



THE TIMES OF INDIA

Date:17-08-19

Watch, Act, Benignly

Population will stabilise, then fall. Eschew undue alarm

TOI Editorials



Prime Minister Narendra Modi's red-flagging of population explosion in the course of his Independence Day speech suggests a shift in India's prevailing discourse on demographics. It is no longer being thought of as yielding a dividend, instead it is being seen as a curse. Modi warned that rising population gave cause for worry, and held up small families as role models of patriotic expression. He also called for central and state schemes.

While it is important to highlight the benefits of small families and an educated and skilled populace, India may have already internalised this message. This is evident in total fertility rates falling across the board. India's average TFR of 2.2 is slightly above replacement rate fertility of 2.1 and the south, Maharashtra, Bengal, Punjab and J&K are already in the 1.6-1.7 range. Perhaps Modi's message was meant for Hindi heartland states, especially Bihar and UP where TFR is 3.0-3.2 and incentive-based schemes may help. While disseminating messages and offering assistance for voluntary birth control is fine, there must be two no-nos in birth control policy. First, don't make it another avenue for minority bashing at the politically polarised grassroots. Government data itself shows that TFR in states/ UTs like Kerala, Bengal and J&K with a significant Muslim population is far lower than in the Hindi heartland. Second, don't go the coercive way – it breaches democratic rights and serves no conceivable purpose. China's coercive family planning has given rise to severe demographic imbalance: a disproportionately large elderly population and exacerbation of male child preferences. Somehow, 'new India' already has the feel of a return to the Ambassador car era: import substitution, economic slowdown, political centralisation, calls for more austerity and sacrifice. It's best that Sanjay Gandhi-style Emergency era nasbandi misadventures are not thrown into the mix.

THE ECONOMIC TIMES

Date:17-08-19

Include Flood Control in Dam Safety Bill

ET Editorials



The widespread havoc caused by floods nationwide points to the pressing need for structural, non-structural and institutional measures to mitigate flooding and landslides. In this context, the skirting of flood control by the Dam Safety Bill, 2019, now passed by the Lok Sabha, is striking.

The fact is that dams, reservoirs and other water storage systems, both natural and man-made, are an effective means for reducing flood peaks. Reservoirs can indeed provide a long-term solution to the problem of flooding. Their effectiveness in moderating floods downstream would, of course, depend on the capacity available for absorbing the flood runoff. Note that the National Water Policy 2002 did recommend a clear-cut provision for 'adequate flood cushion' in water storage projects nationwide, and further that flood control be given 'overriding consideration' when it comes to reservoir operations. After all, if reservoirs are filled up at the beginning of the monsoon season to meet demands for irrigation, hydropower or industrial supply, a large quantity of water might suddenly need to be released mid-season, potentially causing largely preventable flooding downstream. And, yet, the Dam Safety Bill appears to lack specific scope for flood prevention.

Of late, Maharashtra and Karnataka reportedly failed to coordinate release of water from the Almatti dam, on the Krishna, which appears to have raised flooding levels. Hence the need for a National Dam Safety Authority, with flood control very much under its purview. In tandem, we do need more effective floodplain zoning norms, especially in fragile ecosystems like the Western Ghats, better resource allocation for drainage channel improvement in rivers, and sustainable measures to prevent riparian soil erosion.

Date:17-08-19

Code on Wages a Major Step Forward

ET Editorials

With the passage of the Code on Wages in the recently concluded session of Parliament, the government has taken yet another step to reform the country's labour laws. There is much to appreciate in the Code on Wages — for the first time, all workers in the organised and unorganised sectors, full-time, part-time, across skill levels and on contract, will be offered the protection of the law.

Along with the goods and services tax, the Code on Wages could well bridge the gap between organised and unorganised sectors. Similarly, the move to address regional wage disparities is a positive effort, though more discussion is required on the efficacy and proper use of a National Minimum Wage. These big changes notwithstanding, the Code on Wages, 2019, is essentially an amalgamation of four existing laws, the Payment of Wages Act, 1936, the Minimum Wages Act, 1948, the Payment of Bonus Act, 1965, and the Equal Remuneration Act, 1976, and removes anomalies and conflicts among these four laws. The Code also provides uniform definitions, reduces the number of authorities and changes the nature of inspection, to bring transparency and accountability to the implementation of the law. The Code is better viewed as a bold step forward in reforming labour laws to bring them in sync with the requirements of

the modern economy rather than as its accomplishment. Achieving the broader goals of the Code — expanding coverage to all workers and addressing wage inequalities — will require improved compliance. Enforcement of these norms will be addressed through subsequent legislative efforts. The efficacy of the Code can only be assessed once the other pieces of reformed labour law are put in place, apart from subordinate legislation.

