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EDUCATION

Popularise Sustainable Development Goals in education, say experts

Our Bureau
Hyderabad

There is a need for popularising Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) among students and encouraging collaboration among different stakeholders, according to experts.

Many experts including Seeram Ramakrishna, Professor, FREng. Everest Chair, National University of Singapore (NUS), Singapore; Shombi Sharp, UN Resident Coordinator, New Delhi stressed the the need for popularising Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) among students and encouraging faculty members to engage and collaborate

They were speaking at an international conference on Knowledge for Sustainable Development: Dialogues Across Disciplines to Implement Sustainable Development Goals; held at the Uni-

Over 300 delegates participated in the conference focussing on 17 SDGs to reflect on models of implementing SDGs in India

versity of Hyderabad (UoH) here.

AMBASSADORS OF CHANGE

They called for action to change, especially to students, who can be the ambassadors of change. Both individually and in the community, the students can through their actions produce ripples or create value that transcends individual goals and aspirations.

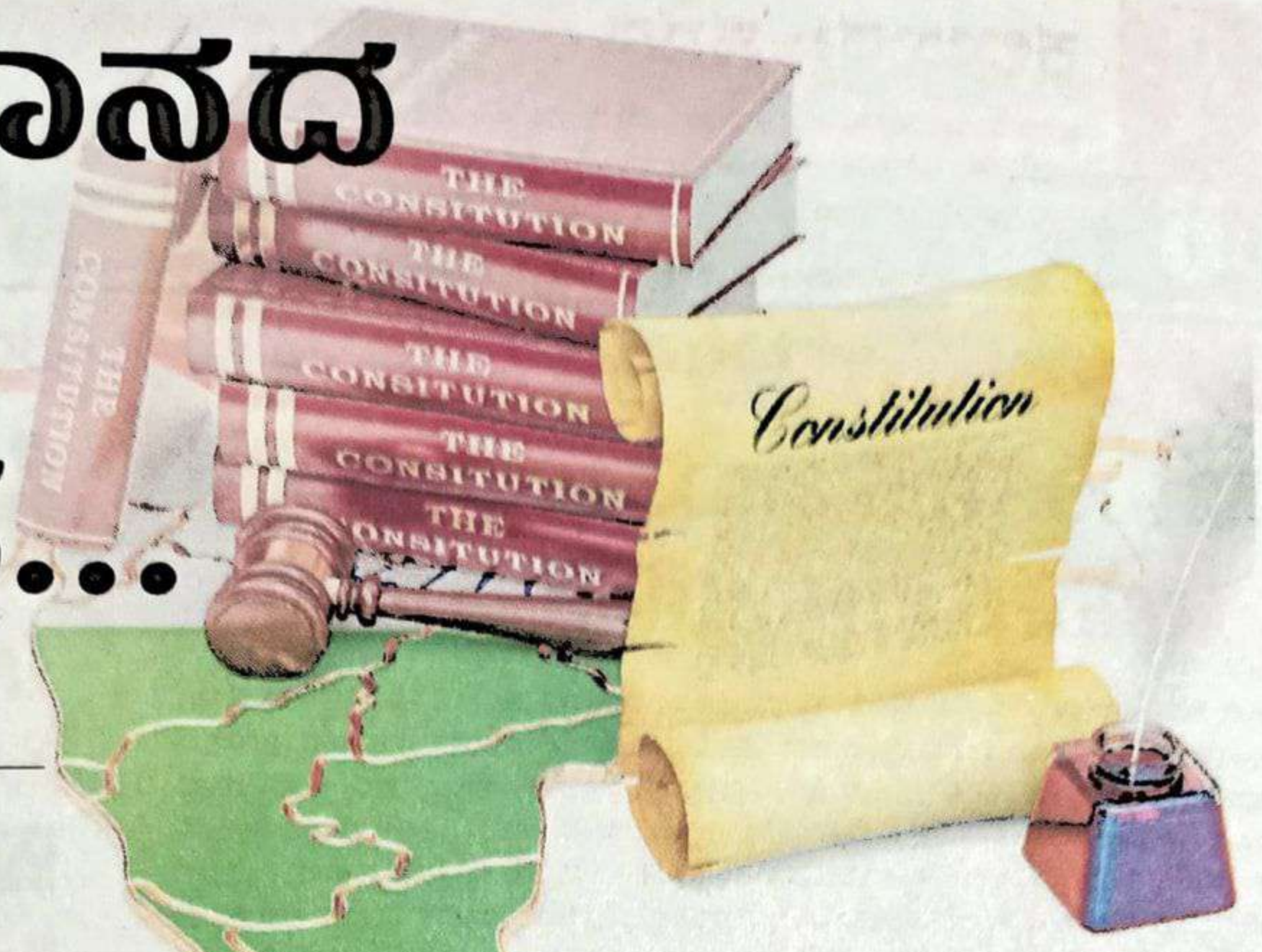
Given the significance and criticality of SDGs, the faculty should be encouraged to think about increasing content of SDG related themes in their

courses gradually from about 5 percent to 50 percent, the deliberations pointed out.

Participants at the conference include students from UoH, and colleges in from across the country. Besides students, speakers at the conference included faculty, researchers, innovative practitioners of sustainable development, from prominent institutions. Speakers from Portugal, Germany, the USA, and Singapore were among the participants in the conference.

Over 300 delegates participated in the conference focussing on 17 SDGs to reflect on models of implementing SDGs in India. The conference was spearheaded by the Internal Quality Assurance Cell (IQAC), UoH and funded by the Institution of Eminence (IoE) is a university-wide initiative; and kick starts the University's Golden Jubilee Year 2024, according to a release.

ಸಂವಿಧಾನದ ಆಶಯ ಬೆಳೆಸುತ್ತ...



ಭಾರತಿ ಕೊಪ್ಪ

ಭಾರತದಲ್ಲಿ ಸಂವಿಧಾನವೇ ಸರ್ವೋಚ್ಚವಾದುದು. ನಮ್ಮ ಸಂವಿಧಾನದ ಮೂಲ ತತ್ವಗಳು, ಆಶಯಗಳು ಮತ್ತು ಸಿದ್ಧಾಂತಗಳನ್ನು ಸಾರಾಂಶ ರೂಪದಲ್ಲಿ ತಿಳಿಸುವ ಸಂವಿಧಾನದ ಪ್ರಸ್ತಾವನೆಯನ್ನು ಪ್ರತಿ ಭಾರತೀಯರೂ ಅರ್ಥೈಸಿಕೊಳ್ಳಬೇಕು.

ಎಳೆಯ ಮಕ್ಕಳಲ್ಲಿ ಸಂವಿಧಾನದ ಬಗ್ಗೆ ಗೌರವ ಬೆಳೆಸಬೇಕು. ಸಂವಿಧಾನದಲ್ಲಿ ತಿಳಿಸಿರುವ ಹಲವು ಅಂಶಗಳನ್ನು ಶಾಲಾ ಶಿಕ್ಷಣದಲ್ಲಿ ಪಠ್ಯೇತರ ಚಟುವಟಿಕೆಗಳಾಗಿ ಅಳವಡಿಸುವುದರಿಂದ, ಮಕ್ಕಳಲ್ಲಿ ಹಕ್ಕು ಮತ್ತು ಕರ್ತವ್ಯದ ಪ್ರಜ್ಞೆಯನ್ನು ಬಾಲ್ಯದಲ್ಲಿಯೇ ಮೈಗೂಡಿಸಿಕೊಳ್ಳಲು ಸಹಕಾರಿಯಾಗುತ್ತದೆ. ಲಿಂಗ ಸಮಾನತೆ: ಶಾಲಾ ಶಿಕ್ಷಣದ ಪ್ರತಿ ಹಂತದಲ್ಲೂ ಲಿಂಗ ಸಮಾನತೆಯ ಅಂಶಗಳನ್ನು ಕಾಪಾಡುವುದು ಅಗತ್ಯ. ಶಾಲೆಯ ಸಾಂಸ್ಕೃತಿಕ, ಕ್ರೀಡಾ ಚಟುವಟಿಕೆಗಳು, ದೈನಂದಿನ ಕೆಲಸ ಕಾರ್ಯಗಳ ಹಂಚಿಕೆ ಮಾಡುವಾಗ ಹೆಣ್ಣು-ಗಂಡು ತಾರತಮ್ಯವಿಲ್ಲದೆ ಹಂಚಿಕೆ ಮಾಡುವುದು ಬಹಳ ಮುಖ್ಯ. ಶಾಲಾ ಸ್ವಚ್ಛತಾ ಕೆಲಸಗಳಾದ ಕಸ ಗುಡಿಸುವುದು, ಅವರಣದ ಸ್ವಚ್ಛತೆ, ಗಿಡಗಳಿಗೆ ನೀರು ಹಾಕುವುದು, ಸಭಾ ಕಾರ್ಯಕ್ರಮಗಳನ್ನು ನಡೆಸುವಾಗ ವೇದಿಕೆಯ ಅಲಂಕಾರ ಇತ್ಯಾದಿ ಕೆಲಸಗಳನ್ನು ಗಂಡು-ಹೆಣ್ಣು ಇಬ್ಬರಿಗೂ ಸಮಾನವಾಗಿ ಹಂಚಿಕೆ ಮಾಡಿದಾಗ ಮಕ್ಕಳಲ್ಲಿ ಹೆಣ್ಣೆಂಬ ಕೀಳರಿಮೆಯಾಗಲಿ, ಬೇಧ ಭಾವವಾಗಲಿ ಮೂಡುವುದಿಲ್ಲ.

ದೈಹಿಕ ಸಾಮರ್ಥ್ಯವನ್ನು ಒರೆಹಚ್ಚುವ ಕ್ರೀಡೆಗಳಾದ ಕಬಡ್ಡಿ, ಖೋಖೋ, ಕ್ರಿಕೆಟ್, ವಾಲಿಬಾಲ್‌ಗಳನ್ನು ಆಡಿಸುವಾಗ ಸಮಾನ ಆದ್ಯತೆ ನೀಡಬೇಕು. ಆಗ ಲಿಂಗ ಸಮಾನತೆಯ ಪರಿಕಲ್ಪನೆ ಎಳೆವೆಯಲ್ಲೇ ಮೂಡಲು ಸಹಕಾರಿಯಾಗುತ್ತದೆ.

ಮತದಾನದ ಪರಿಕಲ್ಪನೆ: ಪ್ರಜಾಪ್ರಭುತ್ವದಲ್ಲಿ 18 ವರ್ಷ ತುಂಬಿದ ಭಾರತೀಯರು ಮತದಾನದ ಮೂಲಕ ಸರ್ಕಾರವನ್ನು ಆಯ್ಕೆ ಮಾಡುವ ಹಕ್ಕನ್ನು ಹೊಂದಿದ್ದಾರೆ. ಈ ಪ್ರಕ್ರಿಯೆ ಬಗ್ಗೆ ಮಕ್ಕಳಲ್ಲಿ ಕುತೂಹಲ ಇರುತ್ತದೆ. ಮತದಾನ ಮತ್ತು ಚುನಾವಣೆ ಬಗ್ಗೆ ಓದಿ ತಿಳಿಯುವುದರೊಂದಿಗೆ, ತಾವೇ ಮಾಡಿ ಅನುಭವಾತ್ಮಕ ಕಲಿಕೆ ಪರಿಣಾಮಕಾರಿಯಾಗಿರುತ್ತದೆ. ಶಾಲಾ ಮಂತ್ರಿಮಂಡಲ ರಚನೆ, ಮತದಾನದ ಪ್ರಕ್ರಿಯೆ ತಿಳಿಸುವ, ಸರ್ಕಾರದ ಆಡಳಿತದ ಕಲ್ಪನೆ ಮೂಡಿಸುವ ಪ್ರಮುಖ ವೇದಿಕೆಯಾಗಬೇಕು. ದೇಶದ ಸಾರ್ವತ್ರಿಕ ಚುನಾವಣಾ ಪ್ರಕ್ರಿಯೆಯ ಮಾದರಿಯಲ್ಲಿಯೇ ನಾಮಪತ್ರ ಸಲ್ಲಿಕೆ, ನಾಮಪತ್ರ ಹಿಂಪಡೆಯುವುದು, ಮತಯಾಚನೆ, ಗುಪ್ತ ಮತದಾನ, ಮತ ಎಣಿಕೆ, ಫಲಿತಾಂಶ ಘೋಷಣೆ ಈ ಎಲ್ಲಾ ಹಂತಗಳನ್ನು ಶಾಲಾ ಮಂತ್ರಿಮಂಡಲದ ರಚನೆಯಲ್ಲಿ ಅನುಸರಿಸುವುದರಿಂದ ಮಕ್ಕಳಲ್ಲಿ ಮತದಾನ ಮತ್ತು ಚುನಾವಣೆಯ ಪರಿಕಲ್ಪನೆ ಮೂಡುತ್ತದೆ.

ಅಣಕು ಸಂಸತ್: ಪ್ರಜಾಪ್ರಭುತ್ವ ವ್ಯವಸ್ಥೆಯಲ್ಲಿ ಸಂಸತ್ತು ಹೃದಯ ಇದ್ದಂತೆ. ದೇಶದ ಸಮಗ್ರ ಚಟುವಟಿಕೆಗಳ ಯೋಜನೆ, ಚರ್ಚೆ ಸಂಸತ್ತಿನ ಅಧಿವೇಶನದಲ್ಲಿ ನಡೆಯುತ್ತವೆ. ಶಾಲಾ ಹಂತದಲ್ಲಿ ಅಣಕು ಸಂಸತ್ ಅಧಿವೇಶನಗಳನ್ನು ನಡೆಸಿ, ಮಕ್ಕಳಿಗೆ ಸಂಸತ್ತಿನ ಕಲಾಪಗಳ ಅರಿವು ಮೂಡಿಸಬಹುದಾಗಿದೆ. ಸಭಾಧ್ಯಕ್ಷರ ಕಾರ್ಯ ವೈಖರಿ, ಆಡಳಿತ ಪಕ್ಷ, ವಿರೋಧ ಪಕ್ಷ, ಸಚಿವರ ಪ್ರಶೋತ್ತರ, ಚರ್ಚೆ ಇವು ಮಕ್ಕಳಿಗೆ ಸಂಸತ್ ಕಲ್ಪನೆ ನೀಡುತ್ತವೆ.

ಮಕ್ಕಳ ಹಕ್ಕುಗಳ ಸಂಘ

ಮೂಲಭೂತ ಹಕ್ಕುಗಳ ಅರಿವನ್ನು ಮಕ್ಕಳಲ್ಲಿ ಬೆಳೆಸಬೇಕು. ಸಂವಿಧಾನವು ನೀಡಿರುವ ಮೂಲಹಕ್ಕುಗಳಲ್ಲೊಂದಾದ ಶೋಷಣೆಯ ವಿರುದ್ಧದ ಹಕ್ಕಿನ ಪ್ರಜ್ಞೆ ಬೆಳೆಸುವಲ್ಲಿ ಮಕ್ಕಳ ಹಕ್ಕುಗಳ ಸಂಘ ಪ್ರಮುಖ ಪಾತ್ರ ವಹಿಸುತ್ತದೆ. ಸರ್ಕಾರದ ನಿರ್ದೇಶನದನ್ವಯ ಶಾಲೆಗಳಲ್ಲಿ ಮಕ್ಕಳ ಹಕ್ಕುಗಳ ಸಂಘ ಈಗಾಗಲೇ ಕಾರ್ಯ ನಿರ್ವಹಿಸುತ್ತಿದೆ. ನಾಲ್ಕನೇ ತರಗತಿಯಿಂದ

ಪ್ರಾರಂಭಿಸಿ, ಪ್ರತಿ ತರಗತಿಯಿಂದ ಇಬ್ಬರು ಪ್ರತಿನಿಧಿಗಳನ್ನು (ಗಂಡು ಹೆಣ್ಣು ಸಮಾನ ಆದ್ಯತೆ) ಆಯ್ಕೆ ಮಾಡಲಾಗುತ್ತದೆ. ಇದರ ಸಂಚಾಲಕರಾಗಿ ಕ್ರಿಯಾಶೀಲ ಶಿಕ್ಷಕರೊಬ್ಬರಿರುತ್ತಾರೆ.

ಮಕ್ಕಳಿಗೆ ಶಾಲೆಯಲ್ಲಿ ಮತ್ತು ಹೊರಗೆ ತಮ್ಮ ಮೇಲಾಗುವ ಅನ್ಯಾಯ, ದೌರ್ಜನ್ಯ, ಹಿಂಸೆ, ಶೋಷಣೆ, ಮೋಸ, ಒಟ್ಟಿನಲ್ಲಿ ತಮ್ಮ ಹಕ್ಕುಗಳ

ಉಲ್ಲಂಘನೆಯಾದಲ್ಲಿ ಅದನ್ನು ಗುರುತಿಸಲು, ಸೂಕ್ತ ವಿಧಾನದಲ್ಲಿ ಪ್ರತಿಭಟಿಸಲು, ದೂರು ದಾಖಲು ಮಾಡಲು ಈ ಸಂಘದ ಕಾರ್ಯ ಚಟುವಟಿಕೆಗಳು ಸಹಾಯಕವಾಗುತ್ತವೆ. ಶಾಲೆಗಳಲ್ಲಿ ದೂರು ಪೆಟ್ಟಿಗೆ, ಪ್ರಶ್ನೆ ಪೆಟ್ಟಿಗೆಗಳನ್ನು ಇಟ್ಟು ಅವುಗಳ ಸಮರ್ಪಕ ನಿರ್ವಹಣೆ ಮಾಡಿ ಮಕ್ಕಳ ಹಕ್ಕುಗಳಿಗೆ ಗೌರವ ನೀಡಬಹುದಾಗಿದೆ.

ಕರ್ತವ್ಯಗಳ ಅರಿವು

ಶಾಲೆಗಳಲ್ಲಿ ರಾಷ್ಟ್ರೀಯ ಹಬ್ಬಗಳು ಮತ್ತು ಪ್ರಮುಖ ದಿನಾಚರಣೆಗಳನ್ನು ಆಚರಿಸುವಾಗ ಮಕ್ಕಳ ಸಕ್ರಿಯ ಭಾಗವಹಿಸುವಿಕೆಗೆ ಅವಕಾಶ ಮಾಡಿಕೊಡಬೇಕು. ರಾಷ್ಟ್ರಧ್ವಜ, ರಾಷ್ಟ್ರಗೀತೆ ಹಾಗೂ ಸಂವಿಧಾನದ ಆದರ್ಶಗಳನ್ನು ಗೌರವಿಸುವುದರ ಜೊತೆಗೆ, ರಾಷ್ಟ್ರೀಯ ಹಬ್ಬಗಳಂದು ಬಹುತ್ವದ ಸಂಸ್ಕೃತಿ ಮತ್ತು ಪರಂಪರೆಯನ್ನು ಗೌರವಿಸುವ ಸಾಂಸ್ಕೃತಿಕ ಕಾರ್ಯಕ್ರಮಗಳನ್ನು ಆಯೋಜಿಸಬೇಕಾಗಿದೆ.

ಸಾರ್ವಜನಿಕ ಆಸ್ತಿಯನ್ನು ರಕ್ಷಿಸುವ ಜವಾಬ್ದಾರಿಯ ಗುಣಗಳನ್ನು ಬೆಳೆಸಬೇಕು. ಶಾಲಾ ಪೀಠೋಪಕರಣಗಳು, ಕೈತೋಟ, ಆಟದ ಮೈದಾನ, ನೀರಿನ ಸಮರ್ಪಕ ಬಳಕೆ ಇತ್ಯಾದಿಗಳ ನಿರ್ವಹಣೆಯ ಜವಾಬ್ದಾರಿಯನ್ನು ಮಕ್ಕಳಿಗೆ ನೀಡುವುದರಿಂದ 'ನಮ್ಮ ಶಾಲೆ', 'ನಮ್ಮ ದೇಶ' ಎಂಬ ಭಾವ ಬೆಳೆಯುತ್ತದೆ.

