

Newspaper Analysis and Summary – 08th February 2014**SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY****ISRO to launch 4 more foreign satellites** – The Hindu

The Indian Space Research Organisation will launch four more foreign satellites for earth observation with its PSLV rocket between the year-end and 2015-end, says an official release. Last month, the ISRO's commercial wing, Antrix Corporation, signed a contract with Singapore's ST Electronics (Satcom & Sensor Systems) Pte Ltd. for putting in space its 400-kg TeLEOS-1 satellite, and entered into agreements with DMC International Imaging for launching three 350-kg DMC-3 disaster monitoring satellites.

DRDO chief: cyber threat possible from imported defence systems – The Hindu

India faces a major cyber security challenge from imported defence products which can come laden with snooping virus or malwares and should thus get involved with the production of weapon systems from their nascent stage, chief of Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) Avinash Chander said on Friday. Addressing the media at Defexpo 2014 here, Mr. Chander, who is also the Scientific Adviser to the Defence Minister, said cyber security could be enhanced by getting involved with the software of the projects from the time they were developed so that "cocoon" could be built around them. "For real security, the answer lies being involved with it from the design stage," he said, adding that similar control could not be possessed over a system that is procured from outside.

Responding to a question on India's ability to check for malware in advanced systems like the C-17 and C-130J Super Hercules aircraft procured from the United States, Mr. Chander said, "When an equipment is bought from outside, you have no control." Stressing the need to protect the country's military equipment from hacking, he said there was a need to ensure that hackers were unable to target the "critical or core systems". Noting that a major reason for the threat posed by malwares was that it was difficult to assess them in an "integrated system", Mr. Chander said the problem was compounded by the fact that most foreign countries do not provide the source code for the equipment sold by them. He said the problem behind unsecured procurements also had its genesis in the fact that many agencies took their own decisions concerning foreign purchases of equipment. He called for having guidelines to protect systems against subversion. "Cyber security is our biggest security challenge and requires a new paradigm in purchase processes. When we buy, we must buy with security in mind," he said.

DRDO's UAVs to hunt down Naxals – The Hindu

The Defence Research and Development Organisation is developing Unmanned Aerial Vehicles for the Central Reserve Police Force for use in Naxal-hit areas of Chhattisgarh and Jharkhand. It would demonstrate the operational capability of the first vehicle, Nishant, in a couple of months in Jagdalpur. These UAVs will help the forces trace and track down the rebels even in thick forests, DRDO chief Avinash Chander said during a media interaction at Defexpo 2014 here on Friday. To begin with, the CRPF had expressed a desire to procure 16 UAVs. The force was earlier using the UAVs of the National Technical Research Organisation and the Indian Air Force, which, however,

were not very effective in dense forests. Mr. Chander said DRDO scientists the CRPF “have worked closely on the configuration required for operation in such difficult areas.” He said that for UAVs meant to operate in thick forests, the DRDO was working on “lower frequency radars”.

ENVIRONMENT

Amphibian leapfrogs into Android age – The Hindu

They may not be considered the most charismatic of life forms, but frogs are an increasingly popular subject of ecological research, acknowledged as they are, as one of the most important indicators of habitat health. Extensive studies over the last decade have helped discover no less than 63 new species of frogs in the Western Ghats alone. And now this branch of herpetology is poised to leapfrog into the app age. Frog Find, an Android app available on Google Play, brings 55 species of the amphibian from the Western Ghats to the cellphone. The app, which helps you accurately identify and report frogs of the Western Ghats, was the result of research and development by scientists at the Centre for infrastructure, Sustainable Transportation and Urban Planning (CiSTUP) at the Indian Institute of Science and at Gubbi Labs, a research collective, among others.

Frog Find is an extension of a book written by CiSTUP researcher K.V. Gururaja called Frogs and Toads of Western Ghats aimed to reach out to people in an interactive way. The app, which displays images, common and scientific names, key features and information about habitat and distribution, “not just helps identify frogs, it allows users to give feedback therefore adding to information,” said H.S. Sudhira, director of Gubbi Labs, which participated in designing it. The presence or absence of frogs and their health are vital pointers to the state of the environment, including factors such as pollution and climate change, Mr. Sudhira said. “We next plan to extend the app to other taxa such as insects,” he added. Updates promise to list out all the frogs you can see in a 10-km radius around your GPS location. Earlier this week, Frog Find received the India Geospatial Forum Award in the biodiversity and conservation category.

Buzzing above Everest – The Hindu

Bumblebees are capable of flying at very high elevations – higher than even Mount Everest – according to a new study. Researchers at University of California, Berkeley, travelled to a mountain range in western China and collected six male alpine bumblebees of the species *Bombus impetuosus*. The researchers placed the bees in clear, sealed boxes and experimentally adjusted the oxygen levels and air density in a simulated elevation while keeping temperature constant, said a press release issued by the University of California. All of the bees were capable of flying in conditions equivalent to 13,000 feet. Some even made it past 30,000 feet – the height of the peak of Mount Everest, researcher said. They found that the bees increased the angle at which they extended their wings with each beat, reaching closer to their heads and abdomens each time.

National Green Tribunal bans tyre burning in public – The Hindu

The National Green Tribunal has banned the burning of tyres at public places, such as roads and areas surrounded by residential buildings and also during protests by political and religious groups as it is likely to cause health hazard. The Western Zone Bench of NGT was hearing the petition against the Maharashtra Pollution Control Board (MPCB) and the State of Maharashtra, filed by a group of

14 lawyers who argued that burning tyres on the streets creates toxic smoke and poses a serious threat to the environment by increasing air pollution. The petition had specifically sought relief through a ban on burning tyres during agitations by political and religious groups. “There has been a complete absence of any rule on environment protection when it comes to burning of tyres on the streets,” said Asim Sarode, one of the petitioners, adding that the NGT order is a positive step in the direction of reducing air pollution. As per the tribunal’s ad-interim order, the local police shall take immediate cognisance of burning of tyres. “Any dereliction in the directions given as above may entail penal consequences as enumerated in Section 26 of the National Green Tribunal Act, 2010,” said the order. Under Section 26, a failure to follow the order can result in a penalty of up to Rs 10 crore, which may be extended to Rs 25 crore and/or imprisonment of three years.

Tips from Holland on soil-less farming – The Hindu

Soil-less cultivation using coco peat, or coir pith, could significantly boost the yield for hi-tech farmers in Kerala who have turned to the polyhouse method of protected farming, according to William van der Riet, a Netherlands-based horticulture expert. Mr. Riet, a consultant with Purn Netherlands Senior Experts, was here recently as part of a tie-up with the city-based Prowins Agri System to assess the polyhouse method of cultivation adopted by the State to boost domestic vegetable production. He told The Hindu that greenhouse cultivation was ideal for Kerala, considering the limited resources and space constraints in the State. “As a State positioned at the beginning of the learning curve in protected cultivation, Kerala should focus on achieving sustainable means of production. It is a good opportunity but one that calls for specialised skills and constant innovation,” he said. Mr. Riet feels that polyhouse farmers in Kerala would benefit from soil-less cultivation and precision farming methods like fertigation, which involves the application of water-soluble fertilizers through an irrigation system. Pointing out that almost 90 per cent of the vegetables cultivated in Holland were grown in stone wool instead of soil, he said coco peat would be a viable soil substitute for farmers in Kerala. A by-product of the coir industry, coco peat is a preferred substrate for horticulture because of its fibrous nature and high water-holding capacity.

