SPECIAL: BCCI, LODHA COMMITTEE AND LEVELLING THE PLAYING FIELD >> p.06

THE MAN OF INTELLIGENCE
Ajit Doval: the brain behind India’s strategic shift

National ST Commission is as marginalised as the tribals themselves p.28

How more and more villagers are switching to cooking gas p.34

Sexist internet: Law will have to evolve to stop cyber harassment p.57
The power we fund brightens lives and so does our care

As a constructive partner in the community in which it operates, PFC has been taking concrete action to realize its social responsibility objectives, through financial assistance for the following:

- Support to employment-oriented Training & Skill Development Programmes for SC, ST, OBC, Women and EWS and physically-challenged persons
- Providing clean energy solutions such as solar lanterns, solar street lights, solar PV systems to Government schools, Anganwadi Centres, Primary Healthcare Centres, etc.
- Providing financial support to Home Lighting Systems at backward & remote areas
- Construction of toilets under ‘Swachh Bharat Swachh Vidyalaya Abhiyana’ at schools and also at village households located in backward districts which do not have toilet facilities
- Upgradation of facilities at Adult Education Centres
- Support to States hit by natural calamities
- Promotion of education, arts, culture, music & dance, sports, etc. through sponsorship support
Contents

14 THE GRANDMASTER
Ajit Doval: The man behind the doctrine

06 Levelling the playing field
The Lodha committee reforms are a shot in the arm for cricket, but practical considerations are being sacrificed for lofty goals

57 Nightmare on the cyber street
Women dread being stalked online and being bombarded with nasty messages from strangers on social networking sites. The law will have to evolve

34 Lighting up the Indian kitchens
Ujjwala Yojana: A ground report on the progress of Modi government’s initiative to provide clean fuel to rural households

28 Tribal rights
National Scheduled Tribes Commission is as marginalised as the people whose interests it is expected to protect

Proxy war for Aleppo at the UN
Cloud computing: regulatory framework remains cloudy
Why NSD needs to revise its script to serve its purpose
In conversation with actor Nawazuddin Siddiqui
The cost of money

Hard cash is not free. In fact, the ₹10 note costs between 70 paise and ₹1.12 to print. An RTI response on the printing cost of currency notes has revealed that different public sector undertakings have different printing costs and sale-price (to the government) for currency notes. The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) owned Bharatiya Reserve Bank Note Mudran Private Limited (BRBNMPL) sells the notes of ₹10 and ₹20 at a cost of 70 paise and 95 paise respectively, to the authorities, while the units of central government-owned Security Printing & Minting Corporation of India Limited (SPMCIL) sells these notes at a much higher price, ₹1.22 and ₹1.216 respectively.

Approachable CM

In the middle of the family feud, Uttar Pradesh CM Akhilesh Yadav is ready with an ad campaign for the upcoming polls. According to an Economic Times report, the ad campaign that features no visuals of the senior party leaders (including his father and uncles) presents him as the “most approachable leader”. Even the party symbol is missing from the campaign. The video centres around Akhilesh as an efficient administrator and shows his routine as a CM and a family man. It ends with the tagline “Uttar Pradesh, India is my family”.

Unique matrimony

While signing an MoU between the railway and urban development ministries, railway minister Suresh Prabhu said that a marriage cannot take place without the consent of the boy and the girl. “Now both [railways and urban development ministry] have consented, hope the marriage [re-developing railway stations in 100 smart cities] is solemnised soon,” the Indian Express quoted him as saying. And as Prabhu refused to take questions, urban development minister M Venkaiah Naidu rushed in to support him with the same analogy: “When the boy and the girl have agreed to the wedding, how can you raise any questions?”

“Dylan is a successful musician and a great entertainer but I am not sure whether he was given the award in the right category...”

Author Ruskin Bond on Bob Dylan winning the Nobel Prize for literature

With one-fourth of the food wasted globally, we can feed 870 million hungry people

Top Google search prompts for Diwali

“Dylan is a successful musician and a great entertainer but I am not sure whether he was given the award in the right category...”

Author Ruskin Bond on Bob Dylan winning the Nobel Prize for literature

Gappistan Radio @GappistanRadio
Rita Bahuguna Joshi says she moved to BJP after ‘surgical strikes’

I want to praise Amit Shah for not laughing when she said that.

Gabbar @GabbarSingh
Cyrus Mistry to be replaced now, mostly by Ratan Tata. Tata Sons is the new Samajwadi Party.
SPECIAL OFFER

JUST PAY ₹150 for 24 ISSUES of a digital subscription

Subscribe to the digital edition of Governance Now.
Read each issue on your smartphone or tab.

GO TO WWW.GOVERNANCENOW.COM FOR DIGITAL SUBSCRIPTION

YOU CAN ALSO SUBSCRIBE TO THE PRINT VERSION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Cover Price</th>
<th>Postage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Year</td>
<td>720</td>
<td>Free</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Years</td>
<td>1,440</td>
<td>Free</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Years</td>
<td>2,160</td>
<td>Free</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

PAYMENT OPTIONS

a. Pay online at governancenow.com/magazine-subscription
b. Or pay through cheque or DD (in favour of “SAB Events and Governance Now Media Limited”) using the form below:

Name
Address
Mobile
Pin
Occupation
E-mail

Please find enclosed DD/Cheque for ₹

City
State
Pin
Dated

For further queries contact Deepak Jindal: deepak@governancenow.com. +91 9999133457

Terms and Conditions: 1. This is a limited period offer. 2. Governance Now will not be responsible for postal delays, transit loses or mutilation of the forms. 3. All disputes are subject to laws of India and exclusive jurisdiction of competent courts and forums in Delhi/New Delhi. 4. Governance Now reserves the right to extend or terminate this offer at any point or to accept or reject any or all forms at its absolute discretion without assigning any reason whatsoever. 5. Allow 3-4 weeks time for processing of the subscription. Subscription would be processed only after realization of payments. 6. Payments can be made through Cheque/DD payable at par. Cash payments will not be accepted.

a Sri Adhikari Brothers enterprise
Cricket associations in India are in a mess, but that is nothing new. Allegations of financial impropriety, corruption, round-tripping, illegal appropriation of funds, rigged elections and even sexual harassment have often been levelled against the state officials. The cricketing machinery in the country has, for decades, suffered because of lack of transparency and accountability, conflict of interest and general apathy towards all-round malfeasance.

Not surprisingly, many critics have often equated state associations with “fiefdoms”, with the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) looking the other way. A number of state associations and the BCCI for long have been in a convenient relationship where cases of fiscal pilfering were quietly swept under the carpet.

While the status quo was immensely lucrative to the stakeholders on the inside, it has come at a massive cost to the game, its players and its followers. Naturally, the radical reform measures recommended by former chief justice of India (CJI) Rajendra Mal Lodha have received a rousing welcome from fans and media in general.

In January 2015, the supreme court (SC) appointed the Lodha committee to investigate recurrent controversies that the game found itself mired in. The committee was assigned with the task of recommending changes to the extant functioning of the game in India, including ushering in efficiency in the management of the BCCI and cleaning the body of its political and bureaucratic hold.

There is little doubt then that the Lodha committee reforms are a shot in the arm for the game. However, these sweeping recommendations will create a new set of executive challenges, and with it will come a rough transition period before business in the BCCI can go back to usual.

**The recommendations**

In July last year, the Lodha committee recommended a ban of two years on the Indian Premier League (IPL) franchises Chennai Super Kings (CSK) and Rajasthan Royals (RR) for their involvement in the 2013 spot-fixing and betting scandal. Gurunath Meiyappan, ‘team principal’ of CSK and son-in-law of former International Cricket Council
(ICC) chairman N Srinivasan, and Raj Kundra, co-owner of RR, faced the committee’s ire and were banned for life from all cricketing activities.

Along with this came the sweeping recommendations for the BCCI’s internal structure.

According to the committee’s report, all 29 states of India are to be granted full membership. At the time of the report’s release, Bihar, Uttarakhand, Chhattisgarh and the northeastern states – Sikkim, Manipur, Meghalaya, Nagaland, Arunchal Pradesh and Mizoram – did not enjoy the status of a full membership in the cricketing body. Some states, on the other hand, were over-represented. For instance, Maharashtra and Gujarat boasted of having three different cricketing bodies each. Many hailed this recommendation as an unprecedented levelling of the playing field, ensuring equal opportunity to all the associations. What was ignored was the resultant problems of such a path-breaking decision. With these recommendations, the three associations of Maharashtra now cannot vote individually in the BCCI elections. The state will have only one vote as per the ‘one state, one vote’ policy. However, multiple associations of Maharashtra – Mumbai, Vidarbha and Maharashtra – will continue to play domestic cricket. Same is the case with Gujarat which has three associations: Baroda, Gujarat and Saurashtra. By doing so, the committee has robbed the legitimate associations of Maharashtra and Gujarat from their erstwhile full memberships, and has instead granted voting rights to the northeastern states that have historically and culturally never been receptive to the game.

Though this move will ensure equality among the states, but it will deprive the already thriving cricket associations of their full membership. As a solution, the committee has suggested an annual rotational system of full membership for states with multiple associations. This recommendation bodes enormous risks to associations without full membership and consequently no voting right.

Primarily, their access to funds could be choked off and secondarily, their domestic teams would be playing in the field without having any representation in the BCCI. Further, granting the northeastern states full membership is an idealistic step forward, but in reality it can lead to a situation where powerful office-bearers will woo these states to align with their interests. This might lead to rampant politicisation of the internal working of these associations.

Additionally, the northeastern states lack first-class cricket teams. By granting them full membership, these states will have the power and privilege to influence the governance of cricket without even having a functional team.

The fact that Gujarat and Maharashtra have three different cricketing bodies is inherently linked to the popularity and cultural appeal of the game in these states. Besides, these states have a rich history of luminaries contributing to the promotion of the game like Ranjitsinhji and Vijaysingh Madhavji.
The committee in its broad-sweeping reforms has given the status of just an associate member to the railways and Services teams, delivering a blow to their representation in the BCCI as well. Another major recommendation of the Lodha committee states that every office-bearer of the BCCI and state associations will have a three-year tenure and can contest for maximum three terms. Also, there will be an obligatory cooling-off period of three years after each term, which is to say that no office-bearer can hold office successively. Further, no member shall be allowed to serve if he/she has already completed over nine years as an office-bearer.

A limit is placed on the tenure so that an office-bearer does not consider the institution as his/her “fiefdom” – which has been the prevalent practice in the state associations, limiting the power in the hands of a few.

However, legendary cricketer Sunil Gavaskar differs from the committee’s views. Speaking to media, he pointed out that three years is too short a time for a member to become a president, which is the “pinnacle in an administrator’s career”.

Even Kapil Dev, who led the Indian team that won the 1983 world cup, found himself in disagreement with the three-year tenure recommendation. He told the media, “Three years is too quick. Things are happening and before you know whether you should do it or not, the time is over. Running such a big organisation is not a small thing. Maybe 30 years back it was different. Back then we didn’t have coaches and management. Now you have professional people to help. Today, the board has changed.”

The hasty implementation of tenure restriction will immediately disqualify most office-bearers resulting in a vacuum of managerial experience. This paucity of skilled hands will be filled by elected but inexperienced individuals, who will be responsible for running such a big organisation.

**INTERVIEW**

Aditya Verma, secretary of the Cricket Association of Bihar (CAB) which is yet to be recognised by the BCCI, has been batting for a full membership for more than a decade. Since 2005, he has also been fighting for transparency and accountability in the working of the BCCI. It was on his petition that the supreme court directed N Srinivasan to step down as the BCCI chief. Another fallout of his petition was the constitution of the justice Lodha committee. The committee’s radical reforms will overhaul the internal mechanics of the BCCI. Naturally, Verma has made a lot of enemies in the process. But he hopes that this would create better prospects for cricketers in the country. In conversation with Kaushal Shroff, he shares his enthusiasm for the unprecedented reforms, which will be ushered in the BCCI.

**How do you see the BCCI transforming in the wake of the reforms recommended by the Lodha committee?**

There won’t be any effect on the financial health of the BCCI due to the Lodha committee reforms. The BCCI was formed in 1928 and has contributed massively in the field of cricket. Many players, who have marked out a name for themselves in cricket and for India, have received support from the BCCI. However, for the last few years, since the IPL was started, a huge amount of funds have started accruing to the BCCI coffers. The IPL extravaganza was started under Lalit Modi and he helped BCCI earn a profit of anywhere in the range of 88,000-10,000 crore for the first two seasons. After that, another businessman, N Srinivasan, who was also the secretary of the BCCI at that time, on realising the immense value of the IPL conspired to throw Modi out of the scene. Later, he went on to capture the BCCI with the force of his money and promises. With the Lodha committee reforms being accepted, all of this will change.

**It has been a long battle for you. What has provoked you to fight this campaign?**

Once Bihar was split into two in 2000, Jharkhand was given full membership of the BCCI, but unfortunately Bihar was not given membership. At that time, IPS officer Amitabh Choudhary, who was juggling work as well as cricket-related activities, helped Jharkhand secure a full membership in the name of Bihar. This was an unfortunate event. The boys of Bihar have been suffering from that decision for the last 15 years. Had Bihar been a full member today, who knows, 10 Sachin Tendulkars might have come from there.

**Had Bihar been a full member, it might have produced 10 Tendulkars**

Aditya Verma, secretary of the Cricket Association of Bihar (CAB) which is yet to be recognised by the BCCI, has been batting for a full membership for more than a decade. Since 2005, he has also been fighting for transparency and accountability in the working of the BCCI. It was on his petition that the supreme court directed N Srinivasan to step down as the BCCI chief. Another fallout of his petition was the constitution of the justice Lodha committee. The committee’s radical reforms will overhaul the internal mechanics of the BCCI. Naturally, Verma has made a lot of enemies in the process. But he hopes that this would create better prospects for cricketers in the country. In conversation with Kaushal Shroff, he shares his enthusiasm for the unprecedented reforms, which will be ushered in the BCCI.

**How do you see the BCCI transforming in the wake of the reforms recommended by the Lodha committee?**

There won’t be any effect on the financial health of the BCCI due to the Lodha committee reforms. The BCCI was formed in 1928 and has contributed massively in the field of cricket. Many players, who have marked out a name for themselves in cricket and for India, have received support from the BCCI. However, for the last few years, since the IPL was started, a huge amount of funds have started accruing to the BCCI coffers. The IPL extravaganza was started under Lalit Modi and he helped BCCI earn a profit of anywhere in the range of 88,000-10,000 crore for the first two seasons. After that, another businessman, N Srinivasan, who was also the secretary of the BCCI at that time, on realising the immense value of the IPL conspired to throw Modi out of the scene. Later, he went on to capture the BCCI with the force of his money and promises. With the Lodha committee reforms being accepted, all of this will change.

**It has been a long battle for you. What has provoked you to fight this campaign?**

Once Bihar was split into two in 2000, Jharkhand was given full membership of the BCCI, but unfortunately Bihar was not given membership. At that time, IPS officer Amitabh Choudhary, who was juggling work as well as cricket-related activities, helped Jharkhand secure a full membership in the name of Bihar. This was an unfortunate event. The boys of Bihar have been suffering from that decision for the last 15 years. Had Bihar been a full member today, who knows, 10 Sachin Tendulkars might have come from there.

**INTERVIEW**

Aditya Verma, SECRETARY, CRICKET ASSOCIATION OF BIHAR

“Had Bihar been a full member, it might have produced 10 Tendulkars”

Aditya Verma, secretary of the Cricket Association of Bihar (CAB) which is yet to be recognised by the BCCI, has been batting for a full membership for more than a decade. Since 2005, he has also been fighting for transparency and accountability in the working of the BCCI. It was on his petition that the supreme court directed N Srinivasan to step down as the BCCI chief. Another fallout of his petition was the constitution of the justice Lodha committee. The committee’s radical reforms will overhaul the internal mechanics of the BCCI. Naturally, Verma has made a lot of enemies in the process. But he hopes that this would create better prospects for cricketers in the country. In conversation with Kaushal Shroff, he shares his enthusiasm for the unprecedented reforms, which will be ushered in the BCCI.

**How do you see the BCCI transforming in the wake of the reforms recommended by the Lodha committee?**

There won’t be any effect on the financial health of the BCCI due to the Lodha committee reforms. The BCCI was formed in 1928 and has contributed massively in the field of cricket. Many players, who have marked out a name for themselves in cricket and for India, have received support from the BCCI. However, for the last few years, since the IPL was started, a huge amount of funds have started accruing to the BCCI coffers. The IPL extravaganza was started under Lalit Modi and he helped BCCI earn a profit of anywhere in the range of 88,000-10,000 crore for the first two seasons. After that, another businessman, N Srinivasan, who was also the secretary of the BCCI at that time, on realising the immense value of the IPL conspired to throw Modi out of the scene. Later, he went on to capture the BCCI with the force of his money and promises. With the Lodha committee reforms being accepted, all of this will change.

**It has been a long battle for you. What has provoked you to fight this campaign?**

Once Bihar was split into two in 2000, Jharkhand was given full membership of the BCCI, but unfortunately Bihar was not given membership. At that time, IPS officer Amitabh Choudhary, who was juggling work as well as cricket-related activities, helped Jharkhand secure a full membership in the name of Bihar. This was an unfortunate event. The boys of Bihar have been suffering from that decision for the last 15 years. Had Bihar been a full member today, who knows, 10 Sachin Tendulkars might have come from there.
I jumped into the fray in 2005 when I saw that a small state like Jharkhand was given full membership after being separated from a bigger state. Bihar was deprived of its full membership and was asked to apply for it afresh. I found it to be unjust and raised my voice against it.

**The Lodha committee reforms have instituted the practice of ‘one state, one vote’.** This, many say, will level the playing field for all states. How will this benefit state associations?

I feel that the order given by the SC will make the BCCI more transparent and accountable. Another point that I raised before the court and the justice Lodha committee was that the BCCI creates a team for India. However, this team comprises of boys only from 20 states, the remaining are either recognised or have been given a secondary recognition. The SC by approving the Lodha committee report has allowed equal representation to all the states, which includes Bihar, Uttarakhand and the northeastern states.

The BCCI in its constitution mentions that its goal is to promote cricket all over the country. Then, why do they adopt such discriminatory practices? Who will the boys from other states play for – Sri Lanka, Pakistan?

Gujarat receives an annual subvention of ₹120 crore from the BCCI, because there are three members from that state – Saurashtra, Baroda and Gujarat. Mumbai receives ₹160 crore, Andhra Pradesh ₹80 crore and Kolkata ₹80 crore. Looking at these huge disbursements, the SC has forced these states to adopt transparent measures within the BCCI. This will benefit the game in the country. Think of all the good these reforms would do for the boys from other states who till now were prevented from playing cricket. Imagine if Sachin Tendulkar or Virat Kohli were born in Manipur or Sikkim. Then despite their god-gifted skills, they would not have been able to play for their country, because these states are unrecognised.

**The BCCI has often argued that having a CAG nominee as a board member will lead to its disqualification from the International Cricket Council (ICC).**

The BCCI is claiming this, not the ICC. If that is the case, then why is the Pakistani prime minister running the Pakistan cricket board? Why is the Sri Lankan cricket board being handled by the Sri Lankan government? Why nominees of the West Indian government are on the West Indies cricket board?

**The BCCI has been less than accommodating and welcoming of the reforms.**

The Lodha committee did not put an application in the SC expressing interest in investigating the matter. It was called upon to do so by the SC. The committee consists of three judges, including the former chief justice of India [RM Lodha]. This committee is, in a way, an extension bench of the SC.

The committee hasn’t spoken of changing the rules of the game – say an over should be of eight balls or batting should happen only from one end or the ball should be white, not red. All it has said concerns transparency, accountability and fairness within the BCCI. The only people who would be inconvenienced by this are those who till now have been running the BCCI as their own private shop or personal legacy. The supreme court has gone to the heart of the matter and the outcome will be the one to behold.

**State associations have often maintained that they cannot be forced to adopt the reforms suggested by the committee. What is your reply to them?**

When senior counsel Kapil Sibal was appearing on behalf of the Baroda Cricket Association, he argued that no one can force the association to adopt the Lodha committee reforms. Then, the SC said that the local cricket association should separate itself from the BCCI and only stick to looking after cricket in Baroda. The SC stressed that the Baroda Cricket Association had a standing simply because it was affiliated with the BCCI, and when an issue of the BCCI’s transparency is being discussed then the Baroda association is not different from its parent body. State association officials should disable themselves of this notion that they are a separate entity from the BCCI. Their identity is on the basis of their affiliation with the BCCI and the funds that are with them have been given by the BCCI. The BCCI often remits money so that state associations can be called to stand by it, as and when needed.

---

The committee has robbed the legitimate associations of Maharashtra and Gujarat from their erstwhile full memberships, and has instead granted voting rights to the northeastern states that have historically and culturally never been receptive to the game.

Ditto with restrictions on bureaucrats and politicians entering the BCCI and state units. In the past, netas and babus have often had allegations of impropriety flung at them and removing them from the administration seems a justified move. However, simply eliminating politicians doesn’t necessarily weed out the political interference. In future, the working of the body will still be dependent on the realpolitik in the BCCI and state associations rather than on considerations of public probity.

The committee also recommends formation of an apex council. This council will comprise of five elected members of the BCCI – president, vice
president, secretary, joint secretary and treasurer. It will also have four other councillors – two (one male and one female) to be nominated by the players’ association (yet to be formed), one to be elected by the full member of the BCCI and one to be nominated by the comptroller and auditor general (CAG) of India. The council eliminates the need of zonal vice presidents. As a result, there will be only one vice president, instead of five zonal vice presidents earlier.