ಉದಾತ್ತ ಆದರ್ಶಗಳನ್ನು ಗೌರವಿಸುವುದು

ಸ್ವಾತಂತ್ರ್ಯ ಸಂಗ್ರಾಮಕ್ಕೆ ಸ್ಫೂರ್ತಿದಾಯಕವಾಗಿದ್ದ ಉದಾತ್ತ ಆದರ್ಶಗಳನ್ನು ಅನುಸರಿಸುವುದು ಹಾಗೂ ಗೌರವಿಸುವುದು ಸಂವಿಧಾನಾತ್ಮಕ ಕರ್ತವ್ಯಗಳಲ್ಲಿ ಒಂದು. ಸ್ವಾತಂತ್ರ್ಯ ಹೋರಾಟಗಾರರ, ಮಹಾನ್ ನಾಯಕರ, ಆದರ್ಶ ಪುರುಷರ ಜನ್ಮ ದಿನಗಳನ್ನು ಆಚರಿಸುವುದು, ಅವರ ಕಥೆಗಳನ್ನು ಹೇಳುವುದು, ಭಾಷಣ-ಪ್ರಬಂಧದಂತಹ ಸ್ಪರ್ಧೆಗಳನ್ನು ಏರ್ಪಡಿಸುವುದು, ಘೋಷವಾಕ್ಯಗಳನ್ನು ಹೇಳಿಸುವುದು, ಪಾತ್ರಾಭಿನಯ ಮಾಡಿಸುವುದು ಇತ್ಯಾದಿಗಳು ಶಾಲಾ ಶಿಕ್ಷಣದ ಅವಿಭಾಜ್ಯ ಅಂಗವಾಗಬೇಕು. ದೇಶ ರಕ್ಷಣೆಯ ಕಾಯಕವನ್ನು ಹಗಲಿರುಳು ನಡೆಸುತ್ತಿರುವ ಯೋಧರೊಂದಿಗೆ ಸಂವಾದ, ಸಂದರ್ಶನಗಳಂತಹ ಕಾರ್ಯಕ್ರಮಗಳನ್ನು ನಡೆಸುವುದರಿಂದ ದೇಶ ರಕ್ಷಣೆ, ದೇಶ ಪ್ರೇಮದ ಭಾವವು ಮಕ್ಕಳಲ್ಲಿ ಬಲಗೊಳ್ಳಲು ಸಹಕಾರಿಯಾಗುತ್ತದೆ.

ಭಾರತದ ಸಂವಿಧಾನವು ನೀಡಿರುವ 'ಶಿಕ್ಷಣದ ಹಕ್ಕು' ಫಲಪ್ರದವಾಗಬೇಕು. ಪರಿಣಾಮಕಾರಿ ಶಿಕ್ಷಣ, ವಿಜ್ಞಾನ ಪ್ರಸರಣ, ಸುಸಂಸ್ಕೃತೀಕರಣ ಈ ಅಂಶಗಳನ್ನು ಶಾಲಾ ಶಿಕ್ಷಣದಲ್ಲಿ ರೂಢಿಸಬೇಕಿದೆ. ಕೇವಲ ವಿಷಯ ಮಾಹಿತಿಗಳನ್ನು ಯಾಂತ್ರಿಕವಾಗಿ ಕಂಠಪಾಠ ಮಾಡುವುದನ್ನೂ ಮೀರಿ ಶಿಕ್ಷಣ ಮುನ್ನಡೆಯಬೇಕು. ವಿದ್ಯಾರ್ಥಿಗಳಿಗೆ ಸಂವಿಧಾನದ ಆಶಯಗಳನ್ನು ರೂಢಿಸಿಕೊಳ್ಳುವ ಶೈಕ್ಷಣಿಕ ವಾತಾವರಣದ ನಿರ್ಮಾಣದತ್ತ ಚಿತ್ತ ಬೆಳೆಸಬೇಕಿದೆ.

Make way for Maths 2.0

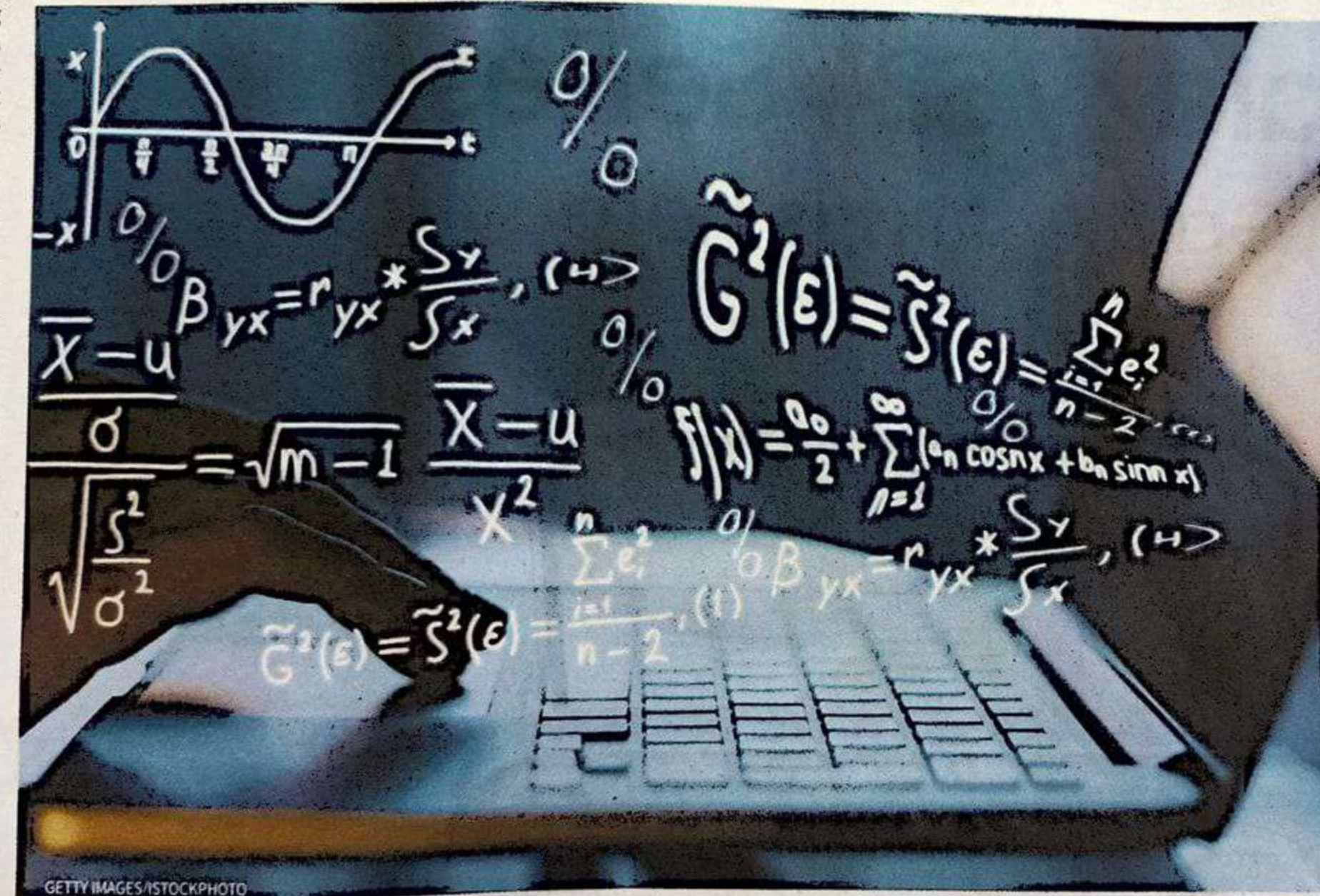
We must strive to modernise Maths education for the 21st century, cultivating spaces where learning the subject becomes a vibrant journey of discovery

Over the last several decades, there has - barely been a change in how Maths has been taught in a classroom setting. The approach of solving multiple problems in the notebook and applying formulas without understanding why has stayed consistent.

High-school Maths education now stands at the crossroads of a significant transformation. It's time to advance beyond traditional problem-solving and prime our students for a future shaped by data and patterns. It is not enough just to teach them how to solve numerical problems; we must equip them to apply and connect their learning to the real world.

Making Maths relevant

As educators and leaders, we need to reassess how Maths is being taught and foster our students' ability to do Maths and think mathematically. It's about teaching students to abstract, systematise, and establish connections. When we frame Maths problems in real-world contexts and encourage students to engage in problem-based learning, we ignite curiosity and make Maths relevant. This enables not just the mastery of content but also the development of critical and reflective thinking. Maths is not limited



to pen and paper; it's out there in the world. To give students an opportunity to apply their learning to solve real-world problems, we need to design and transfer learning through authentic tasks that mirror real-world situations. Whether it's designing a sustainable building or analysing market trends, authen-

tic performance tasks demonstrate the real power of Maths and helps enhance learning and shows students the tangible impact of Maths in everyday life and various professions.

Standards-based learning
Having clearly defined standards for instruction, assessment, skills,

and content ensures mastery. Integrating standards-based learning into Maths is imperative to guide students in developing the essential core skills. By adhering to these standards, we raise the bar for education and empower students to navigate the academic landscape confidently and proficiently.

The digital age has transformed how we approach education. Technology like virtual labs and visualisation tools bring abstract concepts to life and allow students to engage with the subject in a dynamic and interactive way, making learning both enjoyable and effective. Discussion is key to building an inclusive

Maths classroom that normalises risk-taking and fosters critical thinking. It empowers students by promoting responsibility for their learning and building confidence. Furthermore, it creates a sense of community, enhances social-emotional learning skills, and encourages consideration of multi-

ple perspectives.

Empowering educators

A vital part of modernising Maths is empowering teachers. Providing them with the latest tools and methodologies enhances the learning experiences and also supports them in guiding students through new and exciting educational landscapes.

Evaluating learning pathways

In rethinking Maths education, we must also evaluate our learning pathways.

The integration of subjects like Data Science and logic with traditional Maths curricula under the National Education Policy (NEP) is a step in this direction. It's about crafting education that is not only academically sound but also deeply connected to the evolving demands of the world.

As we redefine Maths for the 21st century, our goal should be to transform classrooms into dynamic hubs of inquiry and innovation.

We must strive to cultivate spaces where studying Maths becomes a vibrant journey of discovery, analytical thinking, and tackling real-world challenges.

By doing so, we are not just teaching Maths but equipping our students with a toolkit for the future.

The writer is the Founder of Ekya Schools and Provost, CMR University.

SCHOLARSHIPS

V Able - Vidyadhan Disability Scholarship for Graduates

An opportunity offered by the Sarojini Damodaran Foundation.

Eligibility: Open for disabled students who have completed Class 12 and enrolled in a undergraduate course in 2022, with at least 60% marks or a CGPA of 6 in their HSC exam.

Annual family income must be below ₹4 lakhs.

Rewards: Up to ₹60,000 per annum

Application: Online

Deadline: January 31

www.b4s.in/edge/VVDS2

NGSF Internship Programme

An internship opportunity offered by the Next Gen Scientists Foundation for those who wish to gain research experience in the Life Sciences.

Eligibility: Open to Indian students studying in their second /third year of undergraduate programmes and Master's students in the second/ fourth year of the integrated programme.

Applicants must be willing to work for two-to-three months in the lab of a principal investigator at another Indian institute.

Rewards: ₹6,000 monthly

Application: Online

Deadline: March 31

www.b4s.in/edge/NGF1

Post-Matric Scholarship for OBC Students, Delhi

A centrally-sponsored scholarship offered by the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, Government of India, and managed by the Department of Welfare of SC/ST/OBC.

Eligibility: Open to students from the Other Backward Class (OBC) category domiciled in Delhi who are studying at the post-matriculation /post-secondary level in a government-recognised institution/ college/ university within India and have at least 75% attendance in the previous year. Annual family income should not be more than ₹2.5 lakhs.

Rewards: Up to ₹10,000 annually

Application: Online

Deadline: March 31

www.b4s.in/edge/PMD2

Courtesy: buddy4study.com



Most Important Topics For

Science & Technology

UPSC Prelims & Mains

Data lakes, AI-ML tools help auto OEMs in production

Automakers are using these models to make informed, strategic, tactical decisions across domains

SOHINI DAS & SHINE JACOB
Mumbai/Chennai, 21 January

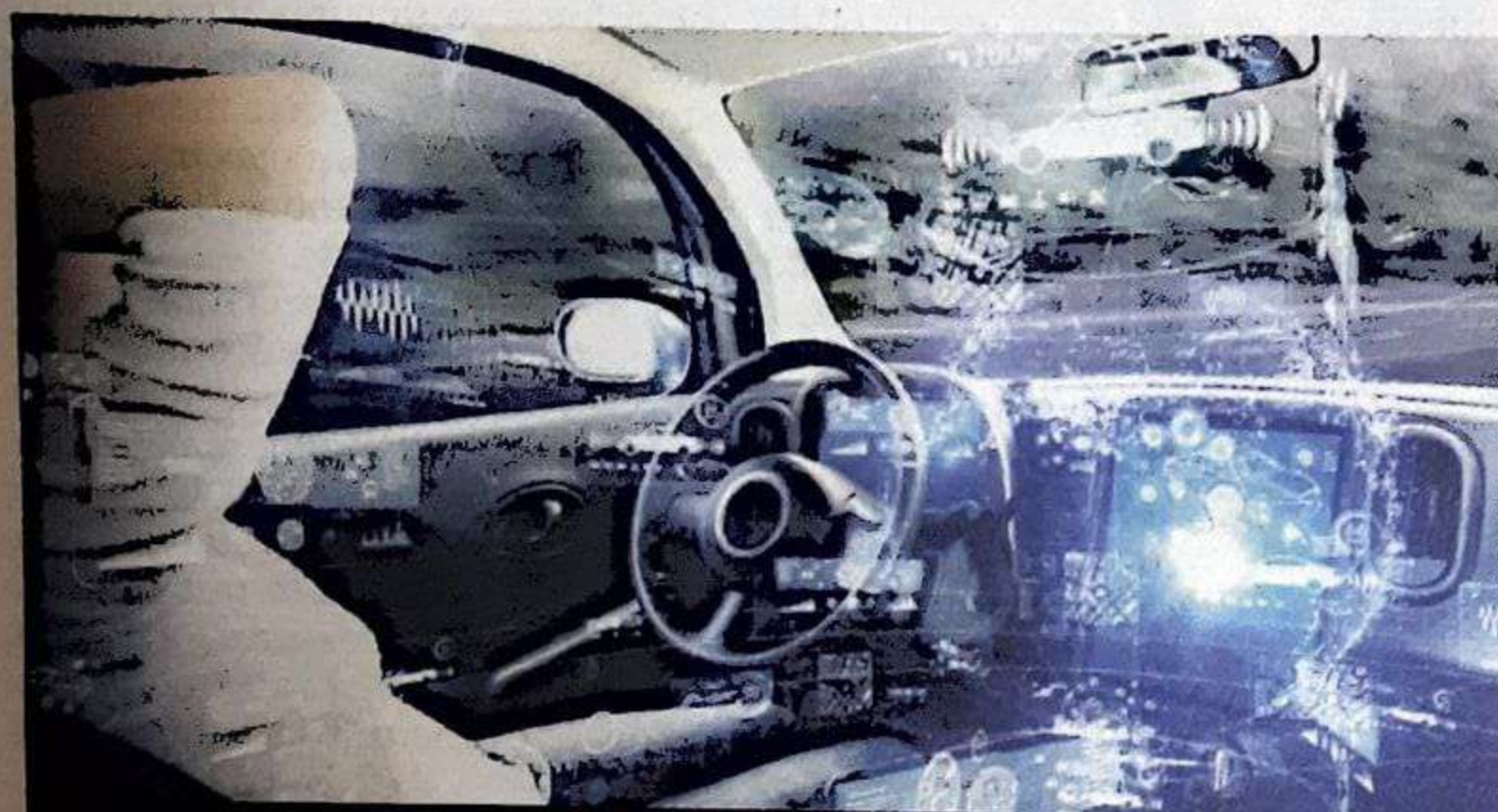
From production planning and inventory management to predicting the supply of critical components and deciding on features, colours and variants that customers want — original equipment manufacturers (OEMs) are using data and employing artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning (ML) tools to manage their operations.

Not just predicting demand patterns, AI-ML tools are being actively used by companies to reduce supplier risk management, according to OEMs.

"The gold standard of planning inventory is now to start tracking from the enquiries itself, and not only from retail sales or invoicing of vehicles. When a customer is logging in his or her query on a search engine, or the OEM website, or is walking into a dealership — it is generating data, and analysing it helps us to predict demand trends," said Shashank Srivastava, senior executive officer, marketing and sales, Maruti Suzuki India.

"From data on enquiries, we can build what we call a data lake or a data warehouse where data is classified into various cohorts and then we use AI and ML tools to predict demand down the line," he said. This helps with colour choices — retail data can only reflect what the OEM is producing, and not what the customer is enquiring about. "It should be the other way round, we should be producing what the customer is asking for," Srivastava said, adding that AI and ML tools help determine patterns, whether regional, demographic-wise, for customer cohorts of 'look-alike' people.

In the age of connected cars (where cars can communicate bi-directionally with systems outside the car), it is possible that in the future a car manufacturer will call a customer for an early replacement of a brake pad because it knows the person has a habit of hitting the brakes frequently. Predictive maintenance is just one of the things that OEMs are trying to achieve by using AI-ML tools to inter-



PREDICTING MAINTENANCE USING AI-ML

- Auto OEMs are using AI-ML tools to predict trends from their database
- Data from customer enquiries, dealers, and reported retail sales are fed into databanks and then arranged cohorts
- AI-ML tools then come up with predictive trends based on these cohorts
- Data analytics is also applied for in-bound logistics
- This is used to predict supply disruptions, vendor supply planning
- AI-enabled optimisers are used for production planning
- AI-ML tools are also used for predictive maintenance of cars or even plants

pret, analyse and come up with predictive patterns out of the data-bank they have.

With AI-ML models becoming strong collaborative and complementary tools, Tata Motors is increasingly using them to make well-informed and strategic, tactical or operational decisions across a variety of functional and business domains. The company said it is using AI and ML models for lead scoring and re-purchase (which helps to prioritise high potential leads and allocate resources efficiently). Tata Motors also pointed out that it is using AI-ML forecasting algorithms to analyse historical sales data, market trends, and socio-economic factors to predict demand in the industry, as well as their sales, enabling adjustments to production plans to meet shifting demand.

Sources from another major passenger vehicle OEM told *Business Standard* that the company is tracking

cars, colours and variants on a real-time basis based on bookings, and production is planned accordingly. At present, it is mainly being used in maintenance and also on shop floors. The company said that data from smart sensors is able to predict many abnormalities in equipment, resulting in 5 per cent reduction in maintenance downtime.

The early success of AI and ML tools has now led the company to consider the next level of implementation by horizontal and vertical deployment of solutions across the shops. The idea is to opt for demand forecasting using historical data, market trends, and external factors to predict future demand, helping companies to optimise their inventory and reduce the stocks.

Srivastava says, "When the semiconductor crisis happened, we used AI-enabled optimisers for production planning. Depending on the past data

on which a vendor can supply how much and in what timelines, we did forecasting for component supplies and procurement and accordingly did the production planning."

Tata Motors adds that massively complex models serve as scenario planners — simulate potential disruptions, and manage risks associated with the supply chain (such as shortages of critical components or geopolitical factors affecting availability of raw materials).

Industry experts believe that the trend will revolutionise the entire value chain in the near future.

"This will have a positive impact on the entire value chain, once companies have clarity on demand, ensuring manufacturing and related activities can be streamlined better. Benefits from a manufacturing perspective include predictive maintenance which will reduce the downtime, lesser breakdowns will result in better inventory management, leading to leaner, efficient and cost-effective supply chain, eventually benefiting the customer, thus creating a virtuous cycle," said Vinnie Mehta, Director General of the Automotive Component Manufacturers Association of India.

Another industry expert highlights that the trend started during the pandemic and it may soon transform booking and customer dealings online.

