

PR  *SENSE*

175

Volume 4

**Politics &
Governance**

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Priyadharshni Rahul**

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Table of Contents

INTRODUCTION ----- 6

Foreword From Dr. APJ Abdul Kalam For The First Edition
PreSense100-----7

Preface to the First Edition-----8

Preface to the Second Edition----- 11

Preface to the Third Edition ----- 12

Preface to the Fourth Edition ----- 13

Preface to the Fifth Edition----- 14

Journey of Ezine PreSense - Milestones ----- 15

Editorial Board – October 2021 ----- 17

Prime Point Foundation and its Initiatives----- 18

POLITICS AND GOVERNANCE ----- 20

Snippets about Indian Elections ----- 21

Case Study – Political Intolerance ----- 23

New Pope takes over----- 26

The Parliament House ----- 28

Role of RSS in the General Elections 2014----- 30

Circumspection and Silence Go Together in Governance----- 34

Milestones of 'Right To Education Act'----- 37

The Ado about Article 370 -----	39
The Economic Makeover of India – 1991 Economic Liberalisation Policy-----	43
US Government Shutdown – What It Means?-----	46
Ethics in Politics – Role Model in Canada-----	50
CSR Taking Wings in India -----	54
The US-China Tariff War -----	59
Why is the Judiciary Under Criticism? -----	64
Lessons from the National Disasters -----	68
10 th Edition of Sansad Ratna Awards -----	71
The Pulwama Attack – Enough is Enough -----	76
16th Lok Sabha – At a Glance -----	80
PreSense Lok Sabha Index -----	88
Is Social Media the ‘Game Changer’ For Indian General Elections 2019? -----	91
Chowkidar Crowned as King -----	99
Investments Without Production and Confusing Policy Announcements Hit Indian Economy -----	105
How an Idea Becomes an Act of Parliament -----	114
Fundamental Duties (Article 51A of the Constitution of India)-	119
Nationalism and Secularism in the Indian Context -----	120
‘India 2020’ Vision – An Assessment -----	125

Suspension of MPLads Will Affect Rural People – An Appeal to the Government to Reconsider Decision-----	131
The Ignored Plight of Our ‘Migrant’ Workers -----	133
The Migrant Workers’ Issue – Why of the Problem, What Next for the Solution-----	135
Ban Political Activism in Educational Institutions -----	143
NEP 2020 – Education Policy on a Revamp -----	147
NEP 2020 – Exclusive Comments-----	154
Oil Prices Crash Globally, but India Raises Fuel Prices -----	156
Contempt of Court-----	160
Do Political Parties Follow Democratic Norms in the Parliament? -----	163
Ban Online Gambling and Related Advertisements to Save Youth -----	167
Indian Govt Passes Three Major Farm Bills as Part of Agrarian Reforms -----	170
Emergence of New Age Political Consultancies – Are Political Parties Getting Corporatised? -----	174
Biden-Harris Combine to Stabilise Indo-US Relations -----	181
Is Simultaneous Election Feasible? -----	185
Know About the Union Budget-----	194
Celebrating Negativity – Quo Vadis? -----	200
Urgent Need for Electoral Reforms in the 75th Year of Independence -----	204

12 Years’ Journey of Sansad Ratna Awards ----- 207

Cash-for-Votes in Recent Tamil Nadu Assembly Elections –Helpless Election Commission: A Quick Survey----- 211

PM Modi’s Seven-Year Rule Gets Good Rating, but the Middle-Class Rings Alarm Bells ----- 216

High Prices of Fuels, Edible Oils and Commodities Hit Common Man Hard - Bring Fuels under GST immediately ----- 223

Mother India@75 Sorrows Over Parliament Disruption----- 226

Ten Challenges faced by India as perceived by Dr APJ Abdul Kalam ----- 233

Panel Discussion: Ethics in Politics ----- 234

Conversation with Ms Priyanka Chaturvedi, Member of Parliament ----- 237

Index ----- 240

Introduction

Foreword From Dr. APJ Abdul Kalam For The First Edition PreSense100

Dr. A.P.J. Abdul Kalam
Former President of India



10, Rajaji Marg
New Delhi-110011

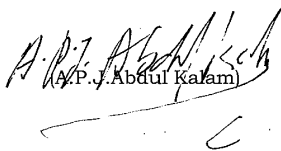
FOREWORD

I am very happy to know that the PreSense monthly ezine published by Prime Point Foundation is bringing out a book based on some of the unique articles, interviews and events published in its editions so far since from March 2006. The 100 issues of the publication have gone through an eventful journey, focusing on knowledge capture and important knowledge dissemination. I recollect my direct association with PreSense in July 2008, when I launched the cartoon character, 'Prince', created exclusively for PreSense.

I see PreSense continuing in its journey under the mentorship of Prime Point Srinivasan, maintaining its status as a must-read ezine, in the fast moving and evolving world of communication, knowledge and connectivity.

I congratulate the Editorial Team of PreSense for bringing out the 100th Edition as a Collector's Digest.

28th May 2015


(A.P.J. Abdul Kalam)

Preface to the First Edition

The emergence of Internet in the 1980s changed the way of communication globally. When Videsh Sanchar Nigam Limited (VSNL) introduced the internet for commercial use on 15th August 1995, India too adopted the new communication model and medium.

Way back in 2002, we published our first electronic newsletter in a move that was viewed as progressive and visionary in nature. After 8 issues, we had to discontinue the newsletter as its electronic form was not regarded contemporary then. In March 2006, we resumed with an ezine titled 'PreSense' with a shift in focus to creating awareness about the essence in personal and corporate communication.

Interestingly, at that time, no bigwig was willing to give an exclusive interview for the re-launching ezine, or even launch it, as there was apprehension about the success of the concept of an electronic magazine. Dr Y S Rajan (co-author of the book, India 2020, with Dr APJ Abdul Kalam) however encouraged us and volunteered to launch the ezine online.

And so we progressed, introducing interesting interviews with eminent personalities recorded on podcast and synchronised with the ezine format, so that the readers were treated to both online reading of contents as well as audio version of interviews. This enabled the readers to a feel of listening to the personalities they have read about in the ezine. We also introduced the concept of Guest Editorship, enabling the association of renowned professionals to share their experience and viewpoints as Editor for the month. This move gave an uplift to the outlook of the ezine and a new trend in its journey ahead.

Many newsletters and ezines launched during the same period were discontinued later for various reasons. PreSense however, survived the test of time and continued till its 60th edition in February 2011. After a deliberate brief break of a few months, we resumed the publication of our ezine, with a new look and a shift again in the focus to a social and general theme, with the tagline,

'Spreading Positive Vibrations'. This shift in focus enabled a more holistic approach to the theme and subject of communication. The attention moved to global current news, historically significant events, and knowledge-based breakthroughs in technology. This turned out to be an exciting challenge for the editorial team to sustain the positive strain while including novel and currently interesting topics for the reading pleasure.

Although an ezine might not be comparable with a giant-sized main line medium of communication, it has its own advantages as a medium of reaching out. The *Sansad Ratna* Award Scheme and the Education Loan Task Force were two major initiatives by our ezine, giving it the privilege of being recognised as the host to two major issues of national relevance.

Over a period of 9 years, our ezine has given opportunities to many young people to experience firsthand, the nitty-gritty of digital magazine making, editing and publishing. At the request of many of our loyal readers, we are now bringing out this book called 'PreSense 100', containing 100 plus articles, handpicked from the past 99 editions of our ezine. We felt that the selected articles qualified as a collector's item, and hence this special issue is described as a Collector's Digest. It is our belief that the reader too will appreciate it as one.

Up until now, our ezine has been published, not for commercial gains. We are proud to have many professionals on board, contributing their valuable time and talent in the making of the ezine every month.

I place on record my gratitude and appreciation to all the past Editorial Team Members like Satish Naaraj, Vidya, Tushar Panchal, Veena Vinod, Swetha and innumerable others who contributed immensely to make the ezine a professional one.

I personally thank our ezine's Editorial Team members for their sustained support in bringing out this book. I acknowledge the valuable support given by Susan Koshy, V Rajendran, T N Ashok, Prof. Jagannathan, Sukruti Vadula and Dr Ramamurthy Natarajan for editing and formatting this book.

At this stage, it is pertinent to mention that during the process of publishing every edition of the ezine, there was the collective, professional and committed involvement and input of every editorial team that was associated then. It has been the endeavour of the team to maintain a progressively high standard of the contents and readability of the ezine. We believe these efforts met the expectations of the readers, based on the positive and constructive feedback we kept receiving from our diverse and loyal readership base.

Right from the beginning, we have always been the beneficiary of the blessings and guidance of Dr APJ Abdul Kalam, Former President of India. I also thank Mr V Ponraj, (Scientific Advisor to Dr Abdul Kalam) who supported us in the selection of its contents.

When we planned to publish this book for free distribution, Dr Maria Zeena of Sathyabhama University volunteered to sponsor the cost. I thank her and her team for the noble gesture. I thank Polaris (Padmini and her team) for designing the cover. I thank Sri Logeswari Prints and its owner, Shri M Muthaian for bringing out this book on time.

I thank the innumerable readers and well-wishers who have given unstinted and close-knit support during our journey. Finally, I thank God Almighty for the divine blessings during the journey of 100 editions.

K Srinivasan
Chairman, Prime Point Foundation
Editor in Chief, PreSense

Preface to the Second Edition

The First edition of PreSense 100 was released in June 2015 as a digest of articles published in the earlier 99 editions. The first edition received an overwhelming response from multifarious groups as students, IAS aspirants, parliamentarians, bureaucrats, and other intellectuals. In view of the support received from the readers, our editorial team decided to come out with the second enhanced edition titled PreSense 100+ with additional articles published between June 2015 and April 2016.

We thank Dr P Ganesan, Chairman of Sony Fire Works (Pvt) Limited and AAA College of Engineering and Technology, Sivakasi who volunteered to sponsor and print this second edition for distribution. The Editorial Team gratefully acknowledges the support given by Shri Bharath Matha Mohan (Educationist at Chennai) and Shri VSM Velmurugan (Chairman of VSM Groups, Kovilpatti) in bringing out this second edition. We also thank Smt. Padmini and her team at Intellect Design for designing the wrapper. We thank innumerable other people who contributed to make this second edition possible.

K. Srinivasan
Editor in Chief
PreSense

Preface to the Third Edition

The first edition of the Digest titled PreSense 100, containing articles published in the first 100 editions of our ezine was released in June 2015. The second enhanced edition titled PreSense 100+, covering 110 editions, was released in June 2016. Due to the overwhelming response from our readers, we are now bringing out the third enhanced edition, covering important articles published in 130 editions of our ezine PreSense. This Digest is titled PreSense 130.

Dr P Ganesan, Chairman of Sony Fire Works (Pvt) Limited and AAA College of Engineering and Technology, Sivakasi has always been a source of inspiration to us. He sponsored the second edition of Digest. This time too, he has volunteered to sponsor and print this third edition for distribution among youth.

We also thank Smt. Padmini and her team at Intellect Design for designing the wrapper. We thank innumerable other people who contributed to make this third edition possible.

K. Srinivasan
Publisher & Mg. Editor
PreSense

Preface to the Fourth Edition

The journey of the eMagazine PreSense since March 2006 is amazing and exciting. During this journey, we were able to publish in the print format three editions Digest of articles published in the 100,110 and 130 issues respectively.

We have been receiving large number of appreciation from readers on the contents of Digest. Enthused by this, we are now pleased to release the fourth edition of digest in digital format titled PreSense150 containing select articles published in the 150 issues.

We thank Dr B Muthukumaran, Co-Founder of Digital Security Association of India (DiSAI) and Advisor to Digital Journalists Association of India (DiJAI) for all technical support in making this eDigest. We also thank Smt. Padmini and her team at Intellect Design for designing the wrapper.

I personally place on record my gratitude to Mrs Susan Koshy, Mr Rajendran, Mr Triambak Sharma and other editorial team members for the sustained support they are giving for successful publication of the eMagazine PreSense every month. We thank innumerable other people who contributed to make this third edition possible.

K. Srinivasan
Publisher & Mg. Editor
PreSense
24 August 2019

Preface to the Fifth Edition

The eMagazine PreSense which was started in March 2008 on the suggestions of Dr APJ Abdul Kalam for positive journalism has reached the 175th edition in September 2021. This digital only eMagazine is passionately run by a group of eminent volunteers without any commercial motive and without accepting any advertisements.

Looking back, we have published high quality articles on various subjects, including current affairs in every issue. Earlier, we have published Digest of articles after 100, 110, 130 and 150th editions. We had the great honour of getting the Foreword from Dr Abdul Kalam himself for the first Digest published at the end of 100th edition.

This is the fifth Publication at the end of 175th edition. Earlier, we provided all articles in a single book. Due to the large number of important articles, we have grouped all the articles in 8 categories. We are now publishing PreSense175 in 8 volumes covering (1) Indian Heritage, (2) Spotlights from History, (3) Politics and Governance (4) Prince cartoons (5) Media and Communication (6) Science and Technology, (7) Health and (8) General and Exclusives.

I am thankful to Priyadharshni Rahul (Editor), T N Ashok (Consulting Editor), Dr R Jagannathan (Editorial Advisor) and Srinivas Gopal (Technology Advisor) who helped in compiling the select articles published in the past editions.

K. Srinivasan
Publisher and Managing Editor
PreSense
26th September 2021

Journey of Ezine PreSense - Milestones

Dec 1999	Launch of Prime Point Foundation, Publisher of the ezine.
Feb 2006	Launch of ezine, PreSense online by Dr Y S Rajan.
Aug 2006	Integration of Podcast with the ezine contents.
Aug 2007	Introduction of Guest Editors.
Feb 2008	Second Anniversary Edition with Dr Abdul Kalam's exclusive interview. Masthead changed.
Apr 2008	First ezine to become 'Media Partner' for a global event held at London.
July 2008	Introduction of cartoons – Cartoon Character 'Prince' launched by Dr Abdul Kalam.
Sep 2008	Change in layout, introducing photographs on the cover.
Jan 2010	Ezine's new initiative 'Education Loan Task Force' (ELTF) launched to create awareness among students and parents.
May 2010	Ezine's second initiative to honour top performing Parliamentarians, with the <i>Sansad Ratna</i> Award launched. Golden Jubilee (50 th) Edition launched.
Feb 2011	Diamond Jubilee (60 th) Edition.

A hiatus after 5 years of uninterrupted journey

Apr 2012	Ezine resumed in a new format of contents. The tag line changed from 'Communicate the Communication' to 'Spreading Positive Vibrations'.
Apr 2013	Tamil Nadu Governor launched a special edition on the Indian Parliament, coinciding with the <i>Sansad Ratna</i> Awards.
Jun 2013	Platinum Jubilee (75 th) Edition launched by the youth at three places simultaneously, across the nation.
Jun 2015	100 th Edition - PreSense 100 released in print format.
Mar 2016	Ezine's third initiative 'Digital Journalists Association of India' (DiJAI) launched.

Jun 2016	Second edition of PreSense 100+ released in print format
Dec 2017	Ezine's fourth initiative 'Digital Security Association of India' (DiSAI) launched.
Mar 2018	Third edition of Digest PreSense130 released in print format.
Aug 2019	Fourth edition of Digest PreSense150 launched in pdf format.
Sep 2021	Fifth edition of Digest PreSense175 in 6 volumes released.

The Journey Continues.....

Editorial Board – October 2021

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K. Srinivasan (Prime Point Srinivasan), Digital Journalist

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Priyadharshni Rahul, Advocate, Supreme Court of India,
New Delhi

Consulting Editor

T N Ashok, Former Editor, Press Trust of India and freelance
Journalist at Delhi

Cartoon Editor

Triambak Sharma, Editor, Cartoon Watch, Raipur

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Indies

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Dr Ashok Pandey, Educationist at Delhi and Columnist

Ramesh Sundaram, Senior Journalist

R Nurullah, Senior Journalist and columnist

M B Jayaram, Chairman Emeritus, Public Relations Council of
India

Editorial Team

Srinivas Gopal, Technology Expert

Nandini Alagar, Digital Marketing Expert, Author, Writer and
Musician



Prime Point Foundation and its Initiatives

Prime Point Foundation, a Non-Profit Trust and NGO was founded in December 1999 by Shri K Srinivasan (popularly known as Prime Point Srinivasan), a former Senior Banker and a Digital Journalist and Communication Professional, to promote leadership and communication skills among the youth. Very eminent persons are associated with the Foundation.

In the past 21 years, the Foundation has organised several seminars, workshops, training and interactive sessions, both offline and online, on various subjects of national interest. The Foundation manages various online discussion groups and podcasts on communication, and digital journalism.

The Foundation has formed 5 initiatives to create awareness in various domains. All these initiatives are managed independently by passionate experts. These initiatives are non-commercial, and focussed on youth.

PreSense: The eMagazine PreSense was started in March 2006 on the suggestion of Dr APJ Abdul Kalam to promote positive journalism. Till September 2021, the Foundation has published 175 editions. This is a digital-only magazine. Digests, containing select articles upto 150 editions of the eMagazine, have so far been published. Dr Abdul Kalam has written the foreword for the Digest of articles upto 100 editions. PreSense publishes the cartoon character Prince, which was launched by Dr Abdul Kalam in 2008. PreSense will be publishing a Digest of select articles published upto 175 editions in the month of September 2021.



Sansad Ratna Awards: This is a flagship initiative started in 2010 to honour top performing Parliamentarians



every year, based on various performance parameters, and selected by a Jury Committee of eminent Parliamentarians. Dr Abdul Kalam himself inaugurated the first edition of the Awards event in May 2010. Till 2021, the Foundation has conducted 11 editions and presented 75 Awards. IIT Madras was the supporting Partner upto the 9th Edition. 10th Edition was held at Raj Bhavan, Tamil Nadu. 11th Edition was held at Constitution Club of India, New Delhi.

Next Gen Political Leaders (NGPL) is an off-shoot of Sansad Ratna Awards. This is a registered NGO operating since 2018.



NGPL has organised several workshops online and offline, for young political leaders and aspirants. Ministers, parliamentarians, legislators and retired constitutional authorities have participated and shared their views. NGPL will shortly be instituting Awards for young promising politicians.

Education Loan Task Force (ELTF) was started in 2010 to create awareness about education loans, among students and parents. More than 30,000 queries have been responded to, through email, and more than



5000 serious complaints have been taken up with the top management of the banks concerned, for redressal. Many policy issues have been taken up by Sansad Ratna Awardee MPs, in the Parliament for solution. ELTF does not facilitate loans.

Digital Journalists Association of India (DiJAI): DiJAI is an independent NGO founded in 2017 to create awareness about digital journalism and its implications, among the public and particularly among the journalists. DiJAI conducts several

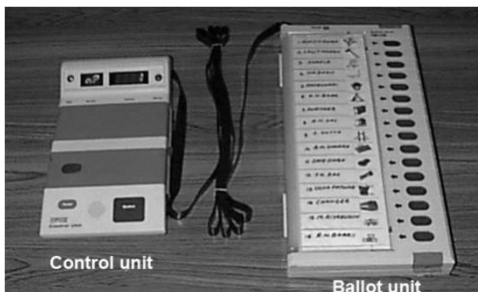


online and offline workshops and seminars, with panels of domain experts.

Politics and Governance

Snippets about Indian Elections

Electronic Voting Machines (EVM): Nearly 11 lakh Electronic Voting Machines are used in the General Elections, covering 8.5 lakh polling stations. EVMs were devised and designed by the Election Commission in collaboration with two Public Sector Undertakings viz., Bharat Electronics Ltd., Bangalore and Electronic Corporation of India Ltd., Hyderabad. Every machine can support 64 candidates and record 3840 votes. Since every polling station in India has a maximum of 1500 voters, one EVM is sufficient for every station. EVMs manufactured in 1989-90, were used on an experimental basis for the first time in 16 Assembly Constituencies in the States of Madhya Pradesh (5), Rajasthan (5) and NCT of Delhi (6), in the General Elections to the respective Legislative Assemblies held in November, 1998.



Indelible Ink or Voter's Ink: This special ink is manufactured by Mysore Paints and Varnish Limited, a State owned public sector company in Karnataka. This company supplies the indelible ink to several other countries too. This ink dries in 40 seconds and cannot be removed for 20 days. This prevents fake voting. A 10-ml bottle can be used for 300 voters. This company supplied 2 million bottles in the 2009 General Elections.

First Chief Election Commissioner of India

Shri Sukumar Sen, a Civil Servant from Bengal was the first Chief Election Commissioner of India. He prepared the first electoral rolls of the country and developed the systems. The first General Election was held between 25 October 1951 and 21 February 1952. During this first election, a different ballot box was used for each candidate, rather than using the ballot paper! Different coloured boxes represented different parties. Later, ballot papers were introduced with the candidate's name and symbol. In 2004, EVMs were used in all the 543 Lok Sabha constituencies. 1033 candidates contested in the Modakurichi assembly constituency in Tamil Nadu in 1996. The ballot paper was in the form of a booklet!



Nation's 5 biggest and 5 smallest constituencies according to area:

Biggest constituencies:

Barmer (Rajasthan) :
71601.24 sq-km
Ladakh (J&K) : 173266.37 sq-km
Arunachal (East) (AP):
39749.64 sq-km
Kuchh (Gujarat) : 41644.55 sq-km
Arunachal(West) AP:
40572.29 sq-km

Smallest constituencies:

Mumbai South: 13.73 sq-km
Mumbai South-central: 18.31 sq-km
Delhi sadar: 28.09 sq-km
Chandni chowk (Delhi): 10.59 sq-km
Kolkata north west 13.23 sq-km

By K Srinivasan, Editor in Chief, PreSense

Source: February 2014 issue of PreSense

Case Study – Political Intolerance

Ananda Vikatan, a leading Tamil weekly published a cartoon on the cover page of its issue dated 29th March 1987. (Picture left).



In the cartoon, a member from the audience asks another, “Which is the MLA and which is the Minister”. The other person replies, “The person who looks like a pickpocket is the MLA and the person who looks like a dacoit is the Minister”

When the issue was released, the Tamil Nadu Assembly was in session. One member raised the issue of this cartoon as ‘breach of privilege’. The Speaker of the Assembly demanded an apology from

the editor.

In the next issue, the Mr S Balasubramanian, Editor of the weekly, wrote an editorial saying, “This cartoon is about the politicians who come to power using democracy and then betraying the trust of the people. This cartoon can apply to any country”.

Not satisfied with the response by the Editor, the Assembly passed a resolution imposing a three month imprisonment to Mr Balasubramanian, Editor. The Editor was arrested. Immediately, the entire media in India and world over objected to this arrest, as it



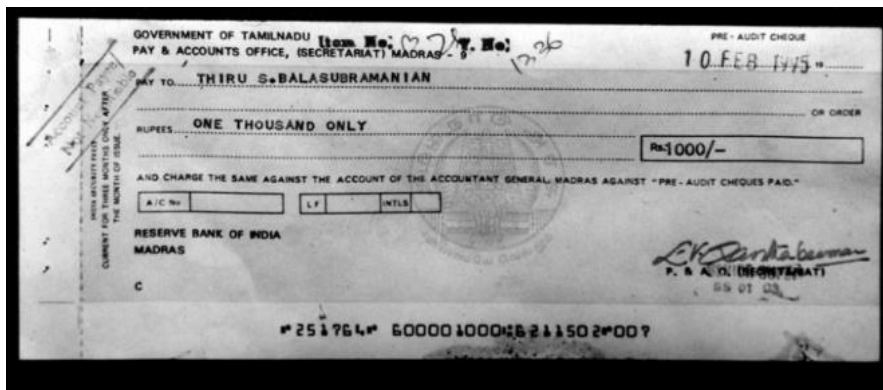
was considered interference in the freedom of press. Even BBC carried a strong message.

Since the issue was taken up by the global media, the speaker ordered the release of the Editor after two days. The Editor came out of the prison a victor. (picture)



At that time, the Times of India carried a cartoon by R K Lakshman. In the cartoon, a politician tells the Editor, when he comes out of the prison, "Remember, no more funny cartoons like this about us, distorting our public image". (picture right)

After release from the prison, Mr Balasubramanian filed a 'defamation case' in the High Court, Chennai demanding a token compensation of Rs.1000/-. After seven years, in Sep 1994, the High Court ordered a compensation of Rs.1000/-, declaring the arrest as 'unconstitutional and null and void'. The Tamil Nadu Government paid the compensation by cheque (picture).



Ananda Vikatan displays an enlarged picture of this cheque in their office as a symbol of 'freedom of expression'. – Photo courtesy: Ananda Vikatan

By K. Srinivasan, Editor in Chief

Source: December 2008 issue of PreSense

New Pope takes over

Vatican panorama from St.Peters Basilica



Subsequent to the sudden resignation of Pope Benedict XVI on 28th February 2013, the papal conclave of 2013 was convened to elect a pope. On 12th March 2013, 115 cardinal-electors gathered at the Vatican to begin the conclave. White smoke was seen emanating from the Sistine Chapel chimney on 13 March at 19:06 local time, following the fifth ballot, the bells began pealing minutes after, signifying the election of a new pope. The conclave elected Jorge Mario Bergoglio, an Argentine cardinal and Archbishop of Buenos Aires, who selected the papal name of Francis, in honour of Saint Francis of Assisi, an admirer of nature and a servant to the poor and destitute. Pope Francis assumed charge on 19th March 2013 with a Mass in Saint Peter's Square.

With the election of the new Pope, he assumed charge as the 'Head of the State' of the world's small country, Vatican with a population of around 800 people spread over 0.44 sq. km.

Born in Buenos Aires, Argentina and of Italian descent, Bergoglio worked briefly as a chemical technician before entering the seminary; he was ordained in 1969. From 1973 to 1979, he was Argentina's Provincial Superior of the Society of Jesus, became Archbishop of Buenos Aires in 1998, and was created cardinal in 2001. Bergoglio is the first Jesuit pope, the first pope from the Americas, and the first pope from the Southern Hemisphere.

Throughout his life, both as an individual and as a religious leader, he is known for his humility, his concern for the poor, and his commitment to dialogue as a way to build bridges between people of all backgrounds, beliefs, and faiths. Since his election to the

papacy, he has displayed a simpler and less formal approach to the office, including a decision to reside in the Vatican guesthouse rather than the papal residence used by his predecessors since 1903.



A majority of the popes were Italians. But with Francis' appointment, the tide could be shifting towards outside Europe.

In his first public act as pontiff, Pope Francis broke with tradition by asking the

estimated 150,000 people packed into St. Peter's Square to pray for him, rather than give his blessings to the crowd first.

The pontiff broke with another tradition by refusing to use a platform to elevate himself above the cardinals standing with him as he was introduced to the world as Pope Francis.

Pope Francis opposes same-sex marriage and abortion, and this is not surprising as leader of the socially conservative Catholic church. The new Pope also faces another challenge of finding ways of working with shifting viewpoints among Catholics. In the United States, for example, 90% of Catholics use contraception and 82% think it is morally permissible.

PreSense prays for the successful tenure of the new Pope Francis.

By K Srinivasan, Editor in Chief, PreSense

Source: March 2013 issue of PreSense

The Parliament House



The Parliament House is one of the most magnificent buildings in New Delhi and has one of the brightest clusters of architectural gems possessed by any country in the world. The building was designed by two famous architects – Sir Edwin Lutyens and Sir Herbert Baker – who were responsible for the planning and construction of New Delhi. The Parliament House is a massive circular edifice, 560 feet (170.69 metre) in diameter.

Its circumference is one-third of a mile and it covers an area of nearly six acres (24281.16 square metre). The open verandah on the first floor is fringed with a colonnade of 144 creamy sandstone columns, each 27 feet (8.23 metre) high.

The Chamber of the Lok Sabha is semi-circular in shape with a floor area of about 4800 square feet (446 square metre). The Chair of the Speaker is placed conspicuously at the centre of the diameter connecting the two ends of the semi-circle. In the pit of the Chamber just below the Speaker's Chair is the table of the Secretary-General of the House. The Chamber has a seating accommodation for 550 members. In the wood work around the

Lok Sabha Chamber, there are 35 gilded designs representing the various Provinces of Undivided India, the Dominions and certain other British Settlements.

By K Srinivasan, Editor in Chief, PreSense

Source: April 2013 edition of PreSense

Role of RSS in the General Elections 2014

RSS Involvement in Elections



Dr Mohan Bhagwat, Chief of RSS

Recently, Ram Madhav, a senior leader of Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) confirmed to the media, of their involvement in the recent Parliamentary Elections to make Narendra Modi the Prime Minister. Generally, RSS does not compete in the elections and does not share power. Ram Madhav further

confirmed that this was the second time that RSS had wholeheartedly involved their cadre in the election strategies. Prime Minister Narendra Modi confirmed the active involvement of RSS in his victory. When Indira Gandhi imposed emergency in 1975, RSS was banned and more than 10,000 RSS workers were arrested. During the 1977 General Elections, RSS worked at the ground level to defeat Indira Gandhi. During that time, the Janata Party won 345 seats out of 543 seats and formed the Government. Though RSS is an apolitical organisation, they involved their cadre to restore democracy in 1977, Ram Madhav said.

After 26 years, RSS involved their cadre again to bring a change of Government, when the nation was facing large scale corruption, policy paralysis and lack of leadership. The Congress made public statements that the electoral fight was between Congress and RSS. Interestingly, NDA won 336 seats in the Lok Sabha. RSS is known to work from behind and without publicising their achievements, however significant they might be.

RSS – Background

RSS was founded by Dr Keshav Baliram Hedgewar in 1925 with the intention of promoting the concept of a united India and to promote indigenous ideology. They drew inspiration from social and spiritual leaders like Swami Vivekananda, Vinayak Damodar

Savarkar and Aurobindo. Their cadre was also active during the freedom movement.

RSS conducts a daily one-hour '*Shakha*' (training) of yoga, physical exercise and games for their members to develop their spirit of nationalism and patriotism. It is reported that around 5,500 full-time workers (*pracharaks*) manage the RSS. Atal Bihari Vajpayee, L K Advani and Narendra Modi started their public service as *pracharaks*. It is also estimated that around 50,000 *shakhas* are held every day throughout India, with the participation of nearly 800,000 to 1,000,000 volunteer members, belonging to various castes and professions, without any discrimination of status.

The RSS network has more than 30 sister organisations, viz. *Sangh Parivar*, which includes the political wing BJP, India's largest trade union *Bharatiya Mazdoor Sangh* (11 million membership), India's largest student union, *Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad* (ABVP with 2,200,000 members), *Vidya Bharathi* (running 13,500 schools with 3 million students), *Bharatiya Kisan Sangh* (2 million members), *Muslim Rashtriya Manch* (1 million members), *Vanavasi Kalyan Ashram* and many others. RSS spreads the message of patriotism and nationalism in all the districts of the country through these organisations.

The current chief of RSS (*Sarsanghchalak*) Dr Mohanji Bhagwat is the 7th chief after the launch of RSS and he is the mentor for all the *Sangh Parivar* organisations.

Rescue Operations during Crises

The RSS cadre is known for its rescue operations during disaster situations like the Bhuj earthquake in 2001, Tsunami in 2004 and the Uttarakhand disaster in 2013.

In 1962, the then Prime Minister, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru had requested RSS to assist the Government in various assignments during the Sino-Indian War. As a gesture of goodwill, in 1963, Pandit Nehru invited RSS to participate in the Republic Day parade at New Delhi. Again in 1965, during the Indo-Pak war, RSS was requested by the then Prime Minister, Lal Bahadur Shastri to take

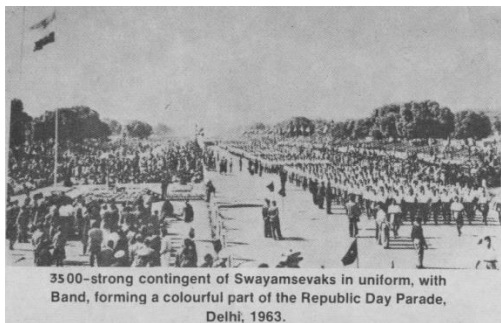
care of the law and order and the traffic in Delhi, so that the policemen could be spared for war duties. Even during the 1971 Indo-Pak war, RSS cadre helped the authorities to maintain law and order in various states.

When Gandhiji visited a 1500-strong RSS camp at Wardha in 1934, he was pleasantly surprised to find that the *Swayamsevaks* were not even aware of the castes of one another, not to speak of any ideas of untouchability. The visit left such a deep impression on Gandhiji's that he referred to it even thirteen years later.

Controversy

The RSS, with its paramilitary style of functioning and its emphasis on discipline and nationalism, is sometimes seen by some as "an Indian version of fascism". When Mahatma Gandhi was assassinated in 1948 by Nathuram Godse, an ex-member of RSS, the Nehru Government banned RSS for the first time in February 1948.

The Justice Kapur Commission was set up to enquire into the murder of Mahatma Gandhi. Justice Kapur observed that RSS was not responsible for the murder of Mahatma Gandhi. The Government lifted the ban in July 1949 with the condition that RSS should adopt a constitution.



RSS was again banned in 1975 during Emergency and the ban was lifted in 1977.

Confused Perception about RSS due to Lack of PR

RSS, as a matter of policy, does not display any reaction to bouquets or brickbats. Thus, even misleading and wrong

information about RSS go undefended. This leads to confused perceptions about it. Even for writing this article, I had to struggle to get information as they do not have any professional Public Relations set-up to share their positive achievements and services to the nation.

By K Srinivasan, Editor In Chief

Source: May 2014 issue of PreSense

Circumspection and Silence Go Together in Governance

Effective communication can take place without sound or gestures; and, silence, used wisely, could be more eloquent. To quote Keats: "Unheard melodies are sweeter" (*'shruta gana abhirama, ashruta gana abhirama taram'*). While decision-making through loud sound-bytes has become the political norm, employing the art of silence as a communication weapon is rare and criticised. The former Prime Minister, Narasimha Rao used this weapon very effectively and received his share of criticism from the more vocal communicators.



P V Narasimha Rao

Ever circumspect that he was, he cautioned against creating hype about the mere fact of his cabinet giving nod to any new proposal. His advice was that when the proposal

got implemented, it would create its own communication.

Sometimes by not expressing any opinion on an item coming up before the cabinet and deferring the subject, Rao would signal a powerful message.

The finance ministry was keen to drastically cut most of the government subsidies, including the subsidy to food grains supplied through the ration shops. This was at a time when there were misgivings within the ruling party over liberalisation. There were demands to strengthen the social safety net for protecting the people affected by changes in the economic policy.

Every time the proposal to increase the price of food grains issued through ration shops came up before the cabinet, without a word Rao would shift to the next agenda item. Through this stratagem, he avoided a political storm within and outside his government. Economic liberalisation was not a popular issue within his own party as well as a section of the private business. Without picking

up a fight with them, he quietly allowed the loosening of bolts and nuts holding the weight of state control over economic activities. When these started bearing fruit, liberalisation won many votaries.

He preferred action to words. Here is an example: the minister in charge of power sector excitedly rushed to him with an announcement in 1994 that a Hong Kong-based tycoon offered to sign a MOU with India for generating 10,000 MW. Rao's suggestion to the minister was to sign the MOU but let the foreign tycoon make the announcement along with its details. The minister preferred the sound byte.

And nothing more was ever heard about this MOU. (Gestation time of power projects is long and people feel their impact over time. In the meanwhile, the short term pains to be endured by power consumers are many. Therefore, in Rao's view merely announcing an MOU was not enough. If a private party makes the relevant announcement, it would be held accountable rather than the government. The latter's announcement of MOU could be used for manipulating the company share market).

In 1996, almost at the end of its term, the government took an in-principle decision to buy Sukhoi fighter jets from Russia that would put the Indian air force on par with neighbours having American F-16 fighters. This was a significant decision taken on the election eve and many of his colleagues wanted the government to make an announcement to derive political mileage. Rao was not in favour, and security issue was not the only reason. The deal involved payment of an advance and other procedures, including approval of the deal by the successor government after the poll. Actual induction of these fighters was a long way off. He was prepared to forego the temporary political advantage in order to protect the deal. As and when these Sukhois took to the skies flying the Indian tri-colour, the message was very clear.

The scamster, Harshad Mehta had announced through a press conference that he had delivered a sum of one crore rupees in a suit case to Rao at his high security official residence. The media went berserk. Party colleagues, sycophants and civil servants rushed to advise him to issue an immediate denial. Rao's reaction:

"Don't hustle me. A crook has made the allegation. Onus of proof is on him'. More than 24 hours elapsed before releasing an official denial.

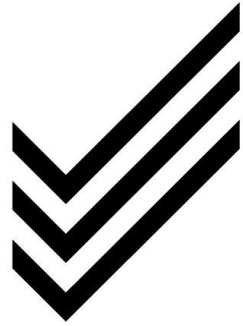
In contrast to this, in the Bofors' Howitzer gun controversy, the government came out with an immediate denial barely a few hours after the Swedish radio alleged that there was a payoff to middle-men contravening the contract terms. Buying time through silence for getting facts and assuring people that the government was concerned and would get to the bottom of the developing scandal could have saved it the ensuing embarrassment. Circumspection and silence mix like salt and pepper to make any communication more palatable and prevent the possibility of one having to eat one's own words.

By S Narendra, Former Information Advisor to Prime Minister

Source: June 2009 issue of PreSense

Milestones of 'Right To Education Act'

education for all



Indian Constitution –Article 45 states:

"The State shall endeavour to provide, within a period of ten years from the commencement of this Constitution, for free and compulsory education for all children until they complete the age of fourteen years "

Amendments

Following initiatives by the Supreme Court of India during the 1990s the Ninety-third amendment bill suggested three separate amendments to the Indian constitution:

The constitution of India was amended to include a new article, 21A, which read:

"The State shall provide free and compulsory education to all children of the age of six to fourteen years in such manner as the State may, by law, determine."

