

## A Beginning

***Elected district development councils must be a first step in kickstarting political process in J&K — not a substitute for it***

### Editorials

The amendments to the Jammu & Kashmir Panchayati Raj Act to facilitate direct elections to the second tier of local government, the district development council, are evidently intended to kickstart the political process in the Union Territory, infuse some guided political energy into the post-August 5, 2019 environment, especially in the Valley, and pave the way for all those desirous of finding a political foothold in "naya" Kashmir. With the holding of Assembly elections tied to the contentious delimitation exercise, and given that participation is uncertain with regional political parties firm on the demand for a return to statehood and special status, election to the DDCs will be a first test of how deep the waters really run. The Centre may calculate that getting enough people to contest the DDC elections would help weaken the Gupkar narrative, which in its third reiteration last week, following the release of PDP chairperson Mehbooba Mufti, resulted in the coming together of the regional parties as a People's Alliance. The recently created Apni Party, hacked out from the PDP, has been itching for a role.

Individuals in the mainstream regional parties, especially those overlooked for nominations in previous Assembly elections, may also see the DDCs as a career opportunity. The BJP is waiting in the wings, too. Earlier, the DDC was filled through nominations. The rationale behind holding direct elections to 14 DDC constituencies in each district is that being chosen through a democratic exercise might give candidates and the DDCs a measure of credibility. The initial responses of the NC and PDP have predictably not been favourable. PDP leader Naeem Akhtar, for instance, has said the move is aimed at depoliticisation by cutting up the UT into "district assemblies", and to reduce Kashmiri political aspiration to the solving of district level water-electricity-road problems.

For the DDC elections to achieve the Centre's many objectives, the entire exercise will need to be substantially different from how the 2018 panchayat elections went down. In that election, candidates were too ashamed to admit they were contesting, and could not appear in public because they feared for their lives. Those who won, some of them because they were the only contestants in their halqas, did not surface for months afterwards. In many panchayat halqas there were no candidates and the elections could not be held. In the DDC elections, the NC and PDP will need to consider the opportunity costs of a boycott even as they weigh it against the price of participation. They do not have an easy choice, but they would do better to engage with the political process, even as they oppose, argue and debate. The Centre, too, should be aware of the limitations of a bonsai democracy in J&K. Sri Lanka is a cautionary example of how an elected body with no powers except to lay roads and repair the drains is not an answer to the political aspirations that lie behind the demand for greater autonomy. The restoration of statehood to J&K has to be prioritised, and Assembly elections.

*Date:19-10-20*

## Tinkering At Margins

***Cap on subsidised fertiliser merely addresses issue of its diversion, doesn't fix real problem — overuse by farmers.***

### Editorials

It's over a decade since a so-called nutrient-based subsidy (NBS) regime for fertilisers was instituted. By linking subsidy to nutrient composition rather than products per se, NBS was expected to wean away farmers from applying too much urea containing only nitrogen. But the actual results prove otherwise. Between 2009-10 and 2019-20, urea consumption rose from 26.7 million tonnes (mt) to 33.7 mt. While overall fertiliser consumption increased from 53.4 mt to 61.7 mt, urea's share went up from below half to 54.6 per cent during this period. The reason for the worsening fertiliser imbalance is simple: Since April 2010, the maximum retail price (MRP) of urea has been raised by hardly 11 per cent, from Rs 4,830 to Rs 5,360 per tonne. The MRPs of other fertilisers — which were decontrolled, with the government only giving a per-tonne subsidy based on their nutrient content — have gone up from 2.5 to four times during these 10 years. Since NBS has been implemented only in other fertilisers, even as urea remains under price control, farmers are using more, not less, of the latter.

The Narendra Modi government must shoulder much of the blame for this agronomic and environmental disaster. The basic MRP of urea hasn't been revised at all in its nearly six-and-a-half years. Instead of bringing urea under NBS — which would push up its MRP closer to Rs 10,000 per tonne at the current per-kg subsidy for nitrogen present in other fertilisers — the Modi government has resorted to tinkering at the margins. That includes compulsory neem-coating of all urea (from December 2015) and making fertiliser subsidy payment to companies conditional upon actual sales to farmers being registered on point-of-sale machines with retailers after biometric authentication (from March 2018). There's a plan next, as reported by this newspaper, to cap the total number of subsidised fertiliser bags that any person can purchase during an entire cropping season. But these measures merely address the issue of subsidised fertilisers, especially urea, getting diverted to bulk buyers/traders or even non-agricultural users such as plywood and animal feed makers. They don't fix the real problem — of overuse by farmers themselves. If urea is heavily under-priced, they will apply three bags when two or less would suffice.

Urea has to come under NBS. A politically feasible way to do it is by hiking its MRP to Rs 10,000 — maybe over two years — and simultaneously reducing the NBS rates of phosphorus, potash and sulphur to make other fertilisers cheaper by Rs 1,500-2,000 per tonne. In the long run, NBS itself should be replaced by a flat per-acre cash subsidy that could be used to purchase any fertiliser. That includes value-added and customised products containing not just other nutrients, but delivering even nitrogen more efficiently than urea.