Similarly, the committee has put an end to the zonal system of selectors and has replaced it with a system comprising of three national selectors. The panel’s recommendation to do away with the zonal system will mean excessive burden on the proposed selection committee, which will have to bear the burden of selecting the finest in the game from the large talent pool within the country. Stakeholders from key state associations say that the selection committee will find it difficult to shoulder such huge responsibility and that it will invariably come at the cost of talent being overlooked.

**Summing up**

Cricket in India often enjoys the status of religion with players being treated as demigods. The Lodha committee recommendations are meant to rescue the gentleman’s game from an opaque and unaccountable power structure. However, this transition will be riddled with a host of administrative problems, the answers to which have not yet been envisaged by the committee. The muck in the game cannot be eliminated by arm-twisting the BCCI and its state units. To comprehend the feasibility, one has to reverse the view and observe the committee’s recommendations from the state associations’ perspective as well.

Here, it is also imperative to note that the sport is just not narrowed down to the management but is also devoted to the sentiments of its audience and players who have embraced the game as part of their culture.
Once upon a time in a nation called India, every citizen believed that governance was the government’s job. Along came an old villager who told them the government’s job is to serve them. Millions were aroused, took to the streets and asked the government for answers. Just like Governance Now has been, since its inception. Come, join the movement.

For Your Pound of Good Governance

For subscriptions contact
Deepak Jindal ● deepak@governancenow.com. ● +91 9999133457

For sales contact
Ragini Shrivastava. ● ragini@governancenow.com. ● +91 9999673653

● www.governancenow.com
Ketan Desai, a famous name in the medical world, is a man with unimaginable access and influence in the power galleries, be it in Gujarat or Delhi, with Congress or BJP. And his election as the chairman of the World Medical Association (WMA), despite facing several corruption charges, validates the same.

Who is Ketan Desai?
Hailing from Gujarat, Desai graduated from BJ Medical College of Ahmedabad in 1983 and became the head of its urology department the same year. Soon, he won several medical body elections. Thereon, he served as the president of the Medical Council of India, Gujarat Medical Council, Dentist Council of India and the Indian Medical Association.

His controversies
Desai was arrested by the CBI on charges of corruption in 2010, when he was the MCI head. Following this, the president of India signed an ordinance empowering the government to dissolve the medical council.

In a letter to the then union health minister Ghulam Nabi Azad, then prime minister Manmohan Singh had reportedly asked for a “detailed report” and action taken by the ministry in the bribery case against Desai.

According to various reports, in 2010, ₹2 crore was recovered from Desai which he had allegedly collected as bribe for granting recognition to Gian Sagar Medical College in Punjab while serving as MCI chief. About 1.5 kg of gold and 80 kg of silver was also found from his possession. The CBI probe found that he
also owned a number of palatial houses, benami assets and jewellery.

The same year, two separate cases, in Delhi and Uttar Pradesh, were filed against him alleging his involvement in a conspiracy to have the MCI allow private medical schools to add more students. The Delhi case was put on hold due to a pending appeal in the supreme court and the Uttar Pradesh district court put the other case on hold last year until investigators obtain the government’s permission to prosecute.

After his arrest in 2010, as many as eight FIRs were filed against him and so far he has got acquittal in six of them, while two are still pending.

Earlier in 2001, the Delhi high court had framed charges against Desai and CBI was asked to prosecute him. Desai managed to come out clean. A former official of MCI, on condition of anonymity, explained how Desai managed that. “It was found that an ineligible candidate, qualification-wise and age-wise, was given a job in the council. This candidate was a blood relative of a member of the investigating team of the CBI. Can CBI and Desai negate these charges which were framed by the high court? All powers of the MCI’s executive committee were usurped by Desai, who was chairman of the committee. For example, the power to appoint the inspector was usurped by him. Also, ₹65 lakh were found in Desai’s bank account.”

He further adds, “While he was being investigated by the CBI in eight cases, Desai visited the residence of former CBI director Ranjit Sinha nine times. Noted lawyer-activist Prashant Bhushan accused Sinha of striking a deal to let Desai go scot-free.”

Another former official recollects how former health secretary Keshav Desiraju was transferred to another ministry because he had opposed the re-entry of tainted Desai into MCI.

The wedding of Desai’s daughter in 2014 was attended by many top national political leaders including Amit Shah and Mulayam Singh Yadav. According to a report in the Indian Express, Mulayam had tried to help Desai after he was arrested and was investigated by the CBI in the 2010 corruption case. “In December 2013, Yadav is learnt to have written to the then health minister Ghulam Nabi Azad, to reinstate him in the MCI,” said the report.

According to the NGO People for Better Treatment (PBT), Desai gets a lot of help from his long-time supporter, Dr KK Aggarwal, who is now the secretary general of IMA. “Ironically, Dr Aggarwal, as he has openly boasted on his website, is also the brother-in-law of Mulayam’s son,” writes PBT, a voluntary organisation that fights medical malpractices and corruption in healthcare.

On October 21, soon after Desai was named the WMA chief, PBT founder Kunal Saha sent a legal notice to MCI, demanding immediate action to stop this “atrocity”. “Almost two years have passed, MCI and health ministry have remained in a deep slumber and refused to take any steps to stop the biggest medical mafia of Indian medicine and a criminally-indicted Dr Ketan Desai from assuming the prestigious post of WMA president… If the MCI and health ministry fail to take any action, PBT will move the appropriate court of law to bring an end to this sheer atrocity that has shaken the core of the Indian and world medical community,” PBT India wrote on its website.

The WMA, a global body with 112 national medical associations, is responsible to “establish and promote the highest possible standards of ethical behaviour and care by physicians”. It is an irony that the saviour of medical ethics and professional competence has appointed a tainted man as its president. Such a practice not only poses a risk of hurting the medical field but also puts at stake the nation’s image abroad.
Should the Indians be worried about Afghanistan’s future? National security advisor (NSA) Ajit Doval offers a perspective on this.

In 2001 then US president George W Bush had launched an all-out ‘Operation Enduring Freedom’ in Afghanistan against the ruling Taliban, which had turned the ancient country into a sanctuary for global terrorists like Osama bin Laden. Bush had then dialled New Delhi and Islamabad. He needed India, the biggest player in the region, to be on his side in Afghanistan. However, for Islamabad, the US had a different set of tasks. As former president Pervez Musharraf admitted in his book, ‘In the line of Fire: A Memoir’, then US secretary of state Richard Armitage had told his counterpart that unless Pakistan took a decisive action against the Taliban and Al Qaeda, the country would be bombed so furiously that it would go back to the stone age. A shocked Islamabad had grudgingly obliged the US, but it continued its covert policy of cultivating terrorists like Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, Jalaluddin Haqqani and Ismail Khan in Afghanistan as its strategic assets. The ISI paid and protected the warlords-turned-terrorists and used them for attacking the US-led forces in Afghanistan. The smart Americans always knew about the Pakistani plan and yet continued to supply arms and pumping aid of $10 billion to it.

One day, finally the US said it would pull out its troops from Afghanistan; and called a meeting of stakeholder nations to work out the transition of the war-torn country’s security into Afghan hands. One stakeholder was kept out: India – the fifth largest donor to the global funds for Afghanistan and a major player in building infrastructure for Kabul and training its army, police and other officials for running the government in Kabul.

As part of his campaign to educate people about risks to India’s security, Doval explained it further to a packed house in Delhi that like a spoilt child, Pakistan had insisted on India’s exclusion and the US had agreed. In fact the US had allowed Islamabad to deal with Afghanistan as it liked. However, behind this obsequiousness was a tacit agreement it had arrived at with Islamabad. Pakistan, as per the agreement, had agreed to ensure that terrorists operating from its soil and its ‘assets’ in Afghanistan would not target America and the West. Doval said in this situation the Al Qaedas and the Talibans would be left to focus on India and especially Kashmir.

The audience are all ears for Doval. He says, this time in a raised voice, that India has to stop living with the pretence of being a peace-loving nation and not taking on the enemies upfront. “You never defeat an enemy that you can't identify,” he said. To make his point, he invoked Lord Krishna's message in the Bhagavad Gita to his friend Arjuna. “Even the God has ordained us to fight a war. He told Arjuna, never
mind even if it means taking up arms against his close relatives in order to make way for righteousness to prevail. Krishna had told Arjuna that he must not think of the pros and cons of a war since the conflict is about ‘dharma’.”

The hall resonated with thunderous applause.

In fact, long before he was hand-picked by prime minister Narendra Modi as India’s fifth NSA and was to emerge as one of the most influential figures in the government, for nine years Doval was busy in changing the perceptions of public on national security and nation-building. The 71-year-old career spy hung up his boots as the head of the Intelligence Bureau (IB) in January 2005 and took to giving discourses in universities, think tanks, professional bodies and social clubs. His speeches have today become a rage on the internet.

To his admirers, spy Doval is a living legend; a hero with unmatched courage and sharp thinking on India’s security and strategic interests. His critics envy his qualities of head and heart yet can’t find fault with him. “I have to admit that he is an A-class intelligence officer and knows his job very well,” remarks former Research and Analysis Wing (RAW) chief AS Dulat, who as his senior has been following Doval’s work and career for 47 years. “Though he has been a bit of a loner, but, I guess that comes with the kind of work he was doing.”

Dulat says Doval’s success as NSA is also because of the fact that he and PM Modi think alike on matters of national security. People who have known Doval closely can clearly see his signature on Modi’s key foreign policy decisions. Be it Modi’s invite to the SAARC leaders for his swearing-in ceremony or the army’s surgical strikes on terrorist launch pads in PoK, these are vignettes from Doval’s dream of India as a strong nation and not the one mired in inertia and content with its global image as a soft state. A senior minister in the Modi government said that the PM’s strong presence in the social media is also part of this makeover plan. “Why should India always look like a soft state where [actor] Shah Rukh Khan has more followers on social media than the prime minister?” he told Governance Now. “This has changed now,” he said referring to the PM’s huge fan following on the social media.

Doval, on his part, has had no political leanings. His peers say that senior BJP leader LK Advani had taken instant liking for Doval’s ideas. This was when Doval, as the head of Operations, IB, was reporting to Advani, then home minister. The two struck a rapport and this, incidentally, took Doval closer to the saffron party. In fact, the BJP’s white paper on the black money stashed abroad that became a major issue in the 2014 Lok Sabha elections was based on Doval’s research. After his retirement from the government job, in 2009 he set up the Vivekananda International Foundation (VIF), a think tank with ideological affinity with the BJP. He stepped down as the director of VIF when he was named the NSA in 2014. His colleagues in VIF say that he put his heart and soul in shaping the ‘right’ think tank as a result of which it has been placed at number 20 in a global ranking of the ‘think tanks to watch for’ prepared by the University of Pennsylvania. It has also listed VIF at number 40 in its list of ‘best NGOs with political affiliations’ (2015).

So far Doval has not courted controversy except when media chose to question the rise of his son, Shaurya Doval, an investment banker, as one of the key policymakers of the Modi government. Shaurya, in his forties, is the co-founder of the RSS-BJP-backed think tank India Foundation, which is believed to be giving key policy inputs to the government.

Doval is the second Indian police service (IPS) officer to hold this position – the first was MK Narayanan, who became NSA after the sudden death of incumbent PN DIVATE. Generally the job is considered reserved for the members of the Indian Foreign Service (IFS). No wonder, a lot of retired diplomats and other veterans openly criticised Doval for the Pathankot attack, blaming him for all that had allegedly gone wrong in combating the Pakistani terrorists who had sneaked into the cantonment. “He is one of the finest intelligence officers in the country and tailor-made for this job, but then he has to understand that the national security of a nation is a bigger responsibility and can’t be run like an operation room of an intelligence agency,” says Dulat.

Doval calls the shots in security and foreign matters in the Modi government. No major decision is taken without the NSA’s input and knowledge. Sources say many ministries report to him on a regular basis. Unlike his predecessors, Doval has not confined his office to an appendage of the prime minister’s office (PMO) in South Block: he has a separate office in the Patel Bhawan in Lutyen’s Delhi. At any key event like the BRICS or BIMSTEC meet, Doval can be seen seated along with senior ministers like Sushma Swaraj and Rajnath Singh. He enjoys perks and position of a cabinet minister.

It took a while for the rest to accept the fact that this NSA is different; he not only has the desired exposure to foreign service but also the acrality of a spy. They realised this only after the surgical strikes. KM Singh, a former IB chief and Doval’s batchmate, says, “For IFS officers, it’s mandatory to have done a stint in a neighbouring country and another in a developed country – Doval has both and, in fact, his double tenure in Islamabad was the most
challenging one. Therefore, the criticism is unwanted.” Besides, he says, Doval has hands-on experience of dealing with all the major internal insurgencies like those in Punjab, Mizoram and Kashmir, and thus has a broader perspective of the security scenario. People who have visited the NSA’s home and office say he is a voracious reader, and many of them add that he owns one of the best private libraries in town.

Sajjad Lone, a minister in the J&K government, has said that the only time he has to prepare ahead of a meeting is when the other side is Doval. As IB chief, Doval had prompted Lone and many other Kashmiri youngsters to join the political mainstream.

When he was asked at a public function how he maintained the agility of his mind, Doval shared a tip. He said the human brain is like a sponge; the more you keep its pores unclogged and away from the muck, the more it will absorb the right things. “Don’t waste your mind on petty jealousies and thinking about what others are thinking. Keep your mind free for things that matter the most. The rest of the time you remain relaxed and enjoy life.”

His close friend and colleague KM Singh says, “Ajit does not think small.” For this reason, he says, Doval is often misunderstood as an unhelpful and asocial person. “Yes, he does not believe in social life and is a workaholic.”

Doval was recently asked about the sweeping powers he enjoys that, at times, seem to infringe upon those of some political leaders. A former civil servant had asked the NSA, at the Lalit Doshi Foundation Memorial Lecture in Mumbai in August 2015, how he could dare to call the Pakistani high commissioner and reprimand him for unprovoked firing on the line of control in Kashmir while traditionally it’s the prerogative of the external affairs minister. His reply left everyone speechless.

He said, “It has nothing to do with conflict of values; it has something to do with what you consider as urgent. When at Ufa [in Russia, where Modi and Nawaz Sharif met] it was agreed that there will be no border firing and then the Pakistanis started firing [on LoC]. So it was absolutely necessary to tell them without any loss of time that you stop it, otherwise we will retaliate and we will retaliate with effect...when there is an immediacy you don’t go into who should be talking to whom...”

He explained it further, “There is nothing like only the PMO dictates the terms or calls the shots. It’s completely wrong...It’s all a teamwork and we all...
work as a very, very well-knit team. Sometimes there is a conflict between what is important and what is immediate... but when there is convergence between what is important and what is immediate and yet you go through a bureaucratic procedure then you don’t deserve to be in a place you are... Here it’s both important and immediate, so lead it from the front.”

Who is Ajit Kumar Doval? Except for the few details which are bound to be in public domain in case of any civil servant, not much is known about the super spy. Till his retirement from the government job, Doval’s persona was that of a typical undercover agent. Digging into his life to know about the man was challenging as most of those who spoke say there was no life beyond work for him. “For most of us, the priorities in life are our family, social life and work in that order. in his case it’s just upside down,” says a batchmate of the 1968 IPS officer of Kerala cadre. “His personality differs from most of us; he is a total workaholic,” he adds.

An acquaintance of Doval from Kashmir quips, “Apart from work, he is a regular guy; loves all good things of life, especially the pan masala.”

Son of an engineering officer in the army, Doval was born in a small village of Ghiri Banelsyun in what is today Uttarakhand. His father was one of the earliest to have left the village for a career. Today, Ghiri Banelsyun is nearly deserted as most of its original residents have shifted to towns and cities for better livelihood. An Uttarakhand officer said Doval visited the village a few months back and the people there urged him to do something to reverse the migration from the hills.

The young Doval (who volunteered to go to Mizoram reeling under insurgency) had no qualms in leaving his wife and two sons in Delhi and proceed to Aizawl, where he spent five years, mostly as an undercover agent.

In 2009, Doval set up the Vivekananda International Foundation, a think tank with ideological affinity with the BJP
years, mostly as an undercover agent. “There would be no word from him to us and his family for months,” says a family friend.

Mizoram saw Doval’s first signature assignment. He disguised himself as a rebel and went close to the Mizo National Army (MNA), a lethal extremist group which operated out of Burma (today’s) Bangladesh. Lt. Gen JFR Jacob, a hero of the 1971 war who as a young army officer was posted in Mizoram, had recalled his encounter with the young Doval. Delivering a lecture on extremism, Gen Jacob said, “We had actually taken him [Doval] as one of the MNA guys and were about to eliminate him. We, in the army, thought of him as a deadly and fearless militant of the MNA till, one day, I was told that he is one of us.”

However, Doval has rarely spoken of his Mizoram experience in public.

Soon Laldenga found that someone had pulled the rug from under his feet as six of his seven top commanders had rebelled against him. He had lost control over his army which was scattered over Burma and what was then East Pakistan. Laldenga was in West Pakistan then. Doval’s magic was working. Pushed to the corner Laldenga’s men soon gave up arms on the Indo-Bangladesh border in a formal ceremony. It was followed by weeks of public celebrations in Aizawl where common Mizos welcomed Laldenga who had signed a peace deal with Delhi in 1972. The Mizo army got converted into Mizo National Front and ever since, Mizoram has remained the most peaceful state in the northeast.

Doval earned a police medal for his extraordinary courage. In fact, the Rajiv Gandhi government had to bend rules according to which the recipient of police medal should have completed 14 years of service. Doval had been in job for seven years then.

Doval’s next posting was in Delhi. But given his penchant for risk, he was soon posted to Islamabad as first secretary, commerce, in the Indian high commission. Of course, back then, there was hardly any commerce taking place between the two neighbours for him to take care of. Doval, in fact, had gone there as an undercover agent. He often speaks of two incidents in Pakistan when he was almost caught. Once, an old man with a flowing white beard approached him in a mosque in Lahore. He asked him if he was a Hindu. Doval denied it but as the old man, who looked every inch a devout Muslim, insisted, he had to admit the truth. The old man told him that his pierced ears had given away his identity. (Doval has explained the old custom in his native place of piercing the ears of boys – something that is never done among Muslims.) The old man advised him to fix his ears to remain incognito. Later the old man took Doval to his home where he showed him idols of Hindu gods which he used to worship secretly. He was a Pakistani Hindu disguised as a Muslim to escape persecution.

The second instance that Doval has spoken about is his visit to the ‘mujras’ in Lahore. On one such evening, a fellow visitor alerted him about his artificial moustache peeling off from his skin!

Doval became indispensable for the high commission and he served a second term in Islamabad. “Again, this is unusual. Nobody is given more than one term in Islamabad, which is considered a difficult posting,” a peer says.

Doval’s best was yet to come. In 1988, a cleric-turned-ideologue named Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale of Babbar Khalsa was dreaming of carving an independent State of Khalistan out of Punjab. He had taken control of the Golden Temple in Amritsar. The earlier army operation against extremists – Operation Blue Star – had gone horribly wrong. Extensive damage to the
sanctum sanctorum of the holiest of the Sikh shrines – Harmandir Sahib – had hurt the psyche of the community and spawned more insurgency. This time, the government was working with caution. Doval was in the middle of the planning for the final operation that was named Black Thunder. He parked himself outside the Golden Temple as a cobbler for three months from where he kept surveillance on the visitors and inmates. Closer to the date of the operation, he went inside the temple posing as an ISI agent. Fearless as he is, Doval went straight to the gun-toting militants and assured them about the supply of arms and Pakistan’s help while he was making a headcount of the extremists and taking mental notes of their location. His inputs helped police and army to plan a meticulous strategy for ‘surgical strikes’ against the band of terrorists without entering the temple. Some of the terrorists were shot dead by sharp shooters from a distance; the rest came out like rats out of holes and surrendered. The image of terrorists coming out with their hands raised for surrender, shown live on television, changed public perceptions on Punjab terrorists. This was the beginning of the end of the Khalistan movement.

Thereafter, Doval became the first non-military man to receive the Kirti Chakra, the highest peace-time award for valour for his valuable contribution to Operation Black Thunder.

**During Operation Black Thunder, Doval parked himself outside the Golden Temple as a cobbler for three months from where he kept surveillance on the visitors and inmates. Closer to the date of the operation, he went inside the temple posing as an ISI agent.**

People who have worked with him say that besides being a fearless person, Doval has an uncanny habit of speaking the truth always – so much unlike a spy. “I asked him once how he manages with so much truthfulness,” says an operative who has known him since the operations in the heydays of insurgency in Kashmir where he was posted as the joint director of IB. “He told me there are two benefits of being truthful – one, your contact may not believe you and he would keep thinking that you are lying to him and his state of mind will give you an upper hand in negotiating with him. The second is that when he discovers that you had actually spoken the truth, he would have more faith in you and things will become easier.”