Article 45 was proposed to be substituted by the article which read:

"Provision for early childhood care and education to children below the age of six years: The State shall endeavour to provide early childhood care and education for all children until they complete the age of six years."

Another article, 51A, was to additionally have the clause:

"...a parent or guardian [shall] provide opportunities for education to his child or, as the case may be, ward between the age of six and fourteen years."

The bill was passed unanimously in both Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha in 2001 and 2002. After the approval by the President of India, it became the 86th amendment. Since then those between the age of 6–14 have a fundamental right to education.

Passage of Bill and implementation

A draft Education Bill was released in 2005. It received opposition, as it contained a mandatory provision of 25% reservation for disadvantaged children in private schools. Both the Houses passed this Bill in July and August 2009 and President approved this bill in Sep 2009. This historic law came into effect on 1st April 2010 with a speech by the Prime Minister of India.

By K Srinivasan, Editor in Chief, PreSense

Source: July 2010 issue of PreSense

The Ado about Article 370

The Minister of State in the Prime Minister's Office (PMO), Jitendra Singh stirred up a controversy recently by talking about initiating a debate on Article 370 of the Indian Constitution, which grants special status to the northernmost state of Jammu and Kashmir. This seemingly off-the-cuff comment has fuelled a debate on the sensitive subject, both in the media and on political platforms.

It may be recalled that when the Bharatiya Janata Party held its rally in Jammu during December 2013, its then prime ministerial candidate, Narendra Modi, had called for a debate on Article 370.

All About Article 370

What Is Article 370?

EXCEPT FOR DEFENCE, foreign affairs, communications and matters specified in the Instrument of Accession of J&K, Indian Parliament needs the concurrence of the J&K Government for applying all other laws.

ARTICLE 370, HENCE, GRANTS SPECIAL STATUS TO JAMMU AND KASHMIR, A SEPARATE CONSTITUTION AND PENAL CODE

Can It Be Abrogated?

IT IS NOT POSSIBLE FOR THE CENTRE TO REVOKE ARTICLE 370 WITHOUT CONCURRENCE OF THE J&K ASSEMBLY

THE PRESIDENT can declare that Article 370 ceases to be operative or shall be operative with exceptions and modifications -

BUT for this, the President will need a recommendation from the Assembly of J&K

WITH NATIONAL CONFERENCE AND PDP AGAINST THE MOVE, SUCH A RECOMMENDATION CANNOT BE OBTAINED

WHY IS BJP AGAINST IT?

BJP AND ITS former avatar, the Jan Sangh has opposed this special status for the state. It believes that Article 370 has prevented J&K's complete integration with the rest of the country

IN ITS MANIFESTO for 2014 elections, BJP has said it will discuss Article 370 with all stakeholders and remains committed to abrogation of this Article

Graphics courtesy: Economic Times

Reasons for Article 370

It is pertinent to know the genesis of, and understand the reason for Article 370. When India and Pakistan gained their national independence on August 15 and 14, 1947 respectively, Jammu & Kashmir chose to remain independent. Maharaja Hari Singh, the

then ruler of Jammu & Kashmir, signed a standstill agreement with Pakistan. India refused to sign any such agreement. In October, 1947, Pakistani Muslim tribes attacked the Maharaja and the people of Jammu and Kashmir.

To save his state from invasion, the Maharaja chose to accede Jammu & Kashmir to India, so that India could help in defending him. It was in the pursuance of those commitments that Article 370 was incorporated under Part XXI of the Constitution of India, which deals with "Temporary, Transitional and Special Provisions". Article 370 was worked out in late 1947 between Sheikh Abdullah, who had by then been appointed the Prime Minister of Jammu & Kashmir by Maharaja Hari Singh, and the then Prime Minister of India, Jawaharlal Nehru. Interestingly, Sheikh Abdullah had then argued that Article 370 should not be placed under 'temporary' provisions of the Constitution. He wanted 'iron-clad autonomy' for the state, which Centre did not comply with.

Dr Ambedkar opposed this Article 370 and refused to draft the article

It is interesting to note that Dr Ambedkar, the architect of Indian Constitution, refused to draft this Article 370 and it was drafted by Mr Gopalaswami Iyengar a State Minister. Dr Ambedkar is reported to have told Sheikh Abdullah, *"You wish India should protect your borders, she should build roads in your area, she should supply you food grains, and Kashmir should get equal status as India. But the Government of India should have only limited powers and the Indian people should have no rights in Kashmir. To give consent to this proposal, would be a treacherous thing against the interests of India and I, as the Law Minister of India, will never do it "* (Ref: wikipedia.org)

Implications of Article 370 on India and J&K

Article 370 was intended to provide space, in matters of governance, to the people of a state who felt deeply vulnerable about their identity and insecure about their future. The state of Jammu & Kashmir was thus accorded special autonomous status.

All the provisions of the Constitution which are applicable to other states are not applicable to Jammu & Kashmir.

For example, till 1965, Jammu & Kashmir had a *Sadr-e-Riyasat* for Governor and a Prime Minister in place of Chief Minister. Besides, except for defence, foreign affairs, finance and communications, the Parliament needs the State Government's concurrence for applying all other laws. Thus the state's residents live under a separate set of laws, including those related to citizenship, ownership of property, and fundamental rights, as compared to other Indians. Indian citizens from other states cannot purchase land or property in Jammu & Kashmir.

Under Article 370, the Centre has no power to declare financial emergency under Article 360 in the state. It can declare emergency in the state only in case of war or external aggression. The Union Government can therefore not declare emergency on grounds of internal disturbance or imminent danger unless it is made at the request or with the concurrence of the State Government.

Article 370 was included in the Constitution on a temporary provision and should have been gradually abrogated. This has not happened in the past sixty years. One asks why a state of the Indian Union should have a special status. It conveys a wrong signal not only to the resident Kashmiris but also to the separatists, to Pakistan and indeed to the international community that Jammu & Kashmir is yet to become an integral part of India. One is convinced that Article 370 has done little to integrate the state of Jammu and Kashmir with the rest of India.

Is it possible to revoke Article 370?

Can Article 370 be revoked unilaterally? Clause 3 of Article 370 states that the President of India may, by public notification, declare that this Article shall cease to be operative, but only on the recommendation of the Constituent Assembly of the State. In other words, Article 370 can be revoked only if the Constituent Assembly of Jammu and Kashmir is convened and is willing to recommend its revocation.

The Parliament has the power to amend the Constitution to change this provision. But this could be subject to a judicial review which may find that this clause is a basic feature of the relationship between the State and the Centre, and hence not for review by it.

As one of the most debated and discussed articles of the Constitution, Modi's suggestion of a debate, followed by Jitender Singh's reiteration, has brought the issue of this provision in the limelight once again.

To read full text of Article 370 of the Indian Constitution, please visit

http://www.jammu-kashmir.com/documents/jk_art370.html

by Susan Koshy, Editor

Source: May 2014 issue of PreSense

The Economic Makeover of India – 1991 Economic Liberalisation Policy

July 24, 1991 is a landmark date in the history of the Indian economy. India instituted a series of economic reforms known as the Economic Liberalisation Policy of 1991. This happened at a time when India was at the brink of economic collapse and a severe balance of payments (payments for export and import of goods, services and capital) crisis. The country was unable to pay off essential imports, and had to borrow heavily from external sources to finance the resulting deficits. Inflation was rampant.

There were several other factors that contributed to this unwelcome state, tracing down from the early post-independence era. India drove a centralised economic planning model (inspired by the Soviet Union), in place of distributing controls.

A natural outcome of this policy was extensive bureaucracy, red tape, unnecessary regulations and trade barriers. Although these socialist reform measures were meant to alleviate poverty, the opposite happened. India faced food shortages and mass starvation; farmers struggled to meet the agricultural production needs and industrialists suffered from the grip of the *License Raj* (Government control). The state intervened in industrialisation, businesses, labour sectors and the financial markets, leading to a huge public sector. Since independence, India had only been able to maintain a growth rate of 3-3.5%; the capital growth rate was even worse, at around 1.3%. It compared poorly even among some of the other developing countries with similar independence timelines.

The wars of 1962, 1965 and 1971 drove up the defence spending, causing further strain to the economy. India also relied on import for some essentials as oil. India dealt with the deficit in the worst possible way - borrowing from external sources to finance the deficit. During 1980-1985, half of India's external financing needs were met with outside assistance. External debt grew to as much as 38.7% of the GDP in 1991-1992, culminating in the Balance of Payments crisis. The then Prime Minister had to pawn India's gold as collateral for IMF (International Monetary Fund) bailouts.

With just three weeks left to completely depleting the last loan from IMF, Narasimha Rao took over as India's Prime Minister and announced India's Economic Liberalisation Policy. He appointed Dr Manmohan Singh as Finance Minister. The goal of his visionary policy was to remove unnecessary bureaucratic controls, take measures to integrate India with the world economy, remove restrictions on foreign investments and crack down on public sector enterprises that yielded very low returns. The Indian Rupee was devalued. Industrial licensing was abolished. The Monopolies and Restrictive Trade Practices (MRTP) Act (that protected businesses from monopolies) was reformed, enabling competitive and productive industries. All industries (barring two) were opened to the private sector. There was gradual reduction of import duties, encouraging foreign investments to flow in. More clearance was given to capital goods. Taxes (income and corporate taxes) were lowered.

How much has India changed as fallout of the 'makeover' of 1991? India's GDP which was Rs.10.8 lakh crore (10.8 trillion) in 1991 quadrupled by 2011 with GDP at Rs.48.8 lakh crore (48.8 trillion); its forex reserves rose from USD5.8 billion in 1991 to USD274 billion in 2011. India boasts of exports' surge from USD 18 billion in 1991 to USD 245 billion in 2011.



Architects of 1991 Economic Liberalisation Policy: P V Narasimha Rao (Prime Minister) and Dr Manmohan Singh (Finance Minister) in 1994

It is pertinent to mention here that as per the principle of economics, when a particular sector performs disproportionately higher than the average growth rate, economic wealth starts concentrating in that sector. In the case of India, it is the service sector. Within this sector, the highest growth is marked by sectors such as financial services and real estate services, etc. which are least employment elastic. Consequently, growth in the past decade in India was

limited to upscale areas of the country as almost the entire service industry operates from these areas. This accelerated migration to urban areas, creating an array of social problems associated with urbanisation. It also changed the pattern and lifestyles of the Indian society. Now we have the ultra-modern and the ultra-primitive societies co-existing and conflicting with each other.

What we have learnt from the past 25 years is that unless we have a crisis, we might not see big bang reforms. We may have incremental reforms that are politically palatable. The present Prime Minister appears to be focusing on fixing some of the architecture that is required for long-term positive change – making government accountable, clamping down on corruption and stimulating entrepreneurship and, hopefully, developing the much-needed infrastructure.

Time will tell how and where India will be propelled towards, in the next 25 years under the present and future legacy. The people of India are hopeful that it would be towards a more balanced and healthier economy that ultimately benefits the common man on the streets of India and the farmers in the fields of its rural landscape. For this, there needs to be inclusive participation of both the government and the entrepreneur, especially in the implementation of the roadmap towards India's development and progress.

By Susan Koshy, Editor

Source : July 2016 issue of PreSense

US Government Shutdown – What It Means?

The expression “When America sneezes, the rest of the world catches a cold” was probably coined as an adage during the cold war days (beginning in the '60s) to imply that if the US foreign policy or its economy or its international trade took a tail spin, it would impact the world globally, since America has dominated foreign policy and world trade for decades.

So, when the US shutdown happened in mid-January this year (2018), the world shuddered as it did during the Lehman Brothers' collapse that triggered the global recession. But thankfully, it has remained an internal situation.

What is US Shutdown?

First, let us understand what the US shutdown is, and what it means domestically to that country. To understand it better, let us first understand the policy closer home in India. Here, when a ruling party government fails to pass a money bill, particularly the budget, to allocate money to different sectors and to appropriate salaries to government employees in the lower house of the Parliament, the government falls and the election process is set in motion for a new government to come out with a new budget. In the interim, the caretaker government adopts a 'Vote on Account' with the support of the opposition, to draw monies from the treasury to pay out. India follows the British model of bicameral legislature and legislative proceedings, which have enough built-in safeguards.

USA follows a presidential form of government where there is the Congress and the Senate, with the President as the final authority. But his authority can be questioned and at times, he can be impeached by the Congress.

A government shutdown occurs in USA when the Congress fails to pass and/or the President fails to sign the appropriation bill – the legislation funding government and agencies. In such a case, interpretation of the Anti-Deficiency Act requires that the federal government begin a "shutdown" of the affected activities, involving

the furlough (*i.e. placing an employee in a temporary non-duty, non-pay status, in this case because of lack of funds*) of non-essential personnel, and curtailment of agency activities and services.

In the Past

Since 1976, when the current budget and appropriations process was enacted, there has been 19 gaps in budget funding, eight of which led to federal employees being furloughed. Prior to 1990, funding gaps did not always lead to government shutdowns, but since 1990, the practice has been to shut down the government for all funding gaps. Shutdowns have also occurred at the state/territorial and local levels of government.

Under President Ronald Reagan’s administration, there were three funding gaps leading to shutdowns lasting one day or less. A funding gap in 1990 during the George H W Bush administration caused a weekend shutdown. During the Bill Clinton administration, there were two full government shutdowns leading to furloughs and significant disruption, during 1995 and 1996, lasting 5 and 21 days respectively. During the Barack Obama administration, a government shutdown occurred during October 1–16, 2013. The Republicans’ desire to delay or defund the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act, more popularly known as Obamacare, brought out by then Democrat President Obama, led to the shutdown.

Why the Present Crisis?

How US Senate voted for closure (60 votes needed for pass) on 18th Jan 2018

Party	Voted for	Voted against	Not voted
Republican (51)	45	5	1
Democratic (47)	5	42	
Independent (2)		2	
Total (100)	50	49	1

Therefore, the recent US government shutdown under President Donald Trump during January 20-23, 2018, was not a new phenomenon (though it was the first since October 2013). It is just history repeating itself. Differences between the Democrats and the Trump-led Republican regime over the passage of an amended Immigration Bill led to a tussle between the two parties with the Democrats adopting filibustering action, blocking the passage of the Bill and preventing the House from adopting the appropriation bills to sanction money to government departments.

Essential services are normally exempted, so they continue in service, but they would not be paid until the shutdown ends. Essential services would include, for example, the armed service personnel as well as the federal government employees, some of whom would still be required to report to work but would not be paid until the government reopens.

Government shutdowns have the effect of disruption to government services and increased cost to the government due to lost labour. During the 2013 shutdown, Standard & Poor, the financial rating agency, estimated that that the shutdown had "to date taken \$24 billion out of the economy," and "shaved at least 0.6 percent off annualized fourth-quarter 2013 GDP growth." The shutdown in October 2013 lasted more than two weeks and more than 800,000 federal employees were furloughed. There is no official tally on how many were off work this time.

Will It Affect India?

Does or did the American shutdown affect India in any way? Here is the take. Indian shipments to the U.S. are likely to get affected following the shutdown of that country's Federal Government, exporters claimed. "The shutdown of the U.S. Federal Government is certainly bad news for the Indian exporters since the American economy is among the largest destinations for (India's) exports," Ravi P Sehgal, chairman, EEPC India — the apex body for Indian engineering exporters, was quoted in the media as saying.

"For the (India's) engineering sector, the U.S. is the number one export destination, giving a robust growth in the current financial

year. During the April-December period of the current fiscal, (India's) engineering exports to the U.S. grew by over 50% to \$7.5 billion," Sehgal said in a statement. With as many as 60,000 employees of the U.S. Commerce and Transportation Departments being furloughed, port operations as also the clearing (of shipments) would be hit, he said.

Global Reaction

While the shutdown at the time of writing was almost resolved, the Republican administration was bracing itself for another potential shutdown in February 2018 as Democrats are in no mood to allow the Trump-led administration to conduct government business unless their demands are conceded to. Of particular concern for the Democrats over the Immigration Bill, is the fate of 700,000 children who had migrated to USA over the last decade, and Republicans worry of legalising illegal entry and incurring the wrath of the voters.

The American shutdown did not impact global business as feared but drew criticism from some European and Asian countries such as Britain, France and China. Even Mexican newspapers criticised the shutdown as an inherent defect in American style of governance. The French media criticised it. China was the first to react, calling the American political system flawed.

Anyway, the latest American shutdown has drawn more global attention than ever before because of antipathy from most countries to President Donald Trump Administration's 'America First' Policy construed as an action of protectionism. The policy was criticised by Indian Prime Minister, Narendra Modi recently at the WEF (World Economic Forum) meet at Davos in Switzerland. China too supported India in the criticism. Modi said that protectionism in a global village was as bad as terrorism.

By T.N.Ashok, Consulting Editor

Source : Jan 2018 issue of PreSense

Ethics in Politics – Role Model in Canada



The Parliament of Canada

When we talk about politics, the clichés that most often go with the word, are 'dirty' and 'corrupt'. Politics and politicians as well as the Government most often mean power, where "power corrupts, and absolute power corrupts absolutely". And this is a universal impression.

Against this background, when the PreSense Editorial Team met up with Mr Ranjith Narayanasamy, a political volunteer from Canada and discussed about the quality of politics in Canada, the information shared by him was enlightening. Ranjith is a registered Professional Engineer who has also been associated with several political campaigns in Canada over the past decade at federal, provincial and municipal levels. Ranjith shared about how Canadian politics is transparent and how Canadian politicians hold the highest level of dedicated service and integrity in their public life through its open and transparent political system. He highlighted the following points that have facilitated the practice of integrity and high standards of morale in public servants of Canada:

- 1) A professional and non-partisan federal public civil service is an integral part of the Canadian democracy. Civil service is

professionally run and is not just government appointments. The civil servants do not change with change of the government.

2) Civil servants follow a high legal and ethical standards. Over the past century, this practice has become ingrained in the Canadian political culture.

3) All expenses of the Members of Parliament (MPs) and Members of the Legislative Assembly (MLAs) are in the public domain and under scrutiny all the time. If any expense is deemed inappropriate as public expense, the MP, the MLA or the minister is asked to reimburse those expenses to the public coffer.

4) The control/monitoring system followed in the Canadian political system to ensure that high standards of integrity and morale are followed is the *Open and Accountable Government*. It sets out core principles regarding the roles and the responsibilities of the ministers in Canada's system of responsible parliamentary government.

5) On the critical issue of ethical conduct, the ministers are expected to be thoroughly familiar with and adhere to the contents of the *Conflict of Interest Act*.

6) The Conflict of Interest Bill also provides for an annual declaration of the private interests of senators, Members of the House of Commons, their spouses and dependent children to an independent three-member Conflict of Interests Commission. Penalty for non-compliance ranges from fines to loss of the Member's or Senator's seat.

7) Canada has an independent Ethics Commissioner who can provide advice to the Members of Parliament and is also enabled to adjudicate alleged breaches of ethics.

8) The Canadian Elections Body which oversees all federal elections, is also empowered to receive information and impose penalties for breaches of conduct and transgressions that do not conform to the Elections Act.

9) The *Parliament of Canada Act* prohibits a member from receiving outside compensation for services rendered on any matter before the House, the Senate or their committees. Pursuant to that Act, a Member found guilty of such an offence is liable to a fine and is disqualified from being a Member of the House of Commons and from holding any office in the public service of Canada for five years after conviction for that offence. In addition, the *Criminal Code* provides for 14 years' imprisonment for a parliamentarian who accepts or attempts to obtain any form of valuable consideration for doing or omitting to do anything in his or her official capacity.



Ranjith Narayanasamy

10) The corruption issues are addressed by dedicated committees appointed for the purpose and the process is followed ethically.

11) The public has access to full disclosure on any public issue. The Freedom of Information Act is very powerful in Canada.

When asked if India could learn from Canada, and aspire for a corruption-free system, Ranjith believed that India could learn lessons from Canada, especially about an inclusive society, accommodating diversity with open arms. In Canada, every citizen is equally eligible for similar services irrespective of their caste, creed, religion or economic background. There is no queue-jumping or special privileges in its government system. Ranjith feels that the real key is to encourage the media to look for corruption.

The Indian public has to be educated to realise that corruption leads to poor decisions. Once corruption is seen as unacceptable by a majority of the voters, change becomes easier. If corruption is accepted as a "normal" way of doing business, it is hard to implement a major change. Incidentally, Ranjith observes that in Canada, most of the leaders are young and university-educated. All candidates seeking political office at any level of government

have to understand the law and rules around election funding and personal integrity.

In conclusion, when one compares the political, social and legal provisions of India with Canada, one will find that India is equally well-equipped in its legislatures, norms, rules and penalties to deter corruption. If corruption persists in spite of it, the lacuna is in the lack of intent among its public and government servants. Proper education of the majority of its people is also critical so that they can understand the implication of the election system and governance, their impact on the masses, and their role and responsibility in making it work. Success in transforming India into a corruption-free country and society can happen only if there is an equally strong positive intent, implementation and practice of the standards and norms spelt out in the legislatures, laws and rules of the country.

by Susan Koshy, Editor-in-Chief

Source: March 2018 issue of PreSense

CSR Taking Wings in India



The passing of Companies Act, 2013 in a way acted as a bridge between companies and communities in need, in India. This landmark Act benefitted millions who were in need and mustered Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) as an industry in itself.

Although it is a mandatory expense on the part of corporates, they do not complain. Today, we see many corporates in the country coming forward to help communities in need. The companies which are eligible to do CSR are enthusiastically creating their own CSR structure and developing their own plans to benefit the society.

The important point to note here is that the companies should strictly undertake their CSR activities as prescribed under the Companies Act, 2013. There were many cases where the good work done by certain companies to help the needy communities was not considered as CSR as it did not fall under the purview of Companies Act, 2013.

CSR is not just about giving donations or performing charity after making profits. It is about companies doing their business in a responsible manner. It is about giving back to the society, protecting the environment and leaving a footprint for the next generation, to lead a peaceful life.

According to Companies Act 2013, CSR is mandatory for all corporates having a turnover of Rupees 500 crores (5 billion) or more, Rupees 1000 crores (10 billion) of investment or Rupees 5 crores (50 million) net profit, ie. profit after taxes. Eligible companies should spend 2% of their net profit on CSR. It is applicable to listed, public and private limited companies and also public sector undertakings.

Companies should constitute a committee consisting of three directors of the Board, (out of which one should be an independent director). CSR implementation should be reported to the statutory authority in a format called Business Responsibility Report (BRR). This document is to be attached as annexure to the annual report for circulation to all stakeholders and posted on the company's website.

For the Greater Good

A Formal Framework for Social Spending by Corporates

WHEN From April 1, 2014	WHO Companies with net worth of over ₹500 crore or turnover of over ₹1,000 crore or net profit of over ₹5 crore	WHERE CSR activities will have to be within India
HOW MUCH 2% of average profit of previous three years Profits from overseas branches and dividends from other cos not included in net profit for calculation	Foreign cos registered in India included	

In terms of Sec 135 Schedule 7 of Companies Act 2013, there are several categories to do CSR. Activities which fall under the CSR purview under the Act are Promotion of Education, Eradication of Extreme Hunger and Poverty, Gender Equality and Women Empowerment, Reducing Child Mortality and Improving Maternal Health, Combating HIV-AIDS, Malaria and Other Diseases, Environmental Sustainability, Social Business Projects, Contribution to Prime Minister's Relief Fund and Other Such State and Central Funds, Employment Enhancing Vocational Skills, and such other matters as may be prescribed.

There was a marked increase in the average CSR expenditure by the firms in 2012-13 after the passing of the section regarding CSR in the Companies Act in August 2013.

The passing of the Act also led to a steep rise in the number of firms disclosing their CSR expenditure. In 2010-11, 336 firms disclosed their donations and expenditure on community and environment related activities. This number rose to 504 in 2011-12, and to 1,470 in 2012-13.

In 2012-13, 760 firms had crossed the threshold of Rupees 5 crore net profit, but their total CSR contribution was lesser than the 2% criterion as laid down by the Act. The total CSR spending by firms was Rupees 33,668 million, when the required spending was Rupees 45,154 million.

There are stringent penalties for companies not disclosing their CSR spends. Companies can be fined a sum not less than Rupees 50,000 and up to Rupees 25 lakh (2.5 million). Company officials who default can face imprisonment which can go up to three years or be fined from Rupees 50,000 to Rupees 5 lakh (500,000).

NGOs can help corporates which do not have their own CSR Team and Foundation, to execute CSR projects. NGOs can act as an implementing partner or form a consortium of agencies.

The corporates themselves can undertake CSR by registering a separate company under Sec 8 of Companies Act 2013 to take up the CSR activities. The amount should be spent fully in the

succeeding financial year and it cannot be carried over. Any income generated should be used for the CSR activity itself.

Penalty will be levied to the companies if they do not spend the amount and if the reasons thereof are not valid. If NGOs misuse the funds, the corporate can take legal action against the NGO.



I have requested the corporates to evolve plans under corporate social responsibility to build clean toilets specially for girl students in schools. India should learn from foreign countries, where people are disciplined and do not litter in public places.

— Narendra Modi —

CSR Obligations for MNCs

Multi-national companies (MNCs), operating in special economic zones, are exempted. If the MNCs have any holding company in India and if the holding companies operate in foreign countries, profits arising out of those locations are exempted.

Global Scenario

France, Denmark, South Africa and China have a mandatory reporting obligation on the amount spent on CSR activities. The United Nations has a significant role to play in the universal acceptance of the idea of CSR, with their promotion of the “Global Compact” to which various countries are signatories.

This global compact binds the signatories to universally accepted principles of social responsibility which the businesses in those countries ought to follow and which are tracked for implementation.

***By Sakthi Prasanna, Guest Writer,
with inputs from Mr. V N Premanand, Joint Secretary and
Faculty, Institute of Directors, Chennai Regional Office***

The US-China Tariff War



(Source of Image: Times Now)

News of a trade war between the American President, Donald Trump and the Chinese President, Xi Jinping has been doing the rounds in the media, especially in the past few months. Trump has been alleging unfair trade balances between USA and China, and in his attempt to fix China's "long-time abuse of the broken international system and unfair practices" as promised in his election campaign, has imposed higher tariff on Chinese imports to dissuade importers from the Chinese market, while Xi has retaliated with corresponding hikes in the US goods for China.

Recently, when the Japanese Foreign Minister appealed to the two countries to resolve the issue through negotiations instead of retaliatory actions, he also expressed the concern that besides the economies of the two countries, it was bound to impact other countries too. This statement has aroused curiosity among the onlooking people, about what this unusual warfare was about and

what its background and implications were. Your e-magazine, PreSense has attempted to bring about some clarity about the contentious issue in the following article, for the benefit of its readers.

The Bigger Picture?

The total business from China to US is US\$505 billion, while that from US to China is US\$127 billion. US is therefore the net importer by a great margin. US wants equal trade balance between the two countries. This might not be a feasible expectation as the types of products imported and exported between the two countries are different and essential for the respective countries. While US wants China to change its business model, it is believed that it is concerned about a more contentious issue - US wants China to respect intellectual property rights. In March this year, Trump accused the Chinese government of stealing intellectual property by forcing American companies to share their valuable secrets and sign joint venture agreements with local firms if they wanted to operate in China. The intellectual property rights in China are poor. Much of the technology US gives China is duplicated by China and sold back to US and to other countries at cheaper rates. Therefore, any product can be pirated/duplicated and in Hong Kong and Taiwan, any product is duplicated in 6 hours. US fears that in 5 years, with the well-trained personnel in China, China might take over the world trade in a dominant way.

Another matter of concern for US is the 'Made in China 2025', which is a strategic plan of China issued by Chinese Premier Li Keqiang and his cabinet in May 2015 in an attempt to move the country's manufacturing up the value chain and become a major manufacturing power with 40% of the world goods and 45% of the world business for itself, in direct competition with the United States.

China's One Belt, One Road



The Chinese President, Xi Jinping has proposed a major global project called the One Belt One Road (OBOR), also known as the Belt and Road

Initiative (BRI). Its objective is to build trade routes between China and around 60 countries in Asia, Europe, Africa and Indo-Pacific littoral countries. China is thus hoping to become the gatekeeper for a new platform for international trade cooperation and integration.

The Tariff War

Coming back to the tariff war, in March 2018, Trump imposed a 25% duty on steel and 10% duty on aluminium imported from China. These are infrastructure goods. By imposing a higher tariff on Chinese goods, local steel and aluminium (made in USA) becomes cheaper for purchase by the American buyers. While the long-term impact of this move is yet to be known, it is feared that any hiked tariff will increase consumer cost and weaken the demand. Whatever tariff is imposed by America will have to be borne by the American consumers, thus increasing the inflation while simultaneously decreasing the demand.

More goods have been included under revised tariff from September 24th 2018. China is retaliating by imposing increased tariff on American imports. And the war continues.

Thus, we find that protectionism is being re-introduced in the two countries. Since 1995, world organisations as WTO (World Trade Organisation) has been promoting globalisation and reduction of protectionism for the benefit of all the countries, from the global perspective. But in May 2018, World Bank itself had come out with the statement that globalisation was not working.

When we look back, we find that over the years, there has been a migration from communism, to socialism, to capitalism, to globalisation. State communism (state owning the assets) has lost its relevance, with the German Wall coming down and Russia disintegrating. The bipolar world has migrated into a unipolar world. Meanwhile, capitalism has gone in a big way, and one of the factors in capitalism, is rising inequality. It is reported that a few big houses (corporates) own most of the world's overall wealth. The aggregate wealth of these big houses is humungous when compared to the assets even of the State. With the current tariff war, are we now taking a re-look into a new model?

Economists across the world seem to suggest that globalisation is unsustainable. The best way to restrict globalisation is to restrict imports by imposing quotas in the quantum imported. But how far is this practical? For example, when a country manufactures a garment, it has to import the zip from Taiwan, which is the only country in the world manufacturing it. It would be impractical to stop these imports. Countries are therefore, bound to be interdependent, at least to a certain extent.

Trump's latest strategy with China is not as per the WTO (World Trade Organisation) norm, which has a Dispute Resolution Mechanism. The matter about steel is being sold at cheaper prices, could have been escalated with WTO to resolve. Trump has resorted to imposing corrective steps himself as promised by him in his election campaign to bring employment back to his American people. His latest move might create more employment in US in the short term but it is not expected to sustain in the long term.

Impact on India

While it remains to be seen how far the retaliatory tariffs between US and China will affect the other countries, it is bound to impact global growth and investments across borders. One possibility is that suppliers from across the world may dump their products into India (which is a large market), at lower prices because of the lowered global demand. This should benefit the importers. However, for the same reason, our exporters could face the brunt.

India's exports to USA is to the tune of US\$77 billion in the form of goods and especially of services, while its imports from USA is US\$50 billion. USA's protectionism especially in its visa policy is beginning to hit India adversely as Indians are finding it increasingly difficult to get their visas to work in USA. Even those already working in USA on projects as part of the services to USA, are not assured of renewed visas to continue working there. The current trade surplus that India enjoys with USA would then be hit.

For now, it is a watch-and-wait for the rest of the world as USA and China play out their respective moves in the current Game of Tariffs between them.

By Dr Prabhakar Krishnamurthy, Editorial Advisor
Source : Sep 2018 issue of PreSense

Why is the Judiciary Under Criticism?



Some recent judgements delivered by the Hon'ble Supreme Court of India has attracted unprecedented debates, not witnessed in the past. The social media is flooded with 'memes', teasing the judgements.

As per the 'Doctrine of Separation of Powers', the Legislature, the Executive and the Judiciary should maintain checks and balances, without overstepping into others' jurisdiction. People impose their faith on the judicial system as the saviour of last resort, when the other pillars of democracy fail to redress. That is the reason that people the world over, expect the judiciary to be beyond criticism.

A month ago, some judgements on nationally sensitive and important issues, were delivered by the Supreme Court. In the last decades, it was only the mainline media that used to comment or review the judgements of the courts, that too with restraint. With the emergence of the social media, people are posting their

reactions and comments about the judicial system and some of its rulings. This has increased the responsibility and prudence of the judicial system.

The recent judgement scrapping Indian Penal Code (IPC) Section 377, decriminalising homosexuality, though justifiable in the eyes of law, has attracted immense criticism in the public domain. Another important judgement scrapping IPC 497 has led to a peculiar situation, where if a married man has an illicit relationship with a married woman, it is legal, whereas if he marries her, it becomes illegal.

The recent Sabarimala Judgement scrapping the centuries-old religious practice of disallowing women inside the temple, has attracted protests in many parts of the country, particularly in the South. Similarly, the judgement restricting the window for bursting crackers for festivity to two hours, between 8 pm and 10 pm on Diwali festival day, has created confusion and dissent. In the South, Diwali is celebrated in the early hours of the morning from 4 am. It would be difficult for the police authorities to take action against the 'offenders', in the light of the revised judgement. Questions are being asked whether the judiciary can and should interfere about the methods of celebration of religious festivals.

In the case of the scrapping of IPC 377, the Supreme Court might have delivered the judgement to protect the rights of LGBT (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender). A majority of the public seems to feel that the Supreme Court is being influenced by media hype and the sensation aroused by a handful of activists promoting views and ideas from the western world.

People are also questioning the wisdom of the judges who deliver a series of judgements just before their retirement on superannuation, though they were pending for a long time. This appears to be the case with all the judges in India. Some senior advocates explain that it is due to the long pendency of litigations, and the fact that the judge who has once heard and reserved the judgement, has to deliver the judgement. If it is not delivered, it leads to further dislocation. Therefore, long pendency of litigations seems to be the cause of the last-minute rush to clear cases.

In the case of retiring bank chairmen, powers for taking important decisions which have far-reaching consequences, are withdrawn from them three months before their retirement. A similar model can be considered for adoption by the courts in India. Judges could thus be prevented from delivering judgements which have far-reaching consequences, on the eve of their retirement. They should not be pressurised to prepare the judgements in the last leg of their term, to be delivered just before retirement.

Although the Supreme Court has clear guidelines about allocation of cases, it is understood that due to various reasons like long pendency of cases, and shortage of judges, such guidelines are not being implemented effectively. Recent media reports indicate that the new Chief Justice of India is viewing the issue of long pendency seriously and is taking steps to reduce last minute rush. He has advised all the judges across the country to avoid taking leave or availing the Leave Travel Concession (LTC) facility, or attending seminars during the working days, so that they can tackle the long list of pendency of cases in the courts.

It is strongly felt that courts should stay away from sensitive issues such as religious practices. In the case of *Jallikattu* (a bull-taming sports festival in Tamil Nadu), the Supreme Court faced a similar problem when it banned the sport, going against popular sentiments. Such judgements create law and order issues. The Supreme Court has the responsibility to ensure that the law and order situation is not threatened by their own judgements, and not expect just the State Government to ensure law and order in the fallout of the judgements.

Sabarimala is a cult by itself. The Supreme Court judgement has stirred an hornets' nest with political and communal ramifications. Many people in South India feel that the Supreme Court should not have intervened in the matter of the centuries old religious practice, when many other more important and critical cases are pending for judgements. It was strongly opined that people who are familiar with the local socio-religious practices in Kerala, should have been consulted. This would have helped in avoiding the unwanted debate and apprehension in the minds of the public

about the sensitive matter, leading to outburst of criticisms in the social media.

There is a feeling among the public that there should be 'judicial restraint' and not 'judicial over reach' under the guise of public interest litigation. Courts should examine the *locus standi* of the person or the association filing the litigation, especially if it has emotional and sentimental overtones. In this case of Sabarimala, the case was filed by an association of people, neither associated with nor devotees of the Sabarimala temple.

The temple is meant for worship by believers and those having faith in the deity. It cannot be treated as a tourist spot. All over India, every temple has its own worshipping methods and practices. Courts should refrain from admitting and passing judgements on cases involving traditional 'religious faith', whether such practices are legal or not.

by K Srinivasan, Publisher and Mg. Editor
Source : Oct 2018 issue of PreSense

Lessons from the National Disasters



The Gaja Cyclone that occurred in early November 2018, devastated six districts of the Delta Region of Tamil Nadu State, leaving lakhs of people homeless. The Delta Region of Tamil Nadu, known as the 'granary of South India', is in shambles. Innumerable trees, including coconut trees that provided livelihood to families, have been uprooted. Around 3.5 lakh houses have been completely damaged. Nearly 5,000 cattle have been lost. Many boats of fishermen have been destroyed, depriving them of their sole means of livelihood. It is estimated that it would take 5 to 10 years for the people to return to normal life. More than 1 lakh electric poles have been damaged, causing disruption in power supply for 10 days.

Fortunately, loss of life was minimal due to preventive measures taken by the Tamil Nadu Government. A team from the Central Government has assessed the intense damage caused in the Delta Region. A study by the Anna University estimates the damage caused to the Delta Region as greater than that caused by Tsunami in 2004.

Sadly, in spite of the huge devastation of the fertile Delta Region, the national media has not focused enough on this catastrophe in their news coverage. These national channels seem to find some less critical issues occurring in and around Delhi, more important than that about the affected Delta Region. Is it necessary to remind them that India extends down south upto Kanyakumari?

During the past four months, India faced severe disasters in the states of Kerala, Odisha, Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu. In the Kerala floods, loss of life rose to 500. In the Titli Cyclone in Odisha and Andhra Pradesh, around 100 people lost their lives. In the recent Gaja Cyclone, Tamil Nadu lost around 65 lives. In all the three disasters, there was huge loss and damage to property and livelihood.



