



THE TIMES OF INDIA

Date: 28-09-20

Plurilateral future

With UN reforms elusive, New Delhi must look at alternatives

TOI Editorials

In his pre-recorded speech to the annual UN general assembly debate, Prime Minister Narendra Modi again strongly pitched for UN reforms, asking how long India would have to wait before it was included in the decision making structures of the global body. By all rights, India should have a permanent seat in the UN security council, given its large population and successful contributions to UN peacekeeping missions and other multilateral initiatives. That said, we must also recognise the probability that the desired UN reforms and expansion may never come to fruition.

After all, the UN-driven multilateralism as conceived after World War II was a system set up by the victor nations who worked in concert to guarantee its success. The arrangement survived even the period of the Cold War as the US and erstwhile Soviet Union adhered to the original understanding underpinning the global body. Today the global scenario has drastically changed, with the rapid rise of a revisionist China that is looking to re-fashion the rules of multilateral engagement – Chinese aggression against India and in the South China Sea are stark instances – even as the US under President Donald Trump undermines rather than supports multilateral initiatives.

This has happened in tandem with a resurgence of populist nationalism across the world, including in India. Today, the UN is being pulled apart by these contradictory forces. WHO's failure to mount a credible global response to the Covid-19 pandemic – it couldn't hold China to account in the initial days of the outbreak – exemplifies the UN's predicament. Perhaps reforming UN multilateralism is wishful thinking and countries like India should embrace plurilateral setups, where like-minded nations come together on common interests. A multiplicity of plurilateral platforms could then form the basis of a reimagined multilateralism of the future.



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The Right Redress

Statutory backing to MSP makes no economic sense. Farmers would be better off with income support that is crop-agnostic

Editorial

The ongoing farmers' protests against the agriculture reform bills passed by Parliament have seemingly crystallised into a single demand: Make the minimum support price (MSP) a legal right. The main concern articulated by protesters is over the government — in the guise of giving farmers the freedom to sell outside state-regulated wholesale mandis — gradually discontinuing its MSP-based procurement operations. The Narendra Modi government has denied this. Not only did it announce the MSPs for rabi crops on September 21 (as against October 23 last year), but the procurement of the current season's paddy has also been kicked off five days before the usual date. PM Modi has stated that the "system of MSP will remain" and "government procurement will continue". However, these assurances have cut no ice so far. Farmer organisations want the MSP to become an entitlement, similar to the right to subsidised foodgrains (under the National Food Security Act), work (under the MGNREGA) or free and compulsory education for children.

On the face of it, it is a fair demand. Farmers have saved the day. They produced all the grain that was given out free to alleviate the distress of people most impacted by the COVID-19-induced lockdown. Agriculture was also the only sector that grew even as the Indian economy contracted 23.9 per cent year-on-year during April-June. Farmers have every reason, then, to feel suspicious about the hurried manner in which the recent reform legislation was rammed through. But seeking redress by giving statutory backing to the MSP makes no economic sense. There are established institutional mechanisms — the public distribution system (PDS), gram panchayats and government schools — to ensure right to food, minimum workdays and education. But what can the government do if safflower, nigerseed or ragi prices fall below the MSP in hinterland markets? How much can it buy and how would it dispose of these crops — unlike rice and wheat that are at least sold through the PDS? Once the MSP becomes a "right", the government is duty-bound to enforce it. In this case, successful enforcement would mean not just distorting, but supplanting the market.

The time has come to rethink the MSP. Farmers would be better off with income support that is crop-agnostic. The idea of a universal basic income (UBI), mooted in the 2016-17 Economic Survey, is worth considering. Let all 12 crore-odd farm households receive a UBI of, say, Rs 24,000 annually, which is four times the amount already extended under PM-Kisan. The extra money required can be found by phasing out the MSP and all market-distorting input subsidies. A UBI to complement the three reform laws will unleash the transformative potential of Indian agriculture.

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Fields of change

Indian agriculture has moved on from Green Revolution, is no longer centred in Punjab and Haryana. Reform is about giving farmers choice

Bibek Debroy, The writer is chairman, Economic Advisory Council to the PM.