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## Fruit Of Reform

**Sudhir Sitapati, [ The writer is an executive director Hindustan Unilever and is the Co-Chair of the CII Food Processing Committee. ]**



Santosh Ganar owns two acres of land in Raigadh in coastal Maharashtra — home of the Alphonso mango. Yet he chooses to plant cheap rice rather than lucrative mangoes. When I asked him why he replied that he would love to plant mangoes. Rice gives him just Rs 30,000 per acre while mangoes would earn 10 times as much. But he could not afford the initial investment of an “elevated bund” for the mangoes, nor survive the five-year waiting period for the trees to yield fruit.

He also added, with a hint of schadenfreude, that his friends who have orchards complain of wasting almost half

their mangoes since they are not able to reach the markets on time. This COVID-filled year was the worst, as most mangoes remained unsold. Ganar told me how he saw pot-bellied monkeys, surrounded by half-eaten mangoes, snoring in his friend’s orchard. His friend didn’t find it necessary to shoo them away with catapults.

The biggest problem the poor in India face is risk mitigation. Since they do not have savings, they are reluctant to undertake even the minimally risky business that you or I would. As a consequence, they remain stuck in a poverty trap, growing cheap rice instead of valuable mangoes. Policymakers the world over have come up with a variety of capital investment and risk mitigation instruments — such as micro-credit loans — for the poor to make money while protecting them against risk. The tragedy of the Indian farmer — who constitute 40 per cent of the country and an even higher percentage of its poor — is that India’s farm laws have prevented these risk-mitigation instruments from reaching them.

Under the laws that governed India until the third week of September, farmers could only sell to the local mandi or agricultural market. The risk-mitigation methods that “contract farming” provide were illegal. The old laws — enacted to protect farmers like Ganar — ensure that they never make enough money to leave poverty.

Ganar’s sorrow is also the sorrow of the consumer since the old laws did not result in fruit being available at a low price for consumers. Quite the opposite.

Fruits are not just expensive compared to other carbohydrates in India — A 100 Kcal of energy from fruits costs five times that from rice — but they are also 20 per cent more expensive than even the western world. As a result, Indians eat fewer fruits than most others. Based on a NIN-ICMR report of 2019, I estimate that Indians eat only 32 grams of fruit a day versus the recommended amount of 100 grams. And this acute deficiency in fruits is much more pronounced among the poor.

This is a particular tragedy because fruits provide the most benefit of all food classes — they give protection and immunity through vitamins and micronutrients. Indians are deficient in Vitamin A, zinc,

Vitamin C and iron. The last two make anaemia the number one public health challenge that India faces. We have a situation where horticulture is saddled with unviability for the farmer and unaffordability for the consumer.

I asked Ganar, that if someone offered to invest in a mango orchard in his land, pay him what he loses in not planting rice till the mango trees gave fruit and agreed to buy all the mangoes that grew on his tree five years later, how much discount would he give his benefactor? Without batting an eyelid Ganar said that he'd happily give a 40 per cent discount and still earn Rs 3 lakh. He would still make 10 times more than he makes today. But his investor, an expert in mango cultivation with better access to markets (and doubtless better methods to shoo away monkeys) would make the full potential of the acre — Rs five lakh. After paying Ganar and accounting for a return on investment the investor would still be left with a surplus. In a competitive market, the consumer would get cheaper mangoes.

This is an example of "contract-farming" — one that would benefit the farmer, the investor, and the consumer. An acre of land yielding Rs 30,000 starts yielding Rs 5 lakh. But for all these years why would either Ganar or the investor have agreed to a "contract" that was not legally binding? Ganar could cheat the investor and decide to sell the mangoes at full price five years later. The investor could cheat Ganar and not buy the mangoes he finally produces. And in a year of mango glut, when forced to buy all of Ganar's mangoes, how could the investor have stored it for the next year, if mangoes were suddenly listed under the Essential Commodities Act (ECA).

The three agriculture bills change all this by providing the legal framework for contract-farming. This is the essence of the reform, not the circumventing of mandis or the ECA. And it will benefit everyone — farmers, industry and consumers. All except the monkeys who have grown fat on years of antiquated agricultural policies.



