The 'None Of The Above' (NOTA) option will remain on the ballot paper in the upcoming Rajya Sabha elections.

The Supreme Court on Thursday refused to stay an Election Commission circular issued in January 2014 that introduced NOTA in the Rajya Sabha elections.

A Bench of Justices Dipak Misra, Amitava Roy and A.M. Khanwilkar rejected the Gujarat Congress's plea to freeze the NOTA option for elections to the three Rajya Sabha seats in the State on August 8.

Refusing to also quash a Gujarat Vidhan Sabha circular of August 1 to include NOTA in the ballot papers, the court paid scant regard to submissions made by senior advocate Kapil Sibal, appearing for Congress chief whip in Gujarat Assembly Shailesh Manubhai Parmar, that NOTA would be a "recipe for corruption", and it would be seen as if the court was turning its back on corruption.

Mr. Sibal raised the concern that MLAs could defy the party whip and invalidate their votes by opting for NOTA. To this, Justice Roy asked Mr. Sibal whether he was apprehensive of losing the RS polls in Gujarat.

Notice to EC

The court, however, issued notice to the Election Commission of India, saying the poll body should be heard in detail as any judicial decision on NOTA may have a ripple effect on elections conducted from January 24, 2014, to the present day.

The court asked why the Congress was challenging the circular now, while noting that "God knows how many elections were held since January 24, 2014."

The court specifically recorded Attorney-General K.K. Venugopal's submission that the Union of India does not in anyway interfere with the decisions of the Election Commission and, hence, had no role in this case.

Consequently, the court issued notice only to the Election Commission for a response on the Gujarat Congress' challenge of its January 24, 2014, notification. Though the Union was let off as a party in the case, Mr. Venugopal was roped in by the Bench to assist the court.

"Does the Election Commission not consult political parties before issuing such a circular," Justice Khanwilkar asked at one point, even as the court scheduled the case for hearing the Election Commission on September 13.

"The system of NOTA makes the system of proportional representation by means of single transferable vote nugatory and otiose and cannot be made applicable in Rajya Sabha elections. The use of NOTA cannot be sanctioned by way of the impugned circular," Mr. Parmar submitted.

Transport / Tourism / Urban development

The Motor Vehicles (Amendment) Bill, 2016

Highlights of the Bill

- The Bill amends the Motor Vehicles Act, 1988 to address issues such as third party insurance, regulation of taxi aggregators, and road safety.
- Under the Act, the liability of the third party insurer for motor vehicle accidents is unlimited. The Bill caps the maximum liability for third party insurance in case of a motor accident at Rs 10 lakh in case of death and at five lakh rupees in case of grievous injury.
- The Bill provides for a Motor Vehicle Accident Fund which would provide compulsory insurance cover to all road users in India for certain types of accidents.
- The Bill defines taxi aggregators, guidelines for which will be determined by the central government.
- The Bill also provides for: (i) amending the existing categories of driver licensing, (ii) recall of vehicles in case of defects, (iii) protection of good samaritans from any civil or criminal action, and (iv) increase of penalties for several offences under the 1988 Act.

Key Issues and Analysis

- The Bill caps the maximum liability for third party insurance, but does not cap the compensation amount that courts can award. In cases where courts award compensation higher than the maximum liability amount, it is unclear who will pay the remaining amount.
- Under the Act, compensation for hit and run victims comes from a Solatium Fund. The Bill creates a new Motor Vehicle Accident Fund in addition. With a Fund already existing to provide compensation for hit and run accidents, the purpose of the new Accident Fund is unclear.
- State governments will issue licenses to taxi aggregators as per central government guidelines. Currently, state governments determine guidelines for plying of taxis. There could be cases where state taxi guidelines are at variance with the central guidelines on aggregators.
- While the penalties for contravening provisions of the proposed scheme on interim relief to accident victims are specified in the Bill, the offences that would warrant such penalties have not been specified. It may be argued that imposing penalties without knowing the nature of the offences is unreasonable.
- The Bill does not address several issues around road safety that

Current Status: Passed by LS
Ministry: Road Transport and Highways

Stage	Date
Introduction	Aug 9, 2016
Com. Ref.	Aug 16, 2016 Ref. to Select Committee on Aug 8, 2017
Com. Rep.	Feb 8, 2017, Select Committee Report on first day of the Winter Session 2017
Lok Sabha	Apr 10, 2017
Rajya Sabha	

Relevant Links

- Bill Text (1456 KB)
- _ (2 MB)
- PRS Bill Summary (415 KB)
- PRS Legislative Brief (663 KB)
- _ (405 KB)
- _ (500 KB)
- Standing Committee Report (1 MB)
- PRS Standing Comm Report Summary (422 KB)
- ___ (653 KB)
- Overview of Road Accidents in India (1021 KB)
- Motor Vehicles notice of amendments, Apr 5, 2017 (1

MB)

have been highlighted by other committees such as: (i) creating road safety agencies, and (ii) improving road design and engineering.

Infographics on Road Accidents

END

Paper trail EVMs will be used in Gujarat polls, Election Commission informs Supreme Court

The Election Commission of India (EC) on Wednesday expressed confidence that it will be able to hold the forthcoming elections to Gujarat Assembly using Electronic Voting Machines with Voter Verified Paper Audit Trail (VVPAT) if it receives the machines it has ordered on time. In an affidavit filed in Supreme Court, the EC said it is short of 16,500 VVPATs - of a total 70,000 required for the Gujarat elections - and has ordered for more.

The EC said in its affidavit: "…The ECI currently has 53,500 VVPAT units in its possession and the number of VVPAT units required for conducting election to the Gujarat legislative assembly is 70,000 units. The ECI is expected to receive delivery of 48,000 VVPAT units from Bharat Electronics Ltd and Electronics Corporation of India Ltd by August 31, 2017 and another 25,500 VVPAT units in September 2017." If this consignment of VVPATs is delivered on time, the Commission stated, it "expects to be able" to conduct the Gujarat elections "completely with the use of VVPATs".

