

Parents are behind child marriages, says SC

The Supreme Court on Thursday said it was unfortunate that parents drive their minor children into marriage, while noting that at least one in three marriages in rural areas involve girl children below the age of 18.

“It is a hard reality and is unfortunate that most of the child marriages happening in the country are done by parents of the girl child. However, to this, there are odd exceptions when a minor boy and girl fall in love and marry on their own,” a Bench of Justices M.B. Lokur and Deepak Gupta said.

The Bench is hearing a petition filed by NGO Independent Thought challenging the Exception 2 to Section 375 (rape) of the Indian Penal Code, which permits “intrusive sexual intercourse with a girl child aged between 15 and 18 only on the ground that she is married.”

The NGO, represented by advocate Gaurav Agarwal, said the statutory exception to rape was violative of right to life, personal liberty, equality and is discriminatory.

The Exception is part of the Criminal Law (Amendment) Act of 2013 and is contrary to the anti-child sex abuse law, Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act of 2012 (POCSO).

Mr. Agarwal argued that the law “violates the health of not only the girl child concerned, but also generations to come.”

He said society must go forward and not get stuck with what was the social norm over 70 years ago.

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Is it time to review Section 377?

LEFT | Anand Grover

Section 377, titled “unnatural offences”, was enacted by the British after we lost our First War of Independence in 1857. They imposed their religio-cultural values upon us. Prior to that, sexual activities, including amongst homosexuals, were not penalised in India.

Section 377 penalises non-procreative sexual acts and any act of sexual perversity, as has been interpreted by different courts. Though it textually applies to all persons, homosexual and heterosexual, it has been targeted at gay men.

The Delhi High Court in *Naz Foundation v. Government of NCT of Delhi* (2009) rightly held that criminalising sexual activities with consent in private not only impairs the dignity of those persons targeted by the law, but it is also discriminatory and impacts the health of those people. Gay men are seen as criminals by the law because of Section 377, and thus by other members of society. This judgment lifted the criminal restrictions on gay men. However, it was short-lived as the Supreme Court in *Suresh Kumar Koushal v. Naz Foundation* (2013) set aside the Delhi High Court judgment. The *Koushal* judgment did not notice that the rape law itself had changed whereby instead of mere restriction on penile-vaginal non-consensual sex, it now includes a range of sexual activities, including digital and object penetration.

Discriminatory in nature

Section 377 is now restricted only to gay men and perhaps transgender people. The contradictions in the law are glaring. Consent is considered to be irrelevant. In the case of children, law presumes no consent. Therefore all sexual acts between an adult and a child are penalised.

The latest judgment on privacy by the Supreme Court has observed that *Koushal* has not appreciated the fundamental right to privacy in its application to Section 377. The *Koushal* verdict is dead; only its burial remains.

After the *Koushal* verdict, there have been a large number of cases where gay men are being blackmailed by their acquaintances and the police in connivance with each other. These cases have sharply risen in the last three years. Though there is recourse in law, no gay man can take recourse to it because Section 377 itself makes gay men’s sexual practices illegal and would put them in danger of being arrested. I have come across cases where people have undergone terrible humiliation and psychological stress, apart from being blackmailed either by their acquaintances or the police. No human being ought to be subject to such acts on account of a natural sexual affection for another human being.

Not in great company

The worst aspect of Section 377 is at the individual level. It makes gay men feel like lesser human beings because they are seen as criminals by law. That impairs not only their dignity, but forces them to go into the closet.

The British, who enacted the law, got rid of it in the 1960s in England. Many countries have got rid

of such laws, either by amendment of legislation or vide decisions of the court. India now remains with countries which India would not like to be associated with otherwise.

While most people gained independence from the British, the LGBT community, and gay men in particular, in India have remained chained to Section 377. It is high time that the chains are broken and we get rid of Section 377 so that gay men and the LGBT community can live their lives with dignity.

(Anand Grover is a senior advocate in the Supreme Court and the petitioner's lawyer in the Naz Foundation case)

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RIGHT | Navneet Rajan

Section 377 has been the subject of intense criticism in academic and other circles for being a colonial legacy, an outdated provision of law which is misused by the police and often against innocent individuals, and one that militates against the individual liberty and freedom of choice, etc. Naz Foundation challenged the constitutional validity of this section before the Delhi High Court and received a favourable verdict when the court held that the essence of Section 377 goes against the fundamental rights of citizens. The court declared that the Section, insofar as it criminalises consensual sexual acts of adults in private, is violative of Articles 21, 14 and 15 of the Constitution. It further ruled that the provisions of Section 377 would continue to govern non-consensual penile non-vaginal sex and penile non-vaginal sex involving minors.

However, the judgment was successfully challenged in the apex court, which reversed it on several grounds, mainly that Section 377 does not violate the Constitution, there was little evidence that the provision was being misused, misuse of law does not make it invalid, and most importantly, it was only for the legislature to repeal or amend the law.

Regaining fervour

The debate has regained fervour after the privacy judgment. Specifically referring to the rights of the LGBT community, the court said these are not "so-called" rights but are real rights founded on sound constitutional doctrine. They inhere in the right to life. They dwell in privacy and dignity. They constitute the essence of liberty and freedom. It further added that sexual orientation is an essential component of identity, and equal protection demands protection of the identity of every individual without discrimination. It goes on to state that privacy includes at its core the preservation of personal intimacies, the sanctity of family life, marriage, procreation, the home, and sexual orientation.

All religions consider homosexuality a sin, a conduct against the order of nature, and hold that an individual falling in this category be considered a criminal. However, by the end of the 19th century, a strong opinion emerged that it was a pathological condition and that the person should not be blamed for such conduct. Later, a dominant view emerged that homosexuality was inborn

and therefore not immoral, and it was not a disease. However, there is still no unanimity on the issue and individuals continue to hold diverse opinions.

While the progressive and timely judgement of the apex court needs to be celebrated, one should not be oblivious of the dangerous path we may tread on if the right to privacy is not tempered with reasonable restrictions. Any right, and more so a fundamental right, survives only if it is not exercised in a manner that it tramples upon the similar rights of another person.

Protecting the 'vulnerable'

The question that arises is, whether by repealing Section 377 we will achieve the objective of privacy and giving equal rights to individuals of any sexual orientation?

The rights of individuals belonging to the LGBT community need to be recognised, and these persons must be treated with dignity. Nevertheless, the law must ensure that the rights of others, especially those who may be vulnerable and may be easily tricked into unacceptable behaviour or physical intimacy by another individual with a different sexual orientation, must also be protected. To ensure that helpless children and women are not victims of such behaviour, we may have a modified provision in the law to punish such conduct against innocent children and non-consenting females who may not have the courage to resist such demands from their husbands.

(Navneet Rajan retired as Director General of Bureau of Police Research and Development, and earlier served in the CBI and the National Investigation Agency)

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CENTRE | Kamal Faruqi

As far as the private affair of an individual is concerned, within the four corners of the house, nobody has the right to interfere or peep into it. Everybody has the right to lead the life they want. But such choices should not spill over onto the streets by way of an endorsement of this style of life so as to attract other people.

Religion and rights

Why is this such an issue? Because we are a religious society. Be it a Hindu, Muslim, Christian, or Sikh, a couple, by which I mean husband and wife, does not have sex outside wedlock. Islam is very particular about the way couples should conduct their lives. Sex is allowed only in married life. Sex within the same gender, or sex out of wedlock, is prohibited in Islam. It is a crime.

But we are living in a democratic society governed by our Constitution. And the Constitution gives certain fundamental rights to citizens and one of the rights is the choice to lead the life one wants. Nobody has the right to disturb and intrude into someone's private life. We are not discussing the philosophical complexities of Section 377, but we are talking in the context of rights enshrined in the Constitution. In that context nobody should be harassed. At the same time, they should be aware that such activities are private, to be conducted within their homes.

Would you say homosexuality should be decriminalised? I speak in the context of the Constitution and in the context of religion and morality. As far as the Constitution is concerned, nobody has the

right to say how an individual should conduct his life, what to eat and what not to eat, what to wear, or comment about people's sexual activities. The Supreme Court was right in making this observation in the right to privacy judgment, delivered by a nine-judge Bench, and in another judgment in another case of instant triple talaq delivered in the same week as the privacy judgment wherein personal laws have been reaffirmed as being protected under the Constitution. The court has also observed that this right cannot be abrogated by a community in the name of majoritarian view.

So far as religious morality is concerned, homosexuality is prohibited by Islam. But the Constitution provides fundamental rights — we are not an Islamic country but a democratic country. But this does not mean a licence to do anything. I am a non-vegetarian, but I should not be oblivious to the concerns of vegetarians. Anything banned in the country, I should not do it.

The order on privacy has to be seen in the context of freedom to religion and the private lives of individual citizens. To protest the criminality of Section 377 is the right of every citizen.

Respect the Constitution

You are asking Kamal Faruqui who is a practising Muslim, who is saying that we should submit ourselves to the Constitution. But it is against my religion. The Koran very clearly states, "*Lakum dinukum waliyadeen*", which means "your religion for you and my religion for me".

We have to respect our Constitution. We are a country of many religions. Who am I to impose my view on others? That's the beauty of our Constitution. I would definitely like my children not to indulge in homosexuality. Section 377 has to be read in totality and I think the nine-judge Bench was clear that this must go.

(Kamal Faruqui is former chairman of the Delhi Minorities Commission and executive member of the All India Muslim Personal Law Board)

The views expressed are personal. As told to Anuradha Raman

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

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Decisive First Step towards Simplified Labour Laws: The Code on Wages, 2017 placed before Parliament

Decisive First Step towards Simplified Labour Laws: The Code on Wages, 2017 placed before Parliament



***Deepak Razdan**

The Government took a decisive step towards simplifying and amalgamating the vast mass of labour laws when it presented before the nation The Code on Wages, 2017, a Bill which combines features and provisions of four existing labour laws pertaining to wages. The Bill was introduced in the Lok Sabha during the Monsoon Session of Parliament on 10th August, 2017. Intended to bring relief to both employers and employees, the Code amalgamates, simplifies and rationalises the relevant provisions of the four Central labour enactments, namely the Payment of Wages Act, 1936; the Minimum Wages Act, 1948; the Payment of Bonus Act, 1965; and the Equal Remuneration Act, 1976. The four Acts will stand repealed with the passage of the Bill. Facilitating easier compliance of the law, the Code will ultimately create conditions for setting up of more enterprises and fresh employment opportunities.

The Statement of Objects of the Bill said the amalgamation of the laws would facilitate their implementation and remove the multiplicity of definitions and authorities, without compromising on the basic concepts of welfare and benefits to workers. The proposed legislation would bring the use of technology in its enforcement and thereby bring transparency and accountability for effective enforcement of the law. Widening the scope of minimum wages to all workers would be a big step for equity.

The Bill provides for all essential elements relating to wages -- equal remuneration, its payment, and bonus. The provisions relating to wages shall be applicable to all employments covering both organised as well as un-organised sectors and the power to fix minimum wages continues to be vested in the Central as well as State Governments, in their respective spheres. There are clear definitions of employer, employee, worker, minimum wage and wages.

The Code will enable the appropriate Government to determine the factors by which the minimum wages shall be fixed for different categories of employees. The factors shall be determined taking into account the skills required, the arduousness of the work assigned, geographical location of the workplace and other aspects which the appropriate Government considers necessary.

Provisions relating to timely payment of wages and authorised deductions from wages, which are at present applicable only in respect of employees drawing wages up to Rs 18,000 per month, shall be made applicable to all employees irrespective of wage ceiling. The appropriate Government may extend the coverage of

such provisions to Government establishments also.

Ensuring that there is no discrimination on the basis of gender in the payment of wages, the Bill incorporates in its first chapter itself provisions for "Equal Remuneration" in Section 3, which says "There shall be no discrimination among employees on the ground of gender in matters relating to wages by the same employer, in respect of the same work or work of similar nature done by any employee."

No employer shall pay to any employee wages less than the minimum rate of wages notified by the appropriate Government for the area, establishment or work as may be specified in a notification. While fixing minimum wages in respect of any employment for the first time under the Code, the appropriate Government, which can be Central or State Government, will appoint a committee comprising representatives of employers, employees and independent members, to go into all issues and make recommendations. This would ensure justice to all stakeholders. "The appropriate Government shall review or revise minimum rates of wages at an interval of five years," says the chapter on minimum wages.

Under the Bill, the Central Government will have the power to fix a national minimum wage, with a provision that there can be different national minimum wage rates for different States or geographical areas. State Governments will not fix any rate lower than the national rate. If any State Government earlier fixed a rate higher than the national rate, it will not reduce its wage rate. The Central Government before fixing a national minimum wage rate will take the advice of a Central Advisory Board. There is provision for payment of overtime work done.

Under its payment of wages provisions, the Code says "all wages shall be paid in current coin or currency notes or by cheque or through digital or electronic mode or by crediting the wages in the bank account of the employee." Wage payments can be made daily, weekly, fortnightly or monthly and the Bill has fixed time-limits for the payments.

The provisions on payment of bonus say that the bonus has to be paid even to employees who have put in only one month of service. Section 26 says this payment will be "an annual minimum bonus calculated at the rate of eight and one third per cent of the wages earned by the employee or one hundred rupees, whichever is higher, whether or not the employer has any allocable surplus during the previous accounting year."

The bonus payment will increase proportionately, if the allocable surplus in any accounting year is higher, subject to a maximum of 20 per cent of the wages, the Section says. The available surplus for any accounting year will be gross profits for the year, after permissible deductions including direct tax on income, profits and gains for the year. The allocable surplus will be 60 per cent of the available surplus for banks and 67 per cent for other establishments.

As per Section 39, all amounts payable to an employee by way of bonus under this Code shall be paid by crediting it in the bank account of the employees by his employer within eight months from the close of the accounting year. An employer can get extension of time, but this shall not exceed, "in any case," two years.

Doing away with inspector-raj, the Code provides for Facilitators who will help employers and employees in the proper execution of the law. The Facilitators can be appointed by the Central or State Governments and given powers throughout the States or such geographical areas assigned to them.

Section 51 of the Code says the Facilitator may within the limits of his jurisdiction, (a) supply information and advice to employers and workers concerning the most effective means of complying with the provisions of this Code; (b) inspect the establishment based on an inspection scheme. The inspection scheme, given by the Government, will provide for generation of a web-based inspection schedule.

The Facilitators can examine workers, "search, seize and take copies of such register, record of wages or notices or portions thereof as the Facilitator may consider relevant in respect of an offence under this Code and which the Facilitator has reason to believe has been committed by the employer," Section 51 says. The Facilitators will be empowered under IPC and CrPC for their work.

Complaints for offences under the Code can be made by the Facilitator, employees, registered Trade Unions, or the Government. The Code has spelt out elaborate penalties for the offences. If an employer pays to his employee less than the amount due to him under the Code, he shall be punishable with fine which can go up to Rs 50,000. A repeat offence within five years can mean imprisonment extending up to three months, and fine up to Rs 1 lakh, or both.

Contravention of the Code or a rule made thereunder can mean a fine up to Rs 20,000, and a repeat offence within five years can mean imprisonment up to one month, or fine up to Rs 40,000, or both. A Facilitator can give time and opportunity to employer to comply with the Code, and may not initiate prosecution if there is compliance.

Clause 55 of the Bill provides for composition of offences. Only the offences for which there is no punishment with imprisonment shall be compounded. The compounding money shall be a sum of

fifty per cent of the maximum fine. There is no compounding for a similar offence compounded earlier or for commission of which conviction was made, committed for the second time or thereafter within a period of five years.

Under various other Sections, the interests of employees are protected by the Code. The burden of proof that the due payment has been made, and without any unjustified deductions, will lie with the employer.

The Code on Wages, 2017 is the first of the four Codes proposed by the Government to give further boost to ease of doing business. The three other Codes will cover Industrial Relations; Social Security & Welfare; and Safety and Working Conditions. While they will bring about a long-awaited clarity in labour legislation, and minimize its multiplicity, their ultimate benefit will help working class know its rights and responsibilities, and look forward to larger employment opportunities.

**Deepak Razdan, is a senior journalist and is at present Editorial Consultant, The Statesman, New Delhi.*

Views expressed in the article are author's personal.

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Financial Inclusion in Rising India



*Arjun Ram Meghwal

"I dream of a digital India where mobile & e-banking ensures Financial Inclusion"

*Prime Minister Shri Narendra
Modi*

"Financial Inclusion" is the way the Governments strive to take the common man along by bringing them into the formal channel of economy thereby ensuring that even the person standing in the last is not left out from the benefits of the economic growth and is added in the mainstream economy thereby encouraging the poor person to save, safely invest in various financial products and to borrow from the formal channel when he need to borrow.

Lack of financial inclusion is costly to society and the individual. As far as the individual is concerned, lack of financial inclusion forces the unbanked into informal banking sectors where interest rates are higher and the amount of available funds much smaller. Because the informal banking structure is outside any legislative framework, any dispute between lenders and borrowers cannot be settled legally. **As far as the social benefits are concerned, financial inclusion increases the amount of available savings, increases efficiency of financial intermediation, and allows for tapping new business opportunities.**

State sponsored universal banking has therefore contributed to greater economic diversification in rural areas than is the case in more competitive banking environments. **With structural adjustment programs being introduced in the 1980s and 1990s, financial market reforms swept over many developing countries.** At the beginning of 20th century, India had insurance companies (both life and general) and a functional stock exchange

Scope of the financial inclusion is not limited to only banking services but it extends to other financial services as well like insurance, equity products & pension products etc. Thus, financial inclusion is not just about opening a simple bank account with a branch in an unbanked area.

Adding the common man into the mainstream economy has other advantages as well as *on the one hand* it helps inculcate the vulnerable section of the society to save money for its future and the rainy days, take benefits of the economic activities of the country by participating in various financial products like, banking services, insurance & pension products etc., *on the other hand*, it helps the country to increase the rate of 'capital formation' which in turn, give a push to the economic activities in the economy by channelizing the money from every nook & corner of the country.

In the absence of people of a country financially included in the mainstream, they often tend to park their savings/ invest in the non-productive assets like land, buildings & bullion etc. While, financially included people can easily avail the credit facilities, whether they are sitting in the organised or unorganised sector, urban or rural sector. *Micro Finance Institutions (MFIs)* are the classic examples for providing easy & affordable credit to poor people and have got written innumerable success stories.

This phenomenon of financial inclusion also helps government plug gaps & leakages in public subsidies & welfare programmes as government can directly transfer the subsidy amount into the account of the beneficiary rather than to subsidise the product. In fact, the Government has even saved by around more than Rs. 57,000 crores in its subsidy bill and has ensured that the benefit of the subsidy reaches to the real beneficiary directly to him/her.

The NDA government led by Prime Minister Sh.Narendra Modi made itself committed, since beginning of its term, to give special emphasis on the financial inclusion of every person of the country. One of the most crucial of the several steps taken by this government is JAM- Jan Dhan, Aadhar & Mobile.

Jan Dhan Yojna - with a view to increase the penetration of banking services and to ensure that all households have at least one bank account, a National Mission on Financial Inclusion named as **Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojna** was announced by Prime Minister Sh. Narendra Modi in his independence speech on 15th August, 2014 & the scheme was formally launched on 28th August, 2014. Within a fortnight of its launch, the scheme entered into the Guinness Book of records for opening a record number of bank accounts. Large scale achievement was made by opening 29.48 crores accounts by Mid-August, 2017 out of which 17.61 crores accounts were in rural/semi-urban areas and the rest 11.87 crores in urban areas.

The additional benefits on opening an account under Jan Dhan Scheme is the customer is issued a RuPay Debit Card having inbuilt insurance cover of Rs 1 Lakh. Besides, an overdraft (OD) facility of Rs 5,000/- is granted to the customer for satisfactory operation of account for 6 months. A life cover of Rs 30,000/- has also been granted to customers for opening the accounts up to a certain time period. The scheme has been a great success and the 99.99% households out of the 21.22 crores households surveyed have been covered under this scheme by December, 2016. More than 44 lakh accounts have been sanctioned OD facility of which more than 23 lakh account holders have availed the facility involving an amount around 300 crores.

Insurance & Pension schemes – In order to provide social security system for all citizens and especially to the poor and under-privileged people, the present government launched **Pradhan Mantri Suraksha Bima Yojna** and **Pradhan Mantri Jeevan Jyoti Bima Yojna**.

The former scheme i.e., **Pradhan Mantri Suraksha Bima Yojna (PMSBY)** covers the persons within the age slab of 18 to 70 years and a risk coverage of Rs 2 lakhs is provided at an affordable premium of Rs 12 per annum only. As per the date 12th April, 2017, around 10 crore people were enrolled under Pradhan Mantri Suraksha Bima Yojana (PMSBY). The later scheme, i.e., **Pradhan Mantri Jeevan Jyoti Bima Yojna** covers the persons within an age slab of 18 to 50 years having a bank account. The life cover of Rs 2 lakhs is provided to the insured payable in case of death of

the insured due to any reason. As on 12th April 2017 3.10 cr person were enrolled under PMJJBY.

Atal Pension Yojna – A scheme launched in 2015 is open to all bank account holders in the age group of 18 to 40 years and they can choose different contributions based on the pension amount. Under this scheme monthly pension is guaranteed to the subscriber and after him to his spouse and after their death, pension corpus as accumulated till the age of 60 years is returned to the nominee of subscriber. Central Government also contributes 50% of the contribution subject to a maximum of Rs 1000 per annum. As on 31st March 2017 a total of 46.80 lakh subscribers have been enrolled from Atal Pension yojana with a total pension worth of Rs1713.214cr.

Varishita Pension Bima Yojana: All those who subscribe to the VPBY from 15th August 2014 to 14th August 2015 will receive an assured guaranteed return of 9% under the Policy.

Pradhan Mantri Mudra Yojna – Scheme launched in April, 2015 to provide formal access of financial facilities to Non Corporate Small Business Sector. The basic objective of the scheme is to promote & ensure bank finance to unfunded segment of the Indian economy.

In the Mudra Scheme since beginning till 13th August 2017, total 8crore 70 lakh loan were distributed out of which 6 crores 56 lakh were given to woman. In this scheme 3 lakh 75 thousand crores were sanctioned (1 lakh 88 crores to woman) and 3lakh 63 thousand crores were disbursed (out of which 1lakh 66 thousand crores were given to woman). The target for 2016-17 was Rs 180,000cr while sanctioned amount is Rs 180528cr which indicate the success of the scheme.

Other Schemes includes Jeevan Suraksha Bandhan Yojana, Sukanya Samridhi Yojana: Kisan Credit Cards (KCC) and General Credit Cards (GCC), BHIM App.

Liberalized policy towards ATMs and White label ATMs. To expand the network of ATMs, the RBI has allowed non-bank entities to start ATMs (called 'White Label ATMs'). The RuPay Cards have significantly increased its market share to 38 per cent (250 mn) of the total 645 million debit cards in the country so far. The card has been provided to the account holders of PMJDY (170 million).

Financial Literacy Centers were started by commercial banks at the request of RBI to give awareness and education to the public to access financial products. Here, RBI's policy is that financial inclusion should go along with financial literacy.

The launch of direct benefit transfers through the support of Aadhaar and Bank Account is one of the biggest developments that activated and retained people in the newly opened account.

Stand up India – launched to extend bank loans between Rs 10 lakhs to Rs 1 crore for Greenfield enterprises set up by the SC, ST & women entrepreneurs and to provide them handholding support. By Mid-August 2017 38,477 people were given loan up to Rs 8,277 crores out of which 31000 were woman and given loan up to Rs 6,895 crores.

To further strengthen financial inclusion in the country, government has advised the Banks to deploy Micro ATMs in rural areas and consequently, 1,14,518 micro ATMs have been deployed by December, 2016.

Venture capital Scheme: In this scheme SC/ST people were encouraged to be Job Provider instead of Job Seekers. Initially in this Scheme loan were provided from 50 lakh to 15 crores which now is changed from 20 lakh to 15 crores. The government had encouraged SC/ST people to stand on their own. Schemes of 70 venture and Fund of Rs 265 crore were approved, funds to 40 venture were already been distributed. These ventures on the average provide employment to 20-25 people. The rate of interest has been reduced from 10% to 8%.

Conclusion:

The government is committed to its target of increasing the inclusion of every household in the financial system so that the masses can get all the legitimate benefits arising out of the growth of the country and in turn, the funds mobilised from the people not earlier in the formal channel could also be brought in the formal channel thereby giving the economy of the country an extra thrust to lead the path of growth.

**The author is the Minister of State for Finance and Corporate Affairs, Government of India.*

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Focus on 'Optimal Infant & Young Child feeding Practices' during National Nutrition Week**Focus on 'Optimal Infant & Young Child feeding Practices' during National Nutrition Week**

Ministry of Health and Family Welfare is observing National Nutrition Week from 1st September to 7th September, 2017. The theme of this year's National Nutrition Week is "Optimal Infant & Young Child feeding Practices (IYCF): Better Child Health." During this period, a week-long campaign is also being carried out to create mass awareness about the importance of appropriate nutrition in protection and promotion of health and wellbeing of children.

For promotion of Optimum IYCF practices, MoHFW has launched "MAA- Mothers' Absolute Affection" programme to improve breastfeeding coverage and appropriate breastfeeding practices in the country. Around 3.7 lakhs ASHAs and around 82,000 healthworkers including programme managers at district and block level, doctors (MOs), staff nurses (SNs) and ANMs have been sensitized for breastfeeding promotion strategies under MAA programme and more than 23,000 health facility staffs (MOs, SNs and ANMs) are trained in IYCF training. In addition, more than 1.49 lakh mothers' meetings were also carried out by ASHAs at village level to sensitize mothers regarding importance of appropriate breastfeeding practices.

Community sensitization activities such as mothers' meetings and block/ district level workshops with programme managers, services providers' e.g MOs, SNs and ANMs along with FLWs are also planned during the National Nutrition Week (NNW). Village Health and Nutrition Days (VHNDs) will be held at village level in Anganwadi centres to increase the awareness and bring about desired changes in the IYCF practices in the community. In addition, "National Guidelines on Lactation Management Centres in Public Health Facilities" have been recently released to facilitate establishment of lactation management centres for ensuring that the sick and pre-term babies are fed with safe human breast milk.

Breastfeeding is an important, efficient and cost-effective intervention promoting child survival and health. Breastfeeding within an hour of birth could prevent 20% of the newborn deaths. Infants who are not breastfed are 15 times more likely to die from pneumonia and 11 times more likely to die from diarrhoea than children who are exclusively breastfed, which are two leading causes of death in children under-five years of age. In addition, children who were not breastfed are at increased risk for diabetes,

obesity, allergies, asthma, childhood leukaemia, sudden infant death syndrome etc. Apart from mortality and morbidity benefits, breastfeeding also has tremendous impact on improved IQ.

The trend of breastfeeding has shown an upward trend. As per recent data, initial breastfeeding has been nearly doubled in last decade. i.e from 23.4 per cent to 41.6 per cent (NFHS-3, 2005-06 and 4, 2015-16). Significant improvement has also been reported for exclusive breastfeeding as proportion of children under age 6 months exclusively breastfed, has gone up to 54.9 (NFHS-4) per cent from 46.4 per cent (NFHS-3). However, there is further scope of improving initial breastfeeding rates considering the high proportion of institutional deliveries in the country.

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To clear the path ahead

Without a doubt, the August 22 [Constitution Bench judgment on instant talaq](#) (*talaq-e-bid'a*) was a historic one. For the first time in Indian history *talaq-e-bid'a* was specifically debated and set aside by the Supreme Court. In the 2002 Shamim Ara case a two-judge bench of the Apex Court had delegitimised this medieval practice only when it was not properly pronounced and preceded by attempts at reconciliation. But the latest ruling completely and unconditionally invalidates *talaq-e-bid'a* and renders it bad in law. The Koranic procedure of talaq is the only way by which a Muslim husband will be able to divorce his wife from now on. It is time then to recap the judgment to chart out the next steps.

The path that was taken to arrive at this landmark decision was tortuous, but intellectually invigorating. Justices R.F. Nariman and U.U. Lalit started off by correctly concluding that *talaq-e-bid'a* cannot be excluded from the definition of “talaq” mentioned in Section 2 of the Muslim Personal Law (Shariat) Application Act, 1937. Additionally, they declared that as the Shariat Act was a law made by the legislature before the Constitution came in force, it would fall within the expression “laws in force” in Article 13(3)(b), and would be hit by Article 13(1) if found to be inconsistent with Part III of the Constitution, to the extent of the inconsistency.

Letting go of instant triple talaq

Surprisingly, the two judges chose not to examine if the *Narasu Appa Mali* ruling was a good law. This judgment had held that personal laws cannot be tested against the provisions of Part III of the Constitution. Nonetheless, having brought the 1937 Act under the ambit of Article 13, the judges analysed several engrossing Supreme Court pronouncements to show how capricious, excessive and disproportional laws are “manifestly arbitrary” and the very antithesis of equality.

But the biggest achievement of Justices Nariman and Lalit is their harmonisation of constitutional equality with Koranic egalitarianism. This was done by endorsing the Koranic law of talaq mentioned in *Shamim Ara* and declaring *talaq-e-bid'a* to be “manifestly arbitrary” and violative of Article 14 because it allows a Muslim man to break the marriage “capriciously and whimsically” without attempting to save it through reconciliation. On these grounds, Section 2 of the 1937 Act was struck down as being void to the extent that it recognises and enforces instant talaq.

Interestingly, Justice Kurian Joseph, even while fully agreeing with the doctrine of manifest arbitrariness on the pure question of law, disagreed with Justices Nariman and Lalit that the 1937 Act regulates instant talaq and hence can be brought under Article 14. In his view, *talaq-e-bid'a* can be set aside without testing any part of the 1937 Act against Part III of the Constitution. As the whole purpose of the Shariat Act was to declare *Shariah* as the “rule of decision”, any practice that goes against the *Shariah* cannot be legally protected. *Talaq-e-bid'a* falls outside the *Shariah* because it goes against its primary source, the Koran. Therefore, what is bad in theology is bad in law as well.

From suo motu to judgment: The arguments for and against triple talaq

Those who criticised the authors of the majority judgment for grounding the crux of their ruling in the Koran ignore the fact that personal laws of all communities in India enjoy constitutional protection. And as these laws are sourced from religious scriptures in most cases the Apex Court cannot but uphold the right of individuals and groups to profess, practise and propagate everything that forms an essential part of their religious scripture, subject to the provisions of Article 25(1). It may be pointed out here that the Koranic procedure of talaq that was implicitly upheld in this judgment does not in any way violate our constitutional values.

In their 272-page ruling former Chief Justice J.S. Khehar and Justice S. Abdul Nazeer, in contradiction to the majority judgment, declared *talaq-e-bid'a* to be an essential part of the Hanafi faith and gave it protection under Article 25(1). However, this view does not stand up to scrutiny as it is based on the flawed theological premise that a religious custom which has been in vogue for several centuries automatically becomes integral to the denomination that practises it. Such a stance is not consistent with the teachings of the Koran.

Had Justices Khehar and Nazeer given weight to the overwhelming evidence in the Koran and authentic hadeeses against instant talaq they could have avoided the problematic invocation of Article 142 to direct the state to enact an “appropriate legislation” on *talaq-e-bid'a*. One fails to understand how after having declared instant triple divorce a fundamental right under Part III of the Constitution the judges could direct the state to bring a law against it. Article 13(2) clearly states that the “State shall not make any law which takes away or abridges the rights conferred by this Part and any law made in contravention of this clause shall, to the extent of the contravention, be void.” Even Justice Kurian had expressed “serious doubts” if the exercise of a fundamental right can be injuncted under Article 142.

Historic day for Muslim women: Shayara Bano on triple talaq verdict

The minority view also failed to appreciate the fact that hadeeses quoted by the AIMPLB were comparatively less authentic than those cited in High Court judgments relied upon by the petitioners which were from the six most authentic Sunni hadees books (*Sihah Sitta*). The AIMPLB cited just one report from *Sihah Sitta* (Hadees No. 5259 from *Sahih Bukhari*) in which instant talaq is mentioned. But this hadees does not show any Prophetic support for *talaq-e-bid'a*. It clearly states that the man who pronounced “triple talaq” did so “without the Prophet’s command.”

As pointed out above, the biggest goal attainment for Muslim women is the realisation that *talaq-e-bid'a* in any of his manifestations will not dissolve the marriage. This renders redundant not just halala but the incorporation of a platitudinous advisory against instant talaq in the *nikahnama*. There is also scope now to amend the 1937 Act, even without designating it as statutory law, to exclude *talaq-e-bid'a* from the definition of the word “talaq” mentioned in Section 2, and make the Koranic procedure of talaq gender-neutral. Indeed all provisions of the *Shariah* mentioned in the 1937 Act can be similarly redefined to bring them in conformity with the humanitarian teachings of the Koran and the Prophet.

This judgment will also encourage legally and theologically informed Muslim intellectuals to establish mediation centres across India under the Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) mechanism to help Muslim couples amicably resolve their marital disputes. To echo the feelings of many, this is not the end but the beginning of the process of reforms in the Muslim personal law. The biggest challenge, however, would be to inform the Muslim masses that the abolition of *talaq-e-bid'a* is not against the *Shariah* but has, on the contrary, brought it closer to the original principles of Islam.

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Shayara Bano, triple talaq crusader

The fight against triple talaq, though supported by a number of women's rights activists and constant media attention, was led by the victims themselves.

Shayara Bano, a 35-year-old woman from Uttarakhand, emerged as the defining persona in the legal battle against the patriarchal custom that, though not as commonly followed, was judged unconstitutional by the Supreme Court recently.

Why this fight?

Ms. Bano was the original petitioner in the case after she approached the court in 2016 demanding that the *talaq-e-biddat* pronounced by her husband be declared as void. She also contended that such unilateral, abrupt and irrevocable form of divorce be declared unconstitutional, arguing that the practice of triple talaq violated the fundamental rights of Muslim women.

"Since my student life, I didn't like the anti-women social traditions like triple talaq and *halala*. But when it happened to me... it [the dislike] grew. Normally, these things do not happen, but when it hits you, you realise how bad this practice really is," says Ms. Bano

What happened to her?

Her battle against triple talaq was spurred by her own experience. She was a victim of the custom. Married in April 2001 to the Allahabad-based property dealer Rizwan Ahmed, she endured domestic violence and physical torture at the hands of her husband and in-laws, who allegedly demanded additional dowry and a car from her parents. Her father, a low-earning government employee, had made special efforts to arrange her marriage beyond his capacity.

As per her claim, she was often beaten and kept hungry in a closed room for days. The final cut came in October 2015, when her husband sent her a divorce note by speed post. The letter contained a pronouncement of instant triple talaq. The custody of her two children, 11 and 13, was kept by the husband. When something "so wrong" happened, she thought that there must be a law to prevent this.

Did she face challenges?

It was never going to be easy for Ms. Bano and the other women to garner support from the community as they were seen challenging the male dominance of Shariat laws, and was suspected by a section of anti-BJP groups and male Muslim intelligentsia of playing into the saffron party's strategy to communalise the discourse ahead of the 2017 Assembly elections in Uttar Pradesh. Ms. Bano says she faced several challenges during the course of her fight. The biggest came in the form of mental harassment. A member of the AIMPLB asked her to withdraw her case, saying she was going against Islam.

Did she think of quitting?

Though she felt discouraged, the thought of giving up the fight didn't occur to her even once. Ms. Bano is thankful to the women activists who supported the cause, her lawyers and the media for highlighting her experience. However, the biggest source of support came from her family, especially her father and brother.

Her legal battle received more coverage after other victims of triple talaq also approached the court, though she was the first petitioner.

Ms. Bano, who completed her M.A. before marriage, is now pursuing an MBA, for which she regularly attends classes. She hopes to get employed some day.

What does it mean to women?

Described as historic, women activists believe it is a step forward in the empowerment of Muslim women in India.

Ms. Bano says that though the ruling will be beneficial to Muslim women and help them avail themselves of maintenance, the real change will come only when a law is enacted making arbitrary talaq illegal.

Ms. Bano says her fight is against the social customs that give men power to abandon women on a whim, sometimes through a flimsy text message or a phone call. Women who received triple talaq lived worse than dogs and without maintenance, she points out.

She has appealed to the BJP government not to take undue credit for the decision or politicise it. "It was a social fight, not a political one. It should not be made into a political agenda," Ms. Bano insists.

Omar Rashid

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Theories that impede job creation

The government is preparing a new industrial policy, according to the department of industrial policy and promotion (DIPP), “to enable industry to play its role as the engine of growth and to shoulder the responsibility of adding more value and jobs”. This policy will replace the United Progressive Alliance’s national manufacturing policy which was expected to generate 100 million additional jobs by 2022. DIPP will be adopting a consultative approach, the announcement says. The previous plan was also developed consultatively. There were 26 working groups representing all stakeholders, who gathered data, debated issues, and developed strategies to achieve the goals. It would be very worthwhile to understand why the goals could not be reached and incorporate those insights into the new policy.