An assessment of the efficacy of interventions such as a national minimum wage will need to be made. Discussion, policy assessment and study are required to ensure that reforms in the labour laws achieve the desired goal of protection for workers, opportunities for industry and business, and economic growth for all. With the Code on Wages, the government has shaken off inertia in this regard. Welcome as this is, much ground remains to be covered.



दैनिक भास्कर

Date: 17-08-19

जनसंख्या विस्फोट को रोकना भी है देशभक्ति

संपादकीय

लाल किले से देश को संबोधित करते हुए 90 मिनट के भाषण में जिस नए और अहम मसले का जिक्र प्रधानमंत्री मोदी ने किया, वह है देश की जनसंख्या। पीएम मोदी ने कहा कि देश की जनसंख्या पर नियंत्रण के लिए सरकार और लोग क्या कर सकते हैं। जनसंख्या विस्फोट भले पीएम के भाषण में बतौर नई चुनौती शामिल हुआ हो लेकिन ये लंबे समय से अतिमहत्वपूर्ण मुद्दा है। पीएम ने भाषण में साफ कहा है कि हमें सोचना होगा कि हम अपने बच्चों की उम्मीदों और सपनों के साथ कैसा न्याय कर पा रहे हैं? जनसंख्या विस्फोट पर चिंता जाहिर करते हुए उन्होंने जिक्र किया कि आने वाली पीढ़ियों के लिए यह समस्या चुनौती होगी। इसके लिए केंद्र और राज्य सरकारों को नीतियां बनानी होंगी और पहल करनी होगी। क्या सचमुच इस दिक्कत के निवारण के लिए सरकारी नीतियों की जरूरत है। क्या जागरूकता और सजगता इस मसले पर कारगर नहीं हो सकती। परिवार नियोजन को स्वैच्छिक आंदोलन बनाना चाहिए। केन्द्र और राज्य सरकारें पहले से अधिक सुविधाएं और रियायतें देकर सीमित परिवार की ओर लोगों का ध्यान खींच सकते हैं। देश को परिवार नियोजन में सख्ती का कड़वा अनुभव 1975-76 के इमरजेंसी में हो चुका है। इसलिए सबसे बेहतर रास्ता सामाजिक जागरूकता है। संयुक्त राष्ट्र की रिपोर्ट के मुताबिक 2027 तक भारत जनसंख्या के मामले में चीन को भी पीछे छोड़ देगा। वह चीन जहां 1979 में एक से ज्यादा बच्चा पैदा करने की मनाही की नीति लागू की गई थी। 2016 में इसे बदलकर दो बच्चों की अनुमति दी गई। हालात तो यहां तक पहुंच गए कि चीन ने एक बार के लिए फैमिली प्लानिंग और बढ़ते परिवारों के लिए बनाए अपने कानूनों और डिपार्टमेंट्स को जनसंख्या बढ़ाने वाले विभाग के रूप में बदलने का भी सोचा। प्रधानमंत्री मोदी के मुताबिक समय आ गया है, जब देश छोटे परिवारों की पैरवी करे क्योंकि यदि लोग पढ़े-लिखे, स्वस्थ नहीं होंगे तो न देश खुश होगा और न ही परिवार। मोदी ने ये भी कहा कि छोटे परिवार रखना ही सच्ची देशभक्ति है और ऐसा करने वालों का सम्मान किया जाना चाहिए। 1.3 अरब लोगों वाला हमारा देश दुनिया का दूसरा

सबसे ज्यादा जनसंख्या वाला देश है। यदि लोग देश के लिए कुछ करना चाहते हैं तो इस जरिए से भी देशभक्ति कर सकते हैं।



Date: 16-08-19

Unifying The Command

Appointment of chief of defence staff will fill a void in India's defence system

Alok Bansal, [The writer is a former naval officer and is currently director, India Foundation and adjunct professor at New Delhi Institute of Management.]

One of the most significant announcements made by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Independence Day is the creation of a Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) to ensure better coordination between the three services. This has been a long pending demand of the defence forces and was recommended by both the Kargil Review Committee led by K Subrahmanyam in 1999, as well as the Committee of Experts set up by Ministry of Defence under the chairmanship of General D B Shekatkar. Although, the exact terms of responsibility and assignment of the CDS have not been made public, in all probability it would be a four-star military officer, who would act as the single point adviser to the government on military matters. The CDS would also coordinate amongst the three services and bridge the differences.