The affidavit was filed following a direction from the apex court. While hearing a petition seeking use of VVPAT machines in Gujarat election, the court had asked EC about its current stock of these machines. Reshma Vithabhai Patel, convener of Patidar Anamat Andolan Samiti, which was in the forefront of the Patel quota agitation in Gujarat, had filed the petition.

END

New system for rating bureaucrats open to bias: Anand Sharma

The government's new system of rating officers on the basis of a 360-degree approach is opaque and susceptible to bias, manipulation and lacks fairness, a parliamentary standing committee has said. The 360-degree approach is a new multi-source feedback system for performance appraisal of bureaucrats started by the current government for future postings. The system seeks to look beyond the ratings received in appraisal reports written by their bosses. It relies on feedback of juniors and other colleagues for an all-round view. The government has been showcasing the 360-degree approach as one of its major administrative reforms. "… The present 360-degree appraisal system opaque, non-transparent, and subjective. Feedback in this process is obtained informally, making the process susceptible to being manipulated," the Standing Committee on Personnel, Public Grievances, Law and Justice said in its report tabled in Rajya Sabha Tuesday.

The report mentions that most central posts of joint-secretary level and upwards go to IAS officers and adds that the majority of top posts should not go to any one service leaving others services out in the Central Staffing Scheme. Since the new 360-degree system hinges on feedback about officers received from people who have worked with them - juniors and peers included- the committee noted that such feedback could lack objectivity.

"Feedback received from subordinates and stakeholders could be biased or lack objectivity, particularly if the officer had to discipline his subordinates or he was unable to meet the unjustified demands of stakeholders," says the report of the multi-party committee headed by Anand Sharma, Congress leader in Rajya Sabha. "Acting on such feedback behind the back of the officer may not be legally tenable particularly if it adversely affects the empanelment prospects of the officer."

The report notes that the 360-degree approach does not have any statutory backing, or supported by any Act. "There is no statutory backing to the scheme to the scheme and it is based on executive instructions only," the report says. The report also mentions the report of the Second Administrative Reforms Commission set up by the UPA-II government to say that the multi-source feedback system was not suitable for India.

"In the context of India, where strong hierarchical structures exist and for historical and social reasons it may not be possible to introduce this system unless concerns of integrity and transparency are addressed," the report says, quoting the administrative reforms commission.

The committee recommended that the empanelment process be more objective, transparent and fair.

Push for law to ensure transparency rules

The government could consider introducing a new law to ensure transparency of rules, the Economic Survey has recommended, stressing that the 'opaque mesh' of regulations prevalent in India not only make life difficult for citizens who cannot feign ignorance of the rules as a valid defence, but also act as a magnet for corruption and endless litigation.

"The problem is that it is not easy for ordinary citizens [and businesses] in India to navigate the multitude of rules, regulations, forms, taxes and procedures imposed by various tiers of government. Moreover, these rules frequently change and sometimes contradict each other," the Survey's second volume tabled in Parliament on Friday said.

Arguing that India would benefit enormously if the average citizen could easily access the latest rules and regulations in a comprehensible format, the survey suggests a Transparency of Rules Act (TORA) as a possible solution.

Explaining that it is not referring to the content of the rules but solely about the ease of finding out what the citizen is expected to so, the Survey said even government officials struggle to keep up with 'the latest version' of complicated rules.

'Attempt to change'

"The TORA is an attempt to change in some ways the relationship between the average normal citizen and the State. All forms of governance are based on citizens being expected to follow the rules. Unfortunately, in India, very often, the rules are not so transparent. I don't mean the grand laws passed in Parliament, but the administrative rules, forms, procedures that citizens have to follow," said Principal Economic Advisor Sanjeev Sanyal.

Says BJP will campaign against corruption, law and order problems and lack of development work in Himachal Pradesh

The process of holding the requisite Board Meetings and Shareholder Meetings has been completed in phases in September 2017.

Ruben George is staying at Ram Nath Kovind's house at Kalyanpur, near Kanpur

The boycott ban: on Maharashtra's law against social boycott

Maharashtra's new law prohibiting the social boycott of individuals, families or any community by informal village councils is a step in the right direction, given the pervasive nature of the problem. **The progressive legislation, which received Presidential assent** recently and was gazetted earlier this month, targets the pernicious practice of informal caste panchayats or dominant sections using ostracism as a means of enforcing social conformity. **The Maharashtra Protection of People from Social Boycott (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2016**, may serve as a template for similar legislation in other States. The Act lists over a dozen types of actions that may amount to 'social boycott', which has been made a criminal offence punishable with imprisonment up to three years or a fine of 1 lakh or both. The practices it prohibits range from preventing the performance of a social or religious custom, denial of the right to perform funerals or marriages, cutting off someone's social or commercial ties to preventing access to educational or medical institutions or community halls and public facilities, or any form of social ostracism on any ground. The law recognises the human rights dimension to issues of social boycott, as well as the varied forms in which it occurs in a caste-based society. Its progressive sweep takes into account discrimination on the basis of morality, social acceptance, political inclination, sexuality, which it prohibits. It even makes it an offence to create cultural obstacles by forcing people to wear a particular type of clothing or use a particular language.

This is not the first law of its type. Bombay enacted a law against excommunication in 1949, but it was struck down by the Supreme Court in 1962 after the Dawoodi Bohra community successfully argued that it violated the community's constitutional right to manage its own religious affairs. One hopes the latest Act will not be vulnerable to legal challenge. Article 17 of the Constitution and the Protection of Civil Rights Act outlaw untouchability in all its forms, but these are legal protections intended for the Scheduled Castes. In reality, members of various castes and communities also require such protection from informal village councils and gatherings of elders who draw on their own notions of conformity, community discipline, morality and social mores to issue diktats to the village or the community to cut off ties with supposedly offending persons and families. The case of a mountaineer from Raigad is somewhat notorious. He had conquered Mt. Everest but could not escape a social boycott in his village because his wife wore jeans and did not wear a mangalsutra. It is not a proud moment for a country when special legislation is required to prohibit social discrimination, ostracism and practices repugnant to human dignity. Yet, given the prevailing circumstances, any legislative assault on abhorrent social practices ought to be welcomed.