He was also witness to Doval’s meeting with a top Kashmiri terrorist who carried a reward of ₹5 lakh on his head. “He told me once that this terrorist had wanted to meet him [Doval].” With the help of former militants who were working with the army, the terrorist came to meet Doval in his office, located in the foothills of Zabarwan on Srinagar’s Gupkar Road. “I was waiting outside when the said militant was located in the foothills of Zabarwan on Srinagar’s Gupkar Road. “I was waiting outside when the said militant was brought in a bulletproof car to Doval’s office. The two remained closeted for half an hour. Later, I asked him how he allowed the dreaded terrorist to come to his office without being subjected to body search. In reply, Doval smiled. He had told the terrorist that police was looking for him and would surely want to bump him off for the reward he carried on his head. Therefore, he told the terrorist, he must surrender immediately. Sadly, he was killed in an encounter by police within two days.”

Contrary to media reports, Doval had no direct role in making counter-terrorists like Kukka Parray a force to reckon with against the Pakistan-backed Hizbul Mujahideen. Liyaqat Khan, a former counter-insurgent who had once cooperated with the security forces and made Anantnag and large swaths of south Kashmir free of Hizbul’s dominance, says Doval would always advise him to join a political party. “Kukka Parray and Abdul Majid...
Bandey [the Congress legislator from Bandipore] were successful but I somehow could not make it.” Doval had wanted to incorporate Kashmiri youth into the mainstream by giving them stakes in India’s future. Liyaqat, who like many others is left in the lurch by the successive elected governments of J&K, says it was Doval and Lt. Gen Shantanu Choudhary who had successfully canvassed for raising a battalion of the Territorial Army for the surrendered militants. “They were visionaries, for they could see that once an elected government returns in Kashmir, our contribution to containing pro-Pakistan forces will be forgotten,” says Liyaqat. The two officers were instrumental in taking the counter-insurgents to then prime minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee and then home minister LK Advani. Finally, the government had decided to raise a battalion of the former insurgents in Kashmir. “That time, the pro-Pakistanis made a big propaganda against this. I got influenced and did not join the army. But 25 percent of my boys are today part of this battalion and proud soldiers,” he says.

From the operational side, Doval had helped various security forces and agencies achieve a level of coordination to maximise their gains against Kashmiri terrorists. However, handing over terrorist Masood Azhar and others to Taliban at Kandahar to get 190 passengers of the hijacked IC 814 released was the lowest moment of his career, though he had played a key role in negotiations for the swap.

“He is the best intelligence officer and the best man for operations,” says Dulat who has written a book on Vajpayee’s handling of Kashmir. “I would say Vajpayee-Dixit was the best combination and Modi-Doval is a greater combination.”

After the army’s surgical strikes in PoK in September, his reputation has travelled to Pakistan, where he is giving jitters to the security establishment. Media debates and commentators are asking the Sharif government to replace diplomat-turned-NSA Sartaj Aziz with someone matching Doval’s stature and mind power. The Doval scare has bitten the establishment as well as opinion makers in Pakistan. Many have come to favour making peace with India by rounding up terrorists like Hafiz Saeed and Azhar Masood. Many are warning Sharif against Doval’s strategy of choking Pakistan on all fronts – diplomatic, trade and internal security – to deter Pakistan from sending terrorists to India. He’s real, they are crying.

aasha@governancenow.com
Welfare schemes that have changed Uttar Pradesh

Under the leadership of CM Akhilesh Yadav, Uttar Pradesh government has initiated many schemes that have benefited the lives of people.

**Janeshwar Mishra Village scheme**
Under Janeshwar Mishra Village scheme, such villages, each from a district, are picked which remained deprived of infrastructure facilities. In view to provide minimum required facilities in each of these villages, construction of CC road and drainage, installation of India Mark -II hand pumps for drinking water, solar energy based lighting and electrification work was done which cost ₹40 lakh. In the last four years, 3835 such villages were equipped with the facilities.

**Metro in Ghaziabad**
Project for construction of 11.11 kilometer of cost ₹1838.00 crore long passageway for metro rail for Ghaziabad city is approved. The 9.71 KM long project will start between Dilshad Garden Delhi and New Bus Station in Ghaziabad (UP) and 14 kilometer long between Shahdara and Jamuna Vihar (UP).

**Trans Ganga City Project**
Trans Ganga City Project is on Unnao, Kanpur Lucknow highway via Ganga Barrage, 20 km from Kanpur Central, 10 km from Kanpur Collectorate and 15 km from Unnao Collectorate. It is the most ambitious scheme of the UP State Industrial Development Corporation. It will be carried on 1213.90-acre land. The allotment is expected by October 2016 by developing infrastructure facilities. Under the project, modern and pollution free industries will be developed on 350-acre land under the scheme. Residential projects will be set up on 150-acre land. On the remaining part of the land, educational institutes, hospitals, Stock Exchange and other projects will be set up. An investment of ₹10,000 crore is expected for the project. Above one lakh people will get job opportunity either direct or indirect under the project.

A 302 kilometer and six lane road is being constructed under Agra Lucknow Expressway- the most important project of the state government. The cost of the project is about ₹15000 crore. This project is longest Green Field scheme in the country. The distance between Agra and Lucknow can be traveled in three and a half hour instead of seven hours- the present time to travel the distance. Four development Centers, two Agri market (mandis), freight Centre, schools and institutes like ITIs will be set up alongside the Agra Expressway. UPEDA is getting the work done by four highly recognized companies in the construction field. The completion of work is expected by October 2016.

**IT City**
Under the state information technology policy 2012, IT City project is being
66-acre land will be used in real estate development. The work is expected to be completed in five years. After the project took shape, 75,000 persons will get job opportunities. In the CG City, 50-acre land is proposed to set up IT City, 100 acre for Medicity, 20 acre for Super Specialty Hospital/ Cardio Centre, 20 acre each for UP Administrative Academy and Dairy processing Plant. A modern township is proposed to be set up at 511-acre land. In addition, it is proposed to set up, a skill development centre on 10-acre land, where youth will be imparted the ultra-modern training. The skill development centre will be functional by October 2016.

**International Cricket Stadium**

A modern International Cricket Stadium having a capacity to accommodate 50,000 onlookers at a time, with a cost of ₹360 crore is being constructed in Lucknow on 137-acre land. Out of this, 71-acre land will be used for Cricket Stadium and sport infrastructure and 66-acre land will be used in real estate development. Players will avail excellent facilities at this stadium, which will be constructed on PPP model. The government has aimed to organize international cricket at this stadium by October 2016.

**Bridge Construction**

Construction of five bridges on Ganga, seven on Yamuna and two on Ghagghra River have been done. The work on six bridges on Ganga in Varanasi, Mirzapur and Gazipur is ongoing after an unforeseen delay. The longest bridge of the country is being constructed by special technique, at Sri Rampur Ghat at Ganga in Ballia. In the last fiscal, 100 bridges of construction cost ₹917.28 crore was completed and was opened for transportation. Besides, construction work is in progress for 83 bridges of construction cost ₹1159.50 Crore. The Bridge Corporation got constructed 202 long bridges, 75 rail over bridge, 213 small bridges (total 540 bridges) during the last four years at an expense of ₹5500 Crore. There were exiting 158 bridges, which were not in use for public as there were link road to connect these bridges. A drive was carried out and 114 bridges were linked with approach roads making it useful and easy for the public to commute. The works on the remaining bridges are undergoing.

**JP Convention Centre**

An international JP Convention centre is being set up a la the India Habitat Centre in Delhi. The work for Jai Prakash Narayan International Central Project- Gomti Nagar being carried out on about 18.6 acre at an expense of about ₹843.68. For the project a fund of ₹488.83 has been released. Under the project, guest house, convention centre, community hall, seminar hall, dormitory, health centre, Gymnasium, swimming pool, driving pool, kids pool, Lawn tennis Court, Multi Activity Centre and in Museum Block reading area, library, in parking block a parking slot for four and two wheeler vehicles are proposed to be set up. The work is expected to be completed by October 2016. The five star hotels, being constructed with the highest guesthouse, will be of 19 floors.

**Lion Safari**

Under the project to set up Babbar Lion breeding Centre and Lion Safari Park in Etawah, breeding centre, hospital and animal house have been set as per the layout plan recommended by the Central Zoo Authority while Interpretation Center, public amenities, office etc are under construction. A Lion Safari park on an area of 30 hectare has been developed in Etawah district. Besides the Babbar Lion safari, setting up of a Leopard Safari on an area of 30 hectare, Antelope Safari on an area of 21 hectare, Deer safari on an area of 31.5 hectare and Bear safari on 21-hectare land is under progress. Eight Babbar Lions had been transported to the Babbar Lion Breeding centre. Also, a committee has been set up for management and running the Babbar Lion Breeding centre, Lion Safari, and other animal’s safari to encourage eco awareness and tourism in the surrounding area.

**Skill Development**

‘To provide skill to all, to provide job to all’ in order to involve youths in the development of UP is one among the top priorities of the state government. A target has been set up to provide short term job oriented training in different trades to 44 lakh youths of age between 14 year to 35 years to make them skill workers. Training is being imparted to 20 lakh youths at different industrial training institutes and state government polytechnic institutes. Training course under 282 program of study at 38 centers is available. There are provisions to teach English speaking and common knowledge about commuters along with the course study. The Skill Development Mission has set up 1817 training centers in all the districts of the state by engaging private trainers.
Medical education
The present government started academic sessions by completing the construction work on previously approved medical colleges of Kannauj, Jalaun and Azamgarh. New Medical Colleges have been approved for Jaunpur, Chandauli and Badayun and the construction work is in progress at accelerated speed. This year academic session began at previously approved Banda Medical College and Saharanpur Medical College. There is a proposal to set up medical colleges in Shahjahanpur, Faizabad, Firozabad and Basti districts. All the medical colleges will run properly by year 2018. A cash of ₹200 crore, which comprises of 70 per cent contributed by the central Government and 30 per cent contributed by state government, will be spent on each of the medical colleges. An augmentation of 500 MBBS seats at medical colleges of the state. Earlier, there were 1140 MBBS seats in medical colleges of the state. Besides, a modern Cancer Institute is being set up in Lucknow.

Samajwadi Pension
For the first time, the state government initiated Samajwadi Pension Scheme under social security scheme from fiscal year 2014-15 by using its resources giving wide scale representation to all categories of the society. Apropos the target of benefiting 45 lakh families, 4088672 families were given benefit of the pension. For fiscal year 2016-17, the target is to benefit 55 lakh under the scheme.

Public Work
A meager of 30 district headquarters is linked with four lane roads out of 75 districts as of now. A work to link the district headquarters of remaining districts to four-lane road is under progress under different phases. Four districts-Amroha, Sambhal, Farrukhabad and Shrawasti have been connected to four lane roads. In the last fiscal, a work of 18470-kilometer long road construction has been done already.

1090 Women help Line
It is one of the important projects of state government. The scheme has become an example for the entire country. Taking cognizance of the utility and success of the WPL, an App has also been launched. A trust is developed among women, specially the working women and college going girls by this scheme and the women are being connected directly to the system. A total of 4,92,320 complaints were registered and 4,80,077 complaints have been addressed while in 485 cases FIRs were lodged.

Kamdhenu and Mini Kamdhenu scheme
For the uplifting of farmers, the State government started Kamdhenu, Mini Kamdhenu and Micro Kamdhenu Schemes. A work is under progress to set up of 300 units of 100 milking animals, Under Kamdhenu Scheme, 1500 units for 50 milking animals under Mini Kamdhenu Scheme and 2500 units for 25 milking animals under Micro Kamdhenu Scheme. The project cost for construction of 100 dairies under Kamdhenu scheme is being fixed as ₹12 crore and ₹52 lakh for setting up of Mini Kamdhenu dairy. An applicant has to deposit 25 per cent of project cost and 75 per cent of total cost will be provided by the bank as loan to be paid within three years and without interest. The interest will be borne by the Animal Husbandry department. The cost of Micro Kamdhenu Dairy is about ₹26.99 lakh and an applicant will have to bear ₹6,74,750 only. Under the Kamdhenu Dairy units, quality fodder for animals, sheds for animals, health check-up and impregnation facilities. A beneficiary of this scheme will have to spend ₹30.13 lakh, which is 25 per cent of the project cost of ₹1.2051 crore. The remaining amount of ₹90.398 lakh will be provided to him/her through bank and without any interest. Under the scheme, 225-lakh litre milk will be produced in the state every year and milkman will get a profit of 208.50 lakh in five year from each of the units. This will boost the milk revolution in villages and in the state.

Under Kamdhenu Dairy scheme, 1535 applications had been given approval apropos the target of 301 milk units by January 2016 and 212 dairies have become functional with 5 lakh litre of milk is being produced. Under Mini Kamdhenu dairy scheme, 7092 applications were received apropos to a target of 1500 milk units and 1145 dairies have become functional with a production of above 3.6 lakh litre milk. Under Micro Kamdhenu dairy scheme, 7474 applications were received
in relation to a target of 2500 milk units and 233 units have become functional while work in progress in different phases. Besides, a production of an additional of 5-lakh litre milk is also taking place every day. Uttar Pradesh is biggest milk production state in the country and 7.71-lakh litre milk is being produced every day.

**Dr Ram Manohar Lohiya Total Village Development Scheme**

Under the Dr Ram Manohar Lohiya scheme, a scheme to cover with CC Roads/KC Drain and interlocking tiles the inner lanes of 10,000 villages in 2012-13 for a five-year period 2016-17. In the beginning of the scheme in year 2012-13, about 1600 are to be selected while in the coming four years 2100 villages every year will be selected. The maximum financial expense as per population of the village has been fixed. Gram Panchayats having a population of 2000 will be allotted ₹20 lakhs, gram panchayats having population of 2001 to 5000 will be allotted ₹30 lakhs and ₹40 lakhs will be allotted to gram panchayats having population above 5001 under the scheme.

In the last fiscal 2015-16, a fund provision of ₹55000 lakhs for CC Roads, KC Drain and Interlocking tiles for 2098 selected villages. By February 2016, ₹31771.5 lakhs was spent for construction of 1079.7 km CC Road/ KC Drain and the remaining work is in progress.

**Old Age Pension Scheme**

The details of all beneficiaries of Old Age Pension Scheme is available on Pension Portal. To ensure transparency, the scheme has been computerized completely. There was a provision of a budget of ₹168359.19 lakhs, ₹168359.19 lakhs was released, and by March 31, 2014, ₹142103.24 lakhs were spent to benefit 3825688 beneficiaries. In year 2014-15, a fund of ₹1613.59 crore was released and 3506365 old age beneficiaries were benefited. In fiscal year 2015-16, a budget allocation of ₹152000 lakhs has been done. By December 2015 for fiscal year 2015-16, 3733679 old age persons were provided pension benefit by spending ₹69688.67 lakhs.

**Farmer Loan Waiver scheme**

The state government has implemented loan waiver scheme 2012 for the farmers to waive off a loan of ₹50,000 taken from Uttar Pradesh Cooperative Village Development Bank. To save the land of farmers who took loan against their land, the state government waived off a total loan of ₹1788 Crore to benefit 7, 86,167 of them. The funds were adjusted for fiscal year 2012-13 to November 2015.

**Bhoomi Sena Yojna**

Under the state government Bhoomi Sena Yojna run between 2012-13 to 2016-17, barren, ravine, unproductive and lands which remain submerged have been improved making it fit for farming and landless farmers and those lost lands were being provided employment. In year 2012-13, 34234-hectare land, in 2013-14 48708-hectare land and in year 2015-16 36000-hectare land was improved and under the scheme above 90,000 landless farmers were provided with employment.

**Ram Sharan Das village road scheme**

A strip of living beings of length 1989.44 km was covered with facilities at an expense of ₹81886 apropos the target of 1942 populated areas by Public Works Department under the Sri Ram Sharan Das village road scheme during 2013-14. In year 2014-15, 1266 habitate (1240.93 km in length) in regard to a target of 1332 populated areas were saturated at an expense of ₹500.66 crore. In year 2015-16, 582 populated areas against 660 were saturated and the remaining work is in progress.

**Model Cities Scheme**

A work plan has been chalked out to develop cities important in view of historical, social-cultural and tourism in as Model cities while using limited resources and finding a solution to problems generated due to urbanization. This include improvement in traffic and transport system, strengthening/improving infrastructure facilities, improvement in medical and educational facilities, environmental conservation and reformation, conservation and reformation of Heritage places, supply to affordable housing, public grievance addressing and disposal and public safety and public awareness programs. A DPR to developed seven cities- Vrindavan, Mahoba, Charkhari, Chitrakoot, Ayodhya, Faizabad and Sitapur as Model cities has been prepared.

**Ram Manohar Lohiya Gramin Awas**

Under the Ram Manohar Lohiya Gramin Awas
Awas each of the beneficiaries will now get ₹3.05 lakh at place ₹2.75 lakh, which was given by the previous government. For Solar Light, the amount under the NEDA has been increased to ₹30,000 from ₹15,000. Under the Lohiya Gramin Awas Scheme, 2.42 lakh houses have been constructed between 2012-13 and 2015-16 and a total of ₹5031.56 crore was spent on the project.

**Chief Minister Gramodhyog Rozgar Yojna**

Under the state government’s district scheme, a loan of ₹10 lakh for different projects is given through banks under Chief Minister Gramodhyog Rozgar Yojna for entrepreneurship to create self-employment in rural areas. In this scheme, a recommendation is done to get personal/partnership units set up in rural areas by getting loans approved from banks. Male beneficiaries of the general category get loan at a rate of interest of 4 per cent while SC/ST/ Women/ physically challenged/ minorities/ other backward caste/ ex army men get the loan without interest. Under the Chief Minister Gramodhyoga Rozgar Yojna a budget provision of ₹8 crore for the fiscal years 2015-16 has been done to pay the arrears of the interest. Rural entrepreneurs are being benefitted by the scheme. In the last fiscal, industries were set up by selecting 1800 entrepreneurs and getting them for availed the loan from the banks.

**Non-Resident Indian**

To promote investment, to address the problems of NRIs of UP origin NRI department was set up in the state. The objective of the NRI Cell was to link Non-resident Indian’s knowledge, skill and their world level approach to the development of the state. A special call centre has been set up for non-resident Indian and it works round the clock. The centre is proving great helpful in addressing the complaints and problems. The centre also provides suggestion to the Non-resident Indian for their interests. The state government is going to open regional centers in Varanasi, Gorakhpur, Kanpur and NOIDA for NRIs for their convenience under Single Window System. There is provision to honor them for time to time in the meets/convention for their good works done in foreign countries or for their activities or for their special contribution. There is a provision to give then UPNRI card to them. With this help, they can meet the government officials to get their problems addressed. The UP government felicitated 16 NRIs with UP Ratna.

**Food Security Scheme**

Food Security Scheme has been implemented in 28 districts in the first phase from January 2016 and in the second phase, it was implemented in 47 districts from March 1, 2016. Under the scheme, the beneficiaries of Antyodaya Category will get 35 Kg per family per month food-stuff. Each member of the eligible family will get 5 Kg rice per month at a rate of ₹3 per Kg, wheat at a rate of ₹2 per Kg and Millet at the rate of ₹1 per Kg.
One rank up

India moves one notch up, ranking 130, in the World Bank’s Ease of Doing Business report

One of the Modi government’s oft-hyped ambition is to improve the ‘ease of doing business’, that is, to make regulations and processes as business-friendly as possible. The PM in fact aims to put the country among the top 50 nations on this ranking by 2018. After its much effort and push in that direction over the past year, India has move up – by precisely one spot. India has secured 130th position in the World Bank’s report on the ease of doing business, Doing Business 2017: Equal Opportunity for All.

The World Bank has also released findings for 17 Indian cities, and Ludhiana bagged the top spot with Kolkata at the last. Hyderabad ranked 2, Gurgaon 4, Ahmedabad 5 and New Delhi 6.

The World Bank ranks 190 countries on the basis of 10 parameters annually. India’s rank improved only in four of these categories: getting electricity, registering property, trading across borders and enforcing contracts.

Globally, New Zealand bagged the first spot, followed by Singapore and Denmark. China’s rank improved by six notches from 84th to 78th, Pakistan fell to 144th position from 138th earlier. Among the BRICS nations, India’s rank stood at the lowest.

Caught on the back foot, the government released the following statement: “Over the past two years, the government has implemented a host of reforms to make it easier for businesses to start, operate and exit. It is therefore disappointing that these achievements are not covered by the report due to methodological issues. The government has engaged with the World Bank multiple times in the process, and is hopeful that they will take into account all the implemented reforms in future reports.”

Best cities to do business in

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>City</th>
<th>Ease of doing business</th>
<th>Starting a business</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ludhiana</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hyderabad</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bhubaneswar</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gurgaon</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ahmedabad</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Delhi</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jaipur</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guwahati</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ranchi</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mumbai</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indore</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Noida</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bengaluru</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patna</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chennai</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kochi</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kolkata</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Ease of doing business

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>2017 rank</th>
<th>2016 rank</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>New Zealand</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Singapore</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United States</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

BRICS nations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>2017 rank</th>
<th>2016 rank</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Brazil</td>
<td>123</td>
<td>121</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russia</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>India</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>131</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>China</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Africa</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Jharkhand is on the boil over acquisition of tribal land. On October 5, four people were killed and more than a dozen injured while protesting against a coal mining project of NTPC, a Maharatna PSU. In September, more than 40,000 people from 11 districts of Jharkhand gathered in the state capital Ranchi to demonstrate against the government for issuing an ordinance to open tribal land for commercial and non-agricultural use.

The tribals are clearly quite peeved. Amid this turmoil, the National Commission for Scheduled Tribes (NCST), an independent body framed as per the provisions under the constitution to safeguard the rights of tribal population, is making concerted efforts to prevent the alienation of tribals from their lands.

