



Date: 14-03-25

Old ties, new priorities

The Modi visit to Mauritius focused on present-day imperatives

Editorial



Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Mauritius this week, and his meeting with its newly elected Prime Minister Navin Ramgoolam, marked a decade since his last visit. His trip aimed to strengthen the India-Mauritius strategic partnership and launch new economic and development initiatives. While Mr. Ramgoolam's previous tenure (2005-14) overlapped briefly with Mr. Modi's, the two leaders have maintained close ties. Even during India's strict COVID-19 lockdown, the Indian government facilitated Mr. Ramgoolam's medical evacuation to India. Acknowledging this support, Mr. Ramgoolam warmly welcomed

Mr. Modi as a guest at Mauritius' National Day celebrations where he was also conferred the highest national award. Though not India's closest geographical neighbour, Mauritius remains deeply connected to India. Over 70% of Mauritians are of Indian descent, with enduring cultural ties to India. While Mr. Modi's engagements highlighted these shared historical and cultural bonds, the visit was primarily focused on strategic priorities. India seeks to strengthen its partnership with Mauritius as a key player in the Indian Ocean, an African nation, and a link to the Global South.

As part of this deepening partnership, the two leaders upgraded their strategic ties and committed to increased defence cooperation. India also announced several major economic initiatives, that include bilateral trade in national currencies, support for a new Mauritius parliament building, and a ₹487 crore credit facility to improve water infrastructure. These projects build upon previous Indian-led developments, such as an airstrip and jetty in the Agalega islands, the Mauritius Metro rail project, and the New Supreme Court Building. The visit also carried geopolitical implications. Mr. Ramgoolam has expressed a desire to renegotiate Mauritius' agreement with the U.K. regarding sovereignty over the Chagos Archipelago, home to a U.S. military base in Diego Garcia. While India helped broker the previous deal under Prime Minister Pravind Jugnauth's government, it has assured Mr. Ramgoolam of its full support in whatever course he chooses. Meanwhile, India is also watching China's growing footprint. China's strategic partnership with Mauritius includes a free trade agreement and bilateral trade worth \$1.1 billion — double that of India-Mauritius trade at \$554 million. With the PLA Navy's increased presence in the Indian Ocean, Mr. Modi's announcement of the MAHASAGAR doctrine is significant. At a time when shifting U.S. foreign policy threatens the international rules-based order, disrupts trade, and risks fragmenting global alliances into rigid spheres of influence, Mr. Modi's visit has underscored India's commitment to strengthening regional ties and reinforcing partnerships with trusted friends.

Date: 14-03-25

The gender budget — bigger allocations, little impact

Without addressing the intersectional realities of caste, class, gender, and the digital divide, the gender budget will continue to fail India's women

Bhoomika Choudhury ,Yukti Choudhary, (Bhoomika Choudhury is an international lawyer and researcher specialising in business and human rights, corporate accountability, and labour rights. Yukti Choudhary is an international human rights lawyer and researcher specialising in corporate accountability, labour rights, and sustainability)

The Union Budget 2025-26 has been hailed for its increased allocation towards women-centric schemes, with the total gender budget rising to ₹4.49 lakh crore, marking a 37.25% increase from the previous fiscal year's allocation of ₹3.27 lakh crore. The increased allocation is substantial even if one factors in an inflationary rate of approximately 3.61%.

Despite rising allocations, poor results

The amount allocated for the gender budget has increased consistently — ₹1,71,006.47 crore in 2022-23, ₹2,38,219.75 in 2023-24, ₹3,27,158.44 in 2024-25 and ₹4,49,028.68 in 2025-26. This signifies the government's clear intent to bridge gender disparities. But despite the increase in the expenditure, the economic benefits to women have not percolated in the same ratio. Specifically, tangible benefits to women, particularly from marginalised populations, including the Scheduled Castes (SC) and Scheduled Tribes (ST), have failed miserably. This is despite the government announcing many programmes for the marginalised. To illustrate, this year, a corpus of ₹300 crore has been allocated to the Pradhan Mantri Janjati Adivasi Nyaya Maha Abhiyan (PM JANMAN) for the socio-economic development of 75 Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs) and ₹75 crore for the Dharti Aba Janjatiya Gram Utkarsh Abhiyan, also aimed at tribal welfare.