Dealers, however, pointed out that while things have started moving in this direction, it is still early days. Manish Raj Singhania, president of the Federation of Automobile Dealers Associations (FADA), said that it would be too early to gauge how much of a dramatic transformation can happen in terms of reducing inventory at the dealer end or even reducing waiting periods. "Each OEM has its own dealer management system software where the dealers have to feed the data. At times the data an OEM needs and a dealer needs are slightly different. So, we have now begun talks with software vendors to develop a DMS for dealers which would be uniform across all FADA dealers," he said.

INQUIRIES FROM 15 GLOBAL OPERATORS, 9 NATIONS

Export of full 4G, 5G gear on cards

SUBHAYAN CHAKRABORTY
New Delhi, 21 January

The Centre is eyeing the export of a full range of indigenously designed 4G and 5G stacks in 2024 as part of its policy to attract investments and use the technological outreach as a key foreign policy bet. Several countries such as Kenya, Mauritius, Papua New Guinea, and Egypt, have shown interest in the Indian telecom technology.

"India has received inquiries from at least 15 global telecom operators, as well as bilateral inquiries from 9 nations. All of these requests will be systematically met, and Indian telecom technology will make its way abroad in the second half of 2024," a Department of Telecommunications (DoT) official told *Business Standard*.

Built by a consortium led by the Centre for Development of Telematics (C-DOT), under the DoT, the technology has already garnered global interest. "We have already received several technical queries. We will pursue commercial deployment of the equipment once it is fully rolled out as part of the BSNL network here. The equipment meets global standards, and we are setting a timeline to export it," a C-DOT official said.

Since 2022, the government has offered the entire range of equipment and associated technologies to other nations, and

ON THE ANVIL

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Indian telecom technology

■ Since 2022, the government has offered the entire range of equipment and associated technologies to other nations

■ In 2023, India also showcased the stacks during Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visits to the United States and France

marketed the technology extensively during the G20 discussions on digital economy. In 2023, India also showcased the stacks during the visits of Prime Minister Narendra Modi to the United States and France. New Delhi also wants to capitalise on the stacks to firmly place India in the global telecom arena, and attract higher investment as value chains move to India. Currently, only five countries — US, Sweden, Finland, South Korea and China

— have similar end-to-end 4G-5G stacks. Companies from these countries also dictate the standards, prices and market conditions for 4G and 5G equipment. Swedish giant Ericsson is currently setting up 5G infrastructure for both Reliance Jio and Bharti Airtel.

Apart from being one of the next key foreign policy bets by India, this technological outreach is also expected to rake in financial benefits for Indian public sector companies such as C-DOT.

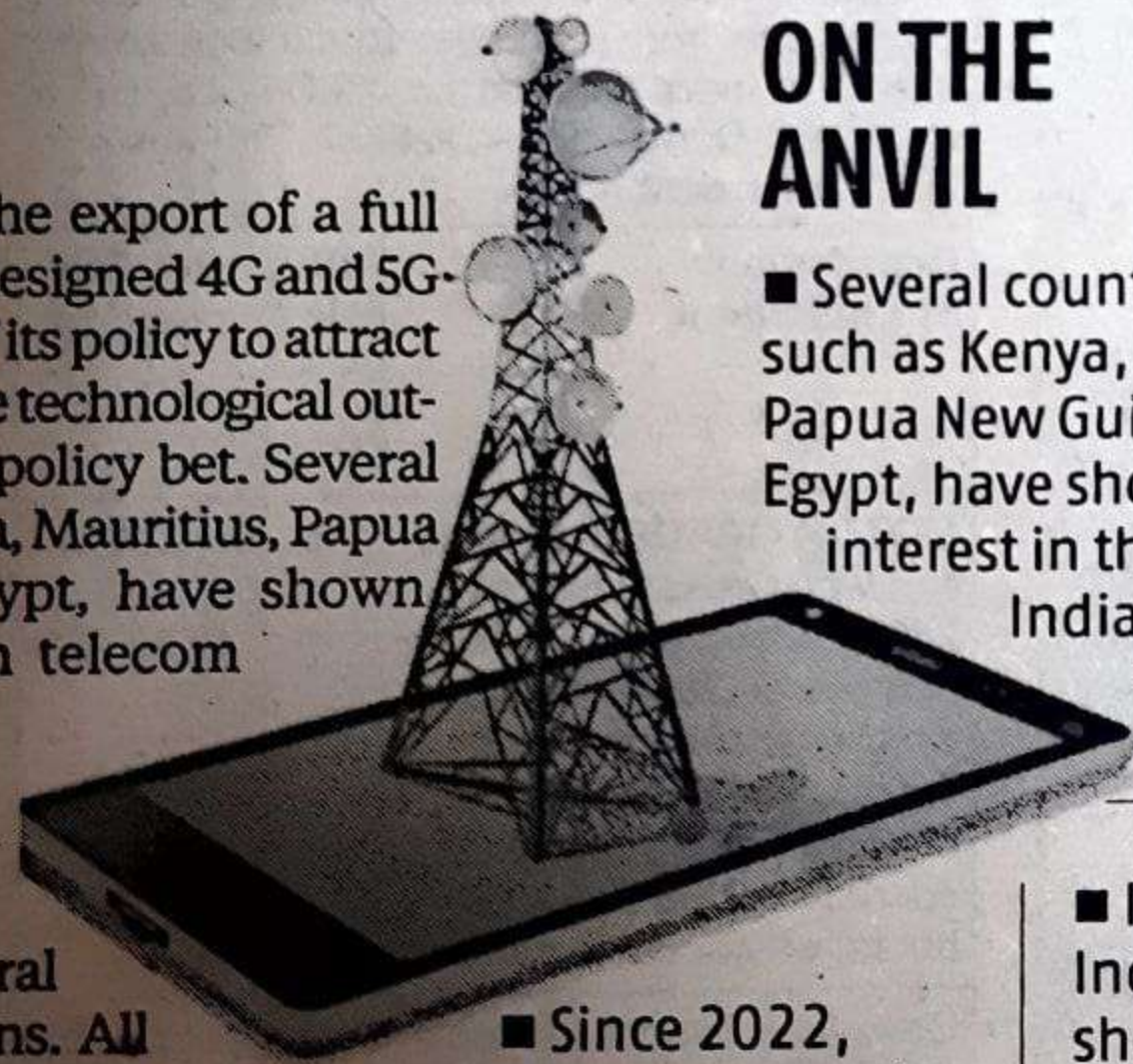
Full package

The first real-world deployment of the entire 4G stack took place in July, as part of the state-owned telecom operator BSNL's plans to roll out 4G services.

While BSNL is launching 4G services years after three private telecom service providers — Reliance Jio, Bharti Airtel and Vodafone Idea — rolled it out, there exists major demand for 4G tech elsewhere. 4G penetration remains below 22 per cent in Sub-Saharan Africa, according to the GSM Association (GSMA), the global industry association representing over 750 mobile network operators. This is expected to more than double within the next 5 years.

"There has been significant interest from the region. Access to telecom technology was also flagged by many countries during the Voice of Global South Summits held by India," another official said.

Meanwhile, GSMA had forecast that 30 new markets will launch 5G services in 2023.



NISAR Mission on track for a launch soon: NASA official

The NASA-ISRO Synthetic Aperture Radar Mission is designed to observe natural processes and changes in earth's complex ecosystems; the final tests of the mission are scheduled for this week

Tiki Rajwi

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

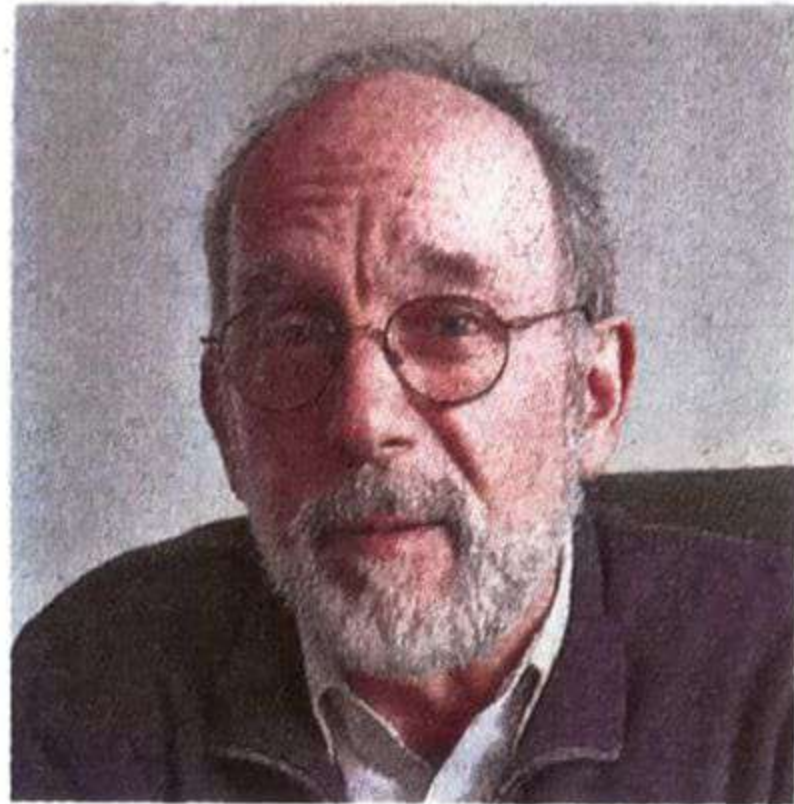
The NASA-ISRO Synthetic Aperture Radar (NISAR) Mission, designed to observe natural processes and changes in earth's complex ecosystems, is on track for an "early 2024" launch, a senior official at NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory (JPL) said on Sunday.

The final tests on the joint NASA-ISRO earth-observing mission are scheduled for this week, Paul A. Rosen, Project Scientist for NISAR at JPL, told *The Hindu*. "As we speak, everything except the acoustic tests has been completed. The vibration test was completed yesterday [January 20]. Final tests are planned this week. We are on track," Dr. Rosen said.

Dr. Rosen and several of his NASA-JPL colleagues associated with NISAR are scheduled to speak at the Global Science Festival Kerala (GSFK), under way at Thonnakkal here, on Monday.

'Enormous data'

Designed as a low-earth orbit (LEO) observatory, the



NISAR Mission is unique in several respects, not least the enormous amount of reliable, high-resolution data expected from it over a three-year mission life. "The volume of data will be enormous, and it helps us to have a reliable set of measurements over any spot on the earth where we want to do science or monitoring applications, forest management, agriculture monitoring or even just looking at an approaching hurricane," Dr. Rosen said.

The open science and open data policy makes the mission unique in its scope, he said. "The data will be placed on our respective data servers in India and the U.S. and they will be made open to the public essentially as soon as they are processed to a



NASA and ISRO are extremely eager to find ways to collaborate on earth science, planetary science and human space (programmes). There is a strong interest

PAUL A. ROSEN

Project Scientist for NISAR at JPL

validated data product. For many SAR (synthetic aperture radar) missions, this is simply not the case," he said.

The mission will use a synthetic aperture radar to scan earth's land and ice-covered regions twice every 12 days in ascending and descending passes. Capable of penetrating cloud cover and operating day and night, NISAR is expected to revolutionise earth-observing capability.

It is also expected to be a reliable data source for disaster monitoring and mitigation.

'Eager to collaborate'

This single observatory solution is equipped with a long wavelength band (L-Band) SAR payload system provided by NASA and a

short wavelength band (S-Band) ISRO payload. Operating together, they will supply, according to ISRO, "spatially and temporally consistent data for understanding changes in earth's ecosystems, ice mass, vegetation biomass, sea level rise, groundwater and natural hazards, including earthquakes, tsunamis, volcanoes and landslides."

"For those disasters that evolve over slightly longer periods of time or where you can actually plan an observation, like a hurricane approaching, for those things, you have a reliable data source," Dr. Rosen said.

Dr. Rosen feels that NASA and ISRO are interested in taking their collaboration in space forward. "Both sides I think are extremely eager to find ways to collaborate on earth science, planetary science and human space (programmes). There is a very, very strong interest," he said.

Dr. Rosen will speak on "NISAR - an international radar system of systems for groundbreaking earth science" at the GSFK on Monday.

Better use of technology needs free access

Data from the Annual Status of Education Report (ASER) 2023 report, that was released recently, confirms that the story of widening access to smartphones across the country continues. The results show that 92% of the 14-18 year olds who were surveyed reported knowing how to use a smartphone. What does this access mean in terms of education or learning?

First, although over 90% of boys and girls reported knowing how to use a smartphone, almost half of them, or 44% of the boys, owned their own smartphone. Among girls, only 20% owned one. The difference in ownership of devices, gender-based or otherwise, can limit what these devices can be used for and can affect some abilities but not others. For example, the ability to browse for information is equal among either boys or girls, regardless of whether they own the device or simply have access to one at home. Finding a YouTube video, which also falls under the category of browsing, is equally easy among boys who own or do not own their phones. But the skill of finding a video and sharing it depends on ownership of the device.

The examples above describe tasks that the youth who were surveyed did on a smartphone (their own, a household member's, or a neighbour's) in the presence of the ASER survey team. Other examples of how phone ownership makes a difference are visible in the youths' self-reported use of smartphones. For example, over 90% of those surveyed reported having used social media in the week prior to the survey, but the proportion of those who were familiar with safety features (such as changing a password or blocking a profile) was largely dependent on ownership.

In short, these results suggest that while access to a common smartphone can be described as basic or superficial, owning a smart device is necessary for deeper access to information and



Madhav Chavan

is a co-founder of Pratham

Data from the recently released Annual Status of Education Report supports the point that once technology is in the hands of motivated users without constraints, they will learn to use it

services. Smartphone skills, like all other skills, need motivation combined with the opportunity to learn. Entertainment is a great motivator. Products such as WhatsApp and YouTube have clearly motivated and helped youngsters to learn to use the new technology without a gender bias. However, in cases of certain online services and commercial activities, girls seem to show less participation than boys. This may have less to do with barriers of technology and more to do with social obstacles. Where there are no social barriers such as using the devices for school-related work, ownership of devices and gender make only a small difference: nearly 70% of youth, boys and girls, both report having used phones for studies at least once in the reference week. ASER 2023 cannot say if this has made an impact on the learning of school subjects.

Once technology, any technology, is in the hands of motivated users without constraints, they learn to use it. Motivation to use and learn new technology came during the COVID-19 pandemic. Without being taught, huge populations adopted the new technology and its applications that were useful and user-friendly. But, even before the big push of the pandemic, we saw an example on a fairly large scale of how children pick up skills without being taught.

An earlier experiment

In 2017, in an early Pratham experiment with integrating digital technology into education, small groups of 11- to 14 year olds were each given a tablet to share. Their mothers were given responsibility for its safe-keeping, with the assurance that there would be no penalty for loss or damage. Nearly 3,000 tablets were distributed in about 400 villages in Maharashtra, Uttar Pradesh, and Rajasthan. Each tablet had a password to ensure that no external content was imported. Within two weeks we discovered that passwords in half the tablets spread over

villages in all three States had been changed, and the children were having a laugh at the expense of the Pratham staff. In those days it was unlikely that the children had prior exposure to devices such as tablets and smartphones in the villages. But obviously some people knew how, and the knowhow spread like wildfire, motivated by the opportunity to play mischief. Needless to say, we removed passwords in all the tablets, and the groups of children were made responsible for protection of the content. Not surprisingly, this worked very well although mistakes were made every now and then. In the above experiment, supported by the Sarva Mangal Family Trust and Google.org, ownership of the tablet was with the children by rotation and they were free to play with the device. Almost similar to the 'Hole in the Wall' project of Professor Sugata Mitra, children learned on their own and from each other. Pratham staff helped but did not teach. It is not clear if this impacted 'progress' in school subjects but boys and girls became much more comfortable with using technology.

There were different phases of this experiment including one where children started filming, editing, sharing and uploading their own videos on given themes or topics. In one phase almost half of the 4,394 group leaders were girls (49%). In other words, girls use the devices equally well as boys when they are given equal and unfettered access to the devices. In contrast, when their access is constrained, their learning also is likely to be affected negatively. The ASER 2023 reports a lower ability of girls to perform tasks such as accessing services, or making payments, or being safe on the Internet. This is strongly related to constraints in using the devices due to absence of ownership.

Free bicycles gave a boost to the enrolment of girls in secondary schools. Perhaps, free smartphones with Internet access are round the corner?

Expert says every individual can fall victim to cybercrime

The Hindu Bureau

HUBBALLI

Director of AI & Cyber Security, MGI, U.S., Uday Shankar Puranik has said that every second a cybercrime is being committed globally and every individual happens to be a potential victim.

He was speaking at a one-day Management Development Programme on risks associated with cyber security and management at KLE Society's Institute of Manage-

ment Studies and Research (IMSR) in Hubballi recently.

Mr. Puranik said that after the United States of America, India happens to be the most targeted country by cyber terrorists.

Founder of Eyesec Cyber Security Solutions Pvt. Ltd., Belagavi, Gajendra Deshpande spoke on the significance of cyber laws.

Inspector, Cyber, Economics & Narcotic Division of Hubballi-Dharwad B.K. Patil spoke.

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HEALTH



Active Covid-19 cases hit one-month low

SANKET KOUL

New Delhi, 21 January

India on Sunday logged 290 fresh cases of Covid-19, while the number of active cases stood at 2,059, the lowest national tally in a month, according to the health ministry.

On December 20, 2023, the country logged 2,311 cases.

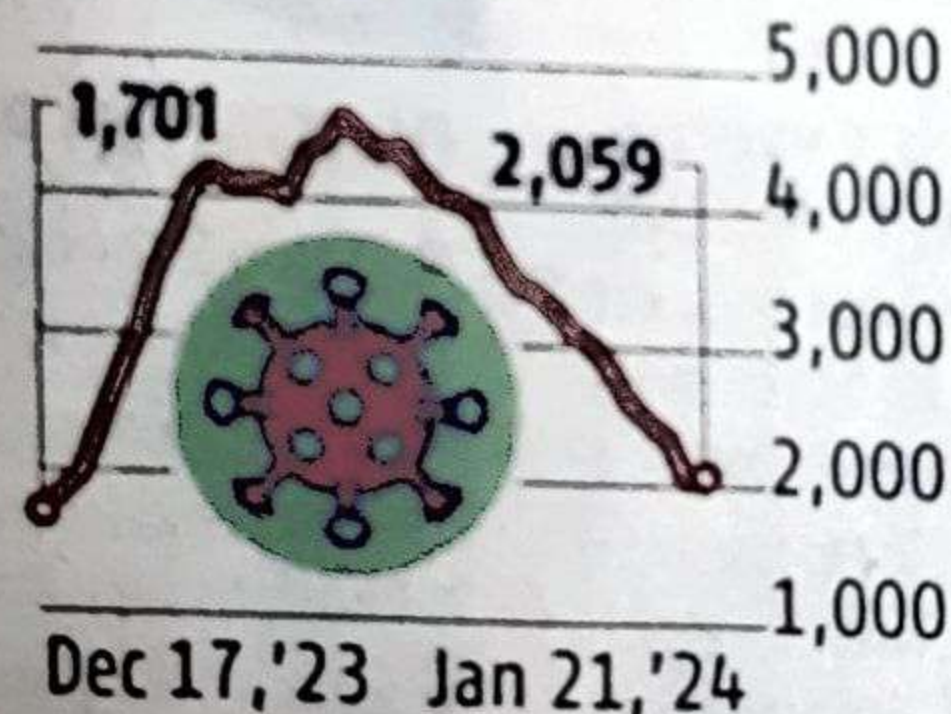
The reason for this phenomenon is due to the high rate of discharges. Sanjith Saseedharan, consultant and head, critical care, S L Raheja Hospital, said the country's recovery rate stands at more than 98 per cent, and almost all infected individuals are recuperating with simple symptomatic treatment.

"Only a small number of cases require hospitalisations, with the majority of them needing hospital care are individuals with severe comorbidities," he explained.

Addressing the current dip in active cases, Manoj Goel, director, Pulmonology, Fortis Memorial Research

SOME RELIEF

(Active Covid-19 cases in India)



Data from 17 December 2023 to 21 January 2024
Source: Ministry of Health and Family Welfare

Institute, said this was due to the 'effective public health interventions and increased immunity through an increase in vaccinations.