Rajasthan's ordinance shields the corrupt, threatens the media and whistle-blowers

UN: UN chief concerned about India's plans to deport Rohingya refugees

UNITED NATIONS: UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres is concerned about India's plans to deport Rohingya refugees from Myanmar, his spokesperson has said, underlining that refugees should not be returned to countries where they fear persecution once they are registered.

Minister of State for Home Affairs Kiren Rijiju had told Parliament last week that the central government had directed state authorities to identify and deport illegal immigrants, including Rohingyas, who face persecution in the Buddhist-majority Myanmar.

"Obviously, we have our concerns about the treatment of refugees. Once refugees are registered, they are not to be returned back to countries where they fear persecution," Guterres' deputy spokesman Farhan Haq told reporters here yesterday.

Haq was responding to a question on India's plans to deport Rohingyas from Myanmar regardless of whether they are registered as UN refugees or not.

Haq said UN principles of non-refoulement applies in this case. According the these principles, no nation shall expel or return a refugee in any manner to territories where his life or freedom would be threatened on account of his race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion.

When asked which agency would convey this message to India, Haq said the first point of contact will be through the UN High Commissioner for Refugees.

Rijiju had said that according to available data, more than 14,000 Rohingyas, registered with the UNHCR, are presently staying in India.

"However, some inputs indicate that around 40,000 Rohingyas are staying in India illegally and the Rohingyas are largely located in Jammu, Hyderabad, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, Delhi-NCR and Rajasthan," he had said.

The Home Ministry had said that infiltration of (Rohingyas) from the Rakhine state of Myanmar into Indian territory, especially in recent years, besides being a burden on the limited resources of the country, also aggravates security challenges posed to India.

END

Digital Em'Power'ment: Delivering on 'RTI'- Right to a Transformed India

*Piyush Goyal

Every government comes to power with the promise of serving the people and making their country a better place to live in. When this promise is broken, by inefficiencies and corruption, people's trust in their leadership is shaken, and they demand answers. In elections then, the people give their own answer to the government, and expectations are transferred to the next government. It is in such an atmosphere of anger and expectation that the Narendra Modi government came to power. Before the 2014 election, India saw the fight against corruption become a people's movement. This momentum towards honest governance found its conclusion in India electing Shri Narendra Modi as their Prime Minister. People placed their trust in him, seeing that his words were backed by action and conviction, and the task was set for our Government: clean up the past, deliver on promises, and reignite people's trust in institutions.

In May 2014, people rejected a scenario where decisions took place behind a smokescreen and were allowed in the public eye only through a 'Right to Information' procedure. The RTI didn't allow citizens to monitor government's work and instead of being a right, it became a privilege, outside the reach of many citizens who are not well-versed with the nitty-gritties of the process. What was needed wasn't a post-facto privilege, but a round-the-clock right to transparency. Under the guidance of Hon'ble PM Shri Narendra Modi, the Ministries of Power, Coal, New and Renewable Energy, and Mines have been digitising our decisions, progress, and goals in the form of apps, and delivering upon the PM's promise of the 'Right to a Transformed India'.

Amongst other means, we've brought transparency through user-friendly apps that broadcast all our major operations to people's mobiles. Want to know the villages yet to be electrified in your district? Just log onto GARV. Want to know the price being paid by your power utility for electricity? Try MERIT. Worried about the next power cut? Don't worry, URJA Mitra will send a notification intimating you in advance.

TAMRA and TARANG track the status of projects and clearances, enabling people to hold government accountable for bottlenecks. It's a fact that while there was a near shutdown of mining

auctions before 2014, 29 mining blocks generating revenue of more than Rs.1.22 lakh crore over the lease period of the mines for mineral bearing States, have been auctioned in the past three years, and TAMRA will help further enhance this. By ensuring timely execution, TARANG app played a role in rapid expansion of our transmission network. Value of projects commissioned between 2014-17 is 83% more than those commissioned between 2011-14, and there has been 40% increase in India's transmission capacity between 2014-17 alone.

PM Modi's 2015 Independence Day speech aroused in people's minds a deep care for India's energy deprived citizens. As he set the task of electrifying India's remotest villages in 1,000 days, public interest was high in the progress of this herculean task. GARV fulfilled the need for a platform with village-wise progress reports, and GARV-II surpassed this with habitation-wise data down to the households. Transparency has helped us immensely as people's scrutiny further energises the 'Speed, Skill, and Scale' mantra. We greatly value all inputs we receive from the people and the media. With GARV, public funds were saved as journalists highlighted uninhabited villages. Making data more meaningful, GARV goes beyond listing and gives 'Impact Study' on villages. People get to know on-the-ground impact through number of shops, *aata chakkis*, appliances, etc. installed post-electrification.

While power purchase by DISCOMs was earlier mired in corruption, MERIT app and Vidyut Pravah have eliminated discretions and reduced costs. Over the next five years, MERIT is expected to save Rs. 20,000 crores in power procurement costs, reducing consumers' bills. UDAY and URJA go a step further by ranking performance of States/cities/DISCOMs on several parameters.

The UJALA app has been instrumental in ensuring the fastest rollout of LED bulbs. This app, which is often quoted internationally, has a story behind its conception. At the end of a review meeting discussing coal block auctions, after the Supreme Court cancelled 204 coal blocks, PM Modi asked me how many LED bulbs have been distributed so far. I did not have the current figure readily, and said I will get back to you after checking. PM then reminded me of the importance of regularly monitoring to ensure results and fix responsibility for performance. I got my team cracking to devise a portal where anytime, anywhere, anyone could check the number of LED bulbs rolled out. The result is not a mere status check on bulbs, but also the amount of CO_2 emissions avoided, power saved, and money saved in people's bills. It in fact, became a popular app which, helped market the scheme across the country and enabled rapid roll out and unprecedented success.

Shedding light on what happens underground, Mining Surveillance System (MSS) app, allows reporting illegal mining, while Coal Mitra identifies the most efficient thermal power plants. ARUN, provides a DIY (Do It Yourself) guide for solar rooftop installations, and critical knowhow about government incentives, costs and methods of installation, thereby removing barriers which inhibited a solar rooftop revolution in India.

