

Freedom is in Peril. Defend it with all your might. Jawaharlal Nehru

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NATIONAL ENGLISH WEEKLY NEWSPAPER

NATION

STATES 360°

After the setback of the Lok Sabha poll, the RSS is not taking any chances in Maharashtra

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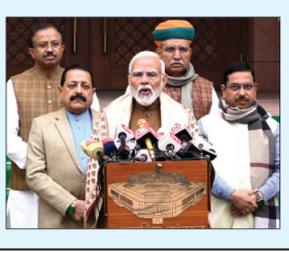


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BUDGET 2024

What the middle class does not get about Modinomics

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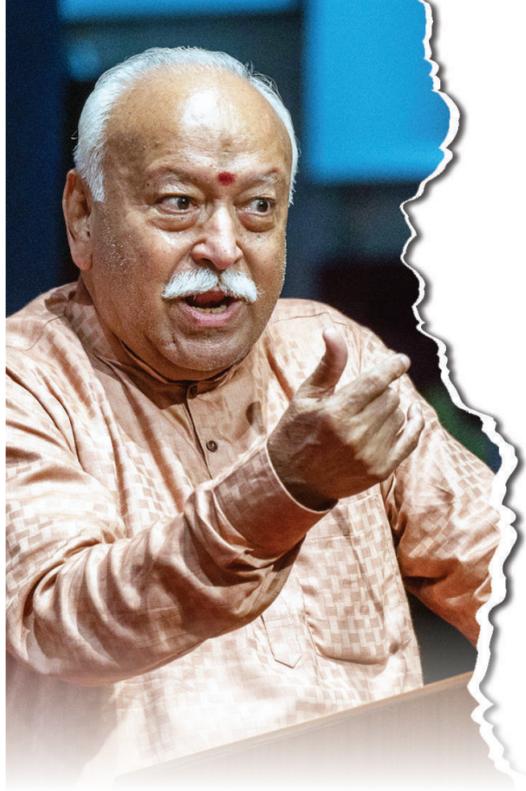


CITYSCAPE

ALT / URBAN

Bombay's ageing buildings need caring renovation not 'redevelopment'

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PARIVAR WARS

The Sangh seems to have had enough of Modi's BJP and is preparing for a regime change with the patience of a chess player. But the prodigal son has a few moves left in this endgame



Sharad Gupta

On a flight from Lucknow to Delhi after polling was over for the last phase of the 2014 Lok Sabha polls, I found an interesting co-passenger in Indresh Kumar, a senior RSS leader. I asked him what were his expectations from the government if the BJP led by Narendra Modi were to win the elections. Pat came the answer: "Get a closure report in all cases being termed Hindu terror cases." Indresh himself was an accused in the Ajmer blast case along with Swami Aseemanand and Sunil Joshi, an RSS pracharak from Madhya Pradesh. Modi did oblige his RSS brethren.

Ten years later, I was surprised to read Indresh Kumar's statement on Modi: "Lord Ram has punished the BJP for its arrogance by limiting its tally to 240 (32 short of the majority)." The two instances sum up the change the relationship between the BJP and its mother organisation the RSS has undergone this past decade. The RSS, which worked tirelessly to bring the BJP to power, is now blaming it for all that is wrong with politics.

It's now a no-holds-barred battle between the two, though still not out in the open. Instead, the battle is being fought through proxies and symbols. The BJP feels like a tiger cub that has come of age and no longer needs the help of its mother. The RSS feels it has invested too much in the BJP to let go of its grip, and has the cub between its teeth.

A symbiotic relationship that soured

RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat played an active role in Modi's ascension, first as the BJP's campaign committee chief and then as prime ministerial candidate in 2013-14. But Modi has never had a one-on-one meeting with Bhagwat in the last 10 years. The latter's request for such a meeting on the sidelines of the Ram Mandir inauguration in Ayodhya was spurned by Modi.

The very same symbiotic relationship between the two organisations that helped them grow with abandon has now become a vexed (and vexing) problem to be sorted out between them. According to a BJP leader close to the top leadership, "It's a do-or-die battle for the two leaders. There is no middle ground left."

The feel-bad factors

Everyone knows that the RSS never wanted a Modi-centric campaign. It wanted a campaign focused on the government's achievements and future plans. Yet, BJP leaders went ahead with its 'Modi's Guarantee' campaign. This was why the RSS pulled back slightly after the first phase of polling. However, it did not voice its concern immediately, preferring rather to wait for the elections. Sensing the RSS's mood, BJP president J.P. Nadda made the issue public, with the statement, "Initially, the BJP was not strong enough, that's why we leaned on the RSS. But now the BJP has outgrown the RSS and no longer needs its help in running the organisation or contesting elections."

Post-elections, the RSS has been paying back the BJP in the same coin. When Bhagwat said, "a true RSS worker is never arrogant", everyone knew it was targeted at Modi. RSS think tank member Ratan Sharda's article in the Sangh mouthpiece *Organiser* attacked Modi for keeping the campaign centred around him. The BJP lost because of over-confidence (in Modi).

Bhagwat's salvo

In his address to RSS workers in Jharkhand's Dumka in early July, Bhagwat unsheathed his claws: "There is no end to development, be it internal or external. There are men who haven't even learnt how to be human, who

want to become Superman. But they don't stop there, they want to become demigods. But then, God is greater, so they want to be God himself. And then God says, I'm all-encompassing (Vishwaroop)."

For those with short memories, PM Modi had said in the run-up to the recently concluded elections, "As long as my mother was alive, I had believed that perhaps my birth was a biological one... But after her death, I'm convinced that God has sent me here."

If anybody had any doubts as to the target of Bhagwat's salvo, Congress leader Jairam Ramesh removed all ambiguity: "I am sure the self-proclaimed non-biological prime minister would by now have come to know of the latest Agni missile fired by Nagpur (RSS headquarters) at Lok Kalyan Marg (the PM's residence)."

Vertical split possible?

The RSS has regularly been drafting its cadre to its ancillaries, including the BJP. Each minister, MP and MLA essentially has one RSS member on his/her staff. The RSS has been managing the BJP's organisation through its secretaries: Suresh Soni (during Atal Bihari Vajpayee's time), Ram Lal, Krishna Gopal and Arun Kumar (during Modi's era). The same system is in place all across, from state to district headquarters, making workers of the two organisations mix like sugar in water. So, can the RSS pull out all its cadre from the BJP, abruptly or even gradually?

Even if the RSS issues a clarion call for its men to pull out of the BJP, a large number of its cadre might prefer to stay back in the political powerhouse

Obviously not. Even if it issues such a clarion call, a large number of its cadre might prefer to stay back in the political outfit.

RSS leaders like Arun Kumar and Suresh Soni are known to be sympathetic towards Modi. Soni has been advising Modi on major political decisions taken by the Centre over the last 10 years. He is the architect of the BJP's pro-OBC stance in the selection of candidates and appointments to key positions in the government.

Diminishing returns

Irrespective of the fracas, a number of state units of both organisations have been collaborating with each other. The Jharkhand RSS unit has promised the BJP to support its campaign for Assembly elections.

Assuming that it can't control its entire cadre and an open fight with the BJP might vertically split the 99-year-old organisation, the RSS leadership is gradually chipping away at BJP leadership, with the aim of discrediting it as arrogant and insincere.

The BJP has realised this is a case of diminishing returns. Its tally in the Lok Sabha has come down from 302 to 240. In the Uttar Pradesh,

MP, Chhattisgarh and Rajasthan Assembly elections, it managed to win with far narrower margins than before. The party lost Karnataka and Telangana. In the next few months, it faces Assembly elections in Maharashtra, Haryana, Jharkhand and Jammu & Kashmir. It is not comfortably placed in any of these states.

Bid to placate RSS

And that explains why the BJP is trying to placate the RSS. Earlier this month, the Centre quietly revoked a 58-year-old government order prohibiting government employees from participating in RSS shakhas on the grounds of it not being a banned organisation, rather an apolitical one. An argument that is as flimsy as it sounds.

The timing of the decision raised several questions. It could have been revoked any time during the last 10 years. The announcement could even have been made to commemorate its centenary celebrations next year. Why now, when relations between the two are strained to breaking point? There can be only one reason: to pour oil on troubled waters.

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To lose people's trust is to lose the war on terror

Rashme Sehgal

Terrorists cannot operate without local support. Since 2019, the Jammu division has seen a sharp acceleration in terrorist activity. The attack in January 2023 when militants killed seven civilians in Dangri village and the more recent assault on a pilgrim bus in Reasi in June 2024 are just two instances of the Pakistani deep state seizing the opportunity opened up by the reduction of troops, both army and paramilitary, from the Jammu division.

In order to neutralise terror networks, the inhabitants of this mountainous and densely forested terrain are invariably the first line of defence. It was therefore imperative for the Modi government to ensure that the Muslim populace in Jammu & Kashmir were not alienated from mainland India.

