

## Arrest value erosion

What ails our education system? Why have education standards fallen? Why doesn't a single Indian university figure among the 200 top universities in the world? These and other questions dog our educationists of whom we have no dearth in the country. Certainly something is wrong somewhere in the entire educational system that is in vogue. We need to identify the reasons for a downslide in educational system and the emergence of imbalanced personalities from the institutions of education and learning.

The debate is triggered by the message of the President to the students of Central University of Odisha via video conferencing. The President addressed the youth of the country focusing on the important role that awaits them once they have completed education and are stepping into active participation in building India of our dreams. Nearly half of the population of our country comprises the youth below 35 years of age. This is enormous man power that would do wonders if harnessed in right direction. The strength of a nation lies in its youth. In that sense our country has tremendous potentiality to grow and become a strong country. Fortunately, we have a democratic system of governance which is highly conducive to the growth of the creative initiative among the youth. The President is very right in saying that our democracy has the potential to do wonders and we should not be deterred by temporary difficulties that crop up here or there. We have to look at our future in a holistic manner. There are no two words about what the President has said about the declining values of life and education in our country in contemporary times. It is a great historical fact that our traditional system of knowledge was based on high moral and ethical values. The important ingredient of that system was renunciation of attachment to material world. Unfortunately, that value system has suffered erosion and the result is that our youth are growing in a structure that is unable to provide them the opportunity of developing their personality and individuality. Plant men if you want to plant for centuries, go a Chinese axiom. A country develops only if its youth are men and women of character and integrity. These essentials are framed and solidified in the institutions of higher education and learning.

The real strength of a democratic system lies in the type of leadership it can give to a nation. There is no denial that our leadership has suffered erosion of faith. The leadership was supposed to become the beacon light for the nation but alas it has not, rather has been misleading in more ways. The President has rightly laid stress on the innovative capability of our youth and for that science and technology are the fundamental instruments. Our present system of education at higher level does not make our youth capable of developing strong innovative faculty. And without that faculty we cannot progress according to our needs. It will be reminded that the Prime Minister also stressed on Indian youth in technical institutes paying full attention to innovative faculty. Our Universities have to make good input in developing innovation as the instrument in the hands of the youth.

The message of the President is a path-finder for the community of students in our universities. But credit should also be given to the President for reminding the youth about the responsibility which they owe to the nation that provides those facilities and scope for attaining highest levels of knowledge. There cannot be privileges without responsibilities. It is for the students of this country to know and to understand that they have to shoulder weighty responsibilities of leading the country to the destination of material and spiritual accomplishments. We are the citizens of a country that is a mosaic of cultures, languages and ethnicities. It is of utmost importance that our youth are brought up with a clear and radiant vision of a pluralistic society. We need to learn that we cannot live in isolation and that peaceful co-existence among all citizens of India is the real strength behind this vast ocean of humanity.

## Strengthening the navy

Our country has a long coastline extending to Arabian Sea, Indian Ocean and the Bay of Bengal. Obviously, we have to guard our seaports and maintain the freedom of the maritime channels of international trade and commerce. This means that we need adequate naval strength to undertake the guarding of the vast sea line. This is the reason why our naval forces have been demanding adequate funding for more than a decade in the past arguing that the navy needed updated missile regime to secure Indian coasts against foreign intrusion. It is good to know that the Defence Ministry understands the compulsion that we have and has acted accordingly. The ISRO has successfully test-fired GSAT 7. For the Navy, this is part of a long-term modernization plan involving the use of satellites and information technology. In recent years successive Chiefs of Naval Staff have identified space-based communications as the core of the Navy's futuristic network-centric operations. Thanks to our capable scientists who are dedicated to the task of building a modern navy with considerable strike power in its missile regimes. We are rightly proud of them and their deep sense of patriotism.

Now that we are moving forward in our naval defence capability by inducting modern weapons and equipment to its strike force, we would make it clear to our neighbours that India never nourished any nefarious designs against her neighbours. If our country is developing and improving her naval strike force, it is not intended to be against any country. It is a self defence mechanism to which our country, like any other in the world, is entitled. Self defence has become all the more important in view of China, our arch rival in the Asian Content, building strong naval presence in the Indian Ocean. When the Defence Minister says that his Government is fully aware of her defence responsibilities, it means that he will not remain complacent on the critical issue of availability of sophisticated defence material. Therefore the test firing of satellites from the bases allotted to her is in line of our defence preparedness.