**THE HINDU**

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## No great escape

***India's low global rank in tackling nutritional deficits calls for a revamped PDS***

### **Editorial**

India's poor progress on nutritional indices must dispel the hubris surrounding strong economic growth for years, and turn national focus on persisting hunger, wasting and stunting among children. This year's Global Hunger Index (GHI) places India in the company of Sudan — rank 94 among 107 countries — with the unedifying assessment of the national situation as "serious". The country's score of 27.2 is the worst among BRICS countries, and inferior to Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh and Nepal. The GHI is developed around wasting and stunting (under five), the share of the population with insufficient caloric intake, and child mortality. Index scores by international agencies have been critiqued as flawed for choosing the

wrong weights in scoring, and also for not including genetics and social determinants, but that would be a narrow view. The evidence from the NFHS-4 of 2015-16 is not very different. The reality is that national policy has no appetite for a radical transformation in the delivery of adequate nutrition especially to women and children, and has paid inadequate attention to achieving diet diversity through the PDS. On the other hand, the country is widely seen as falsely equating energy calories with a diverse diet. The existing deprivation has been aggravated by the pandemic, with food inflation putting pressure on depleted incomes or meagre pensions and savings.

The NFHS-4 found that under-five stunting from chronic undernourishment stood at 38%, and wasting, a result of acute lack of nutrition, at 21%. These data represent some progress, at a drop of about 10 percentage points in both categories compared to a decade earlier, although steady economic prosperity should have yielded a far bigger social dividend. The latest GHI measure is a reminder that much work is necessary to bring the true benefits of the National Food Security Act to the unreached, not merely as hunger mitigation through cereals, but as nourishment through a diverse diet that includes fat, protein and micronutrients. But there are worrying indications that the Centre has chosen the wrong course. In its pursuit of fraud within the PDS, it is inclined to take hard measures that would deprive the disabled and the elderly of even cereals, by insisting on biometric verification to get supplies. Strengthening the PDS, with a focus on women's health, would lead to healthier pregnancies, and stronger supplemental nutrition under the ICDS scheme would give children a better chance at all-round development. The importance of sustained, immediate intervention is further underscored by recent findings of International Food Policy Research Institute scholars that three out of four rural Indians cannot afford a balanced, nutritious diet. The right to food would be meaningless if it leaves a large section of Indians hungry, stunted and wasted.

**Date:19-10-20**

## **The Raj Bhavan's new role — taking centre stage**

***The political design behind increasing gubernatorial over-reach is simple — to crowd in on certain State governments***

**Harish Khare is a senior journalist based in Delhi**

When in 2007 at the height of the agitation in Nandigram in West Bengal, Governor Gopalkrishna Gandhi had allowed himself to express his "cold horror" at the ugly violence, Raisina Hill overseers were not pleased and their displeasure was conveyed to the Raj Bhavan in no uncertain terms. There was a definite clarity in New Delhi that a Governor need not get involved in the fracas among the political parties and leaders. That was "old India" and there was a commitment to the federal principle.

In the "new India", a new role is being scripted for the Raj Bhavan, as is for all other constitutional institutions. The Governors in the non-Bharatiya Janata Party-ruled States have been given a licence to convert Raj Bhavans into a rival centre of political activism — even intrigue — against the elected governments.

### **The letter in Maharashtra**

Hon'ble Jagdeep Dhankhar at the Kolkata Raj Bhavan, so far, had the distinction of being the most active licentiate — till his counterpart in the Mumbai Raj Bhavan decided last week to cross all limits of gubernatorial propriety. Maharashtra Governor Bhagat Singh Koshyari's by-now famous letter to Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray, demanding re-opening of the places of worship to the devotees across Maharashtra, is a brilliant but thoroughly unnerving innovation in a Governor's bag of tricks of over-reach.

Various Raj Bhavans, of course, have become embroiled in extremely unsavoury controversies over the decade, partly because the Constitution of India does allow a certain discretion to the Governor. And a discretion invariably does get abused. The framers of the Constitution had definitely disfavoured the idea of an elected Governor because they were unambiguously clear that political power would only be vested with the Council of Ministers, headed by a Chief Minister; yet, they were not inclined to put in a formal Instrument of Instructions for the Governors and were content to believe that political decencies and correctness would be observed both by the Governor and the Chief Minister.

As the distinguished constitutional expert, Nani A. Palkhivala, saw it, "the Constitution intended that the Governor should be the instrument to maintain the fundamental equilibrium of the people of the State and to ensure that the mandates of the Constitution are respected in the State". The assumption, of course, was that those appointed to a Raj Bhavan would be endowed with "a buddhi [wisdom] which sets apart a statesman from a politician".

### **A twist to discretion**

In the post-Nehruvian era, as our politics became rough and our politicians rougher, that buddhi eluded most Governors. As an appointee of the Union Government, the Governors have, predictably enough, been all too prone to do the bidding of the ruling party at the Centre.

Inevitably the "discretion" — be it choosing a Chief Minister, or requiring a Chief Minister to prove his/her majority, or dismissing a Chief Minister, dissolving the legislature, recommending President's Rule — came to be tainted with partisan political considerations. More often than not, the gubernatorial discretion was abused, sometimes absurdly, even whimsically.

The Supreme Court did try, through its judgment in the S.R. Bommai case, to restore some kind of order on the rampant proclivities of Raj Bhavans. That, of course, did not prevent a Governor from becoming difficult. For example, a Governor has been known for, once, withholding his assent to the Budget because the Chief Minister was not inclined to accede to the Raj Bhavan's demand for a fourth imported luxury car for "His Excellency".