A lot has been written on farmers. How many farmers are there in India? Almost 111 million are registered for the Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi (PM-Kisan). This is based on self-declaration, with penalties for false declaration. Registration requires the family to hold cultivable land, duly registered. If a family member is relatively privileged (MP/MLA, pension exceeding Rs 10,000, an income-

tax payer, or a professional), one can't opt for the PM-Kisan benefits. Therefore, 111 million is a lower bound figure. Other than some categories being barred from PM-Kisan benefits, not every eligible farmer has necessarily registered for PM-Kisan.

Every five years, we have an Agriculture Census. The last one was in 2015-16. That gave us 146 million holdings, an increase from 138 million in 2010-11, a result of further fragmentation. If the agricultural landholding is conditional on being a farmer, apart from a possible further increase since 2015-16, 146 million is possibly the upper bound. Every definition of "farmer" is not contingent on the ownership of land. The Protection of Plant Varieties and Farmers' Rights Act of 2001 is an example where status as a farmer depends on cultivating land (or supervising cultivation), not owning it. That issue was also flagged by the National Commission on Farmers, such as in the Draft National Policy for Farmers (2006), where "farmers" included agricultural labourers, sharecroppers, tenants and so on. When talking and generalising about farmers, it is necessary to specify which set one has in mind. For instance, a hike in agricultural wages is good for agricultural labour. But it squeezes a landholder.

If land is a prerequisite for defining someone as a farmer, surely one should ask questions about the quality of land records in various states. The Committee on State Agrarian Relations and the Unfinished Task in Land Reforms (2009) was devastating in its critique. "The Committee also takes a note of the fact that the Survey and Settlement Operations in the Permanently Settled Areas have not been taken up and where they have been taken up, for instance in Bihar, they tend to never conclude... The last extensive survey and settlement in India was conducted two to three decades prior to Independence. Post-Independence, some states have not undertaken revisional survey and settlement so far."

Two or three decades prior to Independence means the 1920s, for some states. Of course, there have been improvements since 2009 and the Department of Land Resources has a Digital India Land Records Modernisation Programme (DILRMP) and the dashboard shows what various states have accomplished under DILRMP. Using various indicators obtained through DILRMP, NCAER publishes a Land Records and Services Index (LRSI). In the 2020 rankings, the top three states are Madhya Pradesh, Odisha and Maharashtra. Punjab and Haryana, the backbone of India's Green Revolution and vanguard of India's farmer interests, rank 16th and 18th respectively. DILRMP is often about digitising/modernising existing land records. But as that 2009 report mentioned, we need surveys/re-surveys. The dashboard tells us these have been completed in only 11.5 per cent of villages. Gujarat, West Bengal and Tripura score high on this (over 90 per cent). Punjab's track record is 0 per cent.

With agriculture in the State List, should everything be left to the states? If land records are in this condition, some farmers will conceivably be excluded from the farmer definition, because land records have not been updated. We may have one country one tax, but rules on who can buy agricultural land vary across states. Therefore, in urban suburbia, there are farmers who have bought agricultural land and live in farmhouses. Until that land is converted to non-agricultural use, they too will be farmers. Should their voices also influence policy decisions? However, such numbers are insignificant. In deciding whom to hear, there must be some sense of which farmers are more important. With diverse and heterogenous agriculture, all farmers will not have identical views.

The 2015-16 Agricultural Census tells us that most operational holdings are in UP, Bihar, Maharashtra and MP, in that order. The highest operated areas are in Rajasthan, Maharashtra, UP and MP, in that order. 86.1 per cent of holdings are small and marginal (less than 2 hectares) and only 0.6 per cent are large (more than 10 hectares). There is increasing FCI procurement of rice from Telangana, Andhra Pradesh, Chhattisgarh and Odisha, and of wheat from MP, UP and Rajasthan. E-NAM (National

Agricultural Market) has more coverage from MP, UP, Rajasthan, Maharashtra and Gujarat than from Punjab or Haryana. There is a chamber of commerce and industry known as PHD, active primarily in North India. (Disclosure: I worked there for a while.) When initially established, the acronym PHD stood for Punjab-Haryana-Delhi. As it diversified, it shed that antecedent and became progress, harmony and development, but many people still think of it as Punjab-Haryana-Delhi. I think this is a good metaphor for the way we look at Indian agriculture.