So many apps, so many different downloads! How does one discover the apps? How do we

tell the public that these apps exist? Just give a missed call to 1-800-200-300-4. This is a common uniform number where all one has to do is give a missed call; and will receive a link by which one can download the app of your interest.

By inviting public scrutiny through transparency and real time data in public domain, the Ministries of Power, Coal, New & Renewable Energy and Mines, are rebuilding people's trust in government institutions. The beautiful and instructive phrase '*Tamso Ma Jyotirgamaya"* (lead us from darkness to light) guides the teams in all our Ministries. Through these apps, we aspire to remove the darkness of secrecy and corruption, and move towards the light of honesty and dedicated service for the benefit of 125 crore Indians.

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*The Author is Minister of State – (Independent charge) for Power, Coal, New & Renewable Energy and Mines, Government of India.

A minute for Macaulay

Thomas Babington Macaulay has long been a favourite whipping boy for both the Right and Left in India. To many he is associated with the Western idiom, the reason why an English-educated elite ruled the country for more than a century. Of course several members of this elite later turned on their masters and joined, if not led, the movement for national sovereignty, or independence from colonial rule. Nevertheless, 'Macaulayism' is the term given to the deliberate policy of an imperial power to redirect a subject people's education in an attempt to influence their thought and self-understanding.

The signal moment that is cited is Macaulay's Minute on Education in 1835, a tract in which he set out to explain his proposal for promoting English education in India at the expense of Arabic, Persian and Sanskrit, which were being taught in colonial schools.

I contend, nonetheless, that the Macaulay Minute is both overrated and somewhat misjudged in Indian cultural studies. It is true that it came from a man who was directly charged with the formation of a loyal local herd that would be indebted in serving the colonial administration. He was, after all, a bureaucrat of high standing, obliging the Supreme Council of India for five years.

But Macaulay also fancied himself as a politically liberal and cosmopolitan intellectual. One needs to ask what such a claim (of intellectual integrity in particular) might imply, coming as it does from a long tradition going back to the pre-Socratics and the Vedanta.

For most, intellectual activity would simply be the task of asking philosophically rigorous questions about objects in the world and our relationships with them. It also places emphasis on the how, by asking what are the correct ways for people, governments and organisations to act in any given situation. Intellectual honesty demands that we engage with others' ideas as well with sincerity.

Of course, intellectuals are often not themselves honest in their words and actions; this could stem from ignorance as well as ideology. In our time, neoliberalism has proven to be an ideology that generated enormous harm to hundreds of millions. Yet many intellectuals have defended neoliberalism's rules of the 'free market', notwithstanding the destruction it continues to engender.

For Macaulay, the belief that colonialism was a moral right of the British Empire constituted such an ideology. That is why his wide-ranging essay is well worth reading in full. Unfortunately, even scholars tend to focus on select passages pertaining mainly to his suggested deployment of English-educated natives for the Empire's strategic purposes.

Indians, and perhaps Arabs too, are rightly indignant when Macaulay claims that in his conversations with learned men in India, no one would deny that "a single shelf of a good European library was worth the whole native literature of India and Arabia". Still, I believe it is important to try to unravel the logic of the minute from other perspectives as well, without thereby excusing its egregious power claims and the cunning of British imperial politics.

Take, for instance, an extended comparison Macaulay makes with the case of Russia. Russia, in Macaulay's time, has "a large educated class, abounding with persons fit to serve the state in the highest functions, and in no wise inferior to the most accomplished men who adorn the best circles of Paris and London. There is reason to hope that this vast empire, which in the time of our grandfathers was probably behind the Punjab, may, in the time of our grandchildren, be pressing close on France and Britain in the career of improvement. And how was this change effected? Not by flattering national prejudices: not by feeding the mind of the young Muscovite with the old women's stories which his rude fathers had believed: not by filling his head with lying legends

about St. Nicholas: not by encouraging him to study the great question, whether the world was or was not created on the 13th of September: not by calling him "a learned native," when he has mastered all these points of knowledge: but by teaching him those foreign languages in which the greatest mass of information had been laid up, and thus putting all that information within his reach. The languages of Western Europe civilized Russia. I cannot doubt that they will do for the Hindoo what they have done for the Tartar."

Macaulay here is speaking of a nation's progress towards a more cosmopolitan outlook, but he is not thereby denigrating its own native cultures and practices. For instance, he speaks very highly of 19th century England and English literature and poetry of course, but also makes the claim that had the English literati not familiarised themselves with ancient Greek and Roman writings, they would never have produced a Shakespeare. "What the Greek and Latin were to the contemporaries of [16th century writers Thomas] More and [Roger] Ascham, our tongue is to the people of India."

India today sits on the edge of greatness in its political and social influence in the world. The latter especially stems from its rich heritage of multicultural democratic polities and the novel ethics of ahimsa, the Dhammapada, and the grand philosophy of existence expressed in the Gita, not to mention numerous other traditions that are becoming resurgent.

But this growing presence surely also signals our inter-connectedness in a much larger planetary context, with numerous global ecological limits emerging in addition to geopolitical challenges, as well as other multicultural examples to learn from.

Indeed, it would be hard to imagine anyone asserting that a cosmopolitan education is less important or valuable today than it was two centuries ago. By default, that language and idiom are now English (it could well be Chinese in a few decades, but that is not so evident).

Similarly, like Macaulay himself, none would deny the value of alternative modes of education (from activity-based learning to gurukul structures) that dot the Indian landscape. These cannot be divided into Macaulite and non-Macaulite forms. I value my 'Macaulite' education greatly, at least as much or even more than my training in Carnatic classical music, but they are also mingled with the types of lessons my mother and father taught me from Indian epics, and so on.

Indeed, I would not be able to engage in this discussion here or with a wider group of colleagues from South Africa and Brazil to Indonesia, if I were not fluent in English. But engagement across cultures matters to me and, I suppose, to billions more across the world.

Moreover, given the vast disparities of caste, class and other markers of social status, excellence in education even in pre-colonial India was restricted to the elites, with a few Ekalavyas barely managing to get access to the gurukuls and other traditional schools. A Right to Education never existed prior to Macaulay and it would be disingenuous to claim otherwise.