Even though India has been drafting a gender budget for 20 years, it has failed to include evaluations from previous Budgets to inform a gender budget which incorporates the intersectionality of caste, class, and tribal identities. This has led to the failure of the schemes to transform the lives of marginalised women.

As Vikas Singh from Daang Vikas Sansthan, who works with widows of mine workers in Rajasthan, points out, "Schemes are very nice on paper, but digitization has created new barriers. Most women lack digital literacy, making accessing welfare schemes without middlemen difficult." The government's move to eliminate intermediaries through digitisation necessitates urgent investments in digital literacy programmes.

Outdated Census data, other gaps

Women from SC/ST communities face layered discrimination, making it vital to analyse how budgetary allocations address these intersections. In the Union Budget 2025-26, the Ministry of Tribal Affairs received an allocation of ₹14,925.81 crore — a 45.79% increase from the previous year's revised

estimate of ₹10,237.33 crore. However, specific allocations under the Scheduled Castes Sub-Plan (SCSP) and Tribal Sub-Plan (TSP) are not detailed in the available sources.

These sub-plans are integral to the Budgets of various Ministries, with the aim of ensuring targeted development for SCs and STs. The combined allocations for SCSP and TSP across all Ministries are substantial, reflecting the commitment to welfare. But there is a lack of gender-disaggregated data within these plans, which makes it challenging to assess their actual impact on SC/ST women. The last Census in India was in 2011, making current data outdated. This gap raises serious questions about how government policies are tailored without updated statistics, affecting accountability mechanisms.

According to the “Dalit Adivasi Budget Analysis 2023-24” report by the National Campaign on Dalit Human Rights (NCDHR), over 35% of the funds allocated under SCSP and TSP are underutilised due to bureaucratic red tape and lack of community involvement. Complicated paperwork, procedural barriers, low outreach, and an inadequate dissemination of information hinder women from availing themselves of welfare schemes. Though women do not understand the nitty-gritties due to the financial jargon of the Economic Survey, they wait every year for “schemes”, “subsidies”, and government support that can make their life easier.

Schemes often fail to consider regional, cultural and social diversities, especially in tribal areas where access to education and health care remains dismal. The literacy rate among tribal women is 49.4%, compared to the national female literacy rate of 64.63% (Census 2011).

Issues to tackle

According to Sandeep Patnaik, a researcher and journalist working on women’s rights and panchayati raj issues, “Strengthening local institutions and ensuring better utilization of existing funds is as important as increasing allocations.” The role of panchayati raj institutions is critical in ensuring the last-mile delivery of services, yet they often lack the autonomy and the resources to implement gender-sensitive policies effectively. Also, the government needs to create strict rules to prevent the rule of “sarpanch husbands”, which has become one of the significant obstacles to women’s empowerment and upliftment.

Gender budgets must be designed after an audit that accounts for intersectionality of caste, class, and tribal identities at the central and State levels. Second, the government must adopt community-led participatory methods that involve women, especially those from SC/ST backgrounds, in planning and monitoring schemes. Evidence from Kerala’s Kudumbashree mission shows that community-led implementation significantly improves outreach and effectiveness. Establishing transparent monitoring systems to track fund utilisation and impact would be beneficial. The creation of a gender budget tracking portal could foster greater public accountability.

While the increased allocation for women in the Budget is in the right direction, real progress lies in its effective implementation. Without addressing the intersectional realities of caste, class, gender, and the digital divide, the gender budget will continue to fail women. For transformative change, policies must move beyond tokenism to ensure equity, accessibility, and accountability.

Is learning Hindi as a third language necessary?

Yogendra Yadav, psephologist and founding national president of Swaraj India; T.M. Krishna, carnatic musician and author.