Tushar Tayal, consultant, Department of Internal Medicine, CK Birla Hospital, Gurugram, said that as the temperature starts improving, and people have become more aware by following basic precautionary measures such as social distancing, masking and frequent hand sanitization because of which incidences of flu-like illness have begun to come down.

India witnessed a spike in

the number of Covid-19 cases after the detection of its first JN.1 case on December 17 last year.

Since then, the number of cases has risen in India from 45,004,816 on December 17 to 45,023,751 on January 21, an increase of 18,890 Covid infections in one month.

West Bengal leads the list of states with most active cases at 512, with the state accounting for around 25 per cent of all active cases in India. Karnataka (483 cases), Maharashtra (439 cases) and Kerala (182 cases) are the next worst affected states, according to data updated by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare.

The country recorded 126 deaths across seventeen states and union territories since December 17. Of these, Kerala witnessed 52 deaths, followed by Karnataka with 32 deaths, Maharashtra with 12 deaths, Chhattisgarh with 3 deaths, Tamil Nadu and Uttar Pradesh with 2 deaths each, with the rest reporting one casualty each.

India among nations overusing "Watch" group antibiotics

Resistance among Indian patients to certain types of antibiotics is among the highest in the world

DATA POINT

Rebecca Rose Varghese and Vignesh Radhakrishnan

In the Data Point published last week ("Over 38% patients on more than one antibiotic", January 17), results from a government survey showed that an overwhelming number of inpatients are prescribed antibiotics by hospitals across India. Findings also showed that many patients were on more than one antibiotic. Further, the data showed that over 55% of such antibiotic prescriptions belonged to the "Watch" group as classified by the World Health Organization (WHO), i.e., medicines reserved for only severe infections.

Data show that resistance among Indian patients to certain types of antibiotics is among the highest in the world. In India, for many antibiotic-bacterium combinations, over 75% of infections were from resistant bacteria. For instance, in the ceftriaxone antibiotic-Klebsiella pneumoniae bacteria combination, over 87.4% of infections were from resistant bacteria as shown in Table 1. Table 1 also lists the broader antibiotic group these drugs belong to and the best and the worst countries in terms of resistance to various antibiotic-bacterium combinations. For instance, the ceftriaxone antibiotic belongs to the group called third-generation cephalosporins.

It is telling that the resistance proportion among Indian patients was among the highest for drugs in the third generation cephalosporins group, as can be seen in Table 1. As noted in the Data Point last week, over 33% of antibiotic prescriptions in India – the highest among all types – that featured in the government survey in 2021-22, were also from the third generation cephalosporins group, which include antibiotics such as ceftriaxone, ceftazidime and cefotaxime. So, the most used antibiotic is also

the most resisted.

There is also a clear divide between countries with high resistance and low resistance. As shown in Table 1, responsible antibiotic usage has resulted in low antibiotic resistance among developed countries such as Norway, Finland, Netherlands and the U.K.. In contrast, along with India, patients in Russia, Egypt and Pakistan have developed high antibiotic resistance.

Chart 2 explains this relationship further. Chart 2 shows the consumption (%) of "Watch" group antibiotics among AWARe categories in select countries as of 2015-17. AWARe was developed by WHO based on the impact of different antibiotics on antimicrobial resistance so that they can be used appropriately. It broadly categorises antibiotics into "Access", "Watch", and "Reserve". The "Access" group is the most advised as it minimises the potential for resistance. "Watch" group antibiotics are only for specific and limited use, and result in increased antibiotic resistance. The "reserve" group should only be used in life-threatening conditions. According to WHO, 60% of total antibiotic consumption in a country should be from the "Access" group. It is a worry that in India, the opposite is true. About 59% of total antibiotic consumption in the country in 2022 was from the "Watch" group. This share went up to 64% during the pandemic years. Chart 2 shows the "Watch" group share as of 2015-17, a year for which comparison data with other countries was available. Clearly, India stood out that year, with 56% of all antibiotics that were prescribed from the "Watch" group. Russia was a distant second. On the other hand, Norway, Finland, Netherlands and the U.K. – which featured among nations with low antimicrobial resistance – also had low "Watch" group proportion in consumption. "Watch" group antibiotics formed less than 20% of the total consumption in these countries.

Too much of a good thing

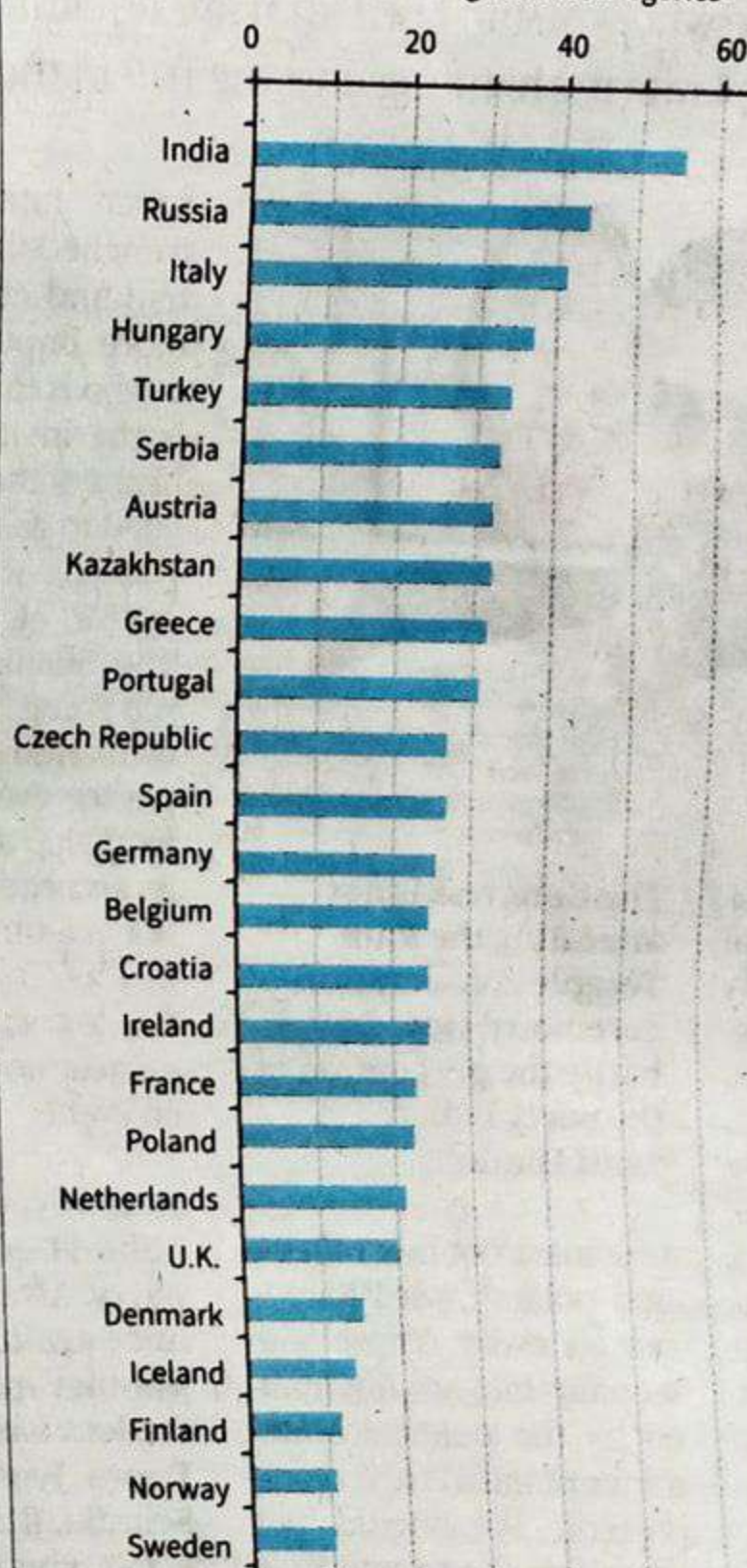
The data for the table and chart were sourced from the report titled, 'WHO Report on Surveillance of Antibiotic Consumption' and WHO's Global AMR data

Table 1: The table lists antibiotic-bacterium combination, the category these drugs belong to, and nations with high and low resistance

Pathogen name	Antibiotic	Category	Resistance %	High resistance	Low resistance
K. pneumoniae	Ceftriaxone	3rd gen. cephalosporines	87.4	Egypt 96%	Switzerland 5%
E. coli	Ceftriaxone	3rd gen. cephalosporines	78.8	Pakistan 72%	U.K. 10%
Acinetobacter spp.	Imipenem	Carbapenem	78.1	Oman 97%	Japan 0.8%
K. pneumoniae	Ceftazidime	3rd gen. cephalosporines	78.0	Egypt 94%	Switzerland 5%
Acinetobacter spp.	Meropenem	Carbapenem	77.9	Russia 93%	Japan 0.9%
E. coli	Cefotaxime	3rd gen. cephalosporines	76.7	Oman 79%	Norway 4%
K. pneumoniae	Cefotaxime	3rd gen. cephalosporines	76.1	Egypt 96%	Switzerland 5%
E. coli	Ceftazidime	3rd gen. cephalosporines	76.0	Nepal 81%	Norway 3%
K. pneumoniae	Cefepime	4th gen. cephalosporines	74.4	Oman 94%	Switzerland 3%
E. coli	Ciprofloxacin	Fluoroquinolones	70.5	Pakistan 71%	Norway 8%
Acinetobacter spp.	Amikacin	Aminoglycosides	68.4	Russia 92%	Japan 0.7%
S. aureus	Methicillin	Beta-Lactam	64.7	Pakistan 69%	Netherlands 2%
E. coli	Co-trimoxazole	-	63.0	Pakistan 67%	Finland 20%
E. coli	Cefepime	4th gen. cephalosporines	62.7	Oman 93%	Switzerland 4%
K. pneumoniae	Co-trimoxazole	-	60.1	Uganda 82%	Switzerland 9%
K. pneumoniae	Ciprofloxacin	Fluoroquinolones	58.3	Russia 89%	Japan 5%
K. pneumoniae	Ertapenem	Carbapenem	53.2	Oman 74%	U.K. 1%



Chart 2: The chart shows the consumption (%) of "Watch" group antibiotics among AWARe categories



Centre likely to soon amend Drugs Act to curb misleading ads

KAVITA BAJELI-DATT @ New Delhi

THE Union Health Ministry may soon take “appropriate” action to amend the proposed long-pending Drugs and Magic Remedies (Objectionable Advertisement) Act, 1954, which is aimed at taking stringent action against misleading advertisements, including Ayush medicines.

The move comes in the wake of directions from the Prime Minister’s Office (PMO) following an RTI filed by Dr K V Babu, a Kerala-based ophthalmologist, who had flagged that the crucial Act has been kept in cold storage since February 3, 2020, when the proposal was first announced.

Babu, who had written to the PMO last year on December 7, received a response that his complaint had been forwarded to the Union health ministry. The health ministry, which had not responded to him despite his earlier RTIs on the issue, in its January 16 reply, said that “action on the issue will be initiated at the ap-

propriate time.”

Reacting to the health ministry’s reply, Babu said, “I believe it is a positive development as it has come after the intervention from the PMO. The proposed amendment will strengthen the D&MR Act. I hope it is enacted soon.”

The proposed D&MR Act was formulated after the parliamentary panel on health in March 2018 criticised the non-enactment of stringent laws against misleading ads of Ayush drugs.

The amendment to the D&MR Act, 1954, which prohibits the advertisement for remedies alleged to possess magical qualities, was proposed by the ministry on February 3, 2020. This act applies to all drugs, including Ayurvedic, Siddha, Unani drugs, and Homoeopathy.

The amendments that were proposed in 2020 included 24 more diseases, including drugs for treatment for enhancing sexual performance, fairness of skin, improvement in the height of kids and adults, and premature ageing.



It has been six years since the parliamentary panel had expressed grave concerns about misleading Ayush medicines. I hope now, they implement the Act after the PMO intervention

KV Babu, RTI activist



Business Finance

US fourth-quarter GDP to crown vigorous 2nd half

BLOOMBERG

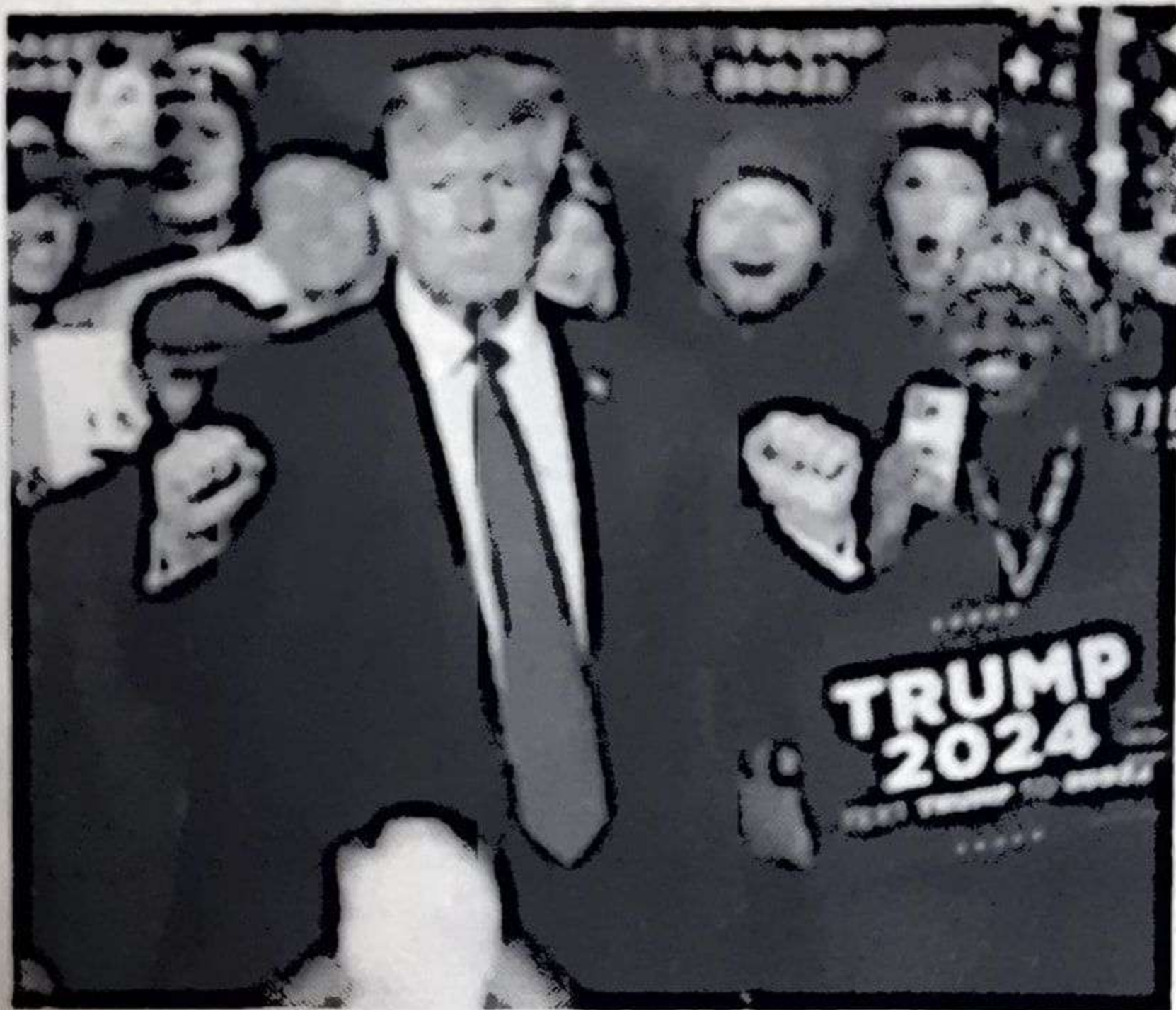
21 January

A likely moderation of US economic growth in the fourth quarter ended an otherwise solid stretch of activity over the final six months of 2023, feeding expectations the expansion will remain intact.

Economists project the government's initial reading of gross domestic product to show an annualised 2 per cent increase, according to the median estimate in a Bloomberg survey. That would follow the 4.9 per cent third-quarter advance and mark the strongest back-to-back quarters of growth since 2021. At the same time, inflationary pressures are becoming less pronounced.

A day after Thursday's GDP figures, the government's personal income and spending report is seen showing the Federal Reserve's preferred gauge of underlying inflation rose 3 per cent in the year ended in December, in what would be an 11th straight month of waning annual price growth.

Slowing inflation has opened the door for US central bankers to lower interest rates this year.



Trump is joined by S Carolina leaders as he tries to undercut Haley

Donald Trump surrounded himself with leaders from Nikki Haley's home state in a show of strength ahead of Tuesday's New Hampshire primary.

Trump was joined at a rally at the NHU Arena in Manchester Saturday night by South Carolina Gov. Henry McMaster, the state's lieutenant governor and a slew of other senior officials, including the state's attorney general, treasurer and House speaker. The statewide officials, along with US Reps Joe Wilson, William Timmons and Russell Fry, appeared on stage with Trump. "Almost every politician from South Carolina's endorsing me," Trump declared. The South Carolinians urged the voters to carry Trump to a win in New Hampshire before the contest moves to their state.

FMCG majors likely to cash in on Korean noodles trend

AKSHARA SRIVASTAVA
New Delhi, 21 January

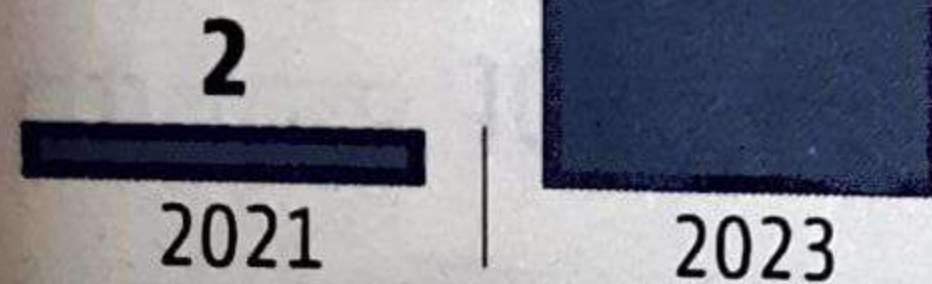
Korean-style spicy Ramen is fast gaining traction in India compared to instant noodles.

After South Korean dramas, beauty products, cars and electronic goods, its noodles are the latest to make inroads into the Indian market. The trend started during the pandemic. Indian fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG) firms are now expanding their instant noodles' portfolio. In November 2023, Nestle India expanded its Maggi brand with the launch of Maggi Korean Noodles in two flavours.