What then are our pedagogical options? I believe it behoves us to find new hybrid forms that draw on a multiplicity of folk traditions but continue to place central emphasis on common curricula with universal access to English across the country. Otherwise, we will simply perpetuate our many ills and continue to blame Macaulay for them.

Sudhir Chella Rajan is Professor, Humanities and Social Sciences, IIT-Madras

The new U.S. Fed Chairman is unlikely to opt for policies that might upset the President's plan

PM's interaction with Additional Secretaries and Joint Secretaries

The Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi, on Wednesday, met and interacted with a group of over 70 Additional Secretaries and Joint Secretaries serving in the Government of India. This was the first of five such interactions.

During the interaction, officers shared their experiences on subjects such as a digital and smart governance, administrative procedures and accountability, transparency, doubling of farmers' income, skill development, Swachh Bharat, consumer rights, environment protection, and building of New India by 2022.

The Prime Minister said the combination of development and good governance is essential for the welfare and satisfaction of citizens. He said good governance should be a priority for the officers. He emphasized the need for all wings of Government to work in harmony, and synchronisation, to achieve the best possible results. He said all officers must keep the poor and the ordinary citizens in their minds while taking decisions.

The Prime Minister said the world is looking to India with positive expectations. He said the entire world feels that a successful India is vital for a global balance. He said there is also a strong undercurrent for excellence from the common citizens of India. Youth from humble backgrounds, with very limited resources are achieving best positions in competitive exams and sports. He asked the officers to work to promote this spontaneous upsurge of talent, recalling the spirit and energy that they themselves would have possessed in the first three years of their service.

The Prime Minister said this was a unique opportunity for officers to deliver their utmost for the benefit of the nation. He emphasized the importance of breaking silos, and efficient internal communication between various departments of the Government. He also underlined the necessity of speed and efficiency in decision making. He said that honest decision making with good intention would always be encouraged by the Union Government. He asked the officers to focus attention on the 100 most backward districts of India, so that they can be brought up to the national average level, on various development parameters.

AKT/AK

Sport empowers individuals, transform communities and inspire populations for positive change: Vice President

Launches National Sports Talent Search Portal

The Vice President of India, Shri M. Venkaiah Naidu has said that Sport empowers individuals, transform communities and inspire populations for positive change. He was addressing the gathering at the launch of the National Sports Talent Search Portal, an initiative of the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports, here today. The Minister of State for Youth Affairs and Sports (I/C), Water Resources, River Development and Ganga Rejuvenation, Shri Vijay Goel and other dignitaries were present on the occasion.

The Vice President said that sports play an important role in improving physical and mental health, and fostering active citizenship and social inclusion. He further said that it also inculcates leadership skills, team spirit and enables a person to develop a sense of equanimity during a win or a loss. There is evidence that sport and play enhance child development, learning and encourage better academic performance, he added.

The Vice President said that we need to create good infrastructure for sports in all states and nurture sporting talent from an early age. He further said that across the length and breadth of the country we need more training academies and coaching centres to turn our young men and women into sports stars and role models for succeeding generations. The platform of National Sports Talent Search Portal will be a game changer and enable the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports and Sports Authority of India select the best, he added.

Following is the text of Vice President's address:

"I am happy to inaugurate National Sports Talent Search Portal, an initiative of the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports. This kind of initiative will not only help in identifying the best talent, but will also provide a level playing field to all the applicants and create a competitive environment.

Sport is an integral part of nation-building process, as it plays an important role in terms of individual development, community development, social inclusiveness and economic development. One of the most important factors that enable a nation to become a sporting power is the identification and development of right talent. As one-seventh of humanity, there is no dearth of talent in our country, especially with more than 450 million youth. In fact, we are overflowing with talent, but in order to harness it we have to put in place a robust system to spot and nurture talent, and develop world champions.

The platform of National Sports Talent Search Portal will be a game changer and enable the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports and Sports Authority of India select the best. I would like to congratulate Shri Vijay Goel for this major initiative, which will go a long way in attracting the best

available sporting talent in the country. This platform will be fast, transparent and provide a mechanism for fair selection. Only meritorious and talented young sportspersons will be selected.

The portal is also available as a Mobile App, which can be downloaded on the smartphones. It gives me lot of satisfaction to know that the talent search portal and App have been developed by IRIS, a highly reputed software and data analytics company, under corporate social responsibility (CSR) support. I congratulate IRIS and the team which developed this valuable platform in close consultation with Sports Authority of India.

Sport empowers individuals, transform communities and inspire populations for positive change. It has become a tool of transformation, weaning villagers away from addiction, breaking caste barriers within the community, bringing women out of the home and empowering them, and reviving spirit and pride in individuals and the village as a whole.

The games foster friendships, unity and a healthy vibrant community. This simple but powerfully uplifting intervention renews the joy and spirit of community kinship. For women, the blossoming of their self-confidence and spirit of initiative in this space is the bedrock for societal change tomorrow.

Sport plays an important role in improving physical and mental health, and fostering active citizenship and social inclusion. It also inculcates leadership skills, team spirit and enables a person to develop a sense of equanimity during a win or a loss.

Sport is a good entry-point for the promotion of life skills-based education and healthy lifestyles, including the values of physical fitness, proper nutrition and how to make choices that positively impact health. There is evidence that sport and play enhance child development, learning and encourage better academic performance. Sport is a powerful social tool, bringing together people from different ethnic, cultural, religious, linguistic and socio-economic backgrounds.

Sports should be an integral part of our everyday life. Some people think that sports is important only for physical well-being, I feel sports is important for overall development of an individual. We are a large and diverse nation. Sports can be a great means of national integration. From sports, we learn sportsman spirit and that acts as a lubricant in our social life. More than winning, sports helps you learn to deal with defeats. Sports helps you become a fighter.

Sport increases self-esteem among adolescent girls and provides opportunities for the advancement of girls in the face of gender-related barriers. Sport can be used to promote a safe and protective environment for children and to teach young people how to solve conflict in a non-violent manner. Sport activities can be low-cost and utilize locally-available resources. Sports help children develop physical skills, get exercise, learn to play as a member of a team, learn to play fair, and improve self-esteem.