A major problem was with the implementation of the previous plan. Job creation along with industrial growth requires aligned action on many fronts: infrastructure, skills, finance for small enterprises, a supportive trade policy, etc. It requires “a whole of government” approach. Partial solutions will not work. No matter how good the plan may have been, the absence of coordination among ministries and cooperation among stakeholders stalled implementation. Because jobs have become a principal concern of Prime Minister Narendra Modi himself, and because implementation is his forte, a policy with him at the steering wheel is more likely to succeed.

A greater challenge will be to change old theories in the minds of policymakers, and industry leaders too, about jobs/livelihoods, enterprises, and productivity.

The traditional concept of a good job/livelihood is full-time employment, preferably with a large organization, with assurance of continuity of employment and social security benefits. However, there are many other ways of earning livelihoods. For example: by owning a small enterprise—a small workshop, or street stall; as a member of a cooperative enterprise co-owned by many producers; driving one’s own car as a taxi with Ola or Uber, etc.

A dominant view of an enterprise that creates jobs is a large factory with hundreds of workers in assembly lines. Or, a large BPO (business process outsourcing) centre with hundreds of workers behind computer screens. So, if we want more jobs in the economy, we imagine we must have more such, large-scale, “organized” enterprises whereas the greater creators of jobs and livelihoods are enterprises that are much smaller, and seemingly unorganized (from the point-of-view of those with a fixed view of what an organization should be).

Small enterprises have great difficulty in obtaining resources—finance, space to operate, skilled workers, etc.—and in dealing with the regulatory framework too. According to some economists, India has too many “informal” enterprises. They must be brought into the formal system, which means they must comply with the requirements of formality (which include compliance with regulations) so that they can obtain the benefits of incorporation into the formal system. At the same time, some economists are advocating that small enterprises should be relieved of compliance with all regulations (which implies greater informality) so that they have flexibility to grow. There is conceptual confusion here. Practical solutions should be found unbiased by ideology.

There is a reason why small (and informal) enterprises can create more jobs and livelihoods than large ones. Unveiling the three-year “action agenda” for the country on 24 August, the vice-chairman of NITI Aayog said, “India does not have an unemployment problem; it has an underemployment problem”. The problem is low productivity, he said. In India, two workers do what one worker could do, which also means lower wages for both. Which suggests that enterprises should take measures to remove their extra workers. This will increase

productivity—measured as output per worker, and it will increase the wages of the workers who remain with the enterprise. But what about the workers who are no longer employed by the enterprise? They will either become unemployed or join less “productive” enterprises that continue to provide “underemployment”.

How do enterprises increase productivity per worker? By investing more in machines and automation. If the productivity of the entire economy must be increased, small enterprises should also invest more in automation. They will have to find money for this. Since the greatest difficulty small enterprises have is to obtain enough money for their business and at low cost, improving productivity by automation is not a viable option for them. So, fortunately, they will continue to provide “underemployment” to the masses seeking jobs, who are not being employed by large enterprises that invest in automation, reduce employees, and thus substantially improve productivity per employee. For small enterprises, the solution for improving their competitiveness is to improve the skills of their owners for managing their workers and improving utilization of their materials and machines.

Productivity is a measure of how much output is produced per unit of input. The most common measurement of productivity is output per worker. But there can be other measures of the productivity of an economy. If the purpose of economic growth, from the point of view of citizens, is the production of more jobs and livelihoods, and if the scarce resource is capital, the more productive economy will be the one that produces more jobs per unit of capital invested. Perhaps, contrary to the drive for more “scale”, it should be an economy with a greater proportion of small enterprises that use more labour and less capital and have a higher “total factor productivity”. Formation of strong clusters and networks of small enterprises, using technology, can enable them to acquire greater scale to obtain access to markets and resources. The policy should be to make clusters and networks more organized and formal rather than the individual enterprises.

Faster implementation is key. However, unless old theories are set aside and fresh solutions applied, a new policy will also fail in more widespread creation of livelihoods and jobs. As Einstein said, you cannot solve an intractable problem with the same theories that created the problem.

Arun Maira served in the erstwhile Planning Commission.

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The economics of the household balance sheet

It is well known that financial assets play a limited role in the Indian household balance sheet. Higher preference for physical assets, among other things, has resulted in lower penetration of insurance products and the near absence of retirement savings. A committee headed by Tarun Ramadorai, professor of financial economics at Imperial College, London, which submitted its report recently, has taken a comprehensive look at these issues and made recommendations in order to increase the role of formal finance in the household sector.

The committee notes that an average Indian household has 77% of its total assets in real estate, 11% in gold, 7% in other durable goods and just 5% in financial assets. While households in other developing countries such as China also have a higher preference for physical assets, this is significantly different from developed countries where financial assets play a much bigger role in household finances. Interestingly, even households that move towards the top of the wealth distribution do not increase allocation to financial assets—they just shift gold holdings towards real estate. The committee has also found a strong link between lower take-up of insurance products and reliance on non-institutional sources of credit. This basically shows that lack of insurance pushes households to take debt from non-institutional sources. The report highlights that 69% of households depend on informal sources of funding to deal with medical emergencies. Funding from informal sources such as moneylenders comes with higher interest burden and affects household finances.

There are various reasons why households at different levels of wealth distribution prefer physical assets over financial assets. For instance, wealthier households may find it easier to divert their illegitimate income towards physical assets to avoid taxes, as investments in the financial sector are easier to track. For others, as the report notes, “High transactions costs and bureaucratic impediments to efficient participation create a high ‘nuisance factor’ for households hoping to engage in formal financial markets.” Lower-income households often believe that the formal financial sector is only for the rich. The other important reason why households prefer physical assets could be persistent high inflation over the decades.

However, at a broader level, the reluctance of households to engage in the formal financial market shows that the institutional architecture has not worked as desired. If people are reluctant to go to a bank or a financial institution, it suggests that the system requires design changes to be able to serve the needs of an average Indian household. This will not only increase the financial well-being of households, but will also help channelize savings into productive investments. In this context, the government has done well by starting the Pradhan Mantri Jan-Dhan Yojana as well as schemes in the insurance and pension space. It is important to understand that with physical assets, households have only optimized their balance sheets in the given circumstances. Therefore, if the operating environment changes, it is possible that Indian households will adjust accordingly—maybe with some amount of hand-holding by the state.

The committee has made several sector-specific recommendations to address issues on both the asset and liability sides of the household balance sheet. For instance, to improve access to financial products, the committee has recommended end-to-end digital distribution networks, and making the know-your-customer requirement completely paperless. Better use of technology should be able to increase the access to financial products. The committee has also recommended the formation of a regulatory sandbox. This is an idea worth trying. It will allow testing of innovative financial products and monitoring of possible risks. This will help in developing innovative low-cost financial products. It will also enable regulators to adapt to innovation and technology. Financial products in India need to be more flexible so that people working in the economy’s large informal sector, with irregular income, can participate. The

committee has made a number of other recommendations to improve the overall market structure for different products, including the way interest rates should be set in the home loan market.

One big issue that influences the household preference for an asset class—and not just in India—is awareness. The state and other stakeholders will have to work together to improve financial awareness. However, it will not be easy to change the asset mix of Indian households and a shift will undoubtedly be a long drawn out process. The government and regulators would do well to create an enabling environment where households are able to access simple financial products, backed by a strong mechanism to redress grievances, with ease. Households will only move to financial assets in a big way if products are easily available and they trust the overall financial architecture with their savings.

Will households benefit from moving to financial assets? Tell us at views@livemint.com

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The Alchemy of financing

Over 50% of Indian households earn less than Rs500 a day.

For most of us, this statistic conjures up images of hundred-rupee notes being handed out to a daily wage worker at the end of the day, or a field sales executive finding Rs15,000 credited to her bank account at the month's end. The reality is very different—for the 60% households in India that are farmers or in trade, incomes are seasonal and highly volatile. If you plotted their household income across the year, it would find two or three spikes and dead silence in between. The expense curve, on the other hand, is an unrelenting saw-tooth curve ripping into the peace of mind of these households every month. How do these folks then manage to make ends meet? It is through the rigmarole of debt.

While readers of this column fret and fuss on issues such as improving fixed deposit yields, refinancing the home loans, buying life insurance, or dabbling in stocks, the average two-acre farmer is involved in a far more complex life-and-death calculus of making the unpredictable income from two harvests separated by six months last for a whole year of daily expenses, the unfortunate but inevitable health emergency, and life events such as a wedding in the family.

Getting through a year often involves harnessing up to a dozen financial instruments, most of which are informal—Kisan Credit Card loan, credit from the local grocer and agri inputs store, top-up credit from the aarhat (grain trader), health emergency borrowing from local money lender, microfinance loan, chit fund membership, informal credit and savings arrangements with neighbouring households, “money-guard” relationship for shoring-up daily surpluses, etc. For a masterclass on this subject, head no further than the 2009 classic *Portfolios of the Poor*, a thoroughly insightful analysis of the cash-flows of over 250 very poor households across India, Bangladesh and South Africa, and the stories of their incredible ingenuity in using the tools of finance to fund bare necessities as well as survive exigencies.

It is true that the bespoke financing innovations of the informal sector have always saved the day for these folks. But barely, as they come at high costs and without guarantees.

At the turn of the millennium, commercial microfinance started bringing in formality at scale to this fragile financing ecosystem. In the joint-liability-group loan, microfinance found a winning product that came to the doorstep of the customer in a remote village, didn't ask for onerous collateral, and could collect small repayments on a weekly basis at relatively low interest rates, thus unlocking formal financing towards “consumption smoothening” for households that had volatile incomes. Unfortunately, regulatory constraints, and the allure of the almost magically scalable joint-liability lending model have kept “microfinance” limited to microcredit and not reach its full potential; at least until very recently. On the credit side too, the lack of matching repayment schedules to household income-flows has ensured the continued existence of additional informal borrowings at high costs to bridge the cash flow gaps. Most poor households, as a result, are still not able to improve their financial net worth even in the good years.

Microfinance's reliance solely on the boots-on-the-ground approach to distribute and collect loans can't afford personalization. When you run a company with a field force in the thousands serving millions of customers scattered across the country, it is difficult to resist the regimented one-size-fits-all collection model to make the economics work.

All of this will change now. The dream of delivering personalized financing products at an affordable cost to our aspiring billion will be a reality in your pet cat's lifetime.

Thanks to the most audacious technology installation event of the last decade globally, we now have the holy trifacta of JAM—Jan Dhan, Aadhaar and Mobile. That is over 1.2 billion people with a secure digital identity through Aadhaar, 300 million households with access to formal banking system through Jan-Dhan accounts and 400 million active mobile internet users growing at 30 million a quarter.

Then there is the all-important India-Stack that makes it possible for JAM to mesh together and enable the delivery of digital services. In the financial transaction context, Aadhaar offers the authentication layer, bank accounts—the vehicle to transact, and mobile phones—the means to transact.

But it is the India-Stack that provides the plumbing to integrate these elements through a set of common protocols and tools that enables companies big and small to simply plug into the system and deliver financial products digitally at a disruptively low distribution cost.

The combination of almost zero distribution and personalization cost, new underwriting approaches and data sets, and a trust factor in mobile transactions that is now firmly established, now offers us the rare opportunity to mimic the three design principles (below) that have made informal sector financing so successful. And we can finally offer it at a price point that unshackles poor households towards building positive financial net worth. Every year.

Synchronize: Match payment schedules (loan repayments, savings contribution, insurance premiums) to when income is generated (seasonal) to avoid refinancing needs

Sachetize: Make the size of contributions and payments small enough to be in tune with the household's daily expense and income streams.

Specify: Build bespoke products to meet the specific goals and aspirations of each household.

When this vision becomes a reality, financing will no longer be a rigmarole, it will turn into alchemy.

Kartik Srivatsa is managing partner at Aspada Investment Advisors. The Bharat Rough Book is a weekly column on building businesses for the middle of India's income pyramid.

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The Code on Wages Bill 2017

The Code on Wages Bill 2017

As part of labour law reforms, the Government has undertaken the exercise of rationalisation of the 38 Labour Acts by framing 4 labour codes viz Code on Wages, Code on Industrial Relations, Code on Social Security and Code on occupational safety, health and working conditions.

1. The Code on Wages Bill 2017 has been introduced in Lok Sabha on 10.08.2017 and it subsumes 4 existing Laws, viz. the Minimum Wages Act, 1948; the Payment of Wages Act, 1936; the Payment of Bonus Act, 1965; and the Equal Remuneration Act, 1976. After the enactment of the Code on Wages, all these four Acts will get repealed. The Codification of the Labour Laws will remove the multiplicity of definitions and authorities leading to ease of compliance without compromising wage security and social security to the workers.

2. At present, the provisions of the Minimum Wages Act and the Payment of Wages Act do not cover substantial number of workers, as the applicability of both these Acts is restricted to the Scheduled Employments / Establishments. However, the new Code on Wages will ensure minimum wages to one and all and timely payment of wages to all employees irrespective of the sector of employment without any wage ceiling.

3. A concept of statutory National Minimum Wage for different geographical areas has been introduced. It will ensure that no State Government fixes the minimum wage below the National Minimum Wages for that particular area as notified by the Central Government.

4. The proposed payment of wages through cheque or digital/ electronic mode would not only promote digitization but also extend wage and social security to the worker. Provision of an Appellate Authority has been made between the Claim Authority and the Judicial Forum which will lead to speedy, cheaper and efficient redressal of grievances and settlement of claims

5. Penalties for different types of violations under this Code have been rationalized with the amount of fines varying as per the gravity of violations and repeat of the offences. Provision of compounding of offences has been made for those which are not punishable by a penalty of imprisonment.

6. Recently, some news reports have been published regarding the fixation of minimum wage as Rs. 18000/- per month by the Central Government. It is clarified that the Central Government has not fixed or mentioned any amount as “national minimum wage” in the Code on Wages Bill 2017. The apprehension that minimum wage of Rs. 18000/- per month has been fixed for all employees is, thus incorrect, false and baseless. The minimum wages will vary from place to place depending upon skill required, arduousness of the work assigned and geographical location.

7. Further, the Code on Wages Bill 2017, in the clause 9 (3), clearly states that the Central Government, before fixing the national minimum wage, may obtain the advice of the Central Advisory Board, having representatives from employers and employees. Therefore the Code provide for a consultative mechanism before determining the national minimum wage.

8. Some reports have also been appearing in the media regarding the revised methodology for calculation of minimum wages by enhancing the units from three to six. It was purely a demand raised by Trade Unions in the recent meeting of the Central Advisory Board on Minimum Wages. However it is clarified that such proposal is not part of the Code on Wages Bill.

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Section 377: SC to start hearing

A march in support of the LGBT community in Chennai. M. Karunakaran

The Supreme Court is likely to hear on September 8 curative petitions against Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code, a colonial-era provision criminalising consensual sexual acts of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) adults in private.

On February 2 last year, a Bench led by the then Chief Justice of India, T.S. Thakur, indicated that the petitions needed to be referred to a five-judge Constitution Bench for a possible back-to-roots, in-depth hearing.

The three-judge Bench of CJI Thakur and Justices Anil R. Dave and J.S. Khehar gave credence to arguments that the threat imposed by Section 377 amounted to denial of the rights to privacy and dignity, and resulted in gross miscarriage of justice.

Major boost

The fight against Section 377 got a major boost when a nine-judge Bench of the Supreme Court, while upholding the right to privacy as a fundamental right intrinsic to life and liberty, ripped apart a 2014 judgment dismissing the case against Section 377.

The nine-judge Bench on August 28 observed that the chilling effect of Section 377 “poses a grave danger to the unhindered fulfilment of one’s sexual orientation, as an element of privacy and dignity”.

In separate judgments, the Constitution Bench led by then Chief Justice of India J.S. Khehar concluded that the 2014 verdict by a two-judge Bench of the apex court pandered to a “majoritarian” view to turn down the LGBT community their inherent fundamental rights of life, personal liberty, equality and gender discrimination.

The 2014 judgment’s view that “a minuscule fraction of the country’s population constitutes lesbians, gays, bisexuals or transgenders” was not a sustainable basis to deny the right to privacy, Justice D.Y. Chandrachud observed in his judgment.

Last stand

The curative petitions was the last stand for the over a decade-old legal fight for LGBT rights. The Review Bench of the Supreme Court, in January 2014, had agreed with its original appeal judgment on December 11, 2013, setting aside the historic verdict of the Delhi High Court. The High Court had declared Section 377 unconstitutional.

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Govt. backs varying ages for girls' marriage

The legislature may have taken a conscious decision to retain the minimum age range for marriage between 15 and 18 for girls considering the socio-economic conditions of the country, the government argued in the Supreme Court on Tuesday.

A Bench of Justices M.B. Lokur and Deepak Gupta questioned the government about the logic behind keeping different minimum ages for marriage under different laws.

“The age of consent varies from the Indian Penal Code to the Prohibition of Child Marriage Act to the Hindu Marriage Act ... What is the logic in keeping different age limits for the marriage of girls,” the Bench asked.

The court termed child marriages in the country “not marriages but mirages”.

The court had earlier said it was unfortunate that parents drove their minor children into marriage. “It is a hard reality and is unfortunate that most of the child marriages happening in the country are arranged by parents of the girl child. However, to this, there are odd exceptions when a minor boy and girl fall in love and marry on their own,” the Bench said. It is hearing a petition filed by an NGO, Independent Thought, challenging Exception 2 to Section 375 (rape) of the Indian Penal Code, which permits “sexual intercourse with a girl child aged between 15 and 18 only on the ground that she is married”.

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The next superpower in global food supply

Russia is often seen as a country that produces little that the world wants except energy commodities. The oil export dependence looks like a major time bomb under the country's future, given the current focus in the West and in China on reducing the use of hydrocarbon fuels. By an ironic quirk, however, Russia appears to be benefiting from the climate change its energy resources are helping to fuel: Its prospects as the world's biggest wheat exporter and a grain superpower are bright, not least because of the rise in global temperatures.

In the last marketing year, which ran from July 2016 through June 2017, Russia exported 27.8 million metric tons of wheat, more than the entire European Union (EU), to claim first place in the world for the first time since the EU has been counted as a unit. In the current marketing year, the US department of agriculture predicts, Russia will export 31.5 million metric tons, increasing its global lead; it's already facing infrastructure constraints because of the fast growth. It's also a leading exporter of corn, barley and oats. Along with Ukraine and Kazakhstan, it's part of the force increasingly shaping global grain markets.

Alexander Tkachev, Russia's agriculture minister, has repeatedly said that he sees grain eventually displacing oil as the country's biggest export revenue source. That's not a view the Kremlin likes to entertain—it would rather hope for a technology boom—but Tkachev's prophecy may be more realistic for a number of reasons.

The first two of these are outside of Russia's purview: The growing global population and climate change. Global grain consumption grew, on average, 2.8% a year in 2011-2016, and the International Grains Council predicts 1.4% annual increases through 2021. At the same time, climate studies show that, compared to the late 1980s, the time of the Soviet Union's demise, which depressed Eurasian agriculture for more than a decade, the temperature in Eurasia's grain-producing areas will increase by up to 1.8 degree Celsius by the 2020s and by up to 3.9 degrees Celsius by the 2050s, with the greatest increase in winter. This means a longer growing season and better crop yields. More carbon dioxide in the atmosphere is also good for crops.

Climate change means Russian farms can expand northward, to lands that were never used to grow grain. But more importantly, it will help Russia, and to a lesser extent Ukraine and Kazakhstan, reclaim cropland that has fallen into disuse in 1991 through 2000—some 140 million acres. Those lands were abandoned in the early years of post-Soviet capitalism because they required too much investment and yielded little if any profit; that's changing, both for climate-related reasons and with technological advances.

These have been relentless in Russia and the neighbouring grain-growing countries in recent years. The Russian capitalist transition and the almost-free but excessively bureaucratized trade in land have created a few dozen large agricultural conglomerates, which have adopted Western technology to increase yields and which have been receiving increased government support since 2005, when the Kremlin declared agriculture a national priority.

These vertically integrated giants are both a blessing for Russian exports—they have driven the growth—and a curse. A collection of scholarly articles on the Eurasian Wheat Belt pointed out that smaller private farms manage land more efficiently and achieve better crop yields than corporations and recommended that Russia, Ukraine and Kazakhstan reform their land regulations to make it easier for individuals to farm.

Russia has a head start in this, since it liberalized land ownership in the early 2000s. Ukraine doesn't even have a legal land market today, which should explain its slower grain production

growth in recent years. But given that much of the country's industrial base is now in a war zone, it has to rely more on agriculture; besides, it's under pressure from the International Monetary Fund to allow the free sale of land. While warmer Ukraine benefits less than Russia from climate change, it still has that huge unused resource.

Together, climate change, population growth, the remaining technological lag between Western and post-Soviet agriculture, and the opportunity to fix regulatory inefficiencies create a huge growth potential for Russia, Ukraine and Kazakhstan. Though their political paths have diverged, these three may, to a degree, share an economic future in the post-oil world.

Of course, a focus on agricultural exports still means a commodity dependence and a vulnerability to global trends in a much less concentrated market than the oil one; Russian wheat sold for more than \$350 per ton in 2012, but the price is down to \$180 now. Besides, in agriculture, growth depends on government support, unlike in the case of hydrocarbons, where the government can passively draw a rent. The export infrastructure, given the Russian state's hold on transportation, is also a bottleneck that requires taxpayers' money to remove. But the support may eventually pay a dividend if Russia succeeds in developing higher-margin agricultural production—that of meat, milk and vegetables, which the country still imports. The Russian government has been trying to stimulate that development by putting an embargo on Western products, and it has spurred growth, but Russian producers lack the expertise and resources for a real breakthrough.

Bloomberg View

Leonid Bershidsky is a Bloomberg View columnist.

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NITI Aayog calls renewed focus on Nutrition, launches the National Nutrition Strategy**NITI Aayog calls renewed focus on Nutrition, launches the National Nutrition Strategy**

Leader of the Green Revolution Dr. M.S Swaminathan and Padma Shri Dr. H Sudarshan, today, launched the National Nutrition Strategy, along with Vice Chairman Dr. Rajiv Kumar and Member Dr. Vinod Paul.

With a benefit to cost ratio of 16:1 for 40 low and middle-income countries, there is a well recognized rationale, globally, for investing in Nutrition. The recently published NFHS-4 results reflect some progress, with a decline in the overall levels of under nutrition in both women and children. However, the pace of decline is far below what numerous countries with similar growth trajectories to India have achieved. Moreover, India pays an income penalty of 9% to 10% due to a workforce that was stunted during their childhood.

To address this and to bring nutrition to the centre-stage of the National Development Agenda, NITI Aayog has drafted the National Nutrition Strategy. Formulated through an extensive consultative process, the Strategy lays down a roadmap for effective action, among both implementers and practitioners, in achieving our nutrition objectives.

The nutrition strategy envisages a framework wherein the four proximate determinants of nutrition – uptake of health services, food, drinking water & sanitation and income & livelihoods – work together to accelerate decline of under nutrition in India. Currently, there is also a lack of real time measurement of these determinants, which reduces our capacity for targeted action among the most vulnerable mothers and children.

Supply side challenges often overshadow the need to address behavioural change efforts to generate demand for nutrition services. This strategy, therefore, gives prominence to demand and community mobilisation as a key determinant to address India's nutritional needs.

The Nutrition Strategy framework envisages a Kuposhan Mukh Bharat - linked to Swachh Bharat and Swasth Bharat. The aim is to ensure that States create customized State/ District Action Plans to address local needs and challenges. This is especially relevant in view of enhanced resources available with the States, to prioritise focussed interventions with a greater role for panchayats and urban local bodies.

The strategy enables states to make strategic choices, through decentralized planning and local innovation, with accountability for nutrition outcomes.

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Centre asks States to focus on impactful and PPP based smart city projects

Centre asks States to focus on impactful and PPP based smart city projects

Rs.32,000 cr worth PPP projects identified so far; 261 impactful projects worth another Rs.31,000 cr

Central government has asked the States to focus on early implementation of smart city projects that have a visible and transformative impact in the lives of citizens in identified smart cities. Further to review of Smart City Mission by Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi during PRAGATI on the 30th of last month, Shri Durga Shanker Mishra, Secretary (Housing & Urban Affairs) wrote to the Chief Secretaries of all the States and Union Territories in this regard the next day.

Shri Mishra urged the States and UTs to ensure commencement of work by November this year on 261 impactful smart city projects in 60 cities that were announced during January-September, 2016. These identified projects accounts for an investment of Rs.31,112 cr . States and UTs have also been asked to speed up work on 370 PPP projects that involve an investment of 32,410 cr.

The impactful projects identified range from building 40 outdoor fitness centres in New Delhi Municipal Council area at a cost of Rs.1.31 cr to redevelopment of 340 acre area in Bhopal at a cost of Rs.3,000 cr.

An indicative list of impactful projects being taken up in the first batch of 20 smart cities and some others are:

S.No	City	Impactful projects	Investment (Rs. cr)
1	Bhubaneswar	Railway Station Multi-modal hub	845
2	Pune	River Front Development and Heritage City Museum	235
3	Jaipur	Talkatora Lake Development with high quality laser show	130
4	Surat	Logistic Park and smart redevelopment of existing creek	210
5	Kochi (Kerala)	Broadway Market and Ernakulam Market Redevelopment	110
6	Ahmedabad	Intermodal Transport Hub and Slum Rehabilitation	961
7	Jabalpur	River Front Development and Green development of Institutional Zone	310
8	Visakhapatnam(AP)	Beach Redevelopment and Shore Protection	365
9	Solapur (Maharashtra)	Rejuvenation of Siddheshwar Lake and Heritage structures	49
10	Davanagere (Karnataka)	Rejuvenation of Mandakki Bhatti	373
11	Indore	Infrastructure development and Parking	679
12	NDMC	Commercial Development of Yahswant Place	89
13	Coimbatore (Tamil Nadu)	Lake development and Non-Motorised Transport infrastructure	526

14	Kakinada (AP)	Space development along canal between Indrapalem Lock and Jagannaickpur Old Bridge and development of eateries	100
15	Belgavi (Karnataka)	Kanbargi Lake Rejuvenation and recreational spaces	10
16	Udaipur	Area development with water, sewerage and road infrastructure and underground cabling	450
17	Guwahati (Assam)	Brahmaputra River Front Development	532
18	Chennai	Pedestrian Plaza	83
19	Ludhiana	Retrofitting of Sarabha Nagar Market	10
20	Bhopal	Redevelopment of 340 acres of area	3000
	Lucknow	Heritage projects, Cultural Hub and Library	160
	Dharmashala (HP)	Redevelopment of Kacchari Adda and Kotwali Bazar	95
	Chandigarh	Affordable housing in Sector 43	321
	Faridabad (Haryana)	Badkal Lake Rejuvenation	45
	Agra	Taj Orientation Centre	232
	Varanasi	Convention Centre	211
	Rourkela	Brahmani Riverfront Development	129
	Raipur	Market development	1026
	Kalyan-Dombivilli (Maharashtra)	Kalyan Station Improvement	427

Some of the major PPP smart city projects are: Bhubaneswar (Affordable housing-Rs.840 cr), Raipur (Urban Plaza at Ganj Mandi-Rs.983 cr), Bilaspur (Markets development –Rs.1,241 cr), Amritsar (Urban space development –Rs.1,028 cr), Coimbatore (Water supply -557 cr), Warangal, Telangana (Bus stand-Rs.611 cr), Shimla (Tourism and recreation infrastructure- Rs.898 cr), Aligarh (Smart multi-level parking-Rs.289 cr), Bengaluru (Tourism and recreation infrastructure- Rs.234 cr) and Pune (Electrical buses- Rs.170 cr).

AAR/KM

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Mountains of garbage: India's neglected waste management crisis

The [collapse of a great wall of garbage](#) in east Delhi's Ghazipur area, sweeping people and vehicles into a nearby canal, is a stark reminder that India's neglected waste management crisis can have deadly consequences. More than a year after the notification of the much-delayed Solid Waste Management Rules, cities and towns are in no position to comply with its stipulations, beginning with the segregation of different kinds of waste at source and their scientific processing. Neither are urban local governments treating the 62 million tonnes of waste generated annually in the country as a potential resource. They have left the task of value extraction mostly to the informal system of garbage collectors and recyclers. Improving on the national record of collecting only 80% of waste generated and being able to process just 28% of that quantum, requires behaviour modification among citizens and institutions. But what is more important is that the municipal bodies put in place an integrated system to transport and process what has been segregated at source. The Swachh Bharat programme of the Centre has focused too narrowly on individual action to keep streets clean, without concurrent pressure on State and municipal authorities to move closer to scientific management by the deadline of April 2018 set for most places, and arrest the spread of pollution from trash.

In the absence of stakeholders at the local body level, recoverable resources embedded in discarded materials are lost due to dumping. Organic refuse, which forms about 50% of all garbage, readily lends itself to the generation of compost or production of methane for household use or power generation. But it is a major opportunity lost. Organic waste that could help green cities and feed small and affordable household biogas plants is simply being thrown away. It is also ironic that while some countries such as Rwanda and Kenya have introduced stiff penalties for the use of flimsy plastic bags, India is doing little to prevent them from drifting into suburban garbage mountains, rivers, lakes and the sea, and being ingested by cattle feeding on dumped refuse. A new paradigm is needed, in which bulk waste generators take the lead and city managers show demonstrable change in the way it is processed. There has to be a shift away from large budgets for collection and transport by private contractors, to the processing of segregated garbage. As the nodal body for the implementation of the new rules, the Central Pollution Control Board should put out periodic assessments of the preparedness of urban local bodies in the run-up to the deadline. Without a rigorous approach, the national problem of merely shifting city trash to the suburbs, out of sight of those who generate it, will fester and choke the landscape. Considering that waste volumes are officially estimated to grow to 165 million tonnes a year by 2030, many more suburbs are bound to be threatened by collapsing or burning trash mountains.

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

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Child marital rape: SC Bench questions exception in penal law

The Supreme Court on Wednesday questioned the reason for Parliament to create an exception in the penal law declaring that sexual intercourse by a man with his minor wife is not rape.

The apex court asked the reason behind such an exception in the Indian Penal Code when the age of consent was 18 years for “all purposes.”

“We do not want to go into the aspect of marital rape. That is for Parliament to see if they want to increase or decrease the age of consent. But once Parliament decided that we have fixed 18 years as the age of consent, can they carve out an exception like this,” a Bench of Justices Madan B Lokur and Deepak Gupta asked the Centre.

“When you [the government] recognise the age of consent to be 18 for all purposes, then why this exception,” it asked.

Section 375 of the IPC, which defines the offence of rape, has an exception clause that says intercourse or sexual act by a man with his wife aged below 18 is not rape. Responding to the query, government counsel submitted that the exemption was created after due thought and consideration by Parliament.

During the hearing, the Bench referred to the aspect of child marriage and said that despite there being a law which held it illegal, the practice was still going on.

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Centre sets up panel to suggest on new jobs

The NDA government has constituted a new task force led by NITI Aayog vice-chairman Rajiv Kumar to recommend measures to increase employment by promoting labour-intensive exports.

“While the Indian workforce has high aspirations, a majority of the workers are still employed in low-productivity, low-wage jobs in small, micro and own-account enterprises. An urgent and sustained expansion of the organized sector is essential to address India’s unemployment and under-employment issue,” the NITI Aayog said in a statement on Wednesday.

Key strategy

“An important strategy is to enable a shift towards more labour-intensive goods and services that are destined for exports. Given the importance of exports in generating jobs, India needs to create an environment in which globally competitive exporters can emerge and flourish,” the Aayog noted. The committee has been asked to submit its report by November 2017.

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Indian family: Here is why Indians are retiring poor with more debt and no pension

NEW DELHI: Indian families borrow and invest in very different ways than families in the US, UK or Germany, and even those in [China](#). The depth of these differences, across all ages and economic levels, is revealed in a recent report on household finances prepared by the [RBI](#).

It shows that a major proportion of household wealth in Indian families is kept as real estate or [gold](#), even among younger families, and even by the poorest 40 per cent of population. This is not the case in other countries. Institutional borrowings by Indian families are low in early life and go on increasing leaving many retired persons with a debt overhang, unlike advanced countries where mortgages reduce after retirement.

And, pensions are virtually absent in [India](#) while in most Western countries they are a major asset in old age. More than three quarters of family wealth is invested in real estate (land and dwelling units) by an average [Indian family](#) compared to just 44 per cent in the US, and 37 per cent in UK and Germany. In China, about 62 per cent of wealth goes into real estate.

Even among the poorest 20 per cent of the population, 59 per cent have some land or dwelling unit in India, while in China, the similar proportion is 61 per cent. But in the rich countries a minuscule share of the poorest quintile has real estate — 4 per cent in US, and less than 1 per cent in UK and Germany.

This may sound bizarre considering India's poverty but here is the thing: average value of the main residence in the poorest Indian households is Rs 22,000, while it is Rs 15 lakh in Germany and Rs 3.7 lakh in the US. The RBI report is talking of proportion of different types of family wealth. Their absolute values are obviously very different.

Besides real estate, the other main target of investment in India is gold. About 11 per cent of family wealth goes into buying gold. Families in other countries spend virtually nothing on this, with the Chinese spending a mere 0.4 per cent of their wealth on gold. Indian families also have gold loans amounting to about 8 per cent of their total liabilities, again a feature not found anywhere else.

"Most households use debt to cope with emergency expenses, such as hospitalisation, or property damage due to a natural disaster. The interest rates on unsecured debt are very high. Therefore, households prefer to put their savings in real estate and gold, which can also be used as collateral," RBI's [Household Finance Committee](#) chairman Tarun Ramadorai of Imperial College, London, told TOI.

Detailed data on countries drawn from various surveys is available in a paper by Ramadorai and co-authors published in 2017. Although 73 per cent of families in India have financial assets like cash, bank accounts and pension accounts, they hold very small amounts adding up to just 5 per cent of their total wealth, he added.

Medical emergencies, especially among the elderly, are one of the main reasons why families in India seek loans at usurious rates from money lenders. Such unsecured loans make up nearly 56 per cent of all liabilities for Indian families, much higher than China at 26 per cent, US (13 per cent) and Germany (24 per cent).

The RBI report notes that "some of these risks could be mitigated through strengthening the public provision of health and social welfare services." Indian families are also exceptional in that

housing loans are low in early life and rise beyond retirement ages. In other countries such loans rise in middle age but fall off at retirement.

This happens because Indian families borrow later in life and it is customary to bequeath property to future generations who in turn look after the elderly. These traditional structures are increasingly under pressure from shifting demographic patterns, social norms, and changing economic conditions, introducing risks to economic well-being especially as households age, the report says.

(This article was originally published in The Times of India)

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Social revolution in a JAM

Safe metal box money secure concept symbol vector

In a post on Facebook made on the third anniversary of the Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana (PMJDY) last week, the Finance Minister reportedly said: “Just as GST (goods and services tax) created one tax, one market, one India, the PMJDY and the JAM revolution can link all Indians into one common financial, economic, and digital space. No Indian will be outside the mainstream.” The suggestion of equality as a criterion of governance that is conveyed by this is to be welcomed. JAM, deriving from Jan Dhan, Aadhaar and Mobile, combines bank accounts for the poor, who barely had the money to deposit in them, direct transfer of benefits into these accounts and the facility of making financial payments through mobile phones. Aadhaar is the pivot here, allowing the government to ensure that benefits reach the poor and enabling them to make payments through ordinary mobile phones. For furthering the latter the government has devised the Bharat Interface for Money (BHIM) app. The Minister spoke of these developments as a “social revolution”, perhaps alluding to the feature that the poor are the most direct beneficiaries.

There is no doubt that eliminating leakage in the transfer of welfare payments and enabling the poor to have bank accounts are worthy objectives, and when achieved should be considered significant. Indeed, it is damning that a largely nationalised banking sector had done very little to extend banking services to the poor till recently, and credit goes to this government that it made this a priority. But claims of having achieved inclusion by operationalising the JAM trinity appear somewhat exaggerated. A financial inclusion, in the sense of everyone having a bank account and access to reliable and free electronic payments system, is not the same as economic inclusion. At its most basic level, inclusion from the economic point of view would entail equal access to opportunities for earning a livelihood. This in turn implies employment opportunities. As the demand for labour is a derived demand, in the sense that it exists only when there is demand for goods and services, a significant element in ensuring inclusion is to maintain, directly or indirectly, the level of demand in the economy. Next, even when the demand for labour exists, potential workers must be endowed with the capabilities to take advantage of the opportunity offered. The potential of the JAM trinity for bringing about either of these conditions for economic inclusion is limited. This is so because JAM functions in the digital space while much of our life is lived in the brick and mortar world. In the latter space we have seen very little improvement, not just recently but since economic reforms were launched over 25 years ago.