But now, the BJP has accelerated the process of institutional lumpenisation. A new role for the Governors in the non-BJP ruled States has been devised. Without seeming to abuse his 'discretion', a Governor, like the gentleman in the Kolkata Raj Bhavan, can blatantly put the licence of 'gubernatorial activism' in the service of his bosses' party interests. There is probably nothing in the Constitution that forbids a Governor from making a political nuisance of himself. The Twitter handle comes in handy. Or, no one can fault a Governor for granting an audience to delegations hostile to the Chief Minister. The Maharashtra Governor was all too willing to get himself photographed with a film actress, who was demonstratively brawling with Chief Minister Thackeray.

Or, take the case of the West Bengal Governor openly suggesting that the police officials and the bureaucrats should perform their duties as “public servants are not political workers”. Almost, a hit-and-run strategy. And, then, leave it to the media to whip up a political cloud over such loaded utterances.

### **New low**

Article 167 of the Constitution does allow a Governor to call for any information “relating to the administration of the affairs of the State”; but, with a wink from the bosses in the Union Home Ministry, a Governor like Mr. Dhankhar or Mr. Koshyari can become a total partisan. But, it was a new low when the Maharashtra Governor mockingly asked the Chief Minister if he had suddenly turned ‘secular’.

In the “old India”, the President of India would have mostly probably found a way of communicating the Rashtrapati Bhavan’s displeasure to the Maharashtra Governor for this ‘secular’ taunt. After all, secularism is very much a part of the basic structure of the Constitution, the very sacred book that a Governor takes oath to “preserve, protect and defend”.

“Secularism” is not a dispensable part of the Constitution, nor is it a dirty word, as Governor Koshyari’s letter implied. After all, it has been pointed out by jurists and constitutional scholars that in the Kesavananda Bharati case, the Supreme Court had declared secularism as a basic feature of the Constitution, even before the Forty-Second Amendment had introduced the word ‘secular’ in the Preamble to the Constitution. The political design behind an over-active Raj Bhavan is simple: poke, prod, pinprick and provoke the elected government to waste its political energies and capital in an unwanted war of attrition; the BJP can be the only beneficiary from the resulting skirmishes.

### **Reflecting an arrogance**

However, there is a certain method to this gubernatorial madness. Governors like Mr. Koshyari and Mr. Dhankhar are too insignificant as political players to have crafted on their own this new gubernatorial meddlesomeness; their overreach is only a reflection of a new arrogant mindset at work.

The Narendra Modi-Amit Shah leadership subscribes to a maximalist approach to the obligation of institutionalised sharing of power within our federal framework. Over and above the primacy of the Union, the BJP is allergic to the idea of having to share power and space with other political parties and players. The non-BJP governments, an unafraid Mamta Banerjee and unintimidated Uddhav Thackeray, are seen as eyesores which need to be removed. To that end, wherever possible, the Raj Bhavans would become the State BJP’s extension counters. No one should be surprised if the BJP were to use the contrived Koshyari-Thackeray dust-up in the Bihar election campaign later this month.

This itch for political intolerance is a recurring nightmare for the Indian Union. After she returned to power in 1980, Indira Gandhi was determined to use the Raj Bhavans to get rid of unhelpful non-Congress governments. Remember Governor Ram Lal in Andhra Pradesh or Governor Jagmohan in Jammu and Kashmir. But, now, a new righteous of the “new India” is being deployed to beautify an old-fashioned power lust. An over-bearing Centre appeals enormously to wannabe emperors.

## Still awaiting police reform

***It is time for the judiciary to step in and enforce the diktats it had passed in 2006***

**M.P. Nathanael is Inspector General of Police (Retd), CRPF**

Police brutality in recent months has turned quotidian. The thrashing of a Dalit Ahirwar couple by the police in Guna district of Madhya Pradesh on July 14 was very distressing. But for the media coverage, the incident would have gone unnoticed. The District Collector and the Superintendent of Police have been transferred and six police personnel have been suspended since the incident. The matter will soon be forgotten.

The public outcry following the brutal torture of J. Benicks and his father P. Jayaraj in Sattankulam town in Thoothkudi district of Tamil Nadu resulting in their death had still not died when news came that a gangster, Vikas Dubey, was killed by the Uttar Pradesh police in Kanpur when he allegedly tried to flee from custody. The police version of the incident was quite unbelievable. It looked like the law had been subverted.

These incidents and several others show that we need immediate remedial measures lest the country witnesses an upheaval of the kind that the U.S. saw following the death of George Floyd. Should such a situation arise, it will be the political class that will squarely be held responsible, for it is they who have proved to be the stumbling block in the implementation of various apex court directives aimed at improving the functioning of the police.