Benefits

Soil-less cultivation brings down the susceptibility to soil-borne plant diseases, reduces the use of chemicals, and enables farmers to raise up to three crops a year, Mr. Riet said. Purn Netherlands, he said, could train farmers and offer technical solutions through its partnership with Prowins Agri System. Mr. Riet said it had taken 50 years for the Netherlands to achieve its status as a major exporter of horticulture products. He explained how his country had experimented with different methods like heating with stoves, crop rotation, fertigation, artificial administration of carbon dioxide, and soil-less cultivation using rock wool. “As a result of constant innovation, we could boost the production to 65 kg per sq.m., going up to 90 kg per sq.m. for some crops”. In contrast, the yield from polyhouses in Kerala is hardly 5 kg per sq.m., observes K.G. Girishkumar, executive director, Prowins. “With the right inputs, it is possible to enhance it to at least 25 kg”.

The Netherlands today has about 10,000 hectares of glasshouses and greenhouses to grow vegetables like tomato, cucumber, peppers, eggplants, beans and salad crops as well as cut flowers and pot plants. All Dutch glasshouses are heated by natural gas and computers are extensively used for farm management, climate control, irrigation, and nutrient supply. About 90 per cent of the horticulture products grown in Holland are exported to other parts of Europe and beyond. While cautioning

against any attempt to blindly copy the Dutch method of greenhouse farming, Mr. Riet said Kerala could focus on creating a similar ecosystem in which the government, universities, research institutions and the private sector play key roles.

Plan for world's largest power-generating lagoon – The Hindu

The first stage of a £12-billion scheme to build a series of tidal energy plants in Britain started on Saturday as a planning application is submitted for the world's largest power-generating lagoon in south Wales. The promoters want to follow up an initial £850m project for Swansea Bay with four even larger lagoons with a capacity of 7,300MW — enough to meet 10 per cent of Britain's electricity needs. Tidal Lagoon Power has put in a development consent order under the Planning Act 2008, but must persuade the government to provide subsidies of £156 per MW/h — even more than that going to offshore wind farms.

The project must also overcome scepticism about tidal power following the collapse of the much larger Severn Barrage power generator in the same region. The project, which envisages an area of 4.5 sq.miles cordoned off by a breakwater, would have an installed capacity of 320MW with an annual output of 420GW/h and a design life of 120 years. A six-mile sea wall up to 20m high would need to be built, but Mr. Shorrock says only a little over half of this wall would be visible from the land at low tide, and barely a few metres showing at high tide. The power will be generated as incoming and outgoing tides — the daily equivalent of 100,000 Olympic swimming pools worth of water — pass through turbines.

POLITY AND GOVERNANCE

Cabinet clears Telangana Bill – The Hindu

The Union Cabinet on Friday cleared the Bill for creation of Telangana, paving the way for its introduction in Parliament on February 11 or 12. The key demands of Seemandhra leaders that Hyderabad be made a Union Territory and that Rayala Telangana be created were rejected, putting a question mark on the fate of the Bill in Parliament. While the Bill as sent by the Andhra Pradesh Assembly would be commended to Parliament for consideration and passage, the government would move 32 official amendments, amplifying some administrative aspects on the bifurcation of the State. The Bill will be tabled along with a summary of 30-odd pages on the proceedings in the Andhra Pradesh Assembly and Council, and a number of amendments proposed by the State legislators.

With the Cabinet's clearance, UPA managers are now faced with the challenge of getting Congress MPs from Seemandhra on board. As things stand, there is little chance that they will cooperate in its passage. The determination of Seemandhra MPs to stall the move was evident as Parliament was paralysed for the third consecutive day on Friday. A senior Minister told The Hindu, "In effect, no big changes were made to the original Bill. One of the amendments proposed is to include the villages that would be submerged on account of the Polavaram project in Seemandhra." Three Ministers from Seemandhra made a forceful but vain attempt to plead the case for demarcation of Hyderabad as a Union Territory. The Bill envisages Hyderabad as a common capital of the two proposed States for 10 years. The demand of the Seemandhra Ministers for inclusion of the districts of Anantapur and Kurnool in Telangana also did not find favour with the Cabinet. At the meeting,

Union Agriculture Minister Sharad Pawar is believed to have sought clarifications on how the Governor of Telangana could be vested with law-and-order powers in the territory of the common capital of Hyderabad.

Jairam Ramesh, a key member of the Group of Ministers on Telangana, explained that the government was legally sound on the subject. The government is keen on pushing the Bill as the ongoing Parliament session, which ends on February 21, is the last chance to get it through. The current Lok Sabha session is the last before the Lok Sabha election due in April-May. The UPA managers were also holding consultations with the BJP, which has its reservations. The BJP has been putting the onus of the passage of the Bill on the Congress, which faced serious embarrassment on account of a no-confidence move by six of the party MPs from Seemandhra. Both the BJP and the Telugu Desam Party support creation of Telangana but have complained that the Bill does not address the concerns of Seemandhra.

SC allows Centre to go ahead with introduction of T-Bill in Parliament – The Hindu

The Supreme Court on Friday declined to restrain the Centre from introducing in Parliament the Andhra Pradesh Re-organisation Bill for the creation of Telangana. A Bench of Justices H.L. Dattu and S.A. Bobde dismissed a batch of nine petitions filed by MLA L. Payyavulu Keshav and several others, challenging the Centre's decision and questioning the move to create Telangana after the Bill was rejected by the Andhra Pradesh Legislature. In a brief order, the Bench referred to its order of November 18, 2013, when it dismissed similar petitions. "We do not see any change in the stage between November 18, 2013 and today. We decline to interfere at this stage," the court said. The Bench, however, made it clear that the points raised in the writ petitions could be raised in appropriate petitions later. Advocate M.L. Sharma contended that the petition raised important questions of law. Senior counsel Rohinton Nariman said there was no immediate necessity to bifurcate the State.

No Indian flag at Sochi – The Hindu

Indian luger Shiva Keshavan's lament on his blog three months ago that the three-member contingent at the Sochi Olympics would suffer the "dubious distinction" of being the first Indians not competing under the Indian flag at an Olympic event came true on Friday. As Mr. Keshavan, Alpine skier Himanshu Thakur and cross-country skier Nadeem Iqbal prepared to march under the Olympic flag at the inaugural ceremony at the Fisht Olympic Stadium in the Russian city, there was seething anger all over as disappointed sports lovers termed it a "national shame." The International Olympic Committee had banned the Indian Olympic Association in December 2012. Mr. Keshavan lamented in his personal blog www.100thofasec.com — in a post titled 'Raising a Flag' — on October 24, 2013: "As the summer games are still some time away (2016), us winter athletes might assume the dubious distinction of being the first Indians to not compete under our tricolour ... What makes it ludicrous though is that in the past, athletes who participated under the Olympic flag were from politically disturbed countries ... India has no such concern; it's just a political mess, like any other." The Winter Olympics was scheduled for inauguration at the "Fisht" Olympic Stadium at 20:14 local time. It goes on till February 23.