# Surviving economic crisis

Arun Jaitley

This country has survived many economic crises in the past. We survived the East Asian Economic crisis in the late 90's, the slow-down of the earlier part of the last decade; to some extent we tried to survive even the global financial crisis, or, the Lehman crisis of the last decade. But there is one fundamental difference. Today, the situation appears to be far gloomy, and the ability of the Government and its political leadership to handle this crisis itself has lost confidence, not only in the country, but is also losing the confidence of the investors' community. This has happened over the last few years.

Let me start with the last point which the Prime Minister has made. He has emphasised the need for a larger consensus on the economic issues; of course, it is necessary. But then consensus on economic issues emerges out of a political environment. If the political environment for consensus is not built up by the Government, on the contrary, it is regularly fractured by the Government of the day then to expect consensus only on economic issues itself will be a daunting and a challenging task. No Government can say I want consultation, I want to be very democratic, but I am a democrat only when in distress. That seems to be the attitude of this Government. Therefore, I think, it is a lesson for all of us, particularly for this Government, that in a course of its relationship with State Governments, with political parties, its conduct in this House while conducting the affairs and the conduct of its investigating agencies must reach a level of fairness and political acceptability, then, despite differences on crucial matters of national interest, there could be consensus and we welcome a consensus on such matters. But if the Government regularly breaks and

fractures that consensus, then, it may be very challenging for it to expect a consensus when in isolation. Sir, this Government has lost confidence and it is for the hon. Prime Minister to reply to my question. You blame the global practice for it. You blame various other factors which have come in. But has the Prime Minister realised that the whole world was warning us, it was global financial media which was warning us, it was global investors which was warning us that there was a spate of policy paralysis going on in India. This has been the criticism for the last four or five years. The whole world warned us. It was a fair comment that the world was making. It was not a comment made by us. We did not invent this phrase. Never has this phrase been used for economic policy direction in India as much as it has been used in the last few years. This has been used by responsible international observers. Why did we lose the trust of the international investors? Why did we lose the trust of the domestic investors? Instead of somebody investing in India, even on the Current Account Deficit you had a reverse flow of investment from India going to outside; and that had an impact. People started saying that India may no longer be the best place to do business. From 1991 onwards till today, under Governments of different political complexions, we as a nation, succeeded in showcasing India as an economic destination. In the last few years that image was lost. Kindly see the impact, hon. Prime Minister, that corruption had. The Finance Minister has recently made a statement indicating the blame on certain other institutions. Let us take the case of Spectrum allocation and see the spiral effect. It was a case of \* corruption. CAG came out with a Report. CAG gave some numbers on which we may have different views. The Court acted because it was

apparently a case of corruption. Sir, may I just request you that this is a very important issue? ..... Finally, you had a situation besides prosecutions, you had licenses being terminated, investments being confiscated. Now this was a spiral effect of corruption. We became a country where investments could be confiscated, licenses could be cancelled. As for coal, the Government speaks of essential imports. Oil is an essential import; edible oils are essential imports. But we have coal reserves. What has happened in the last six-seven years because of coal? Essentially, because of corruption, you have today a situation where we have to import almost 20 billion dollars of coal. The global prices are going up. The result of which is current account deficit. As for Iron ore, corruption both by a section of the industry as also by our system, including agencies in the... you have a situation that our exports have come to a standstill. All these factors are contributing to the current account deficit. Now we can say that the courts are responsible; CAG is responsible. But the root cause is in what we did, and this was a spiral effect of what corruption took place within our system; the spiral effect of which was that people started losing confidence, as far as we were concerned. As for policy decision, here leadership was required not only for policy directives. You can indicate that some difficult decisions took place during 2009 and 2011, but when some fiscal suggestions were made, including suggestions for retrospective taxation, the Prime Minister should have, as an eminent economist and leader of the Government, applied himself as to what the long-term impact of this was going to be. In each of these decisions, you lost the trust of global investors; you lost the trust of domestic investors.