### Solutions that remain on paper

Commissions and committees are set up every time there are demands for police reforms after a major incident. Then the recommendations of such commissions and committees are simply consigned to the archives. But they are not forgotten as some senior police officials vociferously demand implementation of their recommendations from time to time.

The first serious attempt to overhaul the policing machinery was made when the National Police Commission (NPC) was set up in 1977. The NPC submitted eight reports to the Ministry of Home Affairs between 1979 and 1981. Seven of these reports were circulated to the States in 1983 with an annotation that "the Commission has been unduly critical of the political system or the functioning of the police force in general". In a subtle manner, a signal had been sent. The report was put in cold storage until Prakash Singh, a retired IPS officer, filed a PIL in the apex court in 1996 demanding the implementation of the NPC's recommendations.

In 2006, the Supreme Court issued a slew of directives on police reform. These would have had a far-reaching impact had the States and the Centre paid any serious attention to them. But that would have upset the applecart of our politicians and even the bureaucrats, some of whom are known to be corrupt and mired in crime. According to a report by the Association for Democratic Reforms (2018), there were 1,580 MPs and MLAs facing criminal charges. Therein lies the crux of the matter.

### Turning a blind eye

The one diktat that would hurt the most is the setting up of a State Security Commission (SSC) in each State which would divest the political leaders of the unbridled power that they wield at present. Of the States that constituted an SSC, only Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka have made SSC recommendations binding on the State government, according to the Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative. Only six States provided a minimum tenure of two years to the Director General of Police (DGP). In Tamil Nadu, T.K. Rajendran, who was made DGP (Intelligence) and given full additional charge as DGP in September 2016, was formally appointed DGP on the day he attained the age of superannuation. Many States have not implemented a single directive of the Supreme Court.

Since expecting political will to implement police reforms is a far cry, it is for the judiciary to step in and enforce the diktats it had passed. Fourteen years is too long a period for any further relaxation. The Court has to come down heavily on the States and the Centre to ensure that its directives are not dismissed lightly. A bold step towards bringing down crimes is possible only when the politicians-criminals-police nexus is strangled.

# नईदुनिया

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## देशवासियों के खाते में भेजा जाए धन

**भरत झुनझुनवाला, ( आर्थिक मामलों के विशेषज्ञ )**

वर्तमान में गिरती मांग को बढ़ाने का पहला उपाय लोगों को ऋण उपलब्ध करना है, जिससे वे उस रकम के जरिये बाजार से फ्रिज इत्यादि वस्तुएं खरीद सकें। पहली नजर में तो यह सही दिखता है, लेकिन वास्तविकता यह है कि ऋण लेकर खपत करने से केवल तत्काल मांग बनाती है और शीघ्र ही कुल खपत में गिरावट आती है। मान लीजिए, आपने 100 रुपये का ऋण लिया तो उस पर 10 रुपये का ब्याज अदा करेंगे। पहले आपको खर्च के लिए 100 रुपये उपलब्ध थे जो अब घटकर 90 रुपये रह जाएंगे। इसलिए ऋण देकर खपत बढ़ाना तत्काल राहत पहुंचा सकता है, लेकिन यह समस्या का हल नहीं है। विशेषकर इसलिए कि कोविड-19 संकट के बने रहने के आसार हैं।

मांग पैदा करने का दूसरा उपाय है कि सरकार कुछ रकम लोगों के खातों में ट्रांसफर कर दे। इस दिशा में सरकार ने अपने कर्मचारियों को लीव ट्रैवल कनसेशन यानी एलटीसी के एवज में खपत करने की छूट दी है। यह सही कदम है, लेकिन सरकारी कर्मचारियों के माध्यम से मांग कम ही उत्पन्न होगी। अमीर को यदि 100 रुपये की अतिरिक्त आय होती है तो वह उसमें से 40 रुपये की खपत करता है और 60 रुपये की बचत करता है। इसका वह सोना या शेयर खरीदने में, बैंक में जमा करने में अथवा विदेश भेजने में उपयोग करता है। दूसरी तरफ, यदि किसी गरीब को 100 रुपये की अतिरिक्त आय होती है तो वह 90 रुपये की खपत करता है और केवल 10 रुपये की बचत करता है। इसलिए कहा जाता है कि अमीर की तुलना में गरीब की खपत की प्रवृत्ति ज्यादा प्रबल होती है। अतः सरकार को धनराशि का ट्रांसफर गरीब के खाते में करना चाहिए, लेकिन सरकार के सामने समस्या यह है कि इतनी बड़ी रकम आएगी कहां से? वर्तमान में अर्थव्यवस्था सुस्त पड़ी हुई है। सरकार की टैक्स वसूली दबाव में है। सरकार की आय कम है। एक उपाय यह भी है

कि नोट छापकर रकम जनता के खाते में ट्रांसफर की जाए। हालांकि, यह प्रभावी नहीं होगा, क्योंकि नोट छापने से शीघ्र ही महंगाई बढ़ जाएगी।