Healthy people make a healthy nation. If everybody is active and healthy, they can lead a happy life besides being more productive economically. The importance of health in our country is acknowledged over the ages through the saying 'Aarogyame Maha Bhagyam' which translates to 'Health is Wealth'. That being the case, things are different today. Our country is fast emerging as the 'diabetic capital' of the world. It is because of modern life styles, food habits and declining physical activity. This is a serious socio-economic challenge for our country.

Our country has always been rich in culture and tradition, and games have been an important part of Indian culture from times in memorial. Gradually the time changed and so did our sports.

Traditional Games were not just games; they were designed in such a way that one can develop lot of skills like logical thinking, building strategy, concentration, basic mathematics, aiming, and lot more. During the era of the Rig - Veda, Ramayana and Mahabharata, men of a certain stature

were expected to be well - versed in chariot - racing, archery, military stratagems, swimming, wrestling, horse riding and hunting. While the present-day archers are struggling to hit fixed targets, ages ago, Arjuna hit the 'rotating Fish that is MatsyaYantra' to defeat his fellow contenders and win over Draupadi.

We have come a long way from ancient times and have a huge population of young people whose talent needs to be harnessed. Barring cricket and hockey earlier as team sports, our success in sports events is sporadic and more on account of individual effort and excellence, rather than any State patronage and encouragement. That must change. Be it Sania Mirza, P.V.Sindhu, Saina Nehwal, P. T. Usha, Milkha Singh or Abhinav Bhindra, all of them did themselves and the nation proud through perseverance and tenacity.

As I said, we need to create good infrastructure for sports in all states and nurture sporting talent from an early age. Across the length and breadth of the country we need more training academies and coaching centres to turn our young men and women into sports stars and role models for succeeding generations.

It is my dream, a dream I share with millions of my countrymen, to see India emerge as a major sporting nation in the world. India stands poised on the curve of a major leap in all fields and I am certain that this is true of sports as well, of a time when India will figure prominently in the list of medal-winning nations in Olympics and other sports competitions.

Jai hind."

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KSD/BK

Assessing India's Progress in Various Fields

*Anshuman Bhargava

We are celebrating 70 years of our Independence. But looking back at the history of these seven decades, what are the things which we should be proud of? Have we really progressed much and reached the level we should have in all these years?

The verdict will be divided. India is a land of a diverse population, with great variations in economic standards, having different religious and cultural customs and different stages of development. Hence, every section has its own view of development and reasons to whine or cheer.

But there are certain major and decisive strides we have made in these years particularly during last three years which no one can ignore or deny, irrespective of his or her political affiliation or personal grudges against certain leaders or governments or the 'system'.

Perhaps our greatest achievement is to have evolved a healthy democratic government system.

We have a very strong constitutional framework that makes democracy such a success here. But that is just the tip of the iceberg. Our achievements in these years are endless, should we sit to prepare an exhaustive list. We have some of the best institutes in the world in the form of IIMs and IITs.

Our healthcare sector is looking up and health tourism is a reality where people from advanced nations are coming here for affordable treatment. We have a railway network that is among the largest in the world in terms of track length and passenger volume. We have one of the largest armies in the world.

We have among the world's busiest airports in Delhi and Mumbai. Our life expectancy at birth has increased from a mere 32 years in 1947 to 66 years today. We were one of the foremost nations to establish nuclear reactors and produce clean energy. Despite our financial and technological limitations, we have made the best use of our resources and from an importer of even a needle, today we are exporters of software.

Our technocrats and managers are celebrated worldwide for their professionalism and calibre. Today we are a nation reckoned as a leader in space technology. Millions of Indians have fought their way in and made Europe and the US their home, by sheer virtue of their hard work and professional competence, contributing seminally in global projects.

We have produced noble laureates, artists, singers, musicians, writers, sportsmen, scientists, diplomats, scholars and statesmen of world repute year after year, in hundreds. This is no mean thing in just seven decades of our independent existence. We had difficult times in recent years with policy paralysis in government and slackness in ideation that slowed down India's growth trajectory to some extent but in the last three years or so of the NDA government, things have started looking up.

In less than three years, at least 30 new projects have been launched for giving a new shape and direction to the country like Jan Dhan, Swachh Bharat, Startup India, Nat'l Health Policy, Give up LPG, Skill India, Make in India, Smart City, Udaan scheme, GST, Digital India, Crop Insurance scheme to name a few, even if we leave for the moment aggressive advancements in railway and road networks and facilities.

No wonder World Investment Report finds India among the top three prospective host economies of the world. In Financial Year 2015-16 we had a whopping 55 billion dollars' worth of investments in the country. In World economic forum Global Competitive Index, India has jumped 32 places

and today the country is the 6th largest manufacturing nation in the world. Projects worth Rs. 8 lakh crore pending for years have now been cleared and put on the fast track under the Prime Minister's personal initiative.

India's effort and commitment towards production and use of clean energy has found praise globally. The government has plans to produce 175 GW of renewable energy and we have already realised 50 GW production level in last three years. India stands 4th in the world in global wind power installed capacity. At least 22 crores LED bulbs have been distributed, which is to lead to saving of Rs 11,000 crore in electricity bills of the country. The government is not only targeting mega projects but is equally attentive towards micro-level social engineering and taking grassroots level steps to strengthen the common man and the rural foundations.

The Prime Minister deeply believes in public participation and hence all projects are prepared with a view to benefit more and more people. In just three years of his governance, the government has ensured the establishment of 50,000 km of power transmission lines, even as over last five decades we had only 16,000 km covered. Not only that, in less than three years we have over 12,000 villages electrified, even as when the government came in power, it found over 18,000 villages in Independent India still living in the dark.

Between 2010 and 2014, just 59 village panchayats had been connected with optical fibre network which in last three years stands at 77,000 panchayats. Such is the pace at which the government is working. It is very likely that in next two years we will have all the 2.5 lakh villages enjoying optical fibre network to enjoy seamless internet and communication facility.

The buzzword of the government is transparency and to bring in transparency in government working, digitisation has a big role to play, which is why the government is taking along the two together. The more digital technology penetration we have, the lesser corruption we have because everything is in the public domain for everyone to see and track. As Prime Minister Modi says, it is all about change in the viewpoint and way of handling things that would make all the difference.