Therefore, merely to say that there are global factors, there is a crisis in Syria, that others are also doing very badly, hon. Prime Minister, a failed candidate in a class always has this explanation that the whole class has failed this time; that is no explanation. We were amongst the fastest growing economies in the world. We have been showcased before the world. Today, agencies are indicating that our growth rate may fall even below 4 per cent this year. Now if this is to happen, you have to realize as to what is the priority of this Government. We would like to have a specific answer. You speak in terms of correcting the fiscal deficit. Look at the figures. There was a time when the going was good and for years together we had 8 to 9 per cent growth rate. We came down to 2.5 to 3 per cent fiscal deficit. Then electoral expenditure was undertaken. As a result of which, from 2.5, you have gone up to 6 per cent. Your revenue deficits went up. And you merely say that the periods of 2009 and 2011 were responsible because those in-charge at that time are not here to defend themselves. This is an exercise we started in 2007-08 keeping the last election in mind.

Therefore, you now have to decide whether you want to go back to prudence or you want to give priority to populism, which I am afraid your Government is still doing. Because, if you continue to follow the course, then the legacy that you leave behind will not be the legacy that you left behind as Finance Minister. That legacy was different. The legacy then you will leave behind as Prime Minister is going to be, after me the deluge. The country cannot afford it. Therefore, we would like you to respond to these clarifications as though these domestic factors have also contributed to the mess in which the country has been landed up.

(The author is Leader of Opposition in Rajya Sabha)

## Improving performance of Govt schools

Ashish Sharma

Notwithstanding a slew of measure taken by the cenral/state Govt. to attract students to Govt. Schools, a large no. of parents/guardians still prefer to admit their wards in the private schools. The steps taken by the Govt. to improve enrollment in Govt. schools including Provision of Mid Day Meal, construction of rooms/toilets, provision of drinking water facilities, free supply of books/bags, allotment of school maintenance/ have met with little success. What is required to attract students to the Govt. Institutions is to create students friendly atmosphere in the schools, besides provision of quality education to the students. For this purpose, the Govt. needs to introduce a policy of incentives and disincentives for teachers and officers. Heads of institution showing 100% result of their institution should be rewarded by the way of issuing them appreciation/commendation certificates. Similarly, the lecturers/ teachers showing 100% Board result in their respective subjects or their students figuring among the merit positioners need to be honoured by way of their transfers to the institutions of their choice so that others may derive inspiration and strive to improve their performance and those showing poor result should be penalised by way of stopping their annual increments or posting them in far off places. Students getting merit positions should be honoured at dist/provincial levels to make the public aware that Govt. Institutions are not lagging behind the private schools in any way. ZEOs and CEOs should be held responsible for poor performance of schools falling in their jurisdiction and appropriate action should be taken against them.

All the Higher Secondary/High schools should be directed to prepare a calender of academic and co-curricular activities at the outset of the session and submit the calender to the chief education officer who should constitute a team of officers and eminent educationists to monitor the implementation of calender in the areas of their jurisdiction. Schools must be asked to celebrate national festivals, annual day, sports day provide a chance to the students to display their talent. Primary schools need to be equipped with educational toys and games and playing equipment such as small merry grounds, craddles etc. Suitable to their age in accordance with the principle of learning by playing. Teachers should be imparted training as to how to deal with pre-primary and primary children and the post of a counselor should be created at cluster level to deal with the children suffering from physical defects and psychological problems and thus help them avoid taking extreme steps such as suicide which have been on the rise for some time past. Periodic check up by a team of doctors who can help in diagnosing the physical defects and deficiencies of the children and take proper steps to treat them. Filling up of vacancies of teachers and other staff within the shortest possible time help a lot in creation of congenial atmosphere in the schools. More teachers should be recruited to reduce the teacher student ratio. Model schools on the pattern of JNV's and KV's should be opened at zonal level to serve as a model for other schools. Trained faculties should be provided in DIETs and SIEs and it should be made obligatory for them to visit the schools frequently and provide academic support and guidance to the schools.

All these steps if taken in letter and spirit will go a long way in attracting students to the Govt. Schools.