इस विकट परिस्थिति में एक मात्र उपाय यह है कि सरकार आयात शुल्क में भारी वृद्धि करे। सरकार को एक वर्ष में आयात शुल्क से लगभग 170 हजार करोड़ रुपये का राजस्व मिलता है। इसमें 50 प्रतिशत की वृद्धि कर दी जाए तो 85 हजार करोड़ रुपये की अतरिक्त आय हो सकती है, जिससे देश के 130 करोड़ लोगों को 700 रुपये प्रति व्यक्ति अथवा 3,500 रुपये प्रति परिवार प्रति वर्ष ट्रांसफर किया जा सकता है। गरीबों द्वारा इस रकम से माल की खरीद की जाएगी। चूंकि उनकी खपत की प्रवृत्ति अधिक होती है, इसलिए बाजार में माल की मांग पैदा होगी। आयात शुल्क बढ़ाने का दूसरा लाभ होगा कि देश में विदेश से मंगाए जाने वाले माल के दाम बढ़ जाएंगे और उसके अनुरूप घरेलू उत्पादन बढ़ेगा। गणेश जी की प्रतिमा चीन से आयातित किए जाने के स्थान पर मुरादाबाद में बनेगी। घरेलू उत्पादन बढ़ने से आम आदमी को रोजगार मिलेगा। रोजगार से आय उत्पन्न होगी। कमाई होने से जनता का आत्मविश्वास बढ़ेगा। वे खर्च करने की हिम्मत कर सकेंगे क्योंकि उन्हें भरोसा होगा कि आने वाले समय में उनकी आमदनी बरकरार रहेगी।

इस नीति को लागू करने में विश्व व्यापार संगठन यानी डब्ल्यूटीओ की समस्या है। हमने आश्वासन दे रखा है कि निर्धारित सीमा से ऊपर आयात शुल्क नहीं बढ़ाएंगे, लेकिन यह विपदा की स्थिति है। हमारे सामने प्रश्न है कि हम जिएंगे या मरेंगे? इस विकट परिस्थिति में आपद धर्म को अपनाना चाहिए। डब्ल्यूटीओ के नियमों से बंधे रहकर मरने का कोई औचित्य नहीं है। सरकार को कड़ा और क्रांतिकारी कदम उठाते हुए डब्ल्यूटीओ से बाहर आकर आयात पर भारी शुल्क लगाना चाहिए, जिसके एक साथ दो लाभ होंगे। पहला यह कि बढ़े हुए आयात शुल्क से अर्जित रकम को सीधे ट्रांसफर कर देश के हर नागरिक के खाते में राशि भेजी जा सकेगी, जिससे वह बाजार से माल खरीदेगा। दूसरा यह कि आयात से संरक्षण मिलने से घरेलू उत्पादन में गति आएगी, रोजगार बढ़ेगे और मांग बढ़ेगी। हाँ, आयात शुल्क बढ़ाने से आयातित गणेश जी की प्रतिमा के मूल्य बढ़ जाएंगे, लेकिन हमारे सामने चुनौती है कि हम विदेशी सस्ते माल की खपत कर अपने को गड़े में डालेंगे अथवा विदेशी महंगे माल के भार का वहन करके अपनी अर्थव्यवस्था को पुनर्जीवित करेंगे।

## जनसत्ता

Date: 19-10-20

### डिजिटल अर्थव्यवस्था की चुनौतियां

जयंतीलाल भंडारी



भारत डिजिटल अर्थव्यवस्था के युग में प्रवेश तो कर चुका है, लेकिन अभी भी अर्थव्यवस्था का यह नया रूप उम्मीदों के मुताबिक रफ्तार नहीं पकड़ पाया है। इसका बड़ा कारण डिजिटल अर्थव्यवस्था को रफ्तार देने के लिए इसके रास्ते में आने वाली बाधाएं हैं। जब तक इन्हें दूर नहीं किया जाएगा, डिजिटल अर्थव्यवस्था को पूरी तरह से आत्मसात कर पाना संभव नहीं होगा। इसके लिए पहला और महत्वपूर्ण उपाय देश, खासतौर से ग्रामीण क्षेत्रों को डिजिटल रूप में साक्षर बनाना होगा और साथ ही

डिजिटलीकरण के लिए आवश्यक बुनियादी सुविधाओं का जाल बिछाना होगा। जाहिर है, इसके लिए सबसे पहले ग्रामीण क्षेत्रों में बिजली की पर्याप्त पहुंच बनानी होगी। जब तक देश के गांव-गांव में बिजली नहीं होगी, कैसे इंटरनेट का उपयोग संभव होगा। कोरोना महामारी के बीच डिजिटल अर्थव्यवस्था के लिए अप्रैल से जुलाई के दौरान 16.26 अरब डॉलर का विदेशी निवेश भारत आया है। खासतौर से अमेरिकी कंपनियां भारत में स्वास्थ्य, शिक्षा, कृषि और खुदरा क्षेत्र के ई-कारोबार बाजार की प्रबल संभावनाओं को देख कर ही निवेश के लिए बढ़ी हैं।