The economic reforms of 1991 were largely in the nature of liberalisation of the policy regime, meant to make it easier for firms to produce while at the same time exposing them to international competition with a view to increasing efficiency in the economy. What a strategy based exclusively on liberalisation overlooks is that an ecosystem of production is constituted not only by the laws and regulations determining the ease of doing business, but also the access that firms have to producer services ranging from water supply to waste management. These producer services require large capital outlay, often deterring private firms. When private entities do provide these producers services they tend to be expensive, deterring their off-take. It is for this reason that globally they are generally provided by governments. In India the case for public provision of producer services, and there is no reason to provide them free of charge, is particularly high as the overwhelming part of employment is in the form of self-employment. These units are scraping the barrel as it is. Even when producer units employ workers they are poorly capitalised, making it almost impossible for them to generate producer services themselves. Thus the public provision of producer services should be an essential part of public policy. Empowerment in the brick and mortar space would require public infrastructure on a gigantic scale compared to what we have now.

Moving from production to being, JAM cannot even claim equalisation, leave alone empowerment. Amartya Sen effectively settled a longstanding debate on the question of the metric to be used to gauge equality when he proposed that it should be human capabilities. These are the endowments that allow individuals to undertake functionings they value. We would have achieved a social revolution when we have equipped all individuals with the essential capabilities. This happens when a society has, at a minimum, universal health and education infrastructure accessible to all.

We have in recent weeks witnessed governance failure on a major scale in many parts of the country. In U.P.'s Gorakhpur district children have died due to systemic failure that meant that a district's only hospital is not able to maintain a steady supply of oxygen. Later a heavy downpour in Mumbai led to a complete shutdown, widespread loss of livelihood and some of life. And most recently, in Delhi's suburb of Ghazipur a garbage mountain came crashing down, again causing death and disruption. But we would need to turn to Bengaluru to recognise the limits to information technology in solving problems of living. Lakes that are toxic when they haven't been gobbled up by the real estate mafia, traffic snarls and inadequate sewerage make life less than easy in this IT hub aspiring to play first cousin to Silicon Valley.

Given the extraordinary challenges faced by India in the provision of public infrastructure ranging from health and education to drainage and sewerage, the claim made for JAM is breathtaking in its simplicity. JAM ensures seamless transfer of welfare payments and facilitates the making payments in real time. Once again, these are worthy objectives, but fall well short of the social revolution the honourable minister claims for them. Our social revolution will arrive when all Indians are empowered through an equality of capabilities. This would require committing resources to building the requisite social and physical infrastructure and investing time to govern its functioning. JAM may have achieved equality in the digital space but is far from having empowered Indians in spheres in which they are severely deprived at present, an empowerment that they clearly value. The government has leveraged IT smartly in operationalising JAM but the possibility of replicating this to transform the ecosystem of production for firms and the ecosystem of living for individuals is limited. The widespread disempowerment faced by the people of this country predates the arrival of Narendra Modi, but his government appears to give false comfort through its claims.

In a market economy one of the markers of what the public think of the government's policies is the response of private investors. Private investment in India has declined steadily over the past few years. Overall growth had however been maintained, partly through the demand generating impact of public investment. But now even growth appears to be stalling. The latest GDP figures from the Central Statistics Office show growth in the first quarter of the current financial year to be lower than the average for 2016-17. Data actually point to a steadily slowing economy with growth having been successively lower in the past five quarters. There appears to be a mismatch between the government's own assessment of its policies and the private sector's valuation of their worth. The jubilation over JAM is an instance of this.

Pulapre Balakrishnan is Professor of Economics at Ashoka University, Sonapat and Senior Fellow, IIM Kozhikode. Views are personal

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Preserving our vanishing tribes, their heritage, language and wisdom

The breathtaking Nilgiris are home to a number of indigenous tribes, one of which is Toda.

Unfortunately, the once thriving tribe has fewer than 1,000 members today. Based on the yardstick set by our modern education system, these tribesmen and women are considered illiterate and backward. However, one has to visit their homes, interact with them and see their craft to truly understand the depth of their knowledge, art, traditions and sensibilities.

The Toda tribe is largely dependent on buffalo herding and embroidery for its livelihood. Its members are incredibly skilled artisans known for the red-and-black embroidery on white fabrics that has even earned them a GI (geographical indication) tag. They live sustainable lives, in harmony with nature where all their resources are available. The Toda tribals have their own language, which does not have a script.

Over the last century, their numbers have been dwindling. The sharp decline in their population is largely related to the decline in agriculture land, much of which has been lost of afforestation. With their dwindling numbers, their art, craft and traditions are facing a slow death. If not preserved, the day is not far when their unique embroidery, for instance, is lost forever.

The Todas are an extremely closed community, barely connected to the rest of the world and, thus, deprived of the opportunities connectivity offers. They are not alone in leading marginalized and excluded lives. Overall, Scheduled Tribes account for 8.6% of India's population, according to the 2011 Census.

If we focus on language alone, almost every indigenous tribe speaks its own language or dialect. In fact, according to the People's Linguistic Survey of India, as many as 780 different languages are spoken and 86 different scripts are used in the country. However, only 22 of them are recognized by the government as scheduled languages.

What is even more disappointing is that India has lost nearly 250 languages in the last half century, and 196 more have been declared endangered by UNESCO. As many as 120 of these 196 languages are spoken in the North-East. With most of these languages spoken by tribes and lacking a script, it has been particularly difficult to preserve them.

However, digital media allows for their documentation in audio-visual formats now. Simply recording audio or video of folk songs/folk tales in different languages can help preserve not just the language/dialect but also the folk culture.

In the same manner, the traditional knowledge about sustainable living, medicines, farming and architecture that tribals store in their memories can also be documented for preservation and dissemination.

This is what motivated us to work with the Sahariya tribe in Baran, Rajasthan, in 2007. Here, the Digital Empowerment Foundation (DEF) established a 200 km community network and connected it to a local server. This way, even if the Internet is down, the community can share content and access content through the local server, thus creating an intranet or community network. This has also encouraged the community over the years to create a localized database and archive its oral and traditional knowledge, art as well as culture.

Just like the Sahariyas, the Toda tribe too is a rich repository of culture, craft and heritage. So when the All India Artisans and Craftworkers Welfare Association reached out to us, seeking help

to digitally archive the Toda tribe's knowledge, we were more than happy to help. Together, we are now developing a platform that captures the history, heritage, culture, ecology, traditions, art, craft and stories of the Todas.

The idea behind setting up a digital archive in the form of a website is to not just create a repository of this information for the purpose of preservation but also allow the rest of the world to see—without compromising the uniqueness of their craft or designs—the richness of the Todas.

The Internet has a lot to offer to tribes living secluded lives in the forests. Connectivity can ensure better access to government schemes, entitlements and rights; digital market linkages can enable tribal communities to exhibit their craft and agricultural produce to the world for an improved livelihood; access to the Internet can keep them updated on government notifications and other relevant information; digital documentation can preserve and showcase their richness for posterity.

All of this, along with more, also has a direct connection with social as well as behavioural changes within a community. We envision digitally empowering as many tribes as we can.

We wish to bring the tribes of India under the umbrella of digital inclusion to expose them to the services and opportunities the internet has to offer. However, the intention is not merely to teach community members to operate a computer but to provide them contextual, relevant and timely digital literacy, so that they can access the internet to consume the information it offers and share the knowledge that they hold with the rest of the world.

Osama Manzar is founder-director of Digital Empowerment Foundation and chair of Manthan and mBillionth awards. He is member, advisory board, at Alliance for Affordable Internet and has co-authored NetCh@kra—15 Years of Internet in India and Internet Economy of India.

He tweets @osamamanzar.

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China's shift to city-led growth

China has achieved some four decades of rapid economic growth. But one powerful source of growth has yet to be fully tapped: urbanization. Now, the potential of megacities as an engine of dynamism and increased prosperity is finally getting the high-level attention it deserves.

Over the last decade, China has been working to shift from a manufacturing-led growth model fuelled by low-cost labour to an innovation-led, higher-value-added model underpinned by strong productivity gains. Urbanization will be critical to facilitate this shift, not least by enabling economies of scale. Currently, though China is the world's most populous country and its second-largest economy, only half the population lives in urbanized areas, and less than 10% reside permanently in megacities. And the country's urbanization rate remains well below the global average.

Growth in China's megacities—metropolitan areas with a population exceeding 10 million—has long been heavily constrained by rigid state administrative divisions and planning agencies. Indeed, in pursuing rapid industrialization, megacities have often been less successful than smaller cities—which have largely evaded such constraints—in accumulating productive capital, attracting foreign direct investment (FDI), and demonstrating entrepreneurial spirit.

In the 1990s, the small city of Kunshan became China's leading centre for manufacturing electronic products. By integrating themselves into global supply chains, small cities in Guangdong province—including Dongguan, Huizhou, Shunde and Zhongshan—have played a critical role in establishing China as the "Factory Of The World."

But while the success of smaller cities is to be celebrated, it is China's megacities where the greatest potential to fuel future progress in productivity—and thus GDP (gross domestic product) growth—is to be found. So far, China has just four "first-tier" cities (with populations exceeding 20 million): Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou and Shenzhen.

Given the size of China's population and economy, that is not a lot. And, in fact, there is no reason to believe that these megacities have reached their capacity, in terms of population or contribution to economic growth. Moreover, China has many dynamic second-tier cities—such as Chengdu, Tianjin, Hangzhou, Wuhan and Suzhou—that are capable of reaching first-tier status, if given the chance.

In order to maximize the potential of China's cities, the government will need to be much more adaptive and flexible, especially regarding its notoriously strict control of urban land-development ratios. In particular, China must abandon its land-quota system, which not only limits the amount of land cities can develop for future productivity growth, but also allocates a disproportionate share of land to factories. Otherwise, urbanization will continue pushing up already-high housing costs, but not efficiently enough to power sustained growth and development. The good news is that local governments are already working with the central government to alleviate or even eliminate existing administrative constraints.

Another strategy for advancing China's transition towards a city-led growth model is to expand the role played by urban clusters that leverage the strength of first-tier cities to boost growth in less-developed areas. From an economic standpoint, the Yangtze and Pearl River Deltas—which encompass megacities like Guangzhou, Shanghai and Shenzhen—are undoubtedly the most important such urban agglomerations, set to generate higher future productivity gains from economies of scale and complementarity.

Here, too, China's leadership has already caught on. This past March, Chinese Premier Li Keqiang announced a plan for the development of a city cluster in the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macau Greater Bay Area which covers nine cities, including Guangzhou and Shenzhen, as well as the special administration regions of Hong Kong and Macau.

From 2010 to 2016, the annual GDP of the Greater Bay Area soared from ¥5.42 trillion (\$82 billion) to ¥9.35 trillion (\$1.42 trillion), making it the world's third-largest urban economy, after Tokyo and New York. Yet the population of the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macau Greater Bay Area is growing fast, and its GDP per capita is less than half that of Tokyo, suggesting that its potential is nowhere near depleted.

Moreover, China's leaders seem to be eyeing a second greater bay area, centred on Hangzhou Bay, which, because it overlaps with the Yangtze River Delta, could go a long way towards integrating that already-prosperous region. Such a cluster could cover the coastal megacity of Shanghai, as well as about 10 more important cities across the Zhejiang and Jiangsu provinces. It would include world-class ports, such as the Port of Ningbo-Zhoushan (the world's busiest in terms of cargo tonnage). The result would be a bay area on the scale of San Francisco and Tokyo.

The pace of China's economic growth over the last four decades has been unprecedented. But China has yet to complete its rise to rich-country status. As it upgrades its economy to become more knowledge-based and technology-driven, it is again leveraging its strengths. There is no better example of this than the ongoing effort to tap the potential of megacities.

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'Income inequality in India at its highest level since 1922'

According to a research paper by renowned economists Thomas Piketty and Lucas Chancel, income inequality in India is at its highest level since 1922, the year the Income Tax Act was passed. In December, they will release the first 'World Inequality Report' where they will compare India's inequality trajectory with other emerging, industrialised and low-income countries and suggest ways to tackle global and national inequality.

*In an e-mail interview, **Lucas Chancel** discusses the findings of the paper titled 'Indian income inequality, 1922-2014: From British Raj to Billionaire Raj?' Excerpts:*

Can you summarise key findings of the paper?

According to our benchmark estimates, the share of national income accruing to the top 1% income earners is now at its highest level since the creation of the Indian Income Tax [Act] in 1922. The top 1% of earners captured less than 21% of total income in the late 1930s, before dropping to 6% in the early 1980s and rising to 22% today. Over the 1951-1980 period, the bottom 50% group captured 28% of total growth and incomes of this group grew faster than the average, while the top 0.1% incomes decreased. Over the 1980-2014 period, the situation was reversed; the top 0.1% of earners captured a higher share of total growth than the bottom 50% (12% versus 11%), while the top 1% received a higher share of total growth than the middle 40% (29% vs. 23%). These findings suggest that much can be done to promote more inclusive growth in India.

You have said the income inequality has been at the highest level?

Since the 1980s, India did not only open-up and liberalise its economy, it did it in a way that was very favourable to top income earners and capital owners.

Top tax rates which were very high in the 1970s (up to 98%) decreased to 30% in the 1980s. Wages set by governments in government enterprises were liberalised after privatisations and the dispersion increased.

It is also likely that privatisations principally benefited richest income groups, those who already had capital, rather than the majority of the population which didn't access equity.

On the other hand, growth at the bottom of the distribution was notably lower than average growth rates since the 1980s.

Is this finding unique for India?

To better understand the rise in Indian inequality, let's look at other emerging countries. China also liberalised and opened up after 1978, and in doing so, experienced a sharp income growth as well as a sharp rise in inequality.

This rise, however, stopped in the 2000s so that inequality is currently at lower level there than [in] India (top 1% income share at 14% versus 22% in India, according to our estimates). In Russia, the move from a communist to a market economy was extremely brutal and today has a similar level of inequality as in India. This shows that there are different strategies to transit from a highly regulated economy to a liberalised one. In the arrays of possible pathways, India pursued a very unequal way but could probably have chosen another path. All this data is available on an open-access website, WID.world.

There have been counter arguments to your thesis?

Some commentators argue that without extreme growth at the very top of the distribution, there wouldn't have been high growth in India. There is, in fact, little evidence supporting this claim. The top 0.1% captured more total income growth as the bottom 50% since 1980. Would all income growth have disappeared if the situation had been reversed? We can also doubt this. The highest growth period in Western Europe, after the second world war, was also a period of equitable redistribution of the fruits of growth. Europe grew as a market economy but it was not a market society. It had institutions, rules, norms limiting the power of capital accumulation and of income concentration.

What do these findings mean for India?

There are many options and we do not claim to put an end to debates. Regarding rising inequality at the very top of the distribution, we show that after 1980, in India, top Income Tax rates were brought from extreme levels to much lower ones. Land concentration is also an issue in India where agriculture remains a key sector. Indeed, access to free and quality education and health is crucial to raise bottom 50% incomes.

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PM wishes the women officers of Navika Sagar Parikrama the very best; urges people to share good wishes on the NM App

PM wishes the women officers of Navika Sagar Parikrama the very best; urges people to share good wishes on the NM App

The Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi, has conveyed his best wishes to the 6 women officers of the Navika Sagar Parikrama, who will begin their journey of circumnavigating the globe on board INSV Tarini, today.

The Prime Minister has also urged everyone to share their good wishes and words of encouragement for the team of Navika Sagar Parikrama, on the Narendra Modi App.

“Today is a special day! 6 women officers of the Navy begin their journey of circumnavigating the globe on board INSV Tarini.

The entire nation comes together in wishing the all-women team of Navika Sagar Parikrama the very best in their remarkable endeavour.

Share your good wishes and words of encouragement for the team of Navika Sagar Parikrama, on the NM App”, the Prime Minister said.

This is the first-ever Indian circumnavigation of the globe by an all-women crew. They will begin their voyage today from Goa, and expect to return to Goa in March 2018, after completing the circumnavigation. The expedition has been titled Navika Sagar Parikrama. The Parikrama will be covered in five legs, with stop-overs at 4 ports: Fremantle (Australia), Lyttleton (New Zealand), Port Stanley (Falklands), and Cape Town (South Africa).

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The '3-3-3' puzzle and what to do about it

That we are in the midst of an unprecedented and alarming widening of income gaps amongst Indian states is becoming accepted as conventional wisdom. My co-author Praveen Chakravarty and I have been documenting this point for the past year, and our research at the IDFC Institute finds mention in last week's *The Economist* in a very useful report on the topic.

The facts are stark and simply illustrated (*see chart*). The ratio of per capita state income levels as between the richest three and the poorest three of the 12 largest states has been skyrocketing for the past quarter-century, and today stands at well over 300%. We have dubbed this the "3-3-3" puzzle: The three richest states are three times as rich as the three poorest states. It is a puzzle because orthodox economic theory predicts that contiguous economic units which are knitted together by movements of trade and people ought to exhibit convergence, not divergence.

The puzzle deepens because India's states constitute a federal economic union characterized by—finally, after the goods and services tax (GST)—harmonized taxes and free trade among states. Apart from this, there is suggestive evidence presented in this past year's Economic Survey that inter-state movement of people is more robust than we had thought. Finally, let us not forget that India's states constitute not only a customs union and a fiscal union, but a monetary union as well. These are strong forces for convergence that are, evidently, being counteracted by even stronger forces of divergence, leading to widening divergence overall.

The reality of rising regional inequality can no longer be swept under the carpet of rising average incomes across all states. But while the facts are not in dispute, there is little agreement on the causes of, and possible cures for, the 3-3-3 puzzle. Chief economic adviser Arvind Subramanian posits "governance" as a possible explanation, but this theory is unpersuasive. As we document, the data show not only widening income gaps amongst major states, but within those same states: The dubious ascription of state-level governance differences cannot account for this. After all, attributing what one cannot explain to a vague catch-all concept such as governance is little better than providing a label for one's ignorance.

By contrast, Chakravarty and I have argued that much the most plausible explanation for this pattern of widening divergence is the model of economic development itself, characterized by initial income gaps becoming locked in through economies of scale, network externalities, and agglomeration economies. Our hypothesis is consistent with the fact that, as the chart shows, inequality really began taking off only after the 1991 economic liberalization, suggesting that the move from a state-oriented to a market-oriented development paradigm may indeed be the driver. This is not at all to denigrate economic liberalization—quite the contrary—but to observe that the fruits of liberalization may be unevenly spread, as market-driven differences in opportunities and outcomes overcome the flattening effects of decades of socialist Central planning.

The existence of wide regional income gaps which are not going to go away anytime soon, and which, indeed, are integral to the texture of how our development paradigm has evolved, forces us to think creatively about ameliorative economic policy interventions, forming part of what economists have come to call "place-based" economic policy. These will require, in the first instance, a body of evidence which is lacking at present across a range of policy-relevant domains, even including monetary policy. For instance, computing reliable state-level consumer price indices, using local weights in the basket and local prices, rather than relying solely on a national average and broad aggregates such as urban and rural, would be a very good starting point for exploring the differential regional impacts of pursuing a national inflation target mandate.

Vivek Dehejia is a Mint columnist and resident senior fellow at IDFC Institute, Mumbai. Read

Vivek's Mint columns at www.livemint.com/vivekdehejia

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Capital is back? The fall and rise of the rich in India

A collection of stylised trends makes it seem like the super-rich are back again. | Photo Credit: [V.M. Maninathan](#)

To understand the levels and structures of inequality in India, it is necessary to put the rich at the centre of its macro-history.

In Europe and the United States of America (USA) on the eve World War I, wealth held by a fraction of the richest percentile dominated over national income. This wealth fell dramatically over the course of the Great Depression and two World Wars, only to emerge again in the late 1970s. It is this long-run evolution that is at the centre of Thomas Piketty's book *Capital in the 21st Century*.

Much like the developed world, wealth concentration in India seems to have followed a U shape, now recognised as the inverted Kuznets curve. To be sure, India has for centuries housed the richest and poorest people on the planet. My recent research (Kumar, 2017 *Capital and the Hindu Rate of Growth*) asks a question along these lines: Is the state of wealth inequality today a continuation or a sharp break from India's past?

The decline

In 1937, the Nizam of Hyderabad graced the cover of *Time* magazine as the wealthiest person in the world. His land, precious metals, and other assets were equivalent to almost 30% of India's national income. He was by every definition of the word, "Super Rich."

Joining him at the top of India's wealth distribution were other ancestral royalty from India's princely states and a handful of business houses. The establishment of independent India along with its newly drafted Constitution created a new paradox — it guaranteed private property but also made tremendous promises of democratisation. It was on these lines that a large-scale dismantling of incumbent and established wealth occurred over the next three decades. It began with the annexation of private (princely) land during the formation of the Indian union.

Over time, as India's tryst with socialist planning proceeded, much of old wealth was confiscated, taxed progressively and nationalised. In development economics, this period (1950-1980) is often referred to as "The Hindu Rate of Growth." For example in 1966, the top 0.1% in India owned the equivalent of 16% of GDP; i.e. almost two months worth of output. By 1986, this wealth was worth less than 5% of national income.

Had India achieved superb equality? We cannot pretend to answer this affirmatively because the Hindu Rate of Growth was an embarrassment relative to what was happening in East Asia. But much like Europe and the USA, a combination of progressive taxation with anti-capital policies broke up the existing rentier class. Private property was also turned into national wealth — not always efficient but the pace and level of the decline amongst the rich was staggering. The term "Tata-Birla" resonates with the Indian imagination because these (and one or two others) corporate houses were the few that made the journey intact.

Resurgence and metamorphoses

While the speed of the decline owes much to Indira Gandhi, her successor Rajiv planted the seeds needed to rebuild private wealth. By 1986, inheritance taxation was abolished, other direct taxes diluted and private industry began to flourish again. Eventually nationalisation was reversed with sales of public assets and the globalising market became India's friend. The pace of stock market

capitalisation since 1989 easily surpassed India's outstanding GDP growth. Although existing data does not allow a systematic analysis, a collection of stylised trends makes it seem like the super-rich are back again.

The Forbes Rich List published annually showed that by 1996 the richest two persons in India held wealth equal to 1% of GDP. It took thousands of estates to make this figure in 1980. In 2007, exactly seven decades after the Nizam, Mukesh Ambani made the global list as the world's wealthiest person.

At this juncture, India's billionaires club was worth almost 20% of national income. All this points to the possibility that India too has a U-shaped evolution of wealth concentration, indeed these trends were matched by income inequality according to work by Mr. Piketty and Abhijit Banerjee.

The resurgence of the rich was accompanied by a metamorphoses — much of top wealth is still inherited, but instead of hereditary royalty it is now 'corporatised' primogeniture. Unlike the poor investments made by incumbent aristocrats, inherited assets continue to grow. The families dominate private assets, due to closely held equity. But they are also joined by other smart investors and self-made businessmen. Rankings today change frequently based on entries and exits. These fluctuations are in the nature of wealth at the top. Old wealth has made way for the new and even newer wealth keeps emerging. Will national income be dwarfed again?

(The author is Assistant Professor of Economics at California State University)

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

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Did liberalization lead to lower income growth for the poor?

One of the strongest justifications for the economic liberalization that began in the 1980s is that it not only raised growth rates, but that growth percolated down to the poorest people. True, liberalization has increased inequality, but that is rationalized as the price to pay for higher growth. After all, it wasn't just us staunch members of the bourgeoisie who said these things—even Comrade Deng Xiaoping advised the Chinese people to “let some people get rich first”.

Folks unimpressed by Deng may choose to believe economist Simon Kuznets instead, who said that inequality will increase initially as an economy develops, but will ultimately drop. The resultant Kuznets curve, as this depiction of the trajectory of inequality is named, is an inverted ‘U’. So a rise in inequality is perfectly fine, it's just the effect of high growth in the economy. Those of us who are in the best position to profit from that growth, either by virtue of higher initial wealth, or higher educational opportunities, benefit the most, of course. But the important point is that everyone gains, even the poorest.

The French economist Thomas Piketty had poured cold water over this argument in his best-selling book, *Capital in the Twenty First Century*, which debunked our cherished belief that a rising tide of economic growth will necessarily lift everybody's boats. Even so, we assumed that while this may be true for the developed economies as their factories are increasingly automated and their jobs vanish to emerging markets, it was different for developing economies. Surely, the evidence was all around us, as vast populations were able to move above the poverty line, thanks to the higher growth ushered in by liberalization? Surely the forest of satellite dishes in slums, the motorcycles parked in front of thatched huts, the ubiquity of mobile phones all pointed to rising prosperity even among the poor?

Apparently we were all deceived. A much-discussed recent paper by Piketty and Lucas Chancel titled *Indian income inequality, 1922-2014: from British Raj to Billionaire Raj?* denies that liberalization has been beneficial for the poor in India. Baldly stated, their paper finds that while average real annual per adult income growth for the bottom half of the population was 2.2% between 1951 and 1980, it fell to 1.94% between 1980 and 2014 (See chart 1). In other words, the bottom half of the population saw higher income growth in the decades before liberalization than in the decades after it. Sure, their incomes too have gone up after liberalization, but at a slower pace than earlier. Were those supposedly socialist decades really better for the poor?

Nor is the paper upbeat about the situation of the “middle class”. It finds that what it calls the middle 40% of the population (this is somewhat of a misnomer because it denotes individuals above the bottom 50% and below the top 10%) hasn't done too well from liberalization either.

Average annual real per adult income growth for this “middle 40%” was 1.9% during 1951 and 1980, which went up to 2.02% between 1980 and 2014. The increase was a mere 0.12% per year, an increment any self-respecting worker in the formal economy would laugh at. The saving grace is that growth has been above 2% from the middle of the last decade for the bottom half of the population and from around the year 2000 for the “middle 40%”.

Piketty and Chancel do not deny that overall growth went up after liberalization. According to the paper, average annual real per adult growth for the entire population in the 1951-1980 period was 1.7%, well below the 3.25% growth notched up in the 1980-2014 period.

So the question is: in spite of overall growth being so much higher, how is it that people in the lower 90% of the population saw a decline in income growth or just a minor improvement? The rather obvious answer is that the top 10% of the population hogged the lion's share of the growth

in income.

Of the total income growth between 1951 and 1980, the bottom 50% of the population captured 28%, the “middle 40%” got 49%, while the top 10% had to remain satisfied with appropriating 24% of the growth (See *chart 2*). But these proportions changed dramatically after liberalization began in the eighties. During 1980-2014, the bottom half of the population got a mere 11% of the growth, the middle 40% captured 23% and the top 10% of people captured two-thirds of growth. With the top 10% appropriating so much of the increase in income, it's little wonder that the rest of the population saw little benefit from liberalization. It's also worth noting that the top 1% of the population captured 29% of the growth in incomes between 1980 and 2014.

Interestingly, China, which too went in for liberalization after 1980, saw its middle 40% capture 43% of the growth in incomes between 1980 and 2014. Growth there has been much more egalitarian than in India, although this may partly be the legacy of the earlier Maoist era.

What is income inequality now in India? The paper has data for 2014, which shows that the average income of an adult in the top 1% is about 70 times the average of the bottom half and 35 times that of the “middle 40%”.

The paper concludes that “Shining India” corresponds to the top 10% of the population (approximately 80 million adult individuals in 2014) rather than the middle 40%. These findings will be very controversial as it upsets the established narrative on growth after liberalization. It is certain to start a lively and heated debate. The full paper can be accessed [here](#).

Manas Chakravarty looks at trends and issues in the financial markets.

Respond to this column at manas.c@livemint.com.

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The dangers of India's Billionaire Raj

Speaking from the ramparts of Red Fort in New Delhi last month, Prime Minister Narendra Modi was at pains to put fairness at the heart of his political agenda. He promised “a New India, where there is equal opportunity for all” by 2022, the 75th anniversary of independence. But on the most important indicator of this agenda—income inequality itself—the country is slipping dangerously backwards.

This conclusion is inescapable from a paper published last week by the celebrated French economist Thomas Piketty, along with his co-author Lucas Chancel. Its conclusion is striking. The share of national income taken by the top 1% of Indian income earners is now at its highest level since records began, when the British Raj began collecting income tax records in 1922.

Piketty's new Indian data suggests a pattern that is worryingly familiar from his opus *Capital*, which warned of galloping inequality in the industrialized world. In the West, the relative wealth of the ultra-rich dipped in the mid-20th century before bouncing back in the last two decades. India now shows the same trend, albeit mostly for different reasons.

Piketty and Chancel's evidence is comprehensive, but far from unique. International Monetary Fund (IMF) research last year showed India, alongside China, to be the most unequal major economy in Asia. A recent study by Credit Suisse, the investment bank, suggested that India's 1% now own a staggering 58% of national wealth—one of the world's highest rates, and akin to notoriously stratified nations like South Africa and Brazil.

The same is true at the very, very top. Harvard's Michael Walton has shown that India has an unusually high proportion of national wealth held by its swelling ranks of billionaires. Piketty's paper broadly supports this view, showing that the share of income held by the “0.001%” has also increased rapidly. The paper's subtitle poses a question: Is India becoming a “Billionaire Raj?” In truth, the evidence for this is now overwhelming. The question should be: why does it matter, and what can be done about it?

Over recent decades India laboured under the misapprehension that it was an oddly egalitarian nation. This was partly a hangover from the socialist era, when the rich still lived modestly by global standards. There were no Indians on *Forbes* annual billionaire rankings until the mid-1990s (now there are well over 100, more than in any other country bar America, China and Russia). There were methodological issues too, namely that research often focused on consumption rather than income or wealth, giving a false picture of inequality.

Beneath this there lay a peculiar intellectual consensus. On the right, thinkers like economist Jagdish Bhagwati argued that rapid growth mattered more than its distribution. But even on the left, Bhagwati's rival Amartya Sen focused more on conditions at the bottom, and the fact that economic expansion had failed to boost indicators of human development. For both, the gap between rich and poor was a secondary concern.

There was a logic to Sen's argument. Almost all successful economies in East Asia have grown rich by investing heavily in basic health and education, which helps poorer workers to move from farms to factories. Modern India more often looks like a Latin American economy, with a weak social safety net but yawning inequality.

There are good reasons to be worried about this gap too. Mainstream economists often used to be relaxed about inequality, arguing that it at least did little to harm growth. But more recent research, much of it again from the IMF, has overturned this consensus, showing that unequal nations tend

to grow more slowly and are more prone to financial instability. Unequal countries also find it harder to form the kind of social consensus needed for structural economic reforms, a point made by Harvard's Dani Rodrik.

The reasons for Indian inequality are complicated. Some of it stems from positive factors linked to liberalization, like entrepreneurs building large companies linked to global markets. Factors such as rising urbanization and increasing returns to education also play a role. Many countries become less equal as they industrialize, only to reverse that trend later.

Still, India appears to be growing unequal more quickly and more starkly than most, a trend that will be hard to reverse later. It is also hard not to conclude that poor public policy, along with problems of corruption and cronyism, are partly to blame.

It also leaves a dilemma. The gap between rich and poor is likely to grow if Modi ever succeeds in his ambition of hitting double-digit growth rates. Certainly, this was what happened during the 2007 boom, a period when India's billionaire wealth rivalled Russia, and Reliance Industries' chairman Mukesh Ambani was briefly thought to be the richest man in the world.

Fixing this problem, so growth is more broadly shared, will be complicated. But there are obvious places to start, not least tax collection, in a country where an improbably tiny 48,000 people admitted to earning more than Rs1 crore in 2015. Beyond this a far more radical agenda is needed, to improve basic social services at the bottom, while using competition policy and regulation to stamp out crony capitalism and entrenched corporate power at the top.

For all of his talk of fairness, Modi is doing little of this. If he does not change course, the Billionaire Raj is only going to grow stronger.

James Crabtree is a senior research fellow at the Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy in Singapore, and a former Mumbai Bureau chief for the Financial Times. His book on India, The Billionaire Raj, will be published in mid-2018 by Random House and One World.

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Addressing India's income inequality

Thomas Piketty has thrown a flaming dart into the Indian economic debate. In a new paper written in collaboration with Lucas Chancel, the superstar French economist has shown that income inequality in India is now at its highest level since income tax was first levied in 1922. The title of the study is suitably eye-catching—*Indian Income Inequality 1922-2014: From British Raj To Billionaire Raj*. The data here has quite naturally sparked off a lot of excited debate about the nature of Indian economic policy.

Indian inequality data has traditionally been derived from consumer surveys that understate the extent of the problem. Chancel and Piketty have calculated inequality from tax data, national income accounts and sample surveys—a much better method, though the way these disparate data sources have been integrated leads to potential methodological tangles that could lead to an overstatement of the extent of inequality in India. For example, the use of tax data for the top 5% and the use of survey data for the rest of the population assumes that only the top sliver under-reports income. How realistic is that?

The two economists show that income inequality has been rising steadily since Rajiv Gandhi became prime minister. This is not a unique finding. The International Monetary Fund has earlier estimated that the Gini coefficient, a popular measure of inequality, rose from 45 to 51 between 1990 and 2013. The LIS Data Centre in Luxembourg has come to similar conclusions. These are far higher than the official Gini estimate of 37 derived from consumer surveys.

The most obvious conclusion to be drawn is that economic reforms have relatively benefited a tiny group at the top of the Indian income pyramid, though absolute incomes have gone up across deciles since 1980 while the poverty ratio has plummeted. However, the uneven distribution of higher growth needs more public attention.

There are two important lessons to be gleaned from a careful reading of the data that has been released. First, the increase in income inequality coincides with the sharp rise in Indian economic growth after 1980. Also notice the very significant drop in income inequality during the stagnant 1970s. This points to the famous hypothesis put forth by Simon Kuznets—that inequality tends to rise during periods of rapid growth thanks to the uneven pace at which people move from low productivity to high productivity activities. Piketty wrote a sharp critique of the Kuznets hypothesis in *Capital In The Twenty-First Century*, his wildly popular (but perhaps unread) book. The correlation between economic growth and income inequality since 1965 needs to be worked out in a statistically rigorous manner.

Second, income inequality is not just about the share of national income going to the top 1%. There are deeper distributional issues. A comparison with China tells us a lot. Chancel and Piketty show that the share of national income captured by the bottom half in both India and China after 1980 has been broadly similar. The big difference between the two countries is in the fact that the middle 40% in India got 23% of the increase in national income since 1980 while the same group in China got 43%—a massive gap of 20 percentage points. This difference of 20 percentage points was largely captured by the top 1% in India.

So a stylized view is as follows: The Indian top 1% has done extremely well, the Chinese middle has benefited far more than the Indian middle, and the bottom half in both countries has had broadly similar experiences.

This newspaper believes the answer to this paradox lies in the failure of labour-intensive manufacturing in India compared to its massive success in China. The latter could absorb millions

of people who left farming because of the rapid expansion of large enterprises, as was the case in most other successful structural transformations in Asia. India has failed on this front. The proportion of the labour force in agriculture has come down, but the workers who have left farms have not got jobs in modern factories or offices. Most are stuck in tiny informal enterprises with abysmal productivity levels.

There are two major political economy lessons that flow from these trends. First, that a sustainable attack on mass poverty should be focused on job creation in the modern sectors of the economy rather than redistribution through fiscal spending that is eventually destabilizing. Second, widening income inequality weakens public support for liberal economic reforms, as economist Dani Rodrik has shown. Economic populism takes over, as was the case during the tenure of the second United Progressive Alliance government led by Manmohan Singh. The gradual drift of the Narendra Modi government in the direction of populism and interventionism deserves to be seen against this backdrop.

It is also apt to once again underline the historical fact that no country has been able to win the battle against mass poverty without rapid economic growth. China is the latest example. Inequality is a problem that deserves more public attention—but the solution is more inclusive growth rather than misplaced nostalgia for the miserable 1970s.

How can India reduce income inequality? Tell us at views@livemint.com

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State on the other side

Supreme Court

Human rights activists often advance the claim that government is an anti-liberal establishment. During a discussion on individual liberty and state intrusion, a friend raised a counter-question: Why is the government always perceived as an institution resisting individual rights? His point was that government, after all, is a community of individuals who constitute it.

In India, however, the current trends would indicate that state seems to take an increasingly apathetic stand on fundamental rights issues in legal adjudication. Three recent examples are instructive.

On the question of criminalisation of marital rape, the [Centre made several regressive arguments](#) before the Delhi High Court. It was argued that what might appear to be marital rape to an individual wife might not appear so to others. With this argument, the government sought to make a distinction between marital rape and other kinds of rape. However, the fact that the offence is committed in a marital union does not change the character or the nature of the offence. Only non-consensual sexual acts will qualify as rape and not all sexual acts. It is consent that reverses the equation.

The second claim was that penalising marital rape would [destabilise the institution of marriage](#). Now, whatever the benefits of collective institutions are, the value of individual liberty ought to triumph them. Individuals are the ultimate bearers of rights and duties in a constitutional system. They are the morally significant units in a liberal democracy and the political authority of the state is always constrained by them.

The Supreme Court is currently examining the legality of an unusual judgment passed by the Kerala High Court of nullifying the marriage of a 24-year-old girl called Akhila/Hadiya. In the high court, Akhila's parents, who were the petitioners, argued that their daughter had been subject to indoctrination and forced conversion to Islam and that she was unable to take an independent decision in the matter. The marriage of their daughter, they submitted, was bogus and void.