The National Education Policy, 2020, encourages students up to at least Class 5 to learn a regional language in addition to the local language or mother tongue and English. While the Central government asserts that the choice of the additional regional language is left to the States, the NEP's strong pitch for the three-language formula has led to fear, especially in Tamil Nadu, that there is an attempt being made to impose Hindi on non-Hindi speaking States. This week, Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M.K. Stalin dubbed the NEP a "Hindutva policy" aimed at promoting Hindi, rather than focusing on India's overall development. Is learning

Hindi as a third language necessary? Yogendra Yadav and T.M. Krishna discuss the question in a conversation moderated by K.V. Prasad. Edited excerpts:

Should learning a third language be made compulsory?

Yogendra Yadav: Absolutely not. First, because the spirit of federalism and respect for diversity is foundational to the Union of India. So, nothing can be imposed on any State, least of all a language policy. If we have different views on language, they are resolved through consensus, not through imposition. I'm entirely with the DMK and the people of Tamil Nadu on the imposition issue.

T.M. Krishna: If I may ask, why learn three languages? To be clear, we are not talking about students learning other languages of their own accord, which is anyway happening. A government that selectively deletes chapters from history textbooks, stating that there is too much of an education burden on students, is not even willing to look at the fact that learning another language is definitely a burden on them. Also, children in primary and middle school don't have an imagination of time or the distant future. So asking them to learn a third language, in the name of future benefit, is basically an imposition. There is also the argument being made that learning more languages creates unity. This is a smokescreen. Forcing a language on someone is not unity.

Yogendra Yadav: Once we disentangle the idea of teaching three languages from Central imposition and the compulsion of Hindi, we can discuss the issue dispassionately. The point about the burden of education is something that experts have handled. They have come to the conclusion that if you teach a third language, it only helps your primary and secondary language, so I believe that the three-language formula merits serious consideration on grounds of pedagogy and national unity. As for practicality, I know of schools which do follow this formula. They do not give you the option of all the 22 languages (recognised in the Eighth Schedule of the Constitution), but they give you three or four options to choose from. These things can be worked out provided there is a political will and a capacity to teach anything at all.

If compulsory learning of an additional language will be a burden on students, will it not be equally burdensome on schools, since they will need qualified teachers and funds for this purpose?

T.M. Krishna: More than 5,000 schools in Uttar Pradesh are managed by a single teacher. Bihar has a massive teacher shortage. So, even in terms of resources, this formula does not make sense. When resources are few, it makes more sense to look at the ways in which we can teach primary subjects better. And when the mother tongue is the mode of learning and communication in class, and there is English as well, I don't believe that adding another language is necessary.

Is it fair to make adoption of the three-language formula a pre-condition for the release of Central funds for schemes?

Yogendra Yadav: Holding back grants is unconstitutional. This is part of a political assault on the autonomy of the Tamil Nadu government, led by the Governor himself. I understand why not just the DMK, but all parties and the people of Tamil Nadu feel slighted.

T.M. Krishna: It is unconstitutional, unethical, and devoid of any basis. Some people say, let the people decide whether they want three languages or two. But people did not decide about the three-language policy; individuals in the Union government made this decision.

Why is there so much resistance to an educational policy that stresses on the need to learn an additional language?

Yogendra Yadav: My suspicion is that the resistance does not come from pedagogical concerns. It emanates from disquiet with double standards. Frankly, the formula was sabotaged by north India. The expectation was that all the southern and eastern States would learn Hindi, while the Hindi speakers found a shortcut for themselves — they used Sanskrit as a shield so that they would not have to learn a new language. So, in effect, the policy meant that everyone would be forced to learn the mother tongue of Hindi speakers, but they would not have to learn anyone else's mother tongue. That legitimate unease has clouded the debate on multilingualism in our country.

T.M. Krishna: Multilingualism is not just a political problem; it's pedagogic too. The pedagogical methods have changed. At the primary and middle-school level, activity-based learning and experiential learning should be the focus. There are already two languages at play; that itself is multilingualism. I do not view multilingualism in terms of language alone; it is a way of making people be diverse in feeling and in being. People learn languages when they forge relationships, for instance. We can't forget that cultural character and emotional connections make people learn a language.

Monolingualism is predominant in many Hindi-speaking States, irrespective of the three-language formula.