Being a government watchdog, the commission has recommended to the president not to give his assent to the ordinance which seeks amendments in the Chotanagpur Tenancy Act, 1908 and Santhal Pargana Tenancy Act, 1949. These are the two special laws governing the scheduled areas of Jharkhand and restricts the alienation of tribals from their lands.

The commission in its report has rejected the opening of tribal land for non-tribal purposes, citing violation of constitutional safeguards.

But the commission was given a short shrift by the Jharkhand government. “The constitution mandates that the union and every state government shall consult the commission on all major policy matters affecting scheduled tribes. But the Jharkhand government violated it,” NCST chairperson Rameshwar Oraon told Governance Now (see accompanying interview.)

A brief history

According to the 2011 census data, India is home to 10,42,81,034 people who fall in the category of scheduled tribes. The term ‘scheduled tribes’ first appeared in the constitution of India. Article 366 (25) defined scheduled tribes as “such tribes or tribal communities or parts of or groups within such tribes or tribal communities as are deemed under Article 342 to be Scheduled Tribes for the purposes of this constitution”.

The framers of the constitution took note of the fact that certain communities were suffering from extreme social, educational and economic backwardness due to their geographical isolation and age-old practices. Therefore, to provide the constitutional safeguards, a commission was appointed – National Commission for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes.

After the Eighty-Ninth Amendment Act, 2003, two separate commissions were formed in 2004 – one dedicated to the SCs and the other for STs.

Many tribal communities still have very little contact with the mainstream population and they are geographically isolated.

The ST commission has to safeguard rights of the tribal communities over mineral resources and water resources, improve the efficacy of relief and rehabilitation measures and reduce...
and ultimately eliminate the practice of shifting cultivation that leads to their continuous disempowerment and degradation of land.

Ground reality
Take for instance the Rourkela Steel Plant in Odisha, which was started in the late 1950s. As many as 32 villages were acquired, affecting 4,094 families. The commission is still receiving reports from the state government of non-payment of compensation to those whose land were acquired, unemployment of the displaced families, and allotment of land in lieu of their land being acquired. Despite the cases being over five decades old, they are yet to be resolved. Similar is the case with Sardar Sarovar Project in Gujarat.

NCST’s role is to inquire, monitor and follow up on proper compensation or suggest framing a special investigation team (SIT) in certain cases.

The commission cannot look into law and order matters. “It is one of the reasons why atrocity cases that are reported with the commission have a conviction rate of less than five percent,” said NCST chairperson Rameshwar Oraon.

The commission cannot look into law and order matters. “It is one of the reasons why atrocity cases that are reported with the commission have a conviction rate of less than five percent,” said NCST chairperson Rameshwar Oraon.

It can summon and enforce the attendance of any person, seek production of any document, receive evidence on affidavits or requisition any public records or copy from any court or office.

But the panel seems to lack teeth. On July 8, anti-Maoist police force in an operation in Kandhamal district of Odisha reportedly killed five tribals, including a two-year-old child, and injured at least seven people of Gumdumaha village. The victims were caught in a crossfire between Maoists and security forces while they were returning to the village after withdrawing MGNREGA wages from their bank account. In the Kandhamal killings, the commission is yet to receive the report from the SIT appointed to investigate the case.

Invested with the powers, it is supposed to, on its own, investigate by constituting a team at its headquarters in Delhi or through its regional offices in Bhopal, Raipur, Bhubaneswar, Ranchi, Jaipur and Shillong. Only the chairperson, secretary, assistant director, research officer and section officer can be entrusted with the investigation.

Lack of manpower
For last two years, a major chunk of these positions have been lying vacant. All the three posts of members are vacant. There is only one research officer out of three, only one director and an assistant director out of four positions. The regional offices are equally understaffed. The lack of manpower is clearly hampering investigations.

The core of the commission consists the chairperson, vice-chairperson and three members, who are drawn from different political parties and serve a three-year tenure. For a quorum to take decision at least three of them should be present. For the past two years, the quorum is incomplete as there are no members.

Incidentally, the NCST can regulate its own procedures because of which the incomplete quorum does not prohibit the chairperson from taking the decision alone. In fact, the chairperson is invested with powers equal to that of...
Rameshwar Oraon, a former Congress MP who went on to serve as minister of state for tribal affairs, is completing his second consecutive term as the head of the ST commission. In an interview with Archana Mishra days before his successor is expected to be named, Oraon explains what is wrong with the commission.

What is the commission doing about the controversy related to the ordinance by the Jharkhand government to amend the Chotanagpur Tenancy (CNT) Act, 1908 and the Santhal Pargana Tenancy (Supplementary Provisions) (SPT) Act, 1949?

The Jharkhand government has already submitted the ordinance to the president. The tribal commission has also been asked to study the ordinance for analysis and opinion. After going through the documents, the commission wants that it should not be passed. It will drastically impact tribal life in the state. A tribal has only one property – land, and to protect the land two Acts were framed during the colonial rule. The CNT Act was made in 1908 and SPT Act (original) in 1855. Both these Acts are historical and have helped tribals. The Bihar government had already made amendments in both the Acts when Jharkhand was part of it.

The proposed amendments to the Act allow transfer of tribal land for public purposes such as for building roads, canals, railway [tracks], water pipelines, schools, colleges, universities, panchayat buildings or any other activity which the state government may prefer to add in future. If the ordinance is passed, it would open gates for non-tribals to buy tribal lands, leading to a massive land alienation. And, once a tribal loses the land, he cannot buy it again. Also, there has been an amendment to convert agricultural land for non-agricultural purposes, so that the land can be sold like tomatoes.

While the focus is on tribal empowerment, their land is being acquired for industry. How can the two go together? Acquiring land from the tribals can never lead to empowerment. Instead it leads to impoverishment. When Jharkhand was formed as a new state [on November 15, 2000], a bid was made to acquire the tribal land. I won’t name the politician but during his speech he once said that tribal land should be open for all so that a tribal can mint money by establishing business on his land. I was also present during the meeting and refused to accept his viewpoint. According to me,
a poor cannot start his own industry by selling off his land. Empowerment of the tribals is possible only through improvement in the health and education sector. There are no teachers in schools run in these belts. In the middle school, there are only two teachers. In the high school, there aren’t any English or Mathematics teachers. Even the health framework is in a poor state. If there is a malaria outbreak, several villages at a stretch are affected by it. Such cases are not reported because there is no healthcare facility. No health camps are organised nor is any screening mechanism in place to help the poor tribals. Empowerment is possible only if we provide them these basic amenities.

**What is the commission’s role regarding a distressed tribal who lives in an area where the fight is between the state and Maoists, leading to fake encounters and false implications?**

It is a law and order matter, and the commission has no authority to monitor that. However, if there is unjustified firing or killing of a tribal, the commission [intervenes]. If a judicial committee is appointed, then further investigation is done. Also, in the case of fake encounters, compensation is increased. In Chhattisgarh, a girl was killed on the charge of being a Naxal. A single judge-led committee was appointed to inquire into the matter. It was found that she was not a Naxalite. So, we approached the government, provided compensation and a job to her brother. In a fake encounter that happened this year [in Odisha], we knew it was unjustified so we asked the government to appoint a special committee for inquiry. The committee, however, is headed by the ADG [additional director general] of police. I also know that nothing will be done. But we are trying to address other aspects which lead to encounters of those villagers.

**What is the commission doing for those who are falsely implicated as Naxals?**

In the name of fighting Naxalism, tribals are being falsely implicated and the number of such cases is gradually increasing. I admit we cannot do much as we don’t have a machinery to regulate these activities. We cannot scrutinise each and every case. It is the responsibility of the state to address such cases. But we advise the state government to control the situation as those killed or implicated are the [residents] of their state.

**Which are the policy issues the commission is currently working on?**

We are working to improve existing policies. There is no proper policy rehabilitation after the displacement. Displacement is written in the destiny of the tribals. They don’t get jobs. The colony where these tribals stay is in a poor condition. The land they receive as compensation is also not sufficient to sustain the family. They don’t have the money to buy land or invest in any business. There should be a policy that should look at the long term benefits of the displaced population.

**What are the commission’s recommendations on these issues?**

We have already prepared a list of recommendations and will be submitting it to the ministry [of tribal affairs] by the end of this month [October]. We want that all the tribals should be kept in the BPL [below poverty line] card category. Focus is on education as there are no teachers. But, Chhattisgarh and Madhya Pradesh are doing really good in the education sector. A special school has been opened for selected tribal students in Chhattisgarh to take up higher studies till standard XII. Students are taught science in English medium to make them eligible for medical and engineering studies. There is no concrete policy to deal with specific health issues – malaria, sickle cell anaemia and silicosis. There should be a specific policy for these diseases. We are also working on the implementation of the Forest Rights Act and employment of tribal population through Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act.

In annual reports, the commission has complained of poor response from the state governments in seeking advice from it on policy matters.

Acts are being made by the state governments and there are certain Acts where no interest of the tribals is taken into account. There is a provision in the constitution that every matter related to the tribals will be sent to the commission for referral and suggestion. However, states are not sending their reports as per the directives. Only a few states are sending it. The centre, on the other hand, is very particular about policy matters or bills related to tribals. They seek our advice.

**How has the commission been operating and taking decisions in the absence of members in the core committee?**

The commission has the power to make rules for itself. It should comprise of minimum three people. Currently, there are two people. So, if some suggestion is sought by the government then we give it. In such a situation, the chairperson or a vice chairperson can take a decision on behalf of the commission. It has been continuing for more than two years.

**Has the division of states on the basis of tribal domination led to development?**

It is not helping in states like Jharkhand and Chhattisgarh. We call them tribal dominated states, but nothing is being done as per their status. If you look at the utilisation of funds under tribal sub-plan, it is very inappropriate. Money is being used, but states are not able to answer where it is being used. What they show in the balance sheet. If it were used properly, work should have been visible on ground.

“We are working to improve existing policies. There is no proper policy rehabilitation after displacement. Displacement is written in the destiny of the tribals. They don’t get jobs. The colony where these tribals stay is in a poor condition.”
a cabinet minister.

The total number of posts in the commission is now 140. However, the commission has been demanding 400 posts, including at its regional offices across the country. The sanctioned posts have not been filled.

Even the 12th five-year plan report on social sector mentions that the NCST needs strengthening through improvements in the functioning of the commission and placement of requisite manpower at its headquarters and regional offices.

**Just monitoring**

Due to inadequate manpower, the commission finds itself restricted to be just a monitoring body. It asks for the reports and sends out communications to the state governments or any authority concerned, describing the shortcomings that have been noticed in the implementation.

In the Kandhamal firing incident, the commission followed up on the compensation given to the aggrieved family, ensured that there were LED lights in the affected village, roads were constructed and recommended the state government to sensitise police force and provide MNREGA wages at the doorstep.

Despite its autonomous status, states look at the NCST as just any other government department.

The lack of seriousness towards the commission can be understood by the delay in the annual Action Taken Report (ATR) prepared by each state. The state governments take a year or two to submit this report to the commission. The report has to be presented in both houses of parliament for discussion. So far the commission has presented five annual reports to the president, yet only three of them have been laid in parliament.

Kunwar Singh Teekam, the first chairperson of the NCST, said that discussions should take place in parliament on the crucial issues pertaining to tribals, instead of just waiting for the annual ATRs. “It is only then that the actual purpose of the commission will be fulfilled. We need to address those issues to highlight why government schemes of NFSA (National Food Security Act) or MNREGA are not implemented properly.”

The let-down from the government is when it fails to implement the commission’s recommendations. Worse, the recommendations are not mandatory either.

Over the years several deaths have been reported from residential schools of tribal-majority regions of states like Maharashtra, Odisha, Chhattisgarh and Madhya Pradesh. For example, the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) in October took note of media reports indicating 740 such deaths over the past decade in Maharashtra. However, the states have failed to curb the deaths despite the commission’s insistence on preparing a report highlighting strengths, weaknesses and concerns in the existing schemes for these ‘ashram’ schools. This is despite repeated visits by the commission chairpersons and regional staff to the schools and repeated pleas to improve the facilities.

**Fund woes**

The NCST doesn’t have much say over the funds sanctioned under the tribal sub-plan (TSP), a funding mechanism by the states. States have to earmark adequate funds to fill the critical gaps in tribal development. The ministry of tribal affairs and the then planning commission (now rechristened Niti Aayog) have laid stress on earmarking of adequate resources. Some of the states while preparing the annual plan for 2013-14 continued to allocate less than proportional resources to TSP. Andhra Pradesh has framed an Act to curb the misuse or diversion of TSP. The commission has been asking other states to practise the same.

A former member, who preferred anonymity, blamed the commission’s failure primarily due to its financial constraints. “For the commission to work properly, field visits are a must and for that sufficient budget is required. The commission is financially dependent on the ministry of tribal affairs. It is one of the prime reasons the commission is ineffective today. For the first two terms, the commission was active but now it is dormant. It is a neglected child,” he said.

Though it is an independent body, the funds are channelised through the ministry of tribal affairs. It affects the autonomy of the commission. Until 2011, the annual budget was around ₹4-4.5 crore. It has increased to ₹8.54 crore for the current year, but it is largely used for paying salaries, and not for investigation purposes.

The commission is, however, largely preoccupied with service-related issues, including the implementation of reservation policies within the government and cases relating to false community certificates.

The NCST used to have three wings, dedicated to economic and social development, service safeguard and atrocities. One of them, the service safeguard wing, was overburdened as almost 95 percent of the hearings organised in the commission were related to service matters. Thus, it was not a rational and balanced system of work distribution. In 2006, these wings were replaced by four research units, dealing with four geographical regions. Each of them looks after service matters of the specific ministries or departments assigned to them, apart from looking into economic and social development, and atrocities.

The commission has today largely been reduced to playing a mere advisory role, defeating the very purpose for which it was formed – to empower the scheduled tribes.
Recognising excellence in public sector

Last date for sending entries extended till 5th November 2016

CPSEs can nominate for PSU Awards 2016 at www.event.governancenow.com/psu-awards-2016

For Details Contact:
Pragya Guptaa, pragya@governancenow.com, +91-9873650603
Srikant Kukreti, srikant@governancenow.com, +91-9871023330
Seema Devi, a 34-year-old woman, is not much different from other homemakers of her village – Takerson in Ballia district of Uttar Pradesh. But ask her about her latest acquisition, and she turns into an ideal candidate for promotional ad on the Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana (PMUY).

As if reading from a script, she says with enviable articulation: “Ujjwala ne zindagi hi palat ke rakh di humari. Ye gas humare jivan ka atoot hissa hai. [Ujjwala has changed our lives completely. The gas connection has become an integral part of our lives].”

Seema is especially upbeat about it, as she was one of the 10 women who received LPG (cooking) gas connection documents from prime minister Narendra Modi on May 1.

“I had never thought I will have my own gas stove. Cooking food on a gas stove is much better than on a chulha. Life is easy now,” says Seema, pointing to the pride of her kitchen.

Seema’s husband and his two brothers are construction workers and her father-in-law is a vegetable vendor. The family’s monthly income is not
more than ₹4,000-5,000. “For people like us who have such a meagre income, owning a gas connection feels royal,” she exults.

Seema proceeds to light her gas stove, probably to show us that she can handle the new gadget. A Hindi pamphlet, hanging on the brick wall of her small kitchen, lists the safety measures for the stove. “People from the gas agency had come to connect the gas [cylinder]. They taught me how to light the gas stove. They told me about the precautionary measures; and in case I forget, I can simply look in the pamphlet,” she says.

Meanwhile, Seema’s father-in-law, dressed in a white shirt and dhoti, enters the kitchen. “Now, there is no smoke from the chulah and I don’t cough anymore. Food is cooked on the gas stove only,” he says.

Seema says that half of the expense of her connection was borne by the government and for the rest she took a loan from the Indian Oil agency. “The first refill was recently done by the gas agency. But for the next I will have to save money. I haven’t really thought how I will do that. But I have vowed to maintain this connection all my life,” she says.

As per the PMUY, the price of an LPG gas connection is ₹3,200, of which ₹1,600 is borne by the government for below poverty line (BPL) families. The cost includes security deposit for the cylinder, pressure regulator, hose pipe, domestic gas consumer card (DGCC) book – also known as the ‘blue book’ – and one-time installation and administrative charges. The remaining ₹1,600, which includes the cost of LPG stove and the first refill, is paid by the beneficiary. She also has the option of availing a loan from her gas agency as Seema has done. In case of a loan, the initial cost of the LPG stove and first refill is borne by the distributor, which will be later adjusted by the respective oil marketing company from the subsidy due to the consumer on purchase of each refill.

“I had never thought I will have my own gas stove. Cooking food on a gas stove is much better than on a chulha. Life is easy now,” says Seema, a beneficiary.

“People from the gas agency had come to connect the gas [cylinder]. They taught me how to light the gas stove. They told me about the precautionary measures; and in case I forget, I can simply look in the pamphlet,” she says.

Indravati too has taken a loan for the connection and has no idea how she will pay for the refill. “My husband and I are farmers and we plough a nearby field. We earn ₹10-20 per day. I don’t use the gas stove much because I don’t have the money for refilling the cylinder. So I mostly cook on chulha,” she says.

Indravati’s limitation to use the chulha for cooking even after owning a gas connection bares the chinks in the PMUY. While the scheme has changed Seema’s life, it hasn’t brought relief to many others like Indravati.

And yet people, especially BPL families, are rushing to get a connection.

Amitesh, a local Indian Oil Corporation Limited (IOCL) LPG distributor, says that while a few are enjoying the benefits, others are struggling to maintain the connection. He explains the scheme: “The list of beneficiaries was prepared on the basis of Socio-Economic Caste Census (SECC), 2011. Though the survey is five-year-old it is also the
Indravati too has taken a loan for the connection and has no idea how she will pay for the refill. “My husband and I are farmers and we plough a nearby field. We earn ₹10-20 per day. I don’t use the gas stove much because I don’t have the money for refilling the cylinder. So I mostly cook on chulha,” she says.

Waiting list. There are people who are on the list and still not able to get the connection. Reason being, their names in the SECC list don’t match with the names in their documents, and we are very particular about these little details,” he says.

Singh says that many applicants face rejection as their AHL TIN numbers are missing. [AHL TIN Number stands for Abridged Household List-Temporary Identification Number, which is a 29-digit number given under the SECC 2011].

He also spoke of yet another major problem faced by BPL card holders for getting LPG connection: “We tell them that they can’t have the connection unless their name is on the SECC survey list. But BPL women come and ask us if the scheme is for them then why they can’t get the connection now. They also ask us how long they have to wait. Frankly we don’t have answers. We send them to the agency so that at least their information is forwarded to the National Informatics Centre [NIC].” He explains that the NIC is the nodal agency for matching data of BPL women [entitled beneficiary] collected on the field with that of SECC 2011 to avoid duplication of the LPG connection in a family. “But since the NIC does not send an authority letter, we have no idea how long it will take for them to get the connection,” he says.

Amitesh and Rajesh feel that there is urgent need of another survey. “Many things went wrong in the 2011 survey. It was not done properly and it is also old. There are many people in the waiting list. There is an urgent need to hold another survey,” says Amitesh.

Six kilometres from Jira Basti is Dharampura village. Village pradhan Vakeel Rajbhar vents his frustration over the chaos in allotment of LPG connections: “There is so much confusion. People from the gas agency told me that if anyone in my village is entitled to a gas connection, they will first inform me through a text message. Then it will be my responsibility to inform the concerned person. But when I do so the people who still haven’t got a connection get offended and accuse me of favouritism.”

He underlines his point with an anecdote. “Two brothers who were living in one house had received the connection under the Ujjwala scheme. Later they separated their households and when one brother wanted a separate connection, the agency refused saying that one family could only get one connection. This has led to a major fight between them. And such fights are common.”

A visit to the kitchen in Vakeel’s house brings forth a startling revelation about the usage of LPG gas stoves. There, the gas stove lay covered with a neat cotton cloth while a chulha was being used for cooking. Vakeel’s wife, Sursati, explains, “I am used to cooking on the chulha. I use the gas stove as well. It’s just that I am not able to let go of the chulha.”

Anil Kumar Choubey, proprietor of an IOCL agency, gives more insights into the realities of PMUY. “Sometimes there is political pressure from the local MLA for giving preference to his
favourites. But we strictly move according to the list. The pressure is more from people claiming to be friends with the MLA. As the elections are approaching, they are creating more problems for us.”

Choubey too admits that the SECC 2011 is outdated and full of errors. “But we have no other option. We have been instructed to distribute the connection according to the list. The rules are being followed but the mistakes made in the survey create problems for us.”

As per the SECC 2011 data, a total of 2,22,020 connections were to be distributed in the first year in Ballia district. As of now, the LPG agencies have distributed only 16,234 connections. “We are trying our best. Agencies of three companies – the IOCL, Bharat Gas and Hindustan Petroleum – are operating in Ballia. IOCL is the nodal company. We all work in collaboration through the OMC (oil marketing company) web portal where all the data is uploaded and saved,” he says.

Explaining the process of selection, Choubey says that a customer first has to fill a KYC (Know Your Customer) form. If her details match the SECC 2011 data, she is asked to submit her Aadhaar and bank account details. The OMC portal undertakes the exercise to electronically detect any multiple connections in her household. If no multiple connection is detected the new one is released to the beneficiary.

Choubey shows a huge stack of rejected forms. In most of these either the TIN was missing or the name didn’t match with the one in the SECC list.