On Kerala conversion case: Choice & conversion

Quite controversially, without any proper medical examination or other authentic evidence, the government argued that Akhila was unable to make an informed decision about her own life. The basic assumption that certain adults are incapable of making decisions about their own life offends individual freedom. It is important to respect the fact that individuals can also make wrong decisions. It is quite crucial that adults are able to think freely and the state is bound to protect and preserve their capacity to do so. Only when the state system ensures individual self-governance can collective democratic self-governance be meaningfully exercised. Even further, it is correctly argued by scholars that the legitimacy of the state is heavily dependent on its respect for individual autonomy.

The [Supreme Court verdict on privacy](#) was certainly momentous in Indian constitutional law. However, the stand of the Central government regarding the right to privacy was not impressive. The then Attorney General argued that privacy does not enjoy the status of a fundamental right under the Constitution. By relying on two earlier decisions of the Supreme Court, it was asserted that "Indians could claim no constitutional right of privacy".

Though the arguments are less bizarre than the first two cases, this claim is vulnerable. To put it

simply, constitutions are not to be read like commercial contracts. Constitutions talk about rights in an abstract language and the Indian Constitution is no exception. Article 21 merely states about non-deprivation of life or personal liberty. What constitutes personal liberty, for instance, is a matter of constitutional interpretation and context. Merely because a right is not expressly conferred by the Constitution, it does not cease to exist. Many unwritten rights are, after all, manifestations of written provisions.

It might be argued that these are three dissimilar incidents. But the fact remains that in such prime issues of debate, the stand taken by the executive has far-reaching repercussions on politics and law. The current pattern of governmental approach to rights shows opposition to individual rights. Perhaps, one cannot expect an executive that is politically averse to personal liberty to be a strong defender of constitutional rights in law courts.

Thulasi K. Raj is a lawyer at the Kerala High Court

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

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Cabinet approves introduction of the Payment of Gratuity (Amendment) Bill, 2017 in the Parliament

Cabinet approves introduction of the Payment of Gratuity (Amendment) Bill, 2017 in the Parliament

The Union Cabinet chaired by the Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi has given its approval for introduction of the Payment of Gratuity (Amendment) Bill, 2017 in the Parliament.

The Amendment will increase the maximum limit of gratuity of employees, in the private sector and in Public Sector Undertakings/ Autonomous Organizations under Government who are not covered under CCS (Pension) Rules, at par with Central Government employees.

Background:

The Payment of Gratuity Act, 1972 applies to establishments employing 10 or more persons. The main purpose for enacting this Act is to provide social security to workmen after retirement, whether retirement is a result of the rules of superannuation, or physical disablement or impairment of vital part of the body. Therefore, the Payment of Gratuity Act, 1972 is an important social security legislation to wage earning population in industries, factories and establishments.

The present upper ceiling on gratuity amount under the Act is Rs. 10 Lakh. The provisions for Central Government employees under Central Civil Services (Pension) Rules, 1972 with regard to gratuity are also similar. Before implementation of 7th Central Pay Commission, the ceiling under CCS (Pension) Rules, 1972 was Rs. 10 Lakh. However, with implementation of 7th Central Pay Commission, in case of Government servants, the ceiling now is Rs. 20 Lakhs effective from 1.1.2016.

Therefore, considering the inflation and wage increase even in case of employees engaged in private sector, the Government is of the view that the entitlement of gratuity should be revised for employees who are covered under the Payment of Gratuity Act, 1972. Accordingly, the Government initiated the process for amendment to Payment of Gratuity Act, 1972.

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'Cooling off' period in Hindu divorce can go: SC

Hindu couples who have mutually agreed to separate need not wait anymore for the mandatory "cooling off" period of six months before divorce, the Supreme Court held on Tuesday.

Once a couple moves a court of law for divorce under the Hindu Marriage Act, they have to wait for a minimum period of six months.

Mutual consent

Divorce by mutual consent was introduced as an amendment to the Hindu Marriage Act in 1976.

The waiting period under Section 13B was mandated to prevent couples from taking any hasty decision to end their marriage. Marriage is a sacrament in Hinduism.

The waiting period was for them to have enough time to think through their decision to separate.

Divorce was granted only after the 'cooling off' period and once the court found there was no further chance for reconciliation.

"The waiting period will only prolong their agony," a Bench of Justices A.K. Goel and U.U. Lalit observed in their judgment.

The court held that the waiting period should be done away with in cases where there is no way to save the marriage and all efforts at mediation and conciliation have run their course; where parties have genuinely settled their differences including alimony, custody of child, etc, between themselves; and already a year and a half has passed since their first motion for separation.

The application for waiver of waiting period can be filed in court within a week of their first motion for separation. The proceedings can be done through video-conferencing, the court observed.

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Hindi beyond Official Language status



***PRIYADARSHI DUTTA**

September 14 is observed as the Hindi Day. It was on this date in 1949 that the Constituent Assembly adopted Hindi in Devanagari script as the official language of the Indian union after a long and animated debate. Part XVII of the Constitution comprising Articles 343 to 351 deals with the subject. The Article 343 (1) declares the official language of the Union shall be Hindi in Devanagari script. But a reading of the Articles 343 (2) onwards reveal what a difficult and complicated terrain the official language issue had to navigate in a multi-lingual nation like India with its government institutions dominated by laws, rules and regulations set down in English.

It can at best be described as a compromise. All proceedings of the Supreme Court, High Courts, authoritative texts of all Bills and Acts introduced or passed in Parliament of state assemblies, all orders/rules/laws and regulations passed under the Constitution have to be in English (as in colonial India). Until the passage of the [Constitution \(Fifty Eighth\) Amendment Act](#) on February 17, 1987 no updated version of the Constitution (containing the amendments) could be issued in Hindi containing the amendments. For various reasons the performance of Hindi as an official language is far from satisfactory. That is why Hindi is no way in sight of replacing English in government even after 70 years. Our Constitution makers had allotted merely 15 years for this task.

The concept of official language (Raj Bhasha) pertains to various organs of the state viz. legislature, executive, judiciary and armed forces etc. However, the nation is larger than its government institutions. The mass mobilization that Mahatma Gandhi initiated in India happened outside institutions. His Non-Cooperation movement or opposition to Congress participating in elections under the Government of India Act, 1919 reveal his disapproval to the nation being dependent on its institutions. Gandhi was aware of the gulf between the state apparatus in colonial India and her teeming millions. He wanted to address the Indian nation rather than India, the state. One of the ways Gandhi did it was to use the language of the masses rather than English.

The language question was an integral part of Gandhi's *Swadeshi* campaign. He understood that people could be involved in the mission for *Swaraj* only through their languages. Therefore after his return from South Africa in 1915, Gandhi insisted on greater usage of Hindi (and other regional languages). His article in *Pratap* (Hindi) on May 28, 1917 advocated recognizing Hindi as the national language.

Therein he stated that most Indians, who knew neither Hindi nor English, would find the

former easier to learn. He said that it was only on account of cowardice that Indians had not started conducting their national business in Hindi. If Indians shed that cowardice, and cultivate faith in Hindi, then even the work of national and provincial councils could be conducted in that language.

It was in this article that Gandhi first mooted the idea of sending Hindi missionaries in south India. His idea crystallized in the form of Dakshina Bharat Hindi Prachar Sabha established in 1923. Gandhi's long speech at 2nd Gujarat Educational Conference at Bharuch on October 20, 1917 is considered a classic. Therein he paid tributes to the pioneering efforts of Swami Dayanand Saraswati in popularizing Hindi.

Swami Dayanand (1824-1883), like Gandhi, hailed from Gujarat. He used Sanskrit as the medium of religious disputation and preaching. He never bothered to learn Hindi even while spending decades in the Himalayas and northern India. But in 1873, while visiting Calcutta, he came across Keshub Chunder Sen of Brahmo Samaj. Sen advised him to use Hindi instead of Sanskrit to increase his reach amongst the masses. Interestingly neither Swami Dayanand nor Keshub Chunder Sen were native Hindi speakers. He heeded to the friendly advice and mastered Hindi thoroughly in a short time. He wrote his magnum opus *Satyarth Prakash* (1875) in Hindi. The Arya Samaj founded by him acted as a powerful agency to popularize Hindi.

Thus Gandhi took up the baton for Hindi where Swami Dayanand had left it. Whereas Dayanand's mission was religious, Gandhi's was national. Gandhi viewed Hindi as tool to 'de-colonize' the Indian mind. His mission to popularize Hindi found many takers in southern India.

G. Durgabai (1909-1981), who later became a member of Constituent Assembly, ran a popular Balika Hindi Pathshala at Kakinanda (Andhra Pradesh) as a teenage girl. The Balika Hindi Pathshala was visited by C.R. Das, Kasturba Gandhi, Maulana Shaukat Ali, Jamnalal Baja and C.F. Andrews. They could hardly believe that the Pathshala which imparted knowledge of Hindi to few hundred women was run by a teenager.

But the situation regarding Hindi had changed in south India by the time same Durgabai reached the Constituent Assembly. She felt that zealous propoganda in favour of Hindi by native Hindi speakers alienated others. What the volunteers had achieved, misguided zealots threatened to undo. Thus she says in her speech on September 14, 1949, "I am shocked to see this agitation against that enthusiasm of ours with which we took to Hindi in the early years of this century.....Sir, this overdone and misused propoganda on their part is responsible and would be responsible for losing the support of people who know and who are supporters on Hindi like me".

The dilemma captured by G. Durgabati in her speech has not lost relevance after 70 years. Non-Hindi speakers would be more amenable to Hindi through voluntary efforts rather than enforcing the legal status of the language. An increased literary and cultural interaction between Hindi and other Indian languages would help the cause of Hindi. Prime Minister's Narendra Modi's charisma has helped Hindi in an unobtrusive fashion. The aim would be to reach maximum people in a language they can understand.

**The writer is an independent researcher and columnist based in New Delhi.*

Views expressed in the article are his personal.

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Income limit raised for creamy layer

The 'creamy layer' ceiling for OBC reservation has been raised to Rs. 8 lakh per year, according to an official order issued on Wednesday.

"It has now been decided to raise the income limit from Rs. 6 lakh to Rs. 8 lakh per annum for determining the creamy layer among the Other Backward Classes," the order issued by the Department of Personnel and Training (DoPT) said.

In 1993, the limit was kept at Rs. 1 lakh. It was raised thrice — to Rs. 2.5 lakh in 2004, Rs. 4.5 lakh in 2008 and Rs. 6 lakh in 2013.

Finance Minister Arun Jaitley had on August 23 announced that the Union Cabinet had been formally apprised of the decision to increase the limit for Central government jobs.

Mr. Jaitley had said Prime Minister Narendra Modi had hinted in Assam that the bar defining creamy layer would be raised.

"These measures are part of the government's efforts to ensure greater social justice and inclusion for members of the Other Backward Classes," an official release issued recently said.

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Equality for what?

In 1820 the German philosopher Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, in his magnificently crafted *Philosophy of Right*, had written with some despair of the moral squalor and of the ravages that poverty brings in its wake. The state of poverty, he argued, is not an aberration, it is a product of industrial society, of the overproduction and underconsumption which marks this social order. But it is precisely society that banishes its victims to the twilight zone of collective life. Here, removed from the advantages of solidarity that civil society offers, the poor are reduced to a heap of fragmented atoms, rabble, *poebel*. When the standard of living of a large mass of people falls below a certain subsistence level, he wrote, we see a loss of the sense of right and wrong, of honesty and of self-respect. "Against nature man can claim no right, but once society is established, poverty immediately takes the form of a wrong done to one class by another."

Hegel suggests that poverty is a social phenomenon. One, society is complicit in the creation and recreation of poverty. Destitution, that is, is the outcome of a skewed economy. Two, poverty breeds unfortunate consequences, such as suffering, which seriously demoralises human beings. Three, the existence of large numbers of the poor pose a direct threat to the social order, simply because the poor are (justly) resentful of their exclusion from the benefits of society.

We should be seriously reflecting on Hegel's criticism of a society that refuses to correct the wrongs it has heaped on its own people, in the light of the research findings of the economist Thomas Piketty and his colleague Lucas Chancel.

In a paper aptly titled 'Indian income inequality, 1922-2014: From British Raj to Billionaire Raj?', they conclude that income inequality in India is at the highest level since 1922, when the country's income tax law was conceived, and that the top 1% earners corner 22% of income. These research findings should send a powerful warning signal to power elites, leaders who prefer to concentrate on the politics of beef, brutal repression of dissent, and curtailment of basic human freedoms, even as the lives of thousands of Indians are mired in mind-numbing poverty.

Income inequality in India at its highest level since 1922, says Lucas Chancel

There is more to the proposition that some persons are poor beyond belief, and others are rich beyond belief in India. P is poor, we can say, when she does not possess access to the basic resources which enable q, or s, or m to consume nutritious food, avoid ill health, attend school, take up a job, and own a home, let alone go on holiday or possess a car. This implies that p is not just poor, she is unequal to q, s, or m, since the latter three, unlike p, have access to certain advantages that p does not. Poverty is the effect of inequality as well as the prime signifier of inequality. And inequality is demeaning.

Arguably, inequality is not only a matter of statistics. It is a shattering reflection on the kind of society we live in. Logically, if the economic ordering of society is responsible for ill-being, it is obliged to remedy the wrongs that it has visited upon the heads of the poor. This constitutes a basic code of justice. People who have been wronged are entitled to ask for justice. If justice is not delivered, inequalities are reinforced and compounded over time.

The selfish way to combat inequality

Resultantly, people fated to occupy the lowliest rungs of the social ladder are not only denied access to basic material requirements that enable them to live a decent life, they are likely to be socially overlooked, politically irrelevant except in times of elections when their votes bring parties into power, disdained, and subjected to disrespect in and through the practices of everyday life. To

be unequal is to be denied the opportunity to participate in social, economic, and cultural transactions from a plane of equality.

Starkly put, the presence of massive inequality reflects sharply and pejoratively on the kind of social relations that we find in India. Because these social relationships are indisputably unequal, they cannot but be entrenched in massive discrimination and exploitation. Can we reflect on inequality without taking on exploitation and discrimination? And unless we confront these background inequalities directly, will not inequality continue to be produced and reproduced along with the production and reproduction of a lopsided social order, indeed as an integral part of this order?

Let us not understate the implications of inequality, it violates a basic democratic norm: the equal standing of citizens. Persons have equal standing because each human being has certain capacities in common with other human beings, for instance, the capacity to make her own history in concert with other human beings. Of course the histories that persons make might not be the histories they chose to make, but this is not the issue at hand. What is important is that each person realises this ability.

The everyday embrace of inequality

The principle of equal standing generates at least two robust principles of democratic morality. For one, equality is a relation that obtains between persons in respect of some fundamental characteristic that they share in common. Equality is, morally speaking, a default principle. Therefore, and this is the second postulate, persons should not be discriminated against on grounds such as race, caste, gender, ethnicity, sexual preferences, disability, or class. These features of the human condition are morally irrelevant.

These two postulates of political morality yield the following implications. To treat persons equally because they possess equal standing is to treat them with respect. The idea that one should treat persons with respect not only because some of these persons possess some special skill or talent, for example skilled cricketers, gifted musicians, or literary giants, but because persons are human beings, is by now part of common sense morality. If someone were to ask, 'equality for what', we can answer that equality assures equal standing and respect, and respect is an essential prerequisite for the making of human beings who can participate in the multiple transactions of society from a position of confidence and self-respect. If they cannot do so, the government is simply not taking the well-being of its citizens seriously.

There is urgent need, in the face of government inaction and insensitivity towards people trapped in inequality as a social relation to invoke the collective conscience of Indian citizens. If the right to equality is violated, citizens should be exercised or agitated about this violation. But for this to occur, for society to feel deeply about the right on offer, we have to incorporate the right to equality into political thinking, into our values, and into political vocabularies. The project requires the harnessing of creative imagination and courage on the one hand, and careful reasoning, persuasion, and dialogue on the other. The task also demands the investment of rather high degrees of energy and time. But this is essential because a political consensus on what constitutes, or should constitute the basic rules of society, is central to our collective lives. The political is not a given, it has to be constructed, as Karl Marx had told us long ago, through determined and sustained political intervention.

Neera Chandhoke is a former Professor of Political Science at Delhi University

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Subnationalism not a threat

Along with the rhetoric of nationalism, India is also witnessing the re-emergence of subnationalism as a political idea. Interestingly, this is emerging most strongly from Karnataka, which is neither ruled by a regional party nor has shown any significant separatist or secessionist tendencies in the past. The key issue of contention is regarding a [separate State flag for Karnataka](#). While Karnataka has had an unofficial yellow-and-red flag for almost 50 years, the government is now considering adopting an official State flag. The other issue is the protest against the imposition of Hindi, most notably on the signboards of Namma Metro stations in Bengaluru. Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah has strongly come out in support of the State flag and [against the use of Hindi signboards in the Metro](#).

Even if the narrative around Kannadiga pride is impelled by the government with an eye on the upcoming Assembly polls, the larger questions around identity it raises cannot be ignored. Given the multiple identity markers, the key challenge is to foster a shared political community that also accommodates the multiple aspirations of a diverse population. This is important as an aggressive nationalism seeks to engulf any alternative ideas of self-identification. The counter-narrative hence brings into question the place of linguistic and cultural rights in a plural society with a federal Constitution.

Historically, the nationalist movement had furthered a pluralistic idea of India. While the Indian National Congress had demanded language-based provinces during the freedom movement, the experience of religion-based Partition made the Nehru government wary of adopting linguistic States in the early years after Independence. But with the enactment of the States Reorganisation Act, 1956, linguistic States became a reality. Further, the Official Languages Act of 1963 prevented the planned transition of India's official language from English to Hindi. These key legislative moves ensured that Indian national identity is not homogeneous.

The Kannada flag, et cetera

India also does not follow a classical majoritarian form of democracy. While the first-past-the-post electoral system tends to favour ethnocultural majorities, there are also certain group-based fundamental rights provided in the Constitution, such as in Articles 29 and 30. Part XXI of the Constitution has a set of special provisions for certain States and sub-State regions, while the Fifth and Sixth Schedules give special institutional measures for the administration of areas with high Scheduled Tribe populations.

While India does not neatly fit within political scientist Arend Lijphart's framework of a consociational system (providing for formal power-sharing arrangements between different social groups), it possesses a flexible constitutional order that enables creative solutions to subnational aspirations. The creation of new States based on varied grounds has not been too arduous in independent India. Hence, Alfred Stepan, Juan Linz and Yogendra Yadav argue that India may be classified as a "state-nation" which respects "multiple but complementary" sociocultural identities and provides constitutional mechanisms to accommodate political claims arising out of these identities. Such a constitutional order has been central to our endurance as a nation state for 70 years.

The accommodation of linguistic and cultural diversities does not merely help maintain the integrity of India's national boundaries, but also promotes positive social outcomes. In *How Solidarity Works for Welfare*, Prerna Singh has argued that subnationalism is positively linked to social development. Using multiple research methods, she demonstrates that greater the level of subnational solidarity, higher will be the State's commitment to social welfare. Kerala's success is

the most striking example. She contrasts Kerala and Tamil Nadu with Uttar Pradesh, a development laggard with little subnational solidarity, to argue her point.

With hyper-nationalism on the rise, it is important to reassert the pluralistic character of the Indian nation state. While nationalism conventionally privileges one sociocultural identity over others, India's pluralistic nationalism celebrates the coexistence of multiple identities. The assertion of subnational pride in States like Karnataka counters attempts at advancing the homogenising narrative of Hindi-Hindu-Hindustan. As long as subnationalism is not secessionist, or aimed at othering sections of the population, it should not be viewed as a threat, but rather as a constitutive element of India's plural democracy.

Mathew Idiculla is a research consultant at the Centre for Law and Policy Research, Bengaluru

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

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We need to talk about rural distress

A century ago, farmers in Bihar's Champaran district were forced to set aside 15% of their land to cultivate indigo under the *Tinkathia* system. Once planted, the farmers were still subjected to a variety of extortionist cesses, or *abwabs*. They rose in revolt but were crushed by the East India Company until the arrival of a barrister from South Africa. Yet, a century after [Mahatma Gandhi fought against the exploitation of farmers](#), India's agrarian community still remains under siege.

At a granular level, marginal farming in India is a highly complex and decision-intensive process. Farmers have to make a variety of decisions starting with the choice of crops (annual or short term) and their time of tillage. Then there are rising prices of agricultural inputs, availability of water, soil suitability and pest management. All these factors create a narrow window of economic benefit for the marginal farmer. A wrong decision can wreak havoc.

This uncertainty is reflected in rural debt levels. A Panjab University study showed that in Punjab, large farmers with holdings greater than 10 hectares typically had a debt-to-income ratio of 0.26, while for medium farmers, 4-10 ha, and semi-medium farmers, 2-4 ha, it was 0.34 — all seemingly affordable. However, small, 1-2 ha, and marginal farmers, less than a hectare, faced a greater burden of debt, with a debt-to-income ratio of 0.94 and 1.42, respectively; over 50% of their loans are from non-banking sources.

With average landholding size decreasing from 2.3 ha in 1971 to 1.16 ha in 2011, and average input prices rising, cultivation costs have also increased. A farmer now typically earns 2,400 a month per hectare of paddy and about 2,600 a month per hectare of wheat, while farm labourers earn less than 5,000 a month. Real farm wages have grown at an average annual growth rate of 2.9% between 1991 and 2012, with farm wages declining between 2002 and 2007. Effectively, about 30.5 million left farming between 2004-05 and 2010-11, seeking employment in the secondary and tertiary sectors. In 2011, the Planning Commission estimated that the size of this agricultural workforce would shrink to less than 200 million by 2020.

Farm suicides get attention of Supreme Court

The consequence is farmers committing suicides. Farmer suicides have also grown primarily in States with limited irrigation and variable rainfall, comprising 87.5% of all farmer suicides in 2015. Over 3,21,428 farmers committed suicide in the last 20 years.

Large farmers in Maharashtra typically have access to modern pumps, consuming huge amounts of water and leaving hardly anything for small and marginal farmers. Fertilizer and pesticide prices have also risen, causing marginal farmers to adopt organic means. The limited availability and high cost of high-yielding seed varieties also hampers agricultural productivity. Given such constraints, farmers have limited scope for crop diversification, choosing to focus primarily on staple crops such as wheat and rice, where the government offers a price guarantee for produce and the availability of post-harvest infrastructure.

Institutional support has been provided in various forms since Independence. Established in 1982, the National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development has sought to provide financing support for tube-well irrigation, farm mechanisation and other ancillary activities. The introduction of a nationwide agriculture loan waiver in 1990 had a deleterious impact on the provision of rural credit, providing a short-term palliative while breeding credit indiscipline among farmers and leading to a shortfall in rural credit growth.

Why can't the government provide a higher income for farmers, asks M.S. Swaminathan

The 2004-05 Union Budget sought to double agricultural credit, while a 2% interest subvention was provided in 2006, allowing farmers to avail of kisan credit card (KCC) loans at 7% per annum (up to 3 lakh). Another agricultural loan waiver was sanctioned in 2009, just before the Lok Sabha election. In 2011, the government provided a further 3% interest subvention for farmers making immediate payments on their KCC loans. More recently, the [Uttar Pradesh government's farm loan waiver scheme](#) has been replicated in Maharashtra, Punjab and Karnataka and estimated to total up to 0.5% of India's GDP. Similar demands are growing in Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Haryana. Small and marginal farmers certainly deserve greater support from the government. However, India's agricultural policy has historically disincentivised the creation of a formal credit culture among farmers. When the next election is likely to bring about another farm loan waiver, why would any farmer seek to pay off his loans early? Such schemes can also prompt farmers to take on risky ventures that are beyond their capacity.

Ideally, India ought not to have rural distress. We have the second largest amount of arable land in the world. Yet, less than 35% of this land is irrigated, with the remainder subject to fluctuations in rainfall.

The writing is on the wall. India's small and marginal farmers will need another agricultural loan waiver. However, this cannot continue in the future. There are other ways to mitigate their plight. Greater subsidies could be extended for the purchase of agricultural equipment, fertilizers and pesticides, while the medical insurance coverage could be expanded through the Rashtriya Swasthya Bima Yojna. In addition, the scope of the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act could be increased. Allowing marginal farmers to be paid for tilling their own fields could reduce their input costs. Such measures could also increase their net income.

Finally, we need a national conversation on rural distress. Unlike the Champaran Satyagraha, national attention has been curiously lacking. We ought to discuss the [Swaminathan Commission's report](#) in a full week's sitting of Parliament and decide which direction India's agriculture goes. With empathy for India's farmers and a truthful assessment of on-the-ground farming reality, we must make the right choices for Indian agriculture.

Feroze Varun Gandhi is a Member of Parliament representing the Sultanpur constituency for the BJP

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

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Why inclusive growth is indispensable to India

On 15 August India marked 70 years of independence from the British empire, a monumental triumph in social and political liberalization. Today, India is in the midst of an equally monumental struggle in economic liberalization. The stakes could not be higher. An economic future of broadly shared prosperity and vanishing poverty for more than 1.2 billion people is within grasp. To get there, however, calls for advancing inclusive growth.

India's economic performance in recent years has been outstanding in relation to both its own historical record and the global economy. Between 2010 and 2016, for example, annual real gross domestic product (GDP) growth in India averaged 6.7% despite a relatively weak post-crisis global economy that averaged only 2.7% annual gains. Yet the economic optimism in recent years is now tempered by a growing recognition that many deficiencies in the economy remain deep-seated and if not effectively addressed could undermine future growth.

Front and centre is the concern over employment growth.

Despite strong economic growth in the last decade, job growth averaged only approximately 2% a year in the formal sector. Such growth is basically flat when adjusted for the growing population. In the coming decades, some 12-15 million Indians will enter the labour force each year, and if the current job [growth trends persist](#), fewer than half of them will be able to secure formal employment of any kind. For those who fail to find formal employment, their only option is to work in the informal economy.

It is estimated that about 80% of [India's labour force](#) works in the informal economy. Jobs in the informal economy are typically insecure, with neither employment contracts nor regular pay, and very often workers are engaged on a day-to-day basis. The working conditions in the informal economy therefore resemble a low-productivity trap.

Employers have no incentives to invest in training workers who are seen as transient and interchangeable or to invest in better tools and equipment for them. Without some assurance of future income, workers find it difficult to plan for the long term, let alone find the means to invest in learning new skills. The informal economy thus embodies the exact opposite of inclusive growth: workers are effectively excluded from accessing many of the resources they need to make themselves more productive and thereby improve their life chances.

This is why advancing inclusive growth is so important in India today. At the most basic level, economic growth results from labour force growth and productivity growth of workers. With 80% of the labour force stuck in low-productivity activities in informal employment, it is not surprising that the Indian economy is performing far below its true potential.

For the Indian economy to reach its growth potential, ways and means must be found to move workers from informal to formal employment. Ultimately, the economy can reach its full potential only when the hundreds of millions of Indian workers can escape the trap of low productivity.

The good news is that recent reform initiatives are preparing the ground for greater inclusion. The biometric-based unique identification system, Aadhaar, now ensures that the poor are no longer invisible and, therefore, more empowered. A bank account for every adult now ensures universal access to financial services, at least in principle. When combined with Aadhaar, such access will accelerate financial inclusion. The shock of demonetisation and the introduction of the new national goods and services tax will gradually expand India's tax base and eliminate incentives for businesses to operate in the shadow of the formal economy.

Critics of the government's recent reforms are quick to decry their disruptive effects. But this is to miss the woods for the trees. Any reforms that have an impact and are worth doing are necessarily disruptive. Without short-term cyclical effects, there are no longer-term structural gains. Much greater gains will be realized when the different reforms begin to converge to bring more people into the mainstream economy altogether. What is needed is to sustain the push for more reforms, not fewer.

Reducing the size of the informal economy is pivotal to inclusive growth. It allows India to reach its growth potential and deliver broadly shared prosperity for the vast majority. Sustaining a real GDP growth rate of 7% each year until 2040 will quintuple per capita GDP to \$28,000 on a purchasing power parity basis. By 2040, India will also reach its maximum share of the working-age population. This is a glittering prize—endowing its youth bulge with meaningful, well-compensated and rewarding formal employment in a society where prosperity is broadly shared and absolute poverty has become a thing of the past.

The historian Ramachandra Guha has argued (*India After Gandhi: The History Of The World's Largest Democracy*, New York: Harper Collins, 2007) that India is both the world's largest and least likely democracy. The odds were daunting that India could hold as a democracy, and yet it did. At 70, what India needs to do next is clear: democratize productivity through inclusive growth to finally reach its full economic potential.

Yuwa Hedrick-Wong and Manu Bhardwaj are, respectively, chief economist at Mastercard, and vice-president, research and insights, Mastercard Center for Inclusive Growth.

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“Digital inclusion is the foundation of financial inclusion” - sh. Ravi Shankar Prasad

“Digital inclusion is the foundation of financial inclusion” - sh. Ravi Shankar Prasad

Speaking at a conclave on ‘*Financial Inclusion*’ organized by the United Nations, **Shri Ravi Shankar Prasad**, Union Minister for Electronics & Information Technology and law & Justice said, *“Digital inclusion is the foundation of financial inclusion. We have certain fundamental approach for commitment as far as digital platform is concerned. The first and foremost is, we want to become the leaders in the field digital revolution in the world. Second important attribute of our initiative is, we simply don’t want to digitize India, but we want to create a technology that is transformative, which will empower India, and also empowers Indians.”*

“This is the age of information, and information is power. This is the age of technology, and technology is power; and this technology must empower India. We also want to create a digital ecosystem, which leads to digital inclusion. Digital India is more for poor and underprivileged. WE are undertaking a lot of transformative initiatives like Digital India, Make in India, Start-up India, Smart Cities, Skill India. These are all technology based programmes; digital inclusion must be the common thread.” added **Shri Ravi Shankar Prasad**.

“Three more attributes are important to be kept in mind when we talk about digital inclusion. First, technology must be affordable; second, technology must lead to inclusion, and, third, technology must be developmental.” concluded **Shri Ravi Shankar Prasad**.

On the completion of 3 years since the launch of the Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana (PMJDY), one of the largest financial inclusion programmes in the world, India’s example for leading innovations in financial inclusions, access and technology can provide important learnings for other countries. The United Nations in India is bringing together leaders of this financial revolution, with senior level stake holders from the government, the banking sector, innovators, technology partners, intergovernmental organizations and the UN.

The daylong conclave focused on physical access and infrastructure of financial inclusion, maximizing financial access and literacy for women and marginalized groups and using technology and innovation to determine the way forward.

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Building a new India: Pledge to Double Farmers Income by 2022**Building a new India: Pledge to Double Farmers Income by 2022**

In order to improve the economic condition of the farmers, Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi has set up an ambitious target in front of the nation. The goal is to double the income of the farmers by 2022. It has been for the first time, a Prime Minister has put such a target in front of the compatriots for the welfare of the farmers. Under the able guidance of Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi, the Agriculture and Farmers Welfare Ministry has to achieve this target by 2022. The Ministry is committed to making his dreams come true. Farmers and officers are implementing schemes to increase the income of the farmers. Krishi Vigyan Kendras (KVKs) organised pledge taking ceremonies in 562 districts of the country between August 19 to September 11, 2017, as a clarion call to farmers to double their income by 2022 and a total of 47,08,47 farmers and agricultural workers participated in it.

- KVKs organised this program in the 562 districts of the country. The program saw the participation of the State Government and the Central Government officers, Agricultural Officers, Students and a large number of farmers in each district.
- Speaker Smt. Sumitra Mahajan attended one of the events.
- In two places, the Governor of the respective states participated.
- Chief Ministers of three states attended four pledge-taking ceremonies.
- Union Agriculture and Farmers Welfare Minister, Shri Radha Mohan Singh attended five ceremonies.
- 49 Central Ministers participated in pledge taking ceremonies at 79 locations (Districts).
- In 284 places (Districts), Members of Parliament attended the program.
- In 111 locations (Districts), State Ministers attended the program.
- In 350 locations (Districts), the MLAs attended the program.
- In 398 places (Districts), Chairman of District Panchayat attended the program.

[Kindly click here for State wise details.](#)

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Swachhta Hi Seva

Swachhta Hi Seva

Unprecedented nationwide campaign on Swachhta: India responds to Prime Minister's Call

Starting tomorrow, the whole country will take up sanitation initiatives, for over 15 days, in an unprecedented campaign to highlight, once again, the *jan* andolan that is the Swachh Bharat Mission. This follows an impassioned call by the Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi, ahead of the 3rd anniversary of Swachh Bharat Mission that falls on 2nd October. The Prime Minister has named the nation-wide sanitation campaign from 15th September to 2nd October 2017 as "Swachhta Hi Seva". This is being coordinated by the Ministry of Drinking Water and Sanitation, the convening Ministry for the Swachh Bharat Mission.

The objective of the campaign is to mobilise people and reinforce the "Jan Aandolan" for sanitation to contribute to Mahatma Gandhi's dream of a Clean India. Swachhta Hi Seva campaign will see large scale mobilisation of people from all walks of life to undertake shramdaan for cleanliness and construction of toilets and to make their environments free from open defecation. There will be targeted cleaning of public and tourist places. The participation will range from the President of India to the common citizen and would involve Union Ministers, Governors, Chief Ministers, legislators celebrities and top officials. Celebrities, faith leaders, corporate honchos etc. are being mobilised to spearhead the campaign in their respective areas of influence.

Ministry of Drinking Water and Sanitation has made elaborate plans along with the State Governments to involve people from various walks of life and make this an unprecedented people's campaign. Reaching out to the poor and marginalised and providing them with sustainable sanitation services would be the hallmark of this campaign.

The campaign is scheduled to be launched by President of India on the 15th of September 2017 from village *Ishwarigunj* in Kanpur that has attained the status of open free defecation status. The President would administer nation-wide "Swachhta Hi Seva" pledge thereby initiating parallel action in all the 250,000 plus Gram Panchayats and cities in India. The launch campaign will be joined by Sushri Uma Bharti, Union Minister for Drinking Water and Sanitation; Shri Ram Naik, Governor of Uttar Pradesh; Shri Yogi Adityanath, Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh and 7 persons representing various sectors of society, who are involved in supporting Swachh Bharat Mission.

Arrangements have been made to ensure formal launch of "Swachhta Hi Seva" campaign in all States and Districts involving Governors, Chief Ministers, State Ministers, MPs, MLAs and District Collectors. Pledged will be taken and Shramdaans done in Panchayats and other places simultaneously.

Ministry of Drinking Water and Sanitation has identified special dates during the campaign period. It includes three Sundays, 17th, 24th September and 1st October when people are being mobilised to do large scale shramdaan for toilet construction, cleaning of public places, bus stands, school and colleges, statues, hospitals and ponds in rural and urban areas. A special cleanliness drive is planned in 15 identified tourist places on 1st October 2017.

Vice President, Shri M Venkaiah Naidu, is scheduled to visit a village in Karnataka on 17th September 2017, which is being celebrated as "Seva Diwas" and offer shramdaan for toilet construction and general cleanliness. A large number of Union Ministers, MPs and MLAs are also scheduled to offer shramdaan across the length and breadth of the country on this day.

On Seva Diwas, 17th September, Doordarshan has organised a World TV Premiere of "Toilet: Ek Prem Katha", a film that has an overwhelming message about access and usage of toilets on

Doordarshan, at 11am. Community viewing of the telecast is being mobilised to effect positive behaviour change. Several media houses have voluntarily come out to mount special campaigns for Swachhta during the fortnight.

At the culminating event of the fortnight on October 2 Gandhi Jayanti, which is also the Swachh Bharat Diwas, national awards for essays, films and paintings, and other Swachh Bharat awards will be presented to Swachhta champions from across the country and all walks of life. The fortnight was preceded by a countrywide essay, short films and paintings competition, especially focused on schools, youth organisations, central police forces, besides general citizens.

The Ministry has created a special portal and web page on MyGov.in facilitating people to upload pre and post intervention photos of their shramdaan and other interventions.

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President launches nationwide Swachhata Hi Seva jan aandolan from Kanpur**President launches nationwide Swachhata Hi Seva jan aandolan from Kanpur**

The President Shri Ram Nath Kovind today launched the nationwide jan aandolan, Swachhta Hi Seva, from Iswarigunj, a village in Kanpur district of Uttar Pradesh. With this the whole country swings in to mass Shramdaan for toilet making and cleaning of public places for next two weeks.

“Swachhta Hi Seva” Campaign is an unprecedented campaign to highlight, once again, the jan aandolan that is the Swachh Bharat Mission. This follows an impassioned call by the Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi, ahead of the 3rd anniversary of Swachh Bharat Mission that falls on 2nd October, 2017. The objective of the campaign is to mobilise people between 15th September and 2nd October, reigniting the “jan aandolan” for sanitation. Union Ministers, MLAs, MPs, iconic celebrities of India, sports stars, inter-faith leaders, corporates, etc. have been appealed to join in this campaign towards swachhta.