Poonam I Kaushish

A heated argument took place on the Food Security Bill at the Union Cabinet meet last week. "Where do we get an additional Rs 5000 crore?" reportedly queried Finance Minister Chidambaram. Colleagues Antony, Sharad Pawar and Anand Sharma supported him but Kamal Nath, Ghulam Nabi Azad and Jairam Ramesh disagreed. All eyes turned to Prime Minister Manmohan Singh. Said he, "Bite the bullet." It was eminence grise's (power behind the throne) baby'. Five days later averred outgoing Reserve Bank Governor Subbarao: "I do hope Chidambaram will one day say, 'I am often frustrated by the Reserve Bank, so frustrated that I want to go for a walk, even if I have to walk alone. But thank God, the Reserve Bank exists.'" His response to Finance Minister's statement, "If the Government has to walk alone to face the challenge of growth, then we will walk alone," underscoring the two did not see eye to eye.

Cut to the Rajya Sabha where a slugfest ensued between the Prime Minister and BJP Friday last. Breaking his maunvrat on the economic crisis Manmohan Singh blamed the "foreign hand", domestic factors and Opposition for not allowing Parliament to function. "In which democracy does an Opposition call the PM Chor hai?" Shot back Opposition leader Arun Jaitley, "In which democracy does a PM buy MPs to win on a vote of confidence." Accentuating the wide chasm.

Should one dismiss these as disparaging voices from Government? Settling political scores to garner vote-bank security in forthcoming polls? Or do they portray the reality of India? A

sharp downslide from a global darling to plowing a lonely furrow? Is the India story over? All this and more.

Undeniably the Congress's ma-beta duo Sonia-Rahul did the unthinkable: pluming for populism over prudence by getting Parliament to seal the Food Security Bill and Land Bill last Monday. Terming the FSB a "game-changer" asserted Sonia, "The question whether resources can be mustered is answered by, "Ye karna hi hai."

Clearly, sound economic sense has been surrendered to political gamesmanship on the assumption that populist freebies yield better electoral rewards than reasoned issues and sustainable programmes. Think. The FSB which promises to provide 67% population 5Kg wheat, rice and coarse cereals at Rs 3, 2 and 1 respectively will cost the exchequer Rs 1.25-30 lakh crore.

Where will the Government generate the money? The fiscal deficit is 5.6%, growth rate down to 4%. The current account deficit is US\$ 87.8 billion (4.8%) i.e. our imports outstrip exports. The Government has no idea or control on skyrocketing prices, high inflation, stagnant economy, rapid depreciation of rupee, stymied by policy paralysis, a cataclysm staring us in the face.

Undeniably, the FSB is a sure prescription for the impending collapse of Government finances without ensuring that grain would be available to it at affordable rates. Probably, the Admin-



istration will buy foodgrains at high prices and sell at the lowest resulting in enormous unwanted expenditure.

True, the poor who constitute the largest vote chunk need to be fed and it is the duty of the State to take care of its peoples' welfare but at what cost? Or will we wait for manna to fall from Heaven? Can a Party get credit at public expense?

Arguably, the scheme will not entitle beneficiaries to adequate calorie intake, and promote malnutrition. Where will the aam aadmi get nutritional and fortified food, his protein, the Bill makes no provision for dal or will the Congress give chicken soup, reminiscent of French Queen Marie Antoinette?

Also, the Bill could cripple agriculture as farmers would lose

supremo successfully appropriate rice at Rs 2 and made it into a symbol of victory in the early nineties. Why blame Sonia alone? In BJP ruled Chhattisgarh Raman Singh too has made rice his political staple. He has now upped his rice bonanza from Rs 3 per kg to Rs one for the BPL families. All phokut mein.

Sadly, the populism political parties indulge in would be funny, were it not for future consequences. None sees the danger of economic derailment. Specially, when recession and a severe financial crisis is staring the country in the face. Given the economic logic that there is no such thing as a free lunch, a politician's indulgence is invariably paid for either in the form of higher taxes or increasing inflation.

Of course, it can be argued that Parties are obliged to be seen as populist. It would be foolish to wish away political intervention or interference. "We have to garner votes and they don't come for free," confessed a senior Minister. Rubbishing all talk of political jurisprudence in the economic sphere crossing prudence limits, where it starts hurting the economic.

Unfortunately, our policy makers have not been able to perceive the reality of the situation and made populist spending in to holy cow without studying its effectiveness. Miserably failing to evolve a strategy of development which could take into account our pluralism and fluctuating economic disparity.