Yogendra Yadav: The problem is the false sense of pride that many people in north India have developed, especially in Hindi-speaking areas, that somehow Hindi is a more privileged language than any other language. Many people in the north use the term 'national language', which is nowhere mentioned in the Constitution. This is what irks the non-Hindi speaker. The Hindi that we know today is a recent and young language, unlike Tamil or Kannada, which are some of the oldest and richest languages in the world.

T.M. Krishna: It is difficult to get data on this, but I would like to know how many schools in north India that profess to teach three languages really do that. Is the policy actually being followed?

Yogendra Yadav: As I said, in most north Indian States, Hindi is taught along with English and Sanskrit. Sanskrit has become a way to bypass the requirement of the third language. So, technically, yes, it is followed.

T.M. Krishna: Exactly my point. There is a very important cultural point that needs to be understood about the Tamil people and the Tamil language. Tamil as a language is very distinct from every other Sanskrit-based or Sanskrit-derived language. Fundamentally, it is a very difficult task for a Tamil speaker to even learn Hindi or its cousin languages. In Tamil Nadu, people have learned other languages on their own. The dominant positioning of Sanskrit in the NEP, especially for a Tamil speaker, is intimidating especially when the language is so distinct and different grammatically and structurally.

Yogendra Yadav: To position Sanskrit as the sole carrier of our cultural heritage is a serious mistake. Besides, Sanskrit is not being taught to inculcate classical learning, but mainly to sabotage the three-language formula. In effect, Hindi speakers are not learning a new language or script.

What do you propose is the way forward to end the current stand-off?

Yogendra Yadav: Learning three languages, which are distinct from each other, is a good idea to nurture multilingualism that is inherent in our cultures. But this cannot be imposed on anyone. Students should learn a modern Indian language that is distinct from their mother tongue. In the north, it would be “preferably a south Indian language” — exactly what the original formula had mandated and was never implemented.

T.M. Krishna: The distinctness is exactly why I feel there should be only two languages. English is already so distinct from whatever language you speak, be it Hindi or Tamil. Therefore, adding another language is not going to help.



दैनिक भास्कर

Date: 15-03-25

साझी खुशियां और सांस्कृतिक समन्वय

संपादकीय

धार्मिक आस्थाओं के देश में फिर एक बार एकता की मिसाल कायम की गई। साझी खुशियां, सांस्कृतिक समन्वय और सह अस्तित्व का बेहतरीन नजारा शुक्रवार को देखने को मिला। 4 मार्च 1961 यानी 64 साल बाद ऐसा मौका पहली बार आया है। धार्मिक आस्था के इस दिन को पूरे देश में आपसी भाईचारे, सौहार्द और एकता के लिए दर्ज किया गया। होली के रंग और रमजान के जुमे की इबादत ने साझी खुशियां की कहानी बयां की। सांस्कृतिक समन्वय के जरिए होली के रंगों का संयम और आदर रहा, वहीं, शाम को इबादत के बाद इफ्तार में मुंह मीठा कराना हमारी दृढ़ समझ को बताता

है। होली पर रंग-गुलाल लगाने के साथ गले मिलना तो जुमे की नमाज के बाद और शाम को इफ्तारी के वक्त गले मिलना सह अस्तित्व का उदाहरण पेश कर हमारे देश की खूबी बता गया। जाहिर तौर पर यह धार्मिक उन्माद और वैमनस्य फैलाने वालों के लिए एक सबक है कि हम भारतवासी जाति धर्म से भले ही अलग हों लेकिन दिल से एक और नेक हिंदुस्तानी ही हैं। होली और रमजान का जुमा एक ही दिन पड़ना महज संयोग ही नहीं बल्कि यह हमारे देश की विविधताओं में एकता के मूलमंत्र को पूरी दुनिया में स्थापित करने का एक स्वर्ण अवसर भी रहा। यह दिन विश्व पटल पर हमारी साझा संस्कृति की मजबूती और देश की धार्मिक सहिष्णुता का संदेश दे गया।