Bill for persons with disability tabled in RS – The Hindu

Amid the din over the Telangana issue, Union Minister Mallikarjun Kharge tabled the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Bill, 2014 in the Rajya Sabha on Friday. The Bill, which provides for universalisation of the disability certificate, will give effect to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, ratified by India in October 2007. The proposed law defines 19 specified disabilities. It seeks to raise reservation in government jobs from the three to five per cent for persons with benchmark disabilities. Seats would be reserved for students with disabilities in higher educational institutions. The draft makes it mandatory for all educational institutions to provide inclusive education to children with disabilities.

The Central government will, as per the Bill, constitute a Central Advisory Board on Disability, and similar Boards at the State level to advise governments on policies, programmes, legislation and projects with respect to disability; to develop a national policy to address issues concerning persons with disabilities; to review and coordinate the activities of all departments of the government and other governmental and non-governmental organisations dealing with matters of persons with disabilities; and to monitor and evaluate the impact of laws, policies and programmes to achieve full participation of the persons with disabilities. A National Commission for Persons with Disabilities would be set up. It will identify provisions of any other law, policies, programmes and procedures that are inconsistent with the new proposed law.

SC upholds wage board notification – The Hindu

The Supreme Court on Friday upheld the constitutional validity of the November 11, 2011 Union government notifications, directing implementation of the recommendations of the Majithia Wage Boards for journalists and non-journalists of newspapers and news agencies. A Bench of Chief Justice P. Sathasivam and Justices Ranjan Gogoi and Shiva Kirti Singh, dismissing a batch of petitions filed by newspaper managements and the Indian Newspaper Society, said the recommendations “are valid in law, based on genuine and acceptable considerations and there is no valid ground for interference under Article 32 of the Constitution.” Writing the judgment, the CJI said the wages as revised/determined were payable from November 11, 2011. The Bench said: “All arrears up to March 2014 shall be paid to all eligible persons in four equal instalments within one year from today [Friday]” and the revised wages should continue to be paid from April 2014.

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS**India drops death penalty clause as Europe bats for Italian marines – The Hindu**

The Union Home Ministry’s decision to drop the death penalty clause while prosecuting two Italian marines in the case of killing Indian fishermen has come at a time when not just the Italians but other high-level European leaders have started speaking publicly about it. The views of European Commission President Jose Manuel Barroso are well-known. The visiting German President Joachim Gauck also weighed into the subject of death penalty, unusually during his speech at a banquet hosted by President Pranab Mukherjee on Wednesday. Mr. Gauck made it clear that in an open dialogue between friends, it was useful to speak on points of disagreement. These include capital punishment, which Europe has abolished and outlawed.

“Our societies may be different but recognition of the universal nature of human rights issues is extremely important to both our peoples. I see the enormous challenges and difficulties that face India in terms of human rights issues. I can only encourage you to do everything possible to enable the citizens of your country to enjoy their rights,” he said. The German President had decided not to attend the Sochi Winter Olympic Games that began on Friday. Although he gave no reasons, major German media outlets attributed his decision to Russia’s human rights record, especially its views on the rights of gays and lesbians. However, the German President did not say anything on this issue here although it is acknowledged that India’s law is as unrelenting as Russia’s. Exactly a week before the German President made his observations on the death penalty, the EC President was more specific, leaving none in doubt that he was speaking on the trial of the two Italian marines in India. After meeting Italian Prime Minister Enrico Letta in Brussels, Mr. Barroso warned that any decision on the case might have an impact on the overall EU-India relations and would be assessed carefully. “The EU encourages India to find, as a matter of urgency, a mutually satisfactory solution to the longstanding case of the Italian marines arrested in February 2012, in accordance with international law and the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea,” he said.

Make border areas ‘a bridge,’ says China – The Hindu

Looking to turn the page from last year’s heightened tensions along the disputed border, China on Friday said it hoped to make border areas “a bridge and bond” with India as its top diplomat travels to New Delhi next week. State Councillor Yang Jiechi, the Chinese Special Representative (SR) on the boundary question, will visit the Indian capital between Monday and Wednesday, officials here said. During his visit, Mr. Yang and National Security Adviser Shivshankar Menon will hold the 17th round of negotiations on the long-running boundary dispute. The boundary talks are currently in the second of a three-stage process. The current stage — seen as the most difficult — involves agreeing on a framework to settle the dispute in western, middle and eastern sections of the disputed border.

The first stage involved agreeing on “political parameters and guiding principles,” and was concluded in 2005, two years after the current Special Representatives mechanism was introduced. Asked about widely held perceptions that the slow-moving negotiations had remained deadlocked since 2005, Foreign Ministry spokesperson Hong Lei said on Friday that China was of the view that both sides had “done a lot of work” towards achieving a settlement. “Over the years, the two sides have done a lot of work to achieve settlement of the issue, in particular through the establishment of the mechanism of SRs in 2003,” he said. “There have already been 16 such meetings. At the high level, we have exchanged in-depth views on the issue and positive progress has been achieved.”

He said both sides had “reiterated that the boundary question should not overshadow” overall ties. “An early settlement serves interests of both China and India, and it is a strategic objective set by the two governments,” Mr. Hong said. “China is ready to work with the Indian government to advance the process of negotiation so as to achieve a fair, reasonable framework acceptable to both sides so as to make the border areas into a bridge and bond between the two peoples to facilitate their exchanges and communication.” The previous round of border talks took place in June last year, only two months after Chinese troops triggered a three-week-long stand-off by pitching a tent in Depsang, in eastern Ladakh. Addressing tensions, rather than taking forward negotiations, subsequently emerged as the focus of last year’s talks, with both countries saying after the last round they had discussed

“ways and means of strengthening existing mechanisms for consultation and coordination on border affairs and methodology to enhance the efficiency of communications between the two sides.” In November, when Prime Minister Manmohan Singh visited Beijing, both sides signed a Border Defence Cooperation Agreement (BDCA) aimed at expanding on-the-ground engagement and formalising patrolling rules to prevent recurrence of stand-offs.

This year’s talks take place as the new Chinese leadership attempts to recalibrate China’s “neighbourhood diplomacy,” an effort reflected in renewed diplomatic outreach to a number of countries in the region. Even as China has intensified pressure on Japan over disputed East China Sea islands and issues relating to wartime history, Beijing has recently attempted to woo its South and Southeast Asian neighbours. Tensions over the South China Sea that surfaced during the last years of the previous Hu Jintao administration have since subsided, with President Xi Jinping and Premier Li Keqiang both visiting Southeast Asia in October and signing landmark economic deals, including an agreement for joint exploration with Vietnam. Indian officials and analysts have also noted a particular keenness to ensure that ties with India remained stable. This has been reflected in what one Asian diplomat described as Beijing’s “notable silence” as India, last month, prominently honoured Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe by hosting him as the chief guest in the Republic Day parade. In recent months, the Chinese leadership has also pushed attempts to revive a long-dormant Bangladesh-China-India-Myanmar (BCIM) corridor plan, with the first official-level talks held in December in southwestern China.

Annan says violence against women affront to humanity – The Hindu

The former United Nations Secretary-General, Kofi Annan, on Friday met Prime Minister Manmohan Singh to exchange views on political and economic developments in the region, climate change and opportunities for south-south cooperation. Mr. Annan, who is on a three-day visit, said India played a key role in addressing peace and stability, poverty alleviation and climate change. “India’s leadership, within the region and globally will be essential to tackle these challenges.” Delivering the inaugural address at the 14th Delhi Sustainable Development Summit on Thursday, he made observations on the state of women in India, and subsidised water and electricity. As women were the major drivers of development, people must dedicate themselves to transforming relations between men and women at all levels of society, he said. “In too many countries, women face unacceptably high levels of violence, including sexual violence, which is an affront to our common humanity.”

In an interview to a TV channel, Mr. Annan said, “...I often say that there are two things in the world, once granted, it is extremely difficult to withdraw — subsidies and privileges.” Food subsidy should not be indefinite although governments should be able to help out poor people in difficult conditions. Eventually, conditions should be created so that they could manage on their own. Next on his itinerary is Bangalore — he is the chief guest at an Infosys Prize ceremony — where he will emphasise the importance of scientific research and innovation to find solutions to some of the challenges of India and the world.

ECONOMY

GDP estimates show worst may be over – The Hindu

The Central Statistical Office (CSO) on Friday released estimates of the 2013-14 Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth, pegging it at 4.9 per cent. In 2012-13, the economy grew at 4.5 per cent, the lowest in a decade. Since the growth during April-September 2013 was 4.6 per cent, a full-year CSO estimate of 4.9 per cent implies that the economy is expected to grow at just under 5.4 per cent during the second half of 2013-14. The estimate, therefore, shows the worst may be over and the economy will bounce back in the second half of the current fiscal — something that the UPA government has been stating. Prime Minister Manmohan Singh said at a press conference last year that “India’s own growth momentum will revive.”

The pickup has come mainly from the agriculture, forestry and fishery sectors that the CSO estimates will grow at 4.6 per cent against 1.4 per cent last fiscal. Also, the services sector, including finance, insurance, real estate and business services, is estimated to grow at 11.2 per cent, compared with 10.9 per cent in 2012-13. Electricity, gas and water production is estimated to grow at 6 per cent, up from 2.3 per cent. The CSO estimates project a contraction during the current fiscal in the manufacturing sector — a negative growth of -0.2 per cent against a marginal growth of 1.1 per cent in 2012-13.

RBI working paper warns of further strains in asset quality of banks – The Hindu

A Reserve Bank of India (RBI) working paper has warned banks of further strains on their asset quality. The working paper titled, “Re-emerging stress in the asset quality of Indian banks: Macro-financial linkages,” said if the current adverse macro-economic condition persisted, the system level gross NPA (non-performing assets) ratio could rise to 4.4 per cent by end-March 2014. This ratio could go up to 7.6 per cent under the severe risk scenario, it added. Public sector banks, it said, might continue to register highest NPA ratio. The growth prospects in the near-term seemed to have subdued, it said. “In October 2013, the IMF (International Monetary Fund) scaled down its projection of world GDP (gross domestic product) growth for 2013 to 2.9 per cent. In its First Quarter Review of Monetary Policy 2013-14, the RBI has also revised its growth projection for 2013-14 downwards to 5.5 per cent,” it added. While the credit growth in the recent period had ebbed, the RBI projected the non-food credit growth to be around 15 per cent in 2013-14. “Thus, notwithstanding the fact that credit growth is not going to be significantly robust, muted economic prospects and global headwinds could lead to further deterioration in asset quality,” the RBI working paper said.

“The position is not alarming at the current juncture, and some comfort is provided by the sound capital adequacy of banks, which ensure that the banking system remains resilient even in the unlikely contingency of having to absorb the entire existing stock of NPAs,” the RBI paper said. The stress tests for banks showed that even under a scenario in which 30 per cent of restructured advances became NPAs, bank stress remained contained, and banks sufficiently capitalised. Nevertheless, the RBI working paper suggested that “it is worth to recognise the problem in its early stages, and initiate corrective measures in the right earnest”. Though restructuring of advances was helpful in containing the effect of rising bad loans in banks’ balance sheet, in the long-run, however, it could have implications for asset quality of the banks just in case a significant proportion of these restructured advances turned out to be bad loans.

“Hence, there is a need to carefully monitor the impact of restructuring on asset quality of banks in the medium- to long-run,” the working paper said. The spurt in NPAs, it said, was due to assorted

factors ranging from inadequate appraisal and monitoring of credit proposals to aggressive lending, among others. “Delay in administrative clearances was an equally important reason for pressure on asset quality which needed correction, it pointed out. “There is a need to strengthen oversight of financial and corporate risks, and policies to incentivise genuine corporate restructuring and improvements to insolvency framework,” the working paper said. Trends revealed that though public sector banks contributed to the bulk of NPAs. The share of new private sector banks, and foreign banks in the total NPAs had gone up in the post-crisis period. “Nonetheless, public sector banks and foreign banks have mainly contributed to the recent rise in NPAs. Public sector banks and old private sector banks have witnessed greater deterioration in their asset quality in the case of priority sector, while it is vice-versa in the case of foreign banks and new private sector banks,” the paper pointed out.

Other industries: If one were to go by the RBI working paper, coal and textiles had contributed substantially to the recent deterioration in asset quality. The other industries that contributed to the rise in NPAs included iron and steel, other textiles, jute textiles, cotton textiles, computer software, leather and leather products, sugar, tobacco, rubber, metals, construction and vegetable oils and vanaspati industry.

Centre gets Rs.54,600 cr worth bids so far in spectrum auction – The Hindu

Another Rs.2,000 crore were added to government kitty at the end of the fifth day of the ongoing spectrum auction on Friday, taking the total value of bids so far to about Rs.54,600 crore. Spectrum in both 900 MHz and 1800 MHz band in the Delhi telecom circle continues to be in demand, while positive bidding was also witnessed for a few more circles for 1800 MHz band. “Activity is on in eight service areas...Bidding will continue tomorrow morning,” Telecom Secretary M. F. Farooqui told journalists here, and added that the total value of the bids was Rs.54,600 crore after 35 rounds of bidding. At the end of the fourth day of bidding on Thursday, eight telecom companies that are in the fray, had jointly made bids worth about Rs.52,600 crore.

In the 900 Mhz band, bids in Delhi have now went up by over 90 per cent to Rs.684.68 crore per MHz from a base price of Rs.360 crore. In two other metro circles — Mumbai and Kolkata — where the same band of spectrum is also available, bidding has been incremental by over 71 per cent at Rs.563.09 crore and 55 per cent at Rs.194.63 crore, respectively. The demand is high in these three circles as licences of some existing operators like Bharti Airtel and Vodafone India are expiring in November this year. In the 1800 MHz band, bidding is gradually picking up. On Friday, three telecom circles — Assam, Delhi and Uttar Pradesh (West) — saw positive bidding. On Thursday, five circles — Uttar Pradesh (East and West), Assam, Jammu and Kashmir and Madhya Pradesh — had seen positive demand for 1800 MHz.

EDITORIALS

Divesting to bridge the deficit – The Hindu

The Special Undertaking of Unit Trust of India (SUUTI, for short), formed specifically to take over the regular income schemes of the Unit Trust of India, has been in the news recently. Reversing an earlier decision to form an asset management company to take it over, the Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs recently decided to encash some blue chip shares held by it. The earlier proposal,

while being technically and theoretically sound, would be time-consuming and will not suit a government in a great hurry to raise money to bridge its deficit by March. A divestment of some of SUUTI's prized shareholdings, on the other hand, will be a quicker way to meet fiscal targets. The government holds through SUUTI 20.72 per cent of Axis Bank with a market value of over Rs.8,060 crore. It also owns 11.3 per cent of ITC (Rs.19,800 crore) and 8.2 percent of L&T (Rs.6,640 crore). A sale of these would fetch the government over Rs.34,500 crore at current prices. Assuming that the modalities of the sale could be gone through in the remaining less-than two months of the current fiscal year, the disinvestment target of Rs.40,000 crore will be very nearly met. Though the 2G spectrum auctions are on course to exceed initial expectations, the boost in disinvestment proceeds will strengthen government finances and make the target of reining in fiscal deficit at less than 4.8 per cent of GDP that much easier.

That said, it is important to choose the correct method of selling these shares. The objective is not only to meet financial targets but also fulfil some of the broad objectives of the disinvestment programme. Over the years, the government had adopted ingenious methods to meet its disinvestment targets, including sale to state undertakings, buybacks, cross-holdings, special dividends and setting up of exchange-traded funds. None of these benefit the common man. The disinvestment programme has theoretically espoused retail investors' interests. The vision statement of the Department of Disinvestment seeks to "promote people's ownership of shares through disinvestment" and spread the equity culture. Over the years, however, the government has ignored retail investors, offering them mere token incentives such as a small discount in the few share offerings of public sector companies. In contrast, large investors have benefited substantially. In fact, the capital market regulator SEBI introduced new schemes that completely bypassed small shareholders. The government could recompense retail investors by selling its shares in SUUTI exclusively to them. That way, retail investors will get to own some blue chips, and the capital market will get some depth.

Moment of truth for India – The Hindu

For the first time in the history of independent India, a high official of its intelligence services stands indicted for cold-blooded killing in the service of the Republic. Thursday's Central Bureau of Investigation charge sheet against former Intelligence Bureau Special Director Rajinder Kumar and his subordinates for the alleged extra-judicial execution of Maharashtra residents Ishrat Jahan Raza and Javed Sheikh, as well as two alleged Pakistani Lashkar-e-Toiba operatives, marks an unprecedented challenge for India's national security system. The CBI's charge sheet has blown the lid off the comforting fiction that extra-judicial killings are aberrations, crimes carried out by brutish policemen and villainous provincial politicians. In this case, the Gujarat Police might have played executioner, but the charges against Mr. Kumar give reason to believe that the death warrants were signed, so to speak, in North Block. Loud and acrimonious political debate has broken out on whether the four victims were linked to terrorism or not, which really is an irrelevant issue. Instead, political leaders must introspect on the role of governments in encouraging murder as a tool of national security, and demonstrate the legislative will needed to set wrongs right.

India is exceptional among democracies in having no legal framework for its intelligence services, nor a system of oversight and accountability for covert operations. Every time they run trans-border operations or plant moles in terrorist groups, they break the law. Ajit Doval, a former IB Director and

the only Indian police officer ever to be awarded the Kirti Chakra, has candidly said the operation that led the President to give him the coveted military honour involved the killing of a Pakistani spy, the illegal detention of terrorism suspects and smuggling across international borders. For individual officers, the absence of a regulatory law for covert operations creates perverse incentives for wrongdoing: who, after all, would want victims of their criminal acts to tell the story in court? In its absence, kidnapping has been substituted for legal detention, torture for criminal investigation, and the bullet delivered to the back of the skull, for trial. Leaders of all parties, though, have been loath to change the system. For years now, figures like Union Minister Manish Tewari, and former intelligence chiefs, have campaigned for the legal regulation of the intelligence services, arguing that the status quo will end up undermining national security. To continue to ignore these voices will ensure the destruction of the intelligence services, and threaten the security of the republic they are charged with defending.

A lonely fighter lost among patriarchs – The Hindu

Rani Gaidinliu does not appear in Indian history textbooks. In the pantheon of Indian freedom fighters, revolutionaries and liberators her name remains unfamiliar. She is unknown to most Indians, a fading memory and myth to her own people. Rani Gaidinliu was a spiritual leader, a reformer, a guerrilla warrior and a freedom fighter who served 14 years, making her one of India's longest incarcerated political prisoner. Gaidinliu was born on January 26, 1915 at Nungkhao, a Rongmei village in Manipur. She was 16 when she became the leader of the Heraka movement after its charismatic leader Jadonang was executed by the British. While the Heraka movement was long aware of the civil disobedience movement in British India, it was Gaidinliu who first used Gandhiji's name and identified her peoples' struggle against oppression and self-determination with the larger national movement gaining ground in India. Through armed resistance, she quickly transformed a religious-indigenous rebellion into a revolutionary movement for independence. In a note recorded in June 1932, C.P. Mills, Deputy Commissioner, Naga Hills, stated that, "The real danger of the movement is the spirit of defiance."

The Empire fearing the spirit of defiance launched a manhunt for the 16-year-old rebel leader. The Assam Governor-in-Council authorised the overwhelming force of the 3rd and 4th Assam Rifles and the entire Manipur Police force. After a year long search and capture operations, Gaidinliu was arrested on October 17, 1932. She was tried and convicted on a charge of murder, waging war against the British crown and sentenced to life imprisonment. When Nehru met Gaidinliu, she had already been imprisoned for five years. Nehru's efforts and subsequent failure to secure Gaidinliu's release from the British is well documented. She would remain a prisoner for another decade, before being released from Tura Jail on October 14, 1947, after India became independent. The newly independent Indian State quickly recognised Gaidinliu's potential as a symbol of Naga separatism. Upon her release the Indian government imposed severe restrictions on her movement and she was not permitted to return home to her people till 1957. The Naga National Council (NNC) leaders found her ideology, vocal opposition to the insurgency and Christian missionary presence an obstacle to the Naga separatist struggle. With the growing NNC threat against her life she went underground once again in 1960. She was honoured as a freedom fighter and awarded a Padma Bhushan, but toward the end of her life she became a neglected figure. Rani Gaidinliu died alone and disillusioned in 1993.

Insiders and outsiders

Year after year, volumes are written and continue to proliferate the public space about patriarchal figures like Gandhiji and Nehru. Indian history, even when written as a history of struggle, continues to exclude figures like Rani Gaidinliu. The Rani and many like her remain absent from our books, our memory, our politics, our public spaces and our discourses. We have treated their history as someone else's history — or even, not history at all. Their absence is ubiquitous. History plays a powerful constitutive in determining an individual's sense of personal identity. It contributes to citizenship, that implies full membership to democratic exercise and the ability to influence one's destiny by having a significant voice in decisions. But, historically the Indian rectitude of citizenship has distinguished between insiders and outsiders. In the last 67 years we have celebrated the glorious self-images of the dominant, those who look a certain way, speak a certain language, make a certain claim of belonging and peddle a certain kind of hatred justified in the name of nationalism. If we are to write the history of Indian citizenship from the point of view of the "others" and "the outsiders," it would be the story of systematic disaggregation of their citizenship, lost not at the point of a gun but rather by legislative action that has institutionalised prejudice.

The most important right we possess is the right that we shall be governed only by laws we have given consent to; and this is the great guarantee of our freedom enshrined in the Constitution. One that India has persistently denied to its citizens of the Northeast. For instance, the Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act (AFSPA) has been in effect in the seven Northeastern States of Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Nagaland, Manipur, Mizoram, Tripura and Meghalaya since September 11, 1958. AFSPA empowers the Indian security forces with unilateral power to detain, torture and kill to maintain order, alongside a legal immunity for extra-judicial killing. Here the law operates in and through its own suspension, and legitimacy always trumps disproportional use of lethal force. The grey areas of State authority grant the licence to kill and legitimises it through a judicial process. Normal laws of the state do not apply here, the state can transcend and transgress the rule of law in the name of larger public welfare. AFSPA violates Articles 21 and 22 of the Constitution that guarantee the protection of life and personal liberty and protection against arbitrary arrest and detention. What exactly does equality before law mean, when individual citizens of the same Republic are subject to different laws and rights?

Rani Gaidinliu's life is an allegory of the larger problems confounding India's Northeast. If history is the narrative of our past, of who we are and how we came to be, then the Indian state has successfully excluded 44 million Indians who live in India's Northeast from the historical, political and cultural memory of what it means to belong. The greatest repression, perhaps, is to deny and deprive people of their history. Today, the Northeast has a new national and local consciousness, along with a new history. Not of its valiant resilience, egalitarian communities, but forever the disturbed region, the country's buffer, infamously connected to insurgencies, violence, persistent backwardness and a place of exclusion. In it are the terrible predicaments rising out of mainland India's predilections, and even prejudices. Any rapprochement with the Northeast must begin with India's recognition that equal citizenship, along with the idea of belonging transforms a state into a Nation. The human need to belong is not simply intangible, it is also an irrevocable condition.

(Suchitra Vijayan, a lawyer and political analyst, previously worked for the U.N. war crimes tribunal for Yugoslavia and Rwanda.)

When roads take their toll on users – The Hindu

<http://www.thehindu.com/todays-paper/tp-opinion/when-roads-take-their-toll-on-users/article5666470.ece>

Two agencies on a collision course – The Hindu

The Central Bureau of Investigation's decision to chargesheet a former Special Director of the Intelligence Bureau (IB) (whose rank is that of a DGP in the State Police cadre) and three serving officers of the same bureau in the sensational Ishrat Jahan case in Gujarat should shock us. It is a sad day for both the organisations whose support to the cause of national security and the upholding of the rule of law hardly needs overemphasising. Although their respective territories are demarcated, the two are now on a collision course. This is despite the fact that they need each other, and that whenever they have worked in harmony, they have achieved the near impossible. Since they have undoubtedly lent great stability to our polity, to do anything that would dent their image is a sacrilege.

Need for balance: I would like to make it clear that berating the CBI and IB as being handmaidens of the government is being unfair to the many dedicated officers who serve them. Even their most ardent supporters will admit that the two bureaus are not without their faults. Perhaps, they have much to hide — especially the CBI, which is always in the public eye and is under immense judicial scrutiny. On the contrary, the IB is a low profile outfit which, unlike the CBI, has no legal status or authority. I know that both have their detractors who are ready to throw the first stone at them at every conceivable opportunity. Some are only too delighted to be able to drive a wedge between them. We should not allow them to succeed. The Ishrat Jahan case provides these forces an opportunity to do this. This is why what has happened in the Ishrat Jahan case demands both responsible comments and a balanced perspective.

There are some basic facts on which there can be no disagreement. No democracy can condone the killing of any of its innocent citizens by a state agency. And when the victim happens to be a woman, the crime gets compounded a million times. This is what is being alleged by the CBI. The four IB officers did not by themselves kill Ishrat Jahan. But they did a lot to facilitate the crime committed by some Gujarat policemen. What drove them to carry out this barbaric act is anybody's guess. According to press reports, the CBI charge sheet is silent on this. Now that the court concerned is to take cognisance of the CBI charge sheet, it would be extremely inappropriate for any of us to comment on the CBI's controversial decision or any evidence adduced by it. I am happy that an aggrieved IB, true to its wont, has not gone to town with its point of view. All its entreaties to the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) and the CBI for a review of its resolve to go ahead with the charges against the four IB men have been in vain.

Compliance with law

Despite some occasional differences there is nothing here to suggest that the CBI's action was motivated by its animus toward the IB. Also, in a court-monitored case, the investigating agency has no option to overlook the misdemeanour of another public organisation. Compliance with settled law overrides every other consideration, including the morale of the national security agencies. This is what has happened here. The judiciary was breathing down the CBI's neck giving it little room for manoeuvre to accommodate the IB's sensitivities. The pressure of human rights activists is another

factor that would have weighed heavily on the CBI's mind in making the move. In my view, this is one of the few occasions on which activists have been on the right course, and we must compliment them for their vigilance.

From the IB's point of view, the Ishrat investigation is a blow to its morale. Its long-term impact is incalculable. It is conceivable that few IB operatives will hereafter venture to go beyond their routine and stick their necks out in a questionable extralegal operation. This negativism will definitely spell doom for innovation and daring, the hallmarks of an outstanding intelligence officer. No amount of incentives will restore their zest for counterintelligence work. This is true even if one concedes that Rajinder Kumar and his three junior colleagues who stepped out of the routine and assisted the Gujarat Police in pursuing terrorist elements were possibly overzealous and reckless. After all, what is the dividing line between unbridled enthusiasm and a conformity to the law? This is particularly so when the transgressors of the law and the perceived code of conduct are not guilty of looking for personal gain or aggrandisement. This is the tragedy of the whole episode. The law cannot possibly discriminate between those who have committed downright criminal acts and those who have abetted them, except in terms of severity of penalty. If during the trial, it is decisively proved that Rajinder Kumar and his three IB juniors were guilty not of personal ill-will but were simply misguided and reckless, the court could take a lenient view while sentencing them. But this is only wishful thinking in the interests of an organisation that has done yeoman service to stabilise the security situation in the country.

Neighbourhood threat

In the final analysis, the lesson will not be lost on those in the neighbourhood. What is happening in Pakistan and Afghanistan is a matter of concern. The unabashed appeasement of the two Taliban groups through the opening up of a dialogue either openly or covertly (as in Afghanistan) is a warning that the Taliban will not be averse to training its guns on us through their affiliates. No less an expert than M.K. Narayanan, former DIB and National Security Adviser, had expressed concern over this. Therefore, the Ishrat prosecution has come at a wrong time. This is not fanciful. I would like to challenge anybody who disputes this unintended connection between a demoralised security agency and a terror outfit that has very recently received a boost by bringing two troubled Constitutional governments to their knees. We will have to keep our fingers crossed and do everything possible to restore the morale of India's premier intelligence agency. The judiciary cannot also be impervious to this task of a delicate fusing of the rule of law and national security.

(R.K. Raghavan is a former Joint Director of the Intelligence Bureau and former Director, CBI. He is co-author of Indian Mujahideen, Springer 2013.)

Billionaires and crony socialism – The Indian Express

President Barack Obama mentioned inequality in his State of the Union address: "inequality has deepened" in the US. A few days later, Christine Lagarde, managing director of the IMF, stated in her Dimpleby lecture that both the level of and increase in inequality were a major problem in the world. She stated that "Seven out of ten people in the world today live in countries where inequality has increased over the past three decades... In India, the net worth of the billionaire community increased twelve-fold in 15 years, enough to eliminate absolute poverty in this country twice over".

I am quite prepared to accept that inequality may have increased, and increased substantially, in the US, as both Obama and Lagarde are stating. But it is by no means a slam dunk conclusion. Further, what does inequality deepening in the US have to do with billionaire wealth and poverty reduction in India? The fact remains that per capita income in the poor developing countries has increased substantially faster than incomes in the West, and this has led to a radical decline in world inequality. At around a Gini level of 0.61 today, the world is the most equal since 1890. (A Gini level of 1 represents perfect inequality, one person has all the income; and a Gini of 0 means perfect equality, everyone has the same income.) It does not take an IMF to do a back of the envelope calculation on trends in world inequality. Since 1980, for four-fifths of the world's population residing in the developing world, per capita income has been growing at a significantly higher pace than the developed world. This leads to an increase in world equality. Further, it can be the case that even if in every country inequality worsens, world inequality can improve. (These and related issues were explored in a 2002 book, *Imagine There's No Country: Poverty, Inequality and Growth in the Era of Globalisation*, Peterson Institute for International Economics, Washington DC. Many of the conclusions and forecasts in the book have stood the test of time!)

Billionaire wealth: Forbes data (the only source!) for 1999 indicated that there were six dollar billionaires in India with \$5.3 billion in assets; in 2013, that number had expanded to 55 billionaires and \$183 bn in assets. This is an increase of over 34 times the 1999 value. On a per billionaire basis, the increase is only 3.8 times. Over the same time-period, both per capita income and the Sensex (in US dollars) have expanded in a near identical fashion by 3.5 times. Three conclusions follow from this quick perusal of Indian data. First, the joint wealth of dollar billionaires has expanded 34 times, well in excess of the IMF chief's claim of only 12 times. Second, per billionaire wealth did not expand at a pace significantly faster than the income or stock ownership of an average person. A major conclusion that follows is that, unlike other countries (especially China), India has not experienced much increase in inequality over the last 15 years. This back of the envelope conclusion (comparison of wealthy billionaires with the aam aadmi) is also supported by NSS data on real per capita consumption — a Gini of 0.30 in 1999 and a Gini of 0.32 in 2011-12, an increase of less than 7 per cent over 12 years.

But the larger point that Lagarde was making remains valid, though it is not immediately apparent what the larger point is. Is it the case that, if billionaire wealth had not increased by a factor of 34, poverty would have been removed twice over? Are poverty removal and wealth generation not part of the same process? Or perhaps, what the IMF chief meant was that the somewhat "ill-begotten" wealth of the billionaires could be redistributed to the poor via increased taxation? Indirectly or directly, there is constant talk in the liberal media, NGOs and international organisations (with the UN being the most extreme example) about crony capitalism being behind wealth and income concentration, and that if only this were to be reduced, the world would be a better place. What I want to discuss today are the ills of crony socialism and their deleterious effects on poverty reduction. Crony socialism defined as only government programmes meant for poverty reduction — in-the-name-of-the-poor expenditures. The table documents aggregate data on Indian consumption, poverty and related data for the NSS years since 1999-2000. The last two rows document the money required to achieve zero poverty in any given year and what government spends to reduce poverty. The former is calculated under the assumption that god, and not the politician, is identifying and redistributing to the poor as defined by the Tendulkar poverty line.

In 1999-2000, the government was spending 1.1 per cent of GDP on transfer subsidies, and 3.1 per cent of GDP was needed. What the data underline is the fact that, as poverty has declined due to high growth, Sonianomics has engineered exactly the opposite pattern — today, only 0.44 per cent of GDP is needed to achieve zero poverty and the government is spending six times as much to reduce poverty. Why this huge divergence? Because the government expenditures for the poor are not really meant for them; they are designed to benefit the middle class but always, always, in the name of the poor. A perspective on this is provided by the Congress's last stand before elections — increasing subsidised LPG cylinders from nine to 12, or an increase in the existing subsidy by 33 per cent: from an expenditure level of Rs 40,000 crore to Rs 52,000 crore. What is the amount of expenditure needed with perfect targeting? Rs 48 000 crore. That is, the amount spent on LPG subsidy alone is enough to achieve zero poverty in India in 2013-14.

Perfect targeting is not possible, but it must be possible to reduce the leakage. In this regard, the Aadhar identification programme (incidentally dispensed by the Congress!) needs to be supported to allow poor people to get the money meant for them. But don't be surprised if money meant for them does not reach them. It is not only corruption that eats the poor man's lunch; it is badly designed policies like MGNREGA, food subsidies, free water and half-price electricity. Oh yes. Lagarde claimed that billionaires' wealth increase over the last 15 years was enough to eliminate poverty in India twice over. Reduction in crony socialism will be far more effective; today, a minimum of Rs 300,000 crore is spent on transfer subsidies rather than the amount needed, Rs 48,000 crore. The ill-begotten gains of crony capitalism over 15 years reduce poverty twice over according to the IMF; the ill-begotten gains of crony socialism in one year can reduce Indian poverty six times over! I exaggerate, but only ever so slightly. And yes — in Darwinian terms, crony socialism has the genes of a cockroach.

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Better sense prevails – The Indian Express

The blind resistance to genetically engineered crops may finally be easing up. First, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, in his address to the Indian Science Congress in Jammu, backed the careful use of biotechnology to deliver high-yield crops resistant to weather, parasites and vectors. Now, affirming his commitment to resuming GM field trials, Environment Minister Veerappa Moily has spoken of the need for “good processes, which do not mean personal prejudices or likes and dislikes.”

Fears about genetically engineered plants have been persistently disproved by science, whether the worry is about pesticide-resistant superweeds, or such plants contaminating their “natural” neighbours and eradicating biodiversity. But the politics around GM crops has remained stubborn in India, even though the global movement is now running on fumes and there have been public recantations. Peer-reviewed scientific evidence is dismissed, every advocate of GM food written off as a corporate puppet, regulation pre-emptively declared untrustworthy, and selective “facts” marshalled by NGOs and taken at face value by many policymakers. Previous environment ministers have gone to the extent of instituting public hearings where activist prejudices were given the same credence as rigorously tested scientific evidence, and imposing a moratorium on Bt brinjal. Politics has surfaced even in the technical expert committee pondering the question of field trials. Anxieties persist even though India has been a big biotech beneficiary during the Green Revolution, and even

though improved yields and resistance to pests have made many farmers opt for Bt crops, even pirating them when they are not available. Bt cotton is what converted India into a cotton-exporting country.

Now, to break the impasse, a committee of secretaries of stakeholder ministries, the cabinet secretary and the PMO will file a joint affidavit in the Supreme Court. Hopefully, this will be the beginning of scrupulous and scientific farm evaluations, a way to impartially test industry data as well as NGO orthodoxy. What is needed is comprehensive, case-by-case study of each GM crop. Given the rising demands of food security and the promise of GM, it is important that the debate shift to one about optimal regulation.

Olympic protest – The Indian Express

Russians were understandably proud at the opening of the biggest and costliest Winter Olympics ever. In the coming days, however, another far-from-flattering first threatens to dent the legacy of the Sochi Games. Global outrage over Russia's anti-gay and blasphemy law could make this the "most protested" Games ever. Google has already given its search page a multi-coloured make-over, coming out in support of the LGBT community. This could just be the start. A "rainbow flag" sighting from the Sochi arena might get mentioned in the same breath as the famously controversial "Black salute" by a couple of US sprinters at the 1968 Mexico Olympics.

International Olympic Committee president Thomas Bach has even marked out a "protest area" for aggrieved athletes. Olympians have been allowed to make political statements only at press conferences. But the athletes are walking dangerously close to the line. Russia's Alexey Sobolev has turned up at the Games with a snowboard that has a knife-carrying woman in a ski mask, who bears more than a passing resemblance to a member of the anti-establishment Russian pop group Pussy Riot. Many influential voices are using the Sochi Games to highlight all that they think is wrong with Putin's Russia. Günter Grass and Salman Rushdie are among 200 writers who, through an open letter in the media, have joined the protests. Over the years, the Olympic stage has become more visible, and a statement made from there resonates longer. The six colours of the Olympic rings once represented the colours of all nations. At Sochi, they want the rings to stand for the diversity of gender and sexual orientation.

No, you can't – The Indian Express

Having scorned the national lokpal legislation as too feeble to "even catch a mouse", the AAP government in Delhi promised to enact its own Jan Lokpal Bill. The bill is predictably heavy-handed — the jan lokpal would have the power to initiate proceedings, investigate and prosecute cases and could impose life imprisonment on officials. The AAP is intent on ramming this bill through, calculating that the Delhi Congress will not risk pulling the government down on the eve of Lok Sabha polls. The only hitch, though, is that the AAP's action is illegal. Given that it will be partly funded from the Consolidated Fund of the Capital, the Jan Lokpal Bill needs the lieutenant governor's permission to be introduced in the assembly. The lieutenant governor of Delhi consulted the solicitor general of India, who confirmed that the bill could not go to the assembly without the former's permission.

The AAP, though, has never come across an obstruction that it could not paint as a confrontation between itself and the Corrupt Establishment. Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal has written a letter to

the LG in which he suggests that the building face-off over the Jan Lokpal Bill between the Delhi government and the letter of the law is on account of corrupt forces banding together to oppose the AAP, which is alone in resisting the corruption and criminalisation of politics. More specifically, he claims that “it is not written anywhere in the Constitution” that the bill needs sanction from the Centre, and that a Union home ministry directive was being passed off as a constitutional requirement. He argues that this directive itself is unconstitutional. Casting the matter also as an assault on Delhi state’s autonomy, he asks, “if all bills need the Centre’s permission, why bother having an election?” Kejriwal misrepresents the points of contention. The demand of more autonomy for Delhi merits a separate, more sober discussion. As far as the Jan Lokpal Bill is concerned, however, it is not the will or whim of a Congress-run home ministry, but the law, enacted within a constitutional framework, that stands in his way. The Government of National Capital Territory of Delhi Act, 1991 clearly mandates that the LG’s permission is required in such cases.

The AAP has often conveyed a disregard for rules, suggesting that they are empty protocols that exist to serve a corrupt system. All too often, it has ended up showing a dangerous contempt for the rule of law itself, treating warrants as mere niceties, trying to arm organised crowds with sweeping powers over local government bodies. This time, the Jan Lokpal has simply hit a wall — the law of the land. The AAP would do well to back off.

By the people – The Indian Express

The Aam Aadmi Party is making efforts to introduce more participation in governance by referendums to determine the people’s will and mass meetings to resolve their problems. More democratic participation in decision-making has become necessary in the 21st century, not only as an ideological preference but also as a practical necessity. Advances in communications and information technologies — ubiquitous cellphones, the internet, social media — and a hyperactive media, have transformed the speed with which citizens become engaged with issues. Established executive and legal processes are not designed for sufficient citizens’ participation. Therefore, new processes are required for citizens’ participation in a structured manner, to enable new options to be systematically considered and for consensus to emerge. However, as the AAP’s efforts so far have shown, the management of these processes is not easy. The challenge is to combine more public participation with sound decision-making. Broadly speaking, institutional methods with which democracies resolve disputes and find solutions can be divided into three categories: Method A is the adversarial method. Courts hear adversarial arguments. They pass judgments. One side wins, the other loses. It is the rule of law.

Method B is the bureaucratic method. Ministries represent their positions. Expert views are sought. Authorities decide. This is the role of the executive. Method C is the collaborative method. Stakeholders listen to each other. Desired outcomes are agreed to. Various options are generated and considered. This is the role that democratic institutions are expected to perform, in which citizens or their representatives deliberate. Such institutions range from elected assemblies to participative planning processes. Each of these methods has its protocols, its established procedures, and its professionals. These methods are not substitutable for each other because each is designed for a purpose. The adversarial method of the legal system is good to answer singular questions posed to it. It is not an appropriate method for developing multi-faceted solutions to complex problems. The latter is the domain of the executive with its bureaucratic method. The bureaucratic method can

consider many facets of an issue. However, its established protocols and procedures make it operate in silos. It is not very effective when “out of the box” and systemic solutions are required. Moreover, its methods are unsuitable to resolve ideological differences.

Method C, the collaborative method, is the default process to which democracies must turn when the bureaucratic method is stymied by deep differences amongst stakeholders. However, if good processes for democratic deliberation are not used when required, problems tend to oscillate between methods A and B without any resolution. For example, groups of ministers (GoMs) hear all sides and try to find solutions, but the solutions do not stick. Then people turn to the Supreme Court for resolution, which the executive sees as an encroachment on its domain. The longer the system is frustrated by bureaucratic failure to find an acceptable solution and the more it relies on legal or adversarial approaches for resolution, the deeper differences between stakeholders become. This is the swamp into which debates in India on several issues are sinking: environmental regulation, labour laws, and prices of medicines, for example. Policy change is paralysed by contentions, and projects are stuck in disputes. Therefore, investments are not flowing in and growth is stalling.

Method C processes have defined protocols of engagement and procedures for their work, just as legal and bureaucratic processes have their own. They too require professional capabilities. In all these cases, technology can facilitate the process. It cannot replace the institutions and processes of courts, government, Parliament and other democratic bodies. Of late, the Planning Commission has been searching the world and the country too for the best processes for converting contentions amongst stakeholders into collaboration, and confusion in plans into coordination. It has become imperative for the country to adopt such processes so that it can convert its developmental intentions into implementation.

Many countries are developing and applying new “Method C” processes. An example is a special office set up by the Danish parliament to use a process called the “consensus conference” for deliberative consultations. This capacity is made available to commissions and government entities for consultation with citizens on difficult issues. The process of “Deliberative Polling” has been introduced in China for citizens to determine what infrastructure should be built in their city. Another example is “Pemandu”, a systematic process introduced in Malaysia for engaging all stakeholders concerned with a national issue, such as improvement of education or development of an industrial sector. This process is facilitated by a special unit attached to the prime minister’s office. The Planning Commission has developed a process for spreading the use of such deliberative processes across the country. Called the India Backbone Implementation Network (IbIn), this process is modelled on that used in Japan in the 1970s to spread the use of total quality management (TQM) techniques with which Japan was able to transform the performance of its public and private enterprises. Corporations, professionals, government — all participated in building the TQM movement and, with it, the rapid progress of the country.

The evolution of Indian democracy requires innovations of new democratic processes for citizens’ participation. IbIn is the seed of a network of civil society organisations, business associations, and government agencies committed to accelerating the country’s progress by the application of better methods for stakeholder engagement in developing and implementing solutions.

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