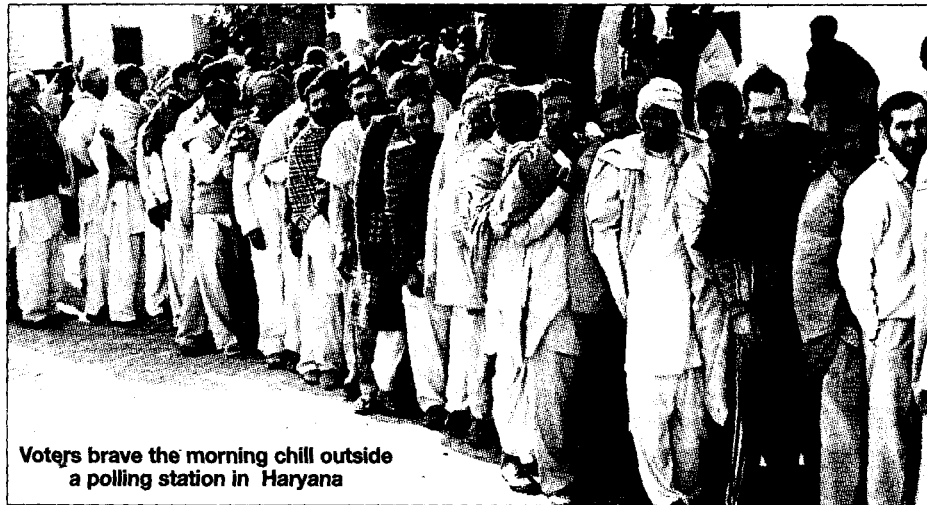


55% turnout in Bihar, Jharkhand and Haryana

Naxal Violence, Party Clashes Claim 19 Lives



Voters brave the morning chill outside a polling station in Haryana

New Delhi: Nearly 55 per cent of the electorate on Thursday exercised their franchise for the 178 assembly constituencies in Haryana, Bihar and Jharkhand where 19 people were killed in Naxalite and poll-related violence.

In the first elections in Jharkhand, where polling was held in 24 constituencies in the first round of three-phased elections, Naxalites triggered a landmine blast killing six policemen and the driver of a vehicle. More than 50 per cent voters cast their ballots.

Four Naxalites were killed when they attempted to disrupt the polling in Dandila in Hussainabad constituency in Palamu district. Their bodies were taken away by their colleagues, police said. In Bihar, which registered about 55 per cent voting in 64 consti-

ties which went to the polls in the first phase, seven persons, including three women and two homeguards, were killed and several injured in attacks by Naxalites, clashes and crude bomb explosions.

The Naxalites also looted



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five rifles and ammunition from the security personnel posted at a booth. An estimated 60 per cent of the 1.27 crore electorate in Haryana cast their vote for the 90-member assembly in polling which was, by and large, peaceful barring minor clashes in which the driver of a candidate was shot dead in

Barwala constituency.

BJP vice president Sushil Kumar Modi escaped unhurt when his vehicle was attacked at Champanagar in Bhagalpur Lok Sabha constituency, police said. Modi was attacked when he was moving in an vehicle of Bashishtha Yadav, an election agent.

Meanwhile, Jharkhand state JD-U general secretary Murari Pandey was arrested along with three party activists on charges of trying to influence voters in Daltongunj, additional district magistrate (law and order) Khurshid Anwar said. Two pistols and 33 live cartridges were seized from Pandey, the official added.

Paramilitary forces opened fire at booth grabbers at Kari booth in Bishrampur constituency but there were no casualties, police said. PTI

Military might showcased

By Sandeep Joshi

NEW DELHI, JAN. 26. Vignettes of India's military might and its rich cultural diversity unfolded on the majestic Rajpath here this morning as the country celebrated its 56th Republic Day. A grand, colourful 90-minute parade not only showcased the country's "prized possessions" in the field of defence but also offered a glimpse of the nation's progress and prowess in different fields.

A daredevil performance by personnel of the Army Service Corps on motorcycles and a breathtaking fly-past by the Air Force stole the show. However, the absence of an investiture ceremony to honour gallant soldiers disappointed many.

The proceedings began with the Prime Minister, Manmohan Singh, and the three Service chiefs laying wreaths at Amar Jawan Jyoti at India Gate. Dr. Singh then received the President, A.P.J. Abdul Kalam, and the chief guest, King Jigme Singye Wangchuck of Bhutan, at the saluting base on Rajpath.