डिजिटल क्षेत्र में विदेशी निवेश बढ़ने के पीछे कई कारण हैं। पूर्णबंदी में ऑनलाइन शिक्षा, घर से दफ्तरी काम की बढ़ती संस्कृति, इससे इंटरनेट उपयोक्ताओं की बढ़ती तादाद, डिजिटल इंडिया के तहत सरकारी सेवाओं के डिजिटल होने, जनधन खातों में लाभार्थियों को सीधे भुगतान, प्रति व्यक्ति डेटा खपत और मोबाइल ब्रॉडबैंड ग्राहकों की संख्या के मामले में भारत तेजी से आगे बढ़ा है। डिजिटल अर्थव्यवस्था के तहत डिजिटल भुगतान उद्योग, ई-कॉमर्स और डिजिटल मार्केटिंग जैसे क्षेत्र तेजी से आगे बढ़े हैं। यदि हम डिजिटल भुगतान उद्योग की ओर देखें तो पाते हैं कि नोटबंदी में भी डिजिटल भुगतान इतनी तेजी से नहीं बढ़ा था, जितना कि कोरोना संकटकाल में इस साल अप्रैल से सितंबर के दौरान बढ़ा है। देश में डिजिटल भुगतान की स्वीकार्यता बढ़ने लगी है। अर्थव्यवस्था में नकदी की जगह दूसरे माध्यमों से लेनदेन को बढ़ावा देने के भारतीय रिजर्व बैंक के प्रयासों का असर दिखने लगा है। देश में जो डिजिटल भुगतान कोरोना के पहले जनवरी 2020 में करीब 2.2 लाख करोड़ रुपए के थे, वे जून 2020 में 2.60 लाख करोड़ रुपए तक पहुंच गए।

पूर्णबंदी के कारण लोगों ने घरों में रहते हुए ई-कॉमर्स और डिजिटल मार्केटिंग को एक तरह से जीवन का अंग बना लिया। अब जब पूर्णबंदी लगभग खत्म हो चुकी है, तब भी लोग भीड़भाड़ से बचने के लिए ऑनलाइन खरीद को ही तरजीह दे रहे हैं। बर्नस्टीन रिसर्च की रिपोर्ट में कहा गया है कि भारत में कोरोनाकाल में लोगों ने जिस तेजी से डिजिटल का रुख किया है, वह भारत के लिए आर्थिक रूप से उपयोगी हो गया है। अनुमान है कि वर्ष 2027-28 तक भारत में ई-कॉमर्स का कारोबार दो सौ अरब डॉलर को पार कर जाएगा।

ई-कॉमर्स और डिजिटल अर्थव्यवस्था के तेजी से बढ़ने का सबसे बड़ा फायदा डिजिटल सेवा कर (डीएसटी) सरकारी आमदानी का नया स्रोत बनता जा रहा है। जैसे जैसे डिजिटल अर्थव्यवस्था गति पकड़ेगी, डीएसटी में भी वृद्धि होगी। भारत में दो करोड़ रुपए से अधिक का सालाना कारोबार करने वाली विदेशी डिजिटल कंपनियों के व्यापार एवं सेवाओं पर दो फीसद डिजिटल कर लगाया गया है। इस कर के दायरे में भारत में काम करने वाली दुनिया के सभी देशों की ई-

कॉर्मस करने वाली कंपनियां शामिल हैं। डिजिटल कर लगाने का कदम भारत का संप्रभु अधिकार है। डिजिटल कर विश्व व्यापार संगठन (डब्ल्यूटीओ) के नियमों का उल्लंघन नहीं है।

अब जैसे-जैसे वैश्विक अर्थव्यवस्था डिजिटल होती जा रही है, वैसे-वैसे देश और दुनिया में रोजगार बाजार का परिवर्त्य भी बदलता जा रहा है। भविष्य में कई रोजगार ऐसे होंगे, जिनके नाम हमने अब तक सुने भी नहीं हैं। कई शोध संगठनों का कहना है कि डिजिटलीकरण से भारत में रोजगार के नए मौके तेजी से बढ़ रहे हैं। इसमें दुनियाभर में ऑटोमेशन, रोबोटिक्स और आर्टिफिशियल इंटेलिजेंस के चलते जहां कई क्षेत्रों में रोजगार कम हो रहे हैं, वहां डिजिटल अर्थव्यवस्था में रोजगार बढ़ रहे हैं। विश्व बैंक ने भी अपनी वैश्विक रोजगार से संबंधित रिपोर्ट में कहा है कि पांच से दस वर्षों में जहां दुनिया में कुशल श्रम बल का संकट होगा, वहां भारत के पास कुशल श्रम बल अतिरिक्त संख्या में होगा। ऐसे में भारत दुनिया के कई विकसित और कई विकासशील देशों में बड़ी संख्या में कुशल श्रम बल भेज कर फायदा उठा सकेगा।