The Modi government seems hellbent on doing the exact opposite. Even as the citizens of J&K reluc-

tantly accepted the abrogation of Article 370, the Centre set about a mammoth delimitation exercise undertaken to favour the BJP's core constituency of Jammu by bringing together two ethnically disparate cultural units of Rajouri and Shopian, Kulgam and Anantnag under one unit.

This was followed by granting Scheduled Tribe status in early 2024 to the Pahadi Muslims. By doing so, they alienated the Gujjar community who have served as the eyes and ears of the security forces since 1947. The devaluation of J&K statehood and the failure to hold assembly elections deepened this schism.

There have been 30 attacks on security forces since May 2021. Many could have been averted by timely tip-offs. Take the incident on 8 July 2024, when terrorists threw grenades and opened fire on the convoy of a Garhwal Rifles' unit on patrol in the Kathua district. The ambush left five jawans dead and another five critically injured.

Investigations reveal that



Houses burn in the wake of gunfights between militants and security forces in Kashmir's Pulwama

Pakistani terrorists attacked this unit with the support of local overground workers (OGWs). An even more daring attack took place on 9 June, the day Prime Minister Modi was sworn in for the third time. Nine people lost their lives, includ-

ing the driver and conductor of the bus, and 33 people were injured. The J&K police arrested one Hakam Din, a resident of Rajouri district, for reportedly guiding the militants to the attack site. The police believe that Hakam Din had provided shel-

ter to militants on several occasions in the past.

Dr Ajai Sahni, executive director of the Institute for Conflict Management, pointed out, "When a group of terrorists carrying guns enter a home in a thinly populated region, few people are in a position to refuse. What is shocking is the government's decision to dismantle the village defence committees (VDCs) who were trained in self-defence and, being armed, could take on these militants. Many of these VDCs were located in remote areas where the army's reach was limited. Equally disturbing has been the government decision to stop the recruitment of Special Police Officers who were a very important source of information for the security forces."

Sahni finds this decision shocking because statistics indicate that the Jammu division has never been free of terrorism. The South Asian Terrorism Portal has recorded 8,567 persons killed by terrorist violence in the Jammu division, while 12,821 have been killed in the valley.

A senior retired police officer from J&K believes there are, at present, around 300-350 OWGs providing logistical support to militants. They don't carry weapons, but they provide detailed information, making it difficult for security forces to locate hideouts.

According to media sources,

security forces killed around 70 militants in 2023 and arrested over 200 OWGs. As per an intelligence input, 35-40 foreign terrorists, suspected to be former members of the Pakistan Army's Special Services Group, are active in areas south of the Pir Panjal range in Jammu sector. Another intelligence input claims there are presently around 120 foreign terrorists operating across J&K—over half of whom are active in areas north of Pir Panjal.

R.R. Swain, director general of police, J&K, believes the figure is lower and that at present there are between 70 to 80 terrorists operating in J&K. A.S. Dulat, former chief of RAW, finds this "a lot". As he points out, "Even in the early phases of militancy during the 1990s, there were around 200 militants known to be operating in the state."

So emboldened are the militants, that after Modi's address on Kargil Vijay Diwas (marking the 25th anniversary of the Kargil conflict in Drass) the Jammu division saw a terror attack a day.

Dulat ascribes this increase to the support of the local people. There was a time when Gujjars were completely anti-Pakistan and pro-India. "It is well known that the Gujjars are not happy about Pahadis having been given ST status," he said.

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STATES 360° MAHARASHTRA

RSS now in the playing-XI

Navin Kumar

The compulsion to win in Maharashtra is so high that the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) has come forward to run the BJP's campaign in the impending election expected to be held in October. Rumours to this effect were confirmed when representatives of the RSS participated in BJP core committee meetings in both Mumbai and Pune, which were preceded by clandestine meetings at RSS headquarters in Nagpur between RSS leaders and deputy chief minister Devendra Fadnavis.

A senior BJP leader conceded that the RSS appreciates the importance and urgency of a BJP government in the state. Maharashtra is too large to lose, and with Mumbai being the financial capital of the country, holding power in the state is crucial. In the recently concluded Lok Sabha election, although BJP won just nine of the 48 seats, the BJP-led Mahayuti coalition established a lead in 130 assembly constituencies as opposed to the MVA or INDIA bloc's lead in 150 of the 288 assembly segments. With the halfway mark in the state assembly being 145, it could be anybody's election, he pointed out. Clearly, the RSS and the BJP would pull out all the stops to bridge the gap.

It seems there is no unanimity yet on how to run the campaign. According to BJP sources, the RSS believes that conditions are not favourable for the party. It has apparently advised the BJP against contesting the election on Modi's guarantees or the prime minister's image which has taken a beating in Maharashtra. It is not clear, however, if the state BJP can persuade the party leadership in Delhi to accept this. In the midst of such speculation, Devendra Fadnavis and his wife had a much-photographed meeting with the prime minister in New Delhi, fuelling speculation that Fadnavis is a frontrunner for the post of BJP's next national president. J.P. Nadda's term ended on 30 June and he has since been inducted into the union ministry.

The same sources aver that the RSS would also like the ruling coalition to dump Ajit Pawar and his NCP, at whose door they lay the blame for the Lok Sabha debacle in Maharashtra. Having hitherto accused him of corruption, the credibility of both party and prime minister has been dented by inducting Ajit Pawar as deputy chief minister and finance minister. The Sangh feels that was a big mistake. If the coalition cannot dump him after his



An RSS march snakes through the streets of Pune, Maharashtra

Photo: Getty Images

miserable performance in the Lok Sabha election, the very least the RSS wants from Ajit is public avowal and support of Hindutva. The Sangh finds Ajit Pawar's indifference to Hindutva suspicious, and believes it makes him likely to jump ship at any time.

The confusion in BJP ranks regarding seat-sharing is palpable. Some BJP leaders like Chandrakant Patil have been braving it out by saying that the party would, if necessary, contest the assembly election alone and put up candidates in all 288 constituencies. The same leaders on other occasions say that whatever be the seat-sharing, BJP would contest the election as part of the Mahayuti coalition. The Shiv Sena (Shinde), a key member of the coalition, has indeed emerged stronger after the general election, having won seven Lok Sabha seats compared to the BJP's nine. It is now flexing its muscles and staking its claim to contest in as many as 130 of the 288 constituencies. It has also gone ahead and appointed its own people in the posts of constituency-in-charge.

The RSS also wants the BJP to draw lessons from the electoral reverses in the Lok Sabha and pay more attention to social engineering. It has offered to work in those constituencies where the BJP is weak.

The RSS has reportedly advised the BJP against contesting the election on Modi's guarantees or his image, which has taken a beating in Maharashtra

With Marathas, Dalits and Muslims lining up against the party, its advice is to consolidate its support base among the OBCs in the hope of replicating Shivraj Singh Chouhan's electoral success in Madhya Pradesh last year. Even the name ('Laadli Behna scheme') was retained. Doubts were immediately voiced about the ability of the state government to sustain these cash transfers over a long period. The Maharashtra government's public debt is Rs 7.11 lakh crore, on which it has to pay an annual interest of Rs 48,578 crore.

Publicity unlocks the coffers

The BJP-Shiv Sena-NCP (Ajit Pawar) government is going all out to woo the people. The state budget presented last month contained a large number of freebies and a surfeit of 'revidis'. A slew of direct cash transfer schemes to women were announced in the hope of replicating Shivraj Singh Chouhan's electoral success in Madhya Pradesh last year. Even the name ('Laadli Behna scheme') was retained. Doubts were immediately voiced about the ability of the state government to sustain these cash transfers over a long period. The Maharashtra government's public debt is Rs 7.11 lakh crore, on which it has to pay an annual interest of Rs 48,578 crore.

It was pointed out that the infrastructure in the state is in shambles. Roads are riddled with more potholes than ever, and there seems to be no money to repair them. Students in government schools are yet to get the books and uniforms they were promised. Can the

state government really sustain the schemes, or are they simply desperate electoral jumbos designed to win the assembly election? Finance Minister Ajit Pawar was quick to allay such doubts, claiming that funds were indeed available and that provisions had been made in the budget. He reassured doubters that money would start flowing from August onwards.

A government notification has hit him out. The state government has allotted as much as Rs 270 crore to publicise the populist schemes. The catch is that this amount will be spent in the next two months before the election. Outdoor advertisers, media, consultants and agencies are looking forward to the Diwali bonanza coming their way—provided of course that the bills are paid in time.

Mystery of the Laapata Ladies

Even as the state government is tripping over itself in an attempt to help *Laadli Behnas* (darling sisters) with monthly cash doles, a PIL (public interest litigation) filed before the Bombay High Court has caused considerable embarrassment. Ex-serviceman from Sangli and state government employee Shahji Jagtap has appealed for the investigation into the disappearance of over one lakh women in Maharashtra since 2019 (35,990 in 2019, 30,089 in 2020 and 34,763 in 2021). Jagtap's own daughter, a college student, went missing in 2021. He filed a complaint at Sanjay Nagar police station, with no luck. Three years later, he managed to reach the court with the help of lawyer Manjari Parsanis. Jagtap says the police insisted his daughter never had a lover.