The NDA government is a departure from the past because it has changed the work culture and viewpoint of the people, instilling hope in them, pushing them to dream big. The seeds of every success lie in dreams that we cherish!

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Views expressed in the article are author's personal.

(This feature has been contributed by PIB Bhopal)

PM's interaction through PRAGATI

The Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi, today chaired his twenty-first interaction through PRAGATI - the ICT-based, multi-modal platform for Pro-Active Governance and Timely Implementation.

The first twenty meetings of PRAGATI have seen a cumulative review of 183 projects with a total investment of Rs. 8.79 lakh crore. Resolution of Public Grievances has also been reviewed in 17 sectors.

Today, in the twenty-first meeting, the Prime Minister reviewed the progress towards handling and resolution of grievances related to patents and trademarks. He noted the improvement in performance, asked the concerned officers to work towards further expediting the processing of patent and trademark applications. Officials explained the steps taken towards speeding up the grant of patents and trademarks, including enhanced manpower. The Prime Minister emphasized the importance of using latest available technology, to streamline the process, and reach global standards in this regard.

The Prime Minister reviewed the progress of nine vital infrastructure projects worth over Rs. 56,000 crore in the railway, road, power and oil pipeline and health sectors, spread over several states including Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat, Haryana, Rajasthan, Maharashtra, Uttarakhand, Punjab, West Bengal, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Odisha, Telangana, and Kerala. The projects reviewed today, include the Delhi Mumbai Industrial Corridor, and construction of four new AIIMS at Manglagiri in Andhra Pradesh, Kalyani in West Bengal, Nagpur in Maharashtra, and Gorakhpur in Uttar Pradesh.

The Prime Minister also reviewed the progress of the Smart Cities Mission. He appreciated the participation of cities in the challenge route. He said the challenge before everyone is now to ensure implementation and expeditious completion of the work in the 90 identified cities, with high quality.

Reviewing the progress of the Forest Rights Act, the Prime Minister emphasized the importance of using space technology to determine the rights of tribal communities, and settle claims expeditiously.

The Prime Minister said that the apprehensions with regard to GST have been proven to be unfounded, and a smooth transition has happened. He asked all Chief Secretaries to further boost efforts to increase registration under GST, and to achieve a quantum jump in this regard within a month.

On Government e-Marketplace (GeM), he said the portal has improved transparency, and has reduced wasteful expenditure. He asked the Chief Secretaries of all States to

give priority to GeM in government procurements.

AKT/SH

END

Swachch Bharat- Gandhi's obsession, Modi's passion

*Smera Chawla

During a recent visit to the Sabarmati Ashram in Ahmedabad where a photo gallery vividly depicts the ideology and life style of Mahatma Gandhi, my thoughts went around to connect the Father of Nation with an independent and clean India.   The Ashram serves as a source of inspiration for we, young Indians, from the life of a Mahatma who fought a non-violent battle against the mighty British empire and won us Independence. In 2014, Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi launched the   Swachh Bharat Mission (SBM), thus so aptly on 2nd October, Gandhiji's birthday.

"A clean India would be the best tribute India could pay to Mahatma Gandhi on his 150th birthday anniversary in 2019", the Prime Minister had said after launch of the mission.

 ''Swachata" or Cleanliness was a way of life for Gandhiji. As he fought the Britishers, he disliked several of the western customs but was candid enough to say that he learnt sanitation from the West. His dream was to introduce and spread that level of cleanliness in India. "I learnt 35 years ago that a lavatory must be as clean as a drawing-room. I learnt this in the West. I believe that many rules about cleanliness in lavatories are observed more scrupulously in the West than in the East. The cause of many of our diseases is the condition of our lavatories and our bad habit of disposing of excreta anywhere and everywhere. I, therefore, believe in the absolute necessity of a clean place for answering the call of nature and clean articles for use at the time. I have accustomed myself to them and wish that all others should do the same. The habit has become so firm in me that even if I wished to change it, I would not be able to do so. Nor do I wish to change it". His words are pertinent and relate eminently to the Swachch Bharat Mission, a dream project of Shri Modi, who is passionate about cleanliness.

Launched under a mission mode, the SBM has surely achieved some measurable targets in the last three years. These include construction of 28, 96,367 household toilets across the country,

while 43,200 wards have been covered for 100 per cent door - to - door waste collection. As per the 'dashboard' (real time figures) of the Swachh Bharat portal, over a million (10, 29,124) Indian Household Toilets have been constructed only in the last eight months since January 2017.

The work has really picked up pace in the recent months is evident from a huge jump, in fact more than double in the number of community and public toilets since January this year. There number has gone up from 1, 09,639 in January to 2, 71,766 in August this year.

Hundrerd per cent target has been achieved under the Swachh Vidyalaya initiative of the Narendra Modi Government with Bihar leading the table. As many as 56,912 schools have been given toilets with half of the number of toilets constructed in the girls' schools. The other states doing commendable work under this initiative include Andhra Pradesh with 49, 293 toilets completed and about 22,000 being meant only for girls' schools. Assam achieved the figure of 35,699, Chhattisgarh 16,629, Jharkhand 15,795, Rajasthan 12,083, Telangana 36,159 and Odisha 43,501.

The Swachh Bharat programme has been linked directly with Beti Bachao Beti Padhao initiative. Under the joint programme initiative it is being ensured that there are girls' toilets in all Government schools in 100 districts which have the lowest child sex ratio. These districts include Vaishali in Bihar, Raigarh in Chhattisgarh, Kamrup in Assam and D & N Haveli.

The mission aims to eliminate open defecation in all statutory towns by 2nd October, 2019. In addition, it also proposes to eradicate manual scavenging, introduce modern and scientific waste management, induce behavioural change with respect to healthy sanitation practices and generate awareness for sanitation. SBM also aims to augment the capacity of Urban Local Bodies (ULBs) and create an enabling environment for the private sector in waste management.