The State Disaster Management Authorities in these states faced challenges in anticipating and managing the disasters, due to lack of impact-based actionable early warning information. The Authorities also faced challenges due to the non-cooperation of some of the affected people, who refused to be evacuated because they did not want to leave their properties. This bad decision had even cost some of them their lives.

The Central and State Governments need to study these disasters and the lessons from them in order to avoid or at least reduce the impact of such damages in future.

1. Although the Disaster Management Act 2005 emphasises regular training of the officials and the people to prepare them for such disasters, it is not done earnestly and effectively. The training is carried out more as a matter of routine and for the record.
2. Floods and cyclones have become especially catastrophic because of the destruction of nature by the society. The Kerala floods is attributed to deforestation and poor maintenance of the Western Ghats. In Tamil Nadu, filling of lakes and ponds for construction of real estate, destruction of trees, and the removal of sand from the rivers have caused the intense damage.
3. Village *panchayats* and local bodies form the backbone of democracy in India. There is no *panchayat* or local body in Tamil Nadu as elections for those posts have not been held for the past two years. This absence of local body leaders created many difficulties during the evacuation and rehabilitation exercise.

PreSense appeals to the Members of Parliament to raise this critical issue of recurrent national disasters and their disaster management, during the Winter Session of the Parliament, and formulate guidelines to manage such disasters effectively in future.

by K Srinivasan, Publisher and Mg. Editor

Source : Nov 2018 issue of PreSense

10th Edition of Sansad Ratna Awards



Sansad Ratna 2019 Awardees

Sitting: L to R – Dr Veerappa Moily, T S Krishnamurthy, Hon'ble Governor of Tamil Nadu Sri Banwarilal Purohit, Bartruhari Mahtab, Ananda Bhaskar Rapolu

Standing: L to R – Nishikant Dubey, Rajani Patil, Dr Heena Gavitt, N K Premachandran, Rajeev Shankarrao Satav, Supriya Sule, Dhananjay Bhimrao Mahadik, Shrirang Appa Barne, Anurag Thakur

The 10th edition of the Sansad Ratna Awards was held at Durbar Hall in Raj Bhavan, Chennai in the afternoon of Saturday, 19th January, 2019. The chief guest for the occasion was Hon'ble Governor of Tamil Nadu, Shri Banwarilal Purohit. He was joined on stage by Shri T S Krishnamurthy, former Chief Election Commissioner of India, and Patron of the Sansad Ratna Awards Committee, Shri K Srinivasan, (Chairman, Prime Point Foundation, Founder, Sansad Ratna Awards, and Managing Editor, eMagazine PreSense), Shri Bhawanesh Deora, (President, Sansad Ratna Awards Committee), and Smt Susan Koshy, (Editor-in-Chief, eMagazine PreSense). Smt Sukruti Narayanan (Editorial Team Member of PreSense) was the Anchor for the afternoon and she guided the audience through the function.

The event commenced with the invocation song, *Thamizh Thai Vazhthu*. After felicitating the Hon'ble Governor and Shri Krishnamurthy with bouquets, Shri Srinivasan rendered his welcome address. He took the audience through the journey of the Sansad Ratna Awards, and enlightened them about the selection process for the Awards. He then submitted an ardent appeal to the Parliamentarians, requesting them to review the Education Loan Scheme and propose changes that would benefit the students who were the future of India.

The Sansad Ratna Awards Committee had received felicitations from several dignitaries, viz Hon'ble Vice-President of India, Shri Venkaiah Naidu, Hon'ble Speaker of Lok Sabha, Smt Sumitra Mahajan, Hon'ble Governor of Kerala, Justice (Retired) P Sathasivam, Hon'ble Governor of West Bengal, Shri Kesari Nath Tripathi, Hon'ble Governor of Mizoram, Shri Kummanam Rajasekharan and Hon'ble Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh, Yogi Adityanath. Smt Susan Koshy read out the felicitation messages to the audience.

Shri T S Krishnamurthy, in his address, shared his perspective about democracy and then appealed to the Parliamentarians to consider proposing elections reforms in their manifesto for the forthcoming elections, for the sake of democracy. He also submitted a suggestion for institution of *Nirvachan Ratna Award* in a similar format to that of the Sansad Ratna Awards, to recognise the outstanding officials doing yeomen service in election work.

The Hon'ble Governor then presented citations to Indian Institute of Technology Madras (IITM), Canara Bank, PRS India, Sathyabama Institute of Science & Technology, Dr P.Ganesan and Shri Triambak Sharma, in acknowledgement of their support to the initiatives of Prime Point Foundation, eMagazine PreSense and the Sansad Ratna Awards Committee over the years.



Dr Veerappa Moily, Chairman of Finance Committee receiving the Sansad Ratna Awards from Hon'ble Governor of Tamil Nadu Shri Banwarilal Purohit. The other Finance Committee Members joined him to receive the Award.

The outstanding performing Members of Parliament (MPs) were then invited on stage individually to be presented the Award by the Hon'ble Governor. They were felicitated with a *Ponnadai* (shawl) and a Citation, followed by a photo session with the Hon'ble Governor, to a standing ovation by the audience.

The Hon'ble Governor then presented his address, wherein he shared some advice and tips as well as his personal experience as Member of Parliament, with the Parliamentarians. He added a couple of anecdotes that were useful to Parliamentarians and political aspirants. The Governor urged the MPs to do their best to sustain the spirit of democracy and take the country forward.

Shri Bhawanesh Deora, President of the Sansad Ratna Awards Committee rendered the Vote of Thanks. The function concluded with the national anthem.

Honouring Supporting Organisations

Some organisations and individuals have been supporting our eMagazine PreSense and Sansad Ratna initiatives during the journey of 10 years. PreSense honoured them during the Sansad Ratna Awards 2019 event.



IIT Madras - Dr
Sudarsan
Padmanabhan



Sathyabama
University - Dr
Mariazeena Johnson



PRS Legislative
Research - Dr M R
Madhavan



Canara Bank - Abdul
Azeez



Dr. P Ganesan
(Sivakasi)



Triambak Sharma
(Cartoonist from
Raipur)

By Editorial Team

Source: Jan 2019 issue of PreSense

The Pulwama Attack – Enough is Enough

February 14 was a grieving day for India when 40 of our CRPF *jawans* fell to the fatal attack of terrorists in the district of Pulwama in our northernmost state of Kashmir. Even though such insurgency has been a constant threat and occurrence since the



Indian sub-continent split into India and Pakistan, the magnitude of the tragedy has left the entire country of citizens shell-shocked and shaken. Besides, the country was aghast to learn that this time, one of our own people – an Indian Kashmiri youth was the suicide bomber who killed our *jawans*. 'Cowardliness' and 'cruelty' seem inadequate to describe the horrendous action.

The issue of Kashmir has been the sore point of contention for the past over 70 years.

i) Right from 1947, the region has been in dispute even though the then ruling Maharaja of Kashmir had ceded the state to India under an Agreement, in lieu of India's military assistance to combat invaders, who crossed over from Pakistan. Pakistan

however, has neither acknowledged nor recognised this Agreement. Therefore, Kashmir for them, is a stake to be claimed by them on the basis of its prominent religion.

ii) Kashmir is currently governed by Articles 35A and 370 of the Indian Constitution, a provision intended as a temporary measure before absorbing the state wholly as part of India. This special provision has had emotional repercussions as the local Kashmiri residents continue to live in a state of mistaken identity and do not see themselves as belonging to India.

Militants who have vested interests in taking over Kashmir as well as disrupting the peace and unity of India, capitalise on this dispute and divided loyalties of the locals. They continue to bombard the place especially the bases of the military forces who protect the borders. These militant outfits also incite false emotional beliefs among the locals, especially the gullible youth. It is no secret which country in the neighbourhood has been backing and protecting these malicious intentions and militants in their missions.

So far, there has been a 'blow hot, blow cold' approach between the two countries. The selfish and short-termed political ambitions of our local leaders help little in any attempt to end the volatile state of affairs at the northern borders and state. Any pursuit to resolve through diplomacy and patience is only emboldening the enemy quarters to challenge our country and our armed forces in cowardly acts of violence. It is also taking away more and more lives of our *jawans*, and disrupting the sovereign peace and stability in our country. India as a country, has to take a strong, firm and uncompromising policy stand on the issue of cross-border terrorism and its patronage by our unfriendly neighbourhood country. There should be no compromise or softening of stand or more talks and treaties to camouflage the actual intent.

Another crucial step is to set our own backyard right, even while taking care of our borders. In the latest attack in Pulwama, the suicide bomber is a local youth from Kashmir. This brings to the forefront a bitter truth. The breed of terrorists has become indigenous. The hardcore leaders and mentors of the terrorist outfits from across the border, had so far been exporting the breed

to India. Today, they have instituted secret outfits within the Indian state of Kashmir and groomed a new generation of terrorists from its local towns. Most of the youth in Kashmir today are unemployed, idle, misinformed and gullible to fanatic teachings based on false religious claims. The first step in correcting this situation is to bring the state of Kashmir under the sole governance of the Indian Constitution which is the legal and righteous step. In other words, Articles 35A and 370 of the Indian Constitution, have to be abolished immediately and Kashmir needs to be educated about where it belongs and where its patriotism should be. It may be remembered that Dr B R Ambedkar, the architect of Indian Constitution was against Article 370.

Kashmir has been enjoying all the benefits and support extended by India, at par with the other Indian states and more, without any reciprocal obligation or responsibility by Kashmir. When the state was in dire floods recently, it was the Indian military force that rescued the hapless and homeless to safety. The state continues to enjoy annual development funds, but the citizens from other states cannot enjoy the privileges from Kashmir, that Kashmiris enjoy from the rest of India. This injustice and discrimination must go.

The call of the hour is for politicians to rise above their individual differences and ambitions and unite to work on a permanent solution to this decades' long unrest. Let us start from the first essential and crucial step – abolish Articles 35A and 370 and bring Kashmir into the whole, rightful and unconditional governance of the Indian Constitution. Step two – united, we must work against the terror that has established itself in the state of Kashmir and annihilate it, so that our *jawans* can concentrate at the borders to curb the infiltrators and enemies of the state.

Step three would be annihilate the terrorists from just across the borders. Our efficient armed forces will take care of that, with a little help from our politicians and leaders by not interfering in the execution of their duties. It is good to find an encouraging start of

this initiative as our Air Force IAF attacked and destroyed the terrorists' camps that occupied hidden terrains across the borders.

by Susan Koshy, Editor-in-Chief

Source : Feb 2019 issue of PreSense

16th Lok Sabha – At a Glance



After completing the full term of five years, the 16th Lok Sabha concluded its final session on 13th February 2019. Although the media has carried a basic analysis of the performance of the 16th Lok Sabha the following morning, so far there has been no in-depth discussion about the performance of the Members. As the nation prepares for the 17th General Elections, it is pertinent at this juncture to analyse the performance of the 16th Lok Sabha vis-à-vis the earlier one, which was elected in 2014. PreSense attempts to bring out a quick review of the performance of the 16th Lok Sabha, in comparison to that of the 14th and 15th Lok Sabha.

Duties of Parliamentarians

- Enacting Laws
- Passing the Financial Budget
- Supervision of the Executive functions
- Representation of the issues of Constituency, State and Nation.

Tools Available in the Parliament

- Debates (Zero Hour, Rule No 377, Short duration discussion under Rule 193, calling attention motion, half an hour discussion, Financial business, debates during legislative business, private members bills, etc)
- Raising Questions
- Participation in Standing Committees

Uniqueness of 16th Lok Sabha

The 16th Lok Sabha has recorded some unique aspects during its tenure.

- Absolute majority by a single political party, after 1989;
- Online filing of notices by Members;
- Merger of Railway Budget with General Union Budget, after 91 years;
- Advancement of Budget presentation to 1st February, from 28th February;
- Passing of Budget proposals before the beginning of next financial year.

Productivity

Lok Sabha	Sittings	Actual working hours	Disruption	Productivity
14	332	1737	13%	87%
15	357	1342	39%	63%
16	331	1616	15%	85%

Data source: PRS Legislative Research / Lok Sabha site

- 16th Lok Sabha has shown improved productivity, compared to 15th Lok Sabha.

Members Participation

Parameter	14 Lok Sabha	15 Lok Sabha	16 Lok Sabha
Debates (D)	15324	18121	21196
Debates – Average per member	31	38	44
Private Members Bills (PMB)	309	372	1116
PMB – Average per member	0.6	0.8	2.3

Questions raised (QR)	89055	143635	142158
Questions – Average per member	179	300	292
Total Tally (D+PMB+QR)	104688	162126	164470
Total tally – Average per member	210	339	338
Average Attendance	70%	76%	80%

Data source: PRS Legislative Research

- There is a marked improvement in the participation by members in Debates, Private Members Bills and Attendance.
- Debates include both initiated debates and associated debates in the 14th and 15th Lok Sabha. The 16th Lok Sabha has shown a substantial increase in Associated Debates (Initiated Debates 21196 and Associated Debates 11166). We have taken only Initiated Debates for our analysis in this article)
- Ministers do not participate in debates, raise questions or introduce PMBs. They are excluded for calculating averages throughout this article.

Legislation

Standing Committee	Lok Sabha		
	14th	15th	16th
Bills introduced (Other than Finance and Appropriation Bills)	245	228	190
Bills referred to Standing Committee	147	157	39
Bills referred to JPC	1	0	5
Bills referred to RS Select Committee after passage by LS	0	4	8
Total Bills referred to Committee	148	161	52
Percentage of Bills referred	60%	71%	27%
<i>*Above Data does not include Finance and Appropriation Bills</i>			

Bills which were referred again during the subsequent Lok Sabha period have been included in the list for the same Lok Sabha period in which they were originally introduced and referred to avoid double counting.

	14th	15th	16th
Bills Introduced and Passed			
Finance and Appropriation Bills Introduced	74	63	47
Other Govt. Bills Introduced	245	228	190
Total Bills Introduced	319	291	237
Other Govt. Bills Passed	173	116	133
Finance and Appropriation Bills Passed	74	63	47
Total Bills Passed	247	179	180
Total Bills Lapsed	39	68	46

Data source: PRS Legislative Research

- 46 Bills got lapsed in 16th Lok Sabha as against 39 and 68 Bills in 14th and 15th Lok Sabha.
- Fewer number of Bills (i.e. 27%) were referred to Standing Committees during the 16th Lok Sabha as against 60 and 71 percent Bills respectively, referred in the 14th and 15th Lok Sabha.

Departmentally Related Standing Committees (DRSC) – Lok Sabha – 16 DRSCs

Lok Sabha	No. of Sitzings	Bills referred	Reports presented
14			627
15	1362	67	662
16	1343	17	720

Data source: Lok Sabha site

- There are 24 Departmentally Related Standing Committees in the Parliament (DRSCs). (16 relate to Lok Sabha and 8

relate to Rajya Sabha). Data for Rajya Sabha Committees is not available.

- Three important functions of DRSCs: (1) Discuss and report on policies (2) Scrutinise the budgetary proposals and (3) Scrutinise bills referred to the committees.
- During the 16th Lok Sabha, fewer number of bills were referred to DRSCs.

Performance of Members – State-wise

State	14 th Lok Sabha			15 th Lok Sabha			16 th Lok Sabha		
	No. of MPs	Total (D+ PMB+ QR)	Average per member	No. of MPs	Total (D+ PMB+ QR)	Average per member	No. of MPs	Total (D+ PMB+ QR)	Average per member
Maharashtra	45	14623	325	44	22222	505	48	28904	602
Kerala	19	5029	265	17	7694	452	21	10231	481
Tamil Nadu	29	5826	201	38	14713	387	38	18168	478
West Bengal	39	7449	191	43	7905	184	46	4996	109
National	498	104688	210	478	162128	339	486	164470	338

Data source: PRS Legislative Research

D-debates; PMB – Private Members Bills; QR – Questions raised

- Ministers excluded in the number of MPs.
- For 16th Lok Sabha, Initiated Debates only taken into account. Associated Debates excluded.
- Maharashtra and Kerala have consistently maintained their position as toppers amongst the States.
- Tamil Nadu has shown better participation in the 15th and 16th Lok Sabha as compared to the 14th Lok Sabha.

Performance of Members – Party-wise

Political Parties	14 th Lok Sabha			15 th Lok Sabha			16 th Lok Sabha		
	No. of MPs	Total (D+ PMB+ QR)	Average per member	No. of MPs	Total (D+ PMB+ QR)	Average per member	No. of MPs	Total (D+ PMB+ QR)	Average per member
Shiv Sena	12	5328	444	11	7793	709	17	12476	734
NCP	9	1696	188	7	2733	399	7	4271	610
BJP	131	27637	211	119	42404	356	264	74916	284
Congress (INC)	126	25085	199	177	49616	280	50	15968	319
CPI(M)	42	6554	156	16	4788	299	9	4333	481
AIADMK	-	-	-	9	4587	510	37	18106	489
DMK	10	1471	147	18	4431	246	-	-	-
CPI	10	3558	356	4	2004	501	1	451	451
AITC	1	32	32	20	1348	67	38	3597	94
National	498	104688	210	478	162128	339	486	164470	338

Data source: PRS Legislative Research

D-debates; PMB – Private Members Bills; QR – Questions raised

- Ministers excluded in the number of MPs.
- For 16th Lok Sabha, initiated debates only taken into account. Associated debates excluded.
- Shiv Sena has been the topper consistently.
- CPI(M) has shown better performance under Debates.
- Ministers excluded in the number of MPs.

Performance of Members – Age-wise

Age group	14 th Lok Sabha			15 th Lok Sabha			16 th Lok Sabha		
	No. of MPs	Total (D+ PMB+ QR) in lakhs	Average per member	No. of MPs	Total (D+ PMB+ QR) in lakhs	Average per member	No. of MPs	Total (D+ PMB+ QR) in lakhs	Average per member
Less than 45	90	0.18	184	80	0.29	362	83	0.28	343
46 to 60	219	0.51	232	232	0.74	320	217	0.74	343
61 & above	183	0.36	197	209	0.59	282	243	0.62	254
National	498	1.05	210	478	1.62	339	486	1.64	338

Data source: PRS Legislative Research

D-debates; PMB – Private Members Bills; QR – Questions raised

- For 16th Lok Sabha, Initiated Debates only taken into account. Associated Debates excluded.
- The younger members of less than 45 years of age have participated more in the 15th and 16th Lok Sabha.

(Ministers do not participate in the Debates, introduce Private Members Bills or raise Questions. They have been excluded from the analysis for this article).

Toppers

Lok Sabha	National Level toppers	
	Name of the MP	Total tally
14	Shri Anandrao Adsul	1290
	Shri S K Kharventhan	1287
15	Shri Anandrao Adsul	1304
	Shri S S Ramasubbu	1236
16	Smt. Supriya Sule	1321
	Shri Rajeev Satav	1255

Data source : PRS Legislative Research

Shri Anandrao Adsul (Shiv Sena) was the topper in the 14th and 15th Lok Sabha. He is a fifth time MP from Maharashtra. He is also the Chairman of the Sansad Ratna Awards Jury Committee, instituted by PreSense. He secured the 9th position in the 16th Lok Sabha in spite of various responsibilities shouldered by him.

Shri S K Kharventhan (Cong) and Shri S S Ramasubbu (Cong) who secured the second position in the 14th and 15th Lok Sabha, are from Tamil Nadu.

In the 16th Lok Sabha, Smt. Supriya Sule (NCP), second-time MP secured the top position, and Shri Rajeev Shankarrao Satav (Cong), first-time MP, secured the second position. Both are from Maharashtra. PreSense congratulates all the toppers and performers of the 14th, 15th and 16th Lok Sabha.

16th Lok Sabha – Sum Up:

- Various unique decisions implemented for the first time in the 16th Lok Sabha.
- The 16th Lok Sabha showed increased productivity with fewer disruptions, when compared with 15th Lok Sabha’
- Participation by Members were good compared to the earlier Lok Sabha sessions; The younger MPs showed good performance in the 16th Lok Sabha.
- Departmentally Related Standing Committees have presented more reports to the Parliament.
- Fewer number of bills were referred to Standing Committees.

***by K Srinivasan, Publisher & Mg. Editor,
Source: Feb 2019 edition of PreSense***

PreSense Lok Sabha Index

Your eMagazine PreSense, in consultation with Parliamentarians and experts, has developed an Index to evaluate the performance of Lok Sabha under 10 parameters. PreSense has also defined

PreSense Lok Sabha Index - Guidelines

No	Parameter	Norms to get 10 marks	Explanation
1	No. of working days (Sittings)	375 (average 75 days per annum)	Since Departmentally Related Standing Committees are in place since 1993, the sittings of the House have decreased.
2	Productivity	Zero disruption – 100% productivity	Zero disruption is the goal
3	Average Attendance	100%	100% attendance is the goal
4	Debates	16250 (3250 per annum)	There is no provision in the rules as to how many debates have to be held and how many Members have to participate in the debates. However this has been taken on the basis of practice and past records. Zero Hour (20 x 70 days = 1400); Rule 377 (20 x 60 days = 1200); Bills discussions (10 members x 40 bills = 400); Private Members Bills (5 members x 10 bills = 50)); Rule 193 (20 members x 5 = 120); Discussion on President's address (30 x 1 = 30); Budget discussion (50 members x 1 = 50) = Total 3250 per annum
5	Private Members Bills (PMB)	350 (70 per annum)	This has been taken on the basis of past records, as there is no provision in the rules as to the number of PMBs can be introduced.
6	Questions	87500 (17500 per annum)	As per rules, maximum of 250 questions can be listed for a day. If various Members ask the same question, they will be clubbed as a single question for answer. But all the members will get the credit individually. (250 x 70 days = 17500 per annum)
7	Government bills passed	200 (40 per annum)	This has been taken on the basis of past records, as there is no provision in the rules as to the number of bills can be introduced.
8	Lapsed bills	Zero	If the bills introduced in Lok Sabha, are kept pending in the Rajya Sabha, after being adopted in Lok Sabha, the bills lapse automatically after the dissolution of the current Lok Sabha. Ideally, bills which are passed by Lok Sabha should be passed by Rajya Sabha as well.
9	Departmentally Related Standing Committees - Reports	800 (10 reports per committee per annum – 16 committees)	DRSC system was introduced in 1993 and there is no general rule as to the number of reports to be presented by a committee. However, taking into account recent introduction of committee system, average record has been taken.
10	Percentage of bills referred to committees	100%	Ideally, all the bills introduced in Lok Sabha are to be referred to Departmentally Related Standing Committees for scrutiny and suggestion.

norms based on Parliamentary rules, practises, pasty averages and capacity. This will be known as '**PreSense Lok Sabha Index**' and this Index will be used in future too.

Using this Index, PreSense analysed the performance of 14th, 15th and 16th Lok Sabha on the 10 parameters. Based on the analysis, PreSense has observed as follows for the performance of 16th Lok Sabha.

PreSense Lok Sabha Index

No	Parameter	14th Lok Sabha		15th Lok Sabha		16th Lok Sabha	
		Achievement	Marks	Achievement	Marks	Achievement	Marks
1	No. of working days (Sittings)	332	8.85	357	9.52	331	8.82
2	Productivity	87	8.70	63	6.30	85	8.50
3	Average Attendance	70	7.00	76	7.60	80	8.00
4	Debates	15324	9.30	18121	10.00	21196	10.00
5	Private Members Bills	309	8.82	372	10.00	1116	10.00
6	Questions	89055	10.00	143635	10.00	142156	10.00
7	Government bills passed	173	8.65	110	5.80	133	6.65
8	Lapsed bills	39	6.10	68	3.20	46	5.40
9	Departmentally Related Standing Committees (DRSC)- Reports	627	7.83	662	8.27	720	9.0
10	Percentage of bills referred to committees	60	6.00	71	7.10	27	2.70
Total Score			81.25		77.79		79.07

Data source: Lok Sabha Secretariat / PRS Legislative Research

- Participation by Members in Debates, Private Members Bills and Questions are quite satisfactory.
- Reports of the Departmentally Related Standing Committees are more than earlier sessions;
- Productivity is good compared to 15th Lok Sabha, with less disruption.
- Lapsed bills in 16th Lok Sabha are more compared to 14th Lok Sabha but less than in 15th Lok Sabha.
- Fewer number of bills were referred to DRSC for scrutiny.

by K Srinivasan, Publisher & Mg. Editor

Source: Feb 2019 issue of PreSense

Is Social Media the 'Game Changer' For Indian General Elections 2019?

Indians experienced the impact of the social media in elections' campaigning for the first time in 2014. Many technology tools were used then. The voters who were used to the traditional style, experienced a different kind of campaigning which was run through internet tools. The then BJP party candidate and Prime Minister-designate, Narendra Modi used these tools effectively. In 2016, the social media was utilised in full swing during the US Presidential Elections.



Growth of Social Media

Internet tools are used in elections' campaigning across the world since 2012. Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Instagram and WhatsApp are mainly used in India for political communications. The penetration of the mobile phones in India over the past five years, and the availability of internet data at very low cost, has increased its use in political communication and in a highly competitive manner by political parties.

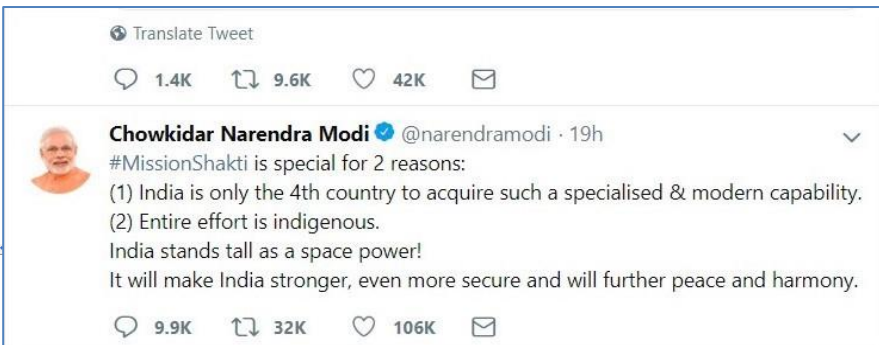
Between 2014 and 2019, mobile subscribers have gone up by 32% and internet subscribers have gone up by nearly 12 times. The entry of Jio as service provider has revolutionised data usage by smartphone users.

Social media users have gone up from 125 million in 2014 to 360 million in 2019, with a three-fold increase. This has created more challenges for political parties. The social media remains both a boon and a bane for the political parties.

"The early movers in the social media have gained a lot. Their early gain in the social media is still there but it is fast eroding with others playing quick catch-up, especially in the rural constituencies. Newer tools and micro segmentation analytics that can precisely predict user clusters/user behaviour, using AI (Artificial Intelligence) and Deep Learning technologies are now being used", says Srinivasan Venkatraghavan, social media data expert.

Political Parties in Social Media

Currently, all political parties at the national and regional levels, are using social media tools extensively for their political communication. Prime Minister Narendra Modi has more followings in the social media than frontline Opposition leader, Rahul Gandhi. Interestingly, during March 2019, Rahul Gandhi's tweets were more re-tweeted than those of Narendra Modi.



	2014	2019	2014	2019
Urban	529	654	139	157
Rural	364	528	42	59
Total	893	1182	72	90
Internet	42	522		

Source: TRAI website

On 27th March 2019, Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced the achievement of DRDO scientists in 'Mission Shakti'. Both Narendra Modi and Rahul Gandhi tweeted on this issue. Narendra Modi's tweet had more re-tweets than that of Rahul Gandhi.

These social media engagements are also taken up by mainline



media like the television and the print media. Therefore, the views from the social media are discussed outside the social media too.

Almost all the parties are using WhatsApp groups to communicate their messages and instructions to their last mile workers. They also use WhatsApp groups to transmit their messages to potential voters.

According to the Election Commission data, 25 million new voters were added in 2014 and 45 million in 2019. The total number of voters in India is around 900 million. The new voters, particularly from the younger age group, should not be taken for granted.

Traditional and Social Media Campaigns

Two questions emerge while considering the type of campaigning to use to reach potential voters:

- whether the social media communication could influence voters to vote in favour of the candidates, and
- whether the young voters who spend more time on social media, would actually go to the polling booths to cast their votes, since the campaigning style itself has changed over the past five years, due to the emergence of the social media.

Interestingly, during the 2014 and 2016 elections, Jayalalitha in Tamil Nadu did not bother about the social media, to the extent that even the party's website was not updated. She resorted to traditional campaigning, by personally reaching out to the people. Even though the other parties used the social media extensively for their campaigning, Jayalalitha and her party swept the polls. According to Bhanu Gomes, a political analyst, the social media does not add much to the existing charisma of mass leaders. The social media is only complementary for them.

Opinions are divided when assessing whether young voters would go to polling booths for voting on election day. According to many party workers who work at the ground level, only very few of the youngsters in the past who had shared their strong views on social media platforms, had actually gone to the polling booths to vote. With the Election Commission currently on an aggressive campaign mode for 100% polling, it is expected that many more youngsters will go to the polling booths on the election day to cast their votes.

It is the opinion of almost everyone who was asked, that the social media would have some impact in influencing potential voters. When the engagements of the social media are picked up by the mainline media, they assume greater significance. Those topics are picked up for discussion and debate by the mainline media, and are also discussed by the people.

“The uneducated voter may not be influenced by the social media, as he goes by various other parameters to vote for a candidate”, says Ranganathan, digital media consultant.

Social Media		
		
Twitter - followers	46.6 M	9.1 M
Facebook - followers	45.0 M	2.0 M
Instagram - followers	19.6 M	0.6 M
Twitter – Average retweets *	5.8 K	9.0 K

* Average for the last 25 tweets in Mar 2019

According to C H Sekhar, Ex-MLA (Member of Legislative Assembly), who contested the elections three times before, there is an increase in the impact of the social media in influencing the voters. “In my view, about 10-15% of the voters can be influenced by the social media. There are fence sitters in every constituency. They may not be unduly influenced by a single message. They will compare and analyse fully before voting. However, the social media will also help them in taking a decision. The trending in the social media about a week before the polling date, can influence greatly”, he added.

Dr Y S Rajan, eminent scientist and co-author of the book, *India 2020* with Dr Abdul Kalam, says that the middle-class and the lower middle-class people take the elections seriously. The social media reflects the mood of the middle-class. The people of the upper middle class do not take the elections seriously. It is doubtful how many of them go to polling booths. Information not carried by mainline media, is usually circulated in the social media.

Many political leaders agree that the campaign model has changed. K T Raghavan, a senior leader of a national party agrees that political parties have to depend on social media to reach out to their party workers and voters, due to the restrictions imposed on wall posters and street meetings. He agrees that the penetration

of the social media is more than what it was in 2014, and that political parties do face the challenge of converting this into votes.

Generally, the voters decide their votes, based on the political party rather than the candidate. Around 10-15% of the fence sitters may vote according to their last-minute perception, influenced either by the party or the candidate. These would be the deciding votes. Everybody agrees that the social media can influence this segment of fence sitters to take their decision.

Challenges

Even though the social media helps political parties to run their campaigns to reach their target audience, it also poses great challenges to the parties.

“Innumerable fake news generating agencies have come up. They spread YouTube videos out of context. Fake news, misinformation, disinformation and malinformation (malicious information) are already playing a major role in communication, in the run-up to this year’s elections. Emotional messages are transmitted. Even rural people view WhatsApp messages, which are transmitted in the local languages”, says C J Singh, Strategic Communication Consultant from Chandigarh.

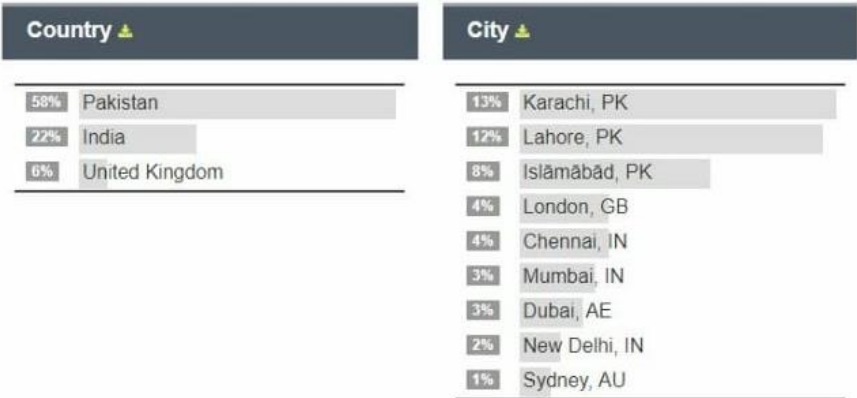
Many political workers and supporters have started circulating fake news and memes to malign their opponents, without realising that they could boomerang on them too. WhatsApp groups are flooded with fake news. They run the risk of influencing the people to take decisions, based on misinformation or incorrect messages received by them.



In the recent years, memes have become popular in the social media. Meme creators use text, image and video to convey political messages in a humorous way.

“Entertainment-oriented humorous memes in regional languages are used by political workers to attack their rivals. People enjoy memes. Memes can create crisis situations for even senior leaders”, says Sridhar Raj, President of Next Gen Political Leaders Forum (NGPL).

It is also reported that some foreign countries are interfering in the election campaigning, using the social media to create confusion in India during its run-up for elections. On 1st March 2019, some opposition parties at Chennai campaigned against Narendra Modi



with a global trending of *#GoBackModi*. According to Ranganathan, social media trend analyst, nearly 58% of the tweets originated in Pakistan and 6% in UK, much to the shock of the opposition parties, which had initiated this trending. Strangely, Chennai which started the campaign had only 4%. According to Ranganathan, such trending might not impact much as they are short-lived. However, when the trending is carried through the mainline media, it reaches a larger section of the people.

Wrap Up

According to many experts, General Elections 2019 can show around a 5% swing in the voting pattern, due to social media. Every 1% swing makes a difference for the candidates. As the social media does not have any regulator at present, fake news will continue to pose greater challenges to the political parties and its candidates. Even though the Election Commission is taking active steps to regulate social media advertising, it would be difficult to totally eradicate/prevent fake news, misinformation, disinformation and malinformation. This throws more responsibility on the citizens and social media users. Every citizen should ensure that wrong information is not circulated in the social media, which can destroy the credibility of the genuine candidates. Mainline media should take efforts to create awareness among the people for responsible use of the social media, instead of looking for sensational news.

***by K Srinivasan, Publisher and Mg. Editor, PreSense
Source : March 2019 issue of PreSense***

Chowkidar Crowned as King

Historic Victory

The 2019 General Elections (*Lok Sabha*) has given a massive mandate to Prime Minister Narendra Modi to continue his leadership of the BJP-led NDA Government for another five years. The landslide victory by this political combine has not only stunned political parties within the country but the entire world. BJP increased its vote share and seats over its first term verdict of 2014. The Indian National Congress (INC) increased the number of its seats marginally in the Lower House, but with a reduced vote share, falling short again, for the second time, of the required minimum number (one tenth of the strength of the House of 543 seats) to qualify for the official position of Opposition Party in the House.

Party	2014		2019	
	Seats	Vote share %	Seats	Vote Share %
BJP	282	31.3	303	37.5
INC	44	19.5	52	18.3
NDA	336	38.5	353	45.0
UPA	60	23.1	91	26.0

In 2019, BJP has secured 229 million votes, as against 171 million votes in 2014. INC secured 119 million votes in 2019 as against 107 million votes in 2014. In 2019, BJP has added more than 50 million votes to its tally, with an additional 6% increase in its vote share.

India is the world’s largest democracy with more than 607 million registered voters exercising their franchise personally to elect their Government. In 2019, as against 910 million eligible electors (834 million in 2014), 66.7% voters (66.4% in 2014) exercised their franchise. In 2019, 607 million (554 million in 2014) voters went to the polling booths to cast their votes. For the first time, Indian voters were able to see the symbols of the political parties which they voted for, through VVPAT (Voter Verifiable Paper Audit Trail)

machines. Although the opposition parties expressed concerns about alleged manipulation of the EVMs (Electronic Voting Machines), not a single complaint from any voter was registered about wrong display in the VVPAT machines. Besides, during the counting, more than 20,000 VVPAT machines were physically tallied with the corresponding EVM Machines and found to be accurate.

Why This Massive Mandate?

After the declaration of the polling results, PreSense conducted a quick online survey to understand the people's perception, and contacted several voters pan-India. The general perception was in favour of a strong leader to lead the nation.

Not Projecting a PM Candidate by Opposition: Rahul Gandhi of INC could not bring all the Opposition Parties together under a single umbrella of the UPA (United Progressive Alliance) banner. More than 12 regional parties contested in the elections, each with its own Prime Ministerial ambition. While NDA projected Modi as their PM, neither the Congress nor any of the other Opposition Parties could project a single leader. This worked to the advantage of NDA as people could not see an alternative leader to Modi, with the TINA factor operating (There Is No Alternative).

Wrong Campaign by Opposition:

Although the Modi's regime was stacked with economic deficiencies like unemployment, farmers' issues, impact of demonetisation and GST, slow growth of the manufacturing sector, the Opposition Parties did not campaign strongly on these issues. Instead, they ridiculed the Pulwama attack on our security forces as well as the Balakote bombings of the suspected terrorist camps in the valley by our security forces. This infuriated a large section of the common people to whom nationalism and patriotism is primary. This *faux*



pas was cleverly leveraged by BJP in its election campaign, projecting national security and citizen security over all other issues in its election campaign. Besides, Congress leader Rahul Gandhi focussed on '*Chowkidar ChorHai*' slogan, leading even to his tendering an unconditional apology before the Supreme Court in this context at the height of his election campaigning. The Rafale aircraft deal signed by the Prime Minister himself in 2016 at Paris, was raked up by the Congress for alleged corruption issues and of favouring a particular big industrial house, but it did not cut much ice with the voters for want of evidence.