जनसत्ता

Date: 14-03-25

साझेदारी का सफर

संपादकीय

भारत और मारीशस के बीच संबंधों का एक लंबा इतिहास रहा है और दुनिया में समकालीन उथल-पुथल के बीच लगभग हर दौर में अलग-अलग स्तर पर दोनों देशों के बीच साझेदारी के नए अध्याय लिखे जाते रहे। इसी क्रम में अगली कड़ी के तौर पर भारतीय प्रधानमंत्री की मारीशस यात्रा को कई कारणों से महत्वपूर्ण माना जा रहा है। इसलिए भी कि दुनिया इस समय भू-राजनीति के एक जटिल दौर से गुजर रही है और इसमें आर्थिक और सामरिक मोर्चे पर नए ध्रुव बन रहे हैं। ऐसे में भारत के रुख पर विकासशील देशों या 'वैश्विक दक्षिण' के साथ-साथ महाशक्ति माने जाने वाले देशों की भी नजर रहती है यों जब शीतयुद्ध के दौरान दुनिया दो मुख्य ध्रुवों में बंटी हुई थी और कई देशों के नीतिगत फैसले भी उसी से तय होते थे, उस दौर में भी भारत की अहमियत जगजाहिर रही। अब पिछले कुछ समय से अमेरिका में सत्ता परिवर्तन के साथ-साथ दुनिया भर में बन रहे नए समीकरण के बीच भी भारत का रुख सभी देशों के लिए मायने रखता है। अच्छा यह है कि भारत ने महाशक्ति कहे जाने वाले से लेकर बाकी तमाम देशों के साथ अपने संबंधों को खास महत्व दिया है।

गौरतलब है कि प्रधानमंत्री की ताजा मारीशस यात्रा के आखिरी दिन उन्नत रणनीतिक साझेदारी के लिए भारत- मारीशस का संयुक्त दृष्टिकोण' जारी किया गया, जो मुख्य रूप से दोनों देशों के बीच खास और अनूठे संबंधों को रेखांकित करता है। इस दौरान बनी सहमति के तहत बुनियादी ढांचा कूटनीति, वाणिज्य, क्षमता निर्माण, वित्त, आवास, अपराध की जांच, समुद्री यातायात निगरानी, डिजिटल प्रौद्योगिकी, स्वास्थ्य, कृत्रिम बुद्धिमत्ता सहित कई क्षेत्रों में सहयोग बढ़ाने पर केंद्रित बातचीत के जरिए द्विपक्षीय संबंधों को मजबूत करने पर जोर दिया गया। इनमें भारत द्वारा मारीशस की नई संसद भवन का निर्माण भी शामिल है। पिछले 'कुछ वर्षों से चीन के रवैये के मददेनजर रक्षा और समुद्री सुरक्षा सहयोग को भारत और मारीशस के बीच संबंधों का एक महत्वपूर्ण स्तंभ मान कर साझेदारी के सफर को आगे बढ़ाना भी एक अहम कड़ी है। हालांकि मुक्त और सुरक्षित हिंद महासागर क्षेत्र सुनिश्चित करने के मामले में साझा प्रतिबद्धता वाले देश के रूप में इन दोनों देशों को एक स्वाभाविक साझेदार माना जाता है। यही वजह है कि क्षेत्र में समुद्री चुनौतियों का सामना करने और व्यापक रणनीतिक हितों की सुरक्षा के लिए मिल कर काम करने का अपना पुराना संकल्प दोहराया।

दरअसल, भारतीय विदेश नीति की प्राथमिकता सूची में 'पड़ोस प्रथम' के तहत भी मारीशस का स्थान महत्वपूर्ण है। हिंद महासागर में मारीशस अपनी भौगोलिक अवस्थिति की वजह से भारत के लिए एक बेहद अहम रणनीतिक साझेदार है। भारत को भी इसकी अहमियत का भान है, इसलिए मित्रता का स्वाभाविक दायित्व निभाने के साथ-साथ भारत ने पिछले कुछ वर्षों में मारीशस में कई विकास योजनाओं में निवेश किया है। इस क्रम में दोनों देशों के बीच रिश्ते में एक गहराई भी आई है। रणनीतिक लिहाज से मारीशस की भारत के साथ बढ़ती घनिष्ठता से चीन का असहज होना स्वाभाविक ही है, क्योंकि बीते कुछ समय से चीन कई स्तर पर ऐसी गतिविधियां जारी रखे हुए हैं, जिससे भारत को घेरा जा सके। उम्मीद की जा सकती है कि मारीशस के साथ भारत का संबंध अब एक नए अध्याय में प्रवेश करेगा, जिसमें नई वैश्विक परिस्थितियों के मुताबिक रणनीतियां तय होंगी।