With the unfurling of the Na-

tional Flag and the singing of the National Anthem amid a 21-gun salute, the parade, led by the General Officer Commanding of Delhi Area, Major General Thomas Mathew, began with an advanced light helicopter and three Mi-17 helicopters showering flower petals on the large gathering.

The first to appear were India's highly-decorated serving and ex-servicemen, followed by Army columns that included the mechanised division of the state-of-the-art T-90 tanks, "airborne gunners" with para-load, the indigenously designed surface-to-surface Prithvi missiles and the Agni-I and II missiles. "Tunguska," an air defence weapons system, Hyderabad Demining Vehicle, the Army's latest acquisition for clearing landmines, and the mobile satellite terminal for communication in war zones instilled in the visitors a sense of pride.

Then followed the smartly dressed marching contingents of different Army regiments, including Punjab, Grenadiers, Sikh, Jat, Dogra, Bihar, Mahar and Gorkha Rifles, as well as

those of the Air Force and the Navy. They were all accompanied by their bands, which belted out the marching tunes, lifting the spirits of the spectators.

Impressive Navy tableau

The Navy's impressive tableau portraying its first expedition to Mount Everest and the circumnavigation of INS Tarangini around the globe drew a loud applause.

The Air Force unveiled its acquisition "Searcher II," an unmanned aerial vehicle recently imported from Israel to provide greater battlefield transparency by feeding information about the areas it flies over. It also displayed its attack helicopter, MI-25, which is a versatile weapon-carrying platform, while the Defence Research and Development Organisation showcased its BrahMos weapons system of supersonic cruise missiles, along with the integrated electronics warfare system, "Samyukta."

The gathering gave a standing ovation to the 19 young National Bravery Awards

recipients, who came riding on caparisoned elephants. Then came the dances and folk performances by hundreds of school children, which were "crisper" this time round.

But the Army Service Corps "Tornadoes" team of 90 skilled motorcycle riders stole the show with their breathtaking performance on their silver machines. The parade ended with an impressive flypast that began with five choppers in arrowhead formation, a mixed formation of five "Big Boy" transport aircraft, a formation of IL-78 tanker and two Sukhoi-30 MKIs fuelling mid-air, and with five Jaguars breezing past in arrowhead formation.

Saving the best for the finish was a Sukhoi-30 aircraft that performed the dangerous yet exciting and breathtaking "Vertical Charlie" manoeuvre in front of a bedazzled gathering. As it disappeared into the distant skies, thousands of colourful balloons, many carrying the air signifying freedom in its most glorious form.

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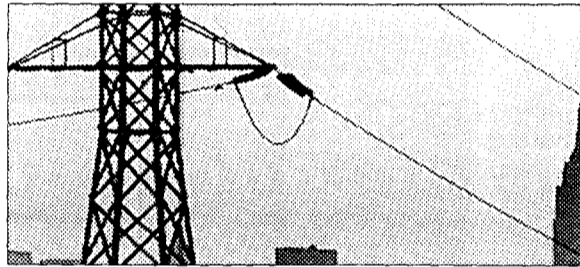
PSUs propose power exchange

HT Corporate Bureau
New Delhi, January 18

PUBLIC SECTOR power companies — NTPC, Power Grid and Power Trading Corp — propose to jointly set up a power exchange. Consultants have been appointed to chart a roadmap for this initiative that will go a long way in developing the electricity market in the country.

Speaking on the sidelines of a Power Grid conference on open access, PTC chairman T.N. Thakur said that the three firms had agreed to work together for setting up a power exchange. The firms may initially acquire some equity in the project, but the details have not yet been finalised. NTPC has appointed Nord Pool Consulting and Crisil as consultants. A final decision will be taken after the consultants submit their report.

The power exchange is expected to function on the lines of commodity exchanges like NCDEX or MCX and will provide a common platform to buyers, sellers and traders of power.



Although it will take some time to set up the exchange, a competitive electricity market may help bulk consumers initially before the benefits trickle down to the retail user segment, feel experts. The initiative is expected to lead to more competitive tariffs due to greater optimisation of capacities and increased competition among generators, trading and distribution firms.