**District administration not in loop**

District administration officials claimed they have no role to play in implementation of the scheme as it is between the government and the oil marketing companies. The officials in fact appeared upset at being kept out of the scheme.

“We cannot be held responsible for any of the issues concerning Ujjwala. Be it the safety aspect or selection of the beneficiary. We have no information whatsoever,” said Rakesh Kumar, who was then district magistrate (DM), Ballia, but has since been suspended pending an inquiry against him for allegedly ordering firing on BJP supporters.

Kumar said that despite this he has to face people’s wrath on not-so-fair gas distribution. “Many people come to me asking for connections but I have to send them to the agencies. Others come with the problems they have with their claims and applications, but we can’t do anything because we are not formally updated about this scheme. It is a big problem as the scheme is not executed through us,” he rued.

Kumar had no access to the database of SECC 2011 survey or the number of connections distributed. “We had to dig out the figures about the number of connections distributed for you, otherwise we have no formal update on this scheme,” he says.

Kumar also mentioned that the survey was done by the ministry of rural development and it has been shared only with the agencies. He therefore had no clue about the problems surfacing from the survey.

Chetan Patwari, IOCL area manager, Gorakhpur, says that the Ujjwala scheme is different from other schemes and doesn’t require the involvement of the district administration. “Why should we unnecessarily complicate the scheme? It is better if

---

**What the Ujjwala envisions**

- It is the NDA government’s scheme that intends to provide five crore LPG connections to below poverty line families over a period of three years (2016-19). During the current financial year (2016-17), 1.5 crore LPG connections will be given to eligible beneficiaries.
- The ₹8,000 scheme will partly be funded by using the money saved from PM’s ‘Give It Up’ campaign wherein 1.13 crore cooking gas users voluntarily gave up their subsidies. The initiative was launched in March 2015 by prime minister Narendra Modi. It aimed at motivating LPG users who can afford to pay the market price for LPG to willingly surrender their LPG subsidy. Nearly ₹5,000 crore subsidy saved through the campaign is being used to provide LPG connection to the poor.
- The scheme is being implemented by the union ministry of petroleum and natural gas. It is for the first time that this ministry is implementing a welfare scheme.
- The identification of eligible BPL families is being made in consultation with the Socio Economic Caste Census (SECC) 2011 data.
- The total cost of the LPG connection is ₹3,200. The government will provide a financial support of ₹1,600 for each connection, which includes administrative cost, pressure regulator booklet and safety hose, etc. The rest ₹1,600 can either be paid by the beneficiary upfront or she can avail the EMI facility from the gas agency. The amount will be adjusted from her next subsidy by the agency.

---

**What we found on the ground**

**Positives:**
- As per the ministry of petroleum and natural gas, 20.5 lakh LPG connections have already been distributed in India
- Half of the LPG connection cost (₹1,600 of ₹3,200) borne by the government. EMI option also available
- Empowerment of rural women along with better health standards
- Employment opportunities to the rural youth by engaging them in the supply chain of cooking gas via PMUY
- Safety pamphlets distributed along with the connections

**Negatives:**
- Due to lack of knowledge, force of habit and superstitious beliefs, many women still using chulha despite having LPG connection
- LPG connection also distributed in thatched kutcha houses where it risks causing fire
- SECC 2011 data is old and inaccurate in details of beneficiaries
- Political pressure from local MLAs in distributing LPG connections
- The cost of refilling the gas cylinder is unaffordable for the poorest of families
Many women in Ballia, UP, say it is difficult for them to collect even a small amount for refilling gas. We frankly don’t have a clear answer to that. But it is firstly important for us to convince the women and other people and educate them about the benefits of LPG. Once they are convinced they will find a way to save money. There are people from these villages who would rather spend money on cow dung than on a gas connection. But we are getting a feedback where women are saying that they will try their best to save money and collect about ₹500 a month.

Many women still use chulha despite having a gas connection.

We are working on that. We have some cultural issues too. We have constantly been in touch with the officials who are working on the ground. There are problems like women refusing to use the gas during the month of Shravan. So we can't force them to start using it immediately. But we are trying our best to convince them. Also, it's been just three months, so we need to give them time to adapt to this new development in their lives.

A few gas agencies claim they don't provide connections to women living in kutcha houses as it poses the threat of fire. But in Ballia, connections were provided in such homes too. What about safety?

LPG is heavier than air. So, if you have a thatched ceiling but a mud wall, then there is no harm. LPG does not go up like other gases; it goes down. But if you have a thatched wall along with a thatched roof, then that is risky. And yes, we definitely have to be careful while providing connections and we’ll work on that.

The local distributors say the SECC 2011 survey is old and many eligible women are still struggling to get the connection. Your comments?

SECC data was collected in 2011. It comes under the ministry of rural development. A proper procedure was followed whereby the list had to be first approved by the gram sabha. This entire work was done by the district administration and state administration and went on till 2012-13. The data is quite old but this is the most recent we have. We are now trying to find ways to update this data and rectify it because there are a lot of errors. We have also received a lot of complaints.

What kind of complaints?

There is mismatch of names. Their allotted TIN is missing. Some families were not there earlier [during the survey]. Some of them might have migrated now. There are other problems as well. For example, if two brothers have separated then the other cannot avail this facility because a connection has already been issued to that family. We are trying to update these cases.

How is the government trying to update the data?

In 2011, our enumerators went door to door. They were provided with tablets to store names. After making a list of these names, a procedure of claim and objection was followed, where the gram sabha voted for the names enlisted and then it was approved. The idea is to keep it transparent. And we will probably be doing the same next time as well and hopefully soon. We are working on it closely with the ministry of rural development.

Why can’t anybody with a BPL card claim the connection?

Just before Ujjwala was launched, we had come up with a scheme called corporate social responsibility fund scheme, where the BPL families could avail new LPG connection without paying security deposit of one cylinder and one pressure regulator. It was given on the basis of their BPL cards only. But we received a lot of complaints where we got to know that the real BPL families never got the connection and people who didn’t come under the BPL category were enjoying the benefits. So, that’s how we decided to go for the SECC 2011 data, which was the most recent data we had. But yes, I admit, it needs to be updated. But then again no data is perfect.

Local distributors complain of political pressure in providing LPG connections. Have you received any such complaints?

We have received some complaints verbally but the point is that anybody can apply. We have a strong system so it is nothing like anyone can pressure. We are moving strictly according to the system.

What is your target and in how many states has the scheme been implemented?

The scheme was launched in May, and in three months we have provided the connection to 20.5 lakh people. We are giving priority to states which have lower LPG coverage than the national average. So we are focusing more on states like Odisha, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, etc. where remote areas in districts like Ballia are of primary importance. In Gujarat we have reached areas where there is dire need of LPG connections. We launched the scheme from Ballia as it is in eastern Uttar Pradesh and is one of the most under-covered parts of the country. Till now, we have covered 22 states where the scheme is being implemented, out of which 14 have lower LPG coverage.

–Sakshi Kuchroo
we keep the work between the government and the OMCs. Because, frankly speaking, there is no need to involve the district administration here," says Patwari, who also covers the distribution of LPG connections in Ballia.

On distribution of connections in unsafe kutcha houses, he says, “We take full care while distributing the connections. Our distributors brief all the ladies of the household. We give them pamphlets written in Hindi. If elders don’t know how to read then at least their children are able to tell them.” When I tell him about Indravati’s unsafe thatched kitchen, Patwari replies, “You can give me the specific names and we will look into the matter. Otherwise, it is not like we don’t take care. We also hold safety education programmes where we call all the beneficiaries at one particular place and give them instructions on how to operate their gas connections.”

Patwari does not want to share his opinion on the SECC 2011 survey with us and claims the government and OMCs are doing their best to reach out to as many BPL families as possible.

Anil Kumar, district supply officer, Ballia, dismisses the claims of LPG distributors about missing names, documents or TIN number. “Who told you all this? We take care of the missing documents. We also make Aadhaar cards for them if they don’t have one,” he says.

Kumar claims that the gas agencies also hold new connection melas (NCMs) where beneficiaries are provided with the LPG connection by an MP. “So far, we have held about 100 NCMs and it is all going great,” he says.

I also met people who have been waiting for connections for long. “It’s been three months since I applied for the connection and I have been repeatedly visiting the agency. We have submitted all our documents and our name is also on the SECC list. I don’t understand why it is taking so long,” says Suresh of Jira Basti, who I met while he was waiting outside the office of Bharat Gas agency with his wife Geeta Devi. He says, “We are tired of running around. People who filled the form after us have received the connection but we are still waiting. We were told that we will get the gas stove today but it’s been three hours and the gates of their office remain locked. How much more a poor family can handle?” asks a visibly distressed Suresh.

At the same place I met Rajan and his wife Baby Devi, who too have been waiting for their connection for two months now. “We have repeatedly asked them if there is any problem with the form but they say everything is fine, just wait for it, we will call you. But they never call. Today they did and now again they have disappeared,” says Baby Devi.

When I tell Patwari about their cases, he promises to look into these. “Normally this is not the case. They get the connection within days. But if there are people who have been waiting for such a long time, I will look into it personally,” he said.

The preamble of the PMUY says that the poor in India have limited access to LPG cooking gas. Lack of access to clean fuel is affecting the health of particularly women and children in the rural households. The government is thus committed to provide clean fuel to as many poor households as possible. PMUY aims to empower women and make them free of all health hazards that are caused by unclean cooking fuel. The target is to reach out to five crore BPL households with the LPG connection over a period of three years.

However, on the ground in Ballia, some beneficiaries have put the gas aside and returned to the chulha, some are waiting for a connection, LPG distributors are blaming the SECC 2011 survey, people are cursing the agencies while the district administration is unhappy at being kept out. If Ujjwala has to achieve its aims, it will have to untangle the web of mismanagement and blame game.

As per the SECC 2011 data, a total of 2,22,020 connections were to be distributed in the first year in Ballia. As of now, the LPG agencies have distributed only 16,234 connections in the district.
Proxy war for Aleppo at the UN

The big powers seem to be in no mood to loosen their stranglehold on Syria

Shreerupa Mitra-Jha

With the fighting intensifying in Syria’s Aleppo, parties to the conflict are aggressively pushing their agendas beyond the battlegrounds. The battle over the war-struck city has great symbolic significance for the big powers, particularly the US and Russia, apart from clear strategic benefits accruing from controlling the city.

Earlier in October, two UN Security Council (UNSC) resolutions on Aleppo failed to be adopted amid heated debate on the content of the text. One of the resolutions initiated by France and Spain demanding an immediate halt to all aerial bombardments and military flights over the city of Aleppo was shot down by Russia, a P5 member. Another text initiated by Russia (which received an affirmative vote by China) that urged an immediate cessation of hostilities in the besieged Syrian city was rejected by France, the US and the UK, all permanent members of the UNSC.

However, the UN Human Rights Council (HRC) adopted a resolution on October 21 that asked the independent Commission of Inquiry (CoI) on Syria to conduct a comprehensive, independent special inquiry into the events in Aleppo, and identify all those responsible for alleged violations and abuses of international human rights law. An analysis of the statements made at the HRC during the tabling of this resolution accurately reflects clash of interests in the Syrian battlefields.

What the resolution says

The ‘Aleppo resolution’ at the HRC was initiated by British ambassador to the UN in Geneva Julian Braithwaite through a letter to the Council president on October 18 requesting for a special session of the UNHRC on the deteriorating human rights situation in Syria with special attention on the Aleppo situation.

The resolution demands that the Syrian “regime and its allies end immediately all aerial bombardments and military flights over Aleppo city” and “urges” the immediate implementation of the cessation of hostilities. The adopted text also demands that all parties, in particular the Syrian authorities and its supporters, “promptly allow rapid, safe, unhindered and sustained humanitarian access” for UN humanitarian agencies and their implementing partners, including across conflict lines and borders, “in order to ensure that humanitarian assistance reaches people in need through the most direct routes”.

It “emphasises” the need to ensure that all those responsible for violations of international humanitarian law (IHL) or international human rights law are held accountable through “appropriate, fair and independent domestic or international criminal justice mechanisms”, “noting the important role that the International Criminal Court can play in this regard” and “underlines” that humanitarian access should be to the “full number of people” in need as identified by the UN and their implementing partners, with the “full spectrum” of humanitarian assistance being delivered. It “strongly condemns” violence committed by ISIS, Al-Nusra Front or other terrorist organisations; reiterates that the only sustainable political solution to the current crisis in Syria is through an “inclusive and Syrian-led political process”; and welcomes the UN Secretary-General’s decision to establish a panel of inquiry into the bombing of a humanitarian convoy at Urum al-Kubra (Big Orem), Syria, on September 19. (The SG appointed Lieutenant General (retd) Abhijit Guha to head the panel.)

The resolution was adopted by the Council with 24 member-states including France, the UK, Germany, Switzerland, Netherlands, Belgium, Saudi Arabia, South Korea, the UAE, and Qatar voting for the resolution. (The US is not a member of the HRC at the moment).

Seven countries including China, Cuba and Russia voted against the resolution. Sixteen countries abstained from voting including India (following its previous voting patterns on the Syrian conflict), Philippines, South Africa, Bangladesh, Ecuador and Vietnam.

Syria, speaking as the concerned country, said that the UK was once again leading a number of states trying to revive its colonial glory – the group of states behind the resolution were not...
concerned about the well-being of the Syrian people, but were instead supporting terrorist organisations in Syria. Syria said there was no such thing as eastern or western Aleppo – there was only one city of Aleppo. Aleppo had become a platform for terrorist groups to launch indiscriminate attacks, which had led to the death of scores of civilians on a daily basis, it accused. The Syrian government was working on ridding some areas of armed groups, and safe passage had been provided for civilians and fighters to leave safely and with guarantees. Army units had retreated to positions which would allow fighters to leave through designated corridors, it said.

Theodore Allegra, US deputy permanent representative to the United Nations in Geneva, said at the UNHRC: “Airstrikes by Russia and the Assad regime are the cause of this devastation, and they are the cause of this suffering. And let me emphasise, no pause can be a substitute for a genuine end to the violence and full access for humanitarian aid. So Russia and the regime owe the world much more than excuses. Why do they keep hitting hospitals and medical facilities, and why do they keep targeting children and women?”

The UK “strongly condemned” Syria, its military and its Russian backers, for the violence in Aleppo. “Russia, you are making the situation worse not solving it,” accused the UK’s parliamentary under secretary of state at the foreign and commonwealth office Tobias Ellwood at the HRC, ignoring the fact that the UK itself had blocked a resolution on cessation of hostilities in Syria at the UNSC. Russia is “spurring radicalisation” and the blocking of the UNSC resolution by Russia is not the leadership expected from a P5 nation, the UK said.

The Russians proposed at least four amendments to the draft resolution at the HRC, all of which were rejected by the initiators of the resolution – in this case, the largely western bloc of countries.

The first proposed amendment, L.2, called for a separation of terrorists from the so-called moderate opposition. The second amendment (L.3) would welcome steps to improve a humanitarian situation in Aleppo, in particular the holding of a humanitarian pause. The third proposed amendment, L.4, addressed the key issue of whether the international community would defend terrorists in Syria. L.5 referred to the continued foreign support to Al-Nusra, ISIS and other unlawful formations. The final amendment, L.6, would remove the “distorted interpretation” on the powers of the International Criminal Court. Russia requested that all amendments be taken one by one, and urged all Council members to support them.

India, presumably not wanting to side either with the western countries or Russia and to avoid getting dragged into the Syrian crisis, abstained from voting on the proposed amendments to the resolution. It was interesting to note that the smaller African countries who are current members of the HRC largely also abstained from voting. Predictably, China and Russia voted ‘yes’ to all the amendments and countries like the UK, Switzerland, Germany, France and Saudi Arabia rejected all the proposed Russian amendments.

Russia, speaking in a general comment after the amendments were rejected, said that the outcome of the voting left a muddied impression, but was also a moment of truth which indicated that the commitment of many states to peace in Syria was “simply empty words”. It turned out that the “Friends of Syria” were “friends of puppet masters and terrorists”, Russia accused. Russia wanted the entire draft resolution to be put to vote.

Saudi Arabia, speaking in a general comment during the tabling of the amendments, said that it believed that the aerial bombardments on Aleppo by Syria could only be seen as terror acts (never mind the inconvenient fact of the catastrophic aerial bombing by Saudi Arabia itself on hapless Yemeni civilians).

Interestingly, Pakistan, during the debate on the text, said that a “country-specific resolution doesn’t help” and demanded that the resolution be “balanced, impartial and implementable” countering Saudi Arabia’s claim of the resolution being “balanced” and moving against the US’s interests.

**What the country statements indicate**

The resolutions at the UNHRC as well as at the UNSC quickly came as the Syrian army’s tanks were seen making major gains and rolling into eastern Aleppo. It is important to note that there are no ISIS fighters in Aleppo – the city is divided into the western part controlled by the Syrian government...
and the eastern part controlled by the opposition fighters including from the Al-Nusra Front, an affiliate of Al-Qaeda and a UN-recognised terrorist organisation. The Syrian government wants to regain control over its lost territory whereas the US sees the rebels in eastern Aleppo as the only hope for toppling the Assad regime, and thereby substantially limiting the influence of Iran and Russia on the region.

Russia flew in its air force to support the Syrian army about a year ago when the Assad regime was practically defeated by the rebel offensives. But Moscow’s intervention completely flipped the war game. The Syrian government quickly made strides in recapturing lost territories, thereby panicking the US and its allies including Israel. An influential Israeli think tank that also does contract work for NATO has said that the US is making a strategic mistake if it destroys ISIS, which will only ground in Syria to counter the heavy deployment of Russian troops at the Hemeimeem military base in Syria. The American officials clearly feel outmanoeuvred by Russian foreign minister Sergey Lavrov as far as the Syrian crisis is concerned as hopes of toppling the Syrian president through the so-called rebels are fast dwindling. A possible victory of the Assad government and Russia would result in a considerable loss of face for the US in the Middle East and might also trigger the perception of the US as a fading world power. The stakes are high.

Russia has demanded that the US help in separating the ‘moderate rebels’ from the terrorists so the battle at Aleppo would end. “We have reached repeated agreements between the Americans that they will differentiate between Jabhat al-Nusra and its like and the so-called healthy opposition forces, including Al-Nusra Front, an affiliate of Al-Qaeda and a UN-recognised terrorist organisation.”

The seemingly bizarre solution proposed by Staffan de Mistura of “personally accompanying” Nusra fighters to leave Aleppo along with their weapons in exchange for safe passage may just be the only solution.

The unpredictability US-Russia relations are at an all-time low and there has been a complete breakdown of trust between the two. Even during the height of Cold War, Washington had never asked for Russian officials to be tried for war crimes as secretary of state John Kerry is demanding now. Kerry, presumably, is also frustrated that US president Barack Obama has refused to put in more boots on the ground in Aleppo. They have agreed that this is necessary. What’s more, we have even agreed on concrete deadlines, but nothing is done from one month to the next,” Russian president Vladimir Putin said in an interview to French journalists on October 12.

The Americans accuse the Russians of bombarding civils (there have been alleged use of prohibited weapons like cluster bombs and chemical weapons in Aleppo) as well as blocking humanitarian access to UN convoys. The Syrian government with the help of Russia has choked off food and medical supplies to the terrorist groups ensuring that they eventually succumb. The rebels have also done the same in some areas under their control. Hundreds of civilians have been stuck in the crossfire and have fallen as “collateral” damage. Starvation as a weapon of war is a clear breach of the IHL whether done by the regime or the rebels. The Russians have accused that the ceasefire and the continuous supply of humanitarian aid is only a smoke screen that allows the terrorist formations to regroup. This theory has been rejected by the western powers who have demanded access to all “direct routes” (read: the Castello road that connects eastern Aleppo) that have been blocked by the Syrian and Russian military. There is complete discrepancy even on the numbers of Al-Nusra fighters in the area. While Russia pegs the number at 3,000, the UN special envoy to Syria puts it at 900 and the UK and the US say that the numbers are a “few hundred”.

A cessation of hostilities declared on September 12 quickly vapourised into nothingness when four days later the Americans hit a Syrian military base “by mistake”. Subsequently, the bombings at Aleppo have been relentless, including by the Russian and Syrian governments.

The seemingly bizarre solution proposed by Staffan de Mistura, the UN special envoy for Syria, on October 6 of “personally accompanying” Nusra fighters – who are recognised by the UN as terrorists – to leave Aleppo along with their weapons in exchange for safe passage may just be the only solution for breaking the logjam on the matter that has cost a devastatingly high number of civilian lives in Syria as a whole and Aleppo, in particular. As of now, Russia seems to have agreed to this solution.

De Mistura warned that if the fighting continued Aleppo would be completely destroyed in two and a half months. “Thousands of Syrian civilians, not terrorists, will be killed and thousands and thousands of them may try to become refugees in order to escape from this,” the Italian UN peacebroker said.

Earlier this month, Kerry had said that “Russia and the [Syrian] regime owe the world more than an explanation”. To tweak his statement a bit, the world owes the Syrian people much more than an explanation.
India ranks 66 out of 113 countries in terms of how the rule of law is experienced by its people, says World Justice Project (WJP) Rule of Law Index. The report has put India behind countries like Nepal, Thailand and Malaysia. The WJP surveyed people on government powers, absence of corruption, open government, fundamental rights, order and security, regulatory enforcement, civil justice and criminal justice.

Where India stands

Global ranking: 66/113
Overall score: 0.51
Regional rank: 2/6
Income rank: 6/11

Denmark which ranks first in the index has an overall score of 0.89. Venezuela performs poorest with an overall score of 0.28 which puts it at the lowest rank.