Political experts claim that the Congress-led Opposition and *Mahagatbandhan's* (Grand Coalition) ambition of multiple choices for the Prime Ministerial candidate created confusion and apprehension amongst the people, thereby feeling that a strong leader was the 'need of the hour'. There was no better alternative to Modi as the proven Prime Minister. The people felt very strongly that an 'undecided crowd of parties' was definitely not an alternative.

Past Experiences: Political analysts quote the example of the 1971 and the 1980 General Elections with similar phenomena. In 1971, when Indira Gandhi declared the '*GaribiHatao*' (Remove Poverty) slogan, the Opposition Parties had a single agenda of '*Indira Hatao*' (Remove Indira). Indira Gandhi went on to win 352 seats in the elections. History seemed to repeat itself, as in the 2019 elections, even as Modi declared a resurgent '*New India*' slogan, the Opposition Parties had a single agenda of '*Modi Hatao*' (Remove Modi).

In 1977, post emergency, Indira Gandhi was defeated by the Janata Party, riding on the wave of the people's anger against the emergency and its alleged atrocities. However, within two years, the Government fell due to infighting. In 1980, Indira had a massive win with 353 seats.

Past experiences indicate that Indian voters always look for stability in the Government and the leadership of the PM candidate. The same Indira Gandhi, rejected by voters in 1977 polls, was returned to power with a massive mandate in 1980 as the

Opposition that formed the Government, messed up due to infighting over leadership issues. The then Prime Minister Morarji Desai, was replaced by an over-ambitious Haryana leader, Charan Singh. But his Government fell.

Tamil Nadu Mandate: It is interesting to note that while almost the entire country voted for Modi, in Tamil Nadu, the regional political party, DMK projected Rahul Gandhi as PM candidate, which the Opposition failed to do at the national level. It was a battle of 'Modi vs Rahul'. With Anti-Modi sentiments riding high because of his support to a fledgling faction-ridden AIADMK without Jayalalitha, the DMK allies swept the polls, bagging 37 out of 38 seats. People suspected that AIADMK was being puppeteered by the Central Government and was carrying out their dictates in the state without protecting the local interests. It may be recalled that during the 2014 elections when Jayalalitha campaigned, she promoted the slogan, "*Modi or Lady*". She bagged 37 out of 39 seats then.



So, past experiences clearly indicate that the people want a choice of strong leaders, and in its absence prefer the best available candidate. In the 2019 polls, it turned out to be Modi again as in 2014.

Challenges before Modi Government

As Modi begins his second five-year tenure as Prime Minister, he has all the odds of economics ills stacked against him. He faces several serious challenges at the political and economic level. High on the agenda of challenges that Modi faces are:

- Demonetisation and introduction of GST crushed the small trade and industry leaving them cash-strapped as the country runs on 85% cash transactions.
- The manufacturing sector is very sluggish. Due to the oil crisis (high prices of crude), India has to pay more foreign

exchange for importing crude and POL (Petroleum, Oils and Lubricants) thus depleting its foreign exchange reserves. With sluggish exports, as incentives were low, South-East Asian countries competed fiercely with India over a variety of commodities including *basmati* rice, so much so, the Capital Account Deficit (CAD) has widened considerably, exerting pressure on inflation and fiscal deficit. CAD is the difference between import revenues and export earnings, and the former has exceeded the latter. Tax revenue has come down even though compliance has risen. This might lead to a deficit in the budget. Notwithstanding this, people have given a massive mandate to Modi to continue so that he can work on the 'structural reforms' introduced by him, which have however inadvertently caused collateral damage to the lower sections of trading classes.

- Although Modi promised job creation and *Ache Din* during the 2014 elections, people feel that nothing has materialised. Many of the schemes like 'Make in India', 'Start Up India', 'Stand up India', 'Skill India' have not been properly executed, keeping with the well-intended spirit of the programmes. A separate ministry to monitor these important schemes seems imperative to drive growth and generate more employment.
- The promise to bring back all black money from foreign countries and to punish the corrupt politicians has not yet been implemented fully till date. Unfortunately, candidates with tainted records have got re-elected to the *Lok Sabha* this time. The new regime should be firm and strong in dealing the corrupt severely.
- Since the BJP has returned to power, some of the aggressive *Hindutva* forces may re-emerge and create problems about cow vigilantism (some people were lynched on suspicion of slaughtering cows for the sake of eating beef). Even if there were such isolated incidents, a section of the media with vested interest, could blow this up at national and international levels and tarnish the country's image, creating unnecessary fear among the minorities. The Government should keep a tight leash on such aggressive elements and also that section of the

media which may generate unwanted panic amongst the people.

- In the earlier regime, the Government had put a ban on the flow of foreign funds to some NGOs, who were using the money for anti-national activities. These NGOs may create more trouble in a different form to show their anger against the Government. The Government should be firm on such NGOs and the persons who indulge in anti-national activities.
- Although BJP has swept almost the entire country, they were unable to convince some of the major Southern states like Tamil Nadu, Kerala and Andhra Pradesh. In the South, BJP is perceived as a North Indian party. In the past regime, the Government did not show much interest in the Southern states. Thus, while the entire country had the 'Modi Wave', the Southern states had the 'Anti-Modi Wave'. The new Government should develop the relationship with frequent visits to the Southern states. The current North-South divide must be bridged immediately.
- With the massive majority, now the *Modi Sarkar* can try to resolve the Kashmir issue firmly, so that terrorism can be under control.

Summing Up

Indian voters have given a historic mandate to Narendra Modi for the second time to govern the Nation, notwithstanding some of the negative aspects of its earlier regime. Indian voters have reposed faith and confidence in Modi, so that he can continue his efforts to improve the economy and living standards of the people. PreSense wishes Modi and his new team the very best to lead the nation to greater heights.

By K. Srinivasan, Publisher and Mg. Editor, and T N Ashok, Editorial Advisor

Source : April 2019 issue of PreSense

Investments Without Production and Confusing Policy Announcements Hit Indian Economy

The slow-down of the Indian economy has caused serious concerns



M R Sivaraman, Former Revenue Secretary to Government of India

for every citizen. This has resulted in many people losing their jobs without creation of new jobs. The Government of India has also announced various measures to overcome this challenge. On behalf of *PreSense*, Prime Point Srinivasan and Prof. K Prabhakar interviewed Shri M R Sivaraman, Former Revenue Secretary to Government of India and Former Executive Director

of International Monetary Fund (IMF) to understand the reasons behind this situation and to get the possible solution. Excerpts:

What precisely is the problem with the country's economy? The GDP growth rate is estimated at 5%. There is recession in the automobile industry, etc. What is the real impact of demonetisation and GST in this slowdown?

As I have been handling finance for the past three decades in government as well as outside government, I would say that the growth rate coming down is nothing surprising, mainly because we have been growing at the rate of nearly 6.8% for nearly two decades. Therefore, it is but natural that the rate of growth will come down slightly. When the economy grows, the base widens. When the base widens to a large extent, it will take some time for the economy to adjust itself again to go up to a larger growth path.

The effect of demonetisation has virtually worn out because the currency in circulation has now almost reached the level it had before demonetisation with respect to the GDP. Demonetisation has not led to less use of cash in the Indian economy. This is mainly

because of the traditional way the Indian economy has been functioning. Cash has been playing a major role. If cash has to be brought down, then the Government has to say that they will not allow people to pay in cash in petrol pumps and all other places where government transactions take place. It will take a long time for it to happen. It will not happen overnight. It would have had an impact may be, in the first year. But subsequently as cash started building up in the economy, it did not affect the growth as such.

Soon after demonetisation, we had the GST coming in. Because GST is a decision by all the finance ministers of the country including the Union Finance Minister, the way in which the GST had to be implemented became the responsibility of the government of all the states and union territories, and the Government of India. So, they had to accommodate the views of 29-30 states in the country. There could not be a single, particular view. And every state had its own point of view regarding the implementation of the GST and the rates of GST. It became an 'accommodating system'. When it became an accommodative system, every time a decision was taken in the GST council, they had to make adjustments in the GST network and programs because the backbone of the implementation of GST is the GST network, which is a computerised system. Every time a change is made, the system had to undergo a major change. When the system undergoes a change, there will be a lot of glitches. That way, GST had impacted the system to a considerable extent. This led to the accumulation of refund of taxes, particularly in the export sector. As far as export is concerned, they had to pay the GST and claim a refund. That is the system we have adopted.

Now the things are getting sorted out. As soon as the exports leave the hands of the exporter and the customs give the clearance for export, the shipping bill with the customs clearance will automatically be put into the system. They now get the refund immediately. To a large extent, this has been rectified.

It is reported that MSMEs have suffered heavily due to GST. What is your opinion?

A large number of MSME operators are not properly educated about the system of GST. Many of these people employ agents to carry out their work.

These agents have not been doing their work properly.

They have been misleading the people. There is a lot of misinformation and disinformation spreading because these MSME people are not able to do their own work properly.

These are some of the internal difficulties in the working of the GSTN which has caused problems to the MSME sector. That is why they have not been able to expand.

The Government did conduct classes. But these classes were mostly held in Chennai and a few other places. They are not adequate. These are some of the internal difficulties in the working of the GSTN which has caused problems to the MSME sector. That is why they have not been able to expand.

But then, there is another point we have to see. Has the number of MSMEs gone down after demonetisation and GST? That is an important indicator. In June 2019, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) Committee on Small and Medium Industries submitted a report. The report which is on the website of RBI, shows that on June 15th, they got the numbers of MSMEs at 68.9 lakhs, which is more than what it was before demonetisation. It could be that more people have got registered. If demonetisation and GST had affected the MSME, then there should have been a significant reduction in the number of MSMEs instead of going up.

But there has been a problem in functioning. People are uncertain about their (GST) money coming back and unsure about how to fill the form. This must have caused some inconvenience. My appeal to the Revenue Department is that they should form small groups of officers who should conduct training to small and medium industries in the smaller places and educate them about how to get the refund and fill the forms, without depending on agents.

Why has investment not taken place in heavy industries in the past few years? What do you think are the main reasons?

There are certain areas where the investment should have taken place – heavy engineering, automobile and textile sectors. In the last 2-3 years, we have observed that Rs.18-20 lakh crores have turned into Non-Performing Assets (NPAs). When Rs.18 lakh crores come into the industry as investment, people get employed and theoretically, when people get employed, production happens and value addition takes place. It is now found that most of them were expanding without production and market development. The economy is hit now because those investments are not giving any returns.

For example, the four or five huge superpower thermal plants (Adani, Tata, Essar, Reliance) were erected at a cost of nearly Rs.1 lakh crores. Now, all these power stations are idle because they could not procure coal at the price they had contracted for the sale of power. They had approached the Supreme Court for relief but it did not agree, saying the companies had signed the agreements assuring sale of power at the price contracted at that particular time. If the companies did not forecast that the price of coal would go up, then the people could not be held responsible. Therefore, the power plants could not generate power except for a minimal quantity. The total investment therefore remains idle. Similar investments made elsewhere such as ports, have not been able to generate any returns. This situation is a major cause in the sudden fall in the GDP.

After those investments, people are scared to make fresh investments even though banks are flushed with funds. Banks are not lending and people are not ready to invest money without sorting out these issues. So, we have a structural imbalance taking place in the country.

What is the real problem with the automobile industry?

There is confusion in the automobile industry of the country. Several factors have come together for this – BS6 norms (automobile emission standard), collapse of the NBFCs which were

lending money, etc. The automobile sector contributes 49% of the GDP of India because the automobile industry has thousands of ancillaries, which also constitute part of the engineering sector, which makes up 7% of the GDP.

The announcement by a senior minister of the Government of India that there would be a shutdown of fossil-fuelled cars by 2030 created confusion in the country. Manufacturers became nervous,

The announcement of a senior minister of the Government of India that there would be a shutdown of fossil-fuelled cars by 2030 has created confusion in the country.

wondering how the cars would be produced and where the charging stations would be. All places in India do not have charging stations. Indian Oil and Bharat

Petroleum do not have a single charging station in Chennai. People became hesitant to buy a petrol-driven car. He also announced that only BS6 compliant cars would be permitted. Hundreds and thousands of cars were already produced and waiting to be released in the market and people were not ready to buy them. The industry requires at least 10 years for a gradual phase-over of equipment. Of course, the Minister later reversed his statement and assured that petrol cars would be allowed. However, the automobile industry has been very severely impacted by then. BS6 cars are now being purchased by the people.

Another factor is the rule insisting on a 3-year registration fee payment and 5-year third-party insurance policy payment – matters that have not been happening in the country for over 60 years. Where do people have the money to invest in this? There is little gained by these confusing announcements. And when these factors hit a major sector, it takes a long time to revive.

How has the employment been affected?

If one additional (new) truck is sold in the market, it generates 2-4 man-years of employment. In a sale of 100,000 trucks, assuming 25,000 go for replacement, for 75,000 new trucks multiplied by an

average 3 people, 2.25 lakh additional people will gain employment.

A car will generate 0.3 man-year employment because of new drivers, cleaners and accessories for the car. Every year, 3.5 million cars were being produced. Assuming a conservative 0.1 man-year employment, 3 lakh people were being employed. Today, additional employment of half a million people from car and commercial vehicles has disappeared. 500,000 people were in the market for purchase of FMCG (Fast-Moving Consumer Goods). They are not there today. This is a major problem for the Government to solve.

How is the agricultural sector?

The agricultural sector by itself does not contribute much money but it attaches a sentimental value. This year, because of the rains, they hope that the production will reach the same as last year, if not more. Shri Modi too has done well by distributing Rs.2000 each to the farmers, which means much to the poor farmer. The only thing is that it must be ensured that all the farmers get the money.

How is the service sector?

The service sector contributes 58% of the GDP of this country. Once the automobile sector goes down, it will affect the other sectors as the financial, insurance, etc which accompany the automobile sector. It has a nominal impact on the hotel sector because people travel to shops and hotels. There is a chain reaction in the service sector. The growth of the service sector has fallen from 12% to 8%, impacted by these factors.

What will be the impact of the trade war between China and USA on India?

The impact is going to be only of sentimental value because it is not going to affect us directly. The impact would be that if the US economy goes down, then our exports to USA will go down. So far, the US economy has not gone down.

The European economy has grown by 1% and it is generally 1-2%. Therefore, it does not materially affect our exports. But the war between the European Union (EU) and United Kingdom(UK), which will end in October (2019) would affect us because many Indian industries have investments in EU and UK. This will affect our income too.

Will the merger of major banks help to improve the situation?

The problem with this Government is that they bring all the changes together, creating confusion in the country.

I would have postponed this merger to one year later, to wait for the economy to settle down from this current turbulent period. The problem with this Government is that they bring all the changes together, creating confusion

in the country. Their policies are good with good impact but bringing them together creates confusion. This merger was not necessary at this time because merger always creates organisational, administrative, lending and marketing problems. They could have postponed it as politically they are battling with the issue of Article 370.

Can the country achieve a 5 trillion economy as announced by the Finance Minister?

No, because this year's rate of growth is not going to be more than 6%. Therefore, for the remaining 5 years, the rate of growth has to be more than 10%. India has never achieved a 10% growth rate except in one year. And now to achieve a 10% growth on a very big base of economy is very difficult.

The problem with the Government of India is that although they enact good policies and measures, the State Governments are not ready to implement them properly in the same spirit. These are some of the physical and structural problems for the Government of India.

The Finance Minister has proposed Rs.100 lakh crores for infrastructure projects. Where will she source the funds from?

Rs.100 lakh crores is the target which can come from various sources like FDI, borrowing from external market and domestic economy.

Recently, RBI transferred Rs1.70 lakh crore to Government of India. Will it help the situation?

It will help the Government of India in a minimal way.

The Finance Minister took office in the middle of May 2019. On July 5th, she presented the Budget. In one and a half months, it is difficult to understand the Budget as it is complicated. She was not given the correct budget figures. The figure in the Budget is more by Rs.1 lakh crore than the actual figure. If the rate of growth is 17-18% on the Rs.1 lakh crore, it is gone. Therefore, the income tax figure is going to fall by Rs.1.5 lakh crore, which will be covered by this amount.

The principal mistake the Government makes is that they do not invite at least all the former Revenue Secretaries and Finance Secretaries for their experienced opinion about the Budget.

As a former Revenue Secretary, having dealt with similar issues in the past, what would you like to suggest?

I have seen serious fiscal deficits. I would suggest that the Finance Minister, along with the good steps announced for the supply side of the economy, should also plan steps to build up the demand side of the economy.

- First of all, the Prime Minister and the Finance Minister should have a technical discussion with the experienced Cabinet Secretaries, Finance Secretaries and Revenue Secretaries about what is to be done to deal with the situation.
- Thereafter, they should call the Chief Ministers and give them action points for implementation. Chief Ministers must be

taken into confidence because they function at the field level. It is their orders that ultimately get translated into action.

- Invite the Opposition leaders and consult them too. In a time of crisis, you have to take the Opposition into confidence. This economy belongs to all the people.

Please listen to the full interview of
Mr M R Sivaraman: Click
<https://youtu.be/OhKKiVz5wQ4>

by K Srinivasan (Publisher and Managing Editor) and Prof. K Prabhakar (Editorial Advisor).

Source: Sep 2019 issue of PreSense

How an Idea Becomes an Act of Parliament

Every Indian or foreigner in this country is governed by an Act of Parliament or Legislative Assembly. It is worthwhile to know as to how an idea or a concept becomes an Act of Parliament.

How an Idea is Conceived

The Government gets the idea to make an Act from different sources like (1) the Public, (2) the Industry or professional bodies, (3) Discussions in Parliament, (4) Private Members Bills or (5) from their own internal discussions. When the Government gets any idea or concept to make an Act, the Ministry concerned sends the input to the Law Ministry for a Draft Bill. The Ministry concerned and the Law Ministry then finalise the Draft Bill. After the approval of the Draft Bill by the Cabinet, the Bill requires the approval of both the Houses of Parliament and the President of India, before it becomes an Act.

Types of Bills presented to the Parliament

- Ordinary Bill
- Money Bill (Under Article 110 of the Constitution)
- Financial Bill (Under Article 117(1) and 117(3) of the Constitution)
- Constitution Amendment Bill

Legislative Procedure of an Ordinary Bill

Notice of Bill—A Minister or any other Member who desires to introduce a Bill has to give a seven-day notice in writing to move for 'leave to introduce the Bill'. The Speaker may, however, allow the motion to be moved at a shorter notice too.

Circulation of the Bill— A Bill will not be incorporated in the list of business for its introduction unless its copies are made available to the Members at least two days before the day on which the Bill is proposed to be introduced. However, Appropriation Bills, Finance Bills and such secret Bills are exceptions to this list of business. The Speaker may, however, permit the introduction of a Bill

without prior circulation or after circulation for a period shorter than the stipulated two days if the Minister concerned is able to provide adequate reasons in a Memorandum for consideration of the Speaker.

Passage of the Bill – A Bill undergoes three readings in the House where it is introduced and should be passed with a simple majority for it to be considered passed in that House. The same procedure is followed in the second House, with or without amendments to the introduced Bill. The Constitution amendment Bills should be passed by not

less than two third members of the House present and voting, but subject to half of total strength of the House and

If there is a deadlock in the passage of the Bill, the President can summon a joint sitting to resolve it.

should be passed in each House separately, by this procedure. A joint sitting cannot be held in case of Money Bills, as Rajya Sabha does not have enough powers in respect of Money Bills.

If there is a deadlock in the passage of the Bill (if the second house rejects the said Bill altogether, or passes with amendments, or holds the Bill with no action for more than six months or if the first House does not agree to the amendments made by the second House), the President can summon a joint sitting to resolve it. The joint sitting is usually chaired by the Speaker of the Lok Sabha. If the majority of members present and voting in the joint sitting approve the Bill, the Bill is deemed to have been passed by both the Houses. However, Constitution Amendment Bills have to be passed in both the Houses separately. There will be 'Three Readings' for passage of all Bills.

First Reading

The First Reading refers to the Motion for Leave to introduce a Bill in the House by the Minister concerned. Motion for Leave to introduce a Bill may be opposed by any Member on general

grounds or on the ground that the Bill initiates a legislation outside the legislative competence of the House. Any such opposition by the Member has to be given as a notice specifying the objections that are to be raised, by 10:00 hours on the day on which the Bill is included for introduction. The Speaker will then put to vote and decide on the introduction of the Bill. When the House gives permission to introduce the Bill, the Minister will say "I introduce the Bill". Now the Bill becomes the property of the House. With the permission of the Speaker, the Bill will be published in the Official Gazette of the Government.

Reference of Bill to Standing Committee

After the Bill has been introduced, the Presiding Officer of the House may refer the Bill to a Standing Committee with the concerns for examination and make reports thereon. A time limit of three months is normally prescribed. The Committee can also take opinion from experts and the general public who are interested in the measures. The report of the Committee shall be treated as considered advice given by the Committee.

Second Reading

During this stage the Bill goes through a detailed scrutiny and assumes its shape. This reading involves two stages. In the first stage, the House can decide to refer the Bill to a Select Committee or Joint Committee for scrutiny. Any amendment can also be moved by any Member for any clause of the Bill. The Speaker will decide based on the vote.

The second stage of the Second Reading consists of clause-by-clause consideration of the Bill, as introduced in Lok Sabha or as reported by a Select or a Joint Committee or as passed by the other House, as the case may be. Discussion takes place on each clause of the Bill and amendments can be moved at this stage. Each amendment and each clause is put to vote of the House. The amendments become part of the Bill if they are accepted by a simple majority of members present and voting and the Second Reading is deemed to be over.

Third Reading

At this stage, the debate is mainly confined to acceptance or rejection of the Bill, with or without amendments, as a thorough scrutiny is done during the Second Reading. Debate is confined to arguments either in support or rejection of the Bill without referring to the details. Only formal, verbal or consequential amendments are allowed at this stage. If a majority of the Members present and voting accept the Bill, the Bill is deemed to have been passed by that House. If the said House is the initiating House, then the Bill is forwarded to the second House. If the said House is the second House, then the Bill is deemed to have been passed by both the Houses and moved for the President's assent.

Bill in the Second House

After the bill is passed by one House, it is forwarded to the second House for concurrence, with a message to that effect. Therefore, an introduction stage is not required in the second House. The Bill again goes through the same stages, *viz.* the Second Reading stage comprising either discussion on the motion that the Bill be taken into consideration or its reference to a Select Committee of that House and the Third Reading stage. The second House may either agree to the Bill, or return the Bill with amendments to the initiating House for its concurrence, or a joint sitting is summoned by the President if there is a deadlock.

Money Bills can be initiated only in Lok Sabha. Rajya Sabha is required to return a Money Bill passed and transmitted by Lok Sabha within a period of 14 days from the date of its receipt, with or without recommendations. It is open to Lok Sabha to accept or reject all or any of the recommendations of Rajya Sabha. However, if Rajya Sabha does not return a Money Bill within the prescribed period of 14 days, the Bill is deemed to have been passed by both the Houses of Parliament at the expiry of the period of 14 days in the form in which it was passed by Lok Sabha.

Assent of the President

Every Bill after being passed by both Houses of the Parliament is presented before the President of India for his assent. The President has three options: (Article 111)

- He may give his assent to the Bill; then it becomes an Act.
- He may return the Bill for reconsideration to the Houses,
- He may withhold the assent to the Bill;

Withdrawal of Bills

The Minister in charge of a Bill, who introduced the Bill in Lok Sabha or Rajya Sabha, may at any stage of the Bill, move for leave to withdraw the Bill on any specific ground listed in the Rules.

Ordinance Power of the President of India

When both the Houses are not in session, the President can promulgate ordinances under Article 123 of the Constitution. **Parliamentary approval is required during the next session within six weeks from the date the Parliament is in session.** If the Ordinance is not passed by the Parliament, it shall cease to operate. However, the President does not have any power to promulgate ordinance to amend the Constitution.

(Reference: The Legislative process in regard to Government Bills is governed by various provisions of the Constitution, the Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business in Lok Sabha and the Directions by the Speaker, which include, *inter alia*, provisions contained in Articles 107 to 111, 117, 245 to 255 and 274 of the Constitution, Rules 64 to 159, 218, 219, 331E, 331H and 335 of the Rules of Procedure and Directions 19A to 26 and 31 to 37 of the Directions by the Speaker).

(Source: Lok Sabha Website)

by Priyadharshni Rahul, Deputy Editor

Source: Sep 2019 issue of PreSense

Fundamental Duties (Article 51A of the Constitution of India)

It shall be the duty of every citizens of India-

- (a) to abide by the Constitution and respect its ideals and institutions, the National Flag and the National Anthem;
- (b) to cherish and follow the noble ideals which inspired our national struggle for freedom;
- (c) to uphold and protect the sovereignty, unity and integrity of India;
- (d) to defend the country and render national service when called upon to do so;
- (e) to promote harmony and the spirit of common brotherhood amongst all the people of India transcending religious, linguistic and regional or sectional diversities; to renounce practices derogatory to the dignity of women;
- (f) to value and preserve the rich heritage of our composite culture.

Source: Nov 2019 issue of PreSense

Nationalism and Secularism in the Indian Context

Perceptions Derived from the Sample Survey

In the past three decades, political parties in India have brought the subject of nationalism and secularism to the centre stage for political purposes. One section of the political establishment has hijacked 'nationalism' and another section, 'secularism'. Both the establishments have interpreted the concepts to suit their political gains.

People's Perception

PreSense conducted a quick online reader's survey in December 2019 on how common people perceived these concepts and how they felt they were being followed in India. Sixty quality samples were obtained with self-disclosure of neutral, left and right ideologies.

Almost all the respondents identified 'nationalism' with patriotism, national interest, loyalty to the nation, culture, heritage and values. They identified 'secularism' with treating all equally, not interfering with any religion, tolerance, and so on. One striking factor is that there was no clear-cut difference between both the terms as perceived by the respondents.

However, when asked about how the Government and the political parties followed these concepts, the respondents were ambivalent. Many of them feel that these terms were primarily being used for their own political gains. Nationalism is being used to kindle patriotic fervour and to gain votes, while secularism is being used to appease minorities. Followers of the 'left' ideology consider the right-wing parties as 'fascists'. 'Right' followers consider the left parties as 'pseudo secularists'. Although nationalism and secularism should mean the same to all political parties and citizens, the political parties have hijacked these terminologies to their advantage, while blaming each other of hijacking them. Furthermore, a majority of the respondents were not able to

differentiate the meaning between the concepts and used them both in similar context.

Mr Padmanabhan, a senior journalist, who is not aligned to the left or the right ideology, observed that the term 'secularism' is a European word and not relevant to our country. "For centuries India has been following unity in diversity and equal respect to all religions, based on the traditional Indian philosophy, '*Sarva Dharma Sama Bhava*' (equal respect for all religions). Unfortunately, today political parties confuse nationalism and secularism with pro- or anti-Hinduism", he added.

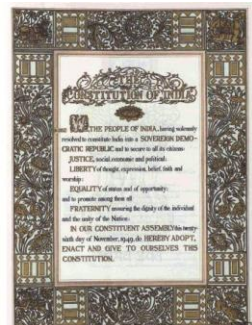
Another respondent Ms Kongkona, a research student from Assam felt that in recent times, nationalism is being looked down upon as a vice, which can rob people of their rational thinking ability. This narrative has been inserted in public minds by a section of political establishment. As a result, nationalistic feelings are discredited as 'bad and harmful' and a path towards unleashing fascism.

Global Phenomenon

There are 96 secular states in the world. Africa and Europe have 27 and 33 secular states respectively. Asia has 20 secular states.

In the West, the word 'secular' implies three things: (1) freedom of religion, (2) equal citizenship to each citizen regardless of his or her religion, and (3) separation of religion and state. Everyone is equal under the law, and subject to the same laws irrespective of his or her religion.

In contrast, in India, the word 'secular' does not imply separation of religion and state. It means equal treatment of all religions. Religion in India continues to assert its political influence and authority in matters of personal law.



Constituent Assembly Debate

During the freedom movement, 'Nationalism' was brought to focus by leaders to bring together all Indians to fight against British Raj. Slogans like *Vandemataram*, *Bharat Mata ki Jai*, *Jai Hind*, etc. were used to kindle patriotic feelings.

During the initial documentation of the Indian Constitution, the Constituent Assembly had debated at length whether to include 'secularism' in the Preamble (Chapter 1 Clause 1) of the Constitution. During the debate in the Constituent Assembly on November 15th, 1948, Dr B R Ambedkar, the architect of the Indian Constitution said, "What should be the policy of the state, how the society should be organised in its social and economic side are matters which must be decided by the people themselves according to time and circumstances. It cannot be laid down in the Constitution itself because that is destroying democracy altogether". After a lengthy debate, the members decided against the inclusion of the word, 'secularism' in the Preamble, and it was not added in the Preamble of the original Constitution.(see picture) The words 'secularism' and 'socialism' were added later by the then Prime Minister, Indira Gandhi in 1976 during the Emergency.

Ancient Indian Scriptures

Mr M Venkaiah Naidu, Vice President said, "I have been saying that secularism was in the DNA of every Indian much before it was enshrined in the Constitution. '*Sarva Dharma Sama Bhava*' epitomises India's secular ethos. India is a land of diverse cultures and religions." India has been following the concept of secularism traditionally, treating all faiths equally."

The ancient Rig Veda says, "*Let noble thoughts come to us from all sides.*" Based on this, Mahatma Gandhi said, "*I do not want my house to be walled in on all sides and my windows to be stuffed. I want the culture of all lands to be blown about my house as freely as possible. But I refuse to be blown off my feet by any.*"

The phrase, "*Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam*" is contained in a Sloka in the *Maha Upanishad* (6.71-75). It means, "*the entire world is my family*".

Even around 3000 years ago, Tamil Poet, Kanian Poongundranar stated, “யாதும் ஊரே; யாவரும் கேளிர்” (*Yathum Oore Yavarum Kelir*) - (Song 192, Purananuru, Sangam Literature). It means, ‘Every place is my home town; Everyone my kith and kin’.

Indian prayers, rituals and ceremonies end with generic prayers such as *Lokāḥ Samastāḥ Sukhino Bhavantu*, meaning " Let the entire world be happy."

Traditionally, our country has adopted ‘inclusive prosperity’ and tolerance, acceptance of other faiths over thousands of years even before the words nationalism and secularism were invented.

Court Verdicts

Since 1950, the Supreme Court has upheld secularism as the backbone of the Indian democracy, in various judgements. Many judgements have held that tolerance among the people in India on the basis of ‘*Sarva dharma sama bhava*’ has sustained secularism in India strongly. Even the latest Ayodhya verdict indicates that ‘secularism’ is toleration based on tradition.

Current Trend

Nowadays, both nationalism and secularism are politically appropriated to suit the political expediency of various parties with an eye on winning elections. Author Taslima Nasreen says that most Indian politicians appease minorities in the name of secularism and this infuriates many belonging to the majority community. There is also an accusation that another section of politicians brand whomsoever not agreeing with them as ‘anti-nationals’.

Nationalism and Secularism are Inter-Connected

In an exclusive chat with PreSense, Mr N K Premachandran, a senior Member of Parliament from Kerala, said, “Nationalism should be seen from a broad perspective. It should not be confined

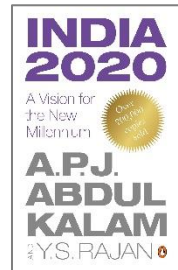
only to territorial jurisdiction. It includes the cultural diversity, various languages and the secular fabric of our nation. We should be proud of our national character. Today, people are branded either as nationalists or as secularists. That is not good for the country. Both nationalism and secularism belong to all citizens. Both are interconnected.”

Time has come that all political establishments should desist from misinterpreting the words nationalism and secularism for their narrow political gains to mislead the people and to develop hatred and fear among the citizens. What we need today is the true nationalism with communal harmony.

by K Srinivasan, Publisher & Managing Editor, and Prof. Prabhakar Krishnamurthy, Editorial Advisor
Source: Dec 2019 issue of PreSense

'India 2020' Vision – An Assessment

In 1998, late Dr APJ Abdul Kalam, former President of India and Dr Y.S.Rajan, former scientist and technologist of ISRO (Indian Space Research Organisation) and Founder Executive Director, TIFAC (Technology Forecasting, Assessment and Information Council) wrote a book titled "India 2020 – A Vision for the New Millennium", wherein they envisioned a new, progressive India, recommending the pathway towards this accomplishment. It was based on a two-year long national exercise by TIFAC.



Over 20 years later, Dr Rajan has made a candid assessment of how far and where India has progressed and where it stands in the nurtured vision of India 2020. Dr Rajan has enumerated the achievements and shortfalls, and the way forward in his website, (<http://ysrajan.com>).

As the subject is pertinent for the general awareness of the readers of your eMagazine, PreSense, we reproduce below a synopsis of the assessment.

Assessment

The sectors that have made immense progress are the telecom including data services, entertainment, financial services, e-governance and e-commerce services, IT industry, automobiles which facilitated better employment opportunities, agriculture where grain, fruits and vegetables and milk production have done exceedingly well, aviation with its economy carriers, making air travel an affordable facility, pharma, providing high class, relatively inexpensive medicines, and the consumer sector reaching the people even in small towns and villages. India's overall GDP and GDP per capita have grown more than envisaged. GDP has grown 8.12 times over the period and GDP per capita has grown at a more modest 5.62 times (because of the growing population, which increased 1.43 times).

On the downward side, Dr Rajan observed that the total production or consumption in several sectors, based on per capita calculation, is still low not just because of the increasing population but also because the people, mainly of the lower middle class, have not been able to acquire the necessary skills to adapt to the demands of modern economy and contribute to the economy. The one-size-fits-all archaic system of education is not helping the youth.

India 2020 – Assessment of Performance	
Good News	Not So Good News
• Telecom	
• Entertainment	• Per Capita Consumption
• Financial Services	• Steel
• e-Governance	• Manufacturing
• Information Technology	• Modernisation of Defence & Security
• Automobile	• Internal Technology Strengths
• Agriculture	• Reforms in Agriculture
• Aviation	• Education System
• Pharma	• Medicare
• Consumables	
• GDP	

Similarly, the manufacturing sector has slipped and Dr Rajan attributes it to the failure in developing internal technology strengths in manufacturing, electronics, software, etc. as recommended in the book, India 2020. Instead, most of the machines for the manufacturing, IT, telecom and biomedical sectors rely almost entirely on imported hardware and licensed software. Modernisation of India's defence and security sectors too have been slow due to the slow take-off of indigenous strengths of the Indian industries in this sector. The reason is that the government policies discourage the Indian private sector. They therefore, depend largely on imports. One of main reasons for this state of affairs is the government procurement rules which deny the right to the Indian industry to even quote against Government tenders if their products are through indigenous R&D unless they have two years of export experience! Dr Rajan expressed his disappointment that it was a sad fact that this hitch has persisted all through the 70 years since Indian Independence, even in the socio-economic sectors of the Government (power, transport, etc).

Dr Rajan recommends steps, some of which are enlisted below, to set the mission on track:

- India needs to accelerate building up the internal technological strengths in the Indian industries, the defence and security sectors, as well as the academia, orienting them to India-relevant R&D. The government rules must change to encourage India-made and India-developed products.
- The agriculture sector needs modernisation through technology and policy reforms to help the farmers instead of periodical subsidies and loan waivers.
- Education needs a radical re-orientation to provide relevant vocational skills to students as well as drop-outs to equip themselves for employment. The youth must adapt to the new work culture to cope with the competitive world.

(For a detailed report, please visit www.ysrajan.com).

PreSense had a conversation with Dr Rajan on the subject, to understand some of the specifics of his assessment and suggestions. (***Incidentally, Dr Rajan launched the first issue of eMagazine, PreSense in March 2006***).



We reproduce below a synopsis of the conversation.

Q. In agriculture, grain production has done well. However, we have issues of farmers facing acute financial problems, not being able to service their loans and resorting to suicides too. Where then is the problem?

Production of grains, milk, fruit and vegetables has indeed done well. The issue of suicides is because of serious problems of lack of reforms and steady actions to help marginal farmers to move out of the low income work they do. To understand the problem of farmers, we need to understand what GDP denotes. GDP is value in money. (Any free service does not contribute to GDP since it generates zero rupees).

While the IT sector, for example, employing about 0.5% of the population, produces about 5% of GDP, the farming sector of about 60% of the population contributes about 17-18% of GDP.

Therefore, the per capita return in case of IT is much higher when compared to that of the farming sector, especially the marginalised farmers. The economy is not able to match the return that the IT industry is able to give its workforce, with that to the farmers, which is minimal and in the form of subsidy only. The marginalised farmers (constituting over 86% of the total count of farmers) with their limited land-hold are not able to contribute enough to the GDP.

The recommended solution to this is “aggregating the land”. This means these marginalised farmers who are not able to produce enough crops from their land, can lease out their land for large-scale farming, and they in turn must develop other skills (ie. upskill) for alternative means of livelihood. The government (both at the Centre and the States) should facilitate growth of industries around villages and nearby towns. This way, they can earn income from the lease as well as deploy their skills elsewhere to earn more money. This cannot be an overnight change. It is a slow revolution and must be initiated without delay. This is how global leaders in agriculture have excelled.

Besides, the farmers or farm aggregators who are able to produce crops and other foods should have the freedom to produce and sell in the market even for exports without any restriction. They should be able to earn their revenue, based on the market conditions and not by Government controls that adversely affect the farmers.