DUAL CITIZENSHIP

Singh logically extends it to all

THE secret of successful countries such as China, South Korea and Israel is that they have leveraged the wealth and expertise of their respective diasporas. India has a particularly large, wealthy and educated diaspora. In an era of globalization, it is silly to persist with the old socialist approach of trying to make them feel guilty for migrating. It is a lot more clever to harness them towards India's development goals. Hence the annual jamborees organised for non-resident Indians; hence also the NDA government's decision in late 2003 to grant dual citizenship selectively to people of Indian origin living in 16 countries.

But this law was bound to create heartburn as the question arose, why cherry-pick some countries, all of them in the developed West, and not others? The question arose particularly with respect to the Gulf countries, home to a large number of migrant workers from India, whose remittances (not those of wealthier migrants in Western countries) keep our foreign exchange reserves buoyant. If non-resident Indians are to invest and lend their expertise to India they need to feel good about their country of origin, a cause that cannot be helped if they are subjected to unnecessary procedures like applying for a visa every time they come to the country, and report at a police station if they stay over 180 days. Prime Minister Manmohan Singh did the logical and gracious thing by extending the dual citizenship benefit to non-resident Indians in all countries which themselves recognize dual citizenship, with 26 January, 1950, as the cut-off date for migration.

There have been needless cavils from LK Advani, former deputy prime minister and now leader of the opposition, who has rhetorically posed the question of whether Dawood Ibrahim and Chhota Shakeel, or the many Bangladeshi illegal immigrants who are now in India, would get the benefits of dual citizenship. But the Citizenship Amendment Act, 2003, explicitly rules out Pakistan and Bangladesh from its purview. To take the argument further, what about gangsters and terrorists who have bases of operations in West Asia? Interestingly, West Asian countries still fall outside the scope of the dual citizenship scheme, since they themselves don't recognize dual citizenship.

Indeed they would be swamped if they did, as in many oil-rich Gulf states citizens derive lucrative social security benefits from the government, while the bulk of the work is done by immigrants. In that sense not a lot more NRIs will now be eligible for dual citizenship than earlier, and no new threats to national security are on the horizon, despite Advani's claims. The difference is that the onus now shifts to West Asian and other states to grant dual citizenship to people of Indian origin.

PM gives green signal for rural development fund

VRINDA GOPINATH

NEW DELHI, JANUARY 14

Prime Minister Manmohan Singh has given the go-ahead to revive the dormant National Fund for Rural Development (NFRD), in a bid to get more revenues for the vast rural, undeveloped sector.

NFRD, first conceived in 1993, was an attempt to utilise excessive funds lying with public sector banks, insurance companies and financial institutions, and enable them to re-

alise their social commitments. The nodal agency to monitor NFRD will be the Rural Development Ministry though participants (donors) will be from PSUs.

The head of the fund has already been appointed — he is Director-General, Council for Advancement of People's Action and Rural Technology (CAPART). Says a ministry official, "It is another attempt to bring about public-private partnership for development and infrastructure building. It

is to allow public sector banks and financial institutions to fulfill its social obligations. Under this scheme, the organisations will have to meet two-thirds of the expenses while the government will pitch in one-third. When it was started, the Fund collected almost Rs 10 crore, and continued to attract more money for two financial years, but soon lost momentum and ended by 1998."

According to the official, Singh relooked into the file and decided to revive it again.

Though it is voluntary by nature, institutions and banks will have no choice but to fulfill their obligations when the Fund is set up again. They include SBI, Central Bank, PNB, LIC, GIC, Oriental Insurance, besides institutions like NABARD.

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দ্বৈত নাগরিকত্ব নিয়ে বিতর্কের মুখে কেন্দ্রীয় সরকার

দিল্লির দু'মুখো নীতির শিকার ভারতীয়রাই

স্টাফ রিপোর্টার, নয়াদিল্লি, ১২ জানুয়ারি: লর্ড স্বরাজ পল চাইলে ভারতের 'নাগরিক' হতে পারেন। কারণ তিনি ভারতীয় বংশোদ্ভূত বিদেশি নাগরিক। যদিও নাগরিকত্বের গুরুত্বপূর্ণ অধিকার— ভোটচাই দিতে পারবেন না। শুধু পাবেন বিনিয়োগে ছাড়, ভিসাহীন অবাধ যাতায়াতের মতো কিছু সুযোগ।