Date: 14-03-25

संबंधों की नई ऊंचाई

संपादकीय

प्रधानमंत्री नरेन्द्र मोदी की दो दिवसीय मॉरीशस यात्रा से दोनों देशों के पारंपरिक, सांस्कृतिक और राजनीतिक रिश्तों को और ऊंचाई मिली है। मोदी ने मार्च 2015 में मॉरीशस की यात्रा की थी। उन्होंने इस यात्रा की स्मृतियों को याद किया। लोगों को याद रखना चाहिए कि एक दशक पहले की यात्रा के दौरान प्रधानमंत्री मोदी ने पश्चिमी हिन्द महासागर के तटीय क्षेत्रों पर स्थित द्विपीय राष्ट्रों के बढ़ते भू राजनीतिक महत्व को रेखांकित किया था और भारत के 'सागर' दृष्टिकोण यानी क्षेत्र में सभी के लिए सुरक्षा और विकास को उजागर किया था। वर्तमान यात्रा के दौरान उन्होंने इस बात पर जोर दिया कि भारत के 'सागर' दृष्टिकोण को साकार करने के लिए मॉरीशस एक महत्वपूर्ण भागीदार बना हुआ है। इसी के साथ उन्होंने द्विपक्षीय संबंधों को आगे बढ़ाने में मॉरीशस सरकार के समर्थन की सराहना भी की। यह ध्यान रखने वाली बात है कि हिन्द महासागर चीन के दावे के साथ इसके विस्तार को भारत ने बहुत गंभीरता से लिया है। चीन के अलावा रूस और यूरोप के भी कुछ देश हिन्द महासागर के इलाके में अपना प्रभाव बढ़ाने की कोशिश में लगे हुए हैं। इसी कारण से भारत ने विशेष रूप से समुद्री सुरक्षा से संबंधित गठबंधनों को इस क्षेत्र के द्विपीय राष्ट्रों के साथ मजबूत किया है। प्रधानमंत्री मोदी और मॉरीशस के प्रधानमंत्री नवीनचंद्र रामगुलाम ने कहा कि रक्षा और समुद्री सुरक्षा सहयोग द्विपक्षीय संबंधों का एक महत्वपूर्ण स्तंभ बना हुआ है। उन्होंने इस बात पर सहमति जताई कि स्वतंत्र, खुला, सुरक्षित और संरक्षित हिन्द महासागर क्षेत्र सुनिश्चित करने के लिए मॉरीशस और भारत की साझा प्रतिबद्धता है। दोनों देश इस क्षेत्र में स्वाभाविक साझेदार हैं और समुद्री चुनौतियों से निपटने के लिए मिलकर काम करने का संकल्प दोहराया। दोनों देशों के बीच द्विपक्षीय बातचीत के बाद 8 समझौते हुए जिनमें सीमा पर लेनदेन के राष्ट्रीय मुद्राओं को बढ़ावा देना, समुद्री डाटा साझा करना और मनी लॉन्ड्रिंग पर लगाम लगाने के लिए संयुक्त कार्रवाई प्रमुख है। विभिन्न क्षेत्रों में

पारस्परिक सहयोग बढ़ाने की दिशा में यह समझौते अहम भूमिका का निर्वाह करेंगे। प्रसन्नता की बात यह है कि दोनों शीर्ष नेताओं ने दोनों देशों के बीच घनिष्ठ मैत्री संबंधों को और मजबूत करने पर सहमति व्यक्त की।