Q. You observed, "Biomedical sector relies almost fully on imported hardware and licensed software". Can we upgrade our capability to providing indigenously developed hardware and software for our biomedical and other sectors?

If we need to develop our indigenous skills in innovation, the Government must be focussed towards product-based R&D support to the Indian scientists and engineers for their new ideas and innovations. We must encourage innovations by facilitating its promotion in the market, both through Government bodies and public platforms. Unfortunately, today, any innovative product that is brought out in India is not even purchased by the Government

sector due to cumbersome Government procedural formalities. Indigenous technical strength of innovators must be developed steadily, brick by brick. We may even buy IPR's (Intellectual Property Rights) from abroad and build on them.

Q. "India still holds a good position though it is far behind the world economic powers, US and China". Can you elaborate please?

India currently stands fifth among the world economic powers after USA, China, Japan and Germany. China has gone a long way since the 1980s when it was comparable with India. Today, it is at a full-steam pace to overtake USA.

The chances for India to promote itself in the ranking are good provided it maintains continuous sustained efforts in developing a product-focussed value chain in its infrastructure, supply chain connectivity and economic development.

The factors that India has in its favour are:

- Strength in its large population to contribute to growth of GDP.
- Indians have the aptitude to adapt quickly in the changing economic environment, if given the opportunity.
- Indians, even from "B-grade" colleges and towns have shown promising calibre for adaptation and innovation and they must be encouraged by the Government policies which will facilitate 'Make In India' type projects even by foreign companies, speedily. Only then can they be inducted into the workforce with better incomes.
- Many Indians have command over the English Language and this helps in most of the international markets and to access world knowledge and skills.

With concerted efforts in the right direction, India can achieve the fourth position by 2026 and the third position among the world economic powers by 2034, keeping in mind that the other world economies are also in the competitive drive. Persistence is the key.

Q. You have cited China's case of "leapfrogging" to catch up with the technological boom. China follows a political

system that enables it to control and even force change. India, on the other hand, is a democratic country and has its limitations in implementing some its policies because of the tendency of the people to oppose change. You have suggested mindset change and new culture of equipped skills among our youth. How can we do this?

It is true that the one-party political system in China has facilitated implementation of their government policies. However, we need to trace China's path towards becoming a world economic power, to over forty years back when the then leader of China, Deng Xiaoping put China on a new course. Abandoning the strictures of the past, China went in for reforms, encouraging entrepreneurship among the Chinese people.

India, which enjoys full-fledged democracy, faces bigger challenges while implementing its policies, even if they are well-intended. We, as a nation, need to take care not to fritter away our freedom under the premise of liberty and freedom to oppose everything. The social media is helping little in this regard as most of them promote misinformation, disinformation, and fake news. The mood of the people, the media and the government should be towards empowering Indians with modern economic skills and taking India to a strong, sustainable position as a world economic power.

***by Susan Koshy, Editor-in-Chief,
in conversation with Dr Y S Rajan, former Professor,
Scientist, Technologist, ISRO, and Founder Executive
Director, TIFAC.***

Source: Jan 2020 issue of PreSense

Suspension of MPLads Will Affect Rural People – An Appeal to the Government to Reconsider Decision

Recently, the Indian Government decided to implement a 30% salary cut for all Members of Parliament (MPs), and also to suspend MPLads (Member of Parliament Local Area Development Scheme) for two years. Through suspension of MPLads, the Government of India would get Rs.7900 crores. While the Opposition parties have welcomed the salary cut for MPs, they have objected to the suspension of MPLads.

Coronavirus fight: Cabinet passes ordinance to suspend MPLADS fund till 2022

Union minister Prakash Javadekar said the fund from MPLADS scheme will go to Consolidated Fund of India to address the challenges in fight against COVID-19

[BusinessToday/In](#) New Delhi | Last Updated: April 6, 2020 | 17:27 IST

Since many people are not aware of how MPLads works, there are few discussions about it in the mainline media. Some intellectuals have welcomed the Government's move without understanding the concept, due to their misconception about politics and politicians.

Many people are under the wrong impression that the MPs are given Rs.5 crores cash for their expenditure. As per the guidelines of MPLads, the Lok Sabha MPs can utilise the amount only for their parliamentary constituency. The Rajya Sabha MPs can use the funds for the state from where they are elected. The MPs cannot directly spend the money themselves. They can only recommend approved projects to the District Collector / District Magistrate for creation of capital assets against the allocation from MPLads. The District Authorities will implement the projects and claim funds from the Central Government allotment.

Generally, the MPs recommend projects for the construction of toilets, buildings, and water tanks in schools and hospitals owned by the Government. They can also recommend the purchase of ambulances and medical equipment for the government hospitals within their constituency. They can allocate the funds for providing equipment to physically disabled persons. Even link roads connecting villages can be built using this fund. Community

centres can be built to benefit cluster villages. By and large, MPLads has so far benefitted the rural people.

In order to gain the goodwill of the public, MPs would follow up with the district officials for speedy implementation of the projects recommended by them. It would be difficult for the District Collector or the State Governments concerned to execute such projects without MPLads or MLALads funds.

Suspension of MPLads for two years will definitely slow down development projects in the rural areas. Besides a slowdown for at least two years in the post lockdown era, this move would further deprive them of development projects for another two years.

Instead of suspending the entire 10 crores (for two years), the Government of India could have taken Rupees one or two crores per year for the health projects, and permitted the utilisation of the balance amount by the MPs for constituency-specific health and education related projects. The existing guidelines could have been modified accordingly for this purpose.

PreSense appeals to the Hon'ble Prime Minister to reconsider this decision.

by K Srinivasan, Publisher and Managing Editor

Source: April 2020 issue of PreSense

The Ignored Plight of Our 'Migrant' Workers

On 22nd March 2020, when India first went into total lockdown to deal with the threat of the COVID-19 pandemic, there was fear, paranoia, puzzlement, and even ridicule. Soon, reports emerged from the deserted streets across the country. That was when we began to be aware of a section of 4 crore (40 million) of our people who have always been part of our lifeline without our noticing it – the 'migrant' workers who worked in tea shops, restaurants, construction sites, sanitary departments, security of apartments and offices, factories, etc.

These people belong to the unorganised sector and depend on their daily earnings to make their livelihood. These people, when out of work as has happened during lockdown, are immediately deprived of their basic means of survival – '*roti, kapda aur makaan*' (food, clothing and shelter). This migrants' crisis happened because their employers did not pay them their wages during the lockdown period. And the migrants starved.

Towards the conclusion of the initial 21-day lockdown period, there was anticipation by hard-hit companies and entrepreneurs about economic reliefs from the government. But all that these 'migrants' wanted was to go home. Unfortunately, there was no mention about them or any relief for them as the government announced the next phase of the lockdown.

That was when they took matters into their own hands and set out on their long, arduous journey to their hometowns, some homes too far to reach, some travellers too ill-equipped in health, stamina or conveyance to complete their journey. But grit and the longing for home pushed them to their outer limits of tolerance, some making it, several literally falling short in exhaustion, and some in death. Yet, there was no clear respite from the Government for them.

By the third announcement of lockdown, there were vague hints about getting them home. And then started the vulgar negotiations between the central government and the states, between contractors and state-level administrators, and between

transporters and the travellers. The migrants were the hard-hit victims in all these situations. They continued to suffer, walk long miles, fall with hunger and thirst. And India became the butt of insensitivity both to its own society and to the world.

However, considerable relief did come in the form of random Good Samaritans along the way, who brought food and water to these migrant travellers, who facilitated and arranged transportation for them, who pooled money to help them, who coordinated with people in the respective destinations to reach them. These are the people who worked hard but silently, to help these desperate and helpless fellow citizens in their plight. While we applaud their generosity and selfless service, we need to look inward to what we have contributed to make the burden of these hapless people a little lighter.

Has the lockdown really taught us any lesson in humanity? Have we learned to be less selfish? Have we become aware and empathetic towards the people around us, who have so far been invisible but been struggling to stave off starvation and despair? If not, we must. A Biblical verse states: *"For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul?"* This challenging question is worth reflection and introspection. We need to be more than human beings. We need to be human.

by Susan Koshy, Editor-in-Chief

Source: May 2020 issue of PreSense

The Migrant Workers' Issue – Why of the Problem, What Next for the Solution



In the last issue of your eMagazine PreSense, we wrote an Editorial about the 'Ignored Plight of Our Migrant Workers' during the recent lockdown and how they faced a personal crisis and despair due to lack of income and sustenance.

The subject of the Migrant Workers has been taken up as the Cover Story for this month because of the concern over the continued uncertainty about the welfare of these workers. The three areas for examination are:

- Why did the crisis happen with the migrants recently?
- Was there a lacuna in the system or slackness by someone, contributing to this unfortunate situation?
- Is there any remedial course to ensure against such recurrences in future?

Migrant workers who moved out of their hometowns and villages to other states for livelihood, have been working mainly in the unorganised sectors of the industry and in an unorganised system with no records maintained about them at the state or employer's

level. In the absence of any authentic records on these migrants, and with the lockdown in place, the only way to get some information about them was through the volunteers who were in contact with some of the stranded migrants in the state of Tamil Nadu, South India.

Ms Nishath, a qualified social worker, is associated with the trust of a hospital in Chennai, raising funds for surgeries to cure children's heart diseases. During the recent lockdown, Nishath started out by helping the family of her domestic help. Soon she was able to reach out to larger groups of migrant workers by networking with a local pastor (of the Don Bosco group), who has been doing extensive work with migrants, identifying the different groups, stranded by employers and agents in different pockets across the city of Chennai. Thus, she was exposed to a Pandora's box of woeful stories of the plight of the stranded migrant families she got into contact with.

Mr Bagu, who works in the media, has been associated with providing help and aid during environmental crises. He was actively involved in the 2015 Chennai floods, helping in the relief and rescue work.

We also sought the experienced opinion of a serving senior government bureaucrat experienced in technology, as well as that of Mr Devendra Oza, retired bureaucrat who had studied the issue of migrants five years ago.

Why Did the Crisis Happen with the Migrants Recently?

According to Mr Oza, India is a signatory to the protocol with ILO (International Labour Organisation) which seeks to guarantee dignified conditions of work to all kinds of workers throughout the world. The Constitution of India also provides for the Constitutional Protection on Labour Laws, which is to protect workers against any form of exploitation. The Inter-State Migrant Workmen (Regulation of Employment and Conditions of Service) Act, 1979 provides for the migrant's regulated

THE INTER-STATE MIGRANT WORKMEN (Regulation of Employment) AND Conditions of Service) ACT, 1979
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movement and deployment by mandatory registration of such labour by the employer if he hires five or more of them. The Act also spells out the facilities that should be extended to them as migrant employees. However, reality speaks another story.

Mr Oza said, "About five years ago, I studied the migrants who do almost all construction work in Tamil Nadu including high rise buildings. They generally come from Andhra Pradesh, and some of the other adjoining states. The central figure in this is the labour contractor who charges the builder a commission for every worker he provides him. The labour contractor picks up the required number of labourers and takes them to the place where the construction is, usually in Chennai city or any of the smaller cities like Trichy, Coimbatore, Madurai, Tirunelveli, Salem, Vellore etc.

These labourers build shacks for themselves and set up the basic kitchen, where they or their wives cook. They start work the following day, often helped by their children who are underaged. The more the number of people in a family available for work, the more the wages. They have no facilities and no schools where the children can go.

Quite often, after the project is completed, the same labour contractor takes them elsewhere they are needed - either the same city or elsewhere. These migrant labourers, once they join, live in a condition bordering on slavery. They have accepted such work because they have no source of income in their own villages."

Since they are not hired by the employer *per se*, and are supplied by the labour contractor/agent, the employer is not bound by the statutory regulations to register them as employees. Since the labour contractor/agent is not the employer, he is not bound by law to register the names of the workers he brings over.

In such a scenario, when the unusual situation of COVID-19 pandemic and lockdown happened, work ceased and these migrants were immediately out of their jobs. Since the employers and the brokers were not bound by the law to take care of the workers, they were left in the lurch. Therefore, it would have been only on humanitarian grounds that those who brought them over

(the agent) or the employer who had them on hire, could have saved their day. This did not happen.

Since the local government had not kept track of the system of employment of migrant workers with the employers and the brokers in the state, it was also not able to assess the number in this sector that were stranded. The migrant workers became the ignored and forgotten lot. This meant no income, no sustenance, no means of transport to go back home and no one to turn to for assistance or support.

It is reported that the Parliamentary Standing Committee for Labour, chaired by Shri Bhartruhari Mahtab, Member of Parliament, has recently written to State Governments, demanding an explanation on dilution of labour laws during the ongoing coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.

Could the Crisis Have Been Avoided? Was there a Lacuna in the System or Slackness, Contributing to this Unfortunate Situation?

Tada Periyasamy, senior Dalit leader and social worker, believes that the crisis happened because of the lack of a fool-proof system in place whereby the migrant workers' entry into another state had to be compulsorily registered in the state government's record. He alleges a nexus between the employers and the state labour authorities who overlook any deficiency in the compliance of statutory regulations. In the absence of such a mandatory system, the migrants' movement into the state was in no one's records. They were not accounted for when assessment for rations and relief money to be provided to the needy in the state, was done. Thus, only the Good Samaritans who tracked the migrant workers down to help, could reach them and support them.



Homeward Bound Migrant Worker Family
Photo: Bagu

Ms Nishath shared her story of how she by accident, became involved with the migrants, enabling her to facilitate and personally help some of the migrants with groceries, food and the means to return home. She was able to generate funds through her friends, coordinate with some local grocery shops and facilitate through a local government representative to reach the migrants. But, in spite of

many Good Samaritans, only a small fraction of the stranded migrants could be attended to. The rest began their journey home walking.

Mr Bagu recollected how he travelled 70km each way to and from the Tamil Nadu State border with Andhra Pradesh where he found hundreds of weary, hungry, thirsty, dejected and disillusioned migrants, trying to cross the borders as the police at the check posts discouraged them. Bagu said it took him several attempts of persuasion and convincing before the migrants trusted his intentions to help them reach home. They confided about how they felt deserted by the people who employed them, as well as the local government who did not provide for them. Most of the migrants he met were teenagers and youth. He said it was a distressing sight, almost like the post-war migration of 1947, with the migrants walking with no mask, no sandals and no food, and with loneliness staring from their eyes. In the course of the following weeks, Bagu with his friends helped to accommodate them in camps near the border with the help of the police at the borders, before arranging buses to take them to their home states in North and North-east India. About 80% of the thousands of walking migrants and those finally accommodated in trucks, swore that they would not come back from their home state.

If the employers or the local government had addressed their needs, it would have been a different story. When the establishments open up post-lockdown, the migrant workers would have been available and willing to be re-hired to resume working in the pending and future projects and contracts.

"While migrant labourers in many states are up in arms over lack of facilities given to them, including transport to their states, the more than 3.5 lakh 'guest workers' in 19,764 camps in Kerala have no complaints and are waiting for the dangers of the pandemic to pass."

The serving senior government bureaucrat quoted the state of Kerala as a successful example, where the system of registration of migrant workers is being followed seamlessly for the

past ten years. He said this process has helped both the government and the workers immensely. The government has a complete database about the migrant workers with details from their Aadhaar Identity Cards. This enables the workers to enjoy Group/Medical /Life Insurance benefits and financial benefits. In the recent crisis, the database helped the Kerala Government to assess and monitor the number of migrants who stayed in the state, who needed to be paid the allowance for their sustenance, and who intended to return to their hometowns.

The migrants wanting to return home could apply to the State Migrants' Welfare Board where they are registered, and their tickets and travel would be organised by the State Government in a similar manner the international passengers were assisted to fly back to their homes abroad, and from abroad. The media and the migrant workers in Kerala had complimented the State Government for their exemplary management of the workers and their welfare. The Economic Times publication reported, *"While migrant labourers in many states are up in arms over lack of facilities given to them, including transport to their states, the more than 3.5 lakh 'guest workers' in 19,764 camps in Kerala have no complaints and are waiting for the dangers of the pandemic to pass."*

He added that the database enabled the state government to even track down any miscreants/fugitives among the migrants who might have moved states escaping from the law.

Is there Any Remedial Action to Ensure Against Such Recurrences in Future?

- 1) The unanimous suggestion by all the persons interviewed for this Cover Story was the regularisation of the migrants' entry and employment in the migrated states through registration of their identity and movements in and out of the state. This will ensure that their welfare too is taken care of. The suggestion is the issue of passes to the migrants on entry into the state. For successful implementation of this proposal, the migrant workers should be informed and educated on the relevance of obtaining identity cards/passes for themselves that permit them to work in the state and be entitled to the government-sanctioned benefits. When they are registered thus, the local government will have a record with details of the migrant workers in the state. This will enable the government to assess and provide for the rations, allowances and other government benefits that they are eligible for. Unregistered migrant workers should be deemed illegal and sent back to their home states. The practice in Kerala is a benchmark to follow.
- 2) Ms Nishath recommends that the local police could handle this exercise of registration of migrants in their jurisdiction to make it easier for every type of employer, including domestic, to register the migrant workers.
- 3) The police should be on the alert to raid places like fast food hubs like *pani-puri* which are usually run by migrant workers, to check if they are registered as per requirement.
- 4) Tada Periyasamy says that since there are already migrant workers in the states, preliminary steps could be initiated by the state government labour officers to register the migrants at their respective work places in the states. Even in case of a mishap or personal accident, his identity card would help in

identifying the victim and extending the health insurance cover that he would be eligible for.

- 5) The senior tech-savvy government bureaucrat suggested that for sprucing up the management of the system, there should be coordination among the District Collectors through the social media (Whatsapp) at the intra-state level and even inter-state level, to monitor the movement of the migrant workers in case of their travel back home as in the recent case during lockdown. It would ensure smooth passage of the migrants across the districts of the state and across the state borders till they reach home.

Once the system of mandatory registration of the migrant workers with the local government is followed, the government will have a database of these workers to tap in case of another crisis as had happened recently.

The lacuna is apparently the lack of the will to do it.

by Susan Koshy, Editor-in-Chief
Source: June 2020 issue of PreSense

Ban Political Activism in Educational Institutions



Image Courtesy: www.edexlive.com

During India's pre-independence struggle, the extraordinary circumstances in the country lured students to participate as freedom fighters and patriotic protesters against British rule in India. The students joined Indian political parties and groups in their united struggle against the British administration. If we look around in the world and even in India, the student fraternity has been a strong, powerful and influential force to reckon in any nation-wide movement.

During the academic years in college, students vie for positions in student unions and communities. These positions are therefore often fiercely contested by talented and competent student candidates who display qualities of leadership. Winning and serving in positions in student communities is a bonus credit to the student, fortifying his prospects in the career market. Holding such positions of power also wins power and respect among the students and the teaching fraternity of the institution. Students

are also naturally ambitious to seize such privileges, working hard for them.

But an unfortunate trend has crept into the higher educational institutions over the years in post-independent India. Student unions and leaders are affiliated to opposing political parties, thus blemishing the sanctity of student activity in the campus that was intended for holistic development of the student through extracurricular activities, and learning outside the classroom. Political parties exploit the ambitious enthusiasm of the youth and lure them into adorning political flagships to the associations they belong.

According to a former student leader of a renowned city college, who won the college elections purely on the merits of his capability and leadership traits, this trend of political affiliations has become especially pronounced in the past decade. What used to be a battle of talents and skills to win a college election, has turned out in most higher education colleges, including reputed ones, to be a political battle as the contesting student candidates are often backed by political parties. Thus, college elections in the student community become a contest of political might rather than personal competence.

This unhealthy practice has polluted the atmosphere in the corridors of the institutions. Students are misled to believe that political power and affiliation is more important than value-based skills and character development. Such students forget the reason they are in college, which is to learn, be educated and leave the corridors as a young adult ready to start his life in the working world. Instead, they involve themselves in political activities, shirk their studies, exploit their political contacts in order to continue in the college beyond their eligible tenure, enjoying the subsidised facilities and other perks as a student even though they are not entitled to them. Unfortunately, the administrative authorities of the institutions turn a blind eye to these 'student politicians' because of the bullying influence of the political parties they belong to.

A reputed senior and experienced educationist who had headed leading educational institutions across the world, said that educational institutions in developed countries as USA, UK and those in Europe do not have this trend of political affiliation and interference in their universities and colleges and their student communities. The students and the teaching administration as well as the respective local governments are explicit about the role and objective of the students who join colleges and universities for higher studies. The students' focus there is on completing their academic course on time, earning as many credits as they can, and their extracurricular activities and student unions are opportunities for wholesome development of their personalities. He also said that the trend of political affiliation of student unions was prevalent only in developing countries where the system of governance and administration is flawed and corrupt. Another senior and experienced professor, who used to be leader of students' unions abroad, said, "In Europe and USA, there is activism but the laws hold individuals and organisations responsible."

The recently released National Educational Policy 2020 spells out ways and means for the holistic development of the students to produce responsible, conscientious young citizens of integrity. The Policy recommends value-based education to achieve this objective. The Policy should have strongly recommended a ban on political interference, activity and affiliation in educational institutions and student communities, thus enabling students to accomplish their main purpose of enrolment – to study, gain knowledge and groom their personalities, and leave the institution promptly after the prescribed academic tenure. As young and individual adults, they are free to pursue their political ambitions – outside the purview of educational institutions, and with their own time and money.

The educational institution is the Temple of Knowledge. It earned that prestigious title from the traditional education system of ancient India. These temples were centres of learning. True patriotism, which is what politicians and political aspirants generally profess, begins with respecting our heritage and respecting our Temple of Knowledge, and not contaminating it with the colours of political fervour and interference.

by Susan Koshy, Editor-in-Chief

Source: August 2020 issue of PreSense

NEP 2020 – Education Policy on a Revamp



(Image Courtesy: mhrd.gov.in)

Introduction

Recently, the Indian Government-approved National Education Policy 2020 (NEP 2020), was in the news and was widely discussed about its impact, as against the existing Policy. As the introductory line in the Policy emphasises, 'education is fundamental for achieving full human potential, developing an equitable and just society, and promoting national development'.

Education could mean different things to different people. Education is defined as the process of facilitating learning or acquiring knowledge, skills, values, beliefs and habits to imbibe them for life and practice. There are various methods to impart education viz teaching, training, storytelling, discussions and research. But true education happens not just within the walls of a classroom with a salaried teacher but outside the walls too. Education is broadly classified as formal, informal and non-formal. Formal education happens within the classroom with a structured curriculum and syllabus. Non-formal education generally happens beyond the walls of the classroom but usually within a structured curriculum and syllabus, possibly through observations, conversations and experiences. Informal education falls outside the curriculum and the classroom (physical and virtual). Personal learnings from family, peers, society and personal experiences are examples of informal learning.

NEP 2020 addresses the structured education policy. It has taken centre-stage in the media and the people at large because the new Policy recommends a remodelling of the current education system so that students "not only learn but more importantly, learn how

to learn". If implemented seamlessly, NEP 2020 would address late Dr APJ Abdul Kalam's conviction that "all of us do not have equal talent but all of us have equal opportunity to develop our talent".

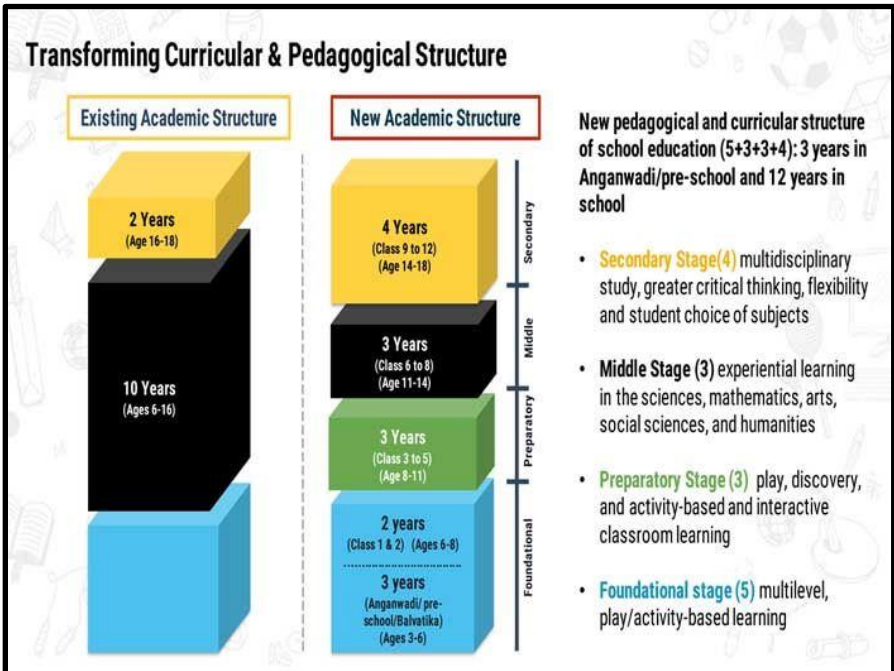
Initiation of NEP 2020

NEP 2020 replaces the National Policy on Education 1986 (modified in 1992). The first education policy of the country was enacted in 1968. The latest education policy was initiated in 2015 and after some intervening draft reports and amendments, in 2017, a Committee was constituted under the chairmanship of Dr K Kasturirangan, former chief of ISRO (Indian Space Research Organisation) and Padma Vibhushan (second highest civilian award of the Republic of India) recipient. The other Committee Members were:

- Vasudha Kamat, former Vice Chancellor, SNDT University, Mumbai;
- K J Alphonse, Retired Bureaucrat;
- Manjul Bhargava, Professor of Mathematics, Princeton University, USA;
- Ram Shankar Kureel, Vice Chancellor, Baba Saheb Ambedkar University of Social Sciences, Mhow, Madhya Pradesh State;
- T V Kattamani, Vice Chancellor, Indira Gandhi National Tribal University, Amarkantak, Madhya Pradesh State;
- K M Tripathy, Chairman, Uttar Pradesh High School and Intermediate Examination Board
- Mazhar Asif, Professor of Persian, Guwahati University;
- M K Shridhar, Member, Central Advisory Board of Education & Member Secretary of Karnataka Innovation Council and Karnataka Knowledge Commission.

The final submission of the draft of the new education policy was made to the Hon'ble Minister of Human Resources Development, Government of India in May 2019. The Government of India stated that NEP 2020 was formulated after considering nearly 2 lakh suggestions taken from 2.5 lakh Gram Panchayats, 6,600 Blocks, 6,000 Urban Local Bodies and 676 Districts. These statistics reflect efforts towards a people-participative and inclusive policy.

School Education



(Image Courtesy: Times Now)

NEP 2020 overhauls the structure of education of students from pre-school up to post-school higher education. The new structure introduces three additional initial years (from three years of age) of the total five years of foundational education that are formative years of activity-based learning. The post-school higher education is a four-year education structure as against the current three.

Some of the key features of the schooling structure recommended by NEP 2020 are:

1. Early Childhood Care and Pre-School Education that forms the foundation of learning because "Over 85% of a child's cumulative brain development occurs prior to the age of 6, indicating the critical importance of appropriate care and stimulation of the brain in the early years in order to ensure

healthy brain development and growth.” It involves play-based, activity-based, and inquiry-based learning. This will include indoor and outdoor play, puzzles and logical thinking, problem-solving, visual art and craft, drama and puppetry, music and movement, in addition to regular classroom learning. It also includes a focus on developing social capacities, sensitivity, good behaviour, courtesy, ethics, personal and public cleanliness, teamwork, and co-operation. The foundation stage of schooling covers three years of *Anganwadi* or pre-school, followed by two years of regular schooling in classes 1 and 2 (covering ages 6-8 years). The remaining stages of schooling are preparatory (classes 3 to 5 covering ages 8-11 years), middle (classes 6 to 8 covering ages 11-14 years) and secondary (four years in two phases of class 9 and 10, and classes 11 and 12).

2. The student will enjoy the flexibility of choosing subjects from across the streams, as against the current fixed menu of subjects.
3. A three-language policy to introduce the student to multi-language proficiency, with emphasis on the local language/mother tongue till class 8, to encourage proficiency in one's native language. Sanskrit, recognised as the rich, classical, scientific and enriching ancient language of India, is recommended for inclusion in the three-language formula to encourage the student to learn and appreciate its rich Indian heritage.
4. Focus of the education is towards learning how to learn as against the culture of rote learning. To achieve this, the curriculum content is to be reduced to core essentials, and provide more space for critical thinking and inquiry-based, discovery-based, discussion-based, and analysis-based learning.
5. Emphasis on learning about the ancient “Indian Knowledge Systems” that have got lost in the realms of the current system of education that still bear colonised (British) influence. Inclusion of basic ethical reasoning, traditional Indian values

and all basic human and constitutional values. Such value-based education is critical in grooming culturally and ethically rounded citizens to carry India forward to wholesome development.

6. Equipping with well-trained and motivated teachers to effectively impart meaningful education to the students. The Policy envisages a four-year integrated B.Ed (Bachelor of Education) degree from multi-disciplinary universities by 2030.
7. Inclusive and equitable education so that every child gets the opportunity to learn and excel, irrespective of the social background or birth. There are suggestions on ways to bridge the gap in the opportunities available for education for certain vulnerable groups of the Indian society termed the Socially and Economically Disadvantaged Groups (SEDGs). Nourishment at school right from breakfast onwards for underprivileged school children is emphasised for implementation to ensure against dropouts and malnourished children.
8. Board level assessment of students are recommended to encourage consistent performance over the years of education instead of a bullet-style assessment at the end of secondary schooling as is prevalent in the current education structure.

Higher Education

1. Undergraduate degree to be of either 3 or 4-year duration, with multiple exit options within this period, with appropriate certifications, as certificate after completing 1 year in a discipline or field including vocational and professional areas, or a diploma after 2 years of study, or a Bachelor's degree after a 3-year programme. The 4-year multidisciplinary Bachelor's programme, would be the preferred option since it provides the full range of holistic and multidisciplinary education.
2. As in the case of schooling, university education to be holistic and multi-disciplinary in line with traditional Indian education as in Nalanda and Takshashila, and with the integration of vocational education programmes into mainstream education in all education institutions. Quality academic research in all fields

of higher education is to be encouraged through a new National Research Foundation.

3. University affiliations and deemed university status to be done away with and instead autonomy to be given to colleges to grant degrees. The M.Phil Course will be discontinued immediately.
4. Top-rated global universities to be facilitated in India and Indian universities to go global.
5. The option of Open and Distance Learning (ODL) to be available to the student. ODL programmes will aim to be equivalent to the highest quality in-class programmes available.

Regulatory Mechanism

The Committee has recommended some stringent regulatory mechanisms to ensure the standards and procedures are adhered to, to maintain a consistently high standard of education at school and higher education levels. It also covered the essential infrastructural and related facilities that must be provided and maintained in the educational institutions. It is noteworthy that the Committee has made a special mention about provision of adequate toilets in the schools (a facility that is currently lacking or inadequate in most of the rural and government schools).

Conclusion

NEP 2020 is an ideal package for Vision India to emerge with a generation of well-grounded citizens with levels of high value in education, ethics and skills, to take the country far ahead in global standing and domestic sustainability. The challenge is in the seamless implementation of the recommendations. With almost every other policy and law in the country, the lacuna is in effective implementation that is marred by a shoddy and corrupt value system. The challenge therefore is in the implementation to the word and spirit of NEP 2020.

by Susan Koshy, Editor-in-Chief

Source: August 2020 issue of PreSense

NEP 2020 – Exclusive Comments

- The Education Policy lays particular emphasis on the development of the creative potential of each individual.
- Countries which groomed their children in their own languages have now shifted their position, making children to gain proficiency in English as the second language. This is needed for acquiring scientific knowledge and business opportunities to compete in the globalised world. English may not be our language, but its status for global connectivity cannot be ruled out. Therefore, what we need is a two-language formula with mother tongue and English so that the load is less on the children to study. It is open for anybody to master many languages to become a genius.
- The policy encourages foreign universities among the top 100 in the world to set up campuses in India. Allowing foreign universities to establish campus is suicidal. Every good student will like to target foreign universities. Indian universities will lose their importance. Instead, Indian universities can be encouraged and given autonomy to have tie-up with world-renowned universities for higher level of research, technology build-up to get world ranking, to undertake research in specific areas jointly for Indians to get Nobel Prize. Give incentive to private institutions to bring excellent research.



– Dr A Sivathanu Pillai, Eminent Scientist,& Father of Brahmos Missile Project

Source: August 2020 issue of PreSense

Though belated by 34 years, NEP 2020 is a well thought out and designed Policy for quick implementation and effective monitoring using technology. The key features that especially stand out in the Policy are:

- focus on early childhood care, emphasising not just care but also the cognitive and physical development of the child under the care of specifically trained teachers, and
- Local language policy that enables students to learn core subjects in the local language of convenience in the formative years of education. Being a scientifically proven effective method in learning, immediate implementation as a compulsory section of quality education in local language even in English medium schools is recommended.



***– Shri P Ravi, Former Regional Director,
National Institute of Open Schooling (NIOS)***

Source: August 2020 issue of PreSense

Oil Prices Crash Globally, but India Raises Fuel Prices

The Indian Government raised fuel prices (diesel/petrol) 22 times in 21 days even as crude oil prices went cart wheeling globally on the back of a second wave of COVID-19 attack that left global economic activity virtually crippled, particularly the logistics and tourism industries. Diesel and petrol prices peaked to record highs of up to Rs.80 plus per litre after the Government enhanced the excise levies on diesel and petrol, causing a cascading effect on the prices of commodities transported across the country. Petrol moves cars, diesel transports passengers on buses, and commodities on trucks. The price rise came at the worst of times when the common people have lost jobs or experienced pay cuts, and were locked out of regular economic activity.



The Union Minister for Petroleum & Natural Gas, and Steel, Mr Dharmendra Pradhan justified the price hike, saying, India was facing challenging times in the energy sector as the global oil and energy markets had become highly volatile and unstable. He assured that the prices would find a natural level once the global energy markets stabilised. COVID-19 has made the energy markets in India and the globe highly unstable, he said.

It was a bizarre situation for the common man in India to understand because crude oil prices were crashing globally on piled up inventories, especially among the OPEC (Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries) countries, due to the global lockdown in over 210 countries. There was no offtake or movement of crude oil across the seas as oil tankers were stranded on high seas. India was merrily raising the prices of petrol and diesel 22 times in over three weeks.

Trend of Fuel Price in India for June 2020 (Rates per Litre)

Parameters	Petrol (Rates/Litre)	Diesel (Rates/Litre)
1 st June 2019	Rs.71.26	Rs.69.39
30 th June 2019	Rs.80.43	Rs.80.53
Highest Rate in June 2019	Rs.80.47 (29 th June 29)	Rs.80.53 (29 th & 30 th June)
Lowest Rate in June 2019	Rs.71.26 (1 st to 4 th June)	Rs.69.39 (1 st to 4 th June)
Overall Performance	Incline (Increase)	Incline (Increase)
Percentage Change	12.86%	16.05%

The Government has not given any justification for raising the prices. But here is the reason. A 120-day shutdown, still counting, all around India disrupted the manufacturing and economic activity. There has been wage cuts and layoffs, and Public Sector Undertakings especially, have sent a section of the staff on leave without pay. The result is that the Government lost substantial revenue in terms of taxes, especially GST (Goods & Services Tax) and Direct Taxes on commodities. The GST revenue loss is estimated at Rs.1.15 lakh crore (\$16 billion). These revenues are the source for the Government to carry out all the public works like building roads, highways, and such infrastructure work for the country.

Since April 2020, India has witnessed back to back lockdowns, now into version 4.0, with almost all shops shutting down, barring those for essential products. Every sector has turned red with the retail sector particularly bearing the brunt of the lockdown. According to media reports, these losses have directly impacted the GST revenues of the Central and the State Governments.

The Confederation of All India Traders (CAIT) in a statement as early as 12th May 2020, stated, "The Indian retail sector has lost a gigantic sum of approximately Rs 7.50 lakh crore business in this period which has resulted in GST revenue loss to Central and State Governments to the tune of about Rs 1.15 lakh crore". Even if the Government were to lift the lockdown partially or wholly, the retailers' customer turnover is expected to remain as low as 20%

due to a lower number of customers as compared to the pre-COVID-19 situation, the reports indicated.

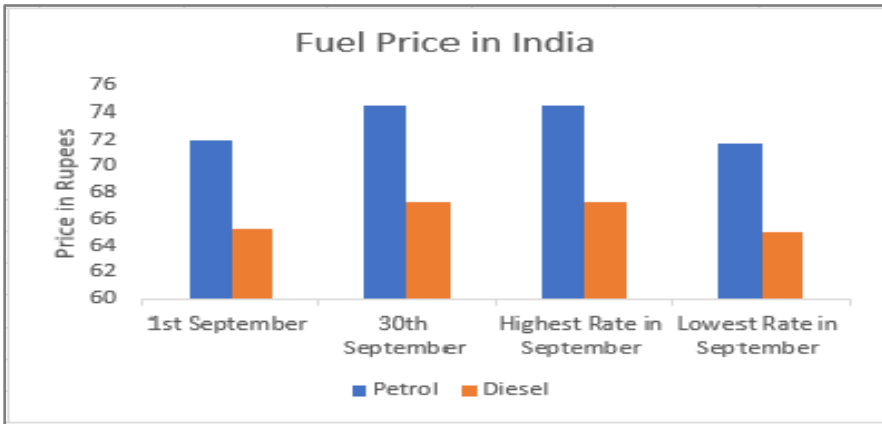
Post-lockdown, businesses need to adopt new norms like taking recourse to digital payments in order to survive, or to quote CAIT's statement, "Upgraded and modernised retail format, health safety precautionary measures, round the clock internal security systems, adoption of digital and contactless payments and other business technologies will be the new paradigm of businesses."