কিন্তু ব্রিটেনে বসবাসকারী ভারতীয় নাগরিক অমর্ত্য সেন যদি একই ভাবে, একই সঙ্গে দুই দেশের সুবিধা আশা করেন? পাবেন না। কারণ, ভারতীয়দের দ্বৈত-নাগরিক হবার সুযোগ নেই এ দেশের সংবিধানে। কয়েক বছর আগে তাই ইস্পাত-সম্রাট এল এন মিস্ত্রীকে ব্রিটিশ পাসপোর্ট নেওয়ার আগে ভারতীয় নাগরিকত্ব ত্যাগ করতে হয়েছিল।

আবার দ্বৈত-নাগরিকত্বের নামে ভারত যা দিতে চাইছে, তা-ও প্রতিবেশী দু'টি দেশের থেকে কম। দূতাবাস সূত্রে খবর, পাকিস্তানি এবং বাংলাদেশি বংশোদ্ভূত বিদেশি নাগরিকেরা নিজেদের দেশে ভোটাধিকারের সুযোগ পান। ভারত শুধু ভিসা বা বিনিয়োগের ক্ষেত্রে কিছু সুবিধা দিয়েই হাত ঝেড়ে ফেলতে চাইছে।

বিদেশে থাকা ভারতীয় বংশোদ্ভূতদের নাগরিক

করতে কেন্দ্র তৎপর, কিন্তু নিজের নাগরিকদের জন্য বিদেশের দরজা খুলে দেওয়ার প্রশ্নে গোঁড়ামি কাটিয়ে উঠতে পারেনি সরকার। কেন এই দু'মুখো মনোভাব? ব্রিটেন বা কানাডার লোকেরা যেমন একই সঙ্গে দুই দেশের নাগরিক হতে পারেন, ভারতীয়দের সেই সুবিধা নেই কেন? কূটনৈতিক মহলের মতে, নিজের দেশের নাগরিকদের বিদেশি রাষ্ট্রের নাগরিকত্ব দিতে অনীহার অন্যতম কারণ, সে ক্ষেত্রে বহু নাগরিক দেশ ছেড়ে চলে যেতে পারেন।

বিদেশ মন্ত্রকের একাংশ একটা যুক্তি দেখাচ্ছেন, নাগরিক হওয়ার পাল্টা সুযোগের অন্যতম মাপকাঠি আর্থ-সামাজিক সাযুজ্য। কানাডা আর ব্রিটেনের মধ্যে তাই নাগরিকত্বের আদান প্রদান হতে পারে, কিন্তু ভারত এবং ব্রিটেনের মধ্যে নয়। তবে এ ক্ষেত্রেও প্রশ্ন উঠছে, নিজেদের 'তৃতীয় বিশ্বের' নাগরিক হিসাবে দেখার এই হীনমন্যতা কেন অন্তরায় হবে? এই মধ্যযুগীয় মনোভাব কেনই বা পাল্টাবে না?

গত সরকারের আমলে এই আইন তৈরির প্রধান উদ্যোগী ছিলেন তৎকালীন রাজ্যসভার সদস্য, দেশের প্রাক্তন সলিসিটর জেনারেল এল এম সিংহভি। মুম্বই থেকে ফোনে তিনি বলেন, "আমাদের কমিটি বিদেশে

ভারতীয় বংশোদ্ভূতদের নাগরিকত্ব দেওয়ার বিষয়টি দেখেছিল। ভারতীয়দের বিদেশে দ্বি-নাগরিক করার ব্যাপারে খতিয়ে দেখিনি আমরা।" ২০০৩ সালে যে বিলটি সংসদের দুই সভাতেই সর্বসম্মতিক্রমে পাশ হয়েছিল, তাতে কোথাও ভারতীয় নাগরিকদের একই সঙ্গে বিদেশের নাগরিক হওয়ার সুবিধা দেওয়া হয়নি। কেন্দ্রীয় স্বরাষ্ট্র মন্ত্রক সূত্রেও বলা হয়েছে, এই মুহূর্তে এই বিষয়টি নিয়ে কোনও ভাবনাচিন্তা হচ্ছে না।