The face of Indian agriculture has changed and is no longer what it was in the Green Revolution days, centred on Punjab, Haryana and western UP. With realistic input costs, that form of agriculture is no longer viable in those Green Revolution tracts. Farmers, and governments, in Bihar and Kerala, don't want APMCs, nor do UP, MP, Gujarat and Karnataka. There is no evidence that this has made those farmers worse off. I knew the late Sharad Anantrao Joshi well and he used to say it is a myth that India has liberalised since 1991. Reforms are about choice, competition and efficiency and those haven't touched agriculture. Why should farmers, even those in PH, not have the choice?

Date: 28-09-20

The farmer's freedom to sell

On farm bills, government must get its act together, but Opposition is misguided

Ashok Gulati , [The writer is Infosys Chair Professor for Agriculture at ICRIER]

The passing of the farm bills in both the Houses of Parliament has sparked a major controversy in the country. The government claims that it is a historic step taken in the interest of farmers, giving them the freedom to sell their produce anywhere in the country and to any one they want. But the opposition parties described the passing of the bills as a “black day” because these pieces of legislation could destroy the existing system of minimum support price (MSP) and the APMC markets, leaving farmers at the mercy of big corporations.

Where does the truth lie? Let us dig a little deeper into the economics and politics of it.

The bills — The Farmers Produce Trade and Commerce (Promotion and Facilitation) Bill, 2020 (FPTC); The Farmers (Empowerment and Protection) Agreement on Price Assurance and Farm Services Bill, 2020 (FAPAFS); and The Essential Commodities (Amendment) Bill, 2020 (ECA) — have to be seen in totality. Essentially, the FPTC breaks the monopolistic powers of the APMC markets, while FAPAFS allows contract farming, and ECA removes stocking limits on traders for a large number of commodities, with some caveats still in place.

The economic rationale of these pieces of legislation is to provide greater choice and freedom to farmers to sell their produce and to buyers to buy and store, thereby creating competition in agricultural marketing. This competition is expected to help build more efficient value chains in agriculture by reducing marketing costs, enabling better price discovery, improving price realisation for farmers and, at the same time, reducing the price paid by consumers. It will also encourage private investment in storage, thus reducing wastage and help contain seasonal price volatility. It is because of these potential benefits

that I had compared these pieces of legislation to the de-licensing of industry in 1991 ('A 1991 moment for agriculture', IE, May 18). I had also suggested that for these legal changes to deliver results, we need to create Farmer Producer Organisations (FPOs) and invest in marketing infrastructure. In that context, it is good to see that Prime Minister Narendra Modi has initiated programmes for the creation of 10,000 FPOs and an Agriculture Infrastructure Fund (AIF) of Rs one lakh crore to handle post-harvest produce, anchored largely with FPOs. NABARD has been entrusted to implement this along with other agencies and state governments.

I must caution that sometimes good ideas/laws fail because of bad implementation. Just to cite an example, late Arun Jaitley had announced a scheme called TOP (tomatoes, onions and potatoes) to stabilise the prices of these farm products through processing and storage. He also allocated Rs 500 crore for it. The scheme was entrusted to the Ministry of Food Processing for implementation. But even after three years of the scheme, not even 5 per cent of the money promised has been spent. No wonder, the government is back to export bans of onions, fearing a spike in onion prices. This is contrary to the signal that the government wants to give through the farm bills that farmers have freedom to sell.

It seems the government has one foot on the accelerator to liberalise agri markets, and the other foot is on the brake (ban on onion exports). All this dents its credibility. I am saying this to emphasise that NABARD has a lot of heavy lifting to do, else they will fail the country by not realising the full potential of these legal changes. NABARD must get its act together, take professional advice and work with implementing agencies in the private sector, including various foundations already working with farmers. The pay off will be very high. It will make Indian agriculture globally competitive, and benefit farmers and consumers alike.

But then why is there so much opposition?

The Congress is leading the charge. But its manifesto for the 2019 general election said, "Congress will repeal the Agricultural Produce Market Committee Act and make trade in agricultural produce — including exports and inter-state trade — free from all restrictions". And further: "We will establish farmers' markets with adequate infrastructure and support in large villages and small towns to enable the farmer to bring his/her produce and freely market the same" (points 11 and 12 of the manifesto under the section on 'Agriculture'). I fail to understand how this is different from what the three bills are about? I don't have any political affiliation, but all my professional life has been spent in analysing agri-policies; I have found how farmers in India have been implicitly taxed through restrictive trade and marketing policies. This is so much in contrast with China and other OECD countries that heavily subsidise their agriculture (see graph). So, the freedom to sell is the beginning towards correcting this massive distortion and that's why I welcome this move.