Our next door *kirana* (grocery) stores have to adopt online platforms to expand their customer reach. Reliance Retail was quick to adapt by integrating the process to evolve physical stores with its e-commerce platform, 'JioMart'.

Comparative Fuel Prices in September 2019

The petrol price in India stood at Rs.67.01 per litre on 1st September 2019 while the diesel price recorded Rs.65.26 per litre the same day. The petrol rose to Rs.71.75 per litre on 8th September 2019. However, in the second week, the fuel price in India rose further due to US-Iran tensions.

The prices kept on increasing after a wave of drones hit the state-owned Saudi Aramco facilities, the world's largest petrol processing facility located in Saudi Arabia. The petrol price closed the month at Rs.74.46 per litre, the highest recorded price for the month of September 2019. Similarly, the diesel price closed at Rs.67.36 per litre, again the highest recorded price for the month. The overall performance of fuel prices in India was 3.40% and 3.21% respectively, trending upwards.



Since oil prices were crashing, India has thought it prudent to stockpile oil as it fell below \$30 per barrel (\$26 per barrel) from a high of \$70 per barrel a few months ago, thus increasing its strategic petroleum reserve (SPR) by buying oil from Saudi Arabia and UAE – the two main competitors in the global market. Saudi Arabia had increased its oil output from less than 10 million barrels a day to 13 million barrels per day. The COVID-19 spread has spread across the world rapidly, drastically reducing the demand in many countries and this was the time for India to capitalise on the stockpiling.

by T N Ashok, Consulting Editor

Source: August 2020 issue of PreSense

Contempt of Court



In a democratic system of governance that prevails in India, freedom of expression is enlisted as a right under the Constitution of India. However, these rights have their limitations. One such limitation relates to any act that could be derogatory to the dignity

of the judiciary system or its courts. This is called 'Contempt of Court'.

Contempt of court, often referred to simply as 'contempt', is the offence of being disobedient to, or disrespectful toward a court of law and its officials in a manner that defies the authority, justice and dignity of the court. Words spoken or written which obstruct or tend to obstruct the administration of justice can be classified as contempt. Historically, contempt of court, was originally introduced as a concept seeking to protect judicial institutions from specific motivated attacks, unfounded or unwarranted criticism, and as a legal remedy to punish those indulging in such activities.

There were pre-Independence laws dealing with contempt of court in India. The High Courts of Calcutta, Bombay and Madras had their own powers to punish any one for contempt by virtue of their inheriting the powers by Supreme Court in these presidencies. When the Constitution was adopted, contempt of court was made one of the restrictions on freedom of speech and expression enshrined in Article 19(1)(a). Article 129 of the Constitution conferred on the Supreme Court the power to punish contempt of itself (Supreme Court), and Article 215 conferred a corresponding power on the High Courts. Subsequently, The Contempt of Courts Act, 1971, was passed in India giving statutory backing to the concept of 'Contempt of Court'.

Classification of Contempt of Court

Contempt of court is classified as civil and criminal.

- Civil Contempt is when someone wilfully disobeys a court order or breaches an undertaking given to a court.
- Criminal contempt is more interesting and deserves an elaborate discussion because of its complexity. Criminal contempt could be the use of 'spoken or written words' that 'scandalise or tend to scandalise' or lower the dignity of the court, prejudices or interference with any judicial proceedings' or obstruction of the administration of justice. Making allegations against the judiciary or individual judges, attributing motives to judgements or judiciary motions and any scurrilous attack on the conduct of the judges are often considered to be matters that scandalise the judiciary. These provisions are listed out to ensure that the judiciary which are expected to command the highest level of respect in the society are not obstructed in their dispensation of justice by unfounded attacks.

The punishment for contempt of court is simple imprisonment for a term up to six months and/or a fine of upto Rs.2,000/-.

When 'Contempt of Court' was News Recently

Advocate Prashant Bhushan is a leading lawyer in India. Recently, the Supreme Court brought up a case of contempt of court against him, initiating *suo motu* (action taken on its own accord without any request from the parties involved) contempt proceedings against him for his tweets, where he published a photo of the Chief Justice of India riding a motorbike, and also criticised the role of the Supreme Court in the recent years, and his unproven allegations of corruption against some past Chief Justices of India in an interview to a magazine. The Supreme Court said that these tweets undermined the dignity and the office of the Chief Justice of India in the public eye.

The verdict for this case is out. But the debate among the advocates and the public, "What is the limit to which one can

express one's opinion about the judiciary, and what exactly are the issues concerning the dignity of court?" may continue.

by V Rajendran, Editor

Source: August 2020 issue of PreSense

Do Political Parties Follow Democratic Norms in the Parliament?

The Monsoon session of the Parliament was held for 10 days from 14th September 2020 to 23rd September 2020 even though it was originally scheduled for 18 days. Around 68% of the Members of Parliament (MPs) participated in the session. Both the Houses (Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha) made appropriate arrangements for the MPs, to ensure maintenance of physical distancing protocols due to the ongoing Coronavirus pandemic.

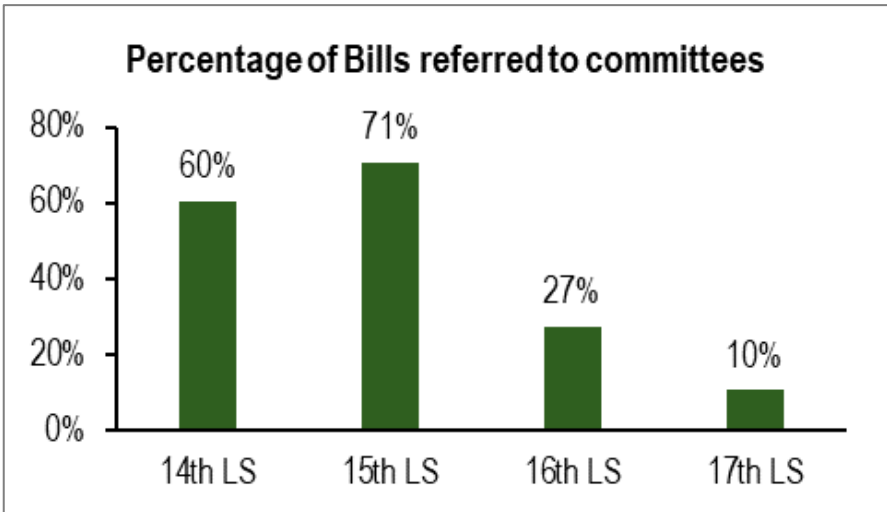
During the session, the Parliament functioned in two parts, with one House sitting in the morning and the other, in the afternoon. However, the session was curtailed because of a public health emergency when several MPs were diagnosed with Covid-19. The Parliament adjourned *sine die* on 23rd September 2020, after functioning for 10 days. Lok Sabha worked 145% of the scheduled time of the sitting days; Rajya Sabha, 99%. Both the Houses of Parliament met after a gap of 175 days – six days ahead of the constitutional requirement of a maximum gap of six months between sessions.

Legislative Business

In the Monsoon session, 20 new Bills were introduced (excluding the Appropriation Bills). Of these, eleven Bills were to replace Ordinances. These include three Bills related to agriculture trade and contract farming, one to expand RBI's regulation of cooperative banks, and three relating to Labour Codes on Social Security, Industrial Relations, and Occupational Safety.

Twenty-five Bills were passed by the Parliament (excluding the Appropriation Bills). On an average, Lok Sabha discussed a Bill for 1.5 hours, and Rajya Sabha discussed a Bill for about an hour, before passing it. Lok Sabha discussed and passed the three Labour Codes within three hours, and Rajya Sabha passed them after 1 hour 45 minutes of discussion. Rajya Sabha passed 13 Bills within 7.5 hours in the last two days.

Allegations Against the Government



Political observers and Opposition parties blame the Government for hurriedly passing the Bills without detailed discussions in the Houses. Rajya Sabha passed 13 Bills within 7.5 hours in the last two days.

In spite of the negative growth of GDP, there was no discussion on the current economic situation, in both the Houses.

There is also a general feeling amongst experts that the present Government does not give enough importance to the Standing Committees as they do not refer the Bills to the Committees for scrutiny. In earlier years, Bills were referred to the Committees, where they get fine-tuned to the best interest of the public. In the current 17th Lok Sabha, only 10% of the Bills introduced so far have been referred to Committees. It is much lower than the 14th (60%), 15th (71%) and 16th (27%) Lok Sabha.

Another criticism against the ruling Government is that they take unduly long time to elect the Deputy Speaker. In the current 17th Lok Sabha, even after 464 days after the commencement of the first session, the Deputy Speaker is not yet elected. This is the longest period in the history of Lok Sabha, to go without a Deputy

Speaker. In the 16th Lok Sabha, the Government took 70 days to elect the Deputy Speaker. Previously, this period was highest in the 12th Lok Sabha (269 days). Otherwise, the Deputy Speaker is normally elected within a short time of less than a month.



Ruckus in the Parliament
(Photo courtesy: indianexpress.com)

Criticism against Opposition

While the Opposition blames the Government for not following the Parliamentary norms, they are guilty of creating ruckus in the House and misbehaving before the Chair in the Rajya Sabha, leading to suspension of 8 Members. They boycotted the sessions too. This enabled the Government to pass the Bills without serious discussions. Creating a ruckus in the House, and stalling the proceedings have become a trend in the past 15 years. Stalling the proceedings is against the principles of democracy.

The Opposition may have genuine reasons for drawing the attention of the nation on any issue. But creating a ruckus and stalling the proceedings are against the interests of the people. They have to adopt different methods, like the mature

After over 70 years of Independence, the least the citizens can expect from the Government and the Opposition is a high level of maturity by following the democratic and defined norms in the Parliament.

democracies in UK and USA.

The people elect the Members to the Parliament to take care of the interest of the people and the nation and to frame suitable policies. Unless the ruling and opposition parties respect and value the traditions of the Parliamentary practices, our democracy cannot be successful. The ruling and the Opposition parties should instil confidence among the citizens by respecting and adhering to democratic and Parliamentary norms.

After over 70 years of Independence, the least the citizens can expect from the Government and the Opposition is a high level of maturity by following the democratic and defined norms in the Parliament.

***By K Srinivasan, Publisher and Managing Editor
(Data and graphics courtesy: PRS Legislative Research)
Source: September 2020 issue of PreSense***

Ban Online Gambling and Related Advertisements to Save Youth

Youth commits suicide after losing Rs 15 lakh in online gambling game in Mancherial

 **Roja Mayabrahma**
Hans News Service | 12 July 2020 9:24 AM IST

HIGHLIGHTS

A 24-year-old youngster committed suicide after he lost Rs 15 lakh to the fraudsters in an online gambling game Dafabet.

News > Mirror Now > Crime > Chennai: 20-year-old student ends life after losing savings in online gambling; suicide note recovered

Chennai: 20-year-old student ends life after losing savings in online gambling; suicide note recovered

Crime

 **Mirror Now Digital**
Updated Jul 20, 2020 | 22:58 IST

ANDHRA PRADESH

Gambling addiction on the rise among youth

 **Rajulapudi Srinivas**

VIJAYAWADA, JUNE 21, 2020 23:01 IST
UPDATED: JUNE 21, 2020 23:01 IST

Man, 28, loses money in online rummy, ends life

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Chennai: The city police are investigating the death of a 28-year-old man who hanged himself in Sembium allegedly after losing money while playing rummy online.

The deceased was identified as M. Kumaresan. A native of Adhanur in Villupuram district, he was working in the city as a collection agent for a private bank.

His roommates found him hanging around 11pm on Tuesday night. Personnel from Sembium police station rushed to the scene and took Kumaresan to the Government Stanley Hospital, where he was declared 'brought dead'.

Preliminary investigations revealed that the deceased was addicted to online gambling and would stay awake till early hours of the day playing rummy.

His family members told investigators that he never sent any money home. His monthly salary was about Rs 10,000 and he had borrowed Rs 1 lakh from his father recently, which he lost while gambling. Sembium police have registered a case and are investigating, police said.

Shocking recent media reports

The recent shocking reports in the media about the suicide of many youngsters after losing money in online gambling is highly disturbing. The unregulated screaming advertisements on television and other online media inviting people to play rummy add more serious concern. It is reported that many youngsters have become addicted to internet gambling.

Gambling in India is governed by The Public Gaming Act of 1867, The Madras Police Act of 1888 and the Tamil Nadu Gaming Act of 1930 in the state. Gambling is listed in the List II of the Seventh Schedule of Indian Constitution and the States are empowered to enact laws to regulate gambling. Goa, Sikkim and Nagaland have permitted gambling online and offline. In the majority of the other States, gambling is permitted in specific places which are called

'Gaming Houses', after taking permission from the authorities concerned.

The Hon'ble Supreme Court has permitted gaming activities like rummy with stakes, which has been described as a game with "preponderance of skill over chance". When these cases were decided, online gambling was not prevalent. Today, a situation has arisen where online gambling has become popular but has neither been specifically prohibited nor permitted. A grey area exists which needs to be addressed expeditiously. In the online Rummy gambling, a person uses the internet to play the game. Cards are dealt virtually and the player does not know whether he plays with a machine or a real human being. Any fraud committed in the physical domain can be detected, but any fraud committed in the virtual domain is almost impossible to detect. Every game could be a 'fixed match'. 'Match fixing' is illegal in India.

Our ancient scriptures like Rig Veda and Mahabharata describe the evils of gambling. In Arthasastra, Chanakya has laid down some stringent conditions for operating Gaming Houses. If there was any violation, the gaming house owner and players were penalised heavily.

All card games, lotteries, IPL betting, commodity trading by unrecognised exchanges, currency trading by unauthorised people are freely available online in India.

Some of the major challenges arising out of online gambling:

- Unlimited losses will ruin the family of the player.
- It will lead to a rise in crimes on the streets.
- Most of the money gets transferred outside India through the hawala channel. Technical manipulations seem to be taking place to circumvent the Money Laundering Act by the game operators. It is also reported that the money is used for drug trafficking and terrorism activities.
- Already people are addicted to the internet. Gambling is more addictive. These two reinforce each other. This will lead the player to pick up other addictions like drugs and alcohol.

- It is also reported that several gaming sites use crypto currencies as a medium of transaction and this will damage the nation's economy, because of unregulated currency flow.
- Through TV and online advertisements, children and housewives are targeted and encouraged to play.
- Personal information is taken, mostly in an unauthorised manner, by the game operator and he uses this information to profile the player and to sell the data to others.

PreSense appeals to the Government of India to immediately address this issue without delay and consider the following suggestions:

- To pass laws to ban or at least regulate such online gaming/gambling websites and permit only restricted access to identified persons (KYC regulated) with strict surveillance over the transactions, limiting betting amounts and monitoring operation of such sites;
- To sensitise the public on the dangers of gambling on the same lines and issue statutory warnings in a similar manner as is done for tobacco users;
- To put in place strict guidelines like antecedent verification, player admission screening, profiling etc before granting admission and creating and maintaining databases of such people after granting access; and
- To consider putting in place rules and guidelines for such practitioners including possible issue of licenses to practice the profession.

Shri S N Ravichandran, a Cyber Security Expert and Social Worker from Coimbatore has filed Public Interest Litigation in the Madras High Court seeking the intervention of the Hon'ble High Court to address the issues urgently. The Court has taken up the case for hearing and issued notices to all concerned.

By K Srinivasan, Publisher & Mg. Editor and V Rajendran, Editor

Source: October 2020 issue of PreSense

Indian Govt Passes Three Major Farm Bills as Part of Agrarian Reforms

The Indian Government has passed three major legislations in Parliament as part of its major effort to put agrarian reforms on track. The two major bills passed were – The Farmers Produce and Trade and Commerce (Promotion and Facilitation) Bill and the Farmers (Empowerment & Protection) Agreement of Price Assuance and Farm Services Bill. The third legislation related to Essential Commodities Act. All three legislations replace ordinances promulgated by the government before the onset of Parliament's Monsoon session.

Reactions:

Prime Minister Modi in a series of tweets described the legislation as a watershed moment in the history of Indian Agriculture. The members of ruling party (BJP) called it a big bang reform. But the Congress led opposition dubbed the legislations as being "historic for all the wrong reasons". The opposition demanded the bills be referred to a Joint Select Committee of the House for further examination of its provisions. BJP's long-time and strongest ally Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD) was disappointed about the Bill and its minister in the cabinet, Harsimran Kaur Badal resigned from the cabinet over the issue.

What the Bills contain?

The first bill seeks to prohibit the state governments from collecting market fees, cess or levies for trade outside notified APMC (Agricultural Produce Market Committee) *mandis*. APMC is a marketing board established by a State Government to safeguard the farmers from exploitation by large retailers, and to ensure that farm-to-retail-price spread does not become excessively high. It also removes inter-state barriers and provides a framework for electronic trading directly between a buyer and a farmer breaking state control over farmers, enabling them to choose the buyer and of course the price. This roots out money laundering practices too. State Governments are fuming over their alleged loss of control of farm produce and their distribution.

The second Bill opens up the market further and allows farmers to sell directly to corporate entities engaged in agricultural trade. The big players are Walmart, Pepsi Foods, Reliance and ITC Agro. Farmers led by the Opposition fear that prices can be manipulated by the corporate lobbies to their advantage with their infrastructure for distribution, financial and muscle power. But Government dismisses such fears as baseless, hoping that the competition among corporates will fetch a better price to farmers.

The third legislation is essentially an amendment seeking to take out some commodities from the essential commodities list – potatoes, tomatoes and onions, with the government justifying the move that removal of these commodities from the essential commodities list, will enable the farmers to stock these in their godowns or elsewhere and sell them when the market is favourable, instead of letting the huge, monopolistic middle-men do it.

Opposition's concern:

The concern of the Opposition is that the move undermines food security. But this is not true, says the Government, defending the legislations. The Government assures that the states still retain the power to control distribution and regularise it especially in times of exigencies like famine, shortages, wars etc. The legislations seem to strike at the heart of a big problem in the demand supply management, hoarders and black marketers. Under the new legislations, they are sought to be rooted out. In a nutshell, the Government is trying to open up the agriculture market, ensuring minimum price and food security. The Minimum Support Price (MSP) continues to hold good, to ensure fair price for the farmers produce.

Some farmer organisations are protesting, maybe because of lack of clarity on the MSP issue which they fear is being dispensed with, though actually it is not. The Centre would do well to reiterate their categorical assurance that the Government-administered pricing mechanism under MSP is not being dispensed with. The problem started with a massive protest by Haryana farmers, who

blocked all roads and highways soon after the Bills were introduced. They feared that the Bills were not beneficial to them. There were massive rallies and protests in Punjab too under the Congress Government, which in a democracy like India is quite understandable. And now, it is official news that after over a month of protests by farmers against the three farm laws enacted by the Central Government, a special session of the Punjab Assembly on Tuesday (October 20) not only rejected the three laws of the Centre by a unanimous resolution but also passed Amendment Bills removing Punjab from the ambit of the central laws. It would be a good academic and Constitutional subject for study, if all the non-BJP states in the country adopt a similar stand and pass similar Acts!

Government's clarification – Graphics courtesy thetrupicture.org

MYTH	REALITY
◆ The two new bills regarding agriculture market reforms are aimed at ending Minimum Support Price for farmers.	◆ Farm bills are not going to affect MSP at all. The bill deals with additional trading opportunities for farmers outside the APMC market
◆ The proposed laws are anti-farmers since the market force will decide their fate.	◆ On the contrary, farmers can make more benefit by selling their produce to anyone by entering into an agreement. Middlemen stand removed from the process.
◆ This is an act of taking away the powers of states by nullifying APMC yards.	◆ States can still have APMCs under their law, but can't force farmers to sell only to them. This is about giving more choices to farmers.
◆ Modi government pushing farmers to the sphere of exploitation by allowing contracts with big corporates.	◆ Contract farming is already in practice under APMC laws. Some examples of contract farming are seen in Punjab (PepsiCo), West Bengal (PepsiCo) and Haryana (SAB Miller). Moreover, the UPA had also formulated laws to encourage states for contract farming.

Minister's assurance on MSP:

Union Agriculture Minister Narendra Singh Tomar has said: "MSPs won't be touched at any cost. Not just these Bills, many steps have been taken to double farmers' income in the past six years. There is no doubt that farmers will continue to get MSP." Former PM and agriculturist Deve Gowda has expressed concerns over farmers' so-called plight saying: "As a farmer I am really concerned with issues related to the farm bills. The entire House, all of us are concerned about farmers. Farmers are the backbone of the country. The Prime Minister should explain why there is a hurry to pass the Bills amid the pandemic."

Whether the farm bills benefit the farmers or not, whether the legislations seek to double the farmers income or not, whether Opposition's criticisms of the bill that farmers will not actually benefit if the existing chain of demand and supply management is disturbed is something one can answer only when the law is enforced in right earnest and the results follow. Perhaps in the next few agricultural seasons, we will know the outcome.

By T N Ashok, Consulting Editor

Source: October 2020 issue of PreSense

Emergence of New Age Political Consultancies – Are Political Parties Getting Corporatised?

In the recent elections in India, we have seen major political parties and candidates engaging professional consultants to manage their elections. Rulers and potential rulers seeking advice from experts, is not a new phenomenon in India.

Political Strategies by Internal Team

Even in *Mahabharata*, Lord Krishna functioned more like a political advisor to the *Pandavas*, and Sakuni for the *Kauravas*. In ancient India, every king had wise ministers to advise him on political strategies. During the freedom struggle, Pandit Nehru, Rajaji, Sardar Patel and many others planned strategies with Mahatma Gandhi. From ancient times, the people who provided strategies were from the team, and not outsiders.

Even in the post-Independence era, till 15 years ago, leaders of the various national and regional political parties worked out political and poll strategies on their own and they were highly successful. They never hired people to advise political or poll strategies. "Great leaders like Vajpayee, Advani, India Gandhi, and many others, worked out their political and election strategies on their own with the help of their internal leaders and workers," says, R Nurullah, a senior political journalist with 40 years of standing.

Leaders Lack Connectivity with Party Workers

"The present-day leaders of big political parties do not have connectivity with their cadre and they do not get any feedback on the aspirations and feelings of the people and hence, they have to depend on outsiders for obtaining feedback and planning strategies. A new class of 'political leaders' has emerged in the recent years, and they function like corporate leaders. Unlike the earlier era, where top leaders were easily accessible to party workers, nowadays, it is difficult for any party worker to meet the leaders and give feedback. Since most of the leaders nowadays function only from their air-conditioned chambers, their

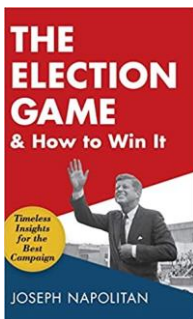
connectivity with the people and the party workers is lost, so that they need a third person to give them the feedback”, says N K Premachandran, fourth term Member of Parliament (MP) from Kerala State, representing the political party, RSP.

Agreeing with the above views, one of the poll strategists, who prefers to remain anonymous, says that in the earlier era, party workers were able to freely converse with their top leaders without fear. Presently, due to sycophancy, party workers and second level leaders do not share the correct feedback with their top leaders. He confirms that all major political parties are engaging outside professional consultants to undertake surveys and to work out poll strategies.

Global Scenario

Political strategists have been in existence since the advent of electoral politics, mainly in the USA, and later in India. However, these strategists were part of an internal team of a political party and not independent advisors.

The first organised political campaign can be traced back to 1896 with businessman turned senator, Marcus Alonzo Hanna successfully undertaking a campaign for William McKinley, the 25th President of the USA. As a corporate entity, Campaigns Inc., a consulting firm by Whitaker and Baxter in California, is said to be the first political consulting firm to get into the business in 1934.



Joseph Napolitan is said to have coined the word 'political consultant' and declared himself a political consultant in the USA. He has done more than 100 campaigns in the USA and other countries. He campaigned for President Kennedy in the 1960 elections. The New York Times newspaper described him in a 1968 profile, as the newest American phenomenon, the professional campaign manager and a pioneering campaign consultant. 'The Election Game & How

to Win It' authored by Joe Napolitan, is one of the top selling books, despite its high price. This indicates the high esteem

held for the man who helped give birth to the modern political consulting industry.

Many political consultants in the USA work not only for parties, but also for political action committees, which is a unique trend in the USA. Internationally, many parties/leaders from various countries have started engaging political consultants during their poll campaigns.

The Indian Scenario

The 1990-2014 Era

After the economic liberalisation in 1991, the emergence of the television (TV) media changed the campaign strategies. Political parties began owning TV channels to promote their parties. In 1993, Sun TV was started as an entertainment channel with the agenda of promoting the DMK political party. Later on, many more parties started their own channels.

In 1996, the BSP leader, Kanshiram slapped Ashutosh, a reporter with the NDTV news channel, when he was asked some uncomfortable questions. That led to the political parties thinking in terms of engaging professional agencies for handling the media and appointing spokespersons to engage the media.

BJP and Congress began using professional public relation (PR) agencies like Good Relations India and Perfect Relations to handle media relations on their behalf. After 2004, national parties began using professional agencies in the states they were ruling (mostly in the North and the West), for election campaign.

Soon, national parties set up their own internal campaign managers, to professionally handle the campaign. Arun Nehru (Congress) Arun Jaitly (BJP), Narendra Modi (BJP), Pramod Mahajan (BJP) and Jairam Ramesh (Congress) emerged as good campaign managers.

The 2004 General Elections saw the emergence of 'theme-based advertisements'. Technology was used only to a limited extent in

the 2004 General Elections. BJP projected Vajpayee as the Prime Minister (PM) candidate. For the first time in the Indian elections, a candidate was projected as a PM candidate. After 2004, political communication strategists emerged in a small way to support individual leaders at the regional level.

In the 2009 General Elections, both BJP and Congress used technology tools like the social media and SMS/telephone in their campaigns. Advani and Dr Manmohan Singh were projected as PM candidates of BJP and Congress respectively. BJP was the major user of technology tools. BJP lost the elections.

Till 2009, there was no concept of 'paid media'. Political parties appointed advertising agencies to plan and place their advertisements. Initially, many leading professional advertising and PR Gurus like Piyush Pandey, Sam Balsara, and Dilip Cherian were involved in advising leaders and running their election campaigns until the new breed of branding, technology, and data science consultants arrived and changed the entire campaign landscape.

Narendra Modi (BJP) used technology tools like social media, 3D hologram, mobile phones, and smart phones in the Gujarat Assembly Elections in 2012.

The 2014 (Post-Modi) Era

Political techno strategies were used in the 2014 General Elections. Professionals like Prashant Kishore supported the BJP campaign. A more professional approach towards the campaign, like survey, big data analytics, and micro-management of the campaign through technology, were used. New technologies like Augmented Reality (QR code) and Virtual Reality (like hologram) were also used. Even in 2019, new generation political consultants engaged by both BJP and Congress, used a mix of traditional and technology strategies.

BJP War Room – Photo Courtesy: DailyMail



Bihar's Prashant Kishore (IPAC), Karnataka's Sunil Konagalu, Tamil Nadu's Jhon Arokiasamy (JPG-PAC), Maharashtra's Girish Dhole (JPG-PAC), and Maharashtra's Tushar Panchal (WarRoom Strategies) have contributed to end-to-end election campaigns for many leaders running for PM's (Prime Minister) and CM's (Chief Minister) offices.

Apart from these well-known consultants, there are numerous others who specialise in exclusive areas such as data science, opinion polls, party and candidate centric surveys, digital campaigns, political events, and voter outreach activations. Many public relations agencies have now started a separate wing for political consultancy.

Role of Political Strategies

Political consultants act as political strategists, brand strategists, and election or poll strategists. This is achieved by planning political narratives, moves and counter moves for leaders and



parties, and campaign strategies and events to promote leaders, candidates or causes. They also provide media strategies for traditional and internet media.

Controversies

The Indian political system is engaging external professional consultants for the first time, to manage poll strategies. They conduct surveys, analyse data and suggest names for the selection of candidates. What was hitherto done by the political leaders, is now being done by outsiders. This is causing heartburn for the second level leaders. In many places, they are also protesting against the involvement of consultants.

The parties spend large amounts of money towards consultancy charges. Despite this, the consultants' team cannot work at the ground level. They engage a large number of educated professionals for undertaking surveys, collecting feedback and preparing reports. They have to depend on the party workers for execution of strategies.

Notwithstanding the initial hiccups, the engagement of professional consultants has come to stay in India and it may further improve, according to R Jai Krishna, a media expert from Delhi. According to N K Premachandran, MP, a new class of

corporate-styled 'political leaders' is emerging, who may not have direct contact with the people and the party cadre.

by K Srinivasan, Publisher and Managing Editor

Source: October 2020 issue of PreSense

Biden-Harris Combine to Stabilise Indo-US Relations

(Your eMagazine publishes this article on the assumption that a Biden-Harris victory in the 2020 US Presidential Elections is just a formality away with an official announcement awaited after a verdict by the Electoral College. Several key world leaders have already congratulated them.)



Any fear that the Indo-US relations would skid with the return of the Democratic Party under the Joe Biden-Kamala Harris combine, after the 2020 Presidential elections, seems to be without any basis. Much of the volume of American trade and stated foreign

policies are expected to remain largely unchanged. India is the most stable democracy in the South Asian region and the USA can ill-afford to neglect this reality. India has a key role to play with the USA, in containing terrorism and establishing a democratically elected regime in Afghanistan, as American troops begin to withdraw. But the worry is that the democrats will dilute the strident tone of Trump towards Pakistan to maintain a geo-political balance.

How Foreign Policy Played Under Trump's Presidency

- Trump dramatically altered the US foreign and trade policies with out of the box thinking.
- Trump reversed the age-old policy of arms' supply to Pakistan.
- On trade and foreign policy vis-à-vis China, Trump took a tough stand in the name of protecting domestic trade and allies' interests in South China Sea. China has claimed territorial integrity, endangering smaller countries like Vietnam and Philippines and India's interests of oil exploration in the region.

- Trump launched peace initiatives with North Korea, meeting its leader Kim Jong Un at neutral venues. He also imposed sanctions on Iran with an embargo on their oil supplies as he suspected the nation of pursuing a nuclear weapons' programme, like North Korea.

Diplomatic circles were betting on a second term for Trump, hoping that India would be the biggest beneficiary, considering the phenomenal success of 'Howdy Houston' and 'Namaste Trump' outreach programmes. Trump was way ahead of Biden in the popularity polls in the beginning of the year, certain to win a second term, but the George Floyd incident in Minneapolis, followed by the 'Black Lives Matter' campaign upset the apple cart. The African Americans and other mixed races massively voted for the Biden-Harris combine, mostly through postal ballots.

Joe Biden, a six-time senator from Delaware, outdid the Richie Rich Trump by endearing himself to the American public, projecting himself as the middle-class single dad, who travelled a total of 300 kms back and forth, both ways to Washington so that he did not have to uproot his children from their familiar neighbourhood. He beat tough opponents Bernie Sanders, Michael Bloomberg and Kamala Harris in the primaries of the party to win the Democrat nomination. He is scheduled to be sworn in as President on 20th January, 2021, to mark his entry into the famed portals of the White House.

Biden's move to nominate his party nomination opponent, Kamala Harris for the vice-presidency, was a tactical and strategic move that paid rich dividends, coming as it did on the back of the 'Black Lives Matter' campaign.

Ms Harris, an African American with Indian roots, is a leading luminary as District Attorney, Attorney General and Senator of the populous California State. She was the perfect pitch against Trump's powerful personality as a business magnate, a gravitas with extreme views on racial bias that pulled strongly with the southern states and the agrarian base of America, that had always voted for Republican.

Biden has also got down to business by narrowing his choice for Secretary of State to Antony Blinken, an experienced hand from the Obama regime, and Jake Sullivan (long-time advisor to Biden and Hilary Clinton) for the top post of National Security Advisor.

As for India, while the bonhomie and bear hugs of the Trump-Modi exuberance that hit a new high in Indo-US relations in theatrics, may disappear, the Biden-Harris combine, will not dilute the relationship. Instead, India can expect the restoration of the generalised system of preferences, removal of trade barriers and greater Indian exports to the USA, as Biden would seek to rectify the over 55 billion USD trade deficit between India and the USA. India enjoys a favourable trade balance with the US. Trade and immigration are the bones of contention in the Indo-US relations. Trump had scrapped trade concessions for India which Biden has promised to reverse.

Expectations Under Biden's Presidency

Biden will be less vociferous and strident than Trump on the US-China relations. Besides Australia and Japan, Biden believes in deepening partnerships from India to Indonesia, to advance shared values in a region that will determine the United States' future. The US needs Pakistan's support to pull out the American troops from Afghanistan. The American families back home do not like the idea of their young draftees dying overseas in a war in which the USA has no stakes at all. Biden will not be strident in his criticism of Pakistan on its handling of terrorism, but would be firm on Pakistan cracking down on home-grown terrorism, where India is the sufferer.

Biden has talked of a 'middle-class foreign policy', which will enable American manufacturers to export their goods to India and the rest of the world. India's emerging market dominated by the demographic choice of the age group 18 to 40 years is a major advantage for the USA. Biden may also encourage Indian imports to replace the Chinese supply chain, which is disrupted due to COVID-19. Under Biden, change is expected in the way the US will look at the H1-B visa issue, that affects the prospects of the Indian youth far more than the youth of any other country. Trump

curtailed the visa regime with his policy of 'America First', wherein India suffered the most. It is unlikely that Biden will view immigrants and workers from India with Trump's suspicion.

Conclusion

The expected Biden presidency may usher in a renewal of rules-based trading system across the world — instead of the *ad-hoc* policy under Trump. Overall, it is unlikely that there would be any tectonic shift under Biden, but there could be less theatrics and diatribes on foes, and a more endearing trust with allies.

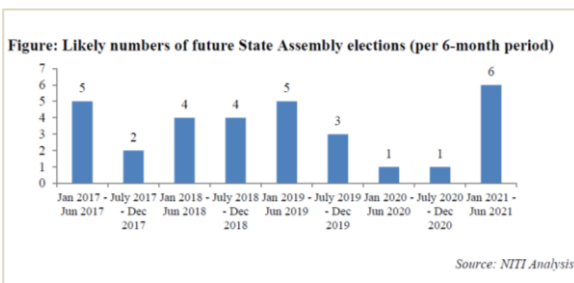
by T N Ashok, Consulting Editor

Source: October 2020 issue of PreSense

Is Simultaneous Election Feasible?

Background

Recently, while addressing the 80th All India Presiding Officers' Conference, Prime Minister Narendra Modi urged the authorities to simplify the laws to enable 'One Nation, One Election', and a single voters' list for polls. He wanted the people to discuss the feasibility of 'Simultaneous Elections' for both Lok Sabha and State Assemblies.



'Simultaneous Elections' is not new to India. The first four General Elections to Lok Sabha (1952 to 1967) and various State Assemblies were held

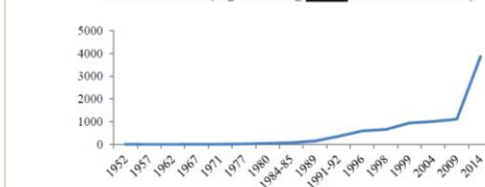
simultaneously. Thereafter, due to the dissolution of some State Assemblies and the premature dissolution of Lok Sabha, the election cycle got disrupted. Besides the General Elections for Lok Sabha, the Election Commission has to conduct elections for five to six State Assemblies every year at different times, depending on the term of completion of the individual State Assemblies.

Conducting the Indian General Elections is the biggest event management in the world. Besides

incurring a huge expenditure, the Election Commission of India (ECI) deploys more than 10 million Government officials and security forces during this election

period. Preparation of the voters' list involves expenditure and deployment of Government officials. This is in addition to the strain

Figure: Election expenditure (Provisional) by Government of India towards Lok Sabha Elections (Figures along Y-axis are in INR Crores)



Source: Figure 8.1, ECI Pocket book 2015-16

for the political parties, and a huge expenditure. According to Narayanan Thirupathy, BJP Spokesperson, the Government spends around Rs.10,000 crores every five year towards the General Elections. According to him the political parties spent around Rs.30,000/- crores in the 2014 General Elections, and Rs.60,000/- crores in the 2019 General Elections.

Since elections are held every year for different states, the government machinery and the security forces are engaged in election duty, and routine official work gets dislocated. Other issues include (1) disruption of normal public life, (2) perpetuation of communal and caste issues and (3) adverse impact on the focus of governance and policy, for electoral gains.

The problems that arise due to the imposition of the Model Code of Conduct (MCC), have been articulated by the Parliamentary Standing Committee in its 79th report. The Committee states *"The imposition of Model Code of Conduct (MCC) puts on hold the entire development programme and activities of the Union and State Governments in the poll bound State. It even affects the normal governance. Frequent elections lead to imposition of MCC over prolonged periods of time. This often leads to policy paralysis and governance deficit"*.

The Prime Minister said that the political parties and the Executives were always in the election mode due to frequent elections in the country, and many of the development schemes could not be announced or implemented due to the Model Code of Conduct, applicable at different parts of the country. Further, the multi-phased elections (upto 7 phases) create more strain to the Government machinery and political parties.

Constitutional Provisions

The Indian Constitution (Article 83(2) and 172(1)) provides for a normal term of five years for the Lok Sabha and State Assemblies from the date of the first sitting. Since they do not have any fixed time, they could be dissolved earlier than its normal term. The tenure of the House cannot be extended beyond five years, except in an emergency situation.