Modern military battles cannot be fought by each service fighting independently. The present Indian Armed Forces are colonial constructs and were configured primarily to serve the interest of their colonial masters during the great wars. The restructuring of armed forces, therefore, has been a crying need as future wars are going to be short intense affairs where all organs of the state are likely to be employed simultaneously. Such a scenario would require unity of command, which is feasible only when the country has a unified command structure led by the CDS. However, political insecurities and bureaucratic stranglehold over the Ministry of Defence have prevented this important void from being filled. After the recommendations of the Kargil Review Committee which had recommended a CDS as well as a Vice Chief of Defence Staff (VCDS), a group of ministers headed by the then Deputy Prime Minister L K Advani examined it and recommended CDS with a tri-service joint planning staff. Accordingly, the Headquarters Integrated Defence Staff (HQIDS) was created in October 2001. But, bureaucrats succeeded in stalling the appointment of the CDS by creating the perception that it would be far easier for a CDS to stage a coup. Consequently, an anomalous situation was created wherein an organisation was created, which has been functioning without a head for the past 18 years.

The VCDS was reconfigured as Chief of Integrated Defence Staff to the Chairman Chiefs of Staff Committee (CISC). The absence of the CDS has limited the ability of CISC to mediate between the three services. More significantly, being lower in rank, he was never accepted as the sole adviser to the government in a rigidly hierarchical organisation like the military. Consequently, HQIDS was mostly duplicating the jobs being undertaken by service headquarters, rather than performing the tasks the office was meant for.

The appointment of the CDS will make the armed forces more effective. However, the mere creation of the office is not enough. This will need to be augmented by restructuring of the Ministry of Defence (MoD) and creating integrated theatre commands. The CDS has to be a cerebral warrior with good understanding of the global security environment and functioning of the three services. It should not be a rotational appointment; the government must select one after interviewing top officials of the three services.

Despite the PM's announcement, it is not going to be a smooth affair. First, the bureaucrats afraid of losing their salience will create bottlenecks. On top of that, individual services, afraid of losing their turf, are bound to resist the CDS's involvement in their affairs. The government may have to take a leaf out of the US Goldwater-Nichols Act and push the three services. To begin with, all defence land and capital budget must be put under the CDS and appointments in inter-service organisations must be made essential for further promotions. For the CDS to be effective, he must have direct access to the defence minister and through him to the prime minister.

After the reorganisation of MoD and establishment of theatre commands, they should directly be responsible to the defence minister through the CDS for all combat operations. Each service chief should only be responsible for equipping, organising and training of the forces. The creation of the CDS will need to be followed up with further reforms to reconfigure the armed forces to meet India's aspirations to be a global power.

Date:15-08-19

Over To The Teacher

Success of Odisha's move to double teaching time for certain subjects will depend on autonomy to the educator.

Editorial

Since the past 10 years, the Annual Status of Education Reports (ASER) have shone the light on a worrying issue: A large number of children in the country cannot read fluently or do basic arithmetic even after attending secondary school. Other studies, including those by the NCERT, have raised questions about teaching methods in Indian schools. Pedagogical interventions in response to these studies and surveys — in Punjab, Delhi, Kerala and Himachal Pradesh, for example — have produced mixed results at best. Now, the Odisha government has attempted to address this problem by doubling the teaching time of three subjects — English, Mathematics and Science — in all government schools in the state. On Tuesday, the state announced that it has asked schools to prepare routines in such a manner that these subjects get 90 minutes of teaching time every day while other subjects will continue to get 45 minutes.

The ASER surveys and several other studies have shown that a large percentage of children in the country's primary schools — including those in Odisha — are first-generation learners. It's also well-known that the school environment and the role of the teacher are crucial in providing support to children from non-literate homes and communities. But with pedagogical methods in most schools

geared towards completing the syllabus, there is scarcely any scope for addressing the needs of students who are not moving ahead at the expected pace, or those who are falling behind. The Odisha government seems to believe that this shortcoming can be overcome if “students spend more time with English, Mathematics and Science teachers and get time to clear their fundamentals”. This seems problematic for several reasons. For a child acquiring foundational skills in a language which is not her mother tongue — English in the case of students in Odisha — is a complex matter. It involves a number of faculties, ranging from comprehending letter-sound correspondence to making sense of texts. Doubling the teaching time could tax the attention span of students, and may end up doing more harm than good.

Science and Mathematics education has been dogged by the longstanding bete noire of the Indian education system — rote learning. Odisha’s classrooms could become harbingers of change if teachers utilise the extra teaching time to stimulate students to discover the laws of nature and Mathematics. But, for that, teachers will have to be provided the autonomy to venture beyond bookish explanations. The litmus test for the Odisha government’s experiment will be the difference it makes in teaching methods.