देश की आबादी का एक बड़ा भाग अब भी डिजिटल बैंकिंग व्यवस्था की व्हिट से पीछे है। इसलिए उसे डिजिटल बैंकिंग की ओर बढ़ाने की जरूरत है। ग्रामीण क्षेत्रों में बड़ी संख्या में लोगों के पास डिजिटल भुगतान के लिए बैंक-खाता, इंटरनेट की सुविधा वाला मोबाइल फोन या क्रेडिट-डेबिट कार्ड की सुविधा नहीं है। इसलिए ऐसी सुविधाएं बढ़ाने का अभियान तेज करना होगा। साथ ही वित्तीय लेनदेन के लिए बड़ी ग्रामीण आबादी को डिजिटल भुगतान तकनीकों के प्रति प्रेरित करना होगा। चूंकि डिजिटल भुगतान के समय होने वाली ऑनलाइन धोखाधड़ी की बढ़ती हुई घटनाओं के कारण बड़ी संख्या में ग्रामीणों का ऑनलाइन लेन-देन में अविश्वास बना हुआ है, इसलिए ऑनलाइन धोखाधड़ी रोकने के लिए सरकार को साइबर सुरक्षा मजबूत करने के लिए कदम उठाने होंगे। डिजिटलीकरण को बढ़ावा देने के लिए मोबाइल ब्रॉडबैंड स्पीड के मामले में अभी काफी कुछ किया जाना बाकी है। इस साल अप्रैल में मोबाइल ब्रॉडबैंड गति के मामले में एक सौ उन्नतालीस देशों की सूची में भारत एक सौ बत्तीसवें पायदान पर है। अप्रैल में भारत की औसत मोबाइल ब्रॉडबैंड डाउनलोड स्पीड 9.81 एमबीपीएस और औसत अपलोड स्पीड 3.98 एमबीपीएस रही। मोबाइल ब्रॉडबैंड गति के मामले में दक्षिण कोरिया, कतर, चीन, यूएई, नीदरलैंड, नार्वे बहुत आगे हैं। इतना ही नहीं, ब्रॉडबैंड रफ्तार के मामले में भारत को पाकिस्तान और नेपाल जैसे देशों ने भी पीछे छोड़ दिया। ऐसे में भारत को डिजिटल अर्थव्यवस्था में रोजगार के मौकों का फायदा लेने के लिए मोबाइल ब्रॉडबैंड नेटवर्क को मजबूत करने के प्रयास करने होंगे।

अब दुनिया की सबसे अधिक युवा आबादी वाले भारत को बड़ी संख्या में युवाओं को डिजिटल दौर की ओर नई तकनीकी रोजगार योग्यताओं से सुसज्जित करना होगा। डिजिटल दुनिया में भविष्य बनाने के लिए डिजिटल अर्थव्यवस्था की विशेषज्ञता के साथ अच्छी अंग्रेजी, कम्प्यूटर दक्षता, संवाद प्रकीणता, जनसंचार तथा विज्ञापन क्षेत्र से जुड़ा कौशल लाभप्रद होता है। इसके अलावा तकनीकी कौशलता के संदर्भ में वेब डिजाइन, सोशल मीडिया, वेब संबंधित सॉफ्टवेयर का अच्छा ज्ञान, विश्लेषणात्मक कौशल और अनुसंधान कौशल भी जरूरी हैं। डिजिटल अर्थव्यवस्था के बीच देश की नई पीढ़ी के लिए रोजगार की जो संभावनाएं बन रही हैं, उनका लाभ उठाने की जरूरत है। अच्छी ऑनलाइन शिक्षा आज वक्त की बड़ी जरूरत बन चुकी है। नेशनल एसोसिएशन आफ सॉफ्टवेयर एंड सर्विसेज कंपनीज (नैसकॉम) के मुताबिक भारत डिजिटल अर्थव्यवस्था में पूरी तरह से लाभ की स्थिति में हैं। लेकिन कोरोना महामारी के बाद की दुनिया में मौजूदा आइटी प्रतिभाओं को नई तकनीकों से फिर से दक्ष बनाना होगा।

हाल ही में एक ओर देश में डिजिटलीकरण को बढ़ाने और दूसरी ओर नई शिक्षा नीति में जिस तरह डिजिटल दुनिया के नए दौर के कौशल विकास पर काफी जोर दिया गया है, उसके प्रभावी क्रियान्वयन से देश में डिजिटल अर्थव्यवस्था में

रोजगार के मौके बढ़ेंगे। देश की नई पीढ़ी डिजिटल अर्थव्यवस्था में छिपे अवसरों को तलाशेगी और देश-दुनिया की नई जरूरतों के मुताबिक अपने को तैयार करेगी।

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