Section 14 and 15 of the Representation of People Act 1951 empowers the Election Commission to notify and conduct elections to both Lok Sabha and State Assemblies, six months prior to the end of the normal term.

Other Countries

According to United Kingdom's Fixed-term Parliaments Act, 2011, the tenure of the Parliament is fixed at five years. Elections will be held on the first Thursday of May every fifth year. The Parliament can be dissolved only when the motion is passed by a two-thirds majority (including vacant seats), or when an alternate Government could not be formed within 14 days from a No-Confidence motion. Elections will be held only for the remainder period.

According to the Federal Republic of Germany's Basic Law (Article 67 – Constructive vote of no confidence), lack of confidence can be expressed only after electing the successor with a majority.

Reports of the Official Committees

The Law Commission of India headed by Hon'ble Justice B. P. Jeevan Reddy, in its 170th report on Reform of Electoral Laws (1999), suggests an end to elections every year, and insists on one election every five years.

The Election Commission of India (ECI) also wrote to the Government in November 1999, that the separate electoral rolls prepared by the ECI and State EC created confusion.

In 2015, the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Personnel, Public Grievances, Law and Justice in its 79th report analysed the 'Feasibility of Holding Simultaneous Elections to the Lok Sabha and State Assemblies'. They sought the views of all the political parties and stakeholders. After an in-depth study, the Committee accepted that there were challenges in frequent elections, and recommended 'Two-Phase' elections, Phase One for Lok Sabha and some State Assemblies and Phase Two after 30 months for

remaining State Assemblies, grouping various State Assemblies together based on their tenure.

Since ECI has the powers to notify and conduct elections six months before the end of the term, the Committee has suggested grouping of the State Assemblies either by curtailing or extending the term to synchronise with the General Elections as a 'one-time measure'.

This could be implemented by a consensus with the political parties and through a Parliament resolution. In this process, assuming that this scheme is implemented from the 2024 General Elections after consensus, around 16 State Assemblies and Lok Sabha Elections will be held in the first phase in May 2024. The second phase of elections for the remaining State Assemblies will be held somewhere during November-December 2026 (midway of 2024 and 2029). The 79th Parliamentary Committee Report explains this proposal with a detailed chart.

Reactions from Political Parties

Some of the political parties like Indian National Congress, Trinamool Congress, NCP, and Communist parties have expressed reservations about the executability and operational feasibility. This is the biggest challenge.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi had called for an all-party meet in June 2019 to discuss and arrive at a consensus among the political parties, on this issue. Out of 40 invited parties, only 21 were present and three shared their views in writing. Indian National Congress, Trinamool Congress, BSP, SP, DMK, AAP and Shiv Sena did not participate.

Criticisms

T K Rangarajan, former MP and Senior Leader of CPI(M) feels that this initiative would disturb the federal structure of our country, and only national parties would dominate, eliminating the regional parties. He also expressed the concern that the ruling party at the centre might create instability in the opposition party-ruled states, in order to bring the state under the President's Rule. He

“This initiative will disturb the federal structure of our country, and only national parties will dominate, eliminating the regional parties. this is a politically motivated one, to bring the entire country under one rule.”

- T K Rangarajan. Former MP and Senior Leader of CPI (M)

felt that such simultaneous elections were not implementable. He alleges that this initiative would be a politically motivated one, to bring the entire country under one rule.

During discussions with apolitical people, there was apprehension expressed about regional issues fading away in simultaneous elections. Hence, the regional parties are reluctant to accept the proposed election reforms.

Expert Views

Former Chief Election Commissioner of India T S Krishnamurthy, speaking to PreSense, said that 'simultaneous elections' is theoretically an attractive proposition. He also said that Constitutional changes were needed to ensure fixed tenure of legislatures and transition provisions, giving right to extend or curtail tenure of existing state legislatures. He cautioned that simultaneous elections might pose administrative problems with deployment of more para military forces to maintain law and order.

T S Krishnamurthy, added that as a first step, before considering simultaneous elections, instead of multi-phased elections for

“Simultaneous Elections is theoretically an attractive proposition. Suitable Constitutional changes are required. This would save enormous expenditure for the Government and political parties. Advantages outweigh disadvantages.”

- T S Krishnamurthy, Former
Chief Election Commissioner of
India

Parliament and State Assemblies in the current system, we should hold 'single day' elections, excluding certain identified regions for security reasons. He agreed that 'simultaneous elections' would save enormous expenditure for the Government and for the political parties. He summed up saying that advantages

overweighed the disadvantages.

Srinivasa Prabhu, Joint Secretary (Retired) of the Lok Sabha Secretariat and a Constitutional expert, speaking to PreSense, said that if a mid-term election was held for Lok Sabha or State Assemblies after a no-confidence motion without any possibility of a new Government, the election should be held only for the remaining period of the term of the House. He said that none of the political parties were interested in dissolving the House, to face elections. They would therefore explore all possibilities of forming an alternate Government. He agreed that during simultaneous elections, the national issues might overwhelm the regional issues, triggering the regional parties to work hard when they were in power.

Prof. G Ramesh, Professor of Public Policy, Indian Institute of Management, Bengaluru said that corruption increased due to huge election expenses. Due to frequent elections happening across the country, the Government is not in a position to take any bold reform decisions, for electoral reasons. He supported the suggestion given by the Parliamentary Committee (79th Report) for two-phase elections. He said that holding simultaneous elections

for Lok Sabha and State Assemblies once in five years, was infeasible.

Dr E M Sudarsana Nachiappan, former Rajya Sabha Member of Parliament (MP), representing Indian National Congress, was the Chairman of the Parliamentary Committee and he presented the 79th report to the Parliament in Dec 2015. This report has also been accepted by NITI Aayog.

Speaking to PreSense, Dr Sudarsana Nachiappan said that during the first General Elections in 1952, when Congress had prominent national and regional leaders, they could not win in some of the State Assemblies. Even in the 2019 General Elections, when some State Assemblies went to polls along with Lok Sabha polls, BJP got a lower percentage in the Assembly segments of some states, than what they polled for Lok Sabha. Based on this observation, he allayed the fears that the federal set-up of the nation would be disturbed. The enactment of the Anti-Defection Act in 1985 and the Supreme Court Judgement in the SR Bommai Case (1994), have made it difficult for the ruling party at the centre to dissolve State Assemblies, according to their whims and fancies, he said. Indian democracy matures day by day, encouraging us to move forward with the reforms.

Dr Sudarasana Nachiappan also quoted the example of the Fixed Time Parliament Act 2011 of the United Kingdom, where the tenure of their Parliament was fixed by an Act. In his 79th Report, he suggested a model that a specific term could be fixed for Lok Sabha and State Assemblies, and dissolution could be made tighter.

In the past three decades, we have seen the trend that whenever a new reform policy is mooted by the ruling party, the opposition parties give a knee-jerk reaction opposing the proposal and demanding its immediate withdrawal, without going into the merits of the suggestion.

Conclusion and Way Forward

We consulted many political leaders and experts while researching for this Cover Story. There is consensus that a large amount of money is being spent during elections, leading to corruption. There is a general feeling that the country urgently needs electoral reforms to curb money power.

In the past three decades, we have seen the trend that whenever a new reform policy is mooted by the ruling party, the opposition parties give a knee-jerk reaction, opposing the proposal and demanding its immediate withdrawal, without going into the merits of the suggestion. At the same time, when the opposition comes to power, they implement those very policies quickly. The previous ruling party, now in the opposition, opposes the same policy, which they had mooted earlier. Although democracy seems mature because of voting by the people, political parties need to improve their attitude and approach, to look into any proposal objectively, keeping the nation's interest in sight, and not their political interest.

In 1991, when Congress introduced liberalisation, all the opposition parties opposed it tooth and nail. Later on, when they came to power, they implemented it. BJP, which had opposed the Aadhar card and GST when they were in the opposition, implemented them after they assumed power. Unfortunately, Congress which had piloted the idea, is now opposing the proposal. Similarly, the political parties which were in power earlier, and had proposed the NEET Examination, and various road projects and industry projects, are now opposing as the Opposition. 'Opposing for the sake of opposition' is not in the interest of the nation.

The concept of simultaneous elections is an idea mooted and developed over 20 years by various governments and the expert committees. In the interest of the nation first, all the political parties and stakeholders should critically discuss the concept, and come out with a solution for electoral reforms and simultaneous elections.

Dr E M Sudarsana Nachiappan, Member of Parliament (Rajya Sabha) was the Chairman of the Parliamentary Committee which went into the various aspects of 'Simultaneous Elections' and presented the report to the Parliament in December 2015. This 79th report, which is the latest official document available for discussion on the subject, can be downloaded from the link: <http://tinyurl.com/report79> .



As Chairman of the Parliamentary Committee, he also presented a report (No. 18) on 'Electoral Reforms' to the Parliament.

Interactive Session with Dr Sudarsana Nachiappan | 24th Jan 2021

Please watch in YouTube:

<https://youtu.be/ZbOZHs-2fxk>

by K Srinivasan, Publisher and Managing Editor

Source: January 2021 issue of PreSense

Know About the Union Budget

The Annual Financial Statement, which is more commonly known as the Union Budget is the Estimate of the Income and Expenditure of the Central Government for a definite duration, which is usually one year. Much planning and exercise goes into the preparation of the Union Budget and there is more to it after its presentation in the Parliament by the Union Finance Minister.

Your eMagazine PreSense had the privilege of interviewing Mr M R Sivaraman, Former Revenue Secretary, Government of India, with many years of experience in the preparation of the Union Budget and State Budgets. We bring you a synopsis of the interview about the Union Budget – Preparation, Presentation, Implementation and Audit.

Q1. We are familiar with the Hon'ble Finance Minister walking into the Parliament with the red cloth bag of documents, for presentation of the Union Budget. What goes into preparing the Union Budget, before it is ready for presentation?

There are six Articles in the Indian Constitution dealing with the Union Budget, and corresponding six Articles dealing with the State Budget. Article 112 deals with the presentation of the Annual Financial Statement, which is the analogue of the company (Government in this case).

The Government has certain commitments to fulfil, irrespective of whether it has enough money to fulfil them or not, such as the expenditure relating to the Judiciary, the Parliament, the President's Office, Interest payments to the public and other countries, Repayment of Loans. These are 'charged on the budget'. They are discussed in the parliament but not voted. The administration of the country which includes the expenditure on defence, police and similar forces, and those of other administrative departments of the government are committed expenditure even though economy cuts can sometimes be imposed on them.

Preparatory Exercise

In the month of October each year, the Government calls for the Budget estimates from all its departments and ministries. To arrive at this estimate, the actual expenditure for the completed period is first ascertained, and then the projected expenditure for the remaining months of the financial year. For example, in the current year 2020-21, the defence expenditure has unexpectedly escalated with the need for more equipment, high altitude clothing for the soldiers, arms and ammunition, warm tents and food, due to the emergency situation at the national border. These are added in what we call the Supplementary Budget, which will be part of the revised Estimate. Then, the Budget for the following financial year is estimated.

Every ministry has its normal schemes and projects. In normal, healthy practice, projects are classified under different categories – projects that can be completed in the current year, those that can be completed in the ensuing year, and so on. The budget for those projects that are already underway and require additional allocation for completion, is given priority over new projects so that they are completed and utilised.

The Financial Advisor in consultation with the Joint Secretary and other officials, prepares the Budget for the ministry. When these proposals reach the Finance Ministry, they are examined and fine-tuned in consultation with the respective departments. The resources are divided into tax and non-tax sources. The Revenue Department consisting of the Central Boards of Direct and Indirect Taxes are involved in elaborate exercises, based on past performance and projections. For example, the services sector which accounts for 58% of the GDP has suffered due to the COVID situation this year. This factor has to be taken into consideration while planning for the next year. This is done by consulting with the various sectors of the economy. This exercise takes place in November-December. Extensive and detailed discussions are held with all the stakeholders, and notes are taken, prior to the preparation of the Budget. Experts and professionals in the respective fields are consulted while preparing the tax proposals.

The Finance Secretary then sits with his team and finalises the Expenditure Budget while the Resources Budget, including changes in taxes if any, is finalised by the Revenue Secretary. The tax proposals go under the signature of the Revenue Secretary. The consolidation of the budget and the finalisation of the budget speech is done by the Finance Secretary, who is the most senior secretary in the ministry in terms of service in the ministry.



Q2. How is the Budget dealt with, in the Parliament for its approval?



The finalised Budget is discussed in detail with the Prime Minister, by the team. Thereafter, the Budget is printed. One hour before the presentation, the Cabinet meets in the Parliament House and a summary is presented for their comprehension. The Presentation of the Union

Budget is then made in the Parliament. The Bills, such as the Finance Bill, and Appropriation Bills, are introduced. The approval

of the President of India is necessary before the presentation of the Union Budget, with the Appropriation Bill (which includes Demand for Grants) and the Finance Bill.

The Appropriation Bill consists of the expenditure and receipts from the various ministries. The expenditure is prepared as a 'Demand for Grant'. Demand for Grant is the request for approval of the expenditure incurred/to be incurred by the respective ministries. A Cut Motion is a special power vested in the Members of the Lok Sabha, to oppose a demand being discussed for specific allocation by the ministry, in the Government Bill, as part of the Demand for Grants. The cut/reduction can be a token amount of Rupee one. These Demands are then voted by the Parliament for approval. Similarly, the Appropriation Bill is discussed. The Finance Bill deals with changes in Customs and Excise Duty, Income and Corporate Taxes. Changes in GST (Goods & Services Tax) have to be approved by the GST Council of India.

Q3. Once the Budget is approved in the Parliament, what does the Government do with the approved Budget?

Once the Budget is approved, the grants are communicated to the various ministries. It is the responsibility of the Financial Advisor and the Joint Secretary to take care of the periodical disbursement of the funds to the ministries or State Governments.

Q4. As the funds are utilised by the ministries in the course of the year, there is an element of auditing of the utilisation of funds. How is this carried out?

The Comptroller and Auditor General of India (CAG), an independent Constitutional Authority, audits the accounts of the Central and State Governments, and submits the audit reports to the President of India. This report is examined by the Public Accounts Committee (PAC) of the Parliament, headed by an Opposition Leader. In case of surplus of expenditure over the budgeted estimate, the ministry concerned has to explain to a Parliamentary Committee, to justify the surplus expenditure without seeking a Supplementary Budget. In case of an emergency as had occurred recently for the Defence Ministry because of the

development in the borders, a Supplemental Budget can be proposed and approved, or reasons justified if expenditure has exceeded the allocation. PAC can raise observations based on the reports, and the ministry concerned would be required to respond to the queries. These responses will be submitted to the Action Taken Committee of the Parliament. India's Union Budget is considered as one of the most transparent budgets in the world.

Q5. In your opinion, what should the focus of the forthcoming Budget for FY 2021-2022 be?

It should focus primarily on the creation of demand for capital goods and consumer goods. This is a complicated exercise since it involves the GST factor, which does not come directly under the Union Budget. Some of the industries that critically need revival are tourism, construction, and automobile. The extent of taxes in the price of an automobile is 45% - almost the highest in the world.

The India's Union Budget is considered as one of the most transparent budgets in the world.

There is at least 25% tax evasion in the country. We need to address this, and increase the tax revenue to the GDP of the country. Otherwise, it is challenging to depend mainly on borrowings.

Therefore, the focus should be :

- Reviving the demand quickly,
- Streamlining tax rates and raising the tax revenue of the country,
- Encouraging employment generation,
- Enabling Unemployment Security to migrant workers through a calibrated unemployment relief scheme.

It is advisable that the Finance Minister associate experienced former government officials for their expertise and advice, which

would be valuable, while planning and drawing up the country's Budget.

The complete interview can be watched on:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5t8Py3iCZ48>

***by K Srinivasan, Publisher & Managing Editor,
with Susan Koshy, Editor-in-Chief***

Source: January 2021 issue of PreSense

Celebrating Negativity – Quo Vadis?

In the recent years, India has been seeing a trend, where a section of the public and the media celebrate negative news, without any reservation. In many states of the country, convicts and criminal offenders who



are released from jail after serving their period of imprisonment, are hailed as heroes and received in grandeur. Anti-hero characters who feature in films, social media and television serials, are hero-worshipped. Hanged terrorists are given grand funerals, with large crowds turning up. In the process, genuine heroes of our nation are not recognised, and are often side-lined.

In the recent violence caused by miscreants in the garb of farmers' support, at the time of the Republic Day celebrations at Delhi, some senior journalists tweeted some fake news against the police. These promoters of the fake news were hailed by a section of media and some intellectuals, in defence of 'freedom of speech and expression'.

Recently, the arrested young girls who were allegedly associated with some international separatist organisations, were hailed, again in defence of 'freedom of speech and expression'. Whatever be the legal position, any association with international groups that work against the sovereignty of India, must not be tolerated and must be condemned. Unfortunately, if anyone dares to condemn these activities, he is silenced and shamed by a powerful lobby of the social media and the traditional media.

The Silence of Concerned Citizens

People who are concerned about the welfare of their nation, are afraid to speak against the celebration of negativity, for fear of being shamed by its supporters. Even though the supporters of

negativity are few in number when compared to the larger number of silent, concerned citizens, these negative people are extremely vocal in the media, especially in the social media, drowning the silence of the people.

The author spoke to a cross section of intellectual people from different professional backgrounds. While they deplored this new trend, they were reluctant to share their views publicly.

Freedom of Speech is Not Absolute

With the emergence of the social media, it is generally assumed that 'freedom of speech and expression' is absolute. This is incorrect. The Indian Constitution provides 'freedom of speech and expression' as a fundamental right under section 19(1)(a). However, under Article 19(2), the Indian Constitution empowers the State to enact laws that impose reasonable restrictions on the exercise of the right conferred by the said article 19(1)(a), "in the interest of the sovereignty and integrity of India, the security of the State, friendly relations with foreign States, public order, decency or morality, or in relation to contempt of court, defamation or incitement to an offence". In India, there are enough laws to impose reasonable restrictions. In the United States, even though their Constitution provides for absolute freedom of speech and expression, this freedom is restricted through various judgements. No country in the world enjoys absolute freedom of speech and expression.

Sadly, the people who advocate 'freedom of speech' do not educate the youngsters about the reasonable restrictions. When the author spoke to one of the senior professors of journalism of a reputed university, the professor questioned the right of the police to arrest any person who violated the restrictions. Surprisingly, this professor was ignorant of the reasonable restrictions and even the fundamental duties enshrined in the Constitution. Thousands of students who are taught by this professor, are likely to be misinformed by him, and therefore, they run the risk of breaking the law, out of ignorance.

Why This Trend?

During the conversation with various people about why this trend has emerged in the recent years, many observed that there was polarisation of right and left across the world with extreme views on both sides, and both finding fault with each other. This polarisation has affected India too.

An internationally reputed neurologist opined that some adverse economic developments, rising unemployment and even some of the good but lenient reform measures introduced by the Government, has caused insecurity and fear among the youngsters, and they tend to react with anger. Out of their lack of awareness about the restrictions and the law, they tend to overstep their right of expression, to vent their frustration. This results in such untoward behaviour and trends.

Inadequate communication from the ruling establishment, and lack of concerted efforts to educate the people about the various useful economic initiatives and reforms, coupled with the 'chest-beating' arrogance of some of the followers of the ruling establishment, have infuriated even the politically unbiased and apolitical people of the country.

Role of Political Parties and the Media

It is a dangerous and unhealthy trend to see youngsters violating the law of the land, using the social media, to the embarrassment for our nation. It is also a dangerous trend that political parties, instead of guiding and checking the youngsters, encourage them, in their pursuit of short-term political gains. Tweets against the sovereignty and integrity of the nation are often hailed by some political parties. The traditional media like print and television, instead of playing a positive role, fuel such acts, to up their TRP ratings.

Differentiate between Government and Sovereignty of the Nation

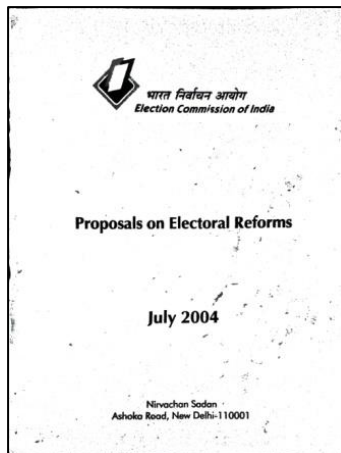
Critics of the ruling establishment should differentiate between the Government and the sovereignty of the nation. In the pretext of opposing the Government, these 'activists' collude with national enemies, to protest against the nation's sovereignty. If the political parties and the media realise the dangers of this trend and act in a responsible manner, we can protect and uphold the sovereignty of the country and its legitimate citizens.

by K Srinivasan, Publisher and Managing Editor

Source: Feb 2021 issue of PreSense

Urgent Need for Electoral Reforms in the 75th Year of Independence

In the midst of the State Assembly Elections in five States, Prime Point Foundation and your eMagazine PreSense organised the 11th edition of Sansad Ratna Awards at New Delhi on 20th March 2021. Shri Sunil Arora (Hon'ble Chief Election Commissioner of India), Shri Arjun Ram Meghwal (Hon'ble MoS, Parliamentary Affairs), and Justice Shri A K Patnaik (Former Judge, Supreme Court of India) were the Chief Guests. Around 20 Hon'ble Members of Parliament were present during the event. On behalf of the civil society, an appeal was made in the welcome address, to all the authorities concerned, to expedite the Electoral Reforms.



Although the first official consolidated proposal for Electoral Reforms was made in June 2004 to the then Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh, by the then Chief Election Commissioner of India, Shri T S Krishnamurthy, to date nothing noteworthy has happened. Any major reforms that have taken place like NOTA, declaring criminal cases in election affidavit by candidates, and disqualification of membership for convicted MPs/MLAs, have happened only through judicial orders from Supreme Court of India.

Although the Law Commission and the Parliamentary Standing Committee have suggested reforms, so far, there has been no political will to legislate such reforms. Without the major electoral reforms, our democracy cannot be strengthened.

The Election Commission is one of the 'Pride Institutions' of India. They deserve appreciation for their free, fair and transparent management of the Indian elections, the world's biggest event. They have derived the power to frame some rules only through the

issue of judicial orders. They still need more power to disqualify candidates who violate the rules. There have been instances when elections were cancelled, when a candidate was caught distributing money during elections. However, the same candidate contested again and won when the new date of elections was notified. The Election Commission is helpless in such situations, as they do not have the power to disqualify a person who violates the rules.

In the past 20 years, political parties have been spending huge amounts of money, even in Assembly elections, not to speak of Parliamentary elections. In spite of all the checks and controls, money gets distributed to the voters. Surprisingly, in one of the surveys conducted by a media house in Tamil Nadu, when voters were asked about the factors that they considered for selecting a candidate like political party, leader, candidate, manifesto, and so on, nearly 10% of the voters responded saying that they voted for 'money'. This situation prevails in some of the states. This is an alarming signal.

Another important matter of concern is the 'Opinion Polls'. Even though the Election Commission had once wanted to ban opinion polls before the elections, the Supreme Court held that it could not be banned on the grounds of 'freedom of speech and expression'. In India, many of the offenders seek protection under the garb of 'freedom of speech'. Exploiting this privilege, many opinion polls are released with the nexus of political parties and the media and poll agencies. These surveys are not transparent as they do not indicate the methodology and the sample size of the survey and the results. Since many of the media houses are owned by political parties or are in alliance with some parties, their views are unreliable. In the past elections, none of the surveys has proved right. The Election Commission can impose restrictions like minimum sample size, transparency of methodology, etc. If there is any legal provision, the Election Commission can permit survey results till the announcement of election dates, without infringing on the freedom of speech. Voters should decide based on their own perceptions. We need to draw the line between 'free and fair election' and 'freedom of speech' in the name of opinion polls.

In the current Assembly Elections, some of the prospective parties have released manifestoes promising 'the moon and the heaven'. They have not declared their source of funds to meet their impractical promises. One party has promised 'government jobs' and washing machines to all the ration cardholders. Many parties have promised monthly pensions to all cardholders, free gas cylinders, free houses, writing off of all education and agricultural loans, etc. Although there are guidelines from the Election Commission, they are violated, while misleading the voters. Unfortunately, the Election Commission does not have enough power to control them.

While on one side, the civil society and vibrant youngsters take initiatives to clean up the electoral system, they are unable to enter politics and contest elections due to the dominance of persons with criminal background and great ill-gotten wealth to fund. During the selection of candidates by many political parties, the first question asked is "how much money can you spend". The highest bidder is allotted the seat, and not the person who is loyal and committed to the party and the welfare of the society.

In the past four General Elections, none of the parties has promised in their manifesto to bring about 'Electoral Reforms'. As the nation prepares to celebrate its 75th year of independence, it is time for all political parties to join together to clean up the electoral and societal system and bring in legislation for Electoral Reforms, including Public Funding through National Election Fund for Funding of Elections as proposed by Former Chief Election Commissioner of India Shri T S Krishnamurthy, and provide opportunities to enthusiastic and committed youngsters to be part of the legislature. PreSense appeals to all authorities to enact a separate comprehensive law to regulate all political parties, as recommended by Justice Venkatachaliah Constitution Review Committee.

by K Srinivasan, Publisher and Managing Editor

Source: March 2021 issue of PreSense

12 Years' Journey of Sansad Ratna Awards



Sansad Ratna Awardees 2021 with Shri Sunil Arora, Chief Election Commissioner of India (third from left) and Justice Shri A K Patnaik, Former Judge, Supreme Court of India (fourth from left)

The Background

Members of Parliament (MPs) of Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha are representatives of the people of India, elected/nominated to work towards efficient governance of the country. This is an especially challenging task in a country like India, which is the largest democracy in the world. These MPs come from different walks of life, with their individual spheres of expertise, to learn and understand the political system, in order to run the government. Many among them work quietly but relentlessly, with dedication and efficiency. They often go unnoticed.

The functioning of the Lok Sabha came under severe criticism especially towards the end of the 14th Lok Sabha in 2009 because of the frequent disruptions and pandemonium in the Parliament. The then Speaker, Shri Somnath Chatterjee, in his valedictory address for the 14th Lok Sabha, was expressly critical, and registered his unhappiness over the frequent disruptions in the

Parliament. The public too, criticised the conduct of the Parliamentarians, through social media. In mock Parliament sessions held in colleges and schools, students ridiculed by throwing chairs and creating pandemonium. In the meantime, elections for the 15th Lok Sabha were announced.

Suggestion by Dr APJ Abdul Kalam

It was around this time that, on the suggestion of former President of India (late) Dr APJ Abdul Kalam, Prime Point Foundation decided to highlight the positive aspect of Indian democracy by recognising its top performing parliamentarians, who quietly discharged their constitutional duties with exemplary commitment and performance. Prime Point Foundation instituted the Sansad Ratna Awards to recognise and honour these Parliamentarians.

In the March 2009 issue of your eMagazine PreSense, interviews with top performing Parliamentarians of the 14th Lok Sabha, including Shri Kharventhan (Tamil Nadu) and Shri Anandrao Adsul (Maharashtra), based on the data provided by PRS India, were carried. Dr APJ Abdul Kalam too gave his exclusive interview, on the role of Parliamentarians. This was the humble beginning of the recognition of performing Parliamentarians, on behalf of the civil society.

The First Awards Function

The first Awards function was held at Chennai in May 2010, coinciding with the 50th Edition of your eMagazine PreSense. Two top-performing Parliamentarians, Shri Hansraj G Ahir (Maharashtra) and Shri S S Ramasubbu (Tamil Nadu) were honoured, in the presence of Chennai citizens. Dr Abdul Kalam himself inaugurated the Awards event through tele-conference from Delhi.

From then on, every year, Prime Point Foundation and eMagazine PreSense presented Awards to top-performing Parliamentarians, based on the data provided by PRS India and Lok Sabha Secretariat. Till the 9th edition (2019), the Awards functions were held jointly with IIT Madras. The 10th edition was held at Raj

Bhavan, Chennai in January 2019, at the end of 16th Lok Sabha. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Awards function could not be held in 2020. The 11th edition was held on 20th March 2021 at Constitution Club of India, New Delhi.

The Awardees are selected by a Jury Committee headed by Shri Arjun Ram Meghwal (Hon'ble MoS, Parliamentary Affairs) with Shri N K Premachandran (Member of Parliament from Kerala) and Shri Shrirang Appa Barne (Member of Parliament from Maharashtra). All the three Jury Committee Members themselves are Sansad Ratna Awardees of earlier Lok Sabha. Dr Abdul Kalam used to discuss about the Sansad Ratna Awards with the Founder of the



Awards, Prime Point Srinivasan and also with the Jury Committee Members. He had given several suggestions to improve the parameters for selection of awardees.

11th Edition of Sansad Ratna Awards 2021

The 11th edition was held on 20th March 2021 at the prestigious Constitution Club of India, New Delhi. Shri Sunil Arora (Hon'ble Chief Election Commissioner of India) and Justice Shri A K Patnaik (Former Judge, Supreme Court of India) presented the Awards during the Awards function. Shri Arjun Ram Meghwal (Hon'ble MoS, Parliamentary Affairs, and Chairman of Jury Committee) was also present. Ten Parliamentarians received Awards. The event was telecast live by Doordarshan News and other private channels.

Shri Bhartruhari Mahtab (BJD, Odisha) and Shri Shrirang Appa Barne (Shiv Sena, Maharashtra) received the Sansad Maha Ratna Awards for the 16th Lok Sabha. Smt Supriya Sule (NCP, Maharashtra), though nominated for Sansad Maha Awards, could

not participate due to some urgent official work. Sansad Maha Ratna Awards are given once in five years.

This is the first time that the Sansad Ratna Awards function was held outside Chennai, and in the national capital of the country. The gist of the speeches of the Chief Guests and the new list of Sansad Ratna Committee Members are included in this edition.

For the first time in the 12 years of the Sansad Ratna Awards functions, school students participated as volunteers at the function in New Delhi. The Management of Ahlcon Public School supported the event with the participation of 10 senior student volunteers. The students were given the opportunity to interact with India's top performing Parliamentarians.

Synopses of the speeches of the main dignitaries, with YouTube links, are given separately in this edition.

Videos of the 11th Sansad Ratna Awards function:

www.tinyurl.com/sansadratna2021

Photographs of the event:

<https://photos.app.goo.gl/fUIdDS3SjSmNvqdZ7>

By K Srinivasan, Publisher and Mg. Editor
Source: March 2021 issue of PreSense

Cash-for-Votes in Recent Tamil Nadu Assembly Elections –Helpless Election Commission: A Quick Survey

While the efficiency of the Indian Election Commission in the smooth conduct of Parliament and Assembly Elections, is widely appreciated, the Commission appears helpless in curbing cash-for-votes. Recently, the Election Commission (EC) had announced State Assembly Elections in five states, including West Bengal, Kerala and Tamil Nadu. At the time of writing this Editorial, the election process is not completed and results not announced.

The Tamil Nadu Assembly Elections held on 6th April 2021, will go down in the annals of history for the unprecedented distribution of cash-for-votes in most of the constituencies. The Election Commission had appointed a large number of observers, and deployed security forces to seize and curb the movement of cash. They seized around Rs. 428 crores worth of cash, gold and liquor in transit in Tamil Nadu alone. Interestingly, many of the seizures were from vans carrying cash for ATM Machines of banks, gold jewellers moving to their shops, and small businessmen carrying cash for their business purposes. The team that seized them, went on to deposit the cash and the gold in the Treasury, recorded the increase in tally of seizure and announced it proudly on all TV media.

On the other hand, it was an open secret that the major political parties in Tamil Nadu distributed cash ranging from Rs.500 to Rs.5000 per voter, in most of the constituencies, three days before the elections. Strangely, the authorities reportedly did not receive any complaint from anyone, and the distribution was completed without any hassle. In some constituencies, people staged *dharna* on the highways, for non-receipt of the cash. From the conversation *PreSense* had with several political workers of all major parties, it is speculated that around Rs.5000 to 6000 crores might have been distributed to voters and booth agents before the elections. *PreSense* understands from the political workers that there was a power shutdown in some centres in the midnight, to enable the parties to distribute the cash. A case was reported that

one candidate bribed an entire police station of staff openly and when it became big news, the DGP (Director General of Police) ordered a CBCID (Crime-Branch Crime Investigation Department) investigation.

Some of the candidates issued tokens to voters, to avoid being caught in cash disbursement. Interestingly, one candidate issued tokens to voters to collect Rs. 2000 worth of provisions from a store, and people began crowding that shop. The shop had to put up posters, disowning responsibility for the tokens issued by the candidate.



Tokens bundled and kept ready



Token to collect provisions worth Rs.2000/-



Poster put up by the shop, disowning responsibility for tokens issued by candidate

During the entire operation by the political parties, the Election Commission could not do anything as they do not have enough powers to ban the candidate or the political parties, violating the rules. The authorities and the people will forget these incidents once the results are announced, and discussions about them will be revived during the next General Elections.

Many vibrant young political leaders with great vision but without enough money, get disillusioned, and move away from the political system, leaving the space open for moneyed and corrupt candidates.

PreSense had repeatedly pointed out that Electoral Reforms were urgently needed to be put in place, to curb illegal money

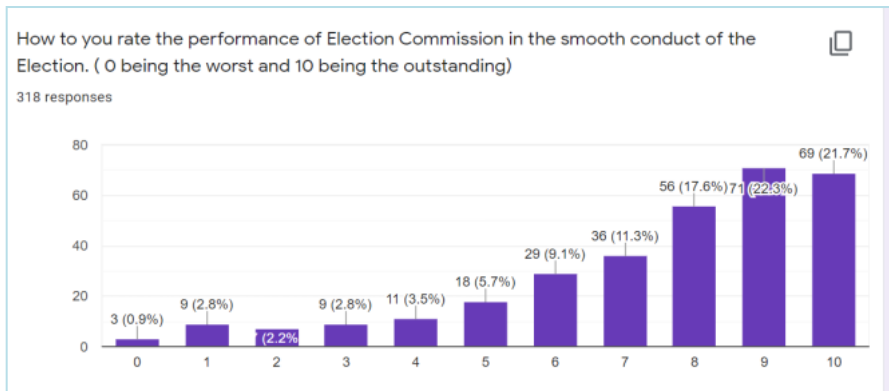
flow during the elections. For selection of candidates, some political parties allot seats only to the 'highest bidder', who can

spend more for the campaign and the elections. Many vibrant young political leaders with great vision but without enough money, are disillusioned by this, and move away from the political system, leaving the space open for moneyed and corrupt candidates.

A Quick Online Survey

After the completion of the single-phase elections on 6th April 2021 in Tamil Nadu, *PreSense* conducted a quick online survey to understand the perception of tech-savvy (users of the internet) voters, living in Tamil Nadu. 318 people responded within 3 days. 85% men and 15% women responded, representing all the districts and various age groups of Tamil Nadu. Youngsters and those under 40 years of age, who participated in this survey, represented only 21%. The respondents were requested to remain anonymous for the survey, and not disclose their identity. The responses revealed high level of maturity.

Rating of Election Commission



When asked how they rated the Election Commission (EC) for the conduct of the elections on a scale of 0 to 10, the respondents gave an average rating of 7.4 out of 10. Sixty percent of them gave a rating of more than 8 out of 10. From the comments given by the respondents, it is felt that the people were not happy about the 'inaction' of the Election Commission, on the violators of rules

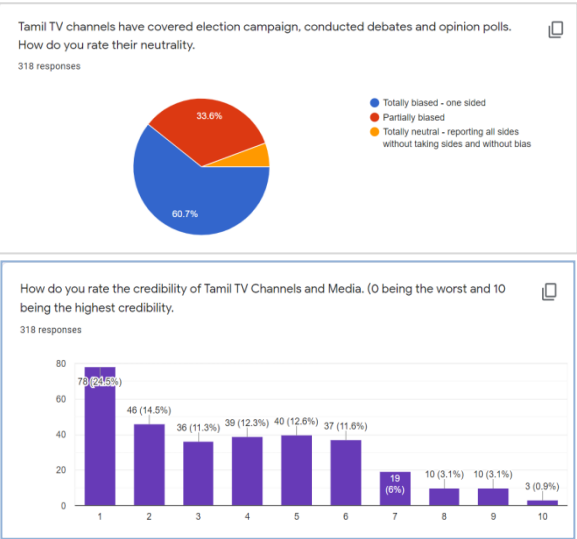
(cash-for-votes and Covid norms). We feel that this factor has pulled down the rating to 7.4, in spite of best efforts by EC to conduct the elections smoothly.

Plus and Minus

When asked to specify one major item that irked them about the elections, the respondents enlisted three main aspects, viz. (1) Indecent and hate speeches by leaders (40%), (2) Cash disbursal to voters (27%) and (3) Election Commission not taking action against violators (22%).

On the positive side, the main aspects were (1) Use of social media during the campaign, (2) Limited acts of violence, and (3) Leaders talking about achievements and developmental schemes during the campaigns.

Rating of Media



When the respondents were asked to rate the media, 94% perceived the media as completely or partially biased (61% felt the media was totally biased and one-sided). When the respondents were asked to rate the media credibility on 0 to 10 scale, the average rating came to 3.7 out of 10. Nearly two-thirds of

the respondents rated it below 4.