Deliverables for Swachh Bharat Mission under the NITI Ayog 's Three –Year Action Agenda 2017-2019-20

Outcome/Deliverable	2017-18 (Cumulative)	2018-19 (Cumulative)
No. of ODF towns	4,041	4,041
Compost Production (Lakh Metric Tonnes)	54	54
Waste to Energy Generation (Mega Watt)	330	511
Wards with 100% door-to-door collection	100 %	100 %

ULBs spend about Rs. 500 to Rs. 1,500 per tonne on solid waste management, according to the NITI Ayog Three Year Action Agenda. Out of earmarked budget, about 60 - 70 per cent is spent on the collection of waste and 20 - 30 per cent on transportation. However, a negligible percentage is dedicated towards the treatment and disposal of waste.

Some of the sustainable disposal solutions include: Waste to energy (Incineration), thermal pyrolysis and plasma gasification technologies. While pyrolysis is not suitable for MSW due to

diverse composition and plasma gasification technologies are very expensive, waste to energy is the most suitable technology as it has multi-fold benefits. In countries like Singapore, more than 37.6 per cent of waste is used for waste-to-energy plants for incineration and energy recovery.

Elimination of Open Defecation is another crucial aspect of SBM. In order to achieve the objective of becoming Open Defecation Free (ODF) by 2019, 55 million household toilets and 115,000 community toilets need to be constructed under the SBM (Gramin), as per the NITI Ayog document. Focus should be on how to ensure that there is easy access to sanitation for women, children, senior citizens and the differently abled and also that these toilets have continuous piped water supply.

The Swachh Bharat roadmap laid out before the country is clear and well defined. But to ensure a result oriented programme, there is a need for all stakeholders, mainly the citizens of India to join the campaign being led by the Prime Minister. No effort can be spared and no avenue left unexplored to achieve the target of a cleaner India.

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Views expressed in the article are author's personal.

Digital Revolution in India

*Dr.Gurmeet Singh

Evolution of technology has been the foundation stone of progress and has over the centuries changed the way societies function. Technological inventions have revolutionized each sector of the society by reducing human labour, brining efficiency and increasing productivity. Be it introduction of information communication technologies in education, digitization in the media and services sector, automated devices for health care ; each sphere of society gets a boost with the touch of technology. For a country like India that has a perfect blend of rich traditional heritage and one of the fastest growing economies with the largest 'young 'population; there is an immense opportunity to change the face of the society with technological revolution. While the country has seen implementation of technological inventions in various fields in several decades after independence, the present Government has acted as a catalyst in not only speeding up the process of digital revolution in the country but also taking an initiative in bridging the digital divide in the country. The past three years have not only witnessed a swift rise in exploration, implementation and utilization of digital technologies but also focused on taking digitization and its benefits to the grass root level and especially to the less privileged sections of the society.

Digital revolution in India is significant as it promises to bring a multi-dimensional metamorphosis in almost all sectors of the society. From digitization in governance to better health care and educational services, cashless economy and digital transactions, transparency in bureaucracy, fair and quick distribution of welfare schemes all seem achievable with the digital India initiative of the present Government. A look at Government initiatives in various sectors in past three years show how digital revolution in India is not only changing the way society functions but also bridging the gap between the haves and the have-nots of the country.

The quality of education in any society forms the foundation stone for the very fabric of the society. Keeping in mind the importance of education, the digital India initiatives puts together a number of digital services for improving the dissemination of education in society. Be it primary level, secondary level or higher education and research facilities, the various digital schemes in this sector are revolutionizing the education system in the country. While there are a number of schemes in the education sector, to mention a few –'SWAYAM' scheme provides an opportunity to students to access courses taught in classrooms from ninth standard to post graduation, that can be accessed by anyone, anywhere at any time. This digital scheme not only brings education at the door step of numerous students but also aims to bridge the digital divide as students who cannot join mainstream or formal education can access this application. Another digital scheme is 'ePATHSHALA' which disseminates all educational content through website and mobile app. Next in row are schemes like ' Mid-Day Meal Monitoring App', 'Shaala Sidhi' and 'Shaala Darpan'   that focus on quality of school administration and evaluate the schools and kendriya vidyalas to improve the quality of education. Promoting research skills is the 'OLABS' digital scheme. OLabs i.e. online labs for school lab experiments provide students with ease of conducting experiments over internet. In the area of higher education Government has the 'National Scholarship Portal', 'eGranthalya', 'National Knowledge Network' to name a few. These digital initiatives not only look at improving the sector of education but are reaching out in bringing education to the underprivileged, thus utilizing the digital revolution to bridge the gap between haves and have-nots of education.

While education sector constructs the fabric of the society, Health care is an equally important sector for a society that has a secure and stable future. The various digital initiatives of the Government in the health services include- ' Digital AIIMS' a project that aims to create an effective linkage between UIDAI and AIIMS; the 'e-hospitals' scheme that is an open source health management system; 'mRaktkosh' – a web based mechanism that interconnects all blood banks of the state into a single network. Besides health and Education the present Government has also taken various initiatives to digitize governance. For instance the 'UMANG' aims to bring one stop solution to all government services; 'e-panchayat', 'eDistricts', eOffice; are also some of the services to digitize governance and administration in the country. Besides these the 'National Voters Service Portal' and 'ECI-EVM Tracking Services are also bringing about transparency in governance. The AADHAR scheme and BHIM app are also significant in speeding up the process of digitizing the economy.

Unique to India's character is the agriculture sector. The Governments' Digital India initiative is also proving a number of schemes for the benefit of the farmer. Some of the schemes in the agriculture sector include, 'mkisan', 'farmer portal', 'Kisan Suvidha app', 'Pusa Krishi', 'Soil Health Card app' , 'eNAM', 'Crop Insurance Mobile APP' , 'Agri Market app' and 'Fertilizer Monitoring App. Keeping in mind women's safety, applications like 'Nirbhaya app' and 'Himmat app' have been launched that facilitate sending of distress calls. There are also apps for law enforcement agencies, courts and judiciary.

Thus, several initiatives by Government in various sectors are not only an attempt to revolutionise

the society but also focus on utilizing the digital technologies to elevate the down trodden and bridge the gap between the different social strata.

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Views expressed in the article are author's personal.

(This Feature has been contributed by PIB Chandigarh)