বস্তুত, দেশের রাজনৈতিক মহলেই যে এই নিয়ে বিশেষ ভাবনাচিন্তা নেই, তার প্রতিফলন মেলে সি পি এমের রাজ্যসভার সাংসদ নীলোৎপল বসুর কথায়। ভারতীয়েরা কেন দ্বি-নাগরিক হতে পারবে না, সেই প্রশ্নে তাঁর বক্তব্য, "সত্যি বলতে কি, আমরা এখনও এই নিয়ে খুব গভীরভাবে ভাবনাচিন্তা করিনি।" গত সরকারের আমলে প্রথমে ঠিক ছিল ১৮টি দেশের অনাবাসীদের দ্বৈত-নাগরিকত্ব দেওয়া হবে। তা নিয়ে আপত্তি ছিল সি পি এমের। সীমিত সংখ্যক বিদেশি রাষ্ট্রে বসবাসকারী ভারতীয়েরা কেন দ্বি-নাগরিক হবেন, তা নিয়ে দৃষ্টিভঙ্গি প্রকাশ করেছে রাজনৈতিক মহল, কিন্তু নিজের দেশের লোকেরদের নিয়ে ভাবার সময় পায়নি দেশের বৃহৎ রাজনৈতিক দলগুলি।

জাতীয় সঙ্গীতের ভূগোল

জাতীয় সঙ্গীতকে শুদ্ধ করিয়া লওয়ার একটি প্রস্তাব পেশ হইয়াছে। 'জনগণমন' গানটিতে 'সিন্ধু'র উল্লেখ বাদ দিয়া 'কাশ্মীর' শব্দটি বসাইলে প্রমাদ সংশোধিত হয়, ইহাই বক্তব্য। আপাতদৃষ্টিতে মনে হয়, সিন্ধু পাকিস্তানের একটি অঙ্গরাজ্য। ভারতের জাতীয় সঙ্গীতে তাহার উল্লেখ কি অপরিহার্য? বরং ধর্মনিরপেক্ষ ভারতে মুসলিম সংখ্যাগরিষ্ঠ রাজ্য কাশ্মীরের থাকিয়া যাওয়ার ঘটনাটি জাতীয় সঙ্গীতে স্বীকৃতি পাইবার দাবি রাখে। কিন্তু সত্যই কি তাই? জাতীয় সঙ্গীত কি জাতিরাত্ত্বের ভূগোল ও ইতিহাসের খুঁটিনাটি বিবরণ? নাকি ইহা জাতির বৈশিষ্ট্যকে তুলিয়া ধরিতে দায়বদ্ধ?

আলোচ্য গানটির রচয়িতা রবীন্দ্রনাথ স্বাভাবিকভাবে একটি শৈল্পিক অভিব্যক্তি ঘটাইয়াছিলেন। গানের রচনাকালে ভারত অবিভক্ত। সিন্ধু যদি কোনও নির্দিষ্ট ভূখণ্ড হয়, দেশভাগের মাধ্যমে ভারত হইতে তাহার বহির্গমনের সম্ভাবনাও তখন নাই। আর কবি যে সিন্ধু নামে প্রদেশকেই বুঝাইয়াছেন, নদ বা সাগরকে নয়, তাহারও কোনও প্রমাণ পাঠটিতে নাই। সর্বোপরি, এই যুক্তিতে 'বঙ্গ'-এর অন্তর্ভুক্তিও বিভ্রান্তিকর, কেননা বঙ্গ অতঃপর বিভক্ত হইয়া পশ্চিমবঙ্গ ও পূর্ব পাকিস্তানে পরিণত হয়, যাহা পরে আবার বাংলাদেশ নামে আত্মপ্রকাশ করে। 'দ্রাবিড়' অভিধাটিই বা গ্রাহ্য কী রূপে, যখন তামিল ছাড়া অন্য দক্ষিণী খণ্ডজাতিগুলি নিজেদের দ্রবিড় বিধে তত আত্মসচেতন নন, ভাষাভিত্তিক প্রাদেশিকতাকে আঁকড়াইয়া থাকিতে বেশি আগ্রহী! আর বাদ পড়ার তালিকা করিতে গেলে হরিয়ানা, গোয়া, সিকিম, ঝাড়খণ্ড, ছত্তীসগড়ের মতো অপেক্ষাকৃত অর্বাচীন রাজ্যই কেবল নয়, অসম, বিহার, উত্তরপ্রদেশ, রাজস্থান ও মধ্যপ্রদেশের মতো ইতিহাসসিদ্ধ সাবেