमने लोगों को पहले ही शिविरों और शेल्टर होमों में शिफ्ट कर दिया। जो गए वे अपने साथ बहुत सारा सामान भी ले गए, इसलिए अगर उनका घर सुरक्षित है तो उनको वापस आकर सामान्य जिन्दगी जीने में बड़ी समस्या नहीं है। हां, फसल तबाह हो गए, सामान्य दुकानदारों की दूकानें खत्म हो गईं, हजारों घर उड़ गए या पूरी तरह क्षतिग्रस्त हो गए और उनको फिर से पुरानी अवस्था में लाने में समय लगेगा, लेकिन जिस तरह पूर्व तैयारी के कारण युद्धस्तर पर काम हो रहा है और केंद्र एवं राज्य के बीच अद्भुत समन्वय है उसे देखते हुए आश्वस्त हुआ जा सकता है।

वास्तव में केंद्र और राज्य के बीच बेहतर तालमेल, समय पूर्व एक-एक पहलू का पूर्वानुमान करते हुए उसके अनुरूप योजना और क्रियान्वयन पर फोकस ने ऐसे भयंकर चक्रवात के विनाश को न के बराबर कर दिया। संयुक्त राष्ट्रसंघ की ईकाई यूएनआईएसडीआर जेनेवा में इस पर चर्चा करने वाला है ताकि दूसरे देशों को भी इसका लाभ मिल सके। अभी तक भारत आपदा प्रबंधन के मामले में पिछड़ा देश माना जाता था। आपदा प्रबंधन के क्षेत्र में भारत को इसके पूर्व कभी विश्व स्तर पर प्रशंसा शायद ही मिली हो। आखिर वही मौसम विभाग, जिसका उपहास उड़ाया जाता था इतना कैसे बदल गया? मौसम विभाग के नये क्षेत्रीय तूफान मॉडल (रीजनल हरिकेन मॉडल), जो भारत की चक्रवातों में जीरो कैजुएलिटी (हादसा शून्य) का हिस्सा है उसकी मदद से हजारों लोगों की जान बचाने में मदद मिली। इसने दिखाया कि सटीक ट्रैकिंग और पूर्वानुमान लगाने की दिशा में प्रगति हुई है। देश ने निर्णय किया कि तूफानों से एक भी व्यक्ति की मौत न होने की अवस्था प्राप्त करनी है और उसी के अनुरूप तैयारियों को मूर्तरूप दिया गया। मौसम विभाग का लगभग कायाकल्प हो चुका है।

मौसम विभाग ने स्वयंसेवी संस्थाओं के जरिए लोगों को जागरूक करना आरंभ कर दिया था। फरवरी से ही रेडक्रॉस और क्रीसेंट सोसाइटी तटीय क्षेत्रों में लोगों को प्लास्टिक और बांस से घर बनाने की सलाह दे रहे थे। तूफान आने से पहले ही केंद्र सरकार ने आरंभिक 14 हजार करोड़ की राशि निर्गत कर दी। उड़ीसा में स्थानीय आपदा प्रबंधन प्राधिकरण और राष्ट्रीय आपदा प्रबंधन दल या एनडीआरएफ की टीमें सक्रिय थीं। एनडीआरएफ ने 65 टीमें उतारीं, जो किसी क्षेत्र में अभी तक की सबसे बड़ी तैनाती है। एक टीम में 45 लोग शामिल थे। तूफान के दिन से लेकर अब तक ओडिशा, आंध्र प्रदेश और बंगाल की सड़कें दुरुस्त करने, कानून-व्यवस्था और भोजन की व्यवस्था के लिए अतिरिक्त टीमें लगाई गई हैं। वास्तव में फोनी से निपटने के लिए युद्धस्तर पर तैयारी थी। पुरी के गोपालपुर में सेना की तीन टुकड़ियां स्टैंडबाय पर थीं और पनागर में इंजिनियरिंग टास्क फोर्स थी। भारतीय वायुसेना ने दो सी-17, दो सी-130 और चार एएन-32 को स्टैंडबाय पर रखा था। नौसेना ने राहत कार्य के लिए 6 जहाजों को तैनात किया। मेडिकल और डाइविंग टीम अलर्ट पर थीं। देश में साधनहीनता का रोगा रोगे वाले नहीं समझेंगे और वे इनमें से भी मीनमेख निकालेंगे। पर देख लीजिए, न राज्य सरकार ने केंद्र की कोई शिकायत की और न केंद्र ने किसी तरह राज्य सरकार को लपेटने की कोशिश, जबकि चुनाव चल रहा है। एक ओर प्रधानमंत्री अधिकारियों के साथ बैठक कर रहे हैं तो दूसरी ओर मुख्यमंत्री अपने यहां और दोनों के बीच भी कॉन्फ्रेंस हो रहा है। यही व्यवहार अपेक्षित है।

राजनीति अपनी जगह देश का काम अपनी जगह। राज्य एवं केंद्र की मशीनरी के बीच तालमेल का अभाव भी ऐसी विपदा में चुनौतियां बनता था, किंतु इस बार ऐसा नहीं था। ओडिशा सरकार ने लोगों को सचेत करने में और सुरक्षित स्थानों पर पहुंचाने में पूरी मशीनरी झोंक दी थी और केंद्र की टीमें वहां उनके अनुसार सहयोग में लगीं थीं। क्या आप कल्पना कर सकते थे कि बिना किसी हो-हल्ला के 12 लाख से ज्यादा लोग बस्तियां खाली कर तूफान से बचने के लिए निर्मित शेल्टरहोमों या शिविरों में चले जाएंगे? ऐसा ही हुआ। ओडिशा तो भारत का एक पिछड़ा राज्य है। अगर वहां यह चमत्कार हो सकता है तो अन्य जगह क्यों नहीं हो सकता।

धरोहर और उदासीनता

संपादकीय

धरोहरें संभालने के मामले में हमारे देश में प्रायः उदासीनता ही दिखाई देती है। निजी संपत्तियों से लेकर सार्वजनिक इमारतों तक के मामले में यही आलम है। हिंदी फिल्म जगत में इतिहास रचने वाला आरके स्टूडियो का बिक जाना इसकी ताजा मिसाल है। आरके स्टूडियो की स्थापना अभिनेता, फिल्म निर्माता राज कपूर ने पाई-पाई जोड़ कर की थी। इस स्टूडियो में अनेक नामचीन फिल्मों का फिल्मांकन हुआ। सिने दर्शकों में इस स्टूडियो को लेकर एक भावनात्मक लगाव था। मगर व्यावसायिक दबाव और बदलते जमाने की कारोबारी होड़ में यह स्टूडियो अपने हाल पर बिसूरता रहा। राज कपूर के न रहने के बाद उनके बेटे और दूसरे परिजन इसकी देखभाल नहीं कर पाए। काफी समय तक कपूर खानदान की बहू जेनिफर नाटकों का आयोजन कर इस स्टूडियो की विरासत को बचाए रखने का प्रयास करती रहीं, पर वे भी विफल रहीं। एक टीवी कार्यक्रम की शूटिंग के दौरान स्टूडियो में आग लगी और आखिरकार कपूर परिवार ने इसे बेचने का फैसला किया। अब उस पर गोदरेज समूह का स्वामित्व हो गया है। गोदरेज कंपनी वहां आलीशान रिहाइश और कारोबार केंद्र बनाएगी।

इस जमाने में जब मुंबई फिल्म निर्माण का बड़ा केंद्र है, फिल्मों का कारोबार काफी बढ़ चुका है। इसमें तकनीक का भरपूर उपयोग होने लगा है। बहुत सारे फिल्मकार जगह न मिलने के कारण मुंबई से बाहर फिल्मांकन के लिए जगह तलाश करते हैं। अगर आरके स्टूडियो को बदलते समय के अनुसार कारोबार की तरह विकसित किया जाता, तो आज उसकी यह दशा न होती, जो हुई है। मगर राज कपूर के वारिस अभिनय और दूसरे जरिए से अपने जीवन-यापन करते रहे, स्टूडियो की विरासत को बचाए रखने को लेकर उदासीन ही देखे गए। कुछ पेचीदगियां इसके स्वामित्व को लेकर भी थीं, पर उन्हें सुलझाना कठिन नहीं माना जा सकता। दूसरे, इसे संभालने में आर्थिक तंगी भी बड़ा कारण नहीं हो सकता था। आजकल फिल्म स्टूडियो बनाने, संभालने के लिए आसानी से कर्ज उपलब्ध हो जाता। बस, जरूरत थी तो इसे कारोबारी शक्ल देने की, जो कपूर खानदान नहीं दे पाया। काश, इसे कोई ऐसी कंपनी लेती, जो उसकी गरिमा को अक्षुण्ण रख पाती। वहां रिहाइशी और कारोबारी केंद्र बनने से स्टूडियो की पहचान तो खत्म ही हो जाएगी। दूसरे अनेक देशों में ऐसी विरासतों को संभालने में सरकार भी दखल देती है, मगर हमारे यहां ऐसी कोई रीति-नीति नहीं है। इसी का नतीजा है कि निजी प्रयासों से बने ऐसे कई ठिकाने बिला गए।

ऐतिहासिक महत्व की निजी संपत्तियों को राष्ट्रीय स्मारक के रूप में विकसित करने के सरकारी प्रयास की तो क्या उम्मीद की जाए, सरकारें खुद अपने यहां मौजूद ऐतिहासिक महत्व के भवनों, जगहों, स्मारकों आदि को संरक्षित नहीं कर पातीं। भारत में पर्यटन के क्षेत्र में अपार संभावनाएं हैं, पर उसे ध्यान में रख कर न तो ऐतिहासिक महत्व की चीजों को सहेजने का कोई उत्साहजनक प्रयास दिखता है, न उनके बारे में विश्व स्तर पर प्रचार-प्रसार का कोई जतन। अब ऐतिहासिक महत्व की इमारतों की साज-संभाल की जिम्मेदारी निजी कंपनियों को सौंपने का एक नया चलन शुरू हुआ है। लाल किला इसका ताजा उदाहरण है। ऐसे में निजी प्रयास से बनी मशहूर जगहों-भवनों को बचाने में भला सरकारी दखल

की क्या बात की जा सकती है। ऐसी जगहें सिर्फ सजावट की वस्तु नहीं होतीं, वे अपने जमाने का इतिहास भी होती हैं। इसलिए इस मामले में व्यावहारिक नीति पर विचार की जरूरत से इनकार नहीं किया जा सकता।



Date: 06-05-19

Clones in the Civil Service

Indian civil services run the risk of producing just clones who seek precedence not innovation in work

Meeran Chadha Borwankar , [The writer is an IPS officer of the Maharashtra Cadre, and retired as the Director General, Bureau of Police Research and development (BPRD)]

Irreverence has its place. Especially if it is coupled with integrity and there is no serious breach in discipline. I am talking of the civil services and with particular reference to the sudden and before-time shift of the Chief of Enforcement Directorate, Western Zone. The government has been prompt in avoiding the prolonged and painful tussle that the country recently witnessed in the fight between the two powerful blocks of the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI). To that extent, the citizens have been spared the turmoil, but the reasons for the sudden action have not been made public and may never come out either. Despite the Right to Information Act, governments — irrespective of the party in power, are wary of disclosing anything as they feel threatened. So, lesson number one is that the Right to Information is a long battle and the citizens have won only the first round.

The sudden “shunting” of civil servants is bewildering to many, especially if the officer has been performing well. At such times the topic of “political interference” in administration invariably crops up. Politicians are painted as darker than black. It is a fact that if officers bend, politicians make them bend even more: But if they do not bend, they indeed are “shunted out” or not given prize postings. That is the price one pays for holding one’s spine straight. However, nowhere have we questioned the culture prevailing within the civil services — whether it is conducive to civil servants taking value-based personal positions, and colleagues standing by such officers and supporting them.

The sad truth is, the civil services induct some of the most talented and intelligent individuals in the country, and then labour hard on making them mediocre. We want clones in each of our departments. Original thinkers? The word does not exist in the dictionary of civil servants. Our prime focus is “safety”, and to be in the good books of the party in power: We feel insecure, very often, especially at the slightest departure from “precedence”, that holy word. We convey the same sentiment to the political bosses, too. Though they are a little more adventurous initially, soon they fall in line. The result is an opaque governance, the slow chugging train of Indian democracy.

An officer who dares to think different or breaks the stagnant, unproductive routine with any new initiatives, is first looked upon with suspicion. And if he goes at a speed that is decidedly not “ours”, he is shunted out so that we feel secure in our own slow bumpy ride. That has been the story for the last 72

years, and yet we wonder why India is still a developing country. Recently, Sabeer Bhatia of Hotmail fame, along with some others, moaned about the non-accountability of civil servants. The truth is that civil servants are as much responsible, if not more, for India missing many achievable goals given the political leadership of different parties: It takes much more to succeed as a nation than the tardy routine that most bureaucrats boast about. If that had been enough, we would have been a happy and healthy nation, decades earlier.

What the civil services need is a culture that accepts and values questioning and the irreverence of bold officers: The ultimate objective, of course, is to have integrity in one's work ethic, and a steady commitment to the common good. If an officer is honest but different, let her be. If the officer has a different viewpoint, it is alright — in fact, that is what we need to take the country out of the rut. We, in the civil services, have been non-performers because we are clones of each other, unable to think differently.

When Harvard University studied the extraordinary response of the staff of the Taj hotel in Mumbai to the 26/11 crisis, they found that "What the Taj Group looks for in managers is integrity, along with the ability to work consistently and conscientiously. to respond beyond the call of duty, and to work well under pressure". While integrity, consistency, and conscientiousness are essential for civil servants, equally important is their ability to think positive, to think different and to be able to implement their thought process to ensure the good of the citizens. If these original thinkers are irreverent of seniority, let it be, as long as they show results. If they question, let us reply to them in full sincerity instead of putting them down. If they have views and opinions of their own, let's forget our cumbersome protocol and listen to them wholeheartedly. They may, and do have substance, most of the time. If they look fearless, let's not feel threatened. Fearlessness comes only if you have a spine and most of us have lost it some time back.

In India, the colonial culture gave way to the culture of "cloneism" in the civil services. That's the reason why the country is stuck the way it is. There are many ways out of it, and one important solution is to make the civil services listen to the voices with a "difference", from among their own. Another is to have a culture that rewards performance and not repetitive motions or "precedence". Encourage officers who offer different solutions, even if they fail. If they are grounded to the field realities, they will come up with new ones. They may be irreverent and outspoken, and yet be the solution. In the "shunting out" of the Enforcement Directorate chief of the Western Zone, the prevalent system has, once again, failed to appreciate and value an officer who dares to think differently.



Date: 06-05-19

What we need today is social justice

The victims of capitalism have always been the disadvantaged sections of society

D. Raja is national secretary, Communist Party of India, and a member of Parliament

The world celebrated the 200th birth anniversary of Karl Marx, which was on May 5, 2018, for a year. Marx was not like other philosophers who interpreted the world in various ways; he made it a point to change it. Marx and Friedrich Engels laid the formulations for the theory and practice of scientific socialism. They applied dialectics to the study of human society and human consciousness. They strove for the liberation of humanity from all forms of discrimination and exploitation. They argued that Parliament should be used as a forum to articulate the concerns of the working people. Marxism as a science, as an ideology, and as a methodology keeps demonstrating its relevance every day.

In the present election campaign to the Lok Sabha, the Left parties have been raising several ideological and political questions in order to save the Republic of India so that it ensures a dignified life to all the people and empowers them in every respect. But it is ironical that several ideological questions are being raised over the relevance of the Left and its future in India. While admitting the widespread influence of communist ideology, some people say communism is dead and the Left as a political force is dead.

The march of capitalism

After the disintegration of the Soviet Union, some proclaimed that there was no alternative to neoliberalism. Since then, the so-called triumphant march of neoliberal capitalism has seen many hurdles, such as the 2008 financial crisis. The worst victims of this march and its consequent crises have always been the disadvantaged sections. This shows the presence of class conflict in society. Needless to say, the vulnerabilities of the disadvantaged are a creation of capitalism itself. The French economist Thomas Piketty exposed the essence of neoliberalism, which leads to unprecedented inequalities and disparities.

In the Indian context, liberalisation of the economy was initiated on the premise that the seemingly socialist and centrally planned economy had outlived its utility and that private ownership and market forces would efficiently replace public sector undertakings and provisions. Such an opening up of the economy was also tried in other parts of the world with only one consequence — unprecedented concentration of wealth in the hands of a few and a marked shift in the actual centres of power. Crony capitalism was soon making fast inroads into the policymaking coterie of India, and this new-found confidence of the private sector bore fruits. But for whom? Definitely not for the masses, as shown in a recent study which named India as the second most unequal society in the world. According to Credit Suisse Research Institute's Global Wealth Report, 1% of the Indian population owns 51.5% of the wealth in the country, and the top 10% own about three-fourths of the wealth. On the other hand, the bottom 60%, the majority of the population, own 4.7% of the total wealth.

Public education and health are the worst hit by capitalism. Education spending by the Centre has been showing a downward trend — from 6.15% in the 2014-15 Budget to 3.71% in the 2017-18 Budget. Instead of expanding higher education horizontally (to more far-flung areas of the country) and vertically (to the disadvantaged sections of society), the Central government is allowing the Higher Education Financing Agency to allow the private sector to dominate the education sector and make higher education a distant dream for the deprived classes. Similarly, in the health sector, the government has chosen private insurance companies and private healthcare lobbies as its partners, effectively taking away the attention from public healthcare infrastructure and its upgradation.

In a country like India, which is plagued with social problems such as widespread poverty, a deepening agricultural crisis, a very high unemployment rate, and abysmal health indicators, giving away public

sector assets to private players and shifting the discourse away from realising socialism could prove fatal for a vast majority of the population.

Rhetoric over real issues

In India, in this election season, real issues of the people are considered secondary to vague appeals of nationalism and national security. The last five years are witness to the fact that the ruling elites of India favour improvement in 'Ease of Doing Business' to improvement in the Human Development Index. India is doing badly on many parameters — nutrition, peace, human development, and press freedom — while a section of the media is celebrating improvement in the Ease of Doing Business Index. In other words, ensuring that people live a decent life is subordinate to ensuring that business becomes easier for crony capitalists.

The ruling party's appeals to nationalism and its use of the sacrifices of the Army for votes are attempts to hide its failure in giving employment to the youth, providing remunerative prices to farmers, ensuring social justice to the marginalised sections, and creating a conducive environment for the overall development of society. The government has presided over the gradual undermining of constitutional institutions, the giving away of national assets to the private sector and the increase in violence against minorities. It brands any opposition to its policies and views as 'anti-national'. All of these, however, are symptoms of a deeper problem. One has to look beyond the cacophony of high-pitched TV debates that are centred on sensationalism. As Noam Chomsky wrote, "It is easy to be carried away by the sheer horror of what the daily press reveals and to lose sight of the fact that this is merely the brutal exterior of a deeper crime, of commitment to a social order that guarantees endless suffering and humiliation and denial of elementary human rights."

The tying of national interest to global capital has not only produced adverse and livelihood-threatening consequences for the masses of the country, it has also deprived India of the higher moral pedestal in foreign policy. Deep-rooted socialism is the only true alternative to this 'post-truth' world where rhetoric has dislodged real issues.

Marx and Engels wrote in *The Communist Manifesto*: "The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles... [where] oppressor and oppressed, stood in constant opposition to one another, carried on an uninterrupted, now hidden, now open fight." It is the duty and the responsibility of socialism to carry on that struggle for humanity, and to bring politics back to where it belongs — to the people. Only by saying a big 'no' to brutal capitalism and by following what the Constitution envisages in its Preamble — social justice — can we remedy the problems that we face today.