For instance, widespread poverty is a good reason for rationing foodgrains through the PDS. But has anyone studied whether it has benefited the Below Poverty Line masses? No, on the other hand, the actual impact working through a multiplier effect has only pushed up corruption, filling political and bureaucratic coffers. While the poor fed their hungry stomachs on the neon signs of Dominos pizzas.

Arguably if the Government recognises that its schemes are leaky it is not irresponsible to continue spending through old, inefficient channels? No proper audit has been done on how the money is being spent. Remember how Prime Minister Manmohan Singh rued that the Rs 12,000 crore meant for poverty alleviation just disappeared.

Questionably, populism will only provide immediate succour at the expense of the entire future. It is no remedy for neglect of education, health, faulty priorities in respect of industrialisation and under-investment in rural areas. The growth of corruption, bloated bureaucracy, burgeoning population and apathy to greater productivity.

Time now for Parties to realise that good governance and populism do not go hand in hand. The voter is no fool. Each populist slogan only heightens his growing awareness. The real significance of any electoral battle is that unless poverty is tackled, populist gimmickry will continue to entice our netas. No Government can afford to throw away money on populist whims. India needs a 'lakshman rekha' on vote-bank politics. INFA

## It's Raining Populism

# Sonia diktat: Yeh Karna Hai!



incentive to raise food crop. Already, 2,500 farmers are giving up cultivation every year which would lead to foodgrains becoming scarcer whereby one would need to buy more. Thus the number of hungry people would increase. Are we putting the clock back to the populist nineties?

Why blame Sonia? Populism is not a new phenomenon. It has reared its ugly head in various forms over the last 25 years. A ring-a-ring-roses of political opportunism heralded by slogans. From Indira Gandhi's 'Garibi Hatao' to BJP's Kamandal and V.P. Singh's Mandal issues down 'roti, kapra aur makaan' and 'sadak, bijli aur paani' and now 'bhook metao'.

Notably, the Congress President is doing a NT Rama Rao. Remember how Andhra's TDP

## Creation of Administrative units in Samba

Sir, The newly created Samba district is having some 900sq km area and comprises of 382 villages 100 Panchayats, 4 Blocks, 1 Tehsil and 3.24 lacs population (2001 Census). Almost three fourth of it is composed of arid and rugged hill sides with average rainfall and meager forests. On account of tremendous changes in the composition of population and growth of new probabilities and aspirations there is need to evolve a new and progressive concept of administration. To meet the aspiration for the people for effective and efficient administration, it is essential to reorganize and re-orient the old system. With the concept of micro-planning at grass roots and administration at the door steps of the people, I propose the following suggestions:-

\*The sprawling interior area of Ramgarh-Swanika, Gurha Slathian-Utterbehani and Raya Bagla be composed to form a new tehsil Vijaypur. It may consist some 124 villages. It also stands recommended by Wazir Commission.

\*The revenue villages falling under Samba Block, with addition of Ghagwal Block/Niabot and Mansar Patwar of Majalta Tehsil be included in the present tehsil of Samba. Some 225 villages fall in its jurisdiction.

\*The Bari Brahama Niabat be elevated to a full-fledged tehsil keeping in view the extremely backward patwars and villages of Purmandal Block, growth of industries, acquisition and requisition of land, volume of work which need the presence of Tehsildar.

## No vote bank politics

Readers Write

Sir, For the last few years the whole of J&K State seems to be prone to communal tension (clashes) even on the trivial issues. The atmosphere has become so explosive and sensitive that one can expect anything to happen at any time and at any place.

As matter of fact almost all the political parties, social groups and religious organisations are worried about their own personal agendas.

Especially the people at the helm of affairs work as per their vote bank politics, leaving the common people at the helm of affairs work as per their whims leaving the common people at the mercy of God.

There is urgent need for political parties to shun away vote bank politics in the best interest of the State and the country and dedicate themselves sincerely for the development, unity and integrity of the country.

We need to be extra ordinary careful and vigilant especially during festivals and religious functions. Intelligence agencies have a big role to play to get the administration informed in advance about the possible future ugly incidents.

Let us hope good sense prevails upon the politicians and other disruptive forces for not making the innocent people as fodder for hatred and communal clashes.

Yours etc....  
Avtar Krishan Razdan  
Late-Da-Bagh  
Jammu