The President administered the nation-wide “Swachhta Hi Seva” pledge in Kanpur, which simultaneously initiated parallel action in all Gram Panchayats and cities of the country. He honoured village level champions from Uttar Pradesh who have contributed to making various villages, including Iswarigunj, open defecation free. The President also launched the Solid and Liquid Waste Management activities in the village which is the next major step in Swachhta after getting the villages Open Defecation Free.

Speaking on the occasion, the President said that every citizen who works for Swachhta is a rashtr-nirmata (nation builder). He called upon all citizens to join the Swachhta Hi Seva movement and become a rashtra-nirmata. He congratulated all award winning Swachhta champions present and said that they were the real heroes of this jan aandolan. He quoted a World Bank study that says that lack of Sanitation costs the country 6% of GDP annually, adding that the weakest sections of society are the ones most affected by this problem. He spoke about diseases transmitted by open defecation, concerns around dignity and safety of women, and economic loss to the family.

He called upon people from all sectors - elected representatives, corporates, NGOs, women, children, senior citizens, Panchayati Raj institutions, media and the youth - to come forward and contribute to the Swachh Bharat movement with vigour and enthusiasm.

In his address, the Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh, Yogi Adityanath, welcomed the President back to his native village and said that Swachh Bharat, when it was first launched by the Prime Minister, had seemed like an impossible goal. He said, that Swachh Bharat is a critical component of the development of the country, and reaffirmed his government's commitment to achieve an Open Defecation Free (ODF) Uttar Pradesh by October 2018. He said that such an ambitious goal cannot be achieved without people's participation and partnership. For this, he mentioned that he is reaching out to grassroots leaders and elected representatives personally to involve all sections of society in this movement. He announced that Shamli, Bijnor, Hapur and Ghaziabad have

already been declared ODF, and that 30 districts will be declared ODF in the State by December 2017.

Sushri Uma Bharti, Union Minister for Drinking Water and Sanitation, in her address, said that she felt great pride that the President's first public appearance after taking office was for the launch of the Swachhta Hi Seva campaign. She spoke about the crucial role of public participation in making Swachh Bharat a reality. She said that Swachhta was both, a right and responsibility, of each and every citizen of the country, and that this was fundamental to the realization of the Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi's vision of Swachh Bharat.

The occasion was also marked by experience sharing by 7 persons representing various sectors of society, who have been involved in supporting the Swachh Bharat Mission. These were Ms Anuradha Joshi Sarpanch, Kodariya, Indore; Ms Lavanya, school student, Karnataka; Mr Banzop Kharrymbal, Sarpanch, Mawlynong (cleanest village in Asia), Meghalaya; Mr Bindeshwar Pathak, Founder, Sulabh International; Ms Naina Lal Kidwai, Chairperson, India Sanitation Coalition; Mr Sanjay Gupta, Executive Editor, Dainik Jagran, Kanpur and Cadet Mansi Dwivedi, 17 UP Girls Battalion, NCC. They each represented different sections of society and took the Swachhta pledge symbolically on behalf of their respective sectors. They also made short addresses at the occasion, highlighting the work done by them in the past, and their Swachhta commitments for the upcoming fortnight and beyond.

In his welcome address at the inauguration, Secretary, Ministry of Drinking Water and Sanitation, Shri Parameswaran Iyer spoke about the clarion call made by the Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi, for every section of society and each and every citizen to contribute to the Swachhta Hi Seva campaign. He also gave a progress update of Swachh Bharat Mission Gramin and Urban, saying that Sanitation coverage in the country has gone up from 39% to 68% since the launch of the Mission.

This launch kicked off the nationwide campaign to mobilise people to do large scale shramdaan.

Shri Murli Manohar Joshi, Member of Parliament, Kanpur constituency, Governor, Uttar Pradesh, Shri Ram Naik, and Minister of Panchayati Raj department, Uttar Pradesh, Shri Bhupendra Singh, were also present on the occasion.

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Government for market borrowing to incentivize speedy execution of new urban missions**Government for market borrowing to incentivize speedy execution of new urban missions****Minister of Housing & Urban Affairs says SPV to tap market****Minister asserts urban missions doing well and targets will be achieved****Comprehensive review of JNNURM to further improve urban planning, execution****National Conclave of States for mid-term review and road ahead**

Ministry of Housing & Urban Affairs is considering market borrowings to incentivize speedy execution of urban infrastructure projects under various new urban missions launched over the last two years. This was stated by the Minister of Housing & Urban Affairs Shri Hardeep Singh Puri while addressing 'Public Affairs Forum of India' on challenges and opportunities of rapid urbanization here today.

Shri Puri said "To overcome the severe infrastructure deficit accumulated over long years, huge order of investments is required. To meet various contingencies and to ensure fund availability to meet the targets under new urban missions, we are thinking of mobilizing resources from the market. We have undertaken an assessment of requirement of funds till 2022 and likely flow of funds. To ensure assured fund flow, setting up of a Special Purpose Vehicle to tap the market is under examination. Once this idea is firmed up, we will take it forward in an appropriate manner".

The Minister assured that the Government led by Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi will spare no efforts to realize a new Urban India and will work shoulder to shoulder with State and city governments in the true spirit of Team India. He further noted "These are happening times in India and Urban India is an integral part of this exciting and challenging journey. I am confident that success will be with the people of India".

Elaborating on the ongoing efforts to further improve urban governance, planning and execution, Shri Puri announced that a comprehensive evaluation of implementation and outcomes of Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission (JNNURM) will be undertaken which will serve several purposes, it being the first concerted effort to make a difference in urban sector. He said "The terms of evaluation will cover the extent of realization of stated goals of JNNURM, an assessment of improvement in urban governance further to implementation of reforms, identification of lacunae and reasons for shortfall in physical and financial progress. This evaluation will provide useful guidance to

city and State Governments in the context of current thrust on urban rejuvenation”.

JNNURM was implemented during the period 2005-14, before it was wound up by the previous government. This government, however, continued to finance some of the incomplete projects based on certain criteria, to enable their completion.

Referring to the impact on the ground of new urban missions, Shri Puri said that though the new Missions like Smart City Mission, AMRUT and Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (Urban) were launched only a little over two years back, substantial work is being executed on the ground with hundreds of projects under implementation. He asserted that visible impact will be visible in the next few months and expressed confidence that targeted outcomes will be achieved within given time frames. To prove his point, the Minister gave an account of performance during 2014-17 and the earlier ten years.

Elaborating on the paradigm shift in urban development approach of this Government, the Minister said “The city level action plans for improving urban infrastructure under different new missions have not been drafted in Delhi. They all emanated from the ground level and are collective expression of the aspirations of the citizens and city governments. Ownership of these plans is with them and not with Delhi. So, they have the obligation of ensuring their timely implementation”.

Shri Puri announced that a National Conclave of States and Union Territories will be organized for a high level mid-tem review with Ministers of the progress of various urban missions, for sharing of experiences for mutual benefit and a structured discussion on speeding up of implementation to meet time bound targets.

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The Ghazipur landfill collapses, another catches fire, and no one wants a dumpsite in the backyard. Where must our solid waste go?

On September 2, an avalanche of garbage at Ghazipur keeled over killing two people | Photo Credit: [Shanker Chakravarty](#)

A defiant mound — lush with grass as on a golf course — rises amidst 150-foot-high mountains of rotting garbage that constitute Delhi's most infamous landfill, in Ghazipur. At the foot of the mound is a stout, rectangular transformer — a 'demonstration project' — meant to show that landfill gas (a mix of methane and carbon dioxide) can be squeezed out of the garbage and be used to produce electricity.

For decades now, commuters on the highway connecting Delhi to Meerut would have been forgiven for mistaking the giant brown heaps for a mountain range. But locals know that it is a hulk of trash that grew at an average of about 3,000 tonnes a day every year — until this month, that is.

On September 2, an avalanche of garbage keeled over onto a road and with its momentum broke through a boundary wall pushing cars and motorcycles into an adjoining drain. Two people died and at least seven were injured in this accident.

"It was a massive sound, like an explosion," said Ram Manohar, who works at one of the effluent treatment plants built to convert some of the waste into biogas, "I ran to see what happened and the next thing I saw was a car floating in the drain."

To Shanta Kumari, who lives in the nearby slum, the disaster was imminent. She and her three sons have lived in one of the slums surrounding the landfill for several years. They have now got used to the stench, says Shanta, although it can get particularly overwhelming during the rains. "The stench apart there have been several fires that billow out during the summer. We've lodged several complaints but nothing has happened and we now accept it as a part of our life."

The bulk of the waste in the landfill being organic means that it's a potent source of methane and is inflammable, a fact that's well known to everyone — from government authorities to activists.

Delhi has other landfill sites at Bhaswal, northwest of the city, and it's so prone to fires that the Delhi Fire Services has engines on standby and positioned close enough to quickly douse it. Delhi isn't the only city that hosts deadly landfills.

Deonar, Mumbai's largest and oldest dumpyard, caught fire multiple times last year and required firemen for weeks; it spiked pollution levels to nearly twice that of Delhi. The Central Pollution Control Board has reported that waste from India's cities has crossed 1,42,870 (1.43 lakh) tonnes per day, of which a substantial 12,858 tonnes is not even collected. Of the 91% (1.3 lakh tonnes) collected, around 65,000 tonnes is dumped or disposed off in the most unscientific and unhygienic manner. Only 23% is being treated while 27% is dumped in landfills.

Energy from waste

A waste-to-energy plant commissioned in Ghazipur works sub-optimally because it requires that there be no solid waste in the refuse before treatment.

In an earlier interview, Ravi Agarwal, Director, Toxics Link, an organisation that works on waste management problems, had said that unless basic steps such as segregating waste at source were undertaken, it would be impossible to deal with Delhi's garbage woes. Professor Manoj Datta

of the Department of Civil Engineering, IIT-Delhi, in the aftermath of the recent disaster said that the 'stability of the landfill' could be increased by flattening the slopes, strengthening the top and removing leachate and gas.

Thirty-five years ago, this 80-acre shrine to garbage was an empty, featureless outback of Delhi. A fish and poultry market, a slaughterhouse, a vegetable and flower market predate the dumpsite and in the eyes of the municipal corporations, was a logical dumping ground for a rapidly-consumerising Delhi. In the late 1980s, as the trucks started to stream in — with piles of refuse from the markets as well as residential colonies of east Delhi — Mohammed Nazir and his schoolmates discovered that it became increasingly hard to host a decent game of cricket here.

"The ball would always get stuck in the trash and after a while it became impossible to ignore the stench," said Nazir, who's now a 45-year-old fish retailer at Murga Mandi, the generic name for the assortment of sprawling retailers that dominate the area.

As Nazir grew, so did the line up of trucks and eventually the landfill, which was stipulated to grow no more than 70 feet, but breached the limit in 2004. There's also an informal economy that subsists around the landfill: waste collectors, operators of trash-skimming equipments, truck drivers who ferry the trash.

For Kumari, living near a dumpsite that receives nearly a third of the city's garbage is a small price to pay because it pays her bills. Her sons climb the mounds of trash everyday for the slightest object of value — iron parts, electronic scrap, plastic — that are then sold for recycling. "Were this to go away, how will we eat?" she asks.

Foiled plan

After the accident, Anil Baijal, Delhi's Lieutenant Governor decreed that no more fresh garbage was to be dumped at the Ghazipur landfill; the convoy of trucks has slowed down to a trickle. Mirza, who works as a watchman at the Ghazipur dump, says that a handful of trucks continue to come in because the government's plans to have garbage dumped in an alternate location has run into stiff opposition from locals.

When disaster strikes

A waste-to-energy plant by the Jindal group in south-east Delhi's Okhla belt was stalled for years because residents in the vicinity complained that it wasn't using proper incineration technology and that the fumes were triggering illnesses.

Even as Delhi's waste management problems balloon, Delhi denizens' protests against any waste-to-energy plant or landfill coming within sniffing distance of their homes, has meant that authorities only firefight when a disaster strikes rather than implement long-term garbage-management plans.

The government amended solid waste management rules last year, mandating that all establishments take charge of ensuring that waste is segregated and waste collectors be absorbed into formal networks. "This requires a concerted government effort but given that different political parties control different wings of government, and Delhi's unique statehood means that it's extremely hard to work on long-term solutions," said a top official at the CPCB, who didn't want to be named.

The green mound was also once part of the dump that has now been flattened out and has its waste dredged to make landfill gas and run a micro power plant. In November, the government will begin an attempt to use the solid waste from the landfill as filler in the construction of a highway

connecting Delhi and Meerut, a plan that was made public in the aftermath of the accident. But “it’s too expensive and I doubt that this mountain heap will go away,” said Anoop Kumar, an engineer who works at the treatment plants.

Jaggi Vasudev’s Rally for Rivers claims they will, but this is not based on the most nuanced science

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Land use conversion and climate change can make a deadly combination for Mumbai

The coastal landscape of Mumbai has changed drastically in the last few years | Photo Credit:

[AP](#)

For the second time in a little more than a decade, rain and floods brought Mumbai, India's commercial capital, to a grinding halt. The city recorded nearly 300 mm of rain on August 29, one of the heaviest spells in the city's history. It was much lower than the all time single-day record of 944 mm of July 2005, but it was enough to bring the city to its knees.

The media reported on the impact on citizens, the failure of the local administration to first anticipate and then deal with the situation. While this remained focused primarily on the causes of flooding, there was another series of reports on larger phenomenon at play: Global warming and changing land use in the city. This makes a deadly combination indeed.

The coastal landscape of Mumbai has changed drastically in the last few years — satellite imagery following the August deluge shows, for instance, how mangrove forests in areas like Thane, Malad, and the Manori creek, have been lost or encroached upon. The new airport that was approved in Navi Mumbai a few years ago will destroy nearly 160 hectares of mangroves. The initial proposals by the Mumbai Metropolitan Region Development Authority had suggested the reclamation of more than 20 sq.km. of the city's salt pans for housing and other projects. The desire for more land is clearly jettisoning the security of the city and this is only expected to grow more pronounced as weather patterns become more extreme and also more uncertain with climate change.

Capacity to cope

There are two threads of discussion that are relevant here. On the positive side is the realisation, at least to an extent, of the importance of ecosystems like the mangrove. This is reflected in the creation in Maharashtra of a mangrove cell to protect and regenerate mangroves. Mumbai has some very good patches of mangroves, two of which (in Vikhroli and Airoli in Navi Mumbai) were included in a list of 12 important mangrove systems in India recently released by the Mangrove Society of India. While protection of the mangroves is unlikely to completely prevent the kind of events Mumbai has seen recently, the move will certainly help ensure a better capacity to cope. A 2009 study by scientists at the University of Delhi and Duke University in the United States showed, for instance, that villages with wider mangrove belts suffered relatively lesser damage during the 1999 'super cyclone' that ravaged the Odisha coast and killed an estimated 10,000 people.

A study published in May 2017 in the journal *Hydrobiologia*, pointed out that in the U.S., wetland coastal protection services provide an estimated \$23.2 billion per year against economic losses as well as deaths associated with major storm events.

Huge challenges

The bigger challenge in India comes however from the overarching thrust given to industrial expansion and infrastructure development.

This is starkly visible in the NITI Aayog's recently-released 'Three year action agenda 2017-18 to 2019-20'. While the action agenda for coastal regions does list issues surrounding coastal zone management and regions vulnerable to cyclones, flooding, earthquakes and tsunamis, these are included only as broad generalities. The major thrust, clearly, is on exploiting the land and the

resources along the coasts for aggressive economic growth, suggesting as it does port development as part of the Sagarmala programme, easing of sea-river movement, a massive thrust to tourism development, creation of a 2500 km long East Coast Economic corridor running from Visakhapatnam to Chennai, and the creation of 14 Coastal Employment zones based on the Chinese model of Special Economic Zones.

Conservation and protection are clearly not a priority — and this is a matter of serious concern, not just for Mumbai but for regions all along India's coastline. The NITI Aayog report itself notes that nearly 250 million people in the country live within 50 km of the coastline. And no amount of infrastructure development or economic growth will ensure their protection as the case of Mumbai has shown not once, but twice in little more than a decade.

The writer researches issues at the intersection of environment, science, society, and technology.

Jaggi Vasudev's Rally for Rivers claims they will, but this is not based on the most nuanced science

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Country of a chosen few

The paper by Thomas Piketty and Lucas Chancel, 'Indian Income Inequality 1922-2014 - From British Raj to Billionaire Raj?', is now in the public domain. Piketty needs no introduction - his *Capital in the Twenty-First Century* has been one of the most influential books on economics in the past decade. Piketty uses Indian data over the decades - including the "household survey of consumption", "fiscal" and "national accounts data", the newly released set of tax data from 1922 to 2014, as well as UN statistics, and other Human Development Survey data collected between 2005 and 2012 - to estimate the "income distribution pattern" of the population of India, as it evolved between 1951 and 2014. At first sight, the integration of the various data sources, including the necessary adjustments to cover the divergences, appear to have been undertaken with due care, to ensure credibility. *Prima facie*, the conclusions appear to be compelling. Note that Piketty has not referred to "black" income in his computations - the income disparities would be sharply higher than estimated by him.

In brief, what are the paper's main findings? Between 1980 and 2014, the share of the top 1 per cent of India's population in income increased from 6 per cent to 22 per cent. During the same period, the share of the top 10 per cent increased from 30 per cent to 50 per cent; the share of the middle 40 per cent (the middle class) fell from 43 per cent to 30 per cent; the share of the bottom 50 per cent fell from 24 per cent to 15 per cent. More astonishingly, the top 0.1 per cent of earners captured a higher share of the total growth than the bottom 50 per cent (12 per cent vs 11 per cent). These are astounding figures.

The period after the year 2000 saw the highest growth of the economy compared to the five preceding decades. In other words, the period 1980-2014 saw the top 0.1 per cent grow at 550 times the rate of the bottom 50 per cent. The top 1 per cent grew at 130 times of the bottom 50 per cent. The middle 40 per cent grew at a three times higher rate than the bottom-half. Note that more segregated data in percentiles is not computed for the bottom-half. Assuming the same skewed growth pattern within the bottom-half, for the bottom 10 per cent these ratios would be significantly higher. Ten per cent of India is about 14 crore, a population higher than that of most countries.

Let us assume for a moment that Piketty is largely right in his conclusions - there is no reason to question his logic or methodology, or indeed his findings. Why has this state of affairs not been brought to our notice by our economists and statisticians? Have Montek Singh Ahluwalia and economists of his generation forgotten that every economics lesson in the London School of Economics on "income generation" would have a parallel connection with "income distribution"?

Perhaps the next generation of economists, who imbibed their lessons at Harvard or Chicago had not heard of the "Gini coefficient" or such concepts like "Theil or Entropy Index". Perhaps these were not seen to be applicable to Indian conditions. The fact is that most of our economists learnt their trade in the foreign conditions of developed countries, where the land/capital/labour inter-relationships are quite different to those in India. Economics was always considered an esoteric, abstruse "science" in India - our politicians had left our economy in the hands of our economists, with, as can now be seen, disastrous results.

It is astonishing that we have not built "inclusion" and "income distribution" as an integral part of every national policy. High-income differentials are possibly tolerable, subject to the lowest strata having minimum living conditions. This is not the case in India. Kamban, who brilliantly wrote the Ramayana in Tamil, some say with even greater elegance and poetry than Valmiki, had described "Ram Rajya" as a place where "Everyone had everything he needed and therefore there was no 'rich' or 'poor'."

In short, there has been no "inclusive growth", to put it mildly. Apparently, this country is meant only for the rich. We had been ruled by the British and the Mughals, by sultans, nawabs, and zamindars. The new rulers are the politicians, the businessmen - nothing has changed in this "democracy". Even not accounting for the wealth stashed away in the Cayman Islands and Lichtenstein by the business community, or the benami property of ex-chief ministers and their kin, or the 30-odd bank accounts of the sons of ex-ministers, and the election expenditures of our legislators, the Piketty-computed income share in the top-most brackets seems obscene.

Is the country sitting on a powder keg? Does India belong to a chosen few? Surely, the arrival of Digital India, 4G etc would convey graphic details of the lifestyle of those driving Lamborghinis or living in gated communities to the poorest in the rural countryside. In a situation where there is an inability to increase employment, this is a dangerous mix for the stability of our democracy.

Tony Atkinson recently defined the necessary conditions to be followed by state policy to bring in inclusivity, and mitigate income disparity. While one may not agree with all his prescriptions, it may be worthwhile to examine them to assess their applicability in Indian conditions. With the advent of technology, coupled with poor education standards, unemployment could become a major issue in a country like India, compared to developed countries. The taxation structure also needs to be looked at for examining correctives like "gift tax", "wealth tax", "estate duty" and the like.

The present skewed income growth pattern needs to be sharply curbed. The prime minister has promised to double the real income of the farmers within five years. This commitment needs to be fulfilled. He surely means this with great sincerity and purpose but where is the roadmap? Will the system be able to overcome large vested interests to meet this goal?

The country has learnt through bitter experience not to trust politicians. Politics is too important to be left to politicians. Likewise, the economy is too vital to be left to economists.

The writer is a former Cabinet Secretary

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Taking A Narrow View: SC ruling on misuse of the dowry law raises questions

In the *Rajesh Sharma v. State of UP* case, the Supreme Court has directed that each complaint of cruelty to a woman by her husband or his relatives, that does not involve tangible physical injuries or death, shall be referred to the Family Welfare Committee of the district. This judgment is based on the Court's observations that Section 498-A of the IPC is abused by some women, particularly to harass elderly in-laws. The Court cited National Crime Record Bureau (NCRB) data in support. The committee may comprise para-legal volunteers or social workers or retired officers or even the wives of serving officers but the members shall not be called as witnesses if the police or magistrate decide to investigate a particular case. There is no doubting the court's intention. But the route it has taken - to substitute investigation - raises many questions.

In most complaints registered under Section 498-A, a victim approaches the police after exhausting all options to settle matrimonial disputes. In most states, the police have a counseling centre at the district headquarters, where both the complainant and the accused - wife and husband - are encouraged to talk about their grievances against each other. At times, a complainant requests the police to not register a case but help strike a compromise between the two parties. A criminal case is registered only when a compromise is not possible. However, once a criminal case is registered, the police have no option but to proceed with the investigation.

The Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC) clearly lays down the procedure an investigating police officer must follow after registering a cognisable criminal case. These provisions have stood the test of time. Therefore, there was no compelling reason for the Court to substitute investigation through the constitution of an extraneous committee which will have no accountability if the disputants do not arrive at a settlement.

It is pertinent to recall the *Vishakha (1997)* case in which the SC issued guidelines to prevent the sexual harassment of women at workplaces. The Court had observed that the sexual harassment of women at workplaces was not clearly dealt with in the existing statutes. It, therefore, decided to lay down norms to be followed till the time Parliament took a call to legislate on the matter. We now have a separate law in place to deal with cases of sexual harassment at workplaces.

However, in *Rajesh Sharma v. State of UP*, the SC neither consulted the states nor deliberated over the practice of counseling in dowry-related cases. In fact, neither the Additional Solicitor General (ASG) nor the counsels who assisted the court in the case suggested the constitution of the family welfare committees. Directing the police to not arrest the accused mechanically, when a case under section 498-A of the IPC is registered, was a welcome judgment in the *Arnesh Kumar v. State of Bihar (2014)* case. The police should use the power of arrest carefully, only when such an action becomes necessary under Section 41 of the CrPC. However, the powers of investigation cannot be substituted by constituting an unaccountable committee, especially when there is no ambiguity about this issue in the existing law.

The SC will review its order after six months. Though such a short period is not sufficient to come to a fair conclusion, the National Legal Services Authority must consider the practices prevalent in the states before submitting its report to the SC. The Court should not impose its will on the clearly laid down provisions of law. The doctrine of statutory interpretation, *casus omissus*, cannot be applied here.

The NCRB data on dowry cases, which forms the rationale of the judgment, either indicates more awareness among women of their rights or the increasing trend of crime in society. Judicial orders that impact society require much wider deliberations. The fundamental right of women to live with dignity cannot be taken away even if a law is found to be misused by a few. The law can take its

own course in such cases.

The writer is a senior IPS officer in Chhattisgarh

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Liberalization's impact on gender discrimination

Conventional wisdom would suggest that gender discrimination should have declined in India, thanks to economic liberalization in the early 1990s. Increased market competition forces firms to eliminate inefficient discriminatory practices, including gender discrimination. The room for hiring their own "types" is less when firms face intense competition. Market competition works in favour of women, as women are more competitive, and offer cheaper and more flexible labour vis-à-vis men.

We examined these issues in some 600 districts using millions of enterprise data in manufacturing and services. Evidence suggests that India's economic liberalization has not reduced gender discrimination. It may have worsened in many respects (Ejaz Ghani, Arti Grover, Sari Kerr, and William Robert Kerr, *Will Market Competition Trump Gender Discrimination In India?*, Policy Research Working Paper Series 7814, World Bank).

The share of females in manufacturing employment has barely increased over the last two decades. Female activity is largely concentrated in the unorganized sector. The concentration of female entrepreneurs in low-wage industries has grown over time. Despite many competitive reforms that India has undertaken, this pattern of gender-based segmentation has been accentuated over the years.

Women entrepreneurs are more dominant in industries that pay lower average wages. Within the manufacturing sector, female ownership shares are highest and typically exceed 50% in industries related to chemicals and chemical products, tobacco products, and paper and paper products. At the opposite end, female ownership shares are 2% or less in industries related to computers, motor vehicles, fabricated metal products, and machinery and equipment.

In the service sector, female ownership rates in major cities tend to be higher than overall state averages. Among service industries, female ownership shares exceed 30% in industries related to sanitation and education. Industries related to research and development, water transport, and land transport have the lowest female ownership rates, at 1% or less.

The states with the highest female service sector ownership rates are Kerala, Tamil Nadu, and Andhra Pradesh, with average female ownership shares exceeding 12%. The lowest female ownership rates are in Rajasthan, Bihar, Odisha, and Uttar Pradesh, each with 6% or less. It is surprising that the nation's capital, Delhi, has the lowest share of female-owned establishments in manufacturing. Its position in the services sector is only slightly above the national average.

What drives the gender balance of new enterprises? Empirical results suggest that a district/industry with more incumbent female employment has a greater female entry share. Among district-level traits, a higher female-to-male ratio, an age profile emphasizing working age population, and better quality infrastructure appear important.

The relationship between infrastructure and female-entry share is perhaps the most relevant for policymakers. While basic infrastructure services like electricity are essential for all businesses, new entrants and the informal sector can be particularly dependent upon local infrastructure (established firms are better able to provision their own electricity if necessary). Inadequate infrastructure also affects women more than men, because women are often responsible for a larger share of, and often more time-consuming, household activities.

Interestingly, empirical findings suggest that access to major cities does not influence the gender balance of entrepreneurship, but infrastructure access within a district does. In particular, transport

infrastructure and paved roads within villages play an important role. Travel in India can be restrictive and unpredictable, and women face greater constraints in geographic mobility imposed by safety concerns and social norms. In addition, better electricity and water access may reduce the burden of women in providing essential household inputs for their families, and allow for more time to be directed toward entrepreneurial activities.

India is simultaneously a leader as well as a laggard on gender. India's 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act, passed in 1992, instituted one-third seat reservations for women in local governance bodies. The political empowerment of women had huge beneficial effects. The political reservation for women has gained India global recognition.

However, India's economic liberalization and increased market competition has not eliminated gender segmentation. Indeed, India's gender balance in entrepreneurship and jobs remains among the lowest in the world. Globalization and trade policy have made a limited contribution towards India's convergence in gender segmentation. However, improved physical and human infrastructure, and domestic pro-competitive reforms have reduced gender segmentation.

Gender will play a bigger and more strategic role in India's future growth. This growth will come in many forms: increased female labour force participation, improvements in productivity, elimination of gender discrimination in access to bank loans, and increased voice and political representation. Simply put, empowering half of the potential workforce has significant economic benefits beyond promoting gender equality.

Ejaz Ghani is lead economist at the World Bank.

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Swachhata Hi Seva Hits a Highpoint on Seva Divas – People Driving the Movement**Swachhata Hi Seva Hits a Highpoint on Seva Divas – People Driving the Movement**

A volunteer group in Delhi called We Mean To Clean planted 600 ecologically valuable trees in Delhi. Earlier they transformed a slum in Kirti Nagar, Delhi. Swachhata Hi Seva is fast becoming a movement that the people themselves are running. Many such organisations run by common people is the feature of the overall Swachh Bharat programme – citizens becoming inspiring leaders, owning the movement and run it.

Enthusiastic cleanliness initiatives among the people have become a feature ever since Prime Minister Narendra Modi launched the Swachh Bharat initiative. Lending further impetus towards a cleaner India, Prime Minister Narendra Modi had appealed to the nation during his recent Mann Ki Baat address to dedicate the last few weeks of September towards Swachhata Hi Seva, an initiative to pay a real tribute to Mahatma Gandhi on Gandhi Jayanti.

On the 15th of September, 2017, President Ram Nath Kovind had launched the Swachhata Hi Seva movement in Uttar Pradesh from a village in Kanpur. Ever since, the movement started it had begun to generate action and positivity. However, with the birthday of Prime Minister Modi on September 17th, it has taken off at a higher trajectory.

Cleanliness volunteers, NGOs and many karyakartas have enthusiastically dedicated themselves to Shramdaan towards cleanliness initiatives to celebrate his birthday as a 'Seva Divas'.

It also came to light that the Prime Minister had written touching personal letters inviting people from across the nation and across domains, to participate in the movement and spread the message of cleanliness. Accomplished Bollywood actor Anil Kapoor took to social media to thank PM Modi for honouring him with an invite to participate in the Swachhata Hi Seva movement and assured he would do his best. Reports said the PM had written to Malayalam superstar Mohanlal inviting him to participate in the movement. K T Rama Rao, young politician from Telangana belonging to the TRS party also received a letter from PM Modi, reports said.

Most ministries, government departments and prominent public servants have been carrying out cleanliness activities in every state across the nation. While Vice President Venkaiah Naidu was seen administering Swachhata Hi Seva pledges to citizens, Governor of Rajasthan, Kalyan Singh was seen picking up the broom by himself to clean his office.

While it was natural for government machinery to take up cleanliness activities for Swachhata Hi Seva, well-known citizens too have ardently joined the movement. In Maharashtra, music director Anu Malik was seen cleaning a place along with a number of citizens. Telugu movie superstar couple Nagarjuna and Amala along with citizen volunteers conducted cleanliness activities in Hyderabad. Actor Ravi Kishan led

cleanliness initiatives in Mumbai. Internationally renowned sand artist Sudarsan Pattnaik first led a group of citizens in cleaning up the Puri beach in Odisha and then created a sand art wishing PM Modi on his birthday.

From Kargil to Ramanathapuram, Manipur to Maharashtra, a renewed sense of eagerness was seen for cleanliness. While the cleanliness movement was kicked off in Kargil with great energy, the District Collector and municipal officials participated in cleanliness activities. Apart from the sheer geographic spread of the movement in just 2 days, yet again, just like its mothership Swachh Bharat, citizens became engines for the movement. NCC cadets of girls' wings of Jammu and Kashmir's Poonch district cleaned the offices and several areas of the Poonch district. The cadets also took out an awareness rally with a message of clean India. Volunteers conducted cleaning activities in Indore. In Puducherry, a cleanliness drive to clean the beach was organised by NSS volunteers and Karaikal Municipality.

Citizens were seen cleaning the Hazrat Nizamuddin Railway Station in Delhi. Heroes from the Navy cleaned up the South Mumbai mangroves and sea front. On the occasion of International Coastal Cleanup day, citizens groups also removed trash and garbage from Mumbai's beaches. Women from Self Help Groups in Agra took Swachhata Shapath and discussed initiatives towards a clean and green India. In many places across the nation, Shramdaan and sanitation drives were held, besides activities around open defecation-vulnerable spots with participation of community, self-help groups and local NGOs.

On social media too, #SwachhataHiSeva was a top trend on the day it was launched. Subsequently, the hashtag has become a hub of positivity where people have posted their Shramdaan activities towards cleanliness using this hashtag. A heightened sense of awareness and participation has ensued since the launch of the movement on social media.

Finally, two happenings showed positive signs for the future of a clean India.

One, that NTPC has invited national and international players to set up 100 waste-to-energy pollution-free plants across the country under the Swachh Bharat mission. This bodes well for a clean and green India.

Two, the future of clean India seems to be in safe hands. The Ministry of Drinking Water and Sanitation had announced a Swachh Bharat painting competition for primary school students from mainly government schools earlier. A total of 2.46 crore children studying in class 1-5 have submitted their entries for the Swachh Sankalp Swachh Siddhi painting competition. The enormous magnitude of participation and the awareness being created in these children towards cleanliness augurs well.

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'Respect regional languages': Pro-Hindi speakers must heed President's Kovind's advice

Coercion is not always the best path if you want to convince people to do something that they are averse to.

President Ram Nath Kovind seems to understand that well.

Addressing a function on the occasion of 'Hindi Divas' in Delhi last week, he asked Hindi-speaking people to give more respect and space to regional languages and their speakers in a bid to make the language more popular across the country.

He added that Hindi continued to face opposition in some parts of the country even though it became an official language many decades ago. Mr Kovind suggested that those who speak Hindi should greet a Tamilian with a 'vanakkam', a Sikh with 'Sat Sri Akal' and a Muslim with an 'Adaab'—words of greeting in Tamil, among Sikhs and in Urdu respectively. They should use the word 'Garu' (sir) while addressing a Telugu-speaking person. Home minister Rajnath Singh, who was also present at the function organised by his ministry, said in his address that Hindi could be enriched further if its speakers also used words from other languages.

Language tensions are not new in India, it started from Independence.

Even today, in many parts of India, Hindi is still a foreign language. In fact, many communities feel cornered when languages spoken by the majority of the state try to push them through.

Take for example, what happened recently in West Bengal. Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee had to revoke her decision of making Bengali a compulsory subject in schools in the hill district Darjeeling after protests by Gorkhas.

Coming back to Hindi-regional language rivalry, last month, activists in Karnataka blackened sign boards displayed in Hindi on the walls of a metro station. In March, Tamil Nadu saw a spate of protests when it replaced English with Hindi on its road signs.

The pro-Hindi lobby must understand that a language is not just about words; it carries with it culture, traditional knowledge, and works as comfort zone for its speakers.

Instead of ramming down a language down the throats of the unwilling, it will be a much better to give regional languages their due and let a thousand languages bloom.

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There are 1.77 million homeless in India, but the State is blind to them

They can be found everywhere but somehow the Indian State fails to notice them. They are the homeless people of India. According to the government's definition, homeless or houseless are those who live in "the open or roadside, pavements, in hume-pipes, under flyovers and staircases, or in the open in places of worship, mandaps, railway platforms etc." Yet when it comes to providing them the basic needs, governments have been failing to spend even their allocated funds. There are 1.77 million homeless people in India.

Last week, [the Supreme Court took the Centre and states to task](#), saying that there should be an audit by the Comptroller and Auditor General of the money disbursed by the Centre to the states for a scheme under the National Urban Livelihoods Mission (NULM), and observed that these funds, which are meant for a specific purpose, should not be diverted.

This is not the first time the SC has rapped the Centre. In 2016, the apex court slammed the Centre and states for their lackadaisical approach in providing shelters to the poverty-stricken in urban areas despite availability of sufficient funds.

It had also observed that the mission of the NULM scheme "remains a distant dream even after lapse of a long period."

The NULM was launched in September 2013 to reduce poverty and vulnerability of urban poor households. The Centre had earlier told the court that an amount of Rs 1,000 crore, released under the NULM, does not pertain only to urban homeless but to other activities also.

The good news is that there has been an overall decline in the houseless population from the last Census. While there has been a 28% decline reported from rural India, there has been a 20% increase in houseless people living in the cities. But still there is a long way to go.

But only spending money will not solve the problem. Here's what needs to be done.

First, the State needs to identify and address the structural causes of homelessness; second, a national moratorium on forced evictions and demolitions should be introduced; third, enhanced policy coherence and convergence between housing schemes in urban and rural areas and schemes for the provision of water and sanitation; fourth, the central and state governments should put in place effective and timely mechanisms to collect data on evictions, including with disaggregation of the persons who are evicted by age, gender, disability, caste and religion.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi has set a target for the nation – every Indian must have a house by 2022. This is a tall order. However it is possible if the state undertakes the right sort of planning and judicious spending of funds.

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Reimagining the OBC quota

Big crowd of Indian women vector avatar illustration - Indian woman representing different states/religions of India.

Regardless of the political impulse that led the government to announce creation of a committee to look into sub-categorisation of Other Backward Classes (OBC), it provides an opening to ensure social justice in an efficient manner. The biggest challenge India faces is that the groups perceived to be disadvantaged consist of a very large segment of Indian society, while public policies are highly limited in scope.

Some illustrative statistics are eye-opening. The National Sample Survey (NSS) data from 2011-12 show that about 19% of the sample claims to be Dalit, 9% Adivasi, and 44% OBC. While some of these claims may be aspirational rather than real, this totals a whopping 72%. Among the population aged 25-49, less than 7% have a college degree. By most estimates, less than 3% of the whole population is employed in government and public-sector jobs. Since reservations cover only half the college seats and public-sector jobs, the mismatch is obvious. A vast proportion of the population eligible for reservations must still compete for a tiny number of reserved and non-reserved category jobs. It is not surprising that there is tremendous internal competition within groups.

If we want reservations to make a significant difference in the lives of the marginalised groups, there are only two options. Either the government must drastically increase availability of government jobs and college seats or it must reduce the size of the population eligible for these benefits. While the Supreme Court would not allow reservations to exceed 50%, frankly it does not matter. Whether available public sector jobs cover 1.5% of the population or 3%, these will only offer opportunities to a minuscule fraction of individuals in reserved categories. Hence, the only viable option is to reduce the size of the eligible population, possibly along the lines of sub-categorisation proposed by the government.

However, while the media and claimants to the coveted OBC status such as Jats, Kapus and Patels are busy arguing over the merits of this proposal, very little attention is paid to the practical challenges facing sub-categorisation. How will we know which castes are the most disadvantaged? At the moment, the only reputable nationwide data on caste comes from the 1931 colonial Census and some of the ad hoc surveys conducted for specific castes.

The Socio-Economic Caste Census (SECC) of 2011 was supposed to provide up-to-date comprehensive data. However, the results remain shrouded in mystery. When releasing poverty and deprivation data from the SECC in 2015, it was found that about 4.6 million distinct caste names, including names of gotra, surname and phonetic variations were returned, making the results almost impossible to interpret. For nearly 80 million individuals, caste data were believed to be erroneous. Since then we have heard little about the quality of caste data in SECC and even less about its results. In 2015, the then NITI Aayog Vice Chairperson, Arvind Panagariya, was asked to head a committee to chair the caste classification using SECC data. Little seems to have come of it.

It is not surprising that SECC data have not been able to shed light on socio-economic disadvantages faced by different caste groups: addition of caste information was an ill-conceived graft on what was supposed to be a Below Poverty Line (BPL) survey. This patchwork solution had to be adopted because in spite of widespread demands to include caste data in the Census of 2001 and 2011, the Office of the Registrar General was reluctant to add this burden to the decennial exercise. As a way of appeasing the OBC lobby, it was decided that the BPL census

would incorporate caste information.

After the probable failure of this effort, it would make sense to rethink collection of caste data in Census. Preparations for Census 2021 are ongoing. There is still time to create an expert group to evaluate the methodology for collecting caste data and include it in the Census forms. Losing this opportunity would leave us hanging for another 10 years without good data for undertaking sub-categorisation of OBC quota or evaluating claims to OBC status by groups like Jats and Patels.

A broader issue, however, focusses on whether we want to radically rethink our approach to affirmative action. What would it take to eliminate caste-based disadvantages in next three or four decades? A two-pronged approach that focusses on eliminating discrimination and expanding the proportion of population among the disadvantaged groups that benefits from affirmative action policies could be a solution.

The present policies focus on preferential admission to colleges and coveted institutions like IITs and IIMs. But these benefits may come too late in the life of a Kurmi or Gujjar child. Their disadvantage begins in early childhood and grows progressively at higher levels of education. The India Human Development Survey of 2011-12 found that among families where no adult has completed more than Class X, 59% children from the forward castes are able to read a simple paragraph while the proportion is only 48% for OBCs, 41% for Dalits and 35% for Adivasis. We know little about what goes on in schools to create these disadvantages but improving quality of education for all, including those from marginalised groups, must be a first step in addressing caste-based inequalities.

The second line of attack must focus on ensuring that benefits of reservations are widely spread. It makes little sense for a young man to obtain admission to a prestigious college, get admitted to a postgraduate course, get a job as an assistant professor, and be promoted to the position of a professor using the same caste certificate. It would make even less sense if his children are also able to obtain preferential treatment using the same caste certificate. Thus, use of the OBC quota must be limited to once in a person's lifetime, allowing for a churn in the population benefitting from reservations. Linking the Aadhaar card to use of benefits makes it possible that individuals use their caste certificates only once, spreading the benefits of reservations over a wider population.

The present move by the government to rethink OBC quota creates a wedge that could potentially be used to ensure that we have better data on caste-based disadvantages for future discourse. It is somewhat disheartening to think that even after 70 years of Independence, we still must rely on a colonial Census to tell us about the condition of various castes in India. It also indicates a mood that wants to ensure that the benefits of reservation are widely spread. Increased attempts at linking benefits to Aadhaar allow us with an option to ensure that reservation benefits are not captured by a few. Let us use this opportunity to reshape the nature of affirmative action in India.

Sonalde Desai is Professor of Sociology at University of Maryland and Senior Fellow at the National Council of Applied Economic Research. Views are personal

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

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At the prison gates

Women now have a voice in the police. They are carrying out all types of duties - regulating traffic, managing control rooms, PCR vans, conducting night rounds, checking at nakabandi points and, above all, investigating serious crimes and supervising large bandobasts. They have come to symbolise a changing India that believes in empowered girls and women. Their uniform has inspired many more to join the police department leading to a powerful community within the service.

Women managing prisons and correctional administration are unsung heroes. Their number is gradually increasing. From being wardens to jailers and deputies, women handle sensitive duties from managing prison gates, barracks, peripheral and internal security to sending inmates to courts and attending to judicial duties regarding prisoners.

Many states like Maharashtra now have 33 per cent reservation for women in prison administration: Their increased number means that they are assigned duties in male prisons too. Most of the 1,400 prisons in the country have a separate women's section with around 18,000 prisoners, according to the NCRB. There are 18 jails exclusively for women. Most prison superintendents are apprehensive of having women staff. The assimilation of women officers in the male prison administration is a challenge that is yet to be surmounted.

The nature of prison duties, hours of their shifts, are such that most of the staff stays near the prison. They form a community of their own. Many are second generation prison staff and steeped in a culture that has developed over time. It is definitely a male-dominated culture that broadly believes that prisons are places for the punishment for criminals and that the latter pose a risk to society. The security of prisons and counting of prisoners is their main occupation.

The presence of women in prison administration requires that officers and staff of prisons are in sync with the culture of gender equality, respect and cooperation. Women come with their own strengths - teamwork, participative management, communication skills etc. They also herald a shift in favour of a correctional administration instead of the traditional punitive mindset. The re-orientation of prison administration has thus become imperative.

The Supreme Court has flagged this issue and that of training prison staff. It has tasked the Bureau of Police Research and Development to revise the existing syllabi for the training of prison officers/staff - a highly ignored area. After basic training during induction, there is hardly any in-service training. Training at regular intervals, linking it with promotions and updating technical knowledge deserve the attention of all state governments, since police and prisons are state subjects.

Last year, the Bureau established a micro-mission to deal with issues of prisons and correctional administration. Besides updating syllabi of basic training for prison administrators, there is a strong need for their reorientation towards correctional administration. Prison officers and staff need to veer towards an attitude of reformation and rehabilitation. The focus should shift from punitive to correctional.

Prisons in most metros and district headquarters are over crowded. Mumbai's Arthur road Central prison is a classic example. The adverse effects on the hygiene and health of prisoners and the staff on duty can be imagined. Tuberculosis and skin diseases are rampant. The security risks are enormous. In this situation, relieving even one staff member for in-service training appears to be a luxury. Thus, besides regular training, filling around 34 per cent vacancies in prisons needs immediate attention. Women officers and around 4,400 staff working in these conditions have the

extra burden of traditional family responsibilities. Their problems have not been studied or attended to.

What kind of challenges are uniformed women facing in prisons? What is their work satisfaction? What kind of duties can be allotted to them in the male prisons? Is their uniform gender-friendly? Are their working hours reasonable and conducive to a healthy family life? Discussions about possible solutions and engaging with them on continuous basis can help women in prison administration reach their potential. They can be equipped with professional expertise to ensure that incidents like the custodial death of Manjula Shete in Mumbai's Byculla prison do not occur. While prison administration as a whole needs attention, the issues of uniformed women in prison administration require a thorough review and follow-up action.

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What does the wage data say about the economy?

There is now an emerging consensus that the economy is in a downward spiral with little hope of it reviving in the near future. While this is certainly evident from the quarterly national account estimates released last month, data released subsequently by other sources confirm the trend is continuing.

It is also clear that much of the distress which has now become obvious has been going on for quite some time even though the situation has worsened after the twin shocks of demonetization and hurried implementation of the goods and services tax (GST).

Much of the impact of these two shocks is still unfolding but it is now evident that domestic demand in the economy has slumped with the agricultural and unorganized sector being the largest casualties. Some of this was already made clear in the second volume of the Economic Survey presented last month.

The second issue, which continues to plague the economy is the absence of job creation, which has also been recognized by most economists as the biggest pressure point on the economy. This again is now more or less confirmed by data from various sources, public as well as private.

While the government has continued to remain in denial mode on most indicators, citing an absence of concrete data or has taken recourse to blaming “technical issues”, the reality is that there is now much more convergence by various data sources on the state of the economy than what the government would like to believe.

An important source of data in this regard is the trend in real wages of casual workers in agriculture and non-agricultural areas in the villages. These remain incontrovertible and an important measure of the state of the economy. In fact, wages are not just an indicator of the earnings of salaried and casual workers—they are also an independent source of information on the labour market.

The information on wage data is available from the labour bureau on a monthly basis, the last being June 2017. These are available for various agricultural and non-agricultural occupations, including general agricultural labourers and non-agricultural unskilled workers.

The trend from these shows a sharp deceleration in real wages for both agricultural and non-agricultural sectors since 2013-14. Real wages of casual workers in agriculture and non-agricultural areas were increasing at 7% per annum between 2007-08 and 2012-13. As against this, real wages in agriculture between 2013-14 and 2016-17 have slowed to 1% per annum. Unlike agriculture, real wages in non-agricultural occupations have actually declined in real terms with wages of unskilled workers declining in real terms by 0.1% per annum.

The increase in real wages of casual workers during 2008-2013 was not just responsible for insulating the economy from a severe shock following the financial crisis and the drought of 2009, but it also contributed to poverty reduction between 2004-05 and 2011-12.

The increase in wages was a result of many factors, including the increase in agricultural productivity but was supported by buoyancy in the construction sector which absorbed a large number of workers released by the agricultural sector. It was also helped by the expansion of the National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (NREGS) which not only contributed to tightening the labour market in rural areas but also provided a floor for private wages with NREGA wages being pegged at minimum wages.

The deceleration in real wages was evident even before the present National Democratic Alliance government took over, with real wages turning negative in 2013-14. The subsequent collapse of the rural economy in the wake of the commodity price crash and back-to-back droughts further aided the deceleration.

The cutback in expenditure on NREGA since 2011-12 has worsened the situation. Not only did the government cut back the expenditure, but it also froze minimum wages, depriving rural workers of alternative opportunities. Some of these could have been reversed but for the twin shocks of demonetization and GST roll-out which hurt the rural economy and the rural informal sector.

The deceleration in real agricultural wages and a real decline in non-agricultural wages not only confirm the worsening demand situation in rural areas but also confirm the lack of job creation in rural areas.

The last time real wages decelerated on this scale was the period between 1998 and 2003, a period of crisis in rural areas, particularly in agriculture. The deceleration this time not only coincides with a similar phase of rural distress and agrarian unrest but also a decline in construction activity which had contributed to insulating the economy from the vagaries of monsoon failure and price fluctuations. The deceleration this time is confirmation of a collapse of demand in rural areas. Given the government's denial of jobless growth, the collapse of rural wages is clear evidence of the lack of employment creation in the last three years in the economy.

The decline in wages is not just a serious and indisputed indicator of the state of the economy but it is also a pointer to the stress in the rural economy. Given that almost one-third of all rural workers and households are dependent on wage work, it will certainly affect the significant gains in poverty reduction that were achieved in the previous decade. But the sheer size of the rural casual workforce also implies that any attempt at reviving the economy will have to include efforts to create employment and raise wages in rural areas.

Himanshu is an associate professor at Jawaharlal Nehru University and visiting fellow at Centre de Sciences Humaines, New Delhi.

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First ever National Conference on “Mission Mode to address Under-Nutrition” to be held in New Delhi tomorrow

First ever National Conference on “Mission Mode to address Under-Nutrition” to be held in New Delhi tomorrow

Three States to be awarded for reducing prevalence of stunting in population

The Ministry of Women and Child Development will hold the first ever National Conference in New Delhi tomorrow on *Mission Mode to address Under-Nutrition* in the country. In his curtain raiser briefing in New Delhi today, the Secretary WCD, Shri Rakesh Srivastava said that this conference is being organized by the Ministry of Women & Child Development in collaboration with Ministry of Drinking Water and Sanitation and Ministry of Health & Family Welfare, keeping in mind the goal of “**Malnutrition Free India-2022**”.

Giving details about the conference, the Secretary WCD said that the Government has decided to lay focused attention on this issue and for this said purpose, Ministry of Women and Child Development has identified 113 districts across the States/UTs based on the composite index of NITI Ayog and prevalence of stunting from NFHS-4 data. At least one district has been selected from each State/UTs so that the action taken in the selected district can be emulated in the other districts also, he explained.

Shri Srivastava said that the National Conference, first of its kind, aims at bringing convergence at District/Block levels of the three key Departments (Health & Family Welfare, ICDS/Social Welfare and Drinking Water and Sanitation) wherein a roadmap would be drawn to evolve an appropriate strategy in tackling the problem of stunting, under-nutrition and wasting comprehensively and conclusively.

The conference would be sensitizing the District Collectors/Deputy Commissioners/District Magistrates as well as the District-level officers of Health & Family Welfare, Nutrition (ICDS/SW), Drinking Water & Sanitation Departments in the 113 High Burden Districts along with the Principal Secretaries/Secretaries, in-charge of these three Departments of all States/UTs on a multitude of topics relating to stunting, under-nutrition and wasting and the key strategic interventions which are urgently required.

The District Magistrates/District Collectors/Deputy Commissioners in these 113 high burden districts, through a dashboard, will regularly monitor and review the schemes

covering the aspects of nutrition across the line departments within their jurisdiction at least once in a three month period. Such a review and monitoring at district level would be done in an exclusively and dedicated manner (between 1st to 10th of January, April, July and October every year) to address implementation of schemes having a direct bearing on nutrition and Health.

Shri Rakesh Srivastava said that three States will be awarded at the conference tomorrow. These three states will be awarded for showing good progress in the area of reduction in stunting as measured between NFHS-3 and NFHS-4. These States are Chattisgarh, Arunachal Pradesh and Gujarat.

Joint Secretary WCD, Dr. Rajesh Kumar said that several important steps have already been taken by the WCD Ministry recently for a multipronged strategy to manage malnutrition. This includes training ICDS functionaries, developing a curriculum for ECCE, food fortification guidelines among others. He further stated that the WCD Ministry has developed a world class software 'ICDS-CAS' for real time monitoring of nutrition related parameters in 8 States. This system is one of its kind in the world and 60,000 Anganwadis have already been given tablets to report growth parameters on a daily basis with the help of this system, Dr. Rajesh Kumar explained.

The problem of malnutrition is inter-generational and is dependent on multiple factors which inter-alia, include proper Infant & Young Child Feeding (IYCF) practices, Immunization, Institutional Delivery, Early Childhood Development, Food Fortification, Deworming, access to safe drinking water & proper sanitation (WASH), Dietary diversification, full ANC checkup, early initiation of breast feeding, ICT enabled real time monitoring and implementation of Anganwadi Services, Improving infrastructure of Anganwadi Centres along with training of Anganwadi workers and other related factors. These factors can also be Area specific or dependent on particular geographical conditions. Further, it requires a convergent approach among all the three departments i.e. Health & Family Welfare, ICDS/Social Welfare and Drinking Water and Sanitation to tackle the issue of malnutrition comprehensively and conclusively.

Some of the important sessions at tomorrow's conference include efficacy of food fortification, sustainable solution through breast feeding, dietary diversification, improving maternal & child health through Mission Indradhanush, improving program delivery effectiveness, accelerating Real Time Monitoring among others.

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Swachhta Hi Seva Campaign



V.Srinivas

On September 15, 2017, the President of India launched a nationwide sanitation campaign "Swachhta Hi Seva" at Iswarganj village in Kanpur. The President administered the Swachhta Hi Seva Pledge whereby the Nation resolved to create a clean healthy and new India. Addressing the gathering the President said "India is fighting a decisive battle for cleanliness and hygiene. Cleanliness is not the responsibility of only sanitation personnel and government departments; it is a multi-stakeholder national movement."

Mahatma Gandhi had once famously said "sanitation is more important than political freedom." This statement underscored the criticality of sanitation in society. Inspired by these words, on August 15, 2014, the Prime Minister gave a clarion call to the Nation from the ramparts of Red Fort to fight filth and open defecation, change old habits and achieve a Swachh Bharat by 2019, to mark the 150th birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi. He further said that "women's pride is an important issue in our villages today. The practice of open defecation must be stopped. Toilets must be built and used."

The aim of the Swachh Bharat Mission is to achieve a clean and open defecation free India by October 2, 2019. The objectives are generating demand for toilets leading to their construction and sustained use by all household members, promoting better hygiene behavior amongst the population and improving cleanliness by initiating solid and liquid waste management projects. The financial allocations under the Swachh Bharat Mission increased from Rs.2850 crores in 2014-15 to Rs.6525 crores in 2015-16, to Rs.10,500 crores in 2016-17, to Rs. 14000 crores in 2017-18. In the last 3 years, under the Swachh Bharat Mission, 48,264,304 toilets were constructed. Open Defecation Free Villages reached 2,38,966. Individual toilet coverage increased

from 42 percent in 2014 to 64 percent in 2017. 5 States have declared themselves open defecation free. The Ministry of Drinking Water and Sanitation has said that the progress achieved is encouraging to reach the goal of an Open Defecation Free India by October 2, 2019.

The Swachh Bharat Mission sought to reform the sanitation sector with the primary focus being on behavioral changes as the fundamental tool for achievement of Open Defecation Free outcomes. Inclusiveness under the Swachh Bharat Mission was achieved by designing public and community toilets keeping in mind the special needs of menstruating women, the elderly, the specially abled and small children. Further the Mission sought to promote gender sensitive information, education and communication/ behavioral changes. The Mission issued Gender guidelines in 2017 and Menstrual management guidelines in 2015.

An innovative monitoring and evaluation system was put in place. The Swachh Sarvekshan was conducted for rural India and revealed that Mandi (Himachal Pradesh) and Sidhudurg (Maharashtra) were the cleanest districts in India. The Swachh Sarvekshan assessed 22 Hill districts and 53 Plain areas. National level monitors were hired to carry out sample-based checks of sanitation coverage and open defecation free status across the country.

A massive survey covering 92000 households in 4626 villages across the country is being conducted. An additional 200 villages located on the banks of Ganga are being surveyed. Eminent personalities like Amitabh Bacchan was nominated as the Brand Ambassador for Swachh Bharat Mission and celebrities like Sachin Tendulkar and Akshay Kumar attended champion collector conclaves for motivational purposes. The Swachh Bharat Mission maintained a significant social media engagement for enhancing awareness levels and a newsletter Swachhta Samachar Patrika was published on a regular basis. A recent Bollywood film titled "Toilet – Ek Prem Katha" based on the Swachh Bharat Mission witnessed considerable box office success.

The Swachh Bharat Mission represents a national movement with diverse stakeholders comprising of Central Ministries, State Governments, local institutions, non-government and semi-government agencies, corporates, NGO's, faith organizations and media. This approach is based on the Prime Minister's call that Swachhta has to be everyone's business and not only that of the sanitation departments.

A host of special initiatives and projects have come out in quick time. The Inter-Ministerial Projects

included Swachhta Pakhwadas, Namami Gange, Swachhta Action Plan, Swachh Swasth Sarvatra campaign, School Sanitation drives, Anganwadi Sanitation drives, Railway Sanitation etc. The inter-sectoral collaborations included Swachh Iconic Places, Corporate Partnership, Inter Faith Cooperation, Media engagement and Parliament engagement. Swachhta Action Plans were developed by 76 union ministries and departments and web based portal was developed to monitor progress and highlight implementation status. Women Swachhagrahis were appointed and Swachh Shakti Awards were instituted to further enhance women involvement with the program. The Swachh Bharat success stories said that accessible and secure toilets had made a big difference to the lives of village communities, as they did not have to travel distances in the dark to relieve themselves. Further the health risks of open defecation were greatly reduced by having a toilet in the house.

The Vice President of India said that Swachh Bharat Mission is at a tipping point from where a major is expected to spiral it into a massive Jan Andolan – a people's movement. The Swachhta Hi Seva Campaign seeks to mobilize people to come out and get directly involved with the Swachh Bharat Mission by offering shramdaan for swachhta in the fortnight leading upto Gandhi Jayanti.

Come join the Swachhta Hi Seva Campaign.

**V.Srinivas is an IAS officer of 1989 batch and is currently posted as Chairman of the Rajasthan Tax Board with additional charge of Chairman Board of Revenue for Rajasthan.*

Views expressed in the article are author's personal.

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MoS Dr Jitendra Singh inaugurates first 'Pension Adalat' today

MoS Dr Jitendra Singh inaugurates first 'Pension Adalat' today

Anubhav Awards 2017 presented to 16 pensioners

Minister launches Mobile App to avail the services of Pensioners' Portal

The Union Minister of State (Independent Charge) Development of North-Eastern Region (DoNER), MoS PMO, Personnel, Public Grievances & Pensions, Atomic Energy and Space, Dr Jitendra Singh inaugurated the first 'Pension Adalat' here today at the Pre-Retirement Counselling Workshop organised by the Department of Pension & Pensioners' Welfare, Ministry of Personnel, Public Grievances and Pensions, Government of India. He also presented the 'Anubhav' awards 2017 to 16 pensioners for their contribution towards creating institutional memory for the departments. On the occasion, Dr Jitendra Singh launched a Mobile App that has been created to avail the services of Pensioners' Portal. The Secretary to President Shri Sanjay Kothari was the Guest of Honour.

Addressing on the occasion, Dr Jitendra Singh congratulated the recipients of 'Anubhav' awards. He said that under Anubhav, the retiring employees give an account of their experiences during service. These experiences are of great help to the Government, he added. He said that these experiences will become an important account for research and resource for administrative reference and thus will help in improving our working.

While inaugurating the first Pension Adalat, he said that Pension Adalats will help in on the spot redressal of pensioners' grievances. He said that this will also inspire the states. He appealed to the states to implement the good governance measures taken by the Government.

The Minister said that a number of reforms have been undertaken by the Government to facilitate the pensioners. Highlighting the initiatives of the Government, he said that one of the main initiatives taken was to fix the minimum pension at Rs 1,000. He said that other initiatives such as Bhavishya, Sankalp, Jeevan Praman-digital life certificates, doing away with the obsolete laws and self attestation, among others have also been taken. He said that a mechanism has been put in place where pensioner will get PPO on the day of his retirement. He further said that the retired population is increasing in India and we should do our best to channelize their energies in a positive manner. There should be smooth transition from their active life to retired life, he added. The pensioners should re-orient themselves to the new beginning, the Minister said.

Shri C. Viswanath, Secretary (Pensions) said that the aim of the department is to provide a life to dignity to the pensioners post-retirement. He said that the pension and gratuity amount has also increased considerably. He further said that about 90% pension accounts have been seeded with Aadhar. He said that Mobile App for Pensioners' Portal is an initiative of moving from e-governance to m-governance. He said that about 3,700 write ups have been published under Anubhav. Shri Viswanath said that Pension Adalat

will help resolve the grievances of pensioners. In future, the Pension Adalats will be set up in other places outside Delhi also, he added.

The Mobile App will extend all the services meant for the pensioner, which are currently available on the Pensioners' Portal of the department, to the mobile handset. The Pensions Portal's features include Personalised Pension Process Road Map, Bhavishya, Pension calculator, CPENGRAMS and What is New. A pensioner can avail various services on it such as checking the date of credit of his first pension, action taken, calculating the commuted pension and giving feedback. Under 'What is New', the new orders issued by the department will be available.

The Pension Adalats are being convened with the objective of bringing on a common table the aggrieved pensioner, the concerned department, the bank or CGHS representative, wherever relevant, so that such cases can be settled across the table within the framework of extant rules.

The Anubhav scheme had been instituted on the call of Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi to encourage retiring/retired employees to submit their experiences while working in the government with the objective to create an institutional wealth for the government for future governance as well as to enthuse and inspire the future generations of government officials in their respective assignments.

Senior officers of the Department were also present on the occasion.

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Cabinet approves increase of cost norms for Supplementary Nutrition provided in Anganwadis and in the Scheme for Adolescent Girls

Cabinet approves increase of cost norms for Supplementary Nutrition provided in Anganwadis and in the Scheme for Adolescent Girls

Cabinet also approves annual cost indexation for increase in rates in future

Government will, over the next three years, invest an additional Rs. 12,000 crore for the nutrition of pregnant and lactating women, children in the age group of 0-6 years, and out of school adolescent girls

The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs chaired by the Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi, has approved the proposal for revision of cost norms with annual cost indexation for Supplementary Nutrition (SN) for the beneficiaries of Anganwadi Services and Adolescent Girls (out of school 11-14 years) under the Umbrella ICDS Scheme. This addresses a long standing anomaly and ensures that the changes in norms keeps pace with changes in costs on an annual basis.

This follows the decision by the Government to provide cash benefits to pregnant and lactating mothers under the Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana, and is part of an intensive effort to improve the nutritional status of women and children.

The revised Supplementary Nutrition cost norms for the beneficiaries of Anganwadi Services and for Adolescent Girls (11-14 years out of school) under the Umbrella ICDS Scheme, as approved by the Government are as under:

S.No.	Category	Existing Rate Rs./day/beneficiary	Revised Rates Rs./day/beneficiary
1	Children (6-72 months)	Rs.6.00	Rs.8.00
2	Pregnant Women & Lactating Mothers (PW&LM)	Rs.7.00	Rs.9.50
3	Severely Malnourished	Rs.9.00	Rs.12.00
4	Adolescent Girls (11-14 years out of school)	Rs.5.00	Rs.9.50

The revision of cost norms for SN for beneficiaries of Aanganwadi Services would cost additional expenditure of Rs.9,900 crore and for beneficiaries of Adolescent Girls, it would cost Rs.2,267.18 crore as Gol share for a period from 2017-18 to 2019-20.

The revision in the cost norms of SN for the beneficiaries of Anganwadi Services and Adolescent Girls would impact the health and nutritional status of about 11 crore beneficiaries per annum.

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Why dynastic politics is harming India

Congress vice-president Rahul Gandhi's fumbling justification of his party's brand of dynastic politics at the University of California, Berkeley, US, last week continues to haunt him. It is now Union finance minister Arun Jaitley's turn to put the boot in after colleagues like Amit Shah had a go. Gandhi's blithe dismissal of the phenomenon indeed rankles. But he was correct in pointing out that most mainstream parties in India are culpable. The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) is far from immune to it, no matter that its tallest leaders have come up the hard way. Across the northern and Dravidian parties, it has become the norm more than the exception. This transformation of dynastic politics into a generalized phenomenon comes with serious negative consequences.

The logic of dynastic politics is the logic of patronage. The dynast trades economic largesse and access to the machinery of the state for long-term fealty. Economist Mancur Olson has described it as stationary bandits versus roving bandits. Dynasts are the former. They have incentive to develop their constituencies because they are in for the long haul. The benefits of the development they deliver will be reaped by their descendants in the form of continued loyalty to the dynasty. In contrast, roving bandits—non-dynastic politicians—face a temporal mismatch between effort and payoff. They are thus less likely to work towards long-term development goals.

That is how it is intended to work in theory, at least—the silver lining to the violation of the egalitarian spirit of a liberal democracy. In practice, however, that is not quite how it works out. A growing body of empirical research shows that dynastic politicians consistently underperform non-dynastic politicians.

The Philippines is a good testing ground. Since the restoration of democracy in 1987, more than 60% of the country's House of Representatives has been made up of dynastic clans. Multiple studies have found that this has had deleterious consequences. In 2012, a study by Roland Mendoza, an economics professor at the Asian Institute of Management in the Philippines, found that constituencies ruled by dynasts tended to have more poverty and higher income inequality. A year later, in their paper *The Effect Of Political Dynasties On Effective Democratic Governance: Evidence From The Philippines*, Rollin Tusalem and Jeffrey J. Pe-Aguirre had similar findings, noting that provinces dominated by family clans were less likely to perform well in terms of infrastructure development, health spending, criminality and employment.

The Philippines is not a one-off. In a 2015 paper studying city-level governments in Brazil, *Political Dynasties And The Quality Of Government*, Arthur Bragança, Claudio Ferraz and Juan Rios found that municipalities with dynastic politicians in power tended to have greater capital expenditure but didn't perform any better than those without dynastic politicians when it came to growth and development outcomes. And rectifying the lack of such empirical work in the Indian context, a recent Harvard paper, *Understanding The Economic Impacts Of Political Dynasties: Evidence From India*, by Siddharth George and Dominic Ponattu, analysed night-time luminosity as a measure of economic growth to find that constituencies where dynasts won grew 6.5 percentage points slower annually than constituencies where dynasts lost.

There are multiple possible reasons for this failure of dynastic politics across the world. By definition, the politics of patronage entails inefficient use of state resources to reward clients. Besides, deterioration of political ability is inevitable. Dynastic capture of the political process locks out capable non-dynasts from participating effectively. This in turn leaves voters with limited choice—which reduces their ability to topple dynasties that fail to deliver and, consequently, the latter's incentive to perform. The corruption that is a given in any stagnant political system is a third cause of poor performance. An entrenched political elite requires an entrenched economic

elite to survive; there is often a fair amount of overlap. That way lies the crony capitalism birthed during the licence raj that continues to plague India, a drag on economic growth.

There is no quick fix. Weak institutions and state capacity of the kind India suffers from enables dynastic politics. When the state is incapable of adequately utilizing resources and delivering public goods to all its citizens, jumping the queue becomes imperative. This is done by acquiring political backing. The politics of caste is a good example of this. Blind caste loyalty is anything but; it is a rational choice based on the utility of mobilizing as a caste group to attract a political patron who will channel state resources to the group. Voting along caste lines and voting on economic grounds are often set up as a binary choice, with the latter preferable. This is a fundamental misreading. In the absence of adequate state capacity, the two are not opposed; they are the same.

Economic growth post-liberalization has lifted millions out of poverty—but until state capacity strengthens enough to remove the need for middlemen, the politics of patronage and dynasty is unlikely to go anywhere.

Can India get rid of dynastic politics? Tell us at views@livemint.com

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A double-edged sword

There has lately been a revival of the classic debate on how subnationalism is good for social welfare, triggered by the controversy surrounding the long-standing demand for an official State flag for Karnataka. None of India's 29 States except Jammu and Kashmir have a flag of their own. The matter is complicated by the fact that the Constitution maintains a conspicuous silence on the issue. The clamour for a separate flag among a section of the Kannadigas thus assumes wider political salience, insofar as the assertion of underlying subnational identities is concerned.

A multi-ethnic polity sharply polarised along linguistic, religious and caste lines, India is no stranger to subnationalist impulses. Initially wary of accommodating regional demands, primarily owing to the bitter experience of Partition, India's central leadership embarked on an audacious project to reconfigure the country's political map based on linguistic criteria: Telugu-speaking areas coalesced into Andhra Pradesh, Malayali-speaking areas into Kerala, Kannada-speaking areas into Karnataka, etc. in the 1950s. More and more states were added to this kitty — Maharashtra and Gujarat joined in 1960, followed by Punjab and Haryana in the mid-1960s. This project has continued up till today, with Telangana being the most recent addition. Most of these states are creations of hard-fought political struggles waged around the idea of a shared ethnic identity. The tenacity of civic bonds among the members of a political community, some scholars maintain, explains why some states have fared well on social development indicators while others still struggle to break out of their vicious trap of backwardness. However, new research in political science shows that not all civic associations are benign; some help foster the democratic ethos while others endanger democracy by reinforcing its majoritarian impulses. This is true as much at the level of the region as it is at the level of the nation.

High levels of subnationalism may have driven higher levels of social welfare in the states of Kerala and Tamil Nadu, but they have also spawned violent ethnic conflict in many others: Gujarat and Maharashtra have witnessed some of the worst ethnic riots unleashed against their religious minorities and immigrants, respectively, in post-Independence India; Assam has periodic bouts of xenophobic violence targeting alleged Bangladeshi settlers.

One only needs to flip the pages of history to realise how nationalism, by its very nature, has the idea of exclusion built into it. How nations or subnations deal with these exclusionary aspects is a question that the subnationalist argument shies away from addressing. It is important to ask whether Gujarat's Muslims are part of the Gujarati *asmita* (pride), or whether migrants from Uttar Pradesh and Bihar feel a close affinity to the Marathi *manoos*. The 'othering' of those who do not form an integral part of the subnation warns us of the dangers of subnationalism, and how it can engender serious democratic deficits in an otherwise vibrant and plural democracy.

Shashwat Dhar is associated with the Lokniti Programme for Comparative Democracy at the Centre for the Study of Developing Societies (CSDS), New Delhi

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

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Update for the online era

Women, especially journalists, have been the targets of misogynist trolls on social media. Often hiding behind the cloak of anonymity the Internet offers, the trolls heap online abuse upon women with an independent point of view, and issue threats and conduct hate campaigns against them.

A 31-year-old law, The Indecent Representation of Women (Prohibition) Act, 1986, has largely proved ineffective in curbing this onslaught on the Internet. Though the Act was passed to prohibit indecent representation of women through advertisements or in publications, writings, paintings, figures or in any other manner, it pertains only to the print media.

In 2012, an amendment Bill was introduced in Parliament to update the law and make punishment stringent; it is still pending. The statement of objects and reasons of the Bill record the need for the amendments in the 1986 law. It says “technological revolution has resulted in development of new forms of communication, such as, internet and satellite based communication, multi-media messaging, cable television, etc. It has, thus, become necessary to widen the scope of the Act so as to cover the above forms of media.”

The government acknowledges that the law has to be more effective; stringent punishment which acts as deterrent also becomes essential. It has also been felt that the power to enter any premises and conduct search and seizure of any material, if there is reason to believe that an offence under the Act has been committed, should be made more effective and the officers conducting such searches given sufficient protection while carrying out their duties.

The Bill defines the ‘indecent representation of women’ to mean the depiction of the figure or form or body or any part thereof, of a woman in such a way as to have the effect of being indecent or derogatory to or denigrating women, or in a way likely to deprave, corrupt or injure public morality.

It amends the definitions of ‘advertisement’ and ‘distribution’ and also defines ‘electronic form’ of material. It prohibits the publication or distribution of any material, by any means, which contains indecent representation of women in any form.

The proposed law pushes for an increase in the maximum imprisonment from two years to three years and fine from 2,000 to a minimum 50,000, which may be extended to 1 lakh for the first offence. Subsequent offences would invite punishment of a maximum five to seven years and fine up to 5 lakh. The Bill wants a police officer not less than the rank of inspector to investigate offences under the Act.

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

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The missing jobs

Not even a tenth of the 30.67 lakh youth who had received or were undergoing training under the Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY) as on early-July have obtained job placement offers, according to a report in this newspaper. The percentage could be even lower if actual placements, as opposed to offers, are taken. So, can this be seen as a failure of the [Narendra Modi](#) government's flagship skills training and certification scheme? Jobs are not simply a function of the country's workforce acquiring formal skills making them employable. More fundamental to job creation is a vibrant economy, in which investment and consumption fuel demand for labour, skilled and unskilled. We did see this happen, for instance, between 2004-05 and 2011-12. During that period, an estimated 52 million non-farm jobs were created, nearly half in construction and the rest in the services and manufacturing sectors. Today's crisis is not one of employability, but of investment and economic activity leading to shrinking job opportunities, whether for IT service professionals, draughtsmen, masons or fitters.

The problem with PMKVY is not its poor job placement record. The question to ask is whether a scheme of this kind - seeking to impart industry-relevant skill training to 10 million youth over four years (2016-2020), largely through private accredited "training partners" and with the Centre meeting the entire fee expenses - is required at all. Ideally, the government's focus should be on providing decent education. That would mean ensuring minimum standards in schools, colleges, polytechnics and industrial training institutes (ITI). If just over 43 per cent of class VIII students in rural government schools can solve three-digit by one-digit division problems and only 45 per cent are able to read simple sentences in English - as the NGO Pratham's Annual State of Education Report for 2016 reveals - that's what needs fixing. Training of broadband and mobile handset repair technicians, CNC machine operators, customer care executives, air hostesses or beauticians are better left to the private sector. The Rs 12,000-crore outlay for PMKVY - mainly towards training modules of 150-300 hours duration, whose utility is doubtful - can instead be used to beef up the infrastructure and course content in 2,284 government ITIs.

This is not to say that formal skilling - currently restricted to hardly three per cent of India's workforce - isn't important. But skills are mostly job-specific and acquired at the workplace. The government would do a great job by just concentrating on basic education, labour reforms and improving the ease of doing business. The market has ways to address skills gap: You don't need PMKVY or a ministry of skills development for that.

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What ails rural Rajasthan

After Maharashtra and Madhya Pradesh, farmers from Rajasthan came out on the streets demanding loan waiver and implementation of the Swaminathan Committee report. Protesting against government policies and demanding their share in the country's development, which they argue have been denied to them, the farmers have shown unity across caste and class lines. However, it is not merely the farm-related economic anxieties that explain this massive farmer's mobilisation. These movements have to be contextualised in the evolution of the present model of development and the way it has reshaped societies.

Much like Maharashtra and Madhya Pradesh, where the farmers' agitations were located in the economically better-performing districts, the epicentre of the farmers' movements in Rajasthan were districts that have seen a qualitative change in the rural economy and society in the past three decades - Sikar and Sri Ganganagar. One can see shops selling branded items and luxury cars on the roads in Sri Ganganagar. There are similar shops in Sikar as well. Today, Sikar looks very different from what it was 10 years ago.

The district has seen the emergence of a strong private education sector in the last three decades which has given a boost to its economy. Sikar's proximity to Jaipur has also resulted in the emergence of a new middle class which has urban aspirations. Government data shows that in 2009 there were around 94 colleges in Sikar which increased to 124 in 2013. Coaching centres have also mushroomed in the district.

Traditionally, Sikar has been amongst the few districts in Rajasthan (also Jhunjhunu and Churu) which have a large number of educated people. Despite economic hardships, dependence on rain-fed agriculture and a lack of alternative income resources in the rural areas, the district has a relatively high literacy rate of 70 per cent. Two-and-a-half decades ago, the educated youth was an active participant in the organised sector. However, since 1991, the state has gradually withdrawn from providing jobs in general and in the education, health and engineering sector in particular.

Sikar's educated youth got accommodated in the private education industry in the region due to growth in engineering, medical and other private enterprises. However, with the state's withdrawal from various employment generating avenues and the gradual decline in employment opportunities in the private sector - a regular feature of Rajasthan's political economy in the past few years - the youth have no other option but to go back and work on their farms. They also look for employment opportunities in the informal education sector.

Sri Ganganagar and the nearby district, Hanumangarh, has also witnessed significant rural-agrarian change in the past three decades. The two districts are beneficiaries of the Green Revolution with irrigation water from the Ganga Singh Canal and [Indira Gandhi](#) Canal available to them. In the initial years, the region benefitted from using new agricultural technology. A new wealthy agrarian class emerged, which has invested heavily in an urbanised life style and also in the education of their male children. The cropping pattern in the region has also shifted towards cash crops like mustard and cotton (Sri Ganganagar contributes 18 per cent of Rajasthan's cotton production). A gradual increase in the cost of farm inputs has led to a rise in the cost of agricultural production.

Increasing access to education and high income levels in the two districts has led to consumerism among the rural youth. This economic change was, however, not accompanied by changes in social and cultural values. The youth became urbanised but have retained their rural cultural essence. The older values of rural community prestige have been clubbed with the urban values of

extravagant marriages, heavy spending on rituals or religious activities, wealth accumulation and, above all, an individualised life.

This gap between the social and economic spheres is clearly visible in Sri Ganganagar and Hanumangarh districts. Despite a high per capita income, Sri Ganganagar has a very poor sex ratio. A large part of the farmers' income in these districts goes in dowry or in rituals related to birth and death or in organising satsangs and jagrans. The Dera Saccha Sauda enjoys a lot of support in the two districts. In the last few years, expenditure on education and health has increased in the districts. The areas are also victims of a health crisis created by the overuse of chemicals in the production of food items, including vegetables and fruits.

The emergence of an expensive yet non-productive lifestyle on the one hand, and the state's withdrawal from the job market on the other, has created a severe socio-economic crisis. There are a large number of educated yet unemployed youth in all these districts. In their bid to bridge the gap between social aspirations and economic realities, they fall into a debt trap. Falling farm incomes, lack of jobs and absence of alternative sources of income on one hand, and increasing expenditure on health and education on the other, has destroyed the rural economy in these newly emerging zones of prosperity.

Demonetisation delivered the final blow to the economy and society of these regions. The rural-agrarian cash economy which used to provide some income to the youth in the countryside collapsed after demonetisation. The state has tried to preserve traditional ethos and cultural traditions, rather than promote scientific temper amongst the younger generation. The situation was thus rife for a psychological outburst.

The state's policy towards rural development has been ad-hoc and devoid of a long-term vision of sustainable development. The Sikar, Sri Ganganagar and Hanumangarh models, despite their differences, have produced a generation of people who have expectations but lack the opportunities to fulfil them. Farmers are the worst victims of this unguided and unplanned process of change. In the changing nature of the rural structure, they have been left with no option but to agitate and demand short-term relief from the state.

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Stairway to prosperity

The World Bank's *Atlas of Sustainable Development Goals* paints a striking image of India's poverty reduction record in the past 25 or so years. India extricated 120 million people from extreme poverty between 1990 and 2013. However, this process was relatively slow. Over the same period, China reduced the number of people living in extreme poverty from 756 million to 25 million.

If we factor in economic growth, between 1995 and 2012, the growth elasticity of poverty reduction for India is just over 0.12. By contrast, countries such as Brazil, Mexico, Ecuador, and Thailand - that witnessed relatively low economic growth rates - emerge as positive outliers, exhibiting higher growth elasticities of poverty reduction than many high-growth countries, including India. While the growth elasticity of poverty reduction for China is a little over 0.28, the numbers for Mexico and Brazil are 3.28 and 1.14 respectively.

In the popular children's game Snakes and Ladders (now called Chutes and Ladders), rapid upward mobility is matched by equally rapid descent. This is an apt metaphor for the resistance of poverty to rapid growth. Growth - the ladders - is an uncertain process for many individuals; benefits are elusive and, if attained, always at risk. Therefore, an essential element in any enduring poverty alleviation strategy is the prevention of large declines in household incomes that are caused by a variety of shocks - in effect, blocking off the chutes.

In each of the positive outliers mentioned above, state-sponsored anti-poverty and social protection schemes have played a significant role in reducing poverty. The World Bank's Francisco Ferreira estimates that in the absence of redistributive transfers, the headcount index in Brazil would have been higher by approximately five percentage points in 2004. Research - most notably by Martin Ravallion - also contrasts Brazil's experience with that of India, where rising inequalities have been found to dilute any impact growth had on poverty reduction. Studying poverty reduction in Kazakhstan, Kudebayeva and Barrientos (2017) find that growth was responsible for about four-fifths of the poverty reduction between 2000 and 2009. But, when the "poverty gap", which takes into account the distance of households from the poverty line, is considered, the contribution of redistributive social assistance measures increases to nearly one-third of the reduction in poverty.

Conditional Cash Transfers (CCTs) have been proposed as an effective instrument in this situation. An added attraction of such schemes is that, beyond the immediate safety net objective, they could also serve longer term objectives through behavioural changes in households. Explaining the channels through which CCTs can reduce poverty, Ferreira and Robalini (2010) explain: "The objective is to alleviate current poverty while simultaneously seeking to break the inter-generational transmission of poverty by encouraging investment in the human capital of poor children."

But do the desired behavioural changes actually take place? In *Declining Inequality in Latin America*, editors Lopez-Calva and Lustig conclude that while education attainment among the poor has increased, the redistributive momentum is at risk of being lost due to persistent divergences in the access to quality education: "The poor and middle ranges of the distribution receive an education of significantly lower quality than the top 10 per cent, members of which usually attend better-quality private schools." Research from Brazil similarly estimates the failure to advance is higher by four percentage points for CCT-covered children than others.

Even for health outcomes, research finds that the Brazilian CCT Bolsa Familia has failed to increase child immunisation rates, and has had no impact on health indicators of children between

12 and 36 months. Similarly, the impact of Mexico's Oportunidades on health outcomes has been inconsistent, owing to variations in the quality of health infrastructure, scarcity of medicine, low level of care, and discourteous treatment by health professionals.

The lesson that emerges is the ability of cash transfers to serve as both "ladders" and for blocking off "chutes" depends on how education and health outcomes for the poor change, which in turn is predicated not just on the behavioural changes the transfers induce, but also on the quality of social infrastructure. Cash transfers are able to act as effective ladders and reduce long-term poverty only as long as they are supported by a social infrastructure that facilitates an improvement in outcomes. As Fiszbein and Schady (2008) write: "Policy makers and program managers for CCTs in Latin America, the region where such programs have the longest tradition and the most established status, increasingly are casting CCTs as part of a broader system of social protection."

India's strategy to address both persistent and recurring poverty among households would be well served by addressing both the ladders and the chutes dimensions of the problem. India's latest Economic Survey has mooted a Universal Basic Income as a "safety net against health, income and other shocks." The UBI has been hotly debated on both feasibility and desirability considerations. However, drawing on the discussion above, at a conceptual level, it focusses squarely on the "chutes" aspect of the poverty problem.

The Survey makes clear that the primary function of the UBI is to block the chutes that threaten to subsume the poor. While blocking the chutes smoothens the consumption curve temporarily, even the most ambitious cash transfers will fail to reduce poverty permanently, unless they are complemented by a well-functioning social infrastructure that is able to provide quality education, health, and nutrition, across the board.

To maximise the bang for the buck, an effective poverty strategy should pay attention to the short-term safety-net aspects of any transfer-based programme, the medium-term behavioural effects, and perhaps most critically, the longer-term changes in outcomes.

The aim therefore should be to minimise the chutes and maximise the ladders - for this, access to the right mix of social services is critical.

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Globalization is not ending, it's changing

In India, as in other parts of the world, people have grown accustomed to the benefits of globalization. Access to global products, transformation of consumer and business technologies, and falling barriers to trade and travel have redefined life over the last 20-30 years. That “phase” of globalization appears to be over. The dominant narrative now in political circles, corporate boardrooms and the mainstream media is that nationalism and protectionism are on the rise, and globalization is in retreat.

It is true that nationalism and protectionism are on the rise; however, drawing from Mark Twain, we believe that “the reports of [globalization’s] death are greatly exaggerated”. How else do we understand the number of travellers crossing international borders since 2005 increasing annually by around half, to 1.2 billion, of which only a small fraction are refugees? Or that the number of people using the Internet globally has soared from less than a million in 2005 to more than three billion today—with more than four billion projected by 2020; even as the number of connected digital devices more than triples to nearly 21 billion?

Globalization isn’t ending, it’s changing. What we are witnessing is the emergence of a new global economy, an economy without borders propelled by digital rocket boosters.

Companies that have learnt to thrive in this increasingly connected world have built large global businesses at astonishing speeds. Uber, for example, penetrated more than 80 countries in just six years.

Netflix launched its streaming service in 2010, and has expanded to more than 190 countries in less than seven years, while the augmented-reality game *Pokémon Go* was being played in over 125 countries and generated nearly \$1 billion in revenue just six months after its launch.

These examples point to business models that operate very differently from the past. During previous phases of globalization, a country or group of countries emerged as an economic “pole”, such as Britain and other maritime powers in the late 19th century, the US after World War II and China more recently, driving global GDP (gross domestic product) growth and global trade.

Globally shared “rules of the game” were introduced and enforced by institutions such as the World Trade Organization (WTO) and the International Monetary Fund, which were strongly influenced by the Western economies. Global economic growth and free trade took precedence over politics and multilateralism over nationalism.

All this is in a state of flux. Economic nationalism (and protectionism) are growing. WTO data indicates that India and the US rank among the countries with the most number of trade restrictive measures in recent years. Global Trade Alert reports that in 2016 alone more than 500 discriminatory measures (and only 300 liberalizing measures) were introduced worldwide.

At the same time, the ability of multilateral institutions to establish and enforce shared rules seems to be weakening and the dominant role of the multilateral financial institutions that traditionally have provided global capital appears to be receding, as new financial institutions, such as China-backed Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank and the New Development Bank, emerge.

Equally profound are the structural changes taking place in the world economy, set in motion by various digital technologies, such as advanced digital manufacturing and global digital platforms.

Advanced digital manufacturing systems (“Industry 4.0”), for example, are enabling businesses to

alter their global production and distribution networks by making it feasible to operate smaller, more flexible facilities closer to customers, instead of concentrating production in large plants in countries with low labour costs.

While this is taking place, the global market has been expanding in ways never before imagined, as both traditional companies, such as General Electric, and relative newcomers, such as Uber, Airbnb and India's Flipkart, gain access to borderless global markets through their information technology platforms and networks of local partners.

Together, these shifts are giving rise to a very different kind of globalization, more-fragmented, with decentralized supply chains and more countries involved.

This creates a host of challenges for global corporations.

The traditional practice of assessing prospective markets on the basis of GDP, per-capita income and market penetration may be obsolete. To recognize opportunities, companies need to look beyond macroeconomic statistics. For companies with the right business models, pockets of opportunity may exist even in slow-growth economies, especially in the rapidly expanding digital marketplace.

Chinese company Alipay, for example, is building a global business serving China's rapidly growing market of overseas travellers, who use the mobile payment platform as an alternative to credit cards at department stores and retail chains in more than 100 countries.

The emergence of a new model of globalization does not mean, of course, that the old ways of engaging with the world will suddenly become irrelevant.

Nor are we at an unprecedented moment; the ebbs and flows of globalization are nothing new. Each previous wave of globalization was halted by some crisis, but was then redefined by new technology. And each time, globalization emerged stronger than ever. The current era is no different.

The precise contours of the new global economy have yet to be defined. We do know this, however: instead of tracking cross-border flows of physical goods, money and people, it is becoming increasingly important to measure connected consumers, communities, devices and machines, and to monitor the flow of data and ideas.

Companies that recognize these underlying shifts, identify the new opportunities and adapt to change are likely to thrive in the new world of globalization.

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BHI is BCG's strategy think tank, dedicated to explore and develop new valuable insights from business, science, and technology. It engages leaders in discussion and experimentation to expand the boundaries of business theory and practice.

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Aspiring Business Leaders should to build a culture of Inclusiveness: Vice President**Aspiring Business Leaders should to build a culture of Inclusiveness: Vice President****Inaugurates 15th edition of ISB Leadership Summit 2017**

The Vice President of India, Shri M. Venkaiah Naidu has said that aspiring business leaders should to build a culture of inclusiveness and shape their actions to have a positive impact in the lives of those who need support. He was addressing the gathering after inaugurating the 15th edition of ISB Leadership Summit 2017 at the Mohali campus of the Indian School of Business on the theme "Transforming Tomorrow: The Future Unraveled", in Mohali, Punjab today. The Governor of Punjab & Administrator of UT Chandigarh, Shri V.P. Singh Badnore, the Minister of State for Civil Aviation, Shri Jayant Sinha and the Minister of Health & Family Welfare, Research & Medical Education, Parliamentary Affairs, Government of Punjab, Shri Brahm Mohindra were also present on the occasion.

The Vice President said that an area of concern has been the growing inequalities and exclusion of certain sections of our population. He further said that we must be attentive to these trends and see that we build a culture of inclusiveness. He advised the ISB students that the *antnyodaya* approach advocated by Gandhiji, Dr. Ambedkar and Deen Dayal Upadhyayaji should serve as our guiding principle. The students must listen to diverse voices, especially those which are feeble and almost inaudible now, he added.

The Vice President said that the students should break new ground. He further said that innovation, thinking outside the box and accessing knowledge from across the globe and adapting it to our country context would be crucial. He also asked them to be mindful of the ethical dimension while building the physical, material and intellectual wealth. Let us remind ourselves of what Gandhiji had said about the means and ends, he added.

The Vice President called for a collective resolve to root out corruption and undesirable elements like communalism, casteism, fundamentalism, criminalization of politics, gender discrimination and atrocities on women and weaker sections. We must recognize the devastating impact of terrorism and launch a coordinated strategy to root it out, he added.

The Vice President pointed that there was a general recognition, echoed in the assessment of the World Bank in 2017, that India is the fastest growing economy in the world, and said that it was time to capitalize on the demographic dividend by enthusing, equipping and empowering youth who constitute 65 per cent of country's population.

The Vice President said that while the country could be legitimately proud of what was accomplished so far, the India of tomorrow will have to be a country which would translate the dreams of our freedom fighters into tangible reality.

- It will be an India that will transform the quality of life of the citizens.

- It will be an India that will internalize and live the values of democracy and inclusion as a way of life.
- It will be an India that places 'people', especially those who are the poorest of the poor at the centre of the development process.
- It will be an India that encourages each Indian to realize her or his own potential.
- It will be an India where women get equal opportunities along with men.
- It will be an India that will foster innovation in all spheres.
- It will be an India that will celebrate its infinite diversity and rich cultural heritage.

If this is the future India we wish to unravel, we have to build it individually and together, he added.

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Smarts cities acquiring censor based 'eyes' and 'ears' connected to Command and Control Centres

Smarts cities acquiring censor based 'eyes' and 'ears' connected to Command and Control Centres

Digital Integrated CCCs act as 'brain' of cities for coordinating civic services

Installation of CCCs in progress in 11 smart cities and bidding completed in another 23

Centre organizes workshop on sharing experiences among cities in Mumbai

Smart cities in the making are set to rise to an entirely a new level of monitoring and delivery of civic services through digitally integrated Central Command and Control Centres, said Shri Durga Shanker Mishra, Secretary (Housing & Urban Affairs), Government of India today. He said so while inaugurating a day long 'Learning and Experience Sharing Workshop on Digitally Integrated Command and Control Centres under Smart City Mission' in Mumbai.

Shri Mishra further said that these centres would serve as the 'brain centres' of smart cities for ensuring effective coordination in the functioning of various agencies of urban local bodies resulting in improved monitoring and delivery of services to citizens. He said that with these centres based on a host of sensors connected to a central server function as the 'eyes' and 'ears' of cities as well by enabling monitoring of garbage collection and it's transportation truck-wise, filling and emptying of garbage collection bins, traffic and red light violation, noise pollution etc.

Shri Mishra urged the cities that are setting up such centres under Smart City Mission to ensure their timely completion so that citizens could benefit from them at the earliest.

Dr.Samir Sharma, National Mission Director, Smart City Mission said that different IT based projects taken up by cities in recent years have been operating in isolation and CCCs seek to integrate all such systems with several enhanced features for better integration for better information and service delivery.

Dr.Sharma informed that Command and Control Centres are under implementation in 11 cities viz., Pune, Nagpur, Ahmedabad, Surat, Vadodara, Jaipur, Raipur, Naya Raipur, Bhubaneswar, Visakhapatnam and Kakinada (Andhra Pradesh). These centres have already become partly operational in Pune and Nagpur. 23 other cities have completed bidding process for setting up such centres.

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Government provides additional Rs.12000 Crores to tackle malnutrition**Government provides additional Rs.12000 Crores to tackle malnutrition**

The Government has provided an additional Rs.12000 Crores to fight malnutrition over next three years in the country by revising cost norms for supplementary nutrition provided in anganwadis and in the scheme for adolescent girls. Briefing media persons in New Delhi today, Secretary, WCD Shri Rakesh Srivastava said that the government has effected a quantum increase of about 33% in cost norms, which have been revised for the first time since 2011 in the case of ICDS. In the case of Scheme for Adolescent Girls, cost norms have been increased first time since 2010. With this, an additional Rs.9900 Crore have been given for supplementary nutrition in anganwadis over the next three years and Rs.2276 Crores in the scheme for adolescent girls over the next three years, he explained. This reflects commitment of the government to tackle malnutrition on a war footing as reflected in Prime Minister Narendra Modi Ji's vision, Shri Srivastava said.

The cost norms have now also been linked to the Food Price Index which will enable the government to increase the cost norms annually without any hindrance. Shri Srivastava disclosed that in the recently held national conference on malnutrition, the district collectors and district magistrates have been asked to take responsibility for eliminating malnutrition in their districts. They have been asked to review comprehensively the nutrition/health status of children and women once in three months and also ensure 2% to 3% decline in malnutrition/stunting per year.

The WCD Secretary announced that a separate policy/protocol for Severely Acute Malnourished Children will be released at the earliest to enable States to deal with this problem effectively.

The revised Supplementary Nutrition cost norms for the beneficiaries of Anganwadi Services and for Adolescent Girls (11-14 years out of school) under the Umbrella ICDS Scheme, as approved by the Government are as under:

S.No.	Category	Existing Rate Rs./day/beneficiary	Revised Rates Rs./day/beneficiary
1	Children (6-72 months)	Rs.6.00	Rs.8.00
2	Pregnant Women & Lactating Mothers (PW&LM)	Rs.7.00	Rs.9.50
3	Severely Malnourished	Rs.9.00	Rs.12.00
4	Adolescent Girls (11-14 years out of school)	Rs.5.00	Rs.9.50

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Consent key factor in defining sexual assault, says Delhi HC

Is a 'yes' or 'no' from a woman to a sexual act really a 'yes' or 'no'? The Delhi High Court asks.

The High Court discusses the various "models" of sexual consent in the modern world. The debate is part of an 82-page judgment which acquits film-maker Mahmood Farooqui in a rape case giving him the benefit of the doubt that he might have misread the 'no' of the woman as a 'yes'.

In normal parlance, consent would mean voluntary agreement of a woman to engage in sexual activity without being abused or exploited by coercion or threats, Justice Ashutosh Kumar, who authored the verdict, observes.

'Affirmative model'

The consent can be revoked any moment. "Thus, sexual consent would be the key factor in defining sexual assault as any sexual activity without consent would be rape," the judgment says.

On the "various models of sexual consent", the judge starts with the "traditional and the most accepted" one, which is the "affirmative model" where a "yes is yes and no is no."

But the judgment goes on to tackle a situation where a woman's affirmative consent or positive denial is not asserted, but conveyed in an "underlying/dormant" fashion, leading to a "confusion in the mind of the other." The court says there are "differences between how men and women initiate and reciprocate sexual consent."

Gender equality

"The normal construct is that man is the initiator of sexual interaction. He performs the active part whereas a woman is, by and large, non-verbal. Thus, gender relations influence sexual consent," Justice Kumar notes. But this may not be true in the case of modern society where gender equality is the "buzzword", Justice Kumar adds.

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Solving food challenges with more research

The world's population is booming. According to estimates, the global population is likely to exceed 9 billion by 2050, with 5 billion people in Asia alone. The capacity to produce enough quality food is falling behind human numbers. Food production in the region must keep pace, even as environment sustainability and economic development are ensured. The answer to these challenges lies in research for sustainable development. As the second goal of the UN's Sustainable Development Goals says: "End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition, and promote sustainable agriculture."

India's fivefold increase in grain production over the past 50 years is largely the result of strong scientific research that has focussed on high-yielding crop varieties, better agronomic practices, and pro-farmer policies. However, India continues to face challenges such as food insecurity and malnutrition, particularly in rural areas.

Providing the world's growing urban population with safe and healthy food requires both a rural and a peri-urban agricultural movement — a huge challenge, but also an opportunity for ingenuity. Integrating agricultural production, nutrition, and health is emerging as a key focal point throughout Asia, with policymakers shifting their attention to the role of biodiversity and the power of local farming systems to improve nutritional status.

There is considerable potential in targeting underused crops such as millets, pulses, and vegetables as a sustainable means of increasing agricultural production and improving nutrition and health in high-need areas. In one project, researchers tested the sustainable use of traditional crops, vegetables, and fruit trees, as well as greater livestock diversity, to increase income and improve food and nutrition security in rural India. This project demonstrated that in three Indian "agro-biodiversity hotspots", home gardens could provide households with up to 135 kg of legumes, vegetables, tubers, leafy greens, and gourds per year — more than double the amount of vegetables they were buying in local markets. These crops add value to existing farming systems by providing an additional source of income and/or more nutritious food for the family. The Food Security Act of 2013 was welcome, as was the inclusion of millets in the Public Distribution System as millets are superior to common grains in many ways and are also climate-resilient. Bio-fortification is also important in overcoming hidden hunger caused by micronutrient deficiencies such as iron, iodine, zinc, vitamin A, and vitamin B12.

Studies show that women make up nearly half of agricultural labourers, yet they carry out approximately 70% of all farm work. Women are among the most disadvantaged because they are typically employed as marginal workers, occupying low-skilled jobs such as sowing and weeding. Our research shows that empowering women is one of the best ways to improve nutrition. Research needs to continue focussing on the needs of women farmers to ensure that they are the direct recipients of development impacts, such as access to markets and income, to improve theirs and their children's access to adequate and diversified diets.

Most importantly, it is crucial to continue to identify issues and seek evidence-based solutions through research. Building on the momentum of recent efforts by the government to improve understanding of India's nutritional situation, there is considerable potential in building partnerships to extend the reach of research for development and to improve the connections between agricultural and nutritional research with extension services and policy. Taking a multisectoral approach that links agricultural and nutritional outcomes will help India sustainably grow, feed its people, and maintain the agricultural sector over the coming decades.

India's research community is poised to be a leader in meeting new food challenges by increasing

food quantity and quality to improve food security and nutrition. The world needs to tap into India's research excellence to experiment, innovate, share knowledge, and scale up effective solutions.

M.S. Swaminathan is the founder of the MS Swaminathan Research Foundation, and Jean Lebel is the President of Canada's International Development Research Centre

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

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Why Indian cities are dirty

We are all familiar with the call for cleanliness that is regularly conveyed to the public through different forms of media. Photo ops of "netas" wielding brooms on streets, with the dust and the garbage of the city being swept off roads, are shown often on [Facebook](#), Twitter and other online platforms. After several months of this great countrywide "abhiyan" however, our nation remains the dirtiest country in the world.

There is no such campaign in any other country in the world, yet they are far cleaner than villages and cities in India. In my travels, I have yet to come across any place that is as dirty and as full of litter as an Indian town. Every time I return to India this is a fact that strikes me the most - that I am back in the dirtiest country in the world. Yet, I have never come across the sight of streets being swept as energetically in any other city abroad, never seen dignitaries handling brooms as assiduously as I have done here.

So what is the secret behind the mystery of the cleaner cities? As an author of several mystery adventure novels for children this is one mystery I know I can solve. Yes, it is simple, my dear Watson. No, it is not because litter is removed quietly and secretly on dark nights when the whole world sleeps, nor is it because the rubbish is made to vanish magically by helpful wizards, nor do aliens carry the garbage to research on what constitutes the filth found on the streets of planet earth.

It is the discipline instilled in the minds of citizens from an early age that helps maintain cleanliness in a country. "Do not litter" signs may be there in many public places in India and children in our schools may be told to throw waste into dustbins, yet this has not become the clarion call of our leaders. They may conduct all kinds of campaigns - against cow slaughter, against people of other religions, and so on - but so far the most important campaign against "dirtying" has not been taken up by anyone. Our public spaces are allowed to get as dirty as possible. And no wonder, for some sweeper or cleaner is bound to come and clear the rubbish. That is his job. After all, he must be getting paid to do the work. So we have every right to throw plastic bottles, bits of paper and whatever we do not need, anywhere and everywhere. Drains along roads are public dustbins and that is where we deposit our waste, no matter if the drain gets blocked or choked and the dirty water overflows on to our doorsteps. We have every right to sweep our shops and throw the dirty stuff into the drain running alongside the road leading to our home. After all, homes where puja is performed must be kept pure and clean, no matter if the brooms direct the dust and other impure matter straight onto the street in front of our pure homes.

"Gandagi nahi failayenge!" "No dumping of litter!" This slogan should ring from east to west and from north to south. "Kachra idhar udhar nahi daalenge!" should be the slogan, and not the one being made popular today. This is the secret behind the clean public places seen in other cities in other countries. It is not the "cleaning", but the "not dirtying" habit that needs to be encouraged in our citizens.

During our stay in Germany almost 50 years ago, it was a crime to throw anything outside our home in Bonn. Two dustbins were placed before our front door; all waste was placed there and they were cleaned regularly every week by the municipality. During winter, one had to remove the snow from the pavement outside our home so that passersby would not be inconvenienced. It was our responsibility to keep the area in front of our home spotless all the time. A friend of ours in the US, also many years ago, was pursued by an irate motorist, because he had thrown the remains of an [apple](#) he had been eating on the road. He was forced to pick up the apple and deposit it in a dustbin rather than on the road. We know China ended its citizens' habit of spitting on streets a long time ago.

The focus in the Swachh Bharat Abhiyaan, in short, should not be on the cleaning up of an already dirty space but on the prevention of any public spot from becoming dirty. There should be strict rules on using dustbins, which must be installed everywhere and regularly emptied by municipal authorities, with a proper system in place for doing so. The rule that everyone should keep public spaces around their homes, shops or other establishments clean and free of litter will automatically lead to cleaner cities and healthier and happier citizens.

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PM launches Pradhan Mantri Saubhagya Yojana; dedicates Deendayal Urja Bhawan to the nation

PM launches Pradhan Mantri Saubhagya Yojana; dedicates Deendayal Urja Bhawan to the nation

The Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi, today launched the Pradhan Mantri Sahaj Bijli Har Ghar Yojana, or Saubhagya, at New Delhi. The aim of this scheme is to provide power to all homes.

On the occasion of the birth anniversary of Pandit Deendayal Upadhyay, the Prime Minister also dedicated a new ONGC building - the Deendayal Urja Bhawan.

The Prime Minister also dedicated to the nation, the Booster Compressor Facility in Bassein Gas Field.

Speaking on the occasion, the Prime Minister gave examples of the success of Jan Dhan Yojana, insurance schemes, Mudra Yojana, Ujjwala Yojana, and Udan, to highlight how the Union Government is implementing schemes which benefit the poorest of the poor.

In this context he mentioned the Pradhan Mantri Sahaj Bijli Har Ghar Yojana, which would provide power connections to all the estimated four crore households which currently did not have a power connection. The outlay for this scheme would be over Rs. 16000 crore. These connections would be provided free of cost to the poor, the Prime Minister said.

Speaking to the accompaniment of a presentation, the Prime Minister recounted how he had set a target of electrifying over 18000 unelectrified villages within 1000 days. He said less than 3000 villages are now left to be electrified.

He explained how coal shortages have become a thing of the past, and capacity addition in power generation has exceeded targets.

The Prime Minister also spoke of an increase in renewable power installed capacity, towards the target of 175 GW by 2022. He mentioned how the power tariff in the case of renewable energy has been reduced significantly. A considerable increase has also been made in transmission lines.

The Prime Minister mentioned how the UDAY scheme has brought down losses of power distribution companies, describing it as an example of cooperative, competitive federalism.

Explaining the impact of economies of scale in the UJALA scheme, the Prime Minister said that the cost of LED bulbs has come down significantly.

The Prime Minister said that New India will require an energy framework that works on the principle of equity, efficiency and sustainability. He said the change in work culture in the Union Government is strengthening the energy sector. This in turn, will positively impact the work culture of the entire country, he added.

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PM launches Pradhan Mantri Sahaj Bijli Har Ghar Yojana “Saubhagya”**PM launches Pradhan Mantri Sahaj Bijli Har Ghar Yojana “Saubhagya”**

The Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi has launched a new scheme **Pradhan Mantri Sahaj Bijli Har Ghar Yojana –“Saubhagya”** to ensure electrification of all willing households in the country in rural as well as urban areas here today.

The **total outlay of the project is Rs. 16, 320 crore** while the Gross Budgetary Support (GBS) is Rs. 12,320 crore. The outlay for the rural households is Rs. 14,025 crore while the GBS is Rs. 10,587.50 crore. For the urban households the outlay is Rs. 2,295 crore while GBS is Rs. 1,732.50 crore. The Government of India will provide largely funds for the Scheme to all States/UTs.

The States and Union Territories are required to complete the works of household electrification by the 31st of December 2018.

The beneficiaries for free electricity connections would be identified using Socio Economic and Caste Census (SECC) 2011 data. However, un-electrified households not covered under the SECC data would also be provided electricity connections under the scheme on payment of Rs. 500 which shall be recovered by DISCOMs in 10 instalments through electricity bill.

The solar power packs of 200 to 300 Wp with battery bank for un-electrified households located in remote and inaccessible areas, comprises of Five LED lights, One DC fan, One DC power plug. It also includes the Repair and Maintenance (R&M) for 5 years.

The expected outcome of the Scheme is as follows:

- (a) Environmental upgradation by substitution of Kerosene for lighting purposes
- (b) Improvement education services
- (c) Better health services
- (d) Enhanced connectivity through radio, television, mobiles, etc.
- (e) Increased economic activities and jobs
- (f) Improved quality of life especially for women

For easy & accelerated implementation of the Scheme , modern technology shall be used for household survey by using Mobile App. Beneficiaries shall be identified and their application for electricity connection along with applicant photograph and identity proof shall be registered on spot. The Gram Panchayat/Public institutions in the rural areas may be authorised to collect application forms along with complete documentation, distribute bills and collect revenue in consultation with the Panchayat Raj Institutions and Urban Local Bodies. **The Rural Electrification Corporation Limited (REC) will remain the nodal agency for the operationalisation of the scheme throughout the country.**

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Power problem — On Saubhagya scheme

Universal access to electricity has been a familiar and long-standing promise of governments at the Centre. Prime Minister Narendra Modi has signalled he is serious about providing this by owning responsibility for its realisation. Success, however, will require more than just budgetary fund allocation; it will depend largely on addressing structural issues that plague the broken power sector. The Pradhan Mantri Sahaj Bijli Har Ghar Yojana, or [the 'Saubhagya' scheme](#), launched by Mr. Modi aims to make electricity accessible to every household by the end of 2018. Under the scheme, expected to cost a little over 16,000 crore, poor households that have no access to electricity will be provided electricity connections free of cost. This builds on previous work carried out under the Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Gram Jyoti Yojana launched in 2015, and the Rajiv Gandhi Grameen Vidyutikaran Yojana launched by the UPA government in 2005, both of which also aimed to provide free electricity connections to the poor. In particular, it hopes to improve electricity access within villages that are already classified as "electrified", according to the criterion that 10% of households enjoy access to electricity. However, the Saubhagya scheme does very little to address the real problem of affordability. In fact, by failing to account for illegal connections taken by households which find it difficult to afford legal access to power, government data on electricity accessibility understate penetration.

A free electricity connection can ease the financial burden on the poor to some degree, but it will not address the recurring burden of power bills. The aim of improving affordability would require that supply be increased drastically to lower the price paid by retail consumers. Paradoxically, amidst the government's claims that India is a power-surplus nation, the power generation utilities remain vastly under-utilised. The plant load factor (PLF) of coal and lignite-based plants, an indicator of capacity utilisation of power generation units, has dropped consistently over the decade from 77.5% in 2009-10 to 59.88% in 2016-17, according to data from the Central Electricity Authority. This is due to demand for electricity from State distribution companies dropping in tandem with their deteriorating financial status. The Ujwal DISCOM Assurance Yojana (UDAY), introduced two years ago to restructure the debt of State distribution agencies, has failed to make enough of a difference to this state of affairs. The outcome is not surprising, given that UDAY has failed to address the root problem of populism in the pricing of electricity. In the absence of the freedom to sell at a profitable price, distribution agencies have had very little incentive to demand more electricity from power generators, as evident in the constantly falling PLF. This in turn holds back investment in power generation units. Saubhagya, unfortunately, does very little to address the fundamentals of India's crippling power problem.

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

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FAQs on Pradhan Mantri Sahaj Bijli Har Ghar Yojana “Saubhagya”**FAQs on Pradhan Mantri Sahaj Bijli Har Ghar Yojana “Saubhagya”**

Pradhan Mantri Sahaj Bijli Har Ghar Yojana –“Saubhagya” a new scheme was launched by the Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi to ensure electrification of all willing households in the country in rural as well as urban areas on 25th September, 2017.

The following Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) give a detailed view of objectives, features, expected outcomes and implementation strategy of the Scheme.

Qs. No. 1 What is the objective of this new scheme?

Ans. The objective of the ‘Saubhagya’ is to provide energy access to all by last mile connectivity and electricity connections to all remaining un-electrified households in rural as well as urban areas to achieve universal household electrification in the country.

Qs. No. 2 What all is included in the last mile connectivity and electricity connection to households?

Ans. The electricity connection to households include release of electricity connections by drawing a service cable from the nearest electricity pole to the household premise, installation of energy meter, wiring for a single light point with LED bulb and a mobile charging point. In case the electricity pole is not available nearby from household for drawing service cable, the erection of additional pole along with conductor and associated accessories shall also be covered under the scheme.

Qs. No. 3 Will electricity connection would be totally free of cost for every un-electrified households?

Ans. Yes. Poor households would be provided electricity connections free of cost. Other households would also be provided electricity connections under the scheme on payment of Rs.500 only which shall be recovered by the DISCOMs/Power Departments in ten (10) instalments along with electricity bills.

Qs. No.4 Does the free electricity connection also includes free power for consumption?

Ans. There is no provision in the scheme to provide free power to any category of consumers. The cost of electricity consumption shall have to be paid by the respective

consumers as per prevailing tariff of the DISCOM/Power Deptt.

Qs. No. 5 The earlier programme of Government of India '24x7 Power For All' has similar objective.? How is it different from this programme ?