Among 28 lower income countries India stands slightly better with 6th position.

Among the Asian countries, India is second to Nepal which ranks first among six nations.

Report card | Score | Ranking
--- | --- | ---
Constraints on government powers | 0.64 | 35/113
Absence of corruption | 0.44 | 69/113
Open government | 0.66 | 28/113
Fundamental rights | 0.5 | 81/113
Order and security | 0.56 | 104/113
Regulatory enforcement | 0.46 | 77/113
Civil justice | 0.43 | 93/113
Criminal justice | 0.41 | 71/113

Source: http://data.worldjusticeproject.org
When TB numbers go out of count

The number of TB patients in India may be up to two to three times higher than current estimates, shows a new study, calling for new policy initiatives.

India currently has the highest number of tuberculosis (TB) patients in the world. But hold your breath! A new study has suggested that the number of TB cases in India is a gross underestimate. In fact, it may be up to two to three times higher than current estimates. The study was jointly done by researchers from the Imperial College London, ministry of health and family welfare, India, and the World Health Organisation (WHO). It was published in the journal, The Lancet Infectious Diseases, in August.

The team had analysed drug sales data to show that the number of cases is underreported as most patients opt for private healthcare providers. And the latter habitually neglect to report cases to the public healthcare officials.

TB is a bacterial infection spread through inhaling tiny droplets from cough or sneeze of an infected person. In 2014, 9.6 million people fell ill with TB and 1.5 million died of the disease around the world.

Earlier estimates have suggested that India’s total TB burden was 2.2 million. However, the study suggests that over two million cases were being treated in the private sector, while an additional 1.4 million were being managed by the public system in 2014.

Dr Sunil Khaparde, one of the authors and also manager of the Revised National TB Control Programme (RNTCP) of the ministry of health and family welfare, says that the mandatory notification policy was introduced in 2012. While the number of cases notified by the private sector has increased, the study shows that there is
The target of RNTCP is to eradicate TB by 2035. But at this rate, says Dr Henk Bekedam, WHO representative to India, this seems impossible. “The study reaffirms the need for innovative ideas to engage the private sector more comprehensively and for all stakeholders to unite if we are to end TB by 2035,” said Dr Bekedam during the release of the report.

Dr Nimalan Arinaminpathy, lead author of the research from the School of Public Health at Imperial College London, feels that it is important to know the current numbers in fighting the disease.

Dr Arinaminpathy feels that the government has realised the importance of the private sector and sees its engagement to fight TB in the long run. “In doing so, however, it is important to know whether this journey will be a hundred kilometres or a thousand kilometres. That’s the value of the present study,” he told Governance Now.

Six months ago the RNTCP rolled out a new drug described as a ‘miracle drug’ to fight drug-resistant TB. The government has got about 2,500 doses from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and was to give it to patients through six government hospitals. However, the ministry has admitted that hardly a handful of patients have come forward to take this drug.

According to Dr Jacob John, retired virologist of Christian Medical College, Vellore, the main problem is that Bacillus Calmette-Guerin (BCG) vaccine, which was regarded as the main tool to prevent TB in children, was found ineffective. So we have no prevention mechanism and we now therefore have to detect all cases and cure all cases.

Says Dr John: “We are one-sixth of the world population, carrying one-third of the global TB burden. The irony is that RNTCP [read GoI] has no policy to control TB; only to give free treatment to those who present themselves for the treatment. Treatment and control are two different things: treatment is medical care after developing disease and control is public health, preventing disease. The government has to get its act straight through a paradigm shift in treatment and control.”

He feels the goal for TB detection should be 100 percent. So, in addition to the present method of passive detection through cough clinics, some form of active search must be designed locally for improved case detection. A relatively simple approach is to capture in the TB control system all patients diagnosed with pulmonary TB, in both public and private healthcare sectors, he says.

Menon is a freelance journalist.

---

**Estimated numbers of patients receiving TB treatment in 2014**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>Patients in private sector (thousands) – 6-month duration</th>
<th>Patients in public sector (thousands)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Uttar Pradesh</td>
<td>840 (715–1,100)</td>
<td>245</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maharashtra</td>
<td>270 (209–343)</td>
<td>133</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Andhra Pradesh</td>
<td>157 (122–209)</td>
<td>107</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delhi</td>
<td>184 (146–249)</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bihar</td>
<td>261 (226–325)</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: Data in parentheses are 95% credible intervals* Source: thelancet.com
Delhi has approximately 70,000 homeless children, more than any other Indian city. These children, on an average, are slightly over 12 years old. The lowest estimate of drug addiction among them is 36 percent and the highest is 80 percent. A large proportion of children, below 10 years of age, grow up routinely consuming tobacco and sniffing white fluid inhalants—glues and whiteners. A report titled ‘Drug Abuse Among Street Children in Delhi’, by Vidhi Centre for Legal Policy, looks at the laws for the treatment and rehabilitation of Delhi’s drug-addicted children.

The government seems to have been doing a lot to address the problems of these children, at least on paper. The fight against the malaise relies on two laws: The Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act, 1985 that ensures treatment and rehabilitation of all the addicts and the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) (JJ) Act, 2015 (which replaced the JJ Act, 2000) that addresses specifically to the needs of children addicted to drugs.

Multiple ministries handle implementation with unclear division of responsibilities and, unsurprisingly, tend to work in silos. For instance, the ministry of social justice and empowerment (MoSJE) handles drug demand reduction, while the ministry of health.

### Number of street children

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>City</th>
<th>Number of Children</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Delhi</td>
<td>69,976</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mumbai</td>
<td>16,059</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kolkata</td>
<td>8,287</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bengaluru</td>
<td>7,523</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chennai</td>
<td>2,374</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Source: Rapid assessment survey by Don Bosco National forum for the young at risk 2012-2013)
and family welfare (MoHFW) conducts treatment and rehabilitation of drug addicts. Both the ministries are mandated to fund de-addiction and rehabilitation programmes.

MoSE runs a scheme for prevention of alcoholism and substance abuse since 1985, which partially funds eligible agencies (that is, NGOs) for setting up Integrated Rehabilitation Centres for Addicts (IRCas) and counselling centres. At the same time, the MoHFW, which is mandated to run treatment and rehabilitation programmes, funds organisations like the National Drug Dependence Treatment Centre (NDDTC) and AIIMS, among others. At present, the two ministries neither share resources nor finance joint operations that can address child welfare comprehensively.

The JJ Act 2015 categorises drug-addicted children as those who are in need of care and protection and provides for their care through an elaborate mechanism. Briefly, a child who falls within the category of ‘in need of care and protection’ has to be brought, within 24 hours, before the child welfare committee (CWC) (each district is required to have at least one). After that, a social investigation report needs to be prepared within 15 days. The CWC can then direct the child to be placed in an approved drug treatment centre. The Juvenile Justice Board, which deals with children in conflict with the law (those who have committed a crime), can also direct children to rehabilitation centres if they are found to be addicted.

Delhi has seven such CWCs. At the Mayur Vihar CWC, for instance, drug-addicted children are only referred to Society for Promotion of Youth and Masses (SPYM), a registered IRA for boys, although there are four other IRCAs in Delhi. This is apparently because there is no written order allowing them to refer the children to other IRCAs or the NDDTC. The treatment at SPYM reportedly includes detoxification, psychotherapy and counselling. The children are not referred to NDDTC, which is a specialised clinic for adolescents and has experienced doctors but reportedly lacks adequate supporting staff. So the children there have to be accompanied by guardians, which is often difficult for street children.

The reason for the shortage of supporting staff cannot be attributed to lack of funds. An RTI reply revealed that over the years the NDDTC’s unspent amounts rose steadily from ₹36 lakh in 2012-13 to ₹57 lakh in 2013-14 and ₹1.03 crore in 2014-15. Keeping the treated children away from drugs, a key element of de-addiction, is an even bigger challenge. Although SPYM claims to follow-up with every child for six months, it is not clear how successful they are in ensuring that the child stays away from drugs. The shortage of social workers in the CWCs implies that they are unable to follow-up regularly with at-risk children. Also, in cases where the children’s families could not be traced or the children did not want to return to their family, the only option is to send them to poorly managed children’s homes, which are inadequately equipped to ensure non-exposure to drugs (or sexual abuse). There is no systematic coordination to ensure that the children return to schools post de-addiction treatment, as per the Right to Education Act.

The government’s budgetary allocations are a window to its priorities. According to a report by the HAQ Centre for Child Rights, in the union budget of 2016-17, there has been significant decrease of 14.4 percent in the fund allocation share for the protection of children.

The government’s budgetary allocations are a window to its priorities. According to a report by the HAQ Centre for Child Rights, in the union budget of 2016-17, there has been significant decrease of 14.4 percent in the fund allocation share for the protection of children.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Extent of addiction among children in Delhi (in percentage)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tobacco: 69.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inhalants: 39.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cannabis: 34.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alcohol: 23.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heroin: 9.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sedatives: 6.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Injectable: 2.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opium: 2.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Source: National Commission for the Protection of Child Rights - NCPCR)

The reason for the falling budget allocation for health and education of children. Tellingly, in spite of lip service by policy makers on child welfare, there is no specific scheme that allocates funds for child drug addicts or the welfare of street or homeless children.

Fixing the challenge requires a sea-change in how society and government views these minor addicts. Consulting all stakeholders collectively, providing clear demarcation of responsibilities and oversight, investing in adequate infrastructure and training of staff to ensure a robust juvenile justice system, allocating adequate funds and treating the problem as a healthcare management issue integrated with the existing healthcare system would make for a good beginning.

Sanyal is an associate fellow at Vidhi Centre for Legal Policy.
Rising NPAs as a principal-agent problem

A new report demystifies NPAs, clears misconceptions and makes a strong case for transparency in the banking sector

In economics, a principal-agent problem refers to the existence of a moral hazard issue when an agent acting on behalf of a principal doesn’t take actions in the best interest of the principal. The term moral hazard refers to the risk of ‘inappropriate’ or otherwise ‘im-moral’ behaviour by the agent. What causes the moral hazard issue is a problem in the incentive structure. A contract with a proper incentive structure can solve the problem. The problem of rising non-performing assets (NPAs) in Indian banks, especially the public sector banks, can be easily analysed as a principal-agent problem. The agents – the banks – are not taking actions in the interest of the principal – the public. Whether it is the loans generated out of deposits in a bank or the huge amounts coming in from the budget as capital infusion to tackle the problem of rising NPAs, we are essentially talking about the public’s money.

In the case of public sector banks, we have a terrible incentive structure as a result of lack of transparency in the functioning of the sector and the resultant lack of public scrutiny and accountability. Adequate data is not available and the discourse based on the limited data that is available also uses a language not so easily comprehensible for the common citizenry. Along with the call for increased transparency, we have to start talking about the data that is available in a language that is trying to educate and spread awareness among the general public.

The first publication of the Public Finance Public Accountability Collective (PFPAC), Unfolding Crisis: The Case of Rising NPAs and Sinking Accountability, tries to do this. The report demystifies the concept of NPAs, clears many common misconceptions and makes a strong case for increased transparency in the sector in a language that is accessible to the common public.

Being devoid of bad loans is impossible. But the problem is having too many of such loans. This makes it important to look at gross NPAs as a percentage of gross advances and the changes in this ratio. The report illustrates that the percentage of gross NPAs to gross advances has increased sharply from 2.26% in March 2007 to 4.27% in March 2015. This shows how the rate at which NPAs are rising in Indian banks is significantly greater than the rate at which gross advances of the sector is increasing. This is a serious concern.

Evidence from the report shows how public sector banks account for almost 86% of these NPAs. However, private banks have managed to bring down their NPAs as a proportion of total NPAs over the years. Gross NPAs as a percentage of gross advances stood at 2.10% for the private banks in March 2015 and at 4.96% for the public sector banks. The data for the recent months will have to be adjusted for certain definitional changes to ensure comparability across time. The report also shows how it is no longer the priority sector that is the major contributor to the NPAs.

Formal sector banks sometimes copy aspects of informal lending institutions to ensure repayment, while dealing in rural credit markets. This takes the form of public shaming and similar steps, sometimes worse than typical moneylenders. And on the other side we have banks and the government also being reluctant to reveal the names of even wilful defaulters and offering many defaulters schemes of debt restructuring, which has resulted evergreening of NPAs.

The case of Kingfisher and rising virtual assets as collateral and the very unimpressive performances of most government and RBI schemes to tackle the problem of rising NPAs make it very clear that the way forward is increased transparency and accountability. This would result in the right incentive structure and the banks paying due diligence at the time of issuing loans. It is hence important to educate the public about this issue and build the right pressures. An effort like that of the PFPAC becomes extremely important for this reason.

John is assistant professor of economics at St. Stephens College, Delhi.
benston.john@ststephens.edu
In order to assist banks reeling under bad loans, the government is planning to bring in state-owned companies like NTPC and SAIL to manage their stressed assets.

Finance minister Arun Jaitley, after chairing a meeting on stressed assets in the steel, power and shipping sectors, said that the agenda of the discussion was to analyse whether the management team of certain established and successful PSUs can be involved to operate some of the plants and facilities of the stressed assets, at least for an interim period. He said that the concerned secretaries were asked to coordinate among banks and concerned PSU chiefs, and that the process would start immediately.

Jaitley pointed out that one of the problems today is that there are no takers for stressed assets when put out, but now takers will be created.

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has taken up the charge to scrutinise the security of banks after reports of possible data leak and exposure of 32 lakh debit cards came to the surface.

The apex bank said that it has “convened a meeting with senior officials from select banks, National Payments Corporation of India and card network operators to review the steps taken by various agencies to contain the adverse fallout of certain card details alleged to have been compromised”.

The bank added that the issue is being investigated by an approved forensic auditor, under PCI-DSS (Payment Card Industry Data Security Standard) framework.

The RBI further said that banks have taken measures including advising the customers to change PIN, blocking payments at international locations, reducing the withdrawal limits, monitoring unusual patterns, replacing the cards and re-crediting the accounts of cardholders for amounts wrongly debited.

According to reports, the card details may have been compromised after an ATM switch, of one of the service providers, linked to certain ATMs was infested with malware. As of now, complaints from as many as 641 customers about fraudulent activity have been received by banks.

Yes Bank has partnered with Lastmile to introduce the IRIS EMV PoS solution.

The bank said that the device allows biometric authentication through IRIS scanning and includes functionalities like cash deposits and withdrawals via business correspondents, purchase transactions through cards, transfer of funds, enquiry of balance, e-KYC verification for account opening, and e-sign for account opening forms. The solution uses Qualcomm Snapdragon processors.
CSR boost

Under new corporate social responsibility norms, companies spend ₹163 crore more than the requirement

The spending under corporate social responsibility (CSR) by the NSE listed companies has seen a huge increase of 28 percent in 2015-16. The Companies Act (2013) has statutory provisions, making CSR mandatory for companies with net worth of ₹500 crore or more, turnover of at least ₹1,000 crore or net profit of at least ₹5 crore. Such companies are required to spend at least 2 percent of their average net profits of last three years on CSR activities, while constituting a separate committee on their board. The law, implemented from April 2014, makes India the only country with a legislated CSR.

According to Prime Database, which has done the analysis, the average net profit of the 920 listed companies over last 3 years was ₹4.60 lakh crore. As per the CSR provision, the companies were required to spend ₹9,146 crore. The companies, however, spent ₹9,309 crore, which is ₹163 crore more than the requirement.

However, ₹1,984 crore remains unspent and the actual CSR expenditure was ₹8,345 crore. This is an increase of 28 percent from ₹6,526 crore spent in 2014-15.

CSR spending as contribution to the PM’s fund saw the maximum increase by 418% from ₹168 crore in 2014-15 to ₹701 crore in 2015-16. This was followed by spending on hunger/poverty (up by 66%) and gender equality (up by 38%).

The companies which have missed the mandatory spending of 2% of profit decreased from 422 in 2014-15 to 376 in 2015-16. The top 5 companies in terms of highest unspent amount in 2015-16 are:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Company</th>
<th>Prescribed CSR expenditure (₹ cr)</th>
<th>Actual CSR expenditure (₹ cr)</th>
<th>Unspent Amount (₹ cr)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>OIL &amp; NATURAL GAS CORP. LTD.</td>
<td>593.70</td>
<td>409.01</td>
<td>184.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BHARTI AIRTEL LTD.</td>
<td>189.00</td>
<td>43.94</td>
<td>145.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HCL TECHNOLOGIES LTD.</td>
<td>144.63</td>
<td>14.16</td>
<td>130.47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HDFC BANK LTD.</td>
<td>248.00</td>
<td>127.28</td>
<td>120.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HINDUSTAN ZINC LTD.</td>
<td>170.05</td>
<td>63.26</td>
<td>106.79</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Under new corporate social responsibility norms, companies spend `163 crore more than the requirement.

The top 5 listed companies in terms of CSR spending are:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Company</th>
<th>CSR expenditure (₹ cr)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>RELIANCE INDUSTRIES LTD.</td>
<td>651.57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>NTPC LTD.</td>
<td>491.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>OIL &amp; NATURAL GAS CORP. LTD.</td>
<td>409.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>TATA CONSULTANCY SERVICES LTD.</td>
<td>294.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>ITC LTD.</td>
<td>247.50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The top 5 PSUs in terms of CSR spending are:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Company</th>
<th>CSR expenditure (₹ cr)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>NTPC LTD.</td>
<td>491.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>OIL &amp; NATURAL GAS CORP. LTD.</td>
<td>409.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>NMDC LTD.</td>
<td>210.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>POWER FINANCE CORP. LTD.</td>
<td>196.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>INDIAN OIL CORP. LTD.</td>
<td>156.68</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

According to Prime Database, PSU spending saw a huge increase of 41 percent from the previous year: 48 PSUs had spent ₹2,078 crore in 2014-15, whereas 47 PSUs spent ₹2,936 crore in 2015-16.
**PSU Watch**

**Air India looking to rejig ₹10,000 crore debt**

National carrier Air India (AI) is looking to rejig debt worth ₹10,000 crore under the scheme for sustainable restructuring of bad assets floated by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI).

The Scheme for Sustainable Structuring of Stressed Assets (S4A) was introduced by the RBI in June to strengthen the ability of lenders to tackle stressed assets and provide an avenue for reworking the financial structure of entities facing genuine problems. In case AI's proposal gets a green signal, it would be for the first time that a public sector undertaking (PSU) would avail the scheme. Air India, which has been in the red for the past many years, has posted an operating profit of ₹105 crore in the last fiscal, the first time in a decade. At present, the airline's debt is estimated to be more than ₹50,000 crore. A consortium of 19 lenders have extended loans to the national carrier.

---

**Profits of PSUs fall first time in five years**

The profits of central PSUs have dropped by about 20 percent in 2015, for the first time in five years. According to government data, 77 PSUs have reported losses. Even the top profit-making PSUs such as ONGC, Coal India Ltd, Indian Oil and NTPC saw a 13 percent dip in profits.

The drop in profits – from ₹1.28 lakh crore to ₹1.03 lakh crore – over 2013-14 comes against the backdrop of prime minister Narendra Modi’s 2016 Independence Day declaration that a “new culture” had helped Air India and telecom company Bharat Sanchar Nigam Limited improve their performances.

As many as 235 PSUs, surveyed by the ministry of heavy industries and public enterprises, have seen a drop in profits in a year when India’s economy grew 7.3 percent over 4.7 percent in 2013-14. Except power generation, PSUs in other sectors reported a fall in profits or a rise in losses during 2014-15 compared with the previous year. However, the main reason for the fall in profits was the global slowdown and weakening of international oil prices.

Also, PSUs contributed ₹20,000 crore less to the public exchequer in 2014-15 than they did the previous year, when they generated ₹2.2 lakh crore.

---

**Government to revive strategic stake sale**

The cabinet is likely to consider the outright sale of stake in over a dozen PSUs including the profit-making ones, as the government plans to revive their strategic sale. NITI Aayog has prepared a list of PSUs where the government can sell its majority stake in order to bring in greater efficiency and professionalism in functioning. The PSUs reportedly include profit-making Bharat Earth Movers and Certification Engineers International, as well as loss-making Scooters India.

---

**PSUs not complying with reservations: SC panel**

The National Commission for Scheduled Castes (NCSC) has found anomalies in areas like reservation rosters, non-filling of backlog vacancies meant for SCs and OBCs and appointment of liaison officers in central PSUs. NCSC has asked the department of public enterprises (DPE) to instruct central PSUs to implement the recommendations.

Madhukar Gupta, additional secretary in the DPE, ministry of heavy industry and public enterprises, has advised the officers of PSUs to follow the guidelines devised by the department of personnel, public grievances and pensions and training in letter and practice. Gupta was speaking at the inauguration of a two-day workshop for the liaison officers of PSUs regarding ‘Implementation of Reservation Policy in CPSEs' in Delhi.

---

**Helicopter engines maintenance plant launched**

Defence minister Manohar Parrikar has inaugurated a helicopter engines maintenance plant in Goa. It is a joint venture of state-run Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL) and Safran Helicopter Engines France located at north Goa’s Sattari district, according to an India Today report.