PreSense has been insisting on several platforms, that there should be some regulation in the broadcast / publication of opinion polls before the elections. Many of these opinion polls are done in secret

If the Government does not have the willingness to introduce the Electoral Reforms, EC itself should find out the provisions and rules available in the Act and the Constitution, just as EC under former Chief Election Commissioner, T N Seshan did, to curb money power in politics, and discipline the political system.

collaboration with political parties, and they are not done scientifically. These biased opinion polls, when aired frequently, tend to influence the voters too. *PreSense* has always been insisting that the right to 'freedom of speech and expression' as provided in the Indian Constitution, is being misused, to benefit the wrong people. It is also worth mentioning that on 23rd April 2021, Justice Shri Bobde, Chief Justice of India on the day of his retirement, mentioned that freedom of speech was the most abused right at present.

While *PreSense* appreciates and salutes the Election Commission for their excellent task, to protect and uphold the Indian democracy, they should not remain helpless observers, when political parties and candidates violate the rules. If the Government does not have the willingness to introduce the Electoral Reforms, EC itself should find the provisions and rules available in the Act and the Constitution, just as EC under former Chief Election Commissioner, T N Seshan did, to curb money power in politics, and discipline the political system.

by K. Srinivasan, Publisher and Managing Editor

Source: April 2021 issue of PreSense

PM Modi's Seven-Year Rule Gets Good Rating, but the Middle-Class Rings Alarm Bells

Generally, it is said that politics and elections are based more on



'perception' than on 'performance'. We have in the past, seen several Prime Ministers (PMs) and Chief Ministers (CMs) losing elections in spite of their sterling performance, and several non-performing politicians winning again. While analysing the seven years of Modi rule, we chose to study the perception of a sample section of the common people. No doubt, the Government and the ruling party have released lots of documents enlisting their various achievements. Ultimately, how the performance is perceived by the common man matters much for any political system to function.

In May 2021, Narendra Modi completed 7 years of his Prime Ministership. For this Editorial, PreSense conducted a snap online Survey to study the perception of a sample section of the people. Between 11th June and 13th June 2021, PreSense received 1321 online responses from across all states, from both genders and different age groups. Since it was conducted online, we can safely take this as the perception of the average educated middle class across India. This segment was the base, which provided Modi huge mandate both in the 2014 and 2019 General Elections. Hence, these perceptions are significant to the Modi team. We also

clarify that we have not done any study of the Below Poverty Line (BPL) segment.

Positive Aspects

Generally, all the respondents, irrespective of whether they were supporters of Modi or not, perceived the following as his positive achievements:

- Strong Leadership qualities both within India and globally;
- Scrapping of Article 370 and resolving the J&K problem overnight – taking bold political decisions which other leaders hesitated to take;
- Friendly relationship with all foreign countries;
- No corruption charges during these 7 years, and even before, when he was the Chief Minister of Gujarat State, *ie.* a clean personal image, and not involving his family in the politics and Government;
- Various Government Schemes like *Jan Dhan, Swachh Bharat, Mudra Loans, Free Housing, Free Gas, Beti Bachao, Ayushman Bharat, Payment to Farmers*, etc.;
- Demonetisation, effective structural changes in the economy, curbing black money, introducing digital economy, etc.;
- Covid Management (managing vaccines within a short time and vaccinating a large number of people, despite negative publicity given by some opposition leaders and the media).

Negative Aspects

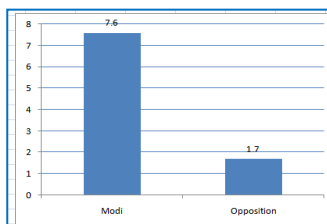
The online respondents belong to the average middle class people. Hence, this can be considered the perception of the average middle class segment.

- Petrol and diesel price hike, leading to a price rise of other commodities;
- Unemployment problem / job losses;
- Not done anything to favour middle class and senior citizens, including Pensioners (bank interest is getting reduced for deposits);
- While the schemes are laudable, implementation is poor;

- A soft approach towards the corrupt. Raids with little progress thereafter. The corrupt have become fearless and are unshaken
- Some Ministers generally inefficient, and Gujarat cadre officers dominating the bureaucracy;
- Poor communication strategies – not making any serious effort to counter fake messages and false news;
- ‘Perceived arrogance’ of some BJP and RSS leaders – not connecting with people –assuming themselves to be ‘intellectual islands’ with an ‘I Know It All’ attitude;
- Not taking enough action against continuous protests like CAA, Farm Laws, etc

Interestingly, the persons who voted for Modi in 2014 and 2019, and confirm voting for him in 2024 too, are highly critical of his handling economic issues and insensitivity of the Government towards the problems faced by the common man.

Rating of Modi Government and Opposition



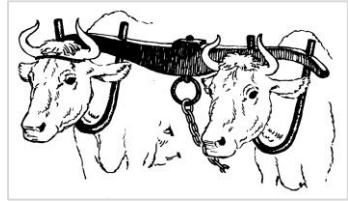
When the respondents were asked to rate the Modi Government on a 0 to 10 scale, 75% rated more than 8.0. 8.6% of the respondents rated 3.0 and below. The average rating by all the respondents was 7.6 out of 10.

The respondents were also asked to rate the performance of the Opposition Parties led by Indian National Congress as an effective opposition, on the scale of 0 to 10. 85% of the respondents rated them less than 3.0 out of 10. Only 3.7% of the respondents rated them 8.0 and above. The average rating was 1.7 out of 10.

These two indicators reveal the lack of an effective opposition in the current situation.

Functioning of the Opposition Parties

As indicated earlier, even those respondents who were against Modi were critical of the Opposition Parties led by Indian National Congress. In any democracy, both the opposition and the ruling parties are like bullocks tied to a yoke. Both have to travel together in a balanced manner. Both have the responsibility to run the democracy, and both are accountable to the citizens.



In 1991, when Narasimha Rao was the Prime Minister, the country was facing a major financial crisis, leading to the liberalisation of economy. Although RSS was against the principles of liberalisation, the then opposition leaders, Vajpayee and Advani worked closely with Narasimha Rao to bail out the country from the crisis. Both the PM and the Opposition Leaders placed the nation above their political gains. Even as a minority government, Narasimha Rao completed his full term, implementing many financial reforms, the fruits of which we enjoy today. When Pakistan raised allegations against India, Narasimha Rao, instead of travelling himself, deputed Vajpayee to give a befitting response on behalf of India, to Pakistan at the United Nations. This gesture sent a strong message globally that all the political parties in India follow a similar policy on Jammu and Kashmir.

Today, even during the pandemic situation, our Opposition Parties do not act responsibly and try to politicise every issue by spreading fake and unverified messages. Sadly, many of the opposition parties issued irresponsible statements, raising doubts about the vaccination, and creating confusion in the minds of the common people. Sometimes, they issue statements which favour enemy countries too.

Alarm Bell Rings

There is visible frustration among the average middle class segment on account of the rising petrol price, unemployment, economic issues, etc. The survey also indicates a drop of 9% support to Modi over 2019. Some have supported Modi because of TINA (There Is No Alternate) factor. The Modi Government should not take this for granted. This is an alarm bell.

There is a clear indication that out of the respondents who voted for Modi in 2014 and 2019, nearly 9% of them indicated that they would not vote for Modi in 2024. Although the General Elections are to be held only in 2024, the ruling establishment should understand the clear and loud message of average middle class. It may get reflected in the UP (Uttar Pradesh) State elections to be held next year. Therefore, they should not take them for granted. From the various responses in the survey, it is clearly indicated that the people are more anxious and concerned about their day-to-day life, than of the achievements trumpeted about a better macro policy or sound foreign relations.

In the past, more than economic issues, emotional issues have helped BJP to come to power. With the new set of young voters and the growing frustration of the average middle class, emotional issues may not play a greater role in future. When a national party like Indian National Congress is weak, it could lead to a fragmented mandate with many regional parties securing seats, leading to chaos and confusion of leadership. India has witnessed such fragile governments in the past, with Charan Singh, Deve Gowda, I.K. Gujral, Chandrasekar and V.P. Singh without majority of mandate, collapsing at the whims and fancies of various regional party leaders. It is also sad that Indian National Congress is not taking enough efforts to emerge as a strong opposition party. Weak Congress is not good for the democracy.

To the question, 'who could be an alternative to Modi, many respondents could not specify any leader. Various names have emerged. Interestingly, Rahul Gandhi has not emerged as front runner. Only a few people indicated his name. Many indicated 'None'. This clearly indicates the leadership crisis in Indian polity. Some of the senior leaders, with whom we spoke, said that a leader would emerge at the appropriate time. Our concern is that such

leaders should not become a temporary leader for a stop-gap arrangement, like we had in the past.

Our Conclusion and Suggestion

As on June 2021, Modi continues to enjoy a good rating and the confidence of the average middle class. As we have not surveyed the BPL segment, we are unable to say anything about their perception. Although Modi has emerged as a strong national and international leader, there is frustration among the average middle class people due to various economic issues. Even before the nation could recover from demonetisation and GST impact, Covid has attacked the whole world, leading to further complications. Even though Modi has been facing several such challenges, he has been managing the situation well.

There is also a feeling among the respondents that the Government is not handling the protests for CAA, Farm Laws, etc effectively. They have allowed too much time for the protests, causing inconvenience to the general public. Also, they do not act heavily on those who spread wrong/fake messages against the country. They also feel that the Government is soft towards corrupt people, who are already booked.

Unfortunately, the communication from the ruling segment is very poor. Although the Government has managed to overcome a lot of challenges, they are not being communicated effectively to the people. Even though the Government boasts of good governance, it is not felt at the grass root level, mainly because of lack of implementation and effective communication. The Government does not counter fake news effectively, and wrong information is spread by print, television and social media.

Media relations is very poor after Modi took over in 2014. Since the media is kept at a distance, without proper interaction, the Government is not able to use the media effectively. During the previous governments, there used to be a Media Advisor to Prime Minister, and he would function as a bridge between the media and the Government. Now, there is no such arrangement. A large gap exists between the Government and the media. This will not help

the Government in the long run. The Government needs the support of the media to carry information about their schemes to the public. Senior journalists confirm that there is no coordination between the PMO (Prime Minister's Office), Ministry of I&B (Information & Broadcasting), PIB (Press Information Bureau), various ministries, and the media for dissemination of information.

There is added frustration when Modi supporters 'chest-beat' about their performance, when the common people are voicing their concern about their day-to-day life problems, including the petrol price. The 'perceived arrogance' and insensitivity of some of the BJP and RSS leaders on vital issues, add to the frustration.

Modi commands the confidence of the people and enjoys a clean non-corrupt image. This is a great advantage. Although the next Parliament election is due only in 2024, with assembly elections in some States scheduled for 2022, both the ruling and the opposition leaders should introspect about taking the country to the next level like bullocks in the yoke.

by K Srinivasan, Managing Editor

*(Survey analysis by Prof. Dr K Prabhakar, Editorial Advisor,
and Priyadharshni Rahul, Deputy Editor)*

Source: June 2021 issue of PreSense

High Prices of Fuels, Edible Oils and Commodities Hit Common Man Hard - Bring Fuels under GST immediately

From May to July 2021, the common man has been battling high prices of petrol, diesel and edible oils amid a depressing scenario of joblessness, unemployment during Covid times. It has been tough balancing the family budget.



Petrol prices breached the Rs 100 mark in 17 states. Diesel touched the Rs 90 mark. Since May 2021, fuel prices are on the rise, revised 15 times in June preceded by 15 times in May. Domestic prices had to sync with international

prices.

The Government walked a tight rope in dismantling administered pricing mechanism to balance the interests of the economy and play to vote bank politics. While Petrol, Diesel went out, Kerosene and LPG were retained under Administered Price Mechanism (APM). Even as overall subsidies came down, the common man was caught by surprise by high prices. The subsidies provided by the government of PM Modi is about Rs 12,840 crore FY 20-21, almost half of the Rs 35,000 crore provided by the previous UPA government. LPG subsidy has been reduced and ceding of this by affordable class has not made an impact. LPG prices have gone up to Rs 700 to Rs 800 against the older price of Rs 500 per cylinder with a jump of Rs 300.

High diesel prices have had cascaded onto transportation costs reflecting high prices of commodities from vegetables, fruits to rice, wheat, barley and pulses like dal, which have to be

transported over long distances. While cereals have a long shelf life, perishable commodities don't. Economists have been stressing on building up a large network of cold storage chains (refrigerating veggies and fruits at different places) to prevent waste leading, to a shortage and high prices.

What is the crux of the problem one might ask? Vote bank politics and political compulsions force governments of the day to prevent them by passing on the increased dose by dose but in quantum jumps of high price hikes. When the price escalation comes in a lump sum, the family budget goes into deficit. How does a family man balance his budget? Save on non-essentials.

On the subsidies on petroleum products, UPA led by Dr Manmohan Singh tried to fix this by allowing floatation of oil bonds to mop up revenues from the public. This comes for redemption next year amounting to over Rs one lakh crore plus interest. The present BJP Government has to raise resources at a time of low tax collections.

No solution appears on the horizon. Says M R Sivaraman, former Revenue Secretary of the Government of India, tax collections across the board have been very low as GST collections have seen a sharp revenue shortfall. Taxes have been low due to manufacturing coming to standstill because of Covid protocols.

Sivaraman says, "In such a situation the state or central governments cannot bring down the prices of fuels as this is the only high revenue raising resource for them. Petrol and Diesel are yet to be brought under the GST and there is a tussle in the GST council between the centre and the states. GST can level out the prices uniformly in all states". But as T K Rangarajan, former MP of CPIM, points out that the states will never agree to bring petrol and diesel under GST as their share of the cess comes down to 28%, leading to a loss in revenue. States get 55% of the revenues from local levies on Petrol and Diesel. It may be virtually impossible for the centre to make up this loss of 27% of tax revenues to the states.

It's a tough task for both the centre and the states to get over this. As there is no immediate solution, the common man may have to bear the pain as prices will remain high until October/ November this year that is the onset of the Kharif season.

Assuming the harvest is good and there is an abundant supply of food grains and edible commodities, Sivaraman says prices will flatten out to fall. Also, if crude oil prices come down from the 80-dollar level to about 65 USD level, which oil pundits predict, it will reduce the fuel prices. "This is the tipping point when the Government will intervene because it has machinery to monitor closely the prices of all commodities in the economy. If it finds that transportation costs alone have contributed to the rise in price of a particular commodity, then the Government will slash the prices of fuels", he says.

Notwithstanding the theoretical aspects, both Centre and State Governments should realize that prices are soaring in this challenging time of pandemic putting the poor and middle class into untold miseries. They should sit together and find a way out to bring the Petrol/Diesel prices under GST, before it becomes too late.

By T N Ashok, Consulting Editor

Source: July 2021 issue of PreSense

Mother India@75 Sorrows Over Parliament Disruption



The Indian Parliament's Monsoon Session 2021, which commenced on 19th July, was adjourned *sine die* on 11th August 2021, two days ahead of its scheduled time. The 17th Lok Sabha saw its session cut short for the fourth consecutive time ahead of its scheduled date. Also, the Winter Session of November 2020 could not be held due to Covid fears. Both the Houses of Parliament were disrupted by opposition members and were forcefully adjourned. Lok Sabha worked only for 21% of the Scheduled time and Rajya Sabha for 29%.

Opposition parties disrupted proceedings demanding a debate on the alleged Pegasus software snooping on journalists, MPs and even ministers and opposition parties based on a media house report, The Wire. Opposition led by the TMC called it Pegasus Snoop Gate. Though the BJP led NDA Government offered to allot time to discuss all the issues of the so-called Pegasus spyware

thread bare, the Congress and TMC led opposition was not interested creating an impression disruption was the only goal.

The government however managed to introduce 15 Bills and get them passed with its majority in the house. All the bills were passed in both the Houses amidst the din without any discussion. Paradoxically, an adamant Opposition, which was disrupting proceedings in both houses, came forward to discuss the 127th Constitutional Amendment relating to Other Backward Classes (OBCs), presumably in pursuance of an electoral gain. Strangely, the Lok Sabha spent 474 minutes and Rajya Sabha 360 minutes discussing the 127th Constitutional Amendment bill, while other draft legislations were passed without discussion.

Commentary & Analysis

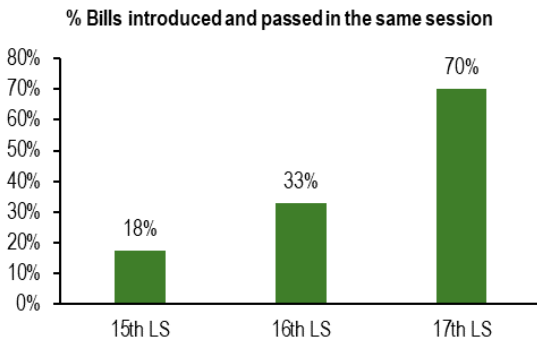
Though the Government was willing to discuss all issues raised by the Opposition, it was insisting on a debate only on the Pegasus issue, to be discussed on priority basis. The same opposition leaders, who were in the Government earlier, knew pretty well that the matter was sub-judice, as it was already in the realm of the Supreme Court. Besides, any open discussion on such sensitive matters involving national security in a public domain was also not possible, but a clear breach of security protocols.

Besides, it is common knowledge that every person holding a smart phone and downloading mobile apps is susceptible to snooping without his or her knowledge. Pegasus may not be a serious issue for the common man. But the opposition could have followed parliamentary protocols by requesting the Business Advisory Committee, for allotting time for a detailed discussion on various issues affecting the common man such as unemployment, economy, fuel price, price rise, inflation more relevant to their constituencies. Sadly, they did not even allow the Prime Minister to introduce the new Cabinet Ministers, as per the Parliament procedure.

Such irresponsible behaviour of some opposition members freed the Government of its obligation to escape from discussions on such vital matters. An intelligent Opposition could have prepared

an agenda of alleged government failures and discussed the same in both houses relayed live by both Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha in house TV networks. They could have grabbed headlines the next day in favour of the public in a positive manner. But they failed to do so for narrow gains. Now they carry the blame for wasting Parliament's time and money.

They should have participated in the discussions on the various bills introduced by the Government. For reasons best known to them, they compromised in favour of a political stance apparently for electoral gains and only participated fully in the 127th Constitutional amendment bill.



Because of the lack of Opposition's maturity, the ruling party gained brownie points taking full advantage in skirting over critical matters for discussion. In the midst of all the ruckus, the Government introduced 15 bills and all were passed

without discussion in the same session, excepting the 127th Amendment bill. Strangely, in the 17th Lok Sabha 70% of the Bills introduced were passed in the same session. This is very high compared to the previous 15th and 16th Lok Sabha.

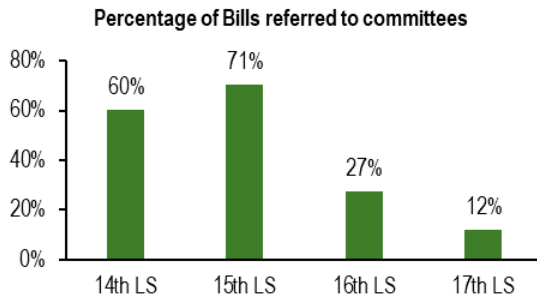
In a democratic process, any proposed legislation needs to be scrutinized thoroughly and debated well before its passage in the house. According to a Senior Member of Parliament, draft legislations prepared by the concerned bureaucrats, often are not in tune with the ground realities and they need to be thoroughly discussed by the MPs, both in the Standing Committees and in the Houses. Then only these bills are fine-tuned with public interests and pass muster of a judicial scrutiny.

Another MP, who also chose to remain anonymous, claimed that the present Government does not refer the Bills to the Standing Committees and pass them without in-depth discussions. During the 14th and 15th Lok Sabha (UPA Government), 60 to 70 percent of the Bills were referred to the Standing Committees. The NDA Government referred only 27% of the bills in the 16th Lok Sabha and 12% in the current 17th Lok Sabha to the standing committees.

Standing

Committees with Members from all parties discuss the draft legislations in detail (media is not privy to such discussions) and also get the views of domain experts. They take the

consensus view on the bills and present their report to the Parliament. Based on the Committee's Reports, both the Houses discuss thoroughly and fine tune the draft legislation.



This democratic exercise is absolutely essential to avoid protests later and any legal scrutiny.

The amendment to legislation on labour was passed by both the Houses. Accepted by all, though there were muted protests. This bill was thoroughly scrutinised by the Standing Committee on Labour and then presented to Parliament. Hence this sensitive bill with lot of reforms has been generally accepted.

On the other hand, the Farm bills, over which there was nationwide protest by a section of the farmers, were passed without reference to the Standing Committee. The legislations are now facing the imponderable and have come under legal scrutiny. Had the Government referred the Farm bills to the Standing Committee and then got them approved through a consensus, such problems could have been avoided, political observers point out.

Expressing concern over the lack of debate in Parliament and state legislatures, the Chief Justice of India NV Ramana said it is a "sorry state of affairs" as the absence of quality debate leaves many aspects of laws unclear and increases the burden on courts. He said that an elaborate discussion during the law-making process reduces litigation as when courts interpret them, "we all knew the intent of the legislature".

Another issue is the delay in electing the Deputy Speaker for Lok Sabha, opposition MP's say. Normally the Deputy Speaker is elected within a month of the new Lok Sabha. Unfortunately, even after 27 months, (longest in 75 years of parliamentary democracy), the government has not taken any initiative to elect a Deputy Speaker.



The unruly behaviour of a Rajya Sabha Member by climbing on the Table in the well of the House and throwing rule book on the Chair makes every Indian to hang his/her head in shame. This speaks of the poor quality of the Members nominated by the Political parties. While 90 to 95 percent of the Members observe decorum in presenting their view points, a section of the MP's, apparently with the blessings of their party leaders indulge in unruly behaviour, to impress them denying an opportunity to MPs,

observing parliamentary protocols, to raise issues so relevant to national interests.

Suggestions

Both Ruling and Opposition parties should stop the “Blame Game” in peoples’ interests, especially in the interests of the constituency people who elected them. Senior party leaders on either side should sit and find a solution across the table and thus avoid such unruly scenes in parliament, which does not project a good image of MPs both within the country and outside. Youngsters get a wrong message about Parliament and its MPs or how democracy is run from such unruly behaviour. Definitely avoidable. Due to the spread of Covid, Parliament could not run on the scheduled timelines.

Time for Proactive Decisions

New Rules have to be framed to prevent Members from indulging in unruly behaviour and they should not only be barred from the rest of the Session but also be subject to a salary cut. Daily allowances

New Rules have to be framed to prevent Members from indulging in unruly behaviour and they should not only be barred from the rest of the Session but also be subject to a salary cut. Daily allowances and all other privileges, to which MPs are entitled, should be denied.

and privileges, to which MPs are entitled, should be denied. Penalties of heavy fines should be imposed on them, as parliamentary records show crores of rupees of public money have been wasted in such disruption of parliamentary proceedings skipping in-depth discussion on relevant issues of public interest. Sadly, political parties do not condemn such misbehaviour inside the House. Unfortunately, we do not have Opposition leaders strong enough in stature to stand up to speak against such unruly behaviour of some MPs. Strong stature of party leaders would invite admiration and serve as a role model for young MPs. Both Ruling and Opposition parties should respect the Institutions of Parliamentary Democracy and should not take them for granted.

The Civil Society expects a new era at least from the Winter Session 2021, keeping the common man in mind, instead of the impending assembly elections for electoral gains.

Let us remember what Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru said:

"Democracy means tolerance, not merely of those who agree with us, but of those who do not agree with us. With all my admiration and love for democracy, I am not prepared to accept the statement that the largest number of people are always right".

Graphics courtesy: PRS India

By K Srinivasan, Publisher and Mg. Editor

Source: August 2021 issue of PreSense

Ten Challenges faced by India as perceived by Dr APJ Abdul Kalam



We recorded an exclusive podcast over telephone in August 2007 with Dr APJ Abdul Kalam, when India was celebrating the 60th Independence anniversary.

In the 9 minutes interview with Prime Point Srinivasan, Dr Abdul Kalam lists 10 challenges before the

Nation (as it was in 2007 and many continue even now) and the role of youth to build the nation.

This interview is still relevant today when we celebrate the 75th Independence Day.

Kindly spare 09 minutes and listen to Dr Abdul Kalam.

<https://youtu.be/hVY3hwsGgE0>

Source: August 2007 issue of PreSense

Panel Discussion: Ethics in Politics
"Legislation needed to regulate political parties and political funding" – Justice A K Patnaik



In the panel discussion under the segment, *Sangamam*, organised by this eMagazine PreSense, on 1st November 2020, Justice A K Patnaik urged the need for an immediate legislation to regulate political parties and political funding.

‘Ethics in Politics’ – Is it an Oxymoron?

PreSense and Prime Point Foundation in association with Next Gen Political Leaders (NGPL) organise a monthly panel discussion with nationally renowned persons under the series, *"Sangamam – Fusion of Great Minds"*. On 1st November 2020, a panel discussion was held on the topic "Ethics in Politics", moderated by Ms Priyadharshni Rahul, Deputy Editor of PreSense. Justice A K Patnaik (Retired Judge, Supreme Court) and Mr Bhartruhari Mahtab (sixth-time sitting MP from Cuttack, Odisha) were the expert panellists.

While introducing the subject, K. Srinivasan, Publisher and Managing Editor of PreSense, said that many people thought ethics and politics were an oxymoron. But he cited the example of great

leaders across the nation like Dr Ambedkar, Sardar Patel, Lal Bahadur Shastri, Morarji Desai, Dr Hari Krishna Mahtab, Kamaraj, Rajaji, Kakkan and many others who practised ethics in their political life. It was only after the period of the 60s and 70s that ethics seemed compromised in politics, he added.

Why Erosion of Values in Politics?

Justice Patnaik said that freedom fighters, who were committed to the national cause, were participants in the legislatures and in the Government till 1960s. He added that it was thereafter that the new class of 'fortune seekers' began to join politics, leading to the erosion of values in politics.

Mr Bhartruhari Mahtab, concurred with the views of Justice Patnaik that a new class of politicians has emerged after the 1960s, with the sole aim to acquire power and earn money. They also interfered with the functioning of the civil administration to gain illegal benefits. Mr Bhartruhari Mahtab quoted Dr Ashok Mehta, a well-known socialist leader who wrote in 1960 that people were rushing towards the political parties, which were expected to come to power.

Legislation Needed

Justice Patnaik observed that electoral politics has led to the collection of large amounts of funds. Therefore, political parties prefer people with a source of large funds. Over a period of time, the leaders themselves have become arrogant and do not follow democracy within their own party. He suggested legislation to regulate the political parties and political funding, along the lines of the UK, Australia, Germany, Cambodia, and South Africa, which have effective legislations in place. He insisted that internal democracy should also be included in the legislation.

Mr Bhartruhari Mahtab felt that in India, the enforcement of the law was weak and any amount of legislation would not help unless enforced effectively. He added that at present, details of funding of political parties cannot be sought through RTI (Right to Information). In response to this observation, Justice Patnaik said

that unless there is a legislation, the Supreme Court, the High Courts and the Election Commission would not be able to enforce, when needed. Both agreed that funding of political parties should become transparent.

Dynastic Politics

Justice Patnaik said that he was not in favour of dynastic politics. If any family is good, they can come back to power on their own. But he was not in favour of individual families controlling the political parties in India, as this was against the interest of democracy.

Agreeing with his views, Mr Bhartruhari Mahtab felt that complacency has developed in dynastic politics. Fortunately, people have become more demanding, and are more conscious of their rights. With the emergence of social media, people have better access to information. He added that the main challenge before politics was how to sustain a high standard of ethics, and do good for the society.

Advice to Young Politicians

Justice Patnaik appealed to youngsters to join politics, after ensuring they had a regular income base to maintain their families. He also appealed to the general public to be vigilant while exercising their votes, so that good people are elected to the legislature.

Mr Bhartruhari Mahtab welcomed the New Education Policy 2020, whereby children would be taught values and ethics from the primary school level. Honesty, gratitude, forgiveness and non-violence need to be taught and inculcated. That would help to build a strong nation.

The discussion in full can be watched on
https://youtu.be/cf_w2EKJrmM.

by Priyadharshni Rahul, Deputy Editor
Source: November 2020 issue of PreSense

Conversation with Ms Priyanka Chaturvedi, Member of Parliament

"Be persistent in your effort. When they see progress, the world is with you!"

In an exclusive conversation with Ms Priyanka Vickram Chaturvedi, Member of Parliament in the talk series, Aura, Ms Priyanka shared her experiences in her journey to become a well-known politician, and a successful woman. Ms Priyanka Chaturvedi is also the deputy leader of her political party, Shiv Sena. She was earlier the national spokesperson of Indian National Congress before she quit.



We reproduce some of Ms Priyanka Chaturvedi's thoughts, shared in the conversation:

Ms Priyanka Joining Politics

As a mother of two, it was the 26/11/2008 Mumbai terrorist attack that triggered my zeal to join politics. Politics was an opportunity to be the change I was seeking.

My decision was an initial shock to my family. When I was getting into politics, I was advised that as a woman, I cannot have an impactful political career unless I came from a politically connected family or I was a well-established celebrity or someone with lots of money.

But my conviction, determination and perseverance impressed my family, the people and the public in general, so as to acknowledge and appreciate what I am, with my legitimate space in politics in the male-dominated arena.

Ms Priyanka in Politics

Politicians are viewed with suspicion by the public. You need to prove yourself and gain their confidence. It is important to be committed and grounded. Remember the 1.3 billion people in India and the 800 odd representatives in the Parliament. That is where

you stand. With great power comes great responsibility. Your duty should be to strengthen the nation and its people.

Women in Politics

It is equally important for women to perform with utmost commitment. Consistently prove your worth, convince your family of your decision and ambition. Be persistent in your effort. When they see progress, the world is with you. And there is no compromise to your womanhood. Fighting for your dignity and self-respect is imperative and not a tradable commodity.

Women's Performance in Parliament

With their confidence and efforts, women MPs give a sense of purpose to younger women who look for a political career. Women have this amazing power of inspiring other women. Ms Supriya Sule, as the top performing MP, encourages and inspires others with her personal commitment, positivity and openness to suggestions.

Managing Family and Politics

During my initial years, my daughter was just two years. I was trying to establish myself by burning the midnight oil. I did miss out on many important family events, but my husband, my children and my family gave me the strength to go after my calling for this nation. My husband and I shared the parenting responsibilities between ourselves, and today my kids are independent, mature and grounded with a strong value system.

Ms Priyanka's Strength Against Social Harassment

My self-respect is valuable. I cannot let my children see me as a leader from outside, and a broken person inside. So, I did not let go of those perpetrators of social harassment against me. This is a message to my son that he cannot behave badly with women, and for my daughter that she must never forget her core values.

After resigning (from the political party that condoned the perpetrators who harassed me), the options were to either end up as a failure who stood up for her dignity, or else try again in another political party which will respect me for what I am. I chose Shiv Sena, and I continue in my political career with many more achievements on the way!

Youth in Politics

This is the best time for youngsters to understand and learn about politics, and aspire, as almost every political party is looking for fresh blood and ideas. Young minds with the right spirit must govern this country. Tomorrow is yours. Believe in it!

Message to Men with Ambitious Women by their Side

Respect and support women for their choices. Be open to discuss their decisions and do not judge their abilities by conventional yardsticks. Treat them as equals and have conversations with them. Convince them that you are with them.

Prerequisites of a Good Politician

Empathy, staying grounded, patience, high emotional quotient, ability to stay connected with the people, and to listen. Communication should be clear. Create a narrative about yourself. The social media can help in effectively conveying one's opinion to the public. Always be aware of the others' ideologies. It helps in strengthening your own convictions. Prepare and be thorough in understanding the concept and background of any topic for debate or discussion.

The complete conversation can be viewed in the following link:
<https://youtu.be/nPyr9d14AEk>.

by Priyadharshni Rahul, Deputy Editor

Source: Dec 2020 issue of PreSense

Index

1

16th Lok Sabha-- 3, 80, 81, 82, 83, 84, 85,
86, 87, 89, 164, 208, 227, 228

A

Act of Parliament-----3, 113
Agricultural Product Market Committee
-----169
Ananda Vikatan -----23, 25
Article 370 3, 39, 40, 41, 42, 78, 110, 216
Article 45 -----37
Article 51A -----4, 118

B

Bhartruhari Mahtab -137, 208, 233, 234,
235
Biden-Harris -----4, 180, 181, 182

C

Cartoon -----15, 17
Civil Society -----231
Contempt of Court ----- 4, 159, 160
Corporate Social Responsibility 3, 54, 55,
56, 57
COVID 132, 136, 137, 155, 157, 158, 182,
194, 208

D

Digital Journalists Association of India
-----13, 15, 19
Dr A Sivathanu Pillai -----153
Dr APJ Abdul Kalam 2, 5, 7, 8, 10, 14, 15,
18, 19, 94, 124, 147, 207, 208, 232
Dr B R Ambedkar -- 40, 78, 121, 147, 234

Dr E M Sudarsana Nachiappan - 190, 192
Dr Manmohan Singh---44, 176, 203, 223
Dr Prabhakar Krishnamurthy 17, 63, 123
Dr Ramamurthy-----10
Dr S K Kharventhan -----86, 207
Dr Y S Rajan -----8, 15, 94, 129
Dynastic Politics-----235

E

Education--2, 4, 9, 15, 19, 37, 38, 56, 72,
126, 146, 147, 148, 149, 150, 153,
235
Education Loan Task Force-----15, 19
Education Policy -----4, 146, 153, 235
Election Commission ---5, 21, 71, 92, 93,
96, 184, 186, 188, 203, 204, 205, 206,
208, 210, 211, 212, 213, 214, 235
Electoral Reform-- 5, 192, 203, 205, 211,
214
Electronic Voting Machines-----21, 99
Ethics in Politics-----3, 5, 50, 233

F

Farm Bills -----4, 169
Finance Secretary -----195
Fuel Price -----4, 155, 156, 157

G

GDP 43, 44, 48, 104, 105, 107, 108, 109,
124, 126, 127, 128, 163, 194, 197
GST- 5, 99, 101, 104, 105, 106, 156, 191,
196, 197, 220, 222, 223, 224

H

History -----14

I

IIT Madras-----	17, 19, 74, 208
India 2020-----	4, 8, 94, 124, 125
India@75-----	5, 225
Indian Election-----	2, 21, 210
Indian Parliament-----	15
Introduction-----	6, 15

J

Jammu and Kashmir-----	22, 40, 216
Judiciary-----	3, 64, 193

K

K Srinivasan	3, 10, 18, 22, 27, 29, 33, 38, 67, 70, 71, 87, 89, 97, 112, 123, 131, 165, 168, 179, 192, 198, 202, 205, 209, 221, 231
--------------	---

L

Law Commission-----	186, 203
Liberalisation-----	3, 43, 44
Lok Sabha--	22, 28, 30, 38, 72, 80, 81, 82, 83, 84, 86, 87, 88, 89, 102, 114, 115, 116, 117, 130, 162, 163, 184, 185, 186, 187, 189, 190, 196, 206, 207, 208, 225, 226, 227, 228, 229

M

M R Sivaraman-----	104, 193, 223
Media-----	14, 15, 201, 213, 220
Migrant workers-----	134
Milestones-----	15
Modi Government-----	101, 217, 219

N

Narendra Modi	30, 31, 39, 49, 90, 91, 96, 98, 103, 175, 176, 184, 187, 215
National Disaster-----	3, 68

National Education Policy 2020---	4, 146, 147, 148, 151, 153, 154
Nationalism-----	4, 119, 121, 123
New Pope-----	2, 26
Next Gen Political Leaders-----	19
Next Gen Political Leaders---	19, 95, 233

O

Oil Price-----	4, 155
Online Gambling-----	4, 166

P

P Ravi-----	154
P V Narasimha Rao-----	34, 44, 218
Parliament House-----	2, 28, 195
Political Consultancies-----	4, 173
Political Intolerance-----	2, 23
Prashant Kishore-----	176, 177
PreSense Lok Sabha Index-----	3, 88, 89
Prime Point Foundation--	1, 2, 10, 15, 18, 71, 72, 203, 207, 233
Priyadharshni	14, 17, 117, 221, 233, 235, 238
Priyadharshni Rahul-----	14, 17
Priyanka Chaturvedi-----	5, 236
PRS India-----	72, 207, 231
Pulwama Attack-----	3, 76

R

R Nurullah-----	173
Rahul Gandhi-----	91, 99, 100, 101, 219
Rajya Sabha--	38, 84, 114, 116, 117, 130, 162, 163, 164, 190, 192, 206, 225, 226, 227, 229
Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh-	2, 30, 31, 32, 33, 217, 218, 221

S

S Narendra-----	36
Sakthi Prasanna-----	58

Sansad Ratna Award-- 3, 5, 9, 15, 19, 71,
72, 73, 74, 86, 203, 206, 207, 208,
209

Sansad Ratna Awards -----15, 19
Secularism----- 4, 119, 123
Simultaneous Election---4, 184, 186, 192
Social Media -----3, 90, 91, 92
Sovereignty -----202
Srinivas Gopal -----14, 17
Sukruti Narayanan -----10
Sukumar Sen-----21
Supreme Court---17, 37, 64, 65, 66, 100,
107, 122, 159, 160, 167, 190, 203,
204, 206, 208, 226, 233, 235
Supriya Sule-----71, 86, 208, 237
Susan Koshy 9, 13, 42, 45, 53, 71, 72, 79,
129, 133, 141, 145, 152, 198

T

T N Ashok--9, 14, 17, 103, 158, 172, 183,
224

T S Krishnamurthy 71, 72, 188, 189, 203,
205

U

Union Budget-----5, 81, 193, 196, 197
US Government----- 3, 46
US Shutdown ----- 46

V

V Rajendran----- 9, 161, 168
Vatican -----26, 27

W

War Room----- 177, 178