But the Opposition has now changed the goal post. It is asking MSP to be made legal, implying that all private players buying below this price could be jailed. That will spell disaster in the markets, and private players will shun buying. The government does not have the wherewithal to buy all the 23 commodities for which MSP is announced. Even for wheat and paddy, it cannot assure MSP throughout India. The reality, as the 70th round of NSSO on Key Indicators of Situational Agricultural Households in India shows that only six per cent of farmers gain from MSPs. Roughly the same percentage of value of agri-produce is sold at MSPs. The rest of the farming community (94 per cent) faces imperfect markets. It is time to "get agri-markets right". These farm bills are steps in that direction.

Some states fear losing revenue from mandi fees and cess. The Centre can promise them some compensation, for say 3-5 years, subject to reforms in APMC markets. Arhtias are smart. They can take on new roles of aggregation for the private sector.



Date: 28-09-20

Where is the sentinel guarding our rights?

The Supreme Court has increasingly come under the public gaze for its repeated failures

Dushyant Dave is a Senior Advocate in the Supreme Court of India and is President of the Supreme Court Bar Association.

In *P.K. Ghosh v. J.G. Rajput* (1995), the Supreme Court held, “Credibility in the functioning of the justice delivery system and the reasonable perception of the affected parties are relevant considerations to ensure the continuance of public confidence in the credibility and impartiality of the judiciary. This is necessary not only for doing justice but also for ensuring that justice is seen to be done.” In its own words, the Supreme Court has been assigned the role of a “sentinel on the qui vive” as regards fundamental rights. The right to get redress from the Court is itself a fundamental right, and the Court cannot abandon its own duty in this regard.

Exercise of power

Since assumption of office by Chief Justice J.S. Khehar in 2017, the Court has increasingly come under the public gaze not for its role as the protector of the Constitution but for its repeated failures. Successive Chief Justices have failed to stop the decline of the Court. With the Court upholding the Chief Justice as ‘Master of the Roster’, in a debatable judgment in 2018, Chief Justices have used their powers to constitute Benches and allocate cases to such Benches in a highly selective manner. This defeats the fundamental principle of the rule of law.

There is no doubt that the Chief Justice must be the administrative head. But he must exercise his powers in a fair and just manner. He must not constitute Benches and allocate cases to those Benches in a manner which tilts the balance in favour of the executive. Decisions in some of the most important matters affecting the nation, the Constitution, democracy, and the people and their fundamental rights have been taken in favour of the executive, such as in the Ayodhya case, the Rafale case, the Birla-Sahara case, and the order for a National Investigation Agency probe into the Hadiya case. On the other hand, the Court refuses to decide on the challenge to electoral bonds, the removal of Article 370, and habeas corpus cases, among others.

These decisions have all come from Benches constituted by respective Chief Justices. The Supreme Court consists of a maximum of 34 judges although it generally functions with around 30. Yet, constitution of Benches and allocation of cases have left much to be desired in the last five years. For instance, diverse Benches, all presided by Justice Arun Mishra (now retired), were assigned as many as eight cases of the Adani Group.

Disturbing events

The outcome of these cases is not the subject matter of this debate. The issue is, does justice appear to have been done? Perhaps, the abject failures of the Court were influenced by different but disturbing events involving these Chief Justices. Former Arunachal Pradesh Chief Minister Kalikho Pul's suicide note, which otherwise is an admissible piece of evidence, carried serious allegations against "two senior-most judges" of the Supreme Court. Pul's wife requested an inquiry, which Chief Justice J.S. Khehar and his colleagues stopped. Contrast this with the Supreme Court ordering an investigation by the Central Bureau of Investigation into the suicide of actor Sushant Singh Rajput, where no suicide note was found. The same Court declined to order any inquiry into the demise of judge B.S. Loya, thereby failing to reassure the subordinate judiciary that it stands with it.

Later, the fact that Chief Justice Dipak Misra presided over the Constitution Bench hearing matters related to the medical college scam, despite the FIR naming unknown persons including constitutional functionaries of misconduct, perhaps weakened his authority. Subsequently, many including retired judges have been chargesheeted in that case.