Ans. '24x7 Power for All' is a joint initiative with the states covering all segments of power sector i.e. Power generation, transmission and distribution, energy efficiency, health of Discom etc. to finalise State/UT specific roadmap and action plan to ensure 24x7 power for all in consultation with States/UTs. The Power for All documents contain details of various interventions required across the value chain of power sector.

Providing connectivity to all households is a prerequisite to ensure 24x7 power supply. Saubhagya is a schematic support to address the issue of energy access.

Qs. No. 6 In distribution sector, two major schemes; DDUGJY for rural areas and IPDS in urban areas are already under implementation- then what is the need for a new scheme?

Ans. Deendayal Upadhyaya Gram Jyoti Yojana (DDUGJY) envisage creation of basic electricity infrastructure in villages / habitations, strengthening & augmentation of existing infrastructure, metering of existing feeders / distribution transformers / consumers to improve quality and reliability of power supply in rural areas. Besides this, last mile connectivity and free electricity connections are also provided to BPL households only identified by the States as per their list. However, in villages which are electrified in past for a long period, many households do not have electricity connections for many reasons. Some of the really poor households do not have BPL cards but these households are not capable of paying applicable initial connection charges. There is also lack of awareness as to how to get connection or taking connection is not an easy task for illiterate people. There may not be electricity pole nearby and the cost of erection of additional pole, conductor is also chargeable from the households for obtaining a connection.

Similarly in urban areas, Integrated Power Development Scheme (IPDS) provides for creation of necessary infrastructure to provide electricity access but some households are not yet connected mainly on account of their economic condition as they are not capable of paying the initial connection charges.

Therefore, Soubhagya has been launched to plug such gaps and comprehensively address the issues of entry barrier, last mile connectivity and release of electricity connections to all un-electrified households in rural and urban areas.

Qs. No. 7 Is the cost of Saubhagya scheme over & above the outlay available under DDUGJY?

Ans. Yes, the cost of Saubhagya scheme i.e. Rs. 16,320 crore is over and above the investment being made under DDUGJY.

Qs. No. 8 What is the criteria for allocation of funds to the States?

Ans. Projects under the scheme would be sanctioned based on the Detailed Project Reports (DPRs) to be submitted by the States. There is no upfront allocation of fund under the scheme.

Qs. No. 9 How the scheme would be implemented in the entire country?

Ans. Project proposals shall be prepared by the State DISCOMs / Power Deptt. and sanctioned by an inter-ministerial Monitoring Committee headed by Secretary (Power), GOI. The electrification works under the sanctioned projects shall be executed by respective DISCOMs/Power Deptt. through turnkey contractors or departmentally or through other suitable agencies capable of doing this work as per norms.

Qs. No.10 What is strategy for achievement of target in a time bound manner?

Ans. In order to hasten the process of release of connections to households, camps would be organised in villages / cluster of villages for identification of beneficiaries using modern IT technology with a Mobile App / Web Portal. Application for electricity connections shall also be registered electronically and requisite documentation including photograph of applicant, copy of identity card and / or details such as mobile number/Aadhar number/bank account number etc. shall be completed on spot in the camps, so that connections are released at the earliest.

The Gram Panchayat / public institutions in rural areas shall also be authorized to collect application form, complete documentation and also for distribution of bills, collection of revenue and other activities, as applicable.

Qs. No.11 What would be estimated rise in power demand with the inclusion of 4 crore households in the electricity network?

Ans. Considering an average load of 1 KW per household and average uses of load for 8

hours in a day, there will be requirement of additional power of about 28,000 MW and additional energy of about 80,000 million units per annum. This is a dynamic figure. With the enhancement of income and habit of using electricity, the demand of electricity is bound to vary. This figure will also vary if the assumptions are changed.

Qs. No.12 What is the provision for households where it is not feasible to extend grid lines?

Ans. For households located in remote and inaccessible areas, solar power packs of 200 to 300 Watt and battery back with 5 LED light, 1 DC Fan, 1 DC power plug along with repair and maintenance for 5 years would be provided.

Qs. No.13 How many un-electrified households would be covered under Saubhagya.

Ans. There are about 4 crore un-electrified households estimated in the country of which about 1 crore BPL households in rural areas are already covered under sanctioned projects of DDUGJY. Thus, total of 300 lakh households, 250 lakh households in rural areas and 50 lakh in urban areas, are expected to be covered under the scheme.

Qs. No.14 Would the Scheme envisage providing amnesty to illegal consumers to come and register? Is that also something the Scheme targets?

Ans. The illegal connections need to be dealt with by the respective DISCOMs/Power Deptt in accordance with their rules/regulations in this regard. However, the scheme categorically provides that the defaulters whose connections have been disconnected shall not be given benefit of the scheme.

Qs. No.15 In what manner, the Scheme would be useful for people in their daily life?

Ans. Access to electricity definitely has positive impact on quality of life of people in all aspects of daily household chores and human development. Firstly, Access to electricity would substitute use of Kerosene for lighting purposes resulting in reduction in indoor pollution thereby saving people from health hazards. Further, electricity access would help in establishing efficient and modern health services in all parts of the country. Lighting after the sunset also provide a sense of enhanced personal safety especially for women and increase in post sunset social as well as economic activities. Availability of electricity will boost education services across all areas and quality lighting post sunset would facilitate children to spend more time on studies and move ahead further in

prospective careers. Household electrification also increases the likelihood that women would study and earn income.

Qs. No.16 In what manner, the Scheme would facilitate economic growth and employment generation?

Ans. Substitution of use of Kerosene with electricity for lighting purposes would reduce annual subsidy on Kerosene and would also help reduce the import of petroleum products. Electricity in each home would provide improved access to all kind of communications like Radio, Television, Internet, mobile etc. through which everyone would be able to access all kind of important information available through these communication mediums. Farmers can access information about new and improved agriculture techniques, agro-machinery, quality seeds etc. resulting in significant increase in agriculture production and consequently increase in income. Farmers and youths can also explore the possibilities of setting up agro based small industries.

Availability of reliable electricity services would also facilitate establishment of new shops of daily use goods, fabrication workshops, flour mills, cottage industries etc. and such economic activities would generate direct as well indirect employment. Implementation of scheme itself would result into employment generation in view of the requirement of semi-skilled / skilled manpower for execution of works of household electrification. About 1000 lakh man-days works would be generated for implementation of the scheme.

The expenditure of over Rs 16,000 crore will create positive externalities which will further help in generating employment and benefit the economy.

Qs. No.17 Is there any plan for creating awareness amongst public at large about the Scheme so that more & more people are benefited from the Scheme ?

Ans. Government of India would take up publicity campaign through Radio, Print Media, Television, Sign Boards etc. Lack of awareness about procedure to obtain electricity connection including cost of connection, uses of electricity, cost of uses vis-à-vis Kerosene, benefits of using electricity (Direct & Indirect) etc. has been cited as one of the major reasons of slow progress on household electrification in various research studies.

Therefore wide multi-media campaign would be undertaken to make people aware of all aspects the Scheme. The DISCOM officials would also organise camps in rural areas for creating awareness about electricity as well as Saubhagya. School teachers, Gram

Panchayat members, local literate/educated youth would also be associated in the awareness campaign.

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Vice-President inaugurates a “Crusade for Toilets” in Karnataka**Vice-President inaugurates a “Crusade for Toilets” in Karnataka**

The Vice President, Shri M Venkaiah Naidu, today inaugurated the “Swachhta Hi Seva” and “Shouchalayakkagi Samara” (A Crusade For Toilets) Programme in Karnataka. He was presiding as the Chief Guest over a public event at Hubli.

The Vice President later visited Konnur Village, in Naragund Taluk, Gadag District, where he initiated the activity of ‘Tippe Samskarane’ (Waste Processing). He also inaugurated a “Shudda Kudiyuva Neerina Ghataka” (Purified Drinking Water Plant), visited the Janata Colony in the village, and addressed a “Shouchalayakkagi Samara” public gathering at the local high school.

Speaking on the occasion, the Vice President emphasized the need for Swachhata to become a jan aandolan. He complimented the taluka, district and State for the good progress made by them. He urged all present to participate in Swachhata activities and said that Swachh Bharat Mission is a national program, a people's program, and not one of any particular political party. He gave several examples of ordinary people making extraordinary contributions, including Ms Lavanya, a young girl from Karnataka who persuaded her unwilling family to build a toilet and then went on to inspire her entire village. The Vice President appreciated the fact that many young women are now demanding toilets before they get married into another family.

On the occasion, the Vice President also honoured 13 Village Panchayat Presidents and the Naragund Taluka Panchayat President, the achievers of “Shouchalayakkagi Samara”. He also declared the rural areas of Naragund Taluk as an ODF block.

Shri Vajubhai Rudabhai Vala, the Governor of Karnataka, began his address by thanking the Vice President for starting the Swachhata Hi Seva campaign from Karnataka. He also emphasized the importance of caring for one another, as enshrined in the slogan of the government, ‘Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas’. He said that to care for others, we need to start by taking the initiative ourselves in the direction of a Swachh Bharat.

Shri Ramesh Jigajinagi, the Minister of State, Drinking Water and Sanitation, congratulated the State government on the occasion and re-emphasized the importance of the Swachhata Hi Seva campaign. He reiterated the fact that the Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi, in his recent visit to Uttar Pradesh, had appreciated the naming of a toilet

as “Izzat Ghar”.

Shri H.K. Patil, Karnataka Minister for Rural development and Panchayati Raj, gave a snapshot of the progress being made by the State under the Swachh Bharat Mission and said that both, the State and the nation, were moving at a good pace towards becoming clean and free from open defecation.

In his welcome address at the gathering, Shri Parameswaran Iyer, the Secretary, Ministry of Drinking Water and Sanitation, shared a nationwide progress update on Swachh Bharat Mission and appreciated the good progress being made by the Government of Karnataka in meeting the goals of the Mission.

Shri P.C. Gaddigoudar, Member of Parliament, Lok Sabha, and Shri B.R. Yavagal, MLA, Naragund, were also present on the occasion.

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Union Home Minister launches Platform for Effective Enforcement for No Child Labour (PENCIL) Portal

Union Home Minister launches Platform for Effective Enforcement for No Child Labour (PENCIL) Portal

SOPs for enforcement agencies on child labour also released

Shri Rajnath Singh addresses National Conference on Child Labour

The Union Home Minister Shri Rajnath Singh launched the Platform for Effective Enforcement for No Child Labour (PENCIL) Portal at the National Conference on Child Labour organised by the Ministry of Labour and Employment, Government of India here today. The PENCIL is an electronic platform that aims at involving Centre, State, District, Governments, civil society and the general public in achieving the target of child labour free society. Shri Rajnath Singh also launched the Standing Operating Procedures (SOPs) for the enforcement of legal framework against child labour. The SOP is aimed at creating a ready reckoner for trainers, practitioners and monitoring agencies to ensure complete prohibition of child labour and protection of adolescents from hazardous labour ultimately leading to Child Labour Free India.

After launching the portal, Shri Rajnath Singh said that any decent society cannot allow the child labour. Child labour is a curse, he said. He said that India needs to take a resolve to eradicate the child labour from the country. He expressed faith that with conviction and resolve, we can eradicate this menace. Shri Rajnath Singh said if India could attain freedom in five years after taking resolve of 'Do or Die' of Mahatma Gandhi during the Quit India Movement, then there is no reason why India cannot attain a child labour free society in coming five years if the whole country gets united and takes resolve to do so. He said that childhood is the best period of an individual's life gifted by God. But he expressed sadness at the fact that one in every 10 children is involved in child labour and is not able to lead a normal life during his childhood.

Shri Rajnath Singh said that ratification of treaties by India in this regard shows our resolve to eradicate child labour in a time-bound manner. He said that only portal will not be able to suffice our efforts, but social awareness is needed in this regard. He quoted the example of special drives undertaken under 'Operation Smile', where 70,000-75,000 children could be saved. He emphasised that for the success of PENCIL Portal also, one month's special drive in the country, even at block levels, is required, so that everybody becomes aware of it and acts in the direction of elimination of child labour. He said that

child labour not only has social implications but economic implications also. Appreciating the Ministry of Labour and Employment's efforts in releasing SOPs for enforcement agencies, he said that this will help in the better implementation of the schemes, as many schemes are good at the formation stage, but are not being implemented in an effective manner on the ground due to lack of guidance.

The Minister of State for Labour and Employment (I/C), Shri Santosh Kumar Gangwar said that children are the country's assets and its future. He said that due to short-term economic and social constraints, the income from child labour may appear to be good, but in the long run, it is not so. He said that keeping in mind the overall development of children, the employment of children under the age of 14 years is not allowed under the law for any occupation and for the children between 14-18 years, the employment is not allowed in occupations that are harmful to their physical and mental health. He said that main hurdle in the implementation of laws is lack of awareness and guidance and the SOPs released today will be useful to the enforcement agencies. He further said that child labour is a social problem and positive attitude is very important in this regard. He expressed hope that all sections of India will rise above law to realise the dream of child-labour free society. The Labour Minister stated that India ratified the two Core Conventions of International Labour Organization (ILO), Convention 138 regarding admission of age to employment and Convention 182 regarding worst forms of Child Labour in June 2017 which shows our commitment to a child labour free nation.

Shri Kailash Satyarthi, Nobel Peace Laureate and Child Right Activist was the Guest of Honour on the occasion. Expressing happiness over the release of PENCIL portal, he said that today is a historic day for India. India is telling the world that it will give PENCIL in the hands of children and not tools to work, he added. He emphasised that the top leadership should be involved in these campaigns. He said that PENCIL and SOPs are important not only for India but also for the world in showing a new direction to them. He said this proves that fact that technology can be converted into instruments of social upliftment and power. Shri Satyarthi said that currently, he is on 'Bharat Yatra' to spread awareness and sensitise on issues related to child sexual abuse and child trafficking. He also emphasised on the institutional mechanism and exclusive courts for handling cases related to child sexual abuse.

Earlier while delivering the welcome address, Secretary, Ministry of Labour & Employment, Smt. M. Sathiyavathy said that Government has taken various initiatives and developed a legal framework to achieve the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) of

eliminating child labour by the year 2025. She said that child labour has come down in India as per 2011 census as compared to 2001 census. She further stated that broad consultation was done with all the stakeholders before finalizing the amendments in central rules which was notified on 2nd June 2017. For the first time we have provided for prevention, rescue and rehabilitation of children in the central rules and institutional set up at the district level in the form of district task force. She said that SOPs will provide step by step guidelines and will be a ready reckoner for trainers, practitioners and monitoring agencies.

In a video message during the conference, Mr Guy Ryder, DG, ILO, congratulated India for its foresight and expressed the hope that India will play a critical role in supporting ILO's efforts around the globe.

On the occasion, a short film on child labour and an animated detailed presentation on PENCIL portal were also shown.

The PENCIL Portal (pencil.gov.in) has various components, namely Child Tracking System, Complaint Corner, State Government, National Child Labour Project and Convergence. The Districts will nominate District Nodal Officers (DNOs) who will receive the complaints and within 48 hours of receiving, they will check the genuineness of the complaint and take the rescue measures in coordination with police, if the complaint is found to be genuine. Till date, 7 states/UTs have appointed the DNOs.

The State Labour Ministers from Uttar Pradesh, Assam, Delhi, Telangana, Tamil Nadu, Haryana, Andhra Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Bihar and Rajasthan participated in the conference. The conference was also attended by Labour Secretaries of the State, Secretaries of Central Ministries, District Nodal Officers as well as the Project Directors for National Child Labour Project (NCLP).

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Special Feature: "Swachhta Hi Sewa" Pakhwada

Swacch Bharat Abhiyan giving wings to Bapu's dream of Clean India



*Vikas Khanna

It will be a stock-taking exercise for the government when India celebrates Mahatma Gandhi's birth anniversary this year as it will also mark the completion of three years of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's flagship cleanliness drive – the "Swacch Bharat Abhiyan". The Modi government has set an ambitious target of Open Defecation Free India by October 2, 2019 when Gandhi's 150th birth anniversary will be celebrated.

Given the giant strides made in a short span of three years, the government seems headed towards meeting the 2019 deadline of providing toilets to every household. Under the Swacch Bharat campaign, more than 4.90 crore toilets have already been constructed since October 2, 2014. According to Ministry of Drinking Water and Sanitation, more than 2.44 lakh villages have been declared open defecation free and 203 open defecation free districts as on September 24, 2017. What makes the programme noteworthy is that several public sector as well as private institutions have joined hands with the government to make it a grand success. Many business houses have adopted several villages in this connection under the Corporate Social Responsibility. It is no surprising then that the country's sanitation coverage has leapfrogged to more than 68 per cent compared to just 38 per cent in 2012. But still much more needs to be done.

Keeping this in view, the government has launched a fortnight long 'Swachhta Hi Seva' (Cleanliness is Service) campaign which will culminate on Gandhi Jayanti next month. Under the campaign, several programmes have been planned to give a fillip to the nationwide cleanliness drive. The purpose is to reinvigorate the "Swacch Bharat Abhiyan" which was started as a national

movement three years ago. The Ministry of Drinking Water and Sanitation, which is spearheading the campaign, has been joined by various other ministries, government departments and non-government organizations to spread the awareness of cleanliness.

October 2, 2014 will go down in the history books as the biggest campaign for “Swachh Bharat” when Prime Minister Modi himself wielded a broom and swept the dirty streets of New Delhi. The people responded to his clarion call to join him in this endeavour to give a fitting tribute to Mahatma Gandhi, who wanted to make sanitation a priority for India more than a century ago. The campaign aims to end the wide-spread practice of open defecation, build more toilets and improve waste management, among other goals.

While underlining the importance of cleanliness, the Prime Minister has often said that the idea of Swachh Bharat has nothing to do with politics, as it is inspired by patriotism. One is reminded of Gandhi's saying that “Sanitation is more important than independence.”

While the father of the nation championed the cause of self-service in cleanliness and end the despicable practice of untouchability, the movement faltered after independence. Though several programmes were undertaken since then by several governments, it is a sad commentary that the twin issues of sanitation and untouchability continue to haunt the country even almost 70 years after Bapu's death.

Poor sanitation leads to several health-related diseases and untimely deaths. A charity organization “WaterAid” had painted a grim situation in one of its reports in 2014. It had then reported that less than a third of India's 1.2 billion people had access to sanitation and more than 186,000 children under the age of five used to die every year from diarrhoeal diseases caused by unsafe water and poor sanitation. It has its economic pitfalls also. It is estimated that the country is losing 6.4 percent of GDP annually as poor access to sanitation results in diseases and deaths. But all that is set to change now as various government agencies are working on war footing to meet the challenge.

Quoting the World Health Organization, the Prime Minister has said in the past that an average of Rs. 6,500 per person is lost in India due to lack of cleanliness and hygiene. He said Swachh Bharat would therefore make a significant impact on public health, and in safeguarding income of the poor, ultimately contributing to the national economy. He said sanitation should not be seen as a political tool, but should only be connected to patriotism (rashtrabhakti) and commitment to

public health.

United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), which carried out a survey to estimate the cost of benefits of the Swachh Bharat Mission, has in a recent report said one rupee invested in improving sanitation helps save Rs 4.30. It said that each household could save Rs. 50,000 every year if there is Open Defecation Free society because the medical costs will come down, the value of time savings and the value of mortality will be averted. It also said the benefits are highest for the poorest quantile of the population.

But to make the programme successful, the local bodies and state governments will need to redouble efforts to create more awareness and educate people to change their age-old attitudes towards hygiene and purity. Despite best of governmental efforts, a large number of people in the hinterland still believe that it is unclean to defecate inside. The government and business houses may construct toilets, but one needs to draw people out from the open fields to the confines of a toilet in order to realize the full health and economic benefits of sanitation. There is an urgent need to educate people through awareness campaigns to help eliminate such negative notions. The success of the programme will be largely dependent on people's participation. It is therefore imperative that people rise to the occasion to make India clean and healthy.

**The author is a senior journalist and columnist. He has worked with several newspapers, news agency and television news channel in his 29 years career. Presently, he is a guest faculty at Indian Institute of Mass Communication.*

Views expressed in the article are author's personal.

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Women rejoice as Saudi ban ends

Saudi Arabia's historic decision to allow women to drive won plaudits internationally and inside the conservative kingdom on Wednesday, as euphoria mixed with disbelief among activists who long fought the ban.

King Salman's decree, which takes effect next June, is part of an ambitious reform push that runs the risk of a backlash from religious hard-liners.

Saudi Arabia was the only country in the world to impose a ban on women driving and its maintenance was seen as a symbol of repression in the Gulf kingdom around the world.

Plaudits from leaders

U.S. President Donald Trump welcomed the decision to end the ban as "a positive step toward promoting the rights and opportunities of women in Saudi Arabia".

British Prime Minister Theresa May hailed it as an "important step towards gender equality".

Saudi Arabia will use the "preparatory period" until June to expand licensing facilities and develop the infrastructure to accommodate millions of new drivers, state media said.

Conservative clerics in Saudi Arabia, an absolute monarchy ruled according to Islamic sharia law, have long opposed lifting the ban, arguing that it would lead to promiscuity. One of them even claimed that driving harmed women's ovaries.

The announcement on Tuesday comes after decades of resistance from women activists, many of whom were jailed for flouting the prohibition.

'A glorious day'

"A glorious day. Can't hold back my tears," tweeted Saudi shura council member Latifah Alshaalan. "Congratulations to the women of my homeland."

Activist Manal al-Sharif, who led the 2011 "Women2Drive" protest movement, tweeted: "Today, the last country on earth to allow women to drive... we did it."

Human rights watchdog Amnesty International said: "It is a testimony to the bravery of women activists who have been campaigning for years that... Saudi Arabia has finally relented and decided to permit women to drive."

Saudi Arabia has some of the world's tightest restrictions on women.

Under the country's guardianship system, a male family member — normally the father, husband or brother — must grant permission for a woman's study, travel and other activities.

It was unclear whether women would require their guardian's permission to apply for a driving licence.

Celebrations on Twitter

After Tuesday's announcement, the hashtags "I am my own guardian" and "Saudi Women Can

Drive” began gaining traction on social media, while many openly lampooned conservatives who long defended the ban.

One Saudi woman tweeted a picture of three women in a convertible going shopping, with the message: “Us soon.”

The policy could socially liberate women — heavily reliant on foreign drivers and ride-sharing apps — and also boost the economy at a time of low oil prices by increasing their participation in the workforce, analysts say.

National Day weekend

The announcement follows a dazzling gender-mixed celebration of Saudi National Day at the weekend, the first of its kind, which aimed to spotlight the kingdom’s reform drive.

Men and women danced in the streets to drums and electronic music, in scenes that were a stunning novelty in a country known for its tight gender segregation and austere vision of Islam.

Women were also allowed into a sports stadium — previously a male-only arena — to watch a concert, a move that chimes with the government’s Vision 2030 plan for social and economic reform.

With more than half the country aged under 25, Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, the King’s son and the architect of the reforms, is seen as catering to the aspirations of younger people. His gambit to loosen social restrictions, which has so far not translated into more political or civil rights, seeks to ease criticism over recent arrests, some analysts say.

Authorities this month arrested more than two dozen people, including influential clerics and activists, in what critics described as a coordinated crackdown.

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A people's movement

For the first 11 years of her life, Avantikapa, now 12, grew up without a toilet in her house in West Bengal's East Midnapur district. As she approached adolescence and felt increasingly uncomfortable with the multiple risks of open defecation and the sheer embarrassment of it, Avantikapa spoke to her parents and got them to build a toilet at home. "I don't have to worry about dogs, I don't have to go under the cover of night," she says happily.

In East Sikkim, a co-education school has seen attendance of girl students improve after toilets were built inside the school. "Earlier, they would go in the bushes. Many students fell ill with diarrhoea, and it became harder to find places to defecate. Now many girls who dropped out of school have come back for further studies," says school principal Aarti Gautum.

These are two heartening stories of the success of Prime Minister [Narendra Modi](#)'s Swachh Bharat Mission. But anecdotal evidence is an imperfect method of impact assessment. For decades, public discourse about the impact of sanitation programmes has been informed by anecdotal evidence from the other end of the spectrum: Toilets are constructed only in government files and, even if made, are never used for practical or cultural reasons. Whether positive or negative, this gives, at best, a skewed understanding of the impact of social sector schemes. That is why three years into the mission, the Quality Council of India (QCI) launched a massive survey of rural sanitation to gather empirical evidence and measure service levels against promises.

QCI is a national accreditation body that has been involved in most of the marquee Swachh Bharat schemes to evaluate sanitation performance through an internationally bench-marked evaluation matrix. It's an article of faith in the most reputed management courses that what gets measured gets improved. With a continent-size population of 1.3 billion plus, it is implicit that any outsize scale project like Swachh Bharat must constantly measure the right metrics.

The survey, Swachh Survekshan Gramin 2017, covered 140,000 households across 700 districts. QCI surveyors personally visited the households to physically verify if they had a toilet, and if they had one, were the toilets were being used. Every enumerated household was geo-tagged to lend the survey authenticity. The survey, conducted over six months ending in August 2017, threw up stunning results.

In their criticism of the Swachh Bharat Mission, many have cited anecdotal evidence about toilets being used to store grains, but the QCI survey gathered empirical evidence of a dramatic improvement in both coverage and usage of toilets. Three years after the launch of the mission, a behavioural change is discernible, especially in rural India.

Let the figures do the talking: As per Census 2011, more than five in 10 households did not have a toilet or individual household latrine (IHHL) in technical lingo. Further broken down, this translated to nearly seven in 10 rural homes not having a toilet and almost two in 10 urban homes where family members had to defecate in the open. Against that, the survey found, only less than three in 10 households (26.75 per cent) are without a toilet in the country (against 50 per cent as per the 2011 census). The improvement is dramatic in rural India where the number of households without toilets has come down to 32.5 per cent (from 69 per cent). That is, toilet coverage has more than doubled in rural India in these three years. For urban areas that number is 14.5 per cent (down from 18 per cent).

Now on to toilet usage. The survey found that more than nine in 10 (91.29 per cent) rural households having access to a toilet are actually using it. The results are similar for urban areas.

Of 73 cities that participated in Swachh Survekshan 2016, 54 cities have improved their score in overall municipal solid waste management in 2017. Here again, there is anecdotal evidence that open defecation persists in cities declared ODF but these are isolated cases. Even if we are not yet at 100 per cent, isn't 90 per cent plus a remarkable number, considering the daunting scale of the mission?

The Swachh Bharat urban and rural projects have set-off healthy competition among cities and districts. Self-help groups, NGOs and popular icons have pitched in and the results are showing in the form of a record number of sustainable toilets, open defecation-free towns, schools with gender specific toilets and decrease in water borne diseases in ODF villages and towns.

The public health benefits of ODF spaces far outweigh any criticism of non-compliance. Swachh Bharat is getting a state push but at its best, it's a social project where we are all conscience-keepers. If funding and resources for local bodies are one end of the spectrum, equally crucial are social factors such as caste, gender and poverty.

The three-pronged job of measuring, ranking and naming-shaming is working and we must leverage this approach across domains. Railways and Ports Authority have already begun implementing similar projects. So far, the QCI has measured toilets built, usage, ODF and structural issues such as sewage systems and solid waste removal systems. As these achieve usage at scale, we should also measure behaviour changes. Pouring concrete alone won't solve the problems of public hygiene. The combination of a people's movement and the force multipliers of infrastructure readiness and impact measurement can deliver results very quickly.

But just as real as the figure the survey has thrown up is the fact that hundreds of Indians die from preventable conditions each year even now, especially in places which have maximum incidence of open defecation. Faeces in groundwater spread encephalitis, an annual post-monsoon scourge, diarrhoea stunts children and adults and underweight mothers produce babies prone to sickness. The cycle is lethal.

The costs of public health crises are far greater than the price of fixing it. That is why Swachh Bharat must power on, its efficacy sharpened by regular impact assessment studies and the learning they provide.

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Clean India Mission prioritises behavioural change



***K V Venkatasubramanian**

Till three years ago, millions of people across India, mostly the rural population and many in urban regions, were nonchalant about performing their early morning rituals, particularly relieving themselves anywhere out in the open. They were unconcerned about hygiene, and diseases that could afflict them. Parents were exposing their children to grave dangers.

All these have changed considerably for the better following Prime Minister Narendra Modi's call for a Swachh Bharat with universal sanitation by October 2, 2019 (Mahatma Gandhi's 150th birth anniversary). Down this period, open defecation, a way of life over centuries, has been curtailed.

Universal sanitation is at the core of India's development agenda. Till 2014, only 39 percent people had access to safe sanitation facilities. As the Swachh Bharat Mission (SBM) completes three years, five states, nearly 200 districts and nearly 2.4 lakh villages across the country have declared themselves open defecation free (ODF). Besides, 1.5 lakh villages have ranked themselves on the village Swachhta Index based on solid and liquid waste management in villages.

Improved sanitation has resulted in major household savings. Every rupee invested in improving sanitation leads to a saving of Rs 4.30, shows a recent independent study by UNICEF to estimate the cost benefits of the SBM. On an average, the cost-benefit ratio was 430 percent, "considering on one hand the expenditure from households and the government, and on the other hand the financial savings induced by improved sanitation," the study found. The benefits are the highest for the poorest quintile of the population.

Besides, in fully ODF communities, an average family that invests in a toilet saves around Rs

50,000 per year--considering medical costs and mortality averted, and also time savings. The study, carried out in 10,000 rural households randomly selected across 12 states, found that 85 percent of family members use their latrines. The survey was conducted to measure the economic impact of sanitation at a household level.

Parameswaran Iyer, Secretary, Ministry of Water and Sanitation, says an independent survey conducted across 140,000 households by the Quality Council of India found that "household toilet usage stands at 91 per cent."

Accessible and secure toilets have induced a big qualitative change in villagers' lives, especially women who were forced to defecate in the open in darkness, suffering mental torture—with their safety, security and dignity imperilled.

Want of access to proper sanitation prompts high health and economic outlay: it costs India 6 percent of its GDP every year. Research has highlighted an indisputable link between toilets, malnutrition and irreversible stunting. For the populace continuously exposed to a faecally-contaminated environment, absence of a toilet can have far-reaching effects. Insanitation affects children leading to 100,000 deaths due to diarrhoeal diseases. Nearly 40 percent of India's children are physically and cognitively stunted, according to the World Bank.

A major challenge facing the government is to bring about behavioural change in people's mindsets, especially among rural masses—totally different from building a toilet, an infrastructure programme, that can be accomplished. It is focusing on this most important factor, which requires dealing with a centuries-old deep-rooted habit of people going out (to defecate) and then getting them to talk about it. Several interpersonal techniques through community approaches to sanitation are being used across the country to trigger behavioural change; fundamental to the SBM.

"Beyond the hundreds of thousands of toilets being built, "a genuine prioritisation of behaviour change interventions is taking place," says Nicolas Osbert, Chief of WASH (Water, Sanitation, Hygiene), UNICEF India.

To strengthen and take the mission forward, the Centre, under an accelerated fortnight-long campaign "Swachhta hi Seva" (cleanliness is service), is executing a series of activities--such as cleaning toilets, bus stands, movie halls, railways stations, public halls and more. The campaign will culminate with Swachh Bharat Diwas on October 2.

Efforts are on to move beyond the current drive for open defecation-free cities and work towards faecal sludge management for a safe urban environment without any risk to land and rivers. Every day, India generates a colossal 1.7 million tonnes of faecal waste. About 78 percent of this sludge (human excreta and water mixture) remains untreated and is dumped into rivers, groundwater or lakes in the absence of proper treatment systems. Sludge contains disease-carrying bacteria and pathogens and poses threat to health.

Youths and other stakeholders are being encouraged to come up with innovative solutions to problems for sustainable, environmental-friendly and affordable toilet technology for hilly, dry, flood-prone and remote areas; novel technological solutions to monitor usage of toilets and bring behavioural change for toilet usage and hygiene;

They have been invited to suggest unconventional models and methods to improve operation and maintenance of school toilets; pioneering solutions for menstrual health management and innovative solutions for early decomposition of faecal matter.

Unlike earlier open-ended programmes, the mission has been put on a fast track to accomplish the sunset clause--an ODF India by constructing 12 million toilets. Realising that this is a difficult and time-consuming venture involving behaviour change, sanitation has been made everyone's business—be it the pradhan or the collector or the Member of Parliament. It is being operated through the Prime Minister, chief ministers, district magistrates, VMs (village mukhiyas). Also, an army of swachhagrahis has been created and nukkad nataks (street plays) have been promoted.

Behavioural change is being motivated through mass media and interpersonal messages communicated by celebrities, who are creating awareness about the ill-effects of open defecation.

The author is an independent journalist and columnist, with four decades of experience across media streams--print, online, radio and television. He writes on science and developmental issues.

Views expressed in the article are author's personal.

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The danger in Asia's demographics

Last week's move by Standard & Poor's (S&P) to downgrade China, the first time since 1999, didn't have the same shock value as its 2011 call to strip "AAA" status from the US. But it's a timely reminder of the biggest problem facing Beijing and much of Asia.

No, not the soaring debt that S&P's cited, as did Moody's when it downgraded Beijing in May. The real reason S&P's cut China's sovereign rating to "A+" from "AA-" is demographics. Yes, China has immense savings. As it churns out tens of trillions of dollars of fresh credit, though, a dwindling workforce, lost productivity and deflation could strain the central government's ability to balance servicing exploding debt with financing its social development. And China is hardly alone. Hong Kong, Japan, Singapore, South Korea and Taiwan also face demographic headwinds.

It's understandable that those riding demographic tailwinds might feel smug. But officials in India, Indonesia and the Philippines must consider their own population-growth-related vulnerabilities. So must investors.

Warnings of China's demographic reckoning come just as Deloitte LLP delights governments in Jakarta, Manila and New Delhi enjoying young and growing labour pools. India came out on top. In Asia, generally, the ranks of those over 65 will rise from 365 million now to more than half-a-billion in 2027, Deloitte said.

By 2030, Asia will have 60% of the global share. Young India, by sharp contrast, will drive the next Asian tailwind as its potential workforce surges to 1.08 billion people from 885 million over the next 20 years. Equally important, it will hold around there for roughly 50 years. Indonesia and the Philippines also are looking at decades of swelling-workforce magic.

Or not. If Narendra Modi, Joko Widodo and Rodrigo Duterte aren't losing sleep over these trajectories, they're delusional. Demographic dividends only matter if Modi can create future jobs for the roughly 25% of his 1.3 billion people under the age of 15. So far, that hasn't been the case. For all the excitement about Modi's 'Make in India' push, job creation in export-related industries isn't anywhere near what New Delhi advertised. Nor is domestic retail-sector growth picking up the slack with well-paying new positions. It's hard to be too optimistic about the consumption outlook.

That's especially so now that Modi appears to be resting on his laurels. After steps to open the aviation, insurance and defence industries, all indications are that the Bharatiya Janata Party is already focused on the 2019 election. Unfortunately, the real big bang will only come when Modi revolutionizes labour, land and tax policies and goes markedly further to cut red tape and increase government efficiency.

That goes, too, for Indonesia's Widodo, who's known as Jokowi, and Philippine President Duterte. Jokowi is indeed working to improve infrastructure, reduce graft, increase transparency and, via tax tweaks, facilitate the return of billions of dollars of investment into South-East Asia's biggest economy. Yet it's not enough. Neither Indonesia's urbanization boom nor its enviable store of national resources nor its growing middle class will matter if Jokowi doesn't hasten reforms.

Efforts to improve roads, bridges, ports and power grids, rein in the bureaucracy and ensure legal contracts are enforced are lagging today's 5% growth, argues Elizabeth Pisani, author of *Indonesia Etc: Exploring the Improbable Nation*. For all Jokowi's efforts to decentralize democracy and take on what she terms the "judicial mafia", a menace that complicates doing business, Indonesia will have a hard time climbing the global competitiveness rankings, Pisani says.

The Philippines may be an even bigger risk. Duterte's economy is experiencing China-like growth of 6.5%, but his policy priorities are more about guns than butter. His bloody drug war has already filled more body bags (at least 7,000) in 456 days than brutal dictator Ferdinand Marcos did in 20 years. Policing drug pushers and users is important, but it's eclipsed all else—including economic upgrades.

The mandate voters gave Duterte, remember, was to accelerate the reform successes of predecessor Benigno Aquino. From 2010 to 2016, Aquino strengthened the national balance sheet, increased transparency and accountability, went after tax cheats and ignored the powerful Catholic Church to cap a population growing faster than incomes. Voters turned to strongman Duterte to take things to new levels. Sadly, his priority is deputizing bands of gunmen to shoot alleged drug-trade members extrajudicially. Not surprisingly, the peso is Asia's worst performing currency so far this year.

The US Federal Reserve's rate hike campaign won't help efforts in Jakarta, Manila and New Delhi to maintain growth consistent with rising living standards. But it's crucial that Jokowi, Duterte and Modi hit the reform accelerator to create enough decent jobs to employ their swelling populations. That means spreading the benefits of rapid growth, investing more in human capital and attracting ample foreign investment.

If not, China's challenges may pale in comparison to hundreds of millions of young Filipinos, Indians and Indonesians turning on governments running afoul of demographic trajectories.

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