Ambadas Danve, head of the opposition in the Legislative Council, had claimed in a letter to the home minister and deputy chief minister Devendra Fadnavis that 70 women and teenage girls were being reported missing *every day*. The state women's commission had taken up the issue two years ago, believing these women to be victims of human trafficking. The minister for women and child development Mangal Prasad Lodha had admitted to 500 disappearances and announced the formation of special squads to help trace them. With 1.91 lakh women and minors reported missing in Maharashtra (as per the National Crime Records Bureau), the state machinery has not only failed distraught parents like Jagtap, it has let down its darling daughters, sisters and mothers, big time. ■

Parivar Wars



power. What benefits it has reaped are yet to be calculated.

The UP thorn in their side

The leadership issue in Uttar Pradesh is another thorny issue. The RSS, after a thumping victory in the 2017 UP Assembly polls had forced the Modi-Shah duo to choose Yogi Adityanath as chief minister over Modi's choice (Manoj Sinha). The Sangh needed another Hindutva mascot besides Modi. But as Yogi's popularity grew across the country, so did the schism between the two organisations.

The Modi-Shah team has left no stone unturned during the past seven years to make Yogi's road as difficult as they could. This included encouraging the two deputy CMs, Keshav Maurya and Brijesh Pathak, to boycott meetings chaired by the CM. This was gross indiscipline, yet the party abstained from taking action.

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The 18-year itch

This is not the first time the RSS has strained relations with the BJP. The two organisations worked as two poles during Vajpayee's six years as PM. So much so that RSS functionaries called Yashwant Sinha a destructionist rather than an economist, an 'anarth mantri' (calamitous minister) instead of 'arth mantri' (finance minister) and Vajpayee the "worst-ever PM of India". They opposed India's economic liberalisation, privatisation of PSUs and even overtures to Pakistan. The VHP defiantly took out a Ram Shila Pujan Yatra in Ayodhya.

But the then RSS chief K.S. Sudarshan was much more apolitical and moderate than Mohan Bhagwat. He never tried to destabilise the Vajpayee government, waiting rather for it to crumble under the weight of its own follies. The real churn began after the fall of the Vajpayee government in 2004. At a meeting in Chitrakoot in 2006, the RSS top brass seriously considered abandoning the BJP as it had gone rogue and propping up a new political organisation instead which would follow RSS ideals to the T.

That proposal was shot down because of the time it would take. Instead, it was decided to reform the BJP and bring it back on the RSS ideological track. It took almost seven years to bring the BJP back to

Yogi has put his foot down. He won't vacate his chair without a fight. The BJP is working on various formulae to ease him out without too much damage

Can the Gujarat model be used in UP?

Yogi has put his foot down. He won't vacate his chair without a fight. The BJP is working on various formulae to ease him out without too much damage. One of the ways is replicating the 'Gujarat Model' wherein the entire ministry including the chief minister and party organisation was changed in one go. The BJP may replace Yogi, Pathak, Maurya and state president Bhupendra Chaudhary with completely new and unknown faces as they have already done in Rajasthan, Odisha, Chhattisgarh, Haryana, Gujarat and Madhya Pradesh.

One can only keep one's fingers crossed. And wait for Yogi and the RSS's response to such a decision, if and when it's taken. ■

To lose people's trust is to lose the war on terror

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Other military analysts believe that high-end militancy and terror in the Jammu division began to decrease after 2009. Initially, the Pakistan spy agency ISI (Inter-Services Intelligence) had hoped to sustain militancy in Jammu with the same intensity as they had done in the early 1990s. But they met with little success due to resistance from locals.

This time around, the ISI has changed its tactics. Jammu-based political commentator and author Zafar Choudhary said, "They are using soldiers from PoK to fight in the Rajouri and Poonch sectors while they are using battle-hardened Punjabis to fight in other parts of Jammu. They are trained in jungle warfare and are equipped with US-made weapons and steel bullets. Their latest communication equipment makes it difficult to intercept them."

Choudhary also pointed out that post 2019, "the government has been using the NIA and state investigating agencies to confiscate property and houses and freeze bank accounts of suspects. This has further heightened

the sense of alienation among the local populace".

Political leader Murtaza A. Khan, a Pahadi, expressed the central government for the hasty removal of troops from the Jammu region: "They allowed terrorists and their handlers to expand their area of operation. The only way to combat them is for the Centre to send in more manpower and resources."

Senior retired army officers who warned the central government against the dilution of the Counter Terrorism (CT) grid have also expressed dismay. Each time the CT gets diluted, it ends up affecting both the intelligence grid and the integration achieved with the local people, as well as sending poor signals to the civil administration. It takes time to establish an effective grid with all these elements working in a synchronised manner.

Relations between the army and the local people reached a new low on 21 December 2023, when hours after militants had ambushed an army vehicle at Dhatar Morh in Poonch, killing four soldiers and injuring three others, villagers were picked up for questioning. Three of them allegedly died during interrogation. All three belonged to the Gujjar-Bakarwal tribes.

Some of these tribesmen have openly expressed their disillusionment with the Centre, which benefits the militants. The brother of one of the deceased is presently working as a havildar in the Border Security Force (BSF) and he has publicly expressed both his grief and "sense of betrayal" at losing his kin.

By carrying out repeated strikes, terrorists and their handlers in Pakistan are sending Delhi a strong message: not only are they determined to derail the peace process in J&K, they seem determined to ensure the cancellation of upcoming assembly elections as well. ■



Random security checks in Baramulla, J&K, February 2024

UNION BUDGET 2024

An amazing display of perversity

What stands out about this Union budget is its utter indifference to the biggest problems facing the people of the country

Prabhat Patnaik

India is facing massive unemployment that especially afflicts its youth. There is a huge and persistent inflation in food prices; there is acute and unprecedented rural distress; there is a crisis in the petty production sector; and income and wealth inequality has reached such levels the whole world is talking about it.

One would have thought that a budget presented in the midst of all this would have shown some urgency and boldness. But no, not the 2024-25 budget presented by the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) government to Parliament on 23 July. Neither in overall State spending (that stimulates aggregate demand and hence employment), nor expenditure on specific employment generation schemes, welfare programmes, education or healthcare is there any increase in allocation relative to GDP (gross domestic product). On the contrary, there is generally a reduction. This cannot be blamed on a lack of fiscal resources, as fiscal effort has been totally absent.

The strategy underlying this budget is exactly the same as in previous years—to make no effort at mobilising additional fiscal resources; to use the growth in non-tax revenue (a large part of which consists of the profits of the Reserve Bank of India) to increase, to an extent, capital expenditure, including on infrastructure. If welfare expenditure goes up under some heads, then curtail it under other heads, and provide budgetary transfers to big capital for providing answers to pressing problems.

Let me establish these propositions *seriatim*. Total central government spending, including transfers to states, is slated to increase by 7.35 per cent between 2023-24 (Revised Estimates) and 2024-25 (Budget Estimates). This means a decline in the share of central government expenditure in GDP, which is the exact opposite of what is needed to stimulate employment.

This perversity is not because of any fiscal tightness. In fact, the ratio of tax receipts to GDP, primarily at the discretion of the central government, was 11.5 per cent in 2021-22 and 11.7 per cent in 2023-24; it is now slated to be 11.8 per cent in 2024-25. This shows a complete absence of fiscal effort on the part of the government, just a projection of past experience. It is gross non-tax revenue that is supposed to go up by 36 per cent between 2023-24 and 2024-25, of which the largest item 'dividends and profits' is budgeted to increase by 70 per cent.

On the expenditure side, while the central government's total expenditure is supposed to increase by only 7.35 per cent, its capital expenditure, excluding what it transfers to states for capital projects, is to increase by 17 per cent, which continues a trend observed in the past few years. This may appear to be a positive development, but much of this investment is in projects that scarcely affect



Rising unemployment draws hundreds of protesters out on the streets of New Delhi, December 2023

Photo: Getty Images

the lives of the working people. What is more, their multiplier effects leak out abroad to such a large extent they scarcely generate much employment domestically. Instead, the squeeze on other items of expenditure that could have larger multiplier effects domestically ensures, on the whole, a negative impact on employment.

While finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman referred to the unemployment problem in her budget speech, her solution shows a complete lack of understanding. She announced three schemes for employment, involving transfers to employees and employers, for incentivising the creation of new employment. These schemes are for the formal sector; the benefit is likely to leak out wholly to employers who would cut back on salary payments to offset transfers made to employees. She also announced a programme for skilling, which she claimed would help employment.