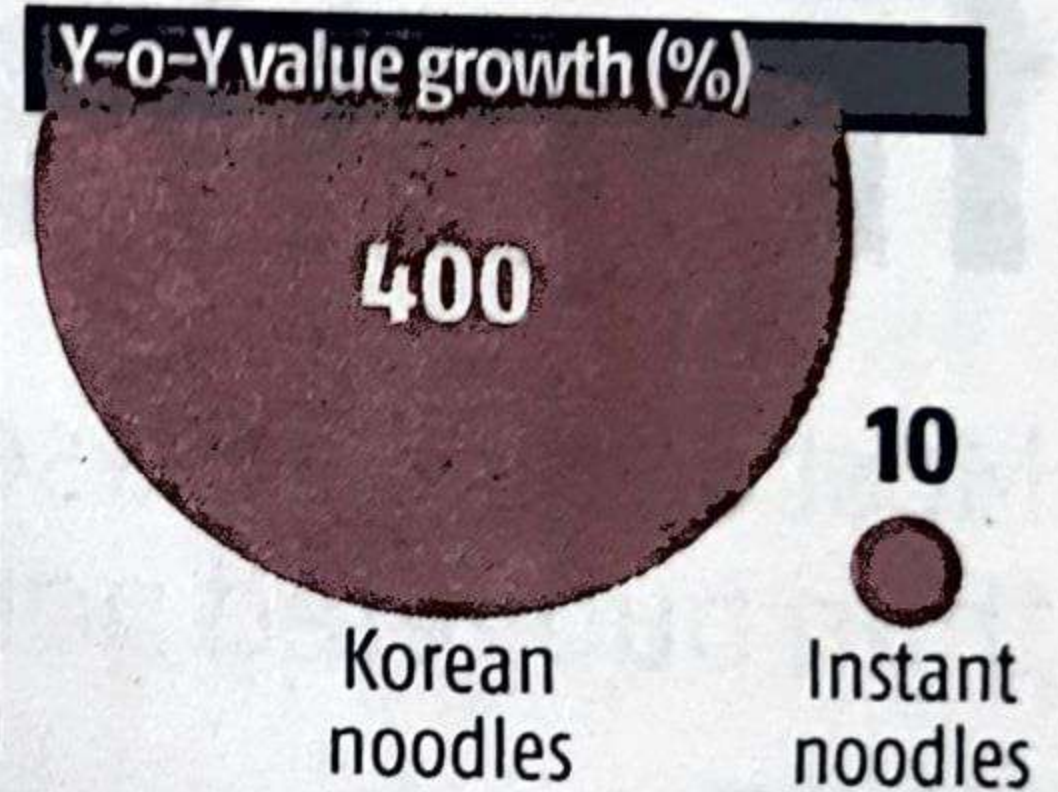
Hindustan Unilever also expanded its Knorr brand with the launch of Korean meal pot. Nissin – the maker of Top

THE K-WAVE

Korean noodle sales (₹ cr)



Source: NielsenIQ



Ramen instant noodles – had also launched its Gekki variant of K-noodles three years ago.

According to the latest data shared by consumer intelligence firm NielsenIQ, the size of the Korean noodles market has surged from ₹2 crore in 2021 to over ₹65 crore in 2023. “In terms of value, this segment has experienced a 4X growth compared to last year. It sur-

passed the 10 per cent growth in instant noodles,” Roosevelt D’souza, head of customer success – India – at NielsenIQ told *Business Standard*. “With over a dozen major players in this segment, and in response to the increased demand, we anticipate key players in the instant noodles category expanding their portfolio to include this variant,” D’souza added.

India-UK FTA: Commerce Dept turns to PMO for directions

Amiti Sen

New Delhi



The UK's wish for tighter IPR regulations is being resisted by India

The Prime Minister's Office (PMO) is likely to take the final decision on certain tricky issues in the India-UK Free Trade Agreement (FTA) negotiations to see if the pact can be concluded before the general elections, sources have said.

These issues include liberalisation of business visas, rules related to intellectual property rights, market access for whisky, automobiles, and financial services, and a social security pact.

"Negotiators from India and the UK have been holding intense talks in New Delhi since January 10, trying to narrow gaps, which are expected to continue. The Commerce Department is in close consultation with the PMO now, as a political call will need to be taken on the handful of remaining issues if the negotiations are to be concluded before the elections," the source said.

Both India and the UK are keen that the FTA be finalised by the present regimes

before the elections in the two countries, the source added.

KEY DEMANDS

While officials have successfully concluded negotiations on most of the 26 chapters in the India-UK FTA pact, there are some matters of importance to both sides that remain vexed.

Of utmost importance to India is its demand for the liberalisation of business visas, which the UK has been resisting, the source said. More business visas are important for Indian professionals, especially in the IT industry.

New Delhi also wants to

get into a social security pact with the UK so that its short-term workers in the country don't have to contribute to social security.

Another important ask is an assurance from the UK that the gains from the FTA would not be nullified by the imposition of a carbon tax, on the lines of the EU's Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM), in the future, as officials had earlier indicated.

The UK's wish for tighter IPR regulations that will go beyond the WTO's TRIPs agreement is something India is resisting, as it does not want "ever-greening" of patents and a situation where its generic producers are threatened, the source said.

Other issues that may not have been fully settled include duty cuts for Scotch whisky, automobiles and auto parts demanded by the UK under the stipulations on rules of origin that prescribe the minimum processing that needs to happen in a FTA partner country for a good to qualify for duty cuts.



SatChi confident despite India Open heartbreak

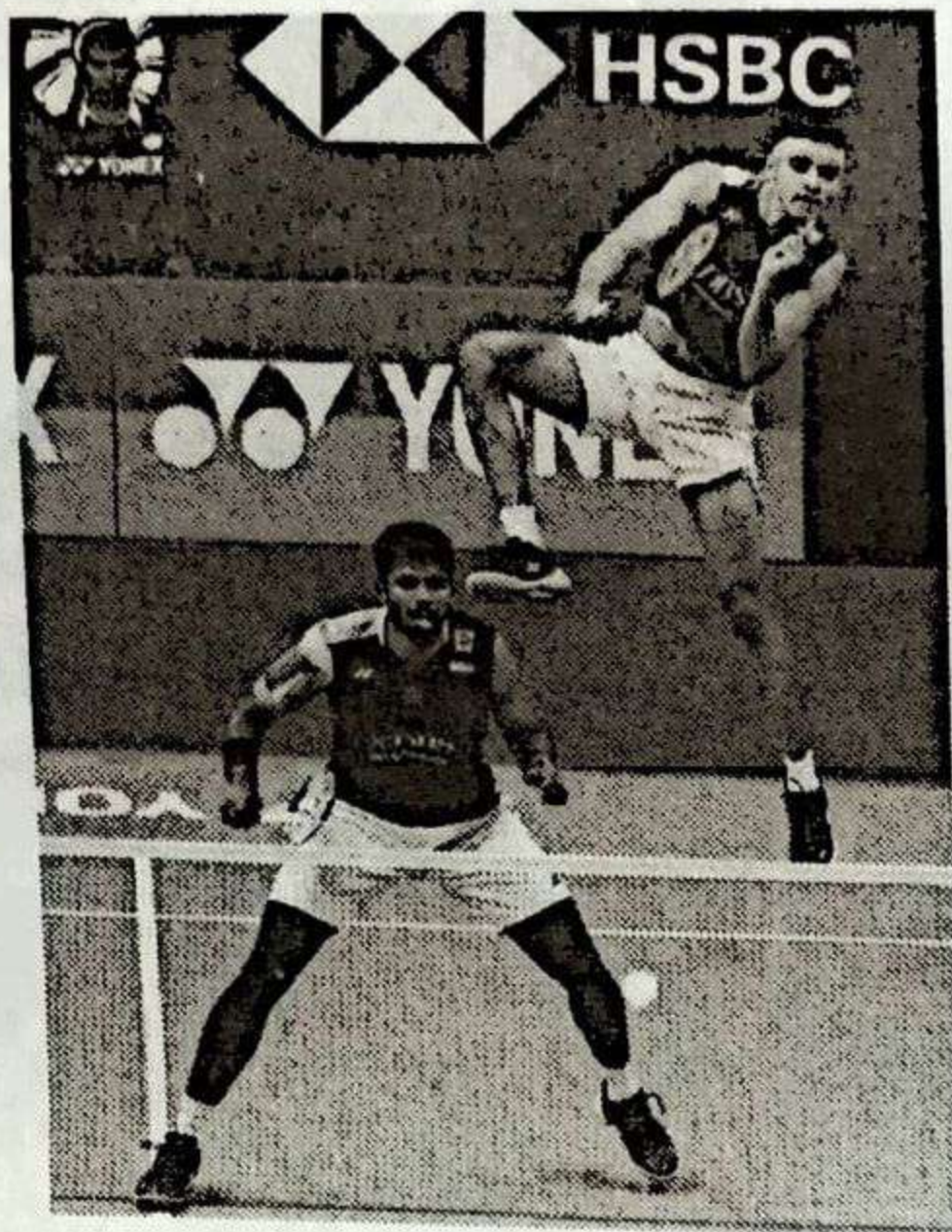
After losing final, World No. 2 pair determined to come back stronger

ANMOL GURUNG @Chennai

IT was a tense spell of play as Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty struggled to find answers. Having played with much authority in the opening game of their men's doubles final, it was a rather bizarre scene as the World No 2 pair was suddenly reduced to collecting the shuttle and passing it back to their rivals. Their struggle could be sensed through the crowd, who had gradually started to lose their voice, here at the KD Jadhav Indoor Hall. It was a period where they conceded nine consecutive points. That was the Indian pair's start of downfall on Sunday as they missed out on a title by a whisker for the second consecutive week, this time in front of the home fans here at the India Open.

After displaying their quintessential style of play in the first game against the Korean duo of Kang Min Hyuk and Seo Seung Jae (World No 3), they lost the plot in the second game and eventually conceded the match (21-15, 11-21, 18-21). Satwik lamented about the aforementioned spell. "We started off quite well in the first game, but in the second, we couldn't really start well. In no time, we were down by 11-5. From then on, it was quite difficult to come back, and yes, they were quite a formidable defensive pair," he assessed.

This latest defeat was certainly a dampener for the Khel Ratnas. Having come so far, that too in front of home fans, Satwik is understandably dejected



Satwiksairaj Rankireddy (L) and Chirag Shetty finished runners-up | PARVEEN NEGI

after letting this opportunity slip. Having said that, he's also quick to point out the positives (a valid one of course). "Overall, we are sad about losing the final in our home tournament. But, there are a lot of positives, the last two weeks have been really good," Satwik was suggesting their runners-up effort at the Malaysia Open last week.

Playing back-to-back finals at the elite level is no mean feat. The shuttlers, who have made a healthy habit of challenging for titles, will have to get used to the rigours of playing more often at a high level. Chirag is pragmatic with regards to their current state and is confident that things will fall in place eventually. "There was a certain fatigue going on (because of playing consecutive finals). We have never played two back-to-back finals (Super 500 or Super 750 level), so it's a positive thing that we have been playing

quite consistently. We just need to look at the bigger picture, and I know that things will eventually turn in our favour," he noted.

On the day, the Korean shuttlers showed why they are the reigning world champions. Despite conceding the first game, they maintained their composure. With a healthy balance of attack and defence, they forced the Indian duo to make mistakes on multiple occasions. Even in the third game, the Indians continued to chase them hard. The gap had come down to merely one point towards the business end. That's when they stepped up big time to spoil the party for most onlookers present here. The doubles duo will have some time to reflect as they'll be taking some time off before attempting another big run. The duo's hunger and commitment to master their craft has made them heavyweights in the BWF circuit over the years. And they're sticking to that mindset going forward. "Our thing is to keep our heads down and keep working on the big titles to come. We will start again in the next few days for the All England and French Open," Satwik declared.

Before the French Open and All England, they are scheduled to take part in the Badminton Asia Team Championships (Malaysia, February 13-19). Given that they have reversed their fortunes after similar setbacks over the years, Satwik and Chirag can certainly come back stronger and make a case for titles.

Full story: newindianexpress.com

Clinical Djokovic polishes off Mannarino, enters quarterfinals

USA's Fritz beats Tsitsipas, will face the Serb in the last-eight stage; Sinner, yet to drop a set in the edition, advances; Sabalenka, Gauff cruise to the next stage after downing Anisimova and Frech respectively

AUSTRALIAN OPEN

Associated Press
MELBOURNE

Achieving yet another record at the Australian Open put Novak Djokovic in a reflective mood, revealing how he thought things might change after he'd clinched that historic 24th major title.

Djokovic played his best two sets "in a while" in a 6-0, 6-0, 6-3 demolition of Adrian Mannarino on Sunday to reach the quarterfinal at a Major for the 58th time, equalling Roger Federer's Grand Slam record.

It's his 14th run to the last eight at Melbourne Park, where his conversion rate is incredible. Of the previous 13, he's gone on to win 10 Australian titles.

"I thought maybe I would this year feel slightly more relaxed, for lack of better term, or maybe less tension, less stress on practice sessions, matches," he said.

In the quarterfinal he'll be facing No. 12-ranked Taylor Fritz, who reached the stage in Australia for the first time with a 7-6(3), 5-7, 6-3, 6-3 win over 2023 runner-up Stefanos Tsitsipas.



Easy-peasy: Djokovic dominated proceedings and beat Mannarino 6-0, 6-0, 6-3. GETTY IMAGES

Djokovic was asked about both potential rivals, and said he was confident if he played to his level. No surprise to Fritz, who is 0-8 against Djokovic..

No. 4 Jannik Sinner hasn't dropped a set en route the quarterfinal, with the Italian beating No. 15 Karen Khachanov, nor have women's defending champion Aryna Sabalenka and U.S. Open winner Coco Gauff.

Sabalenka will next play 2021 French Open champion Barbora Krejčíková, who dropped the first set but rallied for a 4-6, 6-3, 6-2

win that ended 16-year-old Mirra Andrejeva's bid to become the youngest Australian Open quarterfinalist since Martina Hingis in 1997.

No. 2-ranked Sabalenka, who won her first Slam title here last year, beat Amanda Anisimova 6-3, 6-2. Gauff, who picked up her first major at the U.S. Open in September, beat Magdalena Frech 6-1, 6-2.

Gauff, who next faces Marta Kostyuk of Ukraine, was the first woman through, needing just 63 minutes to see off Frech in a match played on Rod Lav-

er Arena – in front of the Australian great. "Luckily when I saw him come in I was already well up," Gauff said.

"I heard clapping and knew it wasn't for us, it was only the first set. But thank you for coming, it's an

FOURTH ROUND RESULTS

Men: 1-Djokovic (Srb) bt 20-Mannarino (Fra) 6-0, 6-0, 6-3. 12-Fritz (USA), bt 7-Tsitsipas (Gre) 7-6(3), 5-7, 6-3, 6-3.

4-Sinner (Ita) bt 15-Khachanov 6-4, 7-5, 6-3.

Women: 4-Gauff (USA) bt Frech (Pol) 6-1, 6-2; 2-Sabalenka bt

honour."

Australian hope Alex de Minaur was playing No. 5 Andrey Rublev in the night match to determine who will face Sinner in the quarterfinal.

Sinner advanced 6-4, 7-5, 6-3 over Khachanov.

Anisimova (USA) 6-3, 6-2. Kostyuk (Ukr) bt Timofeeva 6-2, 6-1; 9-Krejčíková (Cze) bt Andrejeva 4-6, 6-3, 6-2.

Fallen seeds

Men: 7-Tsitsipas, 15-Khachanov, 20-Mannarino.

Rohit is India's trump card, says ex-Eng spinner Panesar

SWAROOP SWAMINATHAN

@ Chennai

MONTY Panesar has singled out Rohit Sharma as the big-wicket for England ahead of the five-Test series beginning in Hyderabad on Thursday.

"Over the last few years, Sharma has played a big role (with the bat) but we don't talk about it often enough," Panesar, who played a big role in England's series win in 2012, told this daily. "He sets it up for the other batters. If he goes after the (James) Anderson and the spinners, the ball can go soft pretty quickly. The seam disappears and that makes it easier for the middle-order. If that consistently happens... if Sharma bats through the initial 20-30 overs in the series, I

think India will win the series easily." The numbers back up Panesar's assessment. The skipper is comfortably clear in terms of runs (677) scored in India in Tests since the beginning of 2021. His two 100s in that time period is also the best. Even if some of the pitches the hosts have played on may have been treacherous, Sharma's mastery of the conditions has led to some big scores. Of course, England were on the receiving end when he made a thrill-a-minute 161 in the second Test at Chennai in 2021.

There is considerable interest in the upcoming series, not least because of England's documented approach to red-ball cricket. Under Brendon McCullum (coach) and Ben Stokes (captain), they have been focus-



ing on attacking, front-foot cricket from the off, irrespective of the conditions. They have got the desired results so there is little reason to change. But it could all go pear shaped in less than a session. Panesar was cognizant of that. "We may have a proper contest if it

comes off," the left-armer said. "It could also easily crumble like we saw at the World Cup. If their game falls like a deck of cards, India will just say 'we told you so, Bazball cannot happen in India.'"

While Panesar hoped for a good contest, he was left in no doubt when it was time to make his prediction. "I don't think Bazball will win in India... India will win the series, just the margin will be dependent on England's strategy." A part of their strategy, Panesar hoped, would be empowering Shoaib Bashir, a tall off-break bowler who has only played six first-class games. "I'm looking forward to seeing Bashir," he said. "He's tall, got big hands and long fingers, will be a very interesting bowler to watch. He can extract more

bounce from that good length area, can be that x-factor spinner if he can hold his nerve.

"One wonders how Stokes skips him. I think he will ask him to bowl full and tell him 'I don't mind you if go for runs but get me wickets... 5/100 in 16 overs is fine. The Indian batters are superstars but let's dangle the carrot and play with their egos a bit.' I think that will be the message that McCullum and Stokes will tell."

Brook returns home

Middle-order batter Dan Lawrence will replace Harry Brook in the England squad for the Test series against India after the latter returned home because of personal reasons, the ECB announced on Sunday.

Full story: newindianexpress.com

EDITORIAL

NEWS



DECCAN HERALD

ESTABLISHED 1948

Warm winter again signals climate crisis

When winter comes, the snow comes with it and not far behind it, but this year there is no snow in most of the higher ranges of the Himalayas. It has been a dry winter in most places with an unusually high rain deficit. Places which have been famous for snowfall, like Gulmarg in Kashmir, are brown and green and not frosty white as usual. A lack of snow and rainfall in Uttarakhand has led to an increasing number of forest fires. Towns like Almora and Nainital have hardly had any snow and rainfall this season, and the forests are burning, as in the summer. Himachal Pradesh has also seen many forest fires. There is no snow or precipitation in the higher reaches of the state, after an abnormally wet monsoon. The vagaries of weather are the result of climate change and global warming and unusual weather phenomena like El Nino.

The failure of snowfall and the rainfall deficit will have serious consequences on the lives of the people and the economy of the region. Extreme weather patterns like summer heat waves have led to rapid melting of glaciers that are a major water source for the region. The entire December and most of January has been snowless. Most of the rivers depend upon the seasonal snow cover for their discharge. Water levels in the reservoirs, including the Bhakra reservoir, are much below normal. Snowfall ensures water security for remote villages in the summer.

Snow also ensures the presence of frost which protects winter crops. Crop yields are expected to fall drastically. The economy of many places in the region depends on skiers and tourists. There are major infrastructural facilities and other arrangements made specially for winter tourism in places like Gulmarg. The livelihood of large numbers of people depends on that. Their life in other months of the year also depends on the income from the winter months.

Studies have shown that a 1 degree Centigrade increase in temperature can reduce the amount of water stored in snowpacks in early spring by nearly 20%. Economies and lifestyles which depended on the traditional patterns of weather are likely to be severely disrupted. Governments will have to be ready to address the consequences of these problems, including migration of people. In the longer term, there is need to adapt to the changes with plans for new agricultural practices and water management techniques. Other parts of the world have also seen such changes in weather patterns. The year 2023 was the warmest year on record, but the world's response to the warnings about climate change has so far been indifferent.

The year
2023 was the
hottest ever
recorded

CROSS-BORDER PAK, IRAN ATTACKS & MENACE OF JIHADI SANCTUARIES

Recent cross-border attacks by Iran and Pakistan on each other's territory and their subsequent kiss and make up tell the tale of jihadi sanctuaries in both lands. Both claim they are 'brotherly' Islamic nations that are otherwise divided by sectarianism. While Iran is a Shia nation, Pakistan has a Sunni majority. Both have no compunctions in using terror as an instrument of state policy. Contiguous regions of Pakistan, Iran and Afghanistan are home to ethnic Balochs, which is at the root of separatism. Balochistan is a resource-rich poor land that aspires for freedom, which no nation is ready to grant. Its nationalism is a powder keg that can be lit in no time. All three nations its people straddle have been playing a dangerous jihadi game to keep insurgency simmering within manageable limits. But last week's violation of sovereignty showed the limits of that policy. While Iran claims it took out its rogue citizens in airstrikes within Pakistan, the latter followed a similar script barely 48 hours later. With both sides making their respective points using costly firepower, they decided to call it a draw. But the Pakistani army notched up some additional brownie points in the process for its surgical retaliation. It also got a left-handed compliment from the US for showing Iran its place.

The US is on the frontline of defence against Iran that uses non-state actors like Hamas in Palestine, Hezbollah in Lebanon and the Houthis in Yemen to become a pre-eminent regional power in West Asia, displacing Saudi Arabia. It was the impending Saudi detente with Israel that was the trigger for Hamas brutality on October 7, as it massacred 1,400 Israelis in a surprise raid. That 23,000 Palestinians and counting - many of them civilian women and children - have been killed by Israel's retaliatory strikes does not bother Iran's conscience. Terror is a self-consuming *Bhasmasura* that can never bring peace and sustenance to any region.

India took the pragmatic approach of not commenting on the Iran-Pakistan faceoff while reiterating its zero tolerance to terror. The Iranian attack revived memories of Indian airstrikes on Balakot in 2019 deep inside Pakistan territory on a Jaish-e-Mohammad stronghold to avenge the Pulwama attack on a CRPF convoy. It brought both nuclear powers on the brink of war before better sense prevailed. No wonder, New Delhi defended Tehran's right to give a fitting response to cross-border threats.

Post Office Act, its unbridled powers of interception

On December 24, 2023, the President of India gave assent to the Post Office Bill, 2023 which will replace the colonial-era Indian Post Office Act, 1898, as and when a notification to this effect is issued by the central government. During the debate in the Parliament, the Opposition expressed fears about the provision on unchecked powers of interception of any item by the post office authorities, including the conditions of such interception, i.e., (occurrence of any) 'emergency' which is not defined under the Act. Another point is that there are also no procedural safeguards in the Act to check arbitrary use by the authorities or any liability in case the power of interception is misused.

Interception under central Acts

On December 24, the Telecommunications Bill, 2023 also received the President's assent which will replace two Central acts namely; the Indian Telegraph Act, 1885 and the Indian Wireless Telegraphy Act, 1933. The Telecommunication Act has a provision, i.e., section 20(2) on interception of messages, which is similar to section 5(2) of the Telegraph Act of 1885 except that the contents of section 7(2)(b) of the Act of 1885 which empower the central government to notify rules on the precautions to be taken for preventing the improper interception or disclosure of messages are now included in section 20(2). Apparently, unless such procedure and safeguards are prescribed, section 20(2) cannot be brought into operation. This is significant because though the 1885 Act provided for making rules, the relevant rule (section 419A) was notified only in March 2007.

Section 69(1) of the Information and Technology (IT) Act, 2000 also provides for interception of any information through any computer source, though the necessary requirement does not call for the occurrence of 'any public emergency' or any demand in 'the interest of public safety' as provided for in the Telegraph Act or in the Telecommunication Act. Thus, the scope of interception under the IT Act is wider. Though the Act provides for 'the procedure and safeguards' to be prescribed by the central government, the necessary rules were notified only in October 2009.

The interception of phones under the Telegraph Act continued without any procedural safeguards in place till the Supreme Court of India, in *People's Union for Civil Liberties (PUCL) vs Union of India* (1996), laid down the procedure and safeguards to check arbitrariness and a misuse of powers by authorities. The Court held that telephonic conversations are often of an intimate and confidential character and, since phone tapping is an infringement of the right to freedom of speech and expression under Article 19 of the Constitution, it is permissible only if it comes within the grounds of restrictions under Article 19(2). The Court also held that since the right to privacy is a part of the right to life and personal liberty, under Article 21 of the Constitution, it cannot be curtailed 'except



R.K. Vij

is a former Indian Police Service officer

The newly enacted Act does not make any provision for procedural safeguards to dispel fears of misuse of the substantive provision on interception

according to procedure established by law'. Also, 'the procedure itself must be just, fair and reasonable' 'to rule out anything arbitrary, freakish or bizarre'.

Since no rules were notified by the central government under section 7(2)(b) of the Telegraph Act by then, the Court laid down procedural safeguards which remained in operation till March 2007 when the central government amended the Telegraph Rules, 1951 and notified Rule 419A. This rule not only replaced the Court's directives but also made some space for interception in 'emergent cases' (in remote areas or for operational reasons) up to a maximum seven days when obtaining prior directions for interception is not feasible; thus, there was a further delegation of the powers of interception to the law enforcement agencies, such as to the ranks not below the Inspector General of Police at the State level.

The Court also elaborated upon parameters to comprehend the occurrence of 'public emergency' and 'public safety', and clarified that unless one of these two conditions is met, interception cannot be resorted to, no matter howsoever necessary or expedient it might be in the interests of the sovereignty and integrity of India, the security of the state, friendly relations with foreign states or public order or for preventing incitement to the commission of an offence. The central government also prescribed similar procedure and safeguards for interception under the Information Technology (Procedure and Safeguards for Interception, Monitoring and Decryption of Information) Rules, 2009.

Apprehensions about interception

While Rule 419A is likely to be replicated under the new Telecommunication Rules, the newly enacted Post Office Act does not make any provision for the procedural safeguards to dispel the fears of misuse of the substantive provision on interception.

The fact remains that the post office mostly transports items such as letters and postcards which are essentially of a confidential nature. The Supreme Court in *Distt. Registrar & Collector, Hyderabad & Anr vs Canara Bank* (2005) held that the right to privacy is not lost as a result of confidential documents or information being parted with by the customer to the custody of a bank. Therefore, the right to privacy is not lost if some personal items are entrusted to the post office for correspondence. The Court has also held in many judgments that the right to privacy imposes a requirement of a written recording of reasons before a search and seizure could be carried out.

In *Justice K.S. Puttaswamy (Retd.) & Anr. vs Union of India & Ors.* (2017), the right to communication has been held to be a part of the right to privacy and thus protected under Article 21 of the Constitution. Article 17 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, 1966, to which India is a party, says that 'no one shall be subjected to arbitrary or unlawful interference with his privacy, family,

home and correspondence nor to unlawful attacks on his honour and reputation'. According to Directive Principle 51(c) of the Constitution, international conventions must be respected unless they are in conflict with domestic laws.

In fact, 'the right of every citizen to the secrecy of his correspondence' was included in (clause 9(d)) of the draft report of the Sub-committee on fundamental rights. But this clause was eventually dropped on the ground that this might lead to practical difficulties in administration of the Posts and Telegraph Department and the relevant laws (the Indian Post Office Act, 1898 and the Indian Telegraph Act, 1885) permit interception of communication sent through post, telegraph or telephone only in specified circumstances. Similar was the fate of another clause 10 on searches and seizure also. But the Supreme Court, in *Puttaswamy*, observed that the Constituent Assembly had not expressly resolved to reject the notion of the right to privacy as an integral element of the liberty and freedoms guaranteed by the fundamental rights.

Therefore, the fears of misuse must be allayed by the central government with regard to the Post Office Act to circumvent intervention by the constitutional courts in future. This Act has made the interception provision more liberal by removing the two major conditions, namely 'the occurrence of public emergency' and 'in the interest of the public safety' which are specifically mentioned in the Act of 1898. As there is no provision with regard to procedural safeguards, any interception of items by the post office intrudes into the privacy of an individual and, therefore, must be backed by a just, fair and reasonable procedure. Also, the term 'emergency' being vague, it must draw inference from rule 419A of the Telegraph Rules or the IT Rules which clarify what constitutes the 'emergent' cases.

Consequences of unauthorised interception

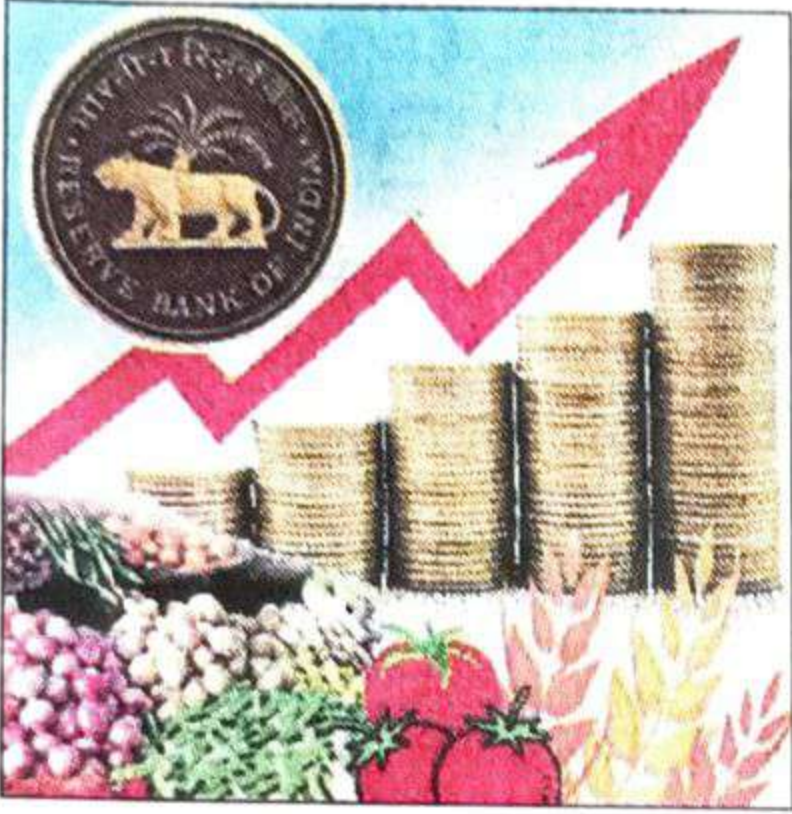
Second, though a telegraph officer may be punished for any unauthorised interception under section 26 of the Telegraph Act, there is no provision for taking any action if the competent authority exceeds or misuses his powers of interception. This seems problematic because the interception documents are destroyed after a certain period of time. Similarly, though unauthorised interception is punishable under the Telecommunication Act, review committees are not bound even to recommend any disciplinary action for misuse of powers by the competent authority. The review committee may only set aside the order of interception and may issue orders for destruction of records.

Therefore, the competent authority needs to be held accountable for any wilful misuse of interception powers, without the 'good faith' clause coming to their rescue. Otherwise, in case of infraction of the right to privacy under these statutes, relief (including compensation) could only be sought from the constitutional courts.



ನಿಯಂತ್ರಣಕ್ಕೆ ಬರುತ್ತಿಲ್ಲ ಬೆಲೆ ಏರಿಕೆ ಆರ್ಥಿಕ ಬೆಳವಣಿಗೆಗೆ ಮಾರಕ

ಡಿಸೆಂಬರ್ ತಿಂಗಳಲ್ಲಿ ದೇಶದ ಚಿಲ್ಲರೆ ಹಣದುಬ್ಬರ ದರವು ನವೆಂಬರ್ ತಿಂಗಳಲ್ಲಿ ದಾಖಲಾಗಿ ದೃಢೀಕೃತ ಹೆಚ್ಚಾಗಿದೆ ಎಂಬುದನ್ನು ರಾಷ್ಟ್ರೀಯ ಸಾಂಖ್ಯಿಕ ಕಚೇರಿ (ಎನ್‌ಎಸ್‌ಒ) ಈಚೆಗೆ ಬಿಡುಗಡೆ ಮಾಡಿರುವ ಅಂಕಿ-ಅಂಶಗಳು ಹೇಳುತ್ತಿವೆ. ಆಹಾರ ವಸ್ತುಗಳ ಹಣದುಬ್ಬರ ಬಾಸ್ತಿಯಾದ ಪರಿಣಾಮವಾಗಿ ಚಿಲ್ಲರೆ ಹಣದುಬ್ಬರ ಪ್ರಮಾಣವು ಡಿಸೆಂಬರ್‌ನಲ್ಲಿ ಶೇಕಡ 5.69ಕ್ಕೆ ಹೆಚ್ಚಳ ಕಂಡಿದೆ. ಈ ಏರಿಕೆಯು ನಿರೀಕ್ಷಿತವೇ ಆಗಿತ್ತು. ಆಹಾರ ವಸ್ತುಗಳ ಬೆಲೆ ಏರಿಕೆ ಪ್ರಮಾಣವು ಹೆಚ್ಚಳ ಕಂಡು, ಒಟ್ಟಾರೆ ಹಣದುಬ್ಬರ ದರವು ಜಾಸ್ತಿ ಆಗಬಹುದು ಎಂಬ ಮಾತನ್ನು ಭಾರತೀಯ ರಿಸರ್ವ್ ಬ್ಯಾಂಕ್ (ಆರ್‌ಬಿಐ) ಹೇಳಿತ್ತು. ಗ್ರಾಹಕ ಆಹಾರ ಬೆಲೆ ಸೂಚ್ಯಂಕವು ಡಿಸೆಂಬರ್‌ನಲ್ಲಿ ಶೇಕಡ 9.53ಕ್ಕೆ ಹೆಚ್ಚಳ ಕಂಡಿದೆ. ಇದಕ್ಕೆ ಮುಖ್ಯ ಕಾರಣ ಧಾನ್ಯಗಳ ಬೆಲೆಯಲ್ಲಿ ಆದ ಶೇ 9.93ರಷ್ಟು ಏರಿಕೆ. ಬಹುತೇಕ ಎಲ್ಲ ಬಗೆಯ ಏಕಧಾನ್ಯಗಳ ಬೆಲೆಯಲ್ಲಿ ಕಳೆದ ಕೆಲವು ತಿಂಗಳುಗಳಲ್ಲಿ ಏರಿಕೆ ಆಗುತ್ತಲೇ ಇದೆ. ದ್ವಿದಳ ಧಾನ್ಯಗಳ ಬೆಲೆಯು ಹೆಚ್ಚು ಏರಿಕೆ ಕಂಡಿದೆ. ಡಿಸೆಂಬರ್‌ನಲ್ಲಿ ದ್ವಿದಳ ಧಾನ್ಯಗಳ ಬೆಲೆಯು 43 ತಿಂಗಳ ಗರಿಷ್ಠ ಮಟ್ಟದಲ್ಲಿ ಇತ್ತು. ಹಿಂಗಾರು ಬೆಲೆಯು ಹಿಂದಿನ ವರ್ಷದ ಪ್ರಮಾಣಕ್ಕಿಂತ ಕಡಿಮೆ ಆಗುವ ಸಾಧ್ಯತೆ ಇರುವ ಕಾರಣ, ದ್ವಿದಳ ಧಾನ್ಯಗಳ



**ಹಣದುಬ್ಬರವು ಹೆಚ್ಚಿನ
ಮಟ್ಟದಲ್ಲಿಯೇ ಇರುವುದು
ಕುಟುಂಬಗಳ ಖರ್ಚುಗಳ
ಮೇಲೆ ಕೆಟ್ಟ ಪರಿಣಾಮ
ಉಂಟುಮಾಡಬಹುದು**

ಬೆಲೆ ಏರಿಕೆ ಇನ್ನಷ್ಟು ಹೆಚ್ಚಾಗುವ ಸಾಧ್ಯತೆಯೂ ಇದೆ. ಜನಸಾಮಾನ್ಯರು ಮನೆಗಳಲ್ಲಿ ಬಳಸುವ ಆಹಾರ ಪದಾರ್ಥಗಳ ಪಟ್ಟಿಯಲ್ಲಿ ಏಕದಳ ಹಾಗೂ ದ್ವಿದಳ ಧಾನ್ಯಗಳಿಗೆ ಆದ್ಯತೆ ಹೆಚ್ಚಿರುತ್ತದೆ. ಹೀಗಾಗಿ, ಈ ಪದಾರ್ಥಗಳ ಬೆಲೆ ಏರಿಕೆಯು ಅವರಿಗೆ ನಿಜಕ್ಕೂ ಸಮಸ್ಯೆ ಸೃಷ್ಟಿಸುತ್ತದೆ. ಕಳೆದ ಕೆಲವು ತಿಂಗಳ ಅವಧಿಯಲ್ಲಿ ತರಕಾರಿಗಳ ಬೆಲೆಯಲ್ಲಿಯೂ ತೀವ್ರ ಏರಿಕೆ ಆಗಿದೆ. ಟೊಮೆಟೊ ಮತ್ತು ಈರುಳ್ಳಿ ಬೆಲೆಯಲ್ಲಿ 2022ರ ಡಿಸೆಂಬರ್‌ನ ಬೆಲೆಗೆ ಹೋಲಿಸಿದರೆ ಭಾರಿ ಏರಿಕೆ ಆಗಿತ್ತು. ಆದರೆ, ತರಕಾರಿಗಳ ಬೆಲೆಯು ಅಲ್ಪಾವಧಿಯಲ್ಲಿ ಬಹಳ ಏರಿಳಿತಕ್ಕೆ ಕಾಣುತ್ತದೆ ಎಂಬುದು ನಿಜ. ಈ ಏರಿಳಿತಕ್ಕೆ ಪೂರೈಕೆ ವ್ಯವಸ್ಥೆ ಸೇರಿದಂತೆ ಹಲವು ಕಾರಣ ಗಳಿರುತ್ತವೆ. ಒಟ್ಟಾರೆಯಾಗಿ, ಎಲ್ಲ ಬಗೆಯ ಆಹಾರ ವಸ್ತುಗಳ ಬೆಲೆಯಲ್ಲಿ ಏರಿಕೆ ಆಗಿದೆ. ಇದು ದೊಡ್ಡ ಸವಾಲು. ಆಹಾರ ವಸ್ತುಗಳ ಬೆಲೆ ಏರಿಕೆಯ ಮೇಲೆ ನಿಗಾ ಇರಿಸುವುದು ಆರ್‌ಬಿಐನ ಪ್ರಮುಖ ಕಾರ್ಯಸೂಚಿಗಳಲ್ಲಿ ಒಂದು ಎಂದು ಗವರ್ನರ್ ಶಕ್ತಿಕಾಂತ ದಾಸ್ ಈಚೆಗೆ ಹೇಳಿದ್ದಾರೆ. ಆಹಾರ ಮತ್ತು ಇಂಧನ ಹೊರತುಪಡಿಸಿ, ಇತರ ಸೇವೆಗಳು ಹಾಗೂ ಸರಕುಗಳ ಬೆಲೆ ಏರಿಕೆಯ ಪ್ರಮಾಣದಲ್ಲಿ ಕುಸಿತ ಕಂಡುಬಂದಿದೆ ಎಂದು ಅವರು ಹೇಳಿದ್ದಾರೆ. ಹೀಗಿದ್ದರೂ, ಹತ್ತು ಹಲವು ಅಂತರರಾಷ್ಟ್ರೀಯ ವಿದ್ಯಮಾನಗಳು ಹಾಗೂ ಹವಾಮಾನದ ಪರಿಣಾಮವನ್ನು ಆಧರಿಸಿರುವ ಹಣದುಬ್ಬರವನ್ನು ಅಂದಾಜು ಮಾಡುವುದು ಕಷ್ಟದ ಕೆಲಸವೇ. ಡಿಸೆಂಬರ್‌ನಲ್ಲಿ ದಾಖಲಾಗಿರುವ ಹಣದುಬ್ಬರ ಪ್ರಮಾಣವು ಆರ್‌ಬಿಐ ನಿಗದಿ ಮಾಡಿಕೊಂಡಿರುವ ಪ್ರಮಾಣಕ್ಕಿಂತ ಬಹಳ ಹೆಚ್ಚು. ಪ್ರಸಕ್ತ ಹಣಕಾಸು ವರ್ಷದಲ್ಲಿ ಚಿಲ್ಲರೆ ಹಣದುಬ್ಬರವು ಶೇ 5.4ರಷ್ಟು ಇರಲಿದೆ ಎಂದು ಆರ್‌ಬಿಐ ಅಂದಾಜು ಮಾಡಿದೆ. ಮುಂದಿನ ಹಣಕಾಸು ವರ್ಷದಲ್ಲಿ ಇದು ಶೇ 5.2ರಷ್ಟು ಆಗಲಿದೆ ಎಂದು ಅಂದಾಜಿಸಿದೆ. ವಾಸ್ತವದಲ್ಲಿ ಹಣದುಬ್ಬರ ಪ್ರಮಾಣವು ಈಗಿನ ಅಂದಾಜಿಗಿಂತ ಹೆಚ್ಚಾಗಬಹುದು ಎಂಬುದನ್ನು ಈಗಿನ ಕೆಲವು ವಿದ್ಯಮಾನಗಳು ಹೇಳುತ್ತಿವೆ.

ಕೇಂದ್ರ ಸರ್ಕಾರವು ಮಧ್ಯಂತರ ಬಜೆಟ್‌ನ್ನು ಫೆಬ್ರವರಿ 1ರಂದು ಮಂಡಿಸಲಿದೆ. ಆರ್‌ಬಿಐನ ಹಣಕಾಸು ನೀತಿ ಸಮಿತಿಯು ಮುಂದಿನ ತಿಂಗಳಲ್ಲಿ ಸಭೆ ಸೇರಲಿದೆ. ಹಣಕಾಸು ನೀತಿ ಸಮಿತಿಯು ರೆಪೋ ದರದ ವಿಚಾರದಲ್ಲಿ ಯಥಾಸ್ಥಿತಿಯನ್ನು ಕಾಯ್ದುಕೊಳ್ಳುವ ಸಾಧ್ಯತೆ ಹೆಚ್ಚಿದೆ. ಹಣದುಬ್ಬರವು ಹೆಚ್ಚಿನ ಮಟ್ಟದಲ್ಲಿಯೇ ಇರುವುದು ದೇಶದ ಅರ್ಥ ವ್ಯವಸ್ಥೆಗೆ ಹಾಗೂ ಕುಟುಂಬಗಳ ಖರ್ಚುಗಳ ಮೇಲೆ ಕೆಟ್ಟ ಪರಿಣಾಮ ಉಂಟುಮಾಡಬಹುದು. ಅದರಲ್ಲೂ ಮುಖ್ಯವಾಗಿ, ಆಹಾರ ವಸ್ತುಗಳ ಬೆಲೆ ಏರಿಕೆಯಿಂದಾಗಿ ಹಣದುಬ್ಬರ ಹೆಚ್ಚಾಗುತ್ತಿರುವಾಗ ಪರಿಸ್ಥಿತಿ ಕಷ್ಟಕರವಾಗಿರುತ್ತದೆ. ಈ ಬಗೆಯ ಹಣದುಬ್ಬರವು ಬೇಡಿಕೆಯನ್ನು, ಬಳಕೆಯನ್ನು ಕುಗ್ಗಿಸುತ್ತದೆ. ಇದನ್ನು ಈಗ ಕಾಣುತ್ತಿದ್ದೇವೆ ಕೂಡ. ಮಾರುಕಟ್ಟೆಯಲ್ಲಿ ಗ್ರಾಹಕರಿಂದ ಬರುತ್ತಿರುವ ಬೇಡಿಕೆಯು ಹಲವು ತಿಂಗಳುಗಳಿಂದ ಕಡಿಮೆ ಮಟ್ಟದಲ್ಲಿದೆ. ಬೇಡಿಕೆಯು ಇನ್ನಷ್ಟು ತಗ್ಗಿದರೆ ಆರ್ಥಿಕ ಬೆಳವಣಿಗೆ ಕುಸಿಯುತ್ತದೆ.



ಸಂಪಾದಕೀಯ EDITORIAL

ಶತಮಾನಗಳ ಕನಸು ನನಸು ಮಂದಿರವಾಯಿತು, ರಾಮರಾಜ್ಯವಾಗಲಿ

ಭಾರತೀಯರನ್ನು ಒಂದು ಶ್ರದ್ಧೆಯ ಸೂತ್ರದಲ್ಲಿ ಬೆಸೆದ 'ರಾಮಾಯಣ'ದ ಪ್ರಭಾವ ಈ ನೆಲದಲ್ಲಿ ಬಹಳ ಗಾಢ. ಪಿತೃವಾಕ್ಯ ಪರಿಪಾಲನೆ, ಏಕಪತ್ನಿ ವ್ರತಸ್ಥ, ನ್ಯಾಯ ಹಾಗೂ ಸತ್ಯಾದರ್ಶಗಳ ಹಾದಿ, ಆಶ್ರಮ ಶಾಲೆಗಳ ಪರಿಕಲ್ಪನೆ, ಪ್ರಜೆಗಳ ಅಭಿಪ್ರಾಯಕ್ಕೆ ಮನ್ನಣೆ, ವಿಜ್ಞಾನ- ತಂತ್ರಜ್ಞಾನ- ತತ್ತ್ವಶಾಸ್ತ್ರಗಳ ಬುನಾದಿ- ಹೀಗೆ ಜನಸಾಮಾನ್ಯರ ಬದುಕಿಗೆ ಅಗತ್ಯವಾದ ರಾಮಾಯಣ ಇಂಥ ಹತ್ತುಹಲವು ಆದರ್ಶಗಳು ಭಾರತೀಯ ಜನಸಮಾಜದ ಬದುಕಿನಲ್ಲೂ ಹಾಸು ಹೊಕ್ಕಾಗಿವೆ. ಈ ಕಾರಣಕ್ಕಾಗಿಯೇ ಶ್ರೀರಾಮ ಒಬ್ಬ ದೇವರು ಎನ್ನುವ ಭಾವಕ್ಕಿಂತ 'ರಾಮ ಒಂದು ದೊಡ್ಡ ಆದರ್ಶ' ಎಂದು ಜನಸಾಮಾನ್ಯರು ಭಾವಿಸುವುದೇ ಹೆಚ್ಚು.

ಇಂಥ ರಾಮನಿಗೆ ಆತನ ಜನ್ಮಭೂಮಿ ಅಯೋಧ್ಯೆಯಲ್ಲಿ ರಾಮಮಂದಿರ ನಿರ್ಮಿಸಬೇಕೆನ್ನುವುದು ಬಹುಸಂಖ್ಯಾತ ಹಿಂದೂ ಧರ್ಮದ ಐದಾರು ಶತಮಾನಗಳ ಕನಸು. ಭಾರತೀಯರು ತಾವಾಗಿಯೇ ಯಾರ ಮೇಲೂ ದಾಳಿ ಮಾಡಿದವರಲ್ಲ. ಆದರೆ, ಭಾರತದ ಮೇಲೆ ಸಾಕಷ್ಟು ವಿದೇಶಿ ದಾಳಿಕೋರರು ಆಕ್ರಮಣಗೈದು ಇಲ್ಲಿನ ಸಂಪ್ರದಾಯದ ನಾಶಕ್ಕೆ ಪಿತೂರಿ ತೊಪಿಸಿದ್ದರು. ಈ ಪಿತೂರಿಯ ಮೊದಲ ಬಲಿಪಶುವೇ ರಾಮನನ್ನಾಗಿಸುವ ಪ್ರಯತ್ನಗಳೂ ನಡೆದವು. ಇದೇ ಕಾರಣಕ್ಕಾಗಿಯೇ ಅಯೋಧ್ಯೆಯಲ್ಲಿ ರಾಮಮಂದಿರ ಧ್ವಂಸಗೊಳಿಸಿ, ಆ ಜಾಗದಲ್ಲಿ 1528ರಲ್ಲಿ ಬಾಬರಿ ಮಸೀದಿ ನಿರ್ಮಾಣವಾಯಿತು. ಇದರೊಂದಿಗೆ ವಿವಾದದ ಕೇಂದ್ರಬಿಂದುವಾಗಿದ್ದ ಅಯೋಧ್ಯೆ ಸಾಕಷ್ಟು ಸಂಘರ್ಷ, ನ್ಯಾಯ ಹೋರಾಟಗಳನ್ನು ಕಂಡುಂಡಂಥ ನೆಲವೇ ಆಯಿತು. 2019ರ ನವೆಂಬರ್ 9ರಂದು ಸುಪ್ರೀಂ ಕೋರ್ಟ್ ಅಂತಿಮ ತೀರ್ಪು ಕೊಟ್ಟ ಬಳಿಕ ಅಯೋಧ್ಯೆ ತನಗೆ ಸುತ್ತಿಕೊಂಡಿದ್ದ ಸಕಲ ವಿವಾದದ ಸುತ್ತಗಳನ್ನೂ ಬಿಡಿಸಿಕೊಂಡು, ಸ್ವಾತಂತ್ರ್ಯ ಕಂಡ ನೆಲದಂತೆ ತೋರುತ್ತಿದೆ.

ಪ್ರಸ್ತುತ ಇಲ್ಲಿ ನಿರ್ಮಾಣಗೊಂಡಿರುವ ರಾಮಮಂದಿರ ಭಾರತದ ಭವ್ಯ ಪರಂಪರೆಯನ್ನು ಪ್ರತಿನಿಧಿಸುವಂಥ ಸೂಚಕ ಕೂಡ. ಇದು ಕೇವಲ ಆರಾಧನೆ, ಅರ್ಚನೆ, ಭಕ್ತಿಗಷ್ಟೇ ಸೀಮಿತಗೊಳ್ಳದೆ ಹಿಂದೂ ಧರ್ಮದ ಪುನರುತ್ಥಾನಕ್ಕೆ ಅಡಿಪಾಯ ಹಾಕಿಕೊಡುತ್ತಿರುವುದು ಆಶಾದಾಯಕ ಬೆಳವಣಿಗೆ. ಸ್ವಾತಂತ್ರ್ಯಪೂರ್ವ ಅಥವಾ ಸ್ವಾತಂತ್ರ್ಯೋತ್ತರ ರಾಜಕೀಯ ಬಣಗಳು ರಾಮನ ಬಗ್ಗೆ ಅಭಿಪ್ರಾಯಗಳನ್ನು ಹೊಂದುವ ಮೊದಲೇ ಭಾರತೀಯ ಸಮಾಜಕ್ಕೆ ರಾಮರಾಜ್ಯವಾಗುವ ತುಡಿತವಿತ್ತು. ಕ್ರಮೇಣ ರಾಮರಾಜ್ಯ ಪರಿಕಲ್ಪನೆ ನಾಯಕರ ಭಾಷಣಗಳಿಗೆ, ಚುನಾವಣಾ ವಿಚಾರಗಳಿಗಷ್ಟೇ ಸೀಮಿತವಾಯಿತೇ ಹೊರತು ಅದರ ಅನುಷ್ಠಾನಕ್ಕೆ ಪೂರಕ ವಾತಾವರಣ ನಿರ್ಮಾಣಗೊಳ್ಳಲೇ ಇಲ್ಲ.

ಮಂದಿರದ ಬೆನ್ನಲ್ಲೇ ಈ ಸಮಾಜ, ಇಲ್ಲಿನ ಸಂಸ್ಕೃತಿ ಪುನಃ ರಾಮರಾಜ್ಯದ ಕನಸನ್ನು ಕಾತರಿಸುತ್ತಿದೆ. ಗುಹನಿಂದ ಹಿಡಿದು ಹನುಮನವರೆಗೆ ಎಲ್ಲರನ್ನೂ ಒಳಗೊಂಡು ಸಾಗಿದ ರಾಮನ ಆದರ್ಶಗಳು ಪುನಃ ಮೌಲ್ಯರೂಪ ತಾಳುವ ಅವಶ್ಯಕತೆಯಂತೂ ಇದ್ದೇ ಇದೆ. ರಾಮಮಂದಿರ ನಿರ್ಮಾಣದೊಂದಿಗೆ ಸಾಮರಸ್ಯದ ಸಮಾಜದ ನಿರ್ಮಾಣವೂ ಆಗಲಿ ಎನ್ನುವುದು ಈ ಹೊತ್ತಿನ ಸದಾಶಯ.

ಪರೀಕ್ಷಾ ಕ್ರಮದ ಸುಧಾರಣೆಯಿಂದ ನೈಜ ಕಲಿಕೆ ಸಾಧ್ಯ

ಆಗಬೇಕಾಗಿದೆ ಶಿಕ್ಷಣದ 'ಪರೀಕ್ಷೆ'



ವಿಶ್ಲೇಷಣೆ

ಅನುರಾಗ್ ಬೆಹ್

ಭಾರತೀಯ ಶಿಕ್ಷಣ ವ್ಯವಸ್ಥೆಯನ್ನು ಬಾಧಿಸುತ್ತಿರುವ ಪ್ರಮುಖ ಸಮಸ್ಯೆಗಳಲ್ಲಿ ಪಬ್ಲಿಕ್ ಪರೀಕ್ಷೆ (ಬೋರ್ಡ್ ಎಕ್ಸಾಂ) ಸಹ ಒಂದು. ಶಾಲಾ ಶಿಕ್ಷಣಕ್ಕಾಗಿ ರಾಷ್ಟ್ರೀಯ ಪಠ್ಯಕ್ರಮ ಚೌಕಟ್ಟು- 2023 (ಎನ್‌ಸಿಎಫ್), ಅವುಗಳನ್ನು ಸ್ಪಷ್ಟವಾಗಿ ಗುರುತಿಸಿದೆ. ಸಮಸ್ಯೆಗಳಿಂದ ಪಲಾಯನ ಮಾಡುವುದರ ಬದಲಿಗೆ, ನೇರವಾಗಿ ಎದುರಿಸಲು ಬೇಕಾದ ಮಾರ್ಗೋಪಾಯಗಳನ್ನು ಒಳಗೊಂಡಿದೆ.

ಪಬ್ಲಿಕ್ ಪರೀಕ್ಷೆಯು ವಿದ್ಯಾರ್ಥಿಗಳು ಹಾಗೂ ಅವರ ಕುಟುಂಬದ ಸದಸ್ಯರಲ್ಲಿ ಉಂಟುಮಾಡುವ ಒತ್ತಡವೇ ಮೊದಲ ದೊಡ್ಡ ಸಮಸ್ಯೆ ಎನಿಸಿದೆ. ಇದರ ಹಿಂದೆ ಅನೇಕ ಕಾರಣಗಳಿವೆ. ಅವುಗಳೆಂದರೆ, ಪರೀಕ್ಷೆಯ ಅಂಕಗಳನ್ನು ಸಾಮಾಜಿಕವಾಗಿ 'ನಿಜವಾದ ಅರ್ಹತೆ' ಎಂದು ಪರಿಗಣಿಸಲಾಗುತ್ತದೆ ಮತ್ತು ಇದು ಬದುಕನ್ನೇ ಬದಲಾಯಿಸುವಂತಹ ಪರಿಣಾಮಗಳನ್ನು ಹೊಂದಿದೆ ಎಂದು ನಂಬಿಸಲಾಗಿದೆ. ಪಬ್ಲಿಕ್ ಪರೀಕ್ಷೆಯ ಫಲಿತಾಂಶವನ್ನು ಕಾಲೇಜು ಶಿಕ್ಷಣದ ಪ್ರವೇಶಕ್ಕೆ ಅಥವಾ ಕೆಲವೊಮ್ಮೆ ಉದ್ಯೋಗ ಪಡೆಯಲು ಪರಿಗಣಿಸಲಾಗುತ್ತದೆ. ಅಲ್ಲದೆ, ಪರೀಕ್ಷೆಯ ಆ ಒಂದು ದಿನ ತೋರಬಹುದಾದ ಕಳಪೆ ಸಾಧನೆಯು ಗಂಭೀರ ಪರಿಣಾಮಗಳನ್ನು ಉಂಟುಮಾಡುತ್ತದೆ. ಜೊತೆಗೆ, ಕೋಚಿಂಗ್ ಕೇಂದ್ರಗಳು ಮತ್ತು ಮನೆಪಾಠದ ಮೂಲಕ ಹಣ ಗಳಿಸುವುದಕ್ಕಾಗಿ ಕೃತಕ ಸ್ಪರ್ಧಾತ್ಮಕ ಒತ್ತಡವನ್ನು ಸೃಷ್ಟಿಸುವ ವಾಣಿಜ್ಯ ಹಿತಾಸಕ್ತಿಗಳು ಸಹ ಈ ಪಟ್ಟಿಯಲ್ಲಿ ಸೇರಿವೆ.

ಎರಡನೆಯದಾಗಿ, ಬಹುತೇಕ ಪಬ್ಲಿಕ್ ಪರೀಕ್ಷೆಗಳು ತಮ್ಮ ಪ್ರಾಥಮಿಕ ಉದ್ದೇಶವನ್ನು ಈಡೇರಿಸುವುದರಲ್ಲಿ ವಿಫಲವಾಗಿವೆ. ಶಾಲೆಯಲ್ಲಿ ಶೈಕ್ಷಣಿಕ ಸಾಧನೆ ತೋರುವ ಪ್ರಯತ್ನಕ್ಕೆ ಇವು ತಪ್ಪು ಮಾರ್ಗದರ್ಶನ ನೀಡುತ್ತವೆ. ಈ ಪರೀಕ್ಷೆಗಳು ಹತ್ತು ಮತ್ತು ಹನ್ನೆರಡನೇ ತರಗತಿಗಳ ಕೊನೆಯಲ್ಲಿ ವಿದ್ಯಾರ್ಥಿಗಳು ಗಳಿಸುವ ಸಾಮರ್ಥ್ಯವನ್ನು ದೃಢೀಕರಿಸಬೇಕಾಗಿತ್ತು. ಆದರೆ ಅದಕ್ಕೆ ಬದಲಾಗಿ ಇವು ವಿಷಯಗಳ ದೊಡ್ಡ ಹೊರೆಯನ್ನು ನೆನಪಿನಲ್ಲಿ ಇಟ್ಟುಕೊಳ್ಳುವ ಸಾಮರ್ಥ್ಯವನ್ನಷ್ಟೇ ಪರೀಕ್ಷೆಗೆ ಒಳಪಡಿಸುತ್ತವೆ. ಈ ಮೂಲಭೂತ ಅಸಮತೋಲನವು ವಿದ್ಯಾರ್ಥಿಯ ಕಲಿಕೆಯ ಬಗ್ಗೆ ಅಪೂರ್ಣವಾದ ಅಥವಾ ತಪ್ಪಾದ (ಅತ್ಯುತ್ತಮವಾಗಿದೆ ಅಥವಾ ಕೆಟ್ಟದಾಗಿದೆ ಎಂಬಂತಹ) ಚಿತ್ರಣವನ್ನು ನೀಡುತ್ತದೆ.

ಮೂರನೆಯದಾಗಿ, ಹೆಚ್ಚಿನ ಪರೀಕ್ಷಾ ಪರಿಕರಗಳು ಕಳಪೆ ವಿನ್ಯಾಸದಿಂದ ಕೂಡಿರುತ್ತವೆ. ಇದು, ಮೌಲ್ಯಮಾಪಕರು ಮತ್ತು ಒಟ್ಟಾರೆ ಅಸಮಂಜಸ ಸ್ಥಿತಿಯ ನಡುವೆ ಸ್ವೀಕಾರಾರ್ಹವಲ್ಲದ ಬದಲಾವಣೆಗಳಿಗೆ ಕಾರಣವಾಗುತ್ತದೆ. ಸಂಕ್ಷಿಪ್ತವಾಗಿ ಹೇಳುವುದಾದರೆ, ನಮ್ಮ ಅನೇಕ ಪಬ್ಲಿಕ್ ಪರೀಕ್ಷೆಗಳು ಸಿಂಧುತ್ವ ಮತ್ತು ವಿಶ್ವಾಸಾರ್ಹತೆಯ ಕೊರತೆಯನ್ನು ಎದುರಿಸುತ್ತಿವೆ. ತಪ್ಪಾಗಿ ನಿರ್ದೇಶಿಸಲಾದ ಪರೀಕ್ಷಾ ಪ್ರಕ್ರಿಯೆಯು ಬೋಧನೆ, ತರಗತಿ ಕೋಣೆ ಅಥವಾ ಶಾಲಾ ಅಭ್ಯಾಸಗಳಿಂದ ಹಿಡಿದು ಪಠ್ಯಪುಸ್ತಕಗಳ ತನಕ ಶಿಕ್ಷಣದ ಎಲ್ಲ ಅಂಶಗಳನ್ನೂ

ಗೌಣವಾಗಿಸುತ್ತದೆ. ಈ ಸಮಸ್ಯೆಗಳನ್ನು ಬಗೆಹರಿಸುವುದಕ್ಕಾಗಿ ಎನ್‌ಸಿಎಫ್, ಪಬ್ಲಿಕ್ ಪರೀಕ್ಷೆಯಲ್ಲಿ ಗಮನಾರ್ಹ ಬದಲಾವಣೆಗಳನ್ನು ಪ್ರತಿಪಾದಿಸುತ್ತದೆ. ಕಲಿಕಾ ಮಾನದಂಡ, ವಿಷಯವಸ್ತು, ಪಠ್ಯಪುಸ್ತಕಗಳು, ಬೋಧನಾ ವಿಧಾನದಂತಹ ಅನೇಕ ಅಂಶಗಳು ಇದರಲ್ಲಿ ಸೇರಿವೆ.

ವಿದ್ಯಾರ್ಥಿಗಳ ಮೇಲೆ ಪಬ್ಲಿಕ್ ಪರೀಕ್ಷೆಗಳು ಉಂಟು ಮಾಡುವ ಹೊರೆಯನ್ನು ವಿವಿಧ ಕ್ರಮಗಳ ಮೂಲಕ ತಗ್ಗಿಸಲಾಗುತ್ತದೆ. ಉದಾಹರಣೆಗೆ, ಪರೀಕ್ಷೆಗಳನ್ನು 'ಸುಲಭ ಮತ್ತು ಹಗುರ'ವಾಗಿಸುವುದು, ಅಂದರೆ ಪರೀಕ್ಷೆಗಳು ಕಠಿಣವಾಗಿ ಇರುವುದಿಲ್ಲ ಎಂದರ್ಥವಲ್ಲ. ಇದಕ್ಕೆ ಬದಲಾಗಿ, ವಿಷಯಗಳನ್ನು ನೆನಪಿನಲ್ಲಿ ಇಟ್ಟುಕೊಳ್ಳುವುದಕ್ಕೆ ಒತ್ತು ನೀಡುವುದರ ಬದಲಿಗೆ ವಿದ್ಯಾರ್ಥಿಗಳ ನೈಜ ಸಾಮರ್ಥ್ಯದ ಬಗ್ಗೆ ವಿಶೇಷ ಗಮನ ನೀಡಬೇಕಾಗುತ್ತದೆ. ಈ ದಿಸೆಯಲ್ಲಿ, ಪಠ್ಯವಸ್ತುಗಳಲ್ಲಿ ವಿಷಯದ ಹೊರೆಯನ್ನು ಗಣನೀಯವಾಗಿ ತಗ್ಗಿಸಲಾಗುತ್ತದೆ. ಪಬ್ಲಿಕ್ ಪರೀಕ್ಷೆಗಳನ್ನು ವರ್ಷಕ್ಕೆ ಕನಿಷ್ಠ ಎರಡು ಬಾರಿ ನಡೆಸುವ ಮೂಲಕ ಅವರು ಎರಡನೇ ಬಾರಿಗೆ ಪರೀಕ್ಷೆ ಬರೆಯಲು, ಸುಧಾರಣೆ ತಂದುಕೊಳ್ಳಲು ಅವಕಾಶ ಮಾಡಿಕೊಡಲಾಗುತ್ತದೆ. ಹೀಗೆ ಗಳಿಸಿದ್ದರಲ್ಲಿ ಅತ್ಯುತ್ತಮ ಎನಿಸಿದ ಅಂಕಗಳನ್ನಷ್ಟೇ ಅಂಕಪಟ್ಟಿಯಲ್ಲಿ ದಾಖಲಿಸಲಾಗುತ್ತದೆ.

ಕಾಲ ಕಳೆದಂತೆ ನಾವು 'ಬೇಡಿಕೆಯ ಮೇರೆಗೆ' ಪರೀಕ್ಷೆಗಳನ್ನು ನಡೆಸುವ ವ್ಯವಸ್ಥೆಯತ್ತ ಸಾಗಲಿದ್ದೇವೆ. ಅಂದರೆ, ವಿದ್ಯಾರ್ಥಿಗಳು ಸಿದ್ಧರಾಗಿರುವಾಗ ಪರೀಕ್ಷೆಯನ್ನು ನಡೆಸುವುದು. ಈ ಕ್ರಮವು ಗಣನೀಯ ಪ್ರಮಾಣದಲ್ಲಿ ಒತ್ತಡವನ್ನು ತಗ್ಗಿಸಲಿದೆ. ಏಕೆಂದರೆ, ಒಂದು ನಿರ್ದಿಷ್ಟ ದಿನದಲ್ಲಿ ತೋರುವ ಸಾಧನೆಯನ್ನಷ್ಟೇ ಪರಿಗಣಿಸಿ ವಿದ್ಯಾರ್ಥಿಯನ್ನು ದಂಡನೆಗೆ ಒಳಪಡಿಸುವುದಿಲ್ಲ ಮಾತ್ರವಲ್ಲದೆ ನೈಜ ಕಲಿಕೆಯ ಸಂಭವನೀಯ ತಪ್ಪು ಮೌಲ್ಯಮಾಪನದಿಂದ ಅವರ ಕಲಿಕೆಯ ಮಟ್ಟವನ್ನು ನಿರ್ಣಯಿಸುವುದಿಲ್ಲ.

ಪಠ್ಯಕ್ರಮದಲ್ಲಿ ಹೇಳಿದಂತೆ, ಪಬ್ಲಿಕ್ ಪರೀಕ್ಷೆಗಳು ಪ್ರೌಢ ಹಂತದಲ್ಲಿ ಇರಬೇಕಾದ ಸಾಮರ್ಥ್ಯಗಳ ಸಾಧನೆಯ ಮೌಲ್ಯಮಾಪನ ನಡೆಸುತ್ತವೆ. ಈ ಮೂಲಕ, ಅಂತಹ ಸಾಧನೆಗಳ ಸಮಂಜಸ ಮತ್ತು ವಿಶ್ವಾಸಾರ್ಹ ಚಿತ್ರಣವನ್ನು ನೀಡುತ್ತವೆ. ಇದು ಸಾಧ್ಯವಾಗಬೇಕೆಂದಾದರೆ, ಪರೀಕ್ಷೆಗೆ ಸಂಬಂಧಿಸಿದ ಎಲ್ಲ ಅಂಶಗಳನ್ನೂ ಗಮನದಲ್ಲಿಟ್ಟು ಕೆಲಸ ಮಾಡಬೇಕಾಗುತ್ತದೆ. ಈ ದಿಸೆಯಲ್ಲಿ, ಪರೀಕ್ಷೆಯನ್ನು ಆಯೋಜಿಸುವವರು ಮತ್ತು ಮೌಲ್ಯಮಾಪಕರ ಸಮಂಜಸ ಆಯ್ಕೆ ಹಾಗೂ ಅವರಿಗೆ ಸೂಕ್ತ ತರಬೇತಿ, ಪರೀಕ್ಷಾ ಸಿದ್ಧತೆಯ ಪ್ರಕ್ರಿಯೆಯಲ್ಲಿ ಸುಧಾರಣೆ, ಮರುರೂಪಿಸಿದ ಪರೀಕ್ಷೆಗಳ ಪರಿಣಾಮಕಾರಿತ್ವ, ಸಿಂಧುತ್ವ ಮತ್ತು ವಿಶ್ವಾಸಾರ್ಹತೆಯ ನಿಯಮಿತ ಪರಿಶೀಲನೆ ಮುಖ್ಯ ಪಾತ್ರ



ವಹಿಸುತ್ತವೆ.

ಉನ್ನತ ಶಿಕ್ಷಣದ ಪ್ರವೇಶಾತಿ ವಿಧಾನಗಳು ಎನ್‌ಸಿಎಫ್‌ನ ವ್ಯಾಪ್ತಿಗೆ ಬರುವುದಿಲ್ಲ. ಆದರೆ, ಅದಕ್ಕೆ ಸಂಬಂಧಿಸಿದ ವಿಷಯಗಳನ್ನು ಇದು ಸ್ಪಷ್ಟವಾಗಿ ನಿರೂಪಿಸುತ್ತದೆ. ಸಾಮರ್ಥ್ಯಕ್ಕೆ ಸಂಬಂಧಿಸಿದಂತೆ ಹೇಳುವುದಾದರೆ, ಭಾರತದಲ್ಲಿ ಅಧಿಕ ಗುಣಮಟ್ಟದ ಉನ್ನತ ಶಿಕ್ಷಣ ಸಂಸ್ಥೆಗಳ (ಎಚ್‌ಇಐ) ಕೊರತೆ ಇದ್ದು, ಇವುಗಳ ಪ್ರವೇಶಾತಿಯನ್ನು 'ಹೊರಹಾಕುವ' ಆಯ್ಕೆ ಪ್ರಕ್ರಿಯೆಯ ಮೂಲಕ ನಡೆಸಲಾಗುತ್ತದೆ. ಲಕ್ಷಾಂತರ ವಿದ್ಯಾರ್ಥಿಗಳು ಈ ಸಂಸ್ಥೆಗಳಲ್ಲಿನ ಕೆಲವೇ ಸಂಖ್ಯೆಯ ಸೀಟುಗಳ ಹಿಂದೆ ಬಿದ್ದಾಗ, ಸಹಜವಾಗಿಯೇ ಸ್ಪರ್ಧೆಯು ಪ್ರಬಲವಾಗಿರುತ್ತದೆ. ಪಬ್ಲಿಕ್ ಪರೀಕ್ಷೆಗಳಲ್ಲಿ ಎಲ್ಲ ವಿದ್ಯಾರ್ಥಿಗಳು ಇತರ ವಿದ್ಯಾರ್ಥಿಗಳಂತೆಯೇ ಸಾಧನೆ ಮಾಡಬಹುದು. ಏಕೆಂದರೆ, ಇವು ಕಲಿಕೆಯ ಮೌಲ್ಯಮಾಪನಗಳಾಗಿರುತ್ತವೆ. ಆದರೆ ಉನ್ನತ ಶಿಕ್ಷಣದ ಪ್ರವೇಶಕ್ಕೆ ಸಂಬಂಧಿಸಿದಂತೆ, ಸಾಮರ್ಥ್ಯದಲ್ಲಿ ಮಿತಿ ಇರುವುದರಿಂದ ಅನೇಕ ವಿದ್ಯಾರ್ಥಿಗಳು ಸೋಲೊಪ್ಪಿಕೊಳ್ಳುತ್ತಾರೆ.

ಈ ಬಿಕ್ಕಟ್ಟಿಗೆ ಪರಿಹಾರವು ಶಾಲಾ ವ್ಯವಸ್ಥೆಯ ಒಳಗಿಲ್ಲ. ಪಬ್ಲಿಕ್ ಪರೀಕ್ಷೆಗಳಿಗಿಂತಲೂ ಹೆಚ್ಚಾಗಿ ಪ್ರಸಕ್ತ ಪರಿಸ್ಥಿತಿಯು ಶಾಲಾ ವಿದ್ಯಾರ್ಥಿಗಳ ನಡುವೆ ಅನೇಕ ಗಂಭೀರ ಸಮಸ್ಯೆಗಳನ್ನು ಹುಟ್ಟುಹಾಕಿದೆ. ಇದರಲ್ಲಿ ಅಧಿಕ ಒತ್ತಡ ಮತ್ತು ಗಂಭೀರ ಮಾನಸಿಕ ಆರೋಗ್ಯ ಸಮಸ್ಯೆಗಳು (ವಿದ್ಯಾರ್ಥಿಗಳು ಮಾತ್ರವಲ್ಲದೆ ಅವರ ಕುಟುಂಬದ ಸದಸ್ಯರನ್ನೂ ಬಾಧಿಸುತ್ತವೆ), ವಾಣಿಜ್ಯ ರೂಪದ ಕೋಚಿಂಗ್ ಮತ್ತು ಟ್ಯೂಷನ್, ನೈಜ ಕಲಿಕೆಗೆ ಒತ್ತು ನೀಡದೆ ಕಾಲೇಜಿನಲ್ಲಿ ಸೀಟು ಪಡೆಯುವುದಕ್ಕಾಗಿ ಪ್ರವೇಶ ಪರೀಕ್ಷೆಗಳಲ್ಲಿ ಉತ್ತೀರ್ಣರಾಗುವಂತಹ ಕಾರಣಗಳು ಶಾಲಾ ಶಿಕ್ಷಣದ ಮೂಲ ಉದ್ದೇಶವನ್ನೇ ದುರ್ಬಲಗೊಳಿಸುತ್ತಿವೆ.

ಇಂತಹ ಸವಾಲುಗಳನ್ನು ಎದುರಿಸುವುದಕ್ಕಾಗಿ ರಾಷ್ಟ್ರೀಯ ಶಿಕ್ಷಣ ನೀತಿ- 2020 (ಎನ್‌ಇಪಿ), ಅನೇಕ ಕ್ರಮಗಳಿಗೆ ಮುಂದಾಗಿದೆ. ಇದರಲ್ಲಿ, ಈಗಾಗಲೇ ಜಾರಿಗೊಳಿಸಲಾದ ಸಾಮಾನ್ಯ ವಿಶ್ವವಿದ್ಯಾಲಯ ಪ್ರವೇಶ ಪರೀಕ್ಷೆಯಂತಹ ಕ್ರಮಗಳು ಒಳಗೊಂಡಿವೆ. ಆದರೆ ಈ ಬಿಕ್ಕಟ್ಟಿನ ಮೂಲ ಪರಿಹಾರವು ನಾವು ಹೊಂದಿರುವ ಅಧಿಕ ಗುಣಮಟ್ಟದ ಉನ್ನತ ಶಿಕ್ಷಣ ಸಂಸ್ಥೆಗಳ ಸಂಖ್ಯೆಯನ್ನು ಗಣನೀಯ ಪ್ರಮಾಣದಲ್ಲಿ ಹೆಚ್ಚಿಸುವುದರಲ್ಲಿ ಇದೆ. ಈ ದಿಸೆಯಲ್ಲಿ ಎನ್‌ಇಪಿಯು ಸ್ಪಷ್ಟವಾದ ದಾರಿಯನ್ನು ರೂಪಿಸಿದೆ. ಆದರೆ ಈ ಕನಸನ್ನು ನನಸಾಗಿಸಲು ಅಗತ್ಯವಿರುವ ಸುಸ್ಥಿರ ಕ್ರಮಗಳ ಪಟ್ಟಿಯನ್ನು ಗಮನಿಸಿದರೆ, ಇದೊಂದು ದೀರ್ಘ ಹೋರಾಟವಾಗಿದೆ ಎಂಬುದರಲ್ಲಿ ಎರಡು ಮಾತಿಲ್ಲ.

ಈ ಲೇಖನವು ಪಬ್ಲಿಕ್ ಪರೀಕ್ಷೆಗಳ ಮೇಲಷ್ಟೇ ಗಮನಹರಿಸಿದೆ. ವಿವಿಧ ತರಗತಿಗಳಿಗೆ ಪರೀಕ್ಷೆ ನಡೆಸುವುದಕ್ಕೆ ಸಮಗ್ರ ಚೌಕಟ್ಟು ಹಾಗೂ ವಿಸ್ತೃತ ಮಾರ್ಗಸೂಚಿಗಳನ್ನು ಎನ್‌ಸಿಎಫ್ ಹೊಂದಿದೆ. ನೈಜ ಕಲಿಕೆಯನ್ನು ಸಾಧ್ಯವಾಗಿಸುವುದಕ್ಕಾಗಿ ಮತ್ತು ಅದರ ಪ್ರಾಮಾಣಿಕ ಮೌಲ್ಯಮಾಪನಕ್ಕಾಗಿ ಇವುಗಳನ್ನು ನಾವು ಬದಲಾಯಿಸಬೇಕು ಹಾಗೂ ಸುಧಾರಣೆ ತರಬೇಕು.

ಭಾರತೀಯ ಶಿಕ್ಷಣದ ಕುರಿತು ಇರುವ ಹಳೆಯ ಚತುರೋಕ್ತಿಯ ಬಗ್ಗೆ ಎನ್‌ಸಿಎಫ್‌ಗೆ ಚೆನ್ನಾಗಿ ಅರಿವಿದೆ. ಅದೇನೆಂದರೆ: ನಮ್ಮಲ್ಲಿ ಪರೀಕ್ಷಾ ವ್ಯವಸ್ಥೆ ಇದೆಯೇ ವಿನಾ ಶಿಕ್ಷಣ ವ್ಯವಸ್ಥೆಯಲ್ಲ.

ಲೇಖಕ: ನಿಇಜಿ, ಅಜೇಂ ಪ್ರಮೋತ್ ಘೋಷ್



A backsliding

Curbs on financing of civil society bodies denote eroding civil liberties

Less than a year after suspending the Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act (FCRA) licence of the Centre for Policy Research (CPR), the Government of India has cancelled its FCRA licence. The justification for this move – CPR's publications have been equated with current affairs programming, prohibited for an entity using FCRA funds – is nothing if not farcical. As a premier think tank, the CPR has been around for more than half a century, during which it has been an exemplar of public-spirited scholarship feeding into an ecosystem of governance and policy-making where multiple stakeholders and their often divergent interests need consensus-building through informed debates – the hallmark of a democracy. A decision to effectively shut down such an institution by crippling its finances is bound to send the message that India is no longer open to the free flow of knowledge and ideas. The move also fits into a broader, and sadly, by now all-too-familiar, pattern of the state wielding the FCRA as a weapon to silence entities whose work is not to its liking – typically those working on environmental issues, civil liberties and human rights. The use of the FCRA to target civil society for political or ideological reasons is perhaps written into its DNA. The legislation is the child of the Emergency, enacted by a regime paranoid about foreign governments interfering in India's internal affairs by channelling funds through NGOs. Since then, it has been amended by successive governments, with the provisions becoming more stringent.

When the latest round of amendments was passed in 2020, the International Commission of Jurists denounced it as "incompatible with international law" and warned that it would "impose ... extraordinary obstacles on the capacity of ... civil society actors to carry out their important work". It appears as though the government has been working hard to prove the ICJ right. Even before dust could settle on the FCRA cancellation of CPR, World Vision India, which works with children, has had its FCRA cancelled. On the one hand, India seeks recognition as a 'Vishwaguru'. Its calling card as the G-20 host was 'Mother of Democracy'. The government is hypersensitive to rankings on international indices, yet unwilling to acknowledge the link between perception and reality. When the U.S.-based non-profit, Freedom House, in its Democracy Index, downgraded India to an "electoral autocracy", a reason it cited was erosion of civil liberties. Shutting off the finances of civil society organisations on flimsy grounds is a textbook example of civil liberties erosion, guaranteed to amplify the narrative of democratic backsliding. It would then be pointless to complain about bias or invoke "conspiracies" to tarnish India's image when these actions get reflected in India's downgrading in global indices of freedom and democracy.

Mixed tidings from education report

The Annual Status of Education Report (ASER) for 2023, prepared by educational NGO Pratham, has brought mixed fare about children's schooling and learning outcomes in rural India. The report, titled 'Beyond Basics', carried out in 28 rural districts in 26 states, was focused on children in the 14-18 age group, and it brings the good news that "more children in India have more years of schooling than ever before." That shows that the disruptions and the economic distress caused by the Covid pandemic did not stop children from attending school. About 86.8% of the children in rural areas are enrolled in schools and this is a major achievement. The trend of increasing enrolment needs to be maintained and the goal should be 100% enrolment. The report also shows that 95% of the surveyed households had smart phones and most could use them, with men having a slight edge over women. This could be turned into a good educational tool. The National Education Policy (NEP) has envisaged the use of digital technologies to promote education at all levels.

But the report also presents the negative side of school education in terms of its quality and learning outcomes. It shows that most children do not have the basic skills expected their age group.

Children in the 14-18 age group were unable to match the abilities expected of students of Classes II or III. About 25% of the children could not fluently read any text in their language. Over half of them failed to do simple division exercises and more than 42% could not read simple sentences in English. The report also found that many of the children, especially girls, have to work in the family and on farms.

This puts pressure on the children and certainly affects their attendance in schools.

The report suggests that there should be reforms in the contents and processes to lighten the pressure on such students. It is important to focus on technical and vocational education from the school level onwards so that children are equipped with skills that are needed in a growing economy. There were only 6% students among those surveyed doing any vocational course. Young persons who leave schools and colleges without basic knowledge and skills will not only be unemployed but also unemployable. A large mass of such young persons will turn the expected demographic dividend into a demographic burden. The availability of a skilled and trained work force was an important factor in China's economic success. All reports about the state of our education have underlined this factor and this should get the highest priority.

More children are going to school but learning outcomes need to be better



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