This venture will provide maintenance, repair and overhaul services for Safran TM333 2B2 and HAL Shakti engines installed on HAL-built helicopters operated by the defence services. The plant plans to support engines of international operators and other engines. The minister said this would create employment with a corresponding boost to the economic activities in Goa.
The telecom regulatory authority of India (TRAI) has suggested imposing a penalty of ₹3,050 crore on three telecom operators – Bharti Airtel, Vodafone and Idea Cellular — for not providing points of interconnection (PoI) to Reliance Jio. It has submitted its recommendations to the department of telecommunications (DoT) after a complaint was filed by Reliance Jio against the three operators. Reportedly, over 75 percent of calls on Reliance Jio network were failing due to lack of Pol. TRAI, in its recommendation, blames the operators, noting that denial of interconnection by these operators to Jio "appears to be with the ulterior motive to stifle competition and is anti-consumer". The incumbents, however, deny the charge saying they are in full compliance of the quality of service standards set by TRAI, which say that not more than five out of every 1,000 call should fail. Jio has sought PoIs from the operators for September, December and March 2017.

GSTN may have 80 lakh assesses by November 8

As many as 80 lakh assesses of excise as well as service tax and VAT can start migrating their registration to the goods and service tax network (GSTN) portal by November 8, said Prakash Kumar, GSTN chief executive. The migration of assesses details onto the GSTN platform will sort out inconsistencies and help the industry get ready for the goods and service tax (GST) implementation date of April 1, 2017, Kumar added. The GSTN is a not-for-profit entity incorporated in March 2013. It has been set up to provide IT infrastructure and services to the central and state governments, taxpayers and other stakeholders for implementation of the GST. It has been allowed to partner with other agencies for creating an efficient and user-friendly GST ecosystem. Software major Infosys had bagged the five-year contract to be the Managed Service Provider (MSP) for GSTN.

Hence, taxpayers will benefit if they receive information through use of technology. So they can match the office salary slip and the SMS, and at the end of the fiscal they will be clear about any possible tax dues.

Finance minister Arun Jaitley, while launching the SMS alert service for Tax Deducted at Source for salaried class

“Hence, taxpayers will benefit if they receive information through use of technology. So they can match the office salary slip and the SMS, and at the end of the fiscal they will be clear about any possible tax dues.”

Finance minister Arun Jaitley, while launching the SMS alert service for Tax Deducted at Source for salaried class

$968 million loss India faced from July 2015 to June 2016 due to internet shutdowns

Source: Brookings Institution, US-based think tank

Government nod for DigiLocker authority

The ministry of electronics and information technology (MeitY), headed by Ravi Shankar Prasad, has approved the setting up of an authority for the DigiLocker scheme. The authority would licencse, empanel and manage digital locker service providers, including provider entities. Besides, it would lay down standards, guidelines and specifications for authorised service provider as well as data retention and migration guidelines. The authority would also have powers to give an opinion on suspension and revocation of a digital locker account of a subscriber in public interest for reasons specified in the rules. The ministry also plans to offer licences to private operators for providing digital locker services by the end of this year. As of now, there are more than 28 lakh registered users of DigiLocker.

IT to bridge gap between government and people

Maximum use of information technology (IT) could bridge the gap between the government and people, said Jharkhand chief minister Raghubar Das, during the Digital India Conclave in Ranchi. Stressing that the IT schemes will benefit people with maximum governance, Das said that 1,400 panchayats have already been connected under the e-village scheme, rest 4,404 panchayats will be connected by December 2017.

MeitY to set up national cyber coordination centre

The ministry of electronics and information technology (MeitY) will soon issue a request for proposal (RFP) to set up the national cyber coordination centre (NCCC), which will safeguard India’s cyberspace against potential threats. This comes after around 30 government websites, mainly of state departments or ministries, were reportedly hacked. NCCC will ensure real-time threat assessment. Its formation will cost ₹900 crore, as reported in InfraCircle.

Satellite-based tech to monitor illegal mining

The ministry of mines has launched a mining surveillance system (MSS) to check illegal mining across India. MSS is a satellite-based monitoring system, which aims to check illegal mining activity through automatic remote sensing detection technology. It is developed by the Indian Bureau of Mines in coordination with the Bhaskaracharya Institute for Space Applications and Geoinformatics (BISAG), Gandhinagar, and the ministry of electronics and IT.
In August 2014, private photos of over 20 Hollywood celebrities were leaked online. Somebody apparently hacked into their accounts on iCloud – Apple’s backup service for all its devices – and stole the photos. The incident was a wake-up call for many, underlining the ease with which data stored in the cloud can be hacked. Keeping this risk in mind, the Indian government is taking some steps to formulate a regulatory framework around cloud computing.

The ministry of electronics and information technology (MeitY) and the ministry of communications have taken up the task. But, it appears, that the two have different views on the regulation. The department of telecommunications (DoT), under the communications ministry, may consider bringing cloud service providers (CSPs) under a stringent regulatory framework, given the content of a public consultation paper floated by the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) on cloud computing. The MeitY, on the other hand, may refrain from any major intervention and adopt a liberal approach to promote the cloud market.

Interestingly, these two ministries were formed after the ministry of communications and IT was bifurcated in...
July after the cabinet reshuffle. Since then the task to chalk out a regulatory framework has become slightly more complicated.

By 2019, cloud IT infrastructure spending is expected to be $52 billion in India, as per International Data Corporation (IDC). Cloud computing refers to on-demand access of computing resources such as software, infrastructure and storage among others from a remote server. For users, it eliminates the need to procure the computing resources (and hence lowers IT expense) and instead connects them to the cloud server (which could be located in a different continent) to access services and pay as per usage. For small and medium enterprises and startups, the cloud is a silver lining as they usually work with limited financial resources. For the government, it offers an opportunity for a quick rollout of applications and services.

But so far the cloud computing market has been without a regulatory framework in the country. “Regulations provide a framework for liability that is important for enabling the market to mature. Without regulations, stakeholders will not be able to resolve issues arising out of using cloud computing,” says Jaijit Bhattacharya, a senior technology consultant at KPMG. Policy and regulation help in addressing the risks associated with cloud deployments, as the cloud takes away the control which organisations had in the traditional data centres, says DD Mishra, research director, Gartner.

At present, a cloud user doesn’t have any legal recourse against hacking. The industry, moreover, is working without any interoperability standards, which makes data transfer from one service provider to another difficult.

Regulatory framework

The government first acknowledged the potential of the innovation called cloud in its national telecom policy of 2012, which called for “policy initiatives” to address “the concerns of cloud users and other stakeholders, including specific steps that need to be taken for lowering the cost of service delivery”. Ever since, two wings of the

TRAI’s cloudy paper

In the consultation paper the TRAI has argued for placing the CSPs under the Indian Telegraph Act of the 1885 vintage. The colonial-era law defines telegraph as “any appliance... used or capable of use for transmission or reception of signs, signals, writing, images... by wire or other electromagnetic emissions...” This definition, according to TRAI, can be construed to include cloud computing. Therefore, a CSP would be seen as establishing, maintaining and working telegraphs for the purpose of the Telegraph Act, under a licence to be issued by the licensor, it asserted. It claims that the cloud falls under section 2(k) of the TRAI Act, 1997.

The consultation paper queries, “What shall be the scope of cloud computing services in law? What is your view on licence or registration to CSPs so as to subject them to the obligations thereunder?”

According to the senior Nasscom official, this clause could prove detrimental to the industry and may keep off various corporations planning to invest in cloud computing.

Lawful interception is another point of contention. According to the paper, lawful interception by a law enforcement agency (LEA) is an “established and transparent method for letting governments protect national security”. A CSP may, without notice to a user, move his or her information from one jurisdiction to another jurisdiction or even sub-contract the cloud services, the paper said.

In its response, the Business Software Alliance (BSA), which represents major US-based software and cloud services companies including Microsoft, Oracle and IBM, said, “The government should leverage existing mutual legal assistance treaty (MLAT) arrangements and coordination via INTERPOL to address lawful interception requirements beyond national boundaries.” MLAT is an agreement between two or more countries to exchange information to enforce public or criminal laws.

The MLAT, in reality, is an efficient process to obtain information from other countries, especially the US. When information is sought from a US-based company, the request for information is first sent to the department of justice, which has the power to approve or disapprove it and accordingly forward it to the respective corporation. The entire process takes eight to ten months, said Gulshan Rai, national cyber security coordinator, at a conference in Delhi in September. In some cases, especially those related to terrorism, agencies require real-time information, he said.

The paper explores mandating CSPs to host data centres within India to resolve the multiple jurisdiction issue. In other words, the regulator is exploring if data localisation is a possibility. According to the industry, if the government mandates data localisation or special arrangement for access to information, it will open a Pandora’s box for the agencies, as they will have to face similar demands in several other jurisdictions or countries. The senior MeitY official said, “As a country, that [data localisation] is not our position and that can’t be as long as you want India to become a hub of cloud computing.”

The TRAI paper has raised issues of standards and interoperability in cloud computing. It defines interoperability as the ability to write code that works with more than one cloud service provider simultaneously, regardless of differences between the providers. The absence of interoperability leads to vendor lock-in, portability and inflexibility to use multiple vendors.

BSA however believed that the government should keep off from prescribing ‘local standards and certifications’. “The role of government should be to encourage the use and adoption of standards that are global, voluntary, and developed through industry-led multi-stakeholder processes,” its response said.
"Regulations provide a framework for liability that is important for enabling the market to mature. Without regulations, stakeholders will not be able to resolve issues arising out of using cloud computing.”

Jaijit Bhattacharya
Senior technology consultant, KPMG

"We should monitor but we should not over control unless it becomes important. Free flow of data unless it does not violates cross border regulations is also important.”

DD Mishra
Research director, Gartner

government are working on the question of regulation, in parallel. While the DoT has focused more on policy side, MeitY is more in the action mode – with little coordination between the two.

In 2012, the DoT sought TRAI’s views on how to regulate cloud computing. TRAI released its ‘consultation paper on cloud computing’ in June 2016, outlining its views on regulations – pending its final recommendations to come later. It also sought responses from the general public on issues around cross-border flow of data, data localisation, registration and licensing of service providers. The industry associations have termed the TRAI position as an attempt to “overregulate”.

Meanwhile, also in 2012, the department of electronics and IT (the precursor of the MeitY), set up Meghraj – a cloud initiative of the government of India – with the help of national informatics centre (NIC). It also released ‘roadmap’ and ‘strategy’ documents for cloud adoption in general, and by the government in particular. An expert working group was also formed to lay out a framework for enabling a cloud ecosystem and making India a global hub of cloud service providers. Headed by Krish Gopalakrishnan, a cofounder of Infosys, the group was to spell out provisions for standards, interoperability, security, privacy and cross-border flow of data.

According to a senior Nasscom official, the Gopalakrishnan-headed group met a few times and eventually submitted its recommendations. The TRAI consultation paper has mounted pressure on the MeitY to decide on the working group recommendations and come out with its own framework, spelling out standards for interoperability, security, data flow and data ownership, among others.

Ministry officials, on their part, are digging out files of the previous meetings. There are plans to revive the working group, find a replacement for its convener who is unwell, and set up a cloud management office (CMO).

MeitY officials are also unhappy with the involvement of TRAI in this matter. “They have nothing to do with cloud computing. Why are they getting into it,” queried a top official at the MeitY. Ironically, TRAI is headed by RS Sharma, who earlier as IT secretary oversaw the MeitY’s cloud initiatives.

“The regulator’s [TRAI’s] role should be confined to ensuring whether the infrastructure required for making India a cloud computing hub is in place. It must not interfere with applications,” a senior Microsoft official said. By and large the industry has expressed similar sentiments. For Mishra of Gartner, the overlap happens “in an evolving market where different initiatives are at different levels of maturity”.

Reconciliation between the TRAI’s view and that of the MeitY is the only way forward. A balance between security, data ownership, localisation and legal access on one hand, and free flow of data on the other is the need of the hour. “There can be two sets of regulations. And even if they are evolving at two different places, at some point in time, they need to converge,” Mishra said.

Experts, including a few at MeitY, nonetheless appreciate the regulator’s work in bringing out a meticulous and comprehensive consultation paper.

Should there be regulations at all?
BSA is batting for a free play, arguing that cloud computing is at an early stage of development in India and attempts to bring it under a regulatory fold will be counterproductive. “Cloud services are provided over telecom infrastructure, which is already licensed and regulated. There is no need for any additional licensing or regulatory oversight,” it said in its response to the TRAI paper.

However, many critical aspects of cloud computing need regulation. The regulation should focus primarily on liability, data sovereignty and legal interception, said Bhattacharya of KPMG. “We should monitor but we should not over control unless it becomes important. Free flow of data unless it does not violates cross border regulations is also important,” Mishra of Gartner said.

For the time being, service providers – and users – will have to keep guessing whether to comply with two separate regulations, or whether regulations will be voluntary or mandatory. ■
Nightmare on the cyber street

Women dread being stalked online and being bombarded with nasty messages from strangers on social networking sites. The law will have to evolve

Prerna Pratham Singh, who works at a media company, had been bombarded with messages from a stranger on Facebook. She ignored those messages. But, in May last year, the stranger made a sexual remark, and Prerna, 23, decided not to suffer the constant harassment in silence.

Not only did she give him a piece of her mind through a stinging reply but also took screenshots of the conversation and posted it on her Facebook wall. In no time the post went viral, gaining attention from the media and the Delhi police. Her action was applauded by all as she was one of the few women who took a bold stand against online sexual harassment.

“After the case was picked up by the media, I received so many messages from women. They told me it is because of this [harassment] that they stopped using Facebook or Twitter.

“Now that they [women] have seen someone standing up against such a bully, they can really speak about it. This is what matters the most. If you make people think that it is not happening just to them and it is not their fault, they just might open up more,” she says.

Prerna filed an FIR and her case is now pending in the court.

There are thousands of women who are targeted on the internet with sexual remarks, rape threats and gender-based hate speech. Not only that, perpetrators use social media platform like Facebook, Twitter and WhatsApp to take revenge against women by leaking private pictures or videos of them without their consent, or by circulating their morphed pictures.

The trolls

Some women also face consequences simply for voicing their opinion on the internet. In 2013, Kavita Krishnan, secretary of the All India Progressive Women’s Association, was threatened with rape on the Rediff online discussion forum where she was invited to discuss violence against women. Somebody who used the name ‘RAPIST’ commented: “Kavita tell me where I should come and rape you using condom.”

Krishnan has been trolled on the internet many times for standing up for women’s rights. She says that social media platforms like Twitter have become so abusive that she has decided to limit herself in sharing opinions. She also points out that Facebook and Twitter have often failed to recognise the seriousness of such threats and gender-based trolling that women face.

“Facebook at times doesn’t even understand what is being said. They do not bother to have staff who understand Hindi or other Indian languages. Facebook has been approached by many people but they have not done much about it. There are several incidents where a man will not use the word ‘rape’ but will still have sexual connotation in his remark.

“And nobody is asking them to ban words. They should not let abusers on their platform threaten women with rape,” she adds.

The police

According to the national crime records bureau (NCRB) data for 2015, there is a 20.5 percent increase in cybercrime cases from 2014. Categorising
The motive behind cybercrimes, the data notes that 606 cases were reported across India that insulted modesty of women, 588 cases were of sexual exploitation and 304 cases were reported under the category of ‘personal revenge’.

Unlike Prerna and Krishnan, many women choose to ignore online harassment. In cases where they are blackmailed online with their private pictures, most women do file a complaint with the police but prefer not to file an FIR. “Most complainants do not file an FIR because they do not want the case to come into the limelight. They think their family members will not be supportive,” says a police officer at Noida’s cybercrime cell.

The officer adds, “90 percent of cases that come here are of obscene, nude or morphed pictures of the victim being circulated on Facebook and WhatsApp. Very few cases pertain to Twitter. In most cases victims know the accused. He is either a former lover or a frustrated man turned down by the woman.”

In the last six months, 93 complaints of harassment on social media were reported at the cyber cell in Noida. Out of this, the team solved 75 cases, with a warning or a fine being imposed and only six FIRs were registered.

When a woman is targeted online by a stalker or a blackmailer, she has an option to file a complaint either online or in person. The police asks the complainant to give evidence with her complaint, which includes a link to the website/s that contain the obscene pictures or videos, or screenshots of the lewd or threatening comments. If the complainant does not submit evidence at the time of filing the complaint, then it takes 10 to 15 days more to collect evidence and then to start investigation of the case.

Once evidence is collected, the police, under section 91 of the Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC), sends a notice to the owner of the website, seeking details of the accused like “login details of the users, IP address to track the person and details of the person who made the profile. We call it users and registrant details”, says an officer at the Delhi police cyber cell.

Since January 1, Delhi police cyber cell have received 568 complaints, out of which only 39 FIRs have been filed.

The fear of damaging their reputation is perhaps one reason that discourages a woman from filing an FIR. Another reason is long court procedures.

“When a complainant decides to file a case, the process of investigation and filing a charge-sheet takes time. After two to four years, the case will be heard at the trial court,” says the Noida police officer.

The police too have their own limitations in acting against the accused in online harassment cases, says the officer from the Delhi police cyber cell. “Sometimes, complainants file a case online but do not follow up. We cannot close their complaint for a year at least. We give them two reminders and if they do not respond, then we pass it on to the additional commissioner of police to decide what is to be done.”

Also, most of the times the companies that run social media sites do not share information sought by the police. “Twitter has a poor record of sharing details. In 90 percent of cases, social media platforms block the accounts of the accused. However, in very few cases they share details of the account. Without details we cannot file an FIR. So the complaints remain pending and that reflects poorly on our records,” says the Delhi police officer.

But are the police personnel trained to deal with online harassment cases? “Police handling of such cases is abysmal. It is same as they handle offline complaints. They try to find out what you have done to provoke the incident rather than filing an FIR and investigate the complaint,” says Krishnan.

Cybercrime experts agree that police training is lacking, which leaves the complainant feeling victimised. “We are not dealing with the absence of law here. We hear accounts of people going to police stations but officers are not taking their complaints seriously. It is more of a process-oriented problem and not a legal one,” says Apar Gupta, a Delhi-based advocate.

Dr Debarati Halder, an advocate and counsellor to women who are victims
Cybercrime in India

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Offences</th>
<th>Trial pending from 2014</th>
<th>Cases sent for trial in 2015</th>
<th>Conviction rate %</th>
<th>Pending cases %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Under section 66E of IT Act</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>37.5</td>
<td>58.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Publication/transmission of obscene/sexually explicit content (cases under sections 67A, 67B, 67C of IT Act)</td>
<td>312</td>
<td>335</td>
<td>34.9</td>
<td>93.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: NCRB: Crime in India 2015

of cybercrime, says that it is necessary to “involve more experts to train police officers in dealing with online harassment of women. It also needs government cooperation to train the police and sensitise general people”.

“When the police personnel have been thoroughly trained, victims may get better cooperation from them. But in cases of semi-urban or rural areas, police officers may be clueless about what the victim is talking about,” she notes. Halder, who runs Centre for Cyber Victim Counselling, has counselled women in the age group ranging from 16 to 47, for cases that include revenge porn, cyber stalking, online reputation damage, online bullying and trolling as well as copyright violation.

The law

Pavan Duggal, a supreme court advocate specialising in cyber law, does make a point when he says that “the victims of online harassment in India do not have effective legal remedies, and that calls for immediate action”.

Currently, there are sections under the Information Technology Act, 2000, that deals with abuse against women through the electronic medium.

For instance, section 66E that deals with violation of privacy, wherein a person, “who intentionally or knowingly captures, publishes or transmits the image of a private area of any person without his or her consent, under circumstances violating the privacy of that person”, will be punished with maximum three years of imprisonment or fine up to ₹2 lakh, or both.

Section 67 prescribes punishment for “publishing or transmitting obscene material in electronic form”.

Duggal says that section 67 “is a very limited exercise. It is only talking about obscene images on electronic platform. It does not talk much of harassment”.

Section 66A of the IT Act criminalised most aspects of verbal abuse on the online platform. It came under the spotlight for all wrong reasons. In November 2012, two young women were arrested for a Facebook post that questioned the call for Mumbai shutdown following the death of Shiv Sena leader Bal Thackeray. They were booked under Section 66A, along with Section 505(2) of IPC.

In March 2015, the supreme court struck down Section 66A of the IT Act, calling it a “draconian” law as it was misused by the powerful politicians to curb their critics on social media.

“The unintended consequences of the SC judgment are that online harassment and online stalking have started increasing. The IT Act does not have a cyber-stalking provision. After Nirbhaya case, we did add section 354D of IPC, but that also has limited aspects of cyber stalking,” says Duggal, referring to the December 16, 2012 incident in which six men were found guilty of raping and torturing a 23-year-old physiotherapist.

He adds, “the government is now talking about amending the IT Act. One of the main amendments needed is effective remedy of all the victims of online harassment. Then it needs to be effectively enforced and for that training all stakeholders is important. They need to be sensitive towards handling online harassment cases.”

Experts highlight the need for clarity on when the law can help the victims of online harassment and when it cannot. The law does not define online harassment. Gupta feels that there should be a “clear division between harassment, abuse in terms of our speech and what constitutes a legal crime”.

The way ahead

There should be a larger discussion on online harassment and how gender relations work in Indian society, says Anja Kovacs, founder director, Internet Democracy, a project initiated by Mumbai-based non-profit platform called Point of View.

Kovacs feels that online abuse is faced not only by women but also by men and many minority groups. It affects women greatly because of the patriarchal nature of society. “For a woman to be called names, which is especially related to her body, affects not only her reputation, but also of her family. It is because a woman’s purity is still so important for marriage, which makes her vulnerable in a way men are not.