The theoretical presumption behind the transfer scheme is that lower wages paid will lead to larger numbers employed. This is a pet theme of bourgeois economics, but there is absolutely no reason to believe it. Employers will simply pocket the transfers, and employment will remain the same.

The skilling scheme likewise is an offshoot of bourgeois economics, according to which unemployment is merely the result of a skill mismatch, i.e., there are always

enough jobs, the only problem is that the skill requirements of the jobs available are different from the skills the unemployed possess.

The basic assumptions of both schemes are wrong, based as they are on Say's Law—'supply creates its own demand', i.e., there is never a deficiency of demand. Karl Marx had attacked this theory, as did John Maynard Keynes 75 years later. So influential was this position prior to Keynes that US president Herbert Hoover had tried to cut wages to raise employment in the midst of the Great Depression, naturally to no avail.

The Narendra Modi government's intellectual stock does not extend beyond these discredited ideas of nearly a century ago; it has effectively done nothing to alleviate unemployment.

The futility of making transfers to capitalists for stimulating the economy comes through on rare occasions in official pronouncements, such as in the Economic Survey. But the question *why* capitalists do not make investments despite such transfers is never asked. It is taken to be a moral failure on their part, even though there is an obvious economic reason for it. Capitalists do not invest more just because they have larger profits; they invest more only when they expect the market to expand. If the market is expected to remain stagnant, any addition to capacity will simply mean this newly added capacity remains unutilised, which will mean earning zero profit on the investment that

The Modi government's intellectual stock does not extend beyond discredited economic ideas of nearly a century ago; it has effectively done nothing to alleviate unemployment

Modinomics is no mystery

Disappointed middle-class supporters simply missed the writing on the wall (or rather, in the manifestos)

Aakar Patel

Supporters of the prime minister have been vocal about their disappointment with the budget—especially aspects which relate to the middle class, which are in this case taxation and the sale of property.

It is unusual to see this set complain about Narendra Modi or his cabinet of ministers; they are usually steadfast in backing him, no matter what. Issues such as Manipur or Ladakh can be raised by opponents or dissenters, but they do not seem to greatly upset the 'bhakts', who tend to accept every eccentric move made by the government. The line *Modiji ne kiya hai toh soch samajh kar hi kiya hoga* (If Modi has done it, he must have done it thoughtfully) is a popular meme on the internet for a reason. And the reason for these staunch devotees to be upset is a matter of interest to us.

But the first question is: Do they actually have a reason to be upset?

I am not talking about the budget itself, but about the people's expectations from it. If one supports a party thinking it stands for something, and then it goes and does something different, one has reason to be upset. So, what do people who support and vote for the BJP think it stands for, when it comes to the economy?

Let us go back to the party's manifestos across the decades. Starting from its formation in 1951, there is nothing in the manifestos of the Jana Sangh that shows a discernible economic ideology, far less a consistent one. There are not even any ideas about how Hindutva would influence the State. The man-

ifestos are nothing more than a collection of rambling and inchoate pronouncements.

There is no particular economic thrust, even at the most basic level, that the Jana Sangh favoured. The party manifestos say it will develop an economic system that will not undo state enterprises (meaning, public sector units) but will give private enterprises their proper place. It should be noted alongside that the party's constitution (article 2, to be precise) says that the BJP swears by socialism.

Historically, 'swadeshi' meant giving subsidies to local industries as well as tariff protection for Indian producers. This is not the 'open market', 'free economy' style of governance that Modi supporters assume he stands for. The manifestos in fact say that the import of consumer goods and luxury goods will be discouraged. Labour rights, including strikes and lock-outs, are also to be discouraged.

In 1957, the party announced that it would introduce 'revolutionary changes' to the economic order, which 'will be in keeping with

BJP voters assume that there is some grand strategy—or at least some basic philosophy—behind 'Modinomics'. Alas, this is not so



Prime Minister Narendra Modi addresses the media at Parliament House, New Delhi

Photo: Getty Images

which was the ideal gap, and all Indians would only be allowed to have incomes inside this range. Additional income earned by individuals over this limit would be procured by the State for development needs 'through contribution, taxation, compulsory loans and investment'.

The party would also limit the size of residential houses in cities, it said, and not allow plots of more than 1,000 square yards. Contrast this with the slogan of 'minimum government, maximum governance' of the first Modi era. There is no consistency, no reason given for why the party has shifted from one position to another.

Early on, the Jana Sangh stood for mechanisation of agriculture; but then almost immediately opposed it in 1954 (because the use of tractors would mean bullocks would get slaughtered). It wanted the industry to calibrate its use of automation not based on efficiency, but on how many individuals it could hire instead. It did not explain why a business owner should or would want to increase costs rather than reduce them.

In 1971, it said it wanted no automation in any industry—except defence and aerospace. I was reminded of this when I saw a headline this week for an interview with the finance secretary: 'There's a nudge for industry to opt for less automation, use more labour'. This is what we were told we were moving away from after 1991! Yet, if we look at the BJP/ Jana Sangh's manifestos, the volte face is unsurprising.

Through the 1950s, the 1960s, the 1970s and the 1980s, the party was merely responding to the Congress manifestos of the time, and had nothing really original to offer. Nor did it think it needed to offer such a thing: with a national vote share that till 1989 was in the single digits, the BJP knew it would not be in power, would not need to implement any policy and, therefore, was free to say whatever came to its collective mind. And so it did.

Now that it has firmly been established as the dominant force in Indian politics, however, people take it more 'seriously'. Its voters assume that there is some grand strategy—or at least, some basic philosophy—behind 'Modinomics', and that this would show in the budget. Alas, this is not so. And if, as a supporter and voter, you assumed that there was, it is hardly the fault of the leader. ■

Bharatiya values of life'. However, these were not elaborated upon. Nor was this theme of 'revolutionary change' picked up in any future manifesto.

In 1967, the party said it backed the idea of a planned economy, but that it would tweak the plan and 'adopt the system of microeconomic planning region-wise and project-wise'. It sought State intervention, but not everywhere. It encouraged private investment, but definitely not in the defence sector. The party said that 'laissez-faire

belonged only to the Krita Yuga' (also called Satya Yuga, the first ideal era when the gods themselves governed the earth). Thus, it held, the State must accept responsibility of ownership and management in certain spheres of the economy.

In 1954 and again in 1971, the Jana Sangh resolved to limit the maximum income of Indian citizens to Rs 2,000 per month and the minimum to Rs 100, maintaining a 20:1 ratio. The party added that it would continue working on reducing this gap till it reached 10:1,

HERALD VIEW

What ails our railways

If you're old enough to still look at the morning newspapers, chances are you'll find news of another train derailment on the front pages every other day. If 'online' is your default mode of news discovery, the grimness of this periodic drip of bad news will only hit harder. You'll not only find graphic images of mangled coaches, and sundry memes and e-chatter, but also have to process the provocation of watching our railway minister finessing the Instagram 'reel' of his speedy arrival at the next accident site.

In the past few years, the glory days of Modi 2.0, there have been 45 major railway accidents. Seven collisions and/or derailments have been reported in just the month of July 2024. Is anyone accountable for this? Rather than focus on demanding some answers from people in government, the media cheerleaders of this government, not to forget the PIB (Press Information Bureau), are busy massaging the data of railway accidents in the time of governments past.

Sure, there have been accidents in the time of past governments, and perhaps some lame excuses proffered too by those in power then, but it was this government that made the re-ordering of its priorities so plain. For a start, it did away with the Railway Budget in 2017, merging it into the Union Budget, arguing that the railway budget was a relic of the past (yes, it was introduced in 1924) that had outlived its relevance.

In 2015, a NITI Aayog panel headed by Bibek Debroy submitted its report to reform the Railways. The rationale for doing away with the railway budget had some features that sound almost reasonable. It would rescue the financial health of the railways and align it with global practices of integrated budgeting for transportation. It recommended an independent regulator; a focus on core services; and offered a diagnosis for why private participation hadn't taken off in the Railways. A key reason for this, the panel had argued in its report, was that the realms of policymaking, regulation and operations were all vested in the same organisation, namely the then ministry of railways. It recommended that these roles must be separated to sustain largescale private participation. Even while making this argument, the panel clarified that its recommendations did not advocate 'privatisation' of the railways but were a path to greater 'private participation' with an independent regulator in place.

Alok K. Verma, a former Chief Engineer in the Indian Railway Service of Engineers (IRSE), has been among the most vocal critics of the decision to do away with the railway budget, arguing that a separate railway budget made for detailed discussions and scrutiny of railway projects and finances. The merger, he believed, has led to less accountability and fewer targeted investments in critical railway infrastructure and safety upgrades.

Verma is on point. The Debroy panel recommendations may not be without merit, but with the Union budget subsuming the railway budget, a scrutiny of the government's priorities—including its spending priorities—when it comes to the Railways has become harder. Rather than make investments in additional track kilometres to decongest the railway system, on track maintenance and fail-safe signalling, the Modi government's focus has been on vanity projects—like the Bullet Train between Ahmedabad and Mumbai, the new Vande Bharat trains, the redevelopment of railway stations (553 stations in 27 states and UTs at an outlay of Rs 25,000 crore)—that will give Mr Modi bragging points. Modernisation is a legitimate ambition, but should it take precedence over budgeting for safety?