Then came the sexual harassment charge against Chief Justice Ranjan Gogoi. Soon after the complainant's charge, Chief Justice Gogoi, Justice Arun Mishra and Justice Sanjiv Khanna presided over a Bench on a Saturday to condemn the complainant at the instance of the Solicitor General in a matter that they stated was "of great public importance touching upon the independence of judiciary". The entire judiciary and executive demonstrated their high-handedness in the case. The complainant later withdrew her complaint and the police filed a report saying no offence was disclosed. Another Bench presided by Justice Mishra entertained a strange affidavit from a lawyer and ordered an inquiry by Justice A.K. Patnaik (retired) into the charge of attack on the judiciary stating: "This is with respect to the contents of the affidavits, whether the affidavits are correct or not." The Court also directed the top agencies to cooperate and investigate this matter. Simultaneously, her complaint was found unsubstantiated by a three-member committee headed by Justice S.A. Bobde and comprising Justice Indu Malhotra and Justice Indira Banerjee. The report has not seen the light of day. The complainant was reinstated just after Chief Justice Bobde took over. This vindicated her on the one hand and proves that every action taken by the Court and the police were unconstitutional. Did these events influence the exercise of the powers by these three masters of the roster? When Chief Justice Bobde took over, I had written that his appointment gave "fresh hope to all stakeholders in the administration of justice", but that his acceptance of the Presidential Proclamation from P.K. Mishra, Principal Secretary to the Prime Minister, raised serious concerns about the times to come.

Functioning of the court

Since the lockdown, the Supreme Court has been functioning in a truncated manner. Despite repeated requests from the Bar, virtual hearings have not improved. While the High Courts have been using better systems, the Supreme Court persists on using a system which does not allow all the judges to sit every day. As a result, generally seven-eight Benches sit every day as against 13-15 which can be constituted by

the master of the roster. The Court, which in March stated that the migrant exodus was triggered by panic created by fake news, has been repeatedly adjourning the matter on the role of the media in publishing/broadcasting false and vicious reports on the Nizamuddin Markaz vilifying a section of Indians. Is the Court not the protector of minorities? The working of the Court is far from satisfactory although the Court claims that sufficient number of matters are being heard. The Bar and litigants feel otherwise. The constitution of Benches and allocation of matters even under the present dispensation continues to be subjective. Senior judges are not assigned PIL matters and almost all matters raising important issues in respect of acts of commissions and omissions by the executive have been allocated to Benches constituted by the Chief Justice.

The Court needs to re-address its role assigned under the Constitution. The Supreme Court must reassert emphatically that it is truly the sentinel on the qui vive as regards the fundamental rights of all citizens.



दैनिक जागरण

Date: 28-09-20

नए कृषि कानून

संपादकीय



यह अच्छा हुआ कि संसद से पारित कृषि विधेयकों पर राष्ट्रपति के हस्ताक्षर होते ही उन्हें अधिसूचित कर दिया गया। यह कार्य इसके बावजूद किया जाना आवश्यक था कि कई विपक्षी दल इन विधेयकों के विरोध में किसानों को सड़कों पर उतारने के साथ राष्ट्रपति से यह आग्रह करने में लगे हुए थे कि वह उन पर हस्ताक्षर न करें। यह एक अलोकतांत्रिक मांग थी और ऐसी मांगों की अनदेखी ही होनी चाहिए। इसलिए और भी, क्योंकि जो विपक्षी दल राष्ट्रपति से कृषि विधेयकों को मंजूरी न देने की अपील कर रहे थे, उन्होंने राज्यसभा में उन पर बहस करने के बजाय हंगामा करना आवश्यक समझा और वह भी ऐसा हंगामा, जो

समस्त मर्यादाओं को तार-तार कर गया। वास्तव में इन विधेयकों के पारित होने के दिन राज्यसभा में जो कुछ हुआ, वह हंगामा नहीं, हड़दंग था। यह पहली बार नहीं जब विपक्ष ने किसी क्षेत्र में सुधार की पहल का बेजा विरोध किया हो। इस

तरह का आचरण वह पहले भी करता रहा है, लेकिन यह देखना अकल्पनीय है कि जो कानून किसानों के हित में हैं, उन्हें उनके लिए अहितकारी बताने के लिए छल और झूठ का सहारा लेने से भी नहीं बचा गया।

छल और झूठ की राजनीति किस तरह अपना असर दिखाती है, इसका प्रमाण है प्रारंभ में प्रस्तावित कृषि कानूनों का समर्थन करने वाले शिरोमणि अकाली दल का राजग से बाहर आ जाना और पंजाब एवं हरियाणा में इन कानूनों के खिलाफ किसानों का धरना-प्रदर्शन जारी रहना। इससे खराब बात और कोई नहीं कि दुष्प्रचार की राजनीति इस तरह अपना असर दिखाए। इस तरह की राजनीति से सरकार को न केवल सतर्क रहना होगा, बल्कि यह भी देखना होगा कि नए कृषि कानूनों पर अमल इस तरह हो कि किसानों को वास्तव में लाभ मिले और वे आत्मनिर्भर बनें। प्रधानमंत्री ने मन की बात कार्यक्रम में नए कृषि कानूनों को किसानों के आत्मनिर्भर बनने में मददगार बताया। ऐसा वास्तव में हो, इसके लिए हरसंभव प्रयास किए जाने चाहिए। नए कृषि कानून किसानों को अपनी उपज मंडियों के बाहर भी बेचने की स्वतंत्रता प्रदान करने वाले हैं, लेकिन इसे सुनिश्चित करने की आवश्यकता है कि यह स्वतंत्रता उनकी आय बढ़ानी वाली साबित हो। यह केवल केंद्र सरकार ही नहीं, राज्य सरकारों को भी देखना चाहिए। जब कृषि समवर्ती सूची का विषय है, तब राज्यों का भी यह दायित्व बनता है कि वे किसानों की भलाई के लिए उठाए जा रहे कदमों को अपना सहयोग प्रदान करें। यह ठीक नहीं कि कुछ राज्य सरकारें ऐसा कुछ करने के बजाय किसानों को बरगलाने का काम कर रही हैं। यह एक तरह से किसान विरोधी आचरण है।

 **जनसत्ता**

Date: 28-09-20

भारत की दावेदारी

संपादकीय

संयुक्त राष्ट्र में सुधार और स्थायी सदस्यता को लेकर पहली बार जिन कड़े और दो टूक शब्दों में भारत ने अपना पक्ष इस वैश्विक मंच पर रखा है, वह बता रहा है कि अब हम विश्व की मजबूत शक्तियों में शुमार हैं। प्रधानमंत्री नरेंद्र मोदी ने इस बार साफ-साफ शब्दों में वैश्विक संस्था से यह पूछा है कि आखिर कब तक भारत को स्थायी सदस्यता के लिए इंतजार करना पड़ेगा, आखिर क्या मजबूरियां हैं कि संयुक्त राष्ट्र सुधारों की दिशा में अपने को बढ़ा पाने में लाचार पा रहा है। इसमें कोई संदेह नहीं कि भविष्य में जो देश दुनिया का नेतृत्व करने की क्षमता से परिपूर्ण हैं, उनमें भारत शीर्ष पर है। देश में स्वस्थ और मजबूत लोकतंत्र व राजनीतिक स्थिरता की बात हो, या क्षेत्रीय और वैश्विक राजनीति का मसला, भारत हमेशा दुनिया की उम्मीदों पर खरा उतरा है। इतना ही नहीं, भारत भी परमाणु शक्ति संपन्न राष्ट्र है, अंतरिक्ष से लेकर तमाम वैज्ञानिक उपलब्धियां हासिल कर दुनिया के गिने-चुने देशों की कतार में भी शामिल है। हाल में कोरोना से निपटने और इसका टीका बनाने की दिशा में जारी प्रयासों को लेकर जिस तरह से दुनिया भर में भारत की सराहना हो रही है, वह मामूली बात नहीं है।

ऐसे में संयुक्त राष्ट्र के समक्ष सबसे बड़ा तार्किक सवाल यह है कि क्यों नहीं भारत को अब तक प्रभावी भूमिका में शामिल किया गया? जिस सुरक्षा परिषद की स्थायी सदस्यता के लिए हम वर्षों से दावेदार हैं, क्यों नहीं हमें वह दी जा

रही? वैश्विक संस्था की स्थापना से लेकर अब तक भारत ने हर मौके पर अपनी महत्वपूर्ण भूमिका अदा की है। फिर भी अगर भारत को अब तक सुरक्षा परिषद की स्थायी सदस्यता नहीं दी गई है तो इससे इस वैश्विक निकाय की दशकों से चली आ रही व्यवस्था पर प्रश्नचिह्न लगना स्वाभाविक है। इसीलिए संयुक्त राष्ट्र में लंबे समय से सुधारों की मांग उठ रही है। भारत न सिर्फ दुनिया की सबसे ज्यादा आबादी वाला दूसरा बड़ा देश है, बल्कि सबसे मजबूत लोकतंत्र भी है। ऐसे में अगर लोकतांत्रिक सिद्धांतों पर चलने का दावा करने वाले वैश्विक निकाय में उसे स्थायी सदस्यता नहीं मिलती है तो इसे कैसे न्यायोचित ठहराया जा सकता है!

सच्चाई यह है कि जिन उद्देश्यों को लेकर संयुक्त राष्ट्र की स्थापना की गई थी, उसमें वह अपनी प्रभावी भूमिका नहीं निभा पाया है। ज्यादा गंभीर बात तो यह है कि संयुक्त राष्ट्र की भूमिका को लेकर अब सदस्य राष्ट्रों के बीच ही सवाल उठ रहे हैं। इससे इस वैश्विक संस्था की प्रासंगिकता संदेह के घेरे में आती जा रही है। इसका बड़ा कारण उन कुछ विकसित देशों जिनमें सुरक्षा परिषद के स्थायी सदस्य देश शामिल हैं, की भूमिका और रवैए में छिपा है। ये देश इसमें ऐसा कोई सुधार नहीं होने देना चाहते जिससे नए देशों को स्थायी सदस्य बनने का मौका मिले। आखिर क्या कारण है कि अमेरिका, रूस, ब्रिटेन और फ्रांस की सहमति के बावजूद भारत को सुरक्षा परिषद की स्थायी सदस्यता से दूर रखा जा रहा है? क्यों सुरक्षा परिषद का दायरा कुछ देशों तक ही सीमित रहना चाहिए? संयुक्त राष्ट्र किसी एक देश या एक समूह विशेष की संस्था नहीं है। दुनिया के हर देश का इस पर समान अधिकार और भूमिका होनी चाहिए। वक्त के साथ अगर इस संस्था के कामकाज व शक्तियों में बदलाव नहीं होंगे, तो इसमें कोई संदेह नहीं कि दुनिया के बाकी देशों को नए वैश्विक विकल्प के बारे में विचार करने को विवश होना पड़े !

राष्ट्रीय
सहारा

Date: 28-09-20

पारिस्थितिकी के लिए बड़ा खतरा

पंकज चतुर्वेदी



हाल ही में वाराणसी में रामनगर के रमना से होकर गुजरती गंगा में डाल्फिन के संरक्षण के लिए काम कर रहे समूह को एक ऐसी विचित्र मछली मिली, जिसका मूल निवास हजारों किलोमीटर दूर दक्षिणी अमेरिका में बहने वाली अमेजन नदी है। चूंकि गंगा का जल तंत्र किसी भी तरह से अमेजान से संबद्ध है नहीं तो इस सुंदर सी मछली के मिलने पर आश्चर्य से ज्यादा चिंता हुई। हालांकि दो साल पहले भी इसी इलाके में ऐसी ही एक सुनहरी मछली भी मिली थी।

सकर माउथ कैटफिश नामक यह मछली पूरी तरह मांसाहारी है और जाहिर है कि यह इस जल-क्षेत्र के नैसर्गिक जल-जंतुओं का भक्षण करती है। इसका स्वाद होता नहीं, अतः ना तो इसे इंसान खाता है और ना ही बड़े जल-जीव। सो इसके तेजी से विस्तार की संभावना होती है। यह नदी के पूरे पर्यावरणीय तंत्र के लिए इस तरह हानिकारक है कि 'नमामि गंगे परियोजना' पर व्यय हजारों करोड़ इसे बेनतीजा हो सकते हैं। हालांकि गंगा नदी पर मछलियों की कई प्रजातियों के गायब होने का खतरा कई साल पुराना है। पहाड़ों से उतर कर गंगा जैसे ही मैदानी इलाकों में आती है तो उसकी जल-धारा के साथ आने वाली मछलियों की कई प्रजातियां ढूंढे नहीं मिल रही। छह साल पहले राष्ट्रीय मत्स्य विकास बोर्ड द्वारा करवाए गए सत्रे में पता चला कि गंगा की पारंपरिक रीठा, बागड़, हील समेत छोटी मछलियों की 50 प्रजातियां लुप्त हो गई हैं। जान लें जैव विविधता के इस संकट का कारण हिमालय पर नदियों के बांध तो हैं। ही, मैदानी इलाकों में तेजी से घुसपैठ कर रही विदेशी मछलियों की प्रजातियां भी इनकी वृद्धि पर विराम लगा रही हैं। गंगा और इसकी सहायक नदियों में पिछले कई वर्षों के दौरान थाईलैंड, चीन व म्यांमार से लाए बीजों से मछली की पैदावार बढ़ाई जा रही है। ये मछलियां कम समय में बड़े आकार में आ जाती हैं और मछली-पालक अधिक मुनाफे के फेर में इन्हें पालता है। हकीकत में ये मछलियां स्थानीय मछलियों का चारा हड़प करने के साथ ही छोटी मछलियों को भी अपना शिकार बना लेती हैं। इससे कतला, रोहू और नैन जैसी देसी प्रजाति की मछलियों के अस्तित्व पर खतरा हो गया है। किसी भी नदी से उसकी मूल निवासी जलचरों के समाप्त होने का असर उसके समूचे पारिस्थितिकी तंत्र पर इतना भयानक होता है कि जल की गुणवत्ता, प्रवाह आदि नट हो सकते हैं। मछली की विदेशी प्रजाति खासकर तिलैपिया और थाई मांगुर ने गंगा नदी में पाई जाने वाली प्रमुख देसी मछलियों की प्रजातियों कतला, रोहू और नैन के साथ ही पड़लिन, टेंगरा, सिंघी और मांगुर आदि का अस्तित्व खतरे में डाल दिया है। गंगा के लिए खतरा बन रही विदेशी मछलियों की आवक का बड़ा जरिया आस्था भी है। विदित हो हरिद्वार में मछलियां नदी में छोड़ने को पुण्य कमाने का जरिया माना जाता है। यहां कई लोग कम दाम व सुंदर दिखने के कारण विदेशी मछलियों को बेचते हैं। इस तरह पुण्य कमाने के लिए नदी में छोड़ी जाने वाली यह मछलियां स्थानीय मछलियों और उसके साथ गंगा के लिए खतरनाक हो जाती हैं। एक्सपर्ट के मुताबिक, गंगा में देसी मछलियों की संख्या करीब 20 से 25 प्रतिशत तक हो गई है, जिसकी वजह ये विदेशी मछलियां हैं। गंगा नदी में 143 किस्म की मछलियां पाई जाती हैं। हालांकि अप्रैल 2007 से मार्च 2009 तक गंगा नदी में किए गए एक अध्ययन में 10 प्रजाति की विदेशी मछलियां मिली थीं। अंधाधुंध और अवैध मछली पकड़ने, प्रदूषण,

जल अमूर्तता, गाद और विदेशी प्रजातियों के आक्रमण भी गंगा में मछली की विविधता को खतरा पैदा कर रहे हैं और 29 से अधिक प्रजातियों को खतरे की श्रेणी में सूचीबद्ध किया गया है। वैसे गंगा में सकर माउथ कैट फिश के मिलने का मूल कारण घरों में सजावट के लिए पाली गई मछलियां हैं। चूंकि ये मछलियां दिखने में सुंदर होती हैं साम सजावटी मछली के व्यापारी इन्हें अवैध रूप से पालते हैं।

कई तालाब, खुली छोड़ दी गई खदानों व जोहड़ों में ऐसे मछलियों के दाने विकसित किए जाते हैं और फिर घरेलू एक्वेरियम टैंक तक आते हैं। बाढ़, तेज बरसात की दशा में ये मछलियां नदी-जल धारा में मिल जाती हैं वहीं घरों में ये तेजी से बढ़ती हैं व कुछ ही दिनों में घरेलू एक्वेरियम टैंक इन्हें छोटा पड़ने लगता है। ऐसे में इन्हें नदी-तालाब में छोड़ दिया जाता है। थोड़ी दिनों में वे धीरे-धीरे पारिस्थितिक तंत्र घुसपैठ कर स्थानीय जैव विविधता और अर्थव्यवस्था को खत्म करना शुरू कर देती हैं। चिंता की बात यह है कि अभी तक किसी भी राज्य या केंद्रशासित प्रदेश में ऐसी आक्रामक सजावटी और व्यावसायिक रूप से महत्वपूर्ण मछली प्रजातियों के अवैध पालन, प्रजनन और व्यापार पर कोई मजबूत नीति या कानून नहीं है।