“What happens online is some of the negative consequences of how gender relations are organised in our society. We need to work on that instead of exploring more legal solutions,” Kovacs says.

Furthermore, training of police forces is essential for handling online harassment cases and for ensuring effective implementation of laws. Besides, there should be discussions on cybercrime against women at larger platforms like social media and campaigning to increase awareness. These are some of the measures that are needed to address the issue of cybercrimes.

Experts also believe that social media platforms too play an important role. Duggal says, “Social media companies cannot be mere spectators. They need to play a proactive role to prevent the misuse once it is notified. They can take action on their own.”

It is clear that if women choose to stay away from online social media platforms because of growing number of abusers, then we cannot expect it to be a tool of empowerment for them.

taru@governancenow.com
The fear that new technology could take away jobs and lead to a greater income inequality is not a new phenomenon. During the initial days of industrial revolution, people were worried that they would get replaced by machines. You might be tempted to dismiss this as a natural (and very human) fear of new technology and of change, but that would be unwise. After all, we aren’t talking about an abstract situation here, but the fears and concerns of our fellow citizens. It is for this reason that any discussion on what automation holds for humanity has to include a focus on what impact it may have on income inequality. And if there is any possibility of a negative impact, what’s the best way to mitigate this.

The best way of focusing on the human impact of automation is to first accept that it is inevitable. Since the dawn of human civilisation, mankind has been searching for ways to reduce manual effort, and has been seeking out ‘smarter’ ways of getting things done. And it’s natural we do so – after all, the time we freed up from survival needs is what spurred civilisation on further.

Automation is changing how we live

Similarly, automation holds the prospect of transforming future society. Even now, and even in a society like ours, where technology hasn’t penetrated to every level of our day-to-day existence as it may have in more industrialised societies, there’s been a sea change in how we work. Whether it’s hailing cabs with a tap on your smartphone, or getting your bank account statements without ever visiting the bank, or ordering food, automation and computerisation have given us a new way of doing things. But don’t let the above examples fool you into thinking that the benefits of automation accrue only to the globalised youth. On the other hand, these cut across age, gender, ethnicity and geographical barriers to make life better for everyone.

New tech has benefited everyone

Just think about how essential government schemes, subsidies and projects are in many urban and rural parts of our nation. From creating employment, to ensuring access to proper medical care, to easy redressal of civic complaints, automation is making all this possible. The government departments are increasingly interlinked, rural banking has gone hi-tech, and social benefits are directly transferred to those in need. The credit goes to the vision of our planners and their use of technology.

As these changes build up, the momentum and new technologies become more affordable and widespread, greater change lies for us. And slowly, we’ll see automation creep into every aspect of our lives.

Short-term inequality may go up

As said earlier, we cannot dismiss the fear of automation leading to a greater income inequality as mere scaremongering. It will be sensible to acknowledge it. In the past, technological improvements have led to job losses in the short term. But the way out is not to be stuck in the past or to abandon the intrinsic human drive for constant improvement. It is in fact to prepare for the societal and economic changes that automation will introduce.

A recent report on India’s IT sector by HIS Research warned that around 28 percent of low-skilled positions could be lost to automation by 2021. At the same time, the report also predicted that we will also see a massive emergence of new high- and medium-skilled positions. The implications of
this report are clear – it is the low-skill worker who has to worry the most about being replaced by a machine.

Logically thinking, this effect shouldn’t be restricted to the IT sector. It may also take place in other sectors too, with varying levels of magnitude. Whether manufacturing, service or retail, low-skilled positions will certainly be lost as the adoption of new tech and automation grows. Some sectors and positions can expect to be unaffected (or face minimal disruption), but others may witness a large shift.

This may lead to a short-term effect on income inequality. At the same time, by being adequately prepared for these changes, we can ensure that not only people’s lives are not disrupted, but this new technological revolution propels us towards a prosperous and equitable society.

New tech creates new opportunities
Automation might take away some jobs, but it will also create many more. As new technologies are introduced, and we change our way of doing business, new positions will open up and new skillsets will be in demand. We – employers, employees and policy makers – must plan for this on a war footing. India has shown in the past that it can leap forward into a new era without going through all the intermediate steps you’d expect – our mobile and services revolution are ample proof of this.

If we plan this well, we could usher in tremendous growth built around new technology. It is therefore essential that we focus on new skills that will be relevant in a highly automated future. As job creators, we have to help our employees pick up new skills, as employees we have to look towards the future and see if we’re adequately prepared, and as policy makers, we have to see whether we have laid the groundwork for this transformation.

Support jobs will grow as well
Automation might shift the focus on economic growth towards high-skill jobs, but as income levels rise, new low-skill opportunities will also come up. Retail businesses will shift online, manufacturing will become reliant on robots, and IT services will change to a tech-intensive, big-data future. But these changes will also create new jobs – low and medium skilled. This does not mean we abandon our focus on skills growth or condemn many of our fellow citizens to a low-income life. We must ensure every citizen gets to look at the coming day with confidence that he or she is on the path to a higher income level, with the attendant higher quality of life. Skilling and education have to be given adequate attention, no matter what, as they are the best ways of ensuring an equitable, fair, and prosperous future for every citizen.

In the long run, quality of life will rise
A higher quality of life is the real target of all economic activity. Higher incomes, more free time to devote to family and personal dreams, greater safety (economic and physical) and greater satisfaction with life – these are the factors that have spurred technological innovation since mankind discovered fire and made the first stone tools.

Today, automation promises to continue this legacy well into the future. Services such as education and healthcare, which become more affordable and accessible due to the new systemic improvements introduced by automation, will change how we live – from the wealthiest to the poorest. Greater efficiency across industries will lead to more economic activity, higher governmental revenue, a more effective social net, and new opportunities that allow the youth to take responsibility for their future. The time saved on day-to-day tasks will provide an intangible (and massive) benefit of a happier society. That is the true promise of automation and it would be unwise to risk this by not planning for a world that is inevitable.

Gupta is founder and CEO of Knowlarity Communications.
Next to Mandi House, in a scenic and historical part of the national capital, stands the National School of Drama (NSD), a premier institution for theatre training. It functions as an autonomous body under the ministry of culture and holds a high rank on the stage of theatre. But the prestigious drama school is struggling with a number of issues, apart from what its major role is – to impart training in dramatics.

Established in 1959 as one of the constituent units of the Sangeet Natak Akademi, NSD became an independent entity and was given an autonomous status in 1975 under the ministry of culture. By 2013 the school had produced 1,025 artists, a small but significant group including stalwarts like Naseeruddin Shah and next-gen stars like Nawazuddin Siddiqui.

Irrespective of the language barrier, theatre enthusiasts from all parts of the country, be it the Hindi-speaking belt or the northeast or the south, try their mettle to get through a series of grueling entrance tests to stand among the 26 trainees for NSD’s graduation programme every year, one of the finest in the world.

The number, however, is miniscule for a country with 1.25 billion people. “The [opportunity to increase the] number shrinks further when the reservation under different quotas is applied,” says Jayanti, a theatre aspirant from Karnataka. The NSD administration though believes that in theatre you impart one-to-one training and hence it is always better to pay attention on smaller groups instead of filling up the classroom to the brim.

The limited number of seats, language barriers, and the need to save regional theatres have led to the idea of setting up more NSDs across India.

For the past 20 years, theatre artists from various parts of the country have been pushing for NSDs in 18 scheduled languages. Veteran theatre director and the face of Kannada theatre, Prasanna, had gone on a hunger strike in 2007 to push this demand.

But in 2011, the government (under the then culture minister, Kumari Selja) proposed establishing five regional centres of NSD, of which three – one each in Bengaluru, Tripura (TIE wing).
and Sikkim – are already operational. The theatre activists felt cheated with this proposal.

“Why do we need regional centres? Why can’t we have, say, NSD-Bengaluru, NSD-Patna, NSD-Lucknow, etc.,” asks Suresh Sharma, chief, repertory company (Rangmandal). “Opening up regional centres means one NSD would govern and lead all the centres, and thus have the monopoly. However, it is important to note that every region has its own literature, flavours and colours which have to be preserved.”

Sharma says that at present, artists from non-Hindi-speaking regions can focus on the academics at NSD only after spending one to two months in learning Hindi. “Once they graduate, they find Hindi theatre or films more lucrative than the folk or regional theatre they belong to. Hence, to preserve the sanctity of the regional theatre and make the art flourish, NSD should function on the lines of IITs, IIMs and NITs [each independent of the others] and training be given in the regional language. A debate on decentralisation of NSD followed by analysis and restructuring is required,” he adds.

Pravin Kumar Gunjan, a 2009 alumnus and former member of the NSD student council, believes that every state should have one NSD. “If you look around, there is just one drama school and a couple of repertories, which are run by the government. The new regional centres are helpful but to popularise regional theatre and impart effective training, the government should think about opening state repertories with each NSD in the state. This way, they can create jobs for theatre artists and also unburden the existing NSD.” Unaffected by the B-town charm, Pravin runs his repertory in Begusarai district of Bihar. “Theatre in our country is a continuous struggle as the sanctity of the regional theatre and proper planning. Just putting in money doesn’t help.

Schools and NSD have focused on the quantity instead of the quality at NSD. There is no vision. The country needs places for rehearsals, auditoriums, an infrastructure and proper planning. However, the funds and planning have focused on the quantity instead of the quality at NSD. There is no vision.

Interview Suresh Sharma, Chief, Repertory Company, NSD

What do you have to say on the autonomy of NSD?
The autonomy should not be just for the sake of saying. The autonomy has to be maintained. Every autonomous entity has a governing body and there are certain rules and regulations that need to be followed, but they must not interfere with the autonomy of the institution.

Should the number of students in graduate courses and repertory wing be increased?
Earlier only 20 students were taken in the graduate courses. This became 26 from 2009. In repertory, there are 20 full-time artists, who are complemented by casual artists when required. Don’t think the number should increase further. At NSD, we don’t give classroom training, we impart one-to-one training. This is where the requirement of decentralisation is felt.

Do you face manpower crunch?
You can say there is a lack of skilled manpower. This is mainly because of reservation and changing priorities of the school.

Are you overburdened?
Some extent, yes. We are often seen as the sole repertory representing the entire nation. There is no clarity, as of yet, on whether we are the national school of drama repertory or national repertory. Of late, we are holding several theatre festivals. FTII is also an autonomous body; it doesn’t hold as many festivals like we do. Theatre festivals are good and encouraging. But why not create a separate entity for holding fests just like the directorate of film festivals, for films.

Is there any problem with budget and funds?
No. The culture ministry has been generous since a couple of years. However, the funds and planning have focused on the quantity instead of the quality at NSD. There is no vision. The country needs places for rehearsals, auditoriums, an infrastructure and proper planning. Just putting in money doesn’t help.

A 2014 high-powered committee report of the culture ministry made some key observations on the role and importance of playwrights. It said, “Many theatre companies abroad have a resident playwright. But NSD has never paid heed to this important aspect of theatre. It does not have a playwriting course since its inception, and falls back very frequently upon classics of Western drama in translation. We would recommend that a course in playwriting must be introduced. Otherwise it would remain a major gap in the syllabus of the institution.”

Of late, the NSD has been continuously engaged in a series of works.
One of these is to hold drama festivals. Apart from the grand Bharat Rang Mahotsav, there are tribal festivals (Adirang Mahotsav), summer theatre festivals and a few that are in collaboration with other cultural festivals. But such jamborees distract it from the academics, the sole purpose of NSD. As recommended by the high-powered committee, NSD should contemplate on forming a vision statement and a proper mandate to bring focus to its role.

Perhaps, it was because of this lack in focus that veteran actor Sanjay Mishra never visited his alma mater after graduating in 1989. “Whatever I am today is only because of my work and my friends. NSD has no role to play in it,” Mishra bemoans.

Governance Now wanted to bring forth all possible issues ailing the school but despite repeated attempts, its director Waman Kendre remained unavailable for an interaction.

Some good news
Amidst the problems, there is always a silver lining when it comes to producing the finest dramatists, actors and directors of the nation. While there is a long list of popular faces in the Bollywood from NSD, there are some alumni who are working as theatre prodigy in various regions of the country. Shrish Dobhal, who graduated from NSD in 1984, and is a contemporary of the likes of actress Seema Biswas and director KS Rajendran, runs a group called Shail Nut for the folk theatre of Uttarakhand. “Shail means mountain and Nut is the colloquial term for a performing artist. Uttarakhand has a rich history of regional drama and folklore as there were no sources of entertainment for a long time, not even TV. I preferred not to leave the place and the work for preserving the art here. Our theatre group consists of folk artists and their families and operates from five different locations in the mountains,” says Shrish, who was once the students’ union president of NSD. “I have worked for films and a few television series but theatre is my real calling, it is no less than worshipping,” he adds.

For actor Pankaj Tripathi, famous for his roles as Sultan Qureshi in Gangs of Wasseypur and school principal in Nil Batte Sannata, the three years at NSD had been a beautiful time of his life. “You ask for a book and they [NSD] would get it for you in a couple of days. Yes, things have changed now. Earlier we used to know who our seniors were; nowadays undergraduates know you only if you are seen in a film. My experience at NSD was awesome. I believe that passion alone can’t make you a great performer. You need proper training as well. And NSD gives that,” he says. Tripathi belongs to Bihar’s Gopalganj district where too, for years, people did not have a television set at their homes.

The work culture at NSD is said to be phenomenal, no matter how over-worked and staff-crunched the institute may be. An anecdote of one of its performances at a nondescript auditorium in eastern UP sheds more light on this. The auditorium was jam-packed; lights were dim off-stage. As the curtain rose, a pin-drop silence engulfed, staying for a few more minutes. The play started with drumbeats in the background and a voice narrated the backdrop of the famous drama Panchayat. A group of eight to nine people entered from the right and positioned in the middle of the stage. In the middle of the play, while enacting a scene of the village panchayat, the light went off. All artists froze at their respective places. When the power was not restored for long, other members of the group used the light from torches to illuminate the stage. Artists resumed the act, exactly from where they had left, so seamlessly as if a technical snag had never happened.

People at NSD are wired that way – to give the best in minimum possible resources.

---

swati@governancenow.com
Nurturing talent

In the fourth book in the ‘Sutra’ series, Devdutt Pattanaik shows the ways to nurture and harbour talent

Ridhima Kumar

Physician-turned-author, Devdutt Pattanaik, is known for weaving magic around Indian mythology, making it simpler for the common reader. And when he combines mythology with the concepts of teamwork, creativity and talent, it becomes a useful read. The Talent Sutra: An Indian Approach to Learning is derived from his book on the Indian approach to management, Business Sutra.

Divided into four sections – isolation, reflection, expansion and inclusion – The Talent Sutra explores issues related to creativity in the workplace, nurturing talent and the importance of teamwork. “Training, learning and development are not just about skills and knowledge and competencies, they are about appreciating the human-animal, recognising that neither we nor those around us are programmable machines that we can plug and play. Managing people, hence relationships, is key to the survival of an organisation,” writes the author.

The book is a good deviation from the usual self-help books, which after a point become preachy. This book is a quick read. Each chapter ends with a short anecdote that narrates how the concepts explained can be implemented in real-life situations.

In one of the chapters, Pattanaik explains why it is important for an employer to trust his/her employee’s true potential. He writes that after the events in the Ramayan took place, Hanuman narrated the entire tale to his mother, Anjani. “His mother asked, ‘Why did they go through the trouble of raising an army and building a bridge to defeat Ravan? Why did you not simply flick your tail and sweep the rakshasa-king and his army away?’”

“Hanuman replies, ‘Because no one asked me to.’ Like no one saw Hanuman’s real potential the same mistake is committed in our offices, where the true potential of the employee is never realised.” The employer is more focussed on getting the work done and rarely thinks about harnessing the employee’s true capability. “In a world that celebrates alignment and compliance to the vision, systems and processes of an organisation, is the individual increasingly getting invisible?”

Pattanaik writes that mostly people use their work “as a beacon to get attention”. The Ramayan was written by both Hanuman and Valmiki, he notes. But the “vocabulary, grammar, melody and metre” of Hanuman’s Ramayan were perfect. “Hanuman sees his work as an exercise to discover what he is capable of becoming while Valmiki sees his work as a beacon to gather fame, attention and validation. Hanuman seeks Narayan while Valmiki seeks Narayani. Narayan helps us see others. Narayani gets others to see us.

“Our work can become the tool that helps us grow not just materially but also emotionally and intellectually. It can widen our gaze. Valmiki, without realising it, focuses on material growth; Hanuman focuses on emotional and intellectual growth.”

Most of the concepts in this book are not new or unheard of. Teachings like giving importance to the other’s perspective, being inclusive (even with those who reject our view), seeking growth of not only ourselves but also of others, and nurturing and promoting talent are known to many. What makes The Talent Sutra different is the way in which the author presents these ideas. Using mythology to explain them adds a fresh perspective.

For instance, the age-old skill of diplomacy is described by giving a reference from the Mahabharat. Pattanaik writes that when King Virata of Matsya learns that his son, Uttar, single-handedly defeated the Kaurav army, his heart was filled with pride and he announced celebrations across the kingdom. But Yudhishthir, under the guise of a priest, said that the young boy was helped by his charioteer, Brihanalla, the eunuch, who once served Arjun, the great archer. The priest was speaking the truth, but the king was not ready to hear that. The author suggests that had Yudhishthir dealt with “sabha-chaturya” or “tactfulness in court” the king would have heard him. “It [diplomacy] is a trait that people who work with leaders must possess. It is a trait that even leaders need to possess if they wish to lead.”

The book concludes on a cautionary note: one should not be blinded by the ways of modern management, which is all about chasing a target. “Hindu mythology, however, warns against chasing Lakshmi, the goddess of wealth; it will result in conflict. Instead it advises making oneself attractive to Lakshmi, worthy of her affection and auspiciousness, so she walks our way. For that we have to be less like Indra, king of the gods, who is consumed by his own hunger, and more like Vishnu, preserver of the world, who is consumed by other people’s hunger. Vishnu knows that human hunger is threefold: for wealth, power and knowledge.”
Coming from a family of farmers in Muzaffarnagar district of Uttar Pradesh, Nawazuddin Siddiqui has made it big in the Hindi film industry. Beginning his career as a theatre actor, the National School of Drama alumnus struggled to break the stereotype of a conventional hero. After several less-noticed performances, Nawazuddin bagged the Jury Award at the 2012 national film awards. He has played iconic characters in films like Black Friday, Gangs of Wasseypur, Kahaani, Manjhi: The Mountain Man, The Lunchbox and Raman Raghav 2.0, to name a few. Nawazuddin had to pull out of the Ramleela performance recently when some Hindu activists protested over his participation.

What inspired you to join theatre?
I had no inclination towards creative arts as I was a science graduate. It was only when my friend took me to watch a play that I got fascinated by the chemistry between the audience and the actors and decided to do theatre.

Were your parents supportive when you chose acting as your career?
There was no opposition. I come from a farmer’s family so they did not have much idea about what I was doing. I told them that after studying in the NSD I would get a job in radio or somewhere else. Like all parents, they wanted me to complete my education and get a job.

How can the life of farmers be improved?
Marginal or small farmers suffer the most. First, they don’t have access to proper irrigation methods. Second, they don’t get an appropriate amount in return for their crops. The rates in the mandi [market] keep fluctuating and farmers having no storage facility end up selling their produce at cheaper rates. The government should focus on these areas that trouble small farmers.

What were your initial challenges in the film industry?
The major challenge was that of acceptance. People, even in the industry, think that a hero should be fair and tall. I was rejected several times for my looks. It took me 12-14 years of struggle to break this image and establish myself as an actor.

Toughest character you played so far?
Raman Raghav.

What are you working on at present?
I have just finished shooting for Babu Moshai. Munna Michael and Nandita Das’s film Manto, based on Saadat Hasan Manto’s life, are my next projects.

Last time you travelled in a train?
It was almost five-six years back. Journey in trains is always nice. I would love to travel in trains but I don’t think it’s possible now.

When was the last time you visited a government office?
I visited a passport office to get my passport renewed. The service has now become quite hi-tech and it takes less time to get a passport unlike what it was seven-eight years ago.

What is your message to aspiring actors?
They should be honest and hardworking. Today, actors spend a lot of time on mobile and internet which consumes their time. In our times, there were fewer distractions. They must limit the use of these devices and should concentrate on their acting skills.

As told to Sneh Singh
ABM is leader in e-municipality segment in India with several successfully sustained projects. 750+ Urban Local Bodies which include many from the initial 100 Smart Cities are our esteemed customers. ABM’s various e-municipality solutions deliver millions of Citizen Services every year. Several states have selected ABM for a state-wide rollout of e-municipality projects as we competed with reputed MNCs and Indian IT firms. ABM’s e-municipality projects are quoted as exemplary case studies in various prestigious journals & international research reports and have bagged awards from credible international organizations, central/state governments, Industry associations and reputed media publications. **ABM is the perfect fit for making the cities smarter.**
YOUR LIFE-SAVINGS GET A LIFE
WHEN YOU DIVERSIFY YOUR INVESTMENTS.

Do your groundwork, make sure the company is reliable, the balance sheet looks good and the management is sound before investing.

Call 022 22728097 to report any market irregularity.
Issued in Public interest by BSE Investor Protection Fund.

The World’s Fastest Exchange with a speed of 6 Microseconds.
Website: www.bseindia.com | Follow us on: /BSEIndia | @BSEIndia | /BSEIndia | /BSEIndia

Disclaimer: Issued in public interest by BSE investor protection fund.