In its latest report, the CAG (Comptroller and Auditor General of India) has red-flagged the decline in stock, inspection and supervision besides delays in replacing rolling maintenance. The report expresses concern over the growing tendency in the Railways to spend on non-priority works.

There are reportedly over 300,000 vacancies in the Railways, a large chunk of these in jobs with a direct bearing on maintaining safety, but the Railways have been reluctant to fill up these vacancies. What does this mean for safety? Or when routes are congested beyond their carrying capacity? It means overworked personnel and rush jobs on track maintenance because there is no slack in the deployment of infrastructure.

The ideal capacity utilisation of tracks is around 70 per cent, but on about 10,000 km of new routes in India, the utilisation is 125 per cent of capacity. Our railways need more tracks. The most visible effect of acute congestion is that trains slow down, leading to delays. But delays also mean there's no slack in the schedule, and there is far less time than ideal for maintenance work. Add to this fewer than ideal personnel, and what you have is a bunch of overworked train drivers, guards, stationmasters, trackmen, maintenance staff and officers who are always in fire-fighting mode. You can imagine what that means for punctilious upkeep.

Letters to the Editor

Insensitive authorities

The death of three civil service aspirants at a Delhi coaching institute is the result of complete administrative callousness. The civic authorities failed to ensure the desilting of drains that led to waterlogging in the area. Apparently, they did not act despite multiple complaints by the locals. At the same time, the police and MCD turned a blind eye to the lower basement being used as a library, not to mention the illegal constructions dotting the area. As per media reports, the owner of the coaching centre admitted that the basement of the institute did not have any drainage facilities and had only one entry and exit point. On paper, this basement was a storage area. In reality, it was being used as a library with 250-odd seats. Didn't the local authorities know this? But we seem to have become insensitive to the extent where nothing affects us, not even the loss of human life.

Shariq Khan, Delhi

Delhi Lt Governor should resign

The tragic death of three students at a coaching centre in Delhi's Old Rajinder Nagar calls for tough action against all those involved—from the owner of the centre to the owner of the building and the local officials who turned a blind eye to the illegality of housing a big library in the basement. Above all, it calls for the accountability of higher authorities like the chief secretary, the MCD commissioner, the

DDA vice-chairman and the Delhi police. Who controls them? The central government through the Lieutenant Governor. It is he, therefore, who should take moral responsibility and resign. He must also explain why officials under him allowed such illegality right under their noses.

Ravi Mishra, Delhi

100 per cent publicity and zero per cent governance

In yet another fatal railway accident, two persons were killed and 20 others injured after 18 coaches of the Howrah-Mumbai Mail derailed at Barabambo in Jharkhand on 30 July. A day earlier, on 29 July, two bogies of the Bihar Sampark Kranti Express detached from the rest of the train in Samastipur, Bihar. Luckily, no mishap occurred. Both these come close on the heels of the Chandigarh-Pradgarh Express accident in Uttar Pradesh's Gonda on 30 July in which at least four people were killed and several others injured. The prime minister is busy flagging off new trains, particularly the expensive Vande Bharat trains, but he hasn't spared a thought for basic safety. The railways have, over the last 10 years, massively cut off the widely affordable sleeper coaches and increased the number of pricey airconditioned coaches. This has made railway travel much costlier. The Modi government is about 100 per cent publicity and zero per cent governance.

Anurag Dey, Kolkata

The unholy row over disability quotas

The Puja Khedkar case is not merely about the misuse of the disability quota, it's about a deeper malaise

Mr. Amitabh Kant, the over-burdened sherpa, has been in the Hall of Fame for some time now, with comments like "India has too much democracy" and the G20 conference stewarded by India last year had issued "the strongest statement ever issued by the G20", never mind that democracy is in the ICU here and no one remembers what that G20 was all about, except to perpetuate to act as a stepping stone to our 2024 elections.

Ms. Smita Sabharwal, considered by some YouTube channels to be the 'most beautiful IAS officer' in India, on the other hand, while not having uttered anything of equal import so far, has now decided to let the people know that she has brains as well as beauty, and should therefore be placed a notch above Mr. Kant (on the brains scale, of course, not the beauty one). Both belong to my erstwhile service, sadly.

My reference is to the recent public statements made by the two, post the shocking revelations about the misuse of reserved quotas in the IAS by one Puja Khedkar under the aegis of a somnolent UPSC and the Department of Personnel and Training (DoPT). Mr. Kant has let it be known to the hoi polloi that he supports the SC/ST and OBC quotas, but not the one for the physically handicapped which should be "reviewed". He has not bothered to explain what he means by that laconic word, but presumably he wants it discontinued. For good measure, he has also voiced his opposition to the transgender quota.

Ms. Sabharwal is more explicit: she wants the handicapped quota abolished as disabled persons cannot do rigorous fieldwork and put in the long hours required in the civil services. She is, of course, wrong on both counts: the average IAS officer, after the first 4-5 years of field postings, the rest of his/her life in office jobs, as Ms. Sabharwal herself is doing currently. As for long hours, my paraplegic son puts in longer hours at his office table six days a week than I ever did.

The lady then delivers her coup de grace to the disabled by pointing out that there are no disabled pilots flying planes or surgeons performing operations for a very good reason! She is wrong again, and would be well advised to read an article by Satendra Singh of the University College of Medical Sciences, Delhi, listing the contributions of some eminent disabled professionals, administrators and academics. This piece—titled 'People with disabilities need bureaucrats who are allies, and not adversaries', first published in *The Long Cable* on 26 July 2014—convincingly demonstrates that disabled persons, if given a fair and equal opportunity, can do as well, if not better, than the able-bodied in most fields.



Avyita Shukla

The short point is that, with their crass comments, both these IAS officers have exposed not only their insensitive and callous nature but also their ignorance and regressive tendencies. Equality and equal opportunities for the disabled are enshrined in the social and legal framework of all countries today, as is the goal of any inclusive society.

India is a signatory to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, 2006. Part III of our Constitution provides for equality and dignity for the disabled; the Directive Principles of State Policy and Article 41 enjoin the state to make effective provisions for securing the right to work for the disabled, among other vulnerable sections of society; the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016, makes specific the obligations of the government, society, employers etc.

The world is moving/ has moved towards integrating the disabled in mainstream society but these two bureaucrat-dinosaurs have not progressed beyond their heartless, able-bodied arrogance and anaesthetised conscience.

One would have understood, indeed applauded, if they had come out strongly against the misuse of all these quotas, as irrefutably demonstrated by the Puja Khedkar case, instead of attacking the disability quota. One would have been delighted if they had raised the following questions:

1. How and why did the DoPT issue Ms. Khedkar's appointment letter when it had been opposed by the UPSC and her case had been dismissed even by CAT?

2. How was she allowed to do forum shopping for four different disabilities (locomotor, visual, hearing, mental) from three different hospitals, at different times, in order to aggregate her disability to meet the 40 per cent

requirement of the UPSC?

3. How did the DoPT fail to notice that with each attempt at certification she kept adding additional disabilities in order to reach the 40 per cent threshold? This itself should have raised red flags.

4. Why was she even considered for appointment when she had refused to appear before the AIMS board not once but six times?

5. Why has the chairman of the UPSC been allowed to resign precisely at a time when he is required to answer questions about his organisation's dubious role in this scandal?

6. Why are the DoPT and UPSC not taking any action to plug the many loopholes in the OBC and disability quota system, even though it is common knowledge that people with connections have been gaming the system all these years? Why are they not tightening the rules/processes to prevent the adoption of strategies to get around the 'creamy layer' provisions, such as paper adoptions, gifting of assets, premature retirement etc.?

7. What is the rationale behind not counting the candidates' own income (and only that of the parents') to determine economic status vis-a-vis the creamy layer requirements?

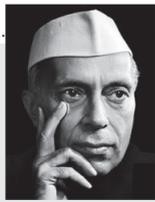
Enough anecdotal evidence is available on social media to convince one that the Khedkar case is only the tip of the iceberg. This cynical gaming of the system adversely effects the calibre of the civil services in two ways—it allows the induction of substandard people into the services, and it does great harm to the genuinely disabled/economically disadvantaged sections by depriving them of their jobs.

What Ms. Khedkar has done could not be possible without collusion at various levels and friends in high places. It is quite clear now that some kind of a cover-up has been set in motion. Ms. Khedkar's services shall be terminated but the various cases filed against her shall be allowed to peter out into the arid sands of time and forgotten. The UPSC chairman has already been allowed to don monkhood and will no doubt take a vow of silence. A few minor bureaucrats and doctors shall be shuffled around and normal business shall resume.

I wish the Kant-Sabharwal duo, who appear to be so worked up about reservations and quotas, had applied their immense acumen to these issues instead of favouring us with their biases and lack of emotional and empathetic intelligence. They should be questioning why the bathwater is so dirty instead of wanting to throw the baby out. ■

AVYITA SHUKLA is an author and a retired IAS officer. Views are personal

NEHRU'S WORD



There is a strong demand for economic change

This is the second and concluding part of *Jawahar Lal Nehru's preliminary assessment of the first general elections that he sent the Congress Working Committee on 31 January 1952. Here he analyses the relative success and failure of different political parties, such as the outright rejection of communal parties, the poor showing of the socialists and the considerable success of the Left fronts, especially in South India.*

Democratic politics and democreeing encourage, to some extent, what is known as boss-politics. Leadership is necessary but the leadership should not encourage too much bossing. Real leadership that counts in an election or in a big organisation is the lower-level leadership. Where there is a big boss at the top, this lower-level leadership does not develop. Only those who pay court to the big boss can flourish. The result is a weakening of the organisation. So long as there is no effective opposition, it can carry on. But as soon as this opposition appears, it tends to crumble.

It is this lower-level leadership that has been singularly lacking in the Congress. This has not only resulted in the weakening of the Congress but has driven away effective and worthy people to other organisations. We have, therefore, to develop this leadership at the lower levels, which is in constant touch with the individual voter.

I think it is fortunate that the Congress, having regard to all the circumstances, to have succeeded in the elections to the extent that it has done. It might well have fared much worse. We have now the chance to learn from experience and make ourselves active and vital again. Naturally, vitality can only come with a worthwhile programme and hard work to attain it. It cannot merely come by thinking of elections alone.

Whatever its other activities, the Congress must function as a definite political party with a definite programme. It cannot continue to be, as Dr Ambedkar once called it, a *dharmsshala* for all and sundry.

During the last five years, all kinds of inner changes were taking place under the surface of Indian politics. Most Congressmen were almost unaware of them... The elections have suddenly brought out these forces to the surface. As a result, new parties and groups have emerged, and some existing parties have more or less collapsed...

The various parties might be divided up into a number of groups: 1) those professing advanced economic programmes like the socialists, communists and other so-called Leftists; 2) the communal parties, whether Hindu, Sikh, Muslim or other (which

includes caste groupings); 3) the social reactionary parties like the jagirdars, zamindars, etc.

There are other odd groups like the KMPP (Kisan Mazdoor Praja Party) which do not fit into any picture. They are just dissidents angry with the world and especially with the Congress. Where they have won, they have done so because of personal reasons. As a party they do not count and will fade away.

The socialists have also proved completely ineffectual. They have also received a hard knock in the elections. Probably part of their membership will drift to other parties.

The purely communal parties like the Hindu Mahasabha, the Jana Sangh, the Ram Rajya Parishad, the Akali Dal and the like have also suffered considerably. Where they have succeeded, they have done so by an alliance with the jagirdars, etc., or for some personal reasons. These parties are not

that Parliament is likely to have a fairly strong and well-knit communist or pro-communist group. The growth of these Leftist fronts indicates certain powerful trends in the country. It does indicate that there is a strong demand for economic change and progress and no party that ignores this can have much of a future.

The conclusion to be drawn from this analysis is that the Congress has still a very important historical role to fulfil, which no other group or party can take up. Every other group, even if given a long rope, is likely to lead to the growth of disruption and disintegration in India. The Congress can check this provided it has the energy, vitality and good sense. I have little doubt that the Congress can meet the challenge that has been thrown to it, but it will have to work hard and get out of the rut it has got into. This means an effective policy, a programme of work, and a well-knit organisation with its roots in the people...

The first part of this policy to which effect has to be given with speed is that relating to land and the abolition of jagirdari, zamindari etc. There is no real opposition to this anywhere except for the law's delay. Opposition will no doubt come in Rajasthan from jagirdar elements. But that will not weaken the Congress. On the contrary, it will strengthen it if it works properly... The Five Year Plan is being tightened up and I hope improved. We have to take this up in right earnest. We must remember that the Leftist groups will be continually bringing forward proposals of far-reaching economic change. We cannot meet them just negatively. We must have a positive answer.

For the Congress, the most important thing is our organisational set up. Our district might well be the parliamentary constituency. Our lower committee should be the assembly constituency. Lower than that there should be a small group of villages not exceeding, as a rule, 30 in number. That should be our primary committee. ■

Selected and edited by MRIDULA MUKHERJEE, former professor of history at JNU and former director of Nehru Memorial Museum & Library

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Leadership is necessary, but the leadership should not encourage too much bossing

likely to grow in strength but they will flourish in a limited way. Another aspect of communalism, i.e. the caste group is, however, dangerous and will no doubt continue to affect elections and our politics.

We then come to what are called the Democratic Leftist fronts which are generally under the leadership of the communists. It is these groups that have emerged from the elections and have established themselves...

The major parties, therefore, that emerged from these elections are the Congress and these Leftist fronts. This is so chiefly in the South. In the North, communists and Leftists have not succeeded to any extent. But it must be remembered

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah during his budget had earmarked Rs 200 crore for the project that includes a contribution of Rs 100 crore from the Revenue Department. The department has realized that there was a dire need to expand the scope of the scheme and implement it even in the tail-end portions of the command areas, as these were hardly getting adequate quantum of irrigation water from canals.

Karnataka aims to develop 30000 to 40000 farm ponds to improve farm productivity

After a year of severe drought, the Congress government in Karnataka has reintroduced its flagship programme, the Krishi Bhagya, which aims to store rainwater in farm ponds for crops during the summer.

The government has decided to not only provide more funds than what has been allocated in the Budget but is also set to expand the scheme but is also set to expand the restrictions on taking it to the tail-end portions of the irrigation command areas.

Emphasising on the importance of the Krishi Bhagya scheme in turning dry-land farming into a sustainable activity through the natural method of stored rainwater, the agriculture department was gearing up to ensure that 30,000 to 40,000 farm ponds were built this year.

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah during his budget had earmarked Rs 200 crore for the project that includes a contribution of Rs 100 crore from the Revenue Department. The department has realized that there was a dire need to expand the scope of the scheme and implement it even in the tail-end portions of the command areas, as these were hardly getting adequate quantum of irrigation water from canals.

In all 31 districts

The scheme was generally being implemented in four dry climatic zones, comprising 106 taluks spread over 24 districts. However, it will be expanded to 236 taluks of 31 districts this time.

The Krishi Bhagya scheme was launched by the Congress government in 2014-15, by the Chief Minister Siddaramaiah in his previous term to ensure sustainable



farming in a State like Karnataka which stands next only to Rajasthan in terms of the extent of drought-prone land.

However, this scheme was discontinued by BJP dispensation since 2021-22.

Soon after Congress came to power in 2023-24 this scheme was re-introduced. A total of 2,89,827 farm ponds were built under the first phase of the scheme which was implemented from 2014-15 to 2020-21. These ponds have the total capacity to store 1,472.31 lakh cubic metres of water.

About 64% of Karnataka's cultivable area is rain-fed. Despite the dependence on rain, the State's rain-fed areas contribute to 55% of food production and 75% of oil seed production.

Karnataka aims to focus on water management

Water is the most precious resource for agriculture. It is the "wonder gold" without which nothing exists, with which everything lives! In turn, it gives our earth the name as a living planet. Earth is called a blue planet because 75% area is covered by water; hence water is considered an astonishing element in Ayurveda, which means it is a wonder medicine that cures almost all the ills.

Half of all workers on the earth are employed in water-related sectors. In this concern, the agriculture and rural development as an integrated concept of growth and poverty elimination have been of paramount concern in the entire consequent government scheme.

Nevertheless, water as a natural resource of the world constitutes 97.39 per cent water is in the sea, which is salty and unfit for agriculture. The only other 2.61 per cent is the freshwater availability, perhaps in that 77.23 per cent is in the polar region and glacier, only a minor fraction of water on earth is present in the groundwater, lakes, rivers, atmosphere which is most useful to the mankind.

The growing population puts tremendous

pressure on the water resource. The annual per capita availability of water in India has decreased from 5000 m3 in 1950 to 1200 m3 in 2010 and projected to decrease further below 1000 m3 by 2025 (MOWR, 2011).

Agriculture background of India

A majority of the Indian population exists in villages, and above 50.00 per cent of them rely on agriculture (directly or indirectly). One of the greatest threats to farming is water scarcity. Rain-fed agriculture constitutes 55.00 per cent of net sown area in the nation. The annual rainfall of the country varies from 400mm to >1200 mm, varying both in place and time.

In the low to medium rainfall regions, the occurrence of high intensity rainfall is very meager i.e., only for a short duration. Hence rain-water management is necessary to increase water efficiency, since the first light of independence concerning efforts has been made to uplift the standards of farmers and rural masses to offer the solution that enables rain-fed farming towards sustainable agriculture.

Krishi Bhagya Scheme



The Krishi Bhagya Scheme was implemented on 14th Feb 2014 in five prime dry zones covering 23 districts. In 2014-15 it was decided to implement 9 lakh hectares of land to increase the agricultural productivity and income level of the farmers. The Government of Karnataka launched Krishi Bhagya Scheme exclusively for the dry-land farmers who rely on the annual rainfall for their farming. Since a majority of the Karnataka's agricultural land over 70.00 per cent is under rain-fed conditions, farming activities on the dry lands become challenging during erratic rainfall period. To ensure irrigation for sustainable agriculture, Krishi Bhagya Scheme was started.

This scheme incorporates effective rainwater conservation measures to improve productivity. The Government of Karnataka has aided over one lakh farmers in the rain-fed areas of 131 taluks in 25 districts.

Under the Krishi Bhagya Scheme, more emphasis is given to help farmers to take up water conservation measures such as constructing farm ponds in their agricultural land and saving every drop of rainwater for using during the dry spells to protect standing crops.

The provisions availed under this Krishi Bhagya Scheme are that construction of climate-resilient technology for rain-fed agriculture like farm ponds, poly houses, polythene sheet, sprinklers/drippers, a motor pump is offered at a subsidized rate which has assisted the farmers in the harvesting of the excess rainwater on a farmer's field. The primary purpose of the strategy is that harvested water in the farm ponds is being applied for providing life-saving protective irrigation for rain-fed crops through drip and sprinkler irrigation system, the polythene sheets are provided to prevent the percolation losses and shade nets for reducing evaporation losses of the water from the farm ponds, poly-houses for protective cultivation of an assortment of crops like vegetables, greenhouse for high-value crops, floriculture, acclimatizing fruit crop growing for the export market, encouraging multiple cropping, inter cropping systems and the motor pumps to raise the water from the conserved structures.

Major objectives of the scheme set by Government of Karnataka

- The government is ambitious in revolutionizing Karnataka's agricultural sector. The implementation of the scheme primarily focuses on securing the farmer's income by taking up on-farm rainwater conservation practices.
- Farmers can increase their productivity using stored rainwater in farm ponds.
- It also encourages the farmers to adopt modern technologies at a subsidized price to farmers for efficient use of water.
- Eventually the government helps to possess good agricultural practices like Integrated farming system, mixed cropping, intercropping with short duration crops, which are provided to improve the farmers income and ensure a better standard of living.

Eligibility and selection of farmers

- According to the Department of Agriculture, farmers who possess one acre land and more is applicable to avail the benefits of the scheme.
- Farmers who have received subsidy for pump sets and drip irrigation system during the last three years are not eligible for the fund for them now. However, can avail fund for farm ponds.
- Applications are issued in Raitha SamparkaKendra's (RSK).

Features of Krishi

Bhagya Scheme

- The project will be implemented in 45 thousand hectares per year where more than one lakh farmers benefit every year
- Availability of modern equipment
- Reasonable price
- Under the scheme, the farmers obtain grants



for constructing farm ponds (Krishi Honda) to conserve rainwater and for buying lift pumps, diesel motors to draw water

- Availability of timely service
- Moreover, this program assists the farmers to earn higher income by enabling them to construct polyhouses and put up shadnets to cultivate hybrid vegetables and flower crops
- The farmers should construct different in-situ soil moisture conservation structures in the field

Krishi Honda - Farm

Pond

Krishi Honda in Krishi Bhagya Scheme is a farm pond dug to store rainwater that can help irrigate about five acres of land during the dry spells. The agricultural loan scheme allocates funds for the purchase of polythene tarpaulin and fencing along with the components required for the construction of Krishi Honda. The Government grants a subsidy up to 90 per cent for the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes and 80 per cent for other farmers.



ALT/URBAN

(Un)safe as houses

Photo: Getty Images



What Bombay's ageing buildings need is caring renovation, not 'redevelopment', writes **Mustansir Dalvi**

Another monsoon in Mumbai, another house collapse. Deaths and injuries, as expected. Even the reportage for such tragedies has become rote, matter of fact. Collapsing buildings in Mumbai have occurred for a variety of reasons, from tampering with RCC frames to overloading. Dilapidation of built fabric in Mumbai isn't new either. People continue to live in buildings they cannot afford to get repaired, just as they cannot afford to lose locational advantage (as repairs would mean having to move out). Tenants will allow a building to crumble even as they enjoy the stability and security of the old Rent Act, paying a pittance to a landlord who has long ceased to care.

Before the millennium, though, there was a go-to place for such structures on the brink—the Repair Board. To use its full title, the Bombay Building Repairs and Reconstruction Board was specifically formed in 1971 by the BMC to address the material welfare of cessed buildings (dilapidated tenanted buildings upon which a cess was levied).

The older cessed buildings in Bombay built on both sides of the *fin de siècle* were densely backed four-storied tenements, with sloping roofs and masonry façades. What is relatively less known is that several had timber frames that carried the load of the structure all the way to the ground. Many of these façades had timber cantilevered balconies, corridors and stairways.

After around a century of nonstop occupation, these frames were both strained and corroded, and needed to be replaced by steel columns and beams to extend the lives of the old buildings. Given Mumbai's ferocious monsoons, leakages from roofs and walls were unremittingly

aggravating and the Board had the skills to deal with those too.

The Board provided competent consultants, both architectural and structural, and had a roster of contractors who knew how to make these unusual buildings structurally sound and leakproof. Officers in municipal wards kept tabs on the wear and tear of such buildings. Despite the usual bureaucracy, the much-reviled Repair Board gave buildings a new lease of life, at least for a decade at a time.

The old board has since given way to the Mumbai Building Repair and Reconstruc-

tion Board, governed by MHADA from 1992. This new board is also mandated to look after cessed buildings. However, there seems to be a steep decline in the number of buildings going in for repair and refurbishment, and dilapidation or imminent danger of collapse does not seem to be the reason for this.

Since the 1990s, the paradigm has shifted. A city, that once accommodated multitudes through easy tenancy, like an absorbent sponge, has now become rigid, like dead corals, due to the shift to the ownership model and the fetishism of real estate. Habitation is now measured out in

coffee spoons of FSI rather than the monthly rental for a *kholi* (apartment). Even families living in cessed buildings for three generations or more now look to gain ownership of their tenements, free from the clutches of an often ineffectual or even absent landlord. And in this grey area, the developers come swooping in.

Today, the push and pull of post-liberalisation aspirations have convinced long-term tenants that the only future is home ownership. For cessed buildings, the way forward is therefore to find a developer who will take the old building off their hands, demolish it, build a new one on the old footprint (with current byelaws) and rehouse the older tenants while creating more space to be sold at market rates for profit (and in order to subsidise the rehousing of the old owners).

The notion of a free, new house with several promised 'amenities', while obviously attractive, brings several challenges with it that the current development rules don't seem to acknowledge. But are the apparent gains that attract a homeowner to let go of a rental home—that they may have lived in for generations—for an ownership flat in a newly constructed building commensurate with their expectations?

A new building is built according to new byelaws. These allow floor-to-ceiling heights of less than ten feet. Room sizes, other than the living room, may be as narrow as nine feet. Kitchen widths may be even less. New buildings constructed with RCC technology allow external walls to be as thin as half the length of a brick. There may be no balconies at all.

Unlike in the older homes where outer walls built in solid masonry provided insulation from the elements and timber balconies modulated sunlight and allowed cross ventilation, new buildings only offer

sliding windows that barely open halfway. The only significant advantage, it must be acknowledged, are the toilets within, and legal ownership.

While these seem seductive enough for a possible future, in the time it takes to find a developer that can take on the project, buildings can deteriorate to the point of collapse. People die waiting, instead of approaching available authorities to tackle the immediate problem of strengthening a deteriorating building. An unforeseen downside of this reticence to approach the Repair Board is the loss of skills.

Carpentry was once a necessary component of the building process, like masonry, glazing or stucco ornament. The Repair Board has the requisite resources to work with timber, but if there is no further call for this, such craft will inevitably decline. Today, perhaps the only craftsmen in Mumbai who can address timber appropriately in building construction are those working for contractors on conservation projects.

One of the final arguments for repair is that of sustainability. Any building that has lasted for four generations and is still being used contains a large amount of embodied energy (the total energy required to acquire raw materials, process, transport, construct and finish a building). In comparison, there is a significant amount of energy expended in demolishing, hauling debris, and raising a new building with current technologies and materials.

Our newly constructed buildings are no angels when it comes to carbon footprints or energy savings. Thin walls and inadequate ventilation ensure that. Even at a rough estimate, one cubic foot of constructed RCC releases nearly seven kilograms of carbon dioxide.

Older buildings, despite their wear and tear, were constructed with fairly high-quality materials with better craftsmanship and detailing. They used bricks, timber, lime and glass in elegant and appropriate ways.

Renovation allows for extending a building's longevity and preserving its elegance in our changing world. It is already sustainable, having 'paid for' its embodied energy over its lifetime.

A readjustment of attitude towards our built fabric can contribute to mitigating the energy crisis that is already upon us. It is this same readjustment that can save lives, if the inhabitants of ageing buildings give them the same kind of loving attention that they might extend to their parents and grandparents. ■

MUSTANSIR DALVI was the longest serving Professor of Architecture in the University of Mumbai. He is a trustee of Art Deco Mumbai

One of the final arguments for repair is sustainability. Our newly constructed buildings are no angels when it comes to their carbon footprint



(Top) A partially collapsed building on Grant Road, Mumbai, with corroded timber frames exposed; (above left) In Bhuleshwar, cessed buildings lose out to contemporary high-rises; (right) The mark of Mumbai's unrelenting monsoons



Photo: Getty Images

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Karnataka to introduce Kindergarten classes in Anganwadis

With the Chief Minister approving the upgrade of anganwadi centres, and the department has decided to provide children with uniforms, books, and bags through these centres. Additionally, a system will be established to issue transfer certificates (TCs) to students in the format of school transfer certificates.



Anganwadis across Karnataka may soon introduce Lower Kindergarten (LKG) and Upper Kindergarten (UKG) classes. This move responds to increasing demand, especially in rural areas where many parents directly enrol children into first grade in government schools.

Minister for Women and Child Development, Lakshmi Hebbalkar, announced this initiative last month (June) stating that

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah has approved the upgrade of all anganwadi centres in the state.

A committee of experts has been established to explore the feasibility of offering pre-primary education (LKG, UKG) in anganwadi centres across the state, except in the Kalyana Karnataka region.

The decision aims to ensure children receive quality education and nutritious meals.

With the Chief Minister approving the upgrade of anganwadi centres, and the department has decided to provide children with uniforms, books, and bags through these centres. Additionally, a system will be established to issue transfer certificates (TCs) to students in the format of school transfer certificates. Out of the 9,000 anganwadi teachers, 1,500 hold graduate degrees, while the rest have diplomas.

Karnataka focuses on building robust foundational stage of school education

1. The concept and objectives of the new Foundational stage of Education, which now consists of an upward extension of the early childhood stage (from 3 to 6 years), to children up to 8 years of age.
2. The need, rationale and importance of this structural change which consists of the curricular integration, upward continuity, and a smooth transition across the two developmental sub-stages – i.e., 3 to 6 years and 6 to 8 years.
3. The objectives, structure, and content of an age/developmentally appropriate and outcome-focused curriculum, within the Foundational stage. The interventions described have kept in mind the different innovative curricula used by the state such as the Chili Pilli, Chili Pilli Plus and Nali Kali for the primary stage of Education.
4. The rationale and curricular implications for the emphasis on play and discovery- based pedagogy that is required by the NCF (2022) for the Foundational stage.
5. The systemic reforms required - which describe the support to be provided to parents and community, support to teachers to deliver quality, the mechanisms that will be put in place for effective supervision, monitoring and mentoring, and providing appropriate service conditions for all functionaries.
6. Some basic principles or guidelines for adoption of a comprehensive and coordinated approach, from an immediate and medium- term perspective, at the state and sub state levels to make sure that the proposed reforms receive the attention, time and resources necessary for equitable and quality services for children.

The reforms will enable every child in the 3-8 age group to get the benefit of a cognitively and socio-emotionally stimulating, enriching and age-appropriate curriculum in the early years.



Anganwadis In Karnataka

What Are They and Why Do We Need Them?

Educating and looking after the well-being of young mothers is essential for a country like India to develop. Anganwadis in Karnataka and across the country is a mother and childcare development program sponsored by the government.

The program gets its name from the courtyards that traditional Indian homes are known for. This was traditionally a place for people of the house to gather.

Anganwadi is a type of rural child care centre in India. It was started by the Indian government in 1975 as part of the Integrated Child Development Services program to combat child hunger and malnutrition. Anganwadi in Hindi means "courtyard shelter" in English.

A typical Anganwadi center provides basic health care in a village. It is a part of the Indian public health care system. Basic health care activities include contraceptive counseling and supply, nutrition education and supplementation, as well as pre-school activities.

The centres may be used as depots for oral rehydration salts, basic medicines and contraceptives.

These centres provide supplementary nutrition, non-formal pre-school education, nutrition, and health education, immunization, health check-up and referral services of which the last three are provided in convergence with public health systems.

Benefits

Despite decades of impressive growth, India has an acute shortage of doctors. The doctor population ratio in 2019-20 was 1:1456; against the WHO recommended level of 1:1000. Through the Anganwadi system, the country is trying to meet its goal of providing affordable and accessible healthcare to local populations.

Anganwadi workers have the advantage over the physicians living in the same rural area, which gives them insight into the state of health in the locality and assists in identifying the cause of problems and in countering them. They also have better social skills and can therefore more easily interact with the local people. As locals, they know and are comfortable with the local language and ways, are acquainted with the people, and are trusted.

Anganwadis – Quick Facts

The Anganwadi project was started in 1975 in an effort to fight against malnutrition and hunger faced by children in Indian villages. More than 40 years later, Anganwadis still provide basic healthcare and informal pre-school education.

There are over 13 lakh mini-Anganwadi centers and Anganwadis in India. There are over 62,580 Anganwadis centers and 3331 mini Anganwadi centers in Karnataka functioning under 204 ICDS projects.

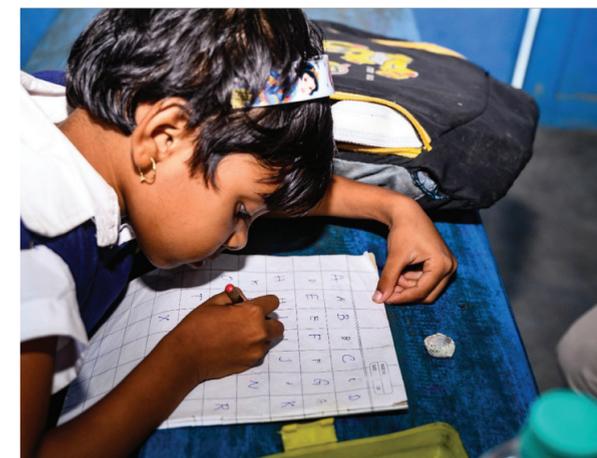
Objectives of the Integrated Child Development Services Program (ICDS)



The ICDS is the only national-level program aimed at addressing the needs of children under the age of 6 years. The program also addresses the needs of expectant mothers, nursing mothers, and adolescent girls. The objectives of this program are:

- To improve the nutritional status of children under the age of 6 years
- To lay the foundation for a

- child's physical, psychological and social development
- To fight against malnutrition and reduce mortality rates and school dropout rates
- To aid in the implementation of social policies that promote child development
- To improve the young mothers' capability to look after the developmental needs of their children.



Anganwadi workers help achieve the objectives.

Basic Services Provides By Anganwadis In Karnataka

The basic services provided by an Anganwadi can be categorized as nutritional, health and pre-school educational services.

Nutritional Services

- The nutritional services provided by an Anganwadi vary from state to state. In most places, a hot meal of cereals, mixed pulses, vegetables, etc. is available at the Anganwadi. In some places, 'take-home rations' are provided to children under the age of 3 years.
- Children under the age of 3 years are weighed once a month at the Anganwadi to keep a check on their nutrition and overall health. Children older than this are weighed once in three months.
- Nutritional and health education is also provided through counseling, demonstrations and home visits to women between the age of 15 and 45 years. This also covers sanitation, family planning, and infant feeding.

Health Services

- Immunization is one of the key health services provided by an Anganwadi. Children below the age of 6 years are immunized against polio, measles, DPT, and tuberculosis. Pregnant mothers are protected from tetanus through immunization.
- After the child is born, antenatal care is provided for the mothers. The Anganwadi and the health department also maintain health records for these children. Cases of malnutrition and sickness are referred to Primary Health Centers.

Educational Services

- The Anganwadis provide informal preschool education to children between the ages of 3 years and 6 years. This education is provided through play to encourage the physical, cognitive, emotional and social development of a child.

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समय जरूरी है :-

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- ▶ राशन कार्ड
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- ▶ जिनका बैंक खाता आधार से जुड़ा नहीं है वे भी योजना का लाभ दिसम्बर-2024 तक उठा सकती हैं, उसके पश्चात बैंक खाता को आधार से जुड़वाना जरूरी है
- ▶ पात्रता संबंधी घोषणापत्र

3 अगस्त 2024

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3 से 10 अगस्त तक विहित प्रपत्र में आवेदन
जमा करने हेतु विशेष कैंप का आयोजन:

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विशेष कैंप के बाद भी आवेदन नजदीकी प्रजा केंद्र में कभी भी जमा किया जा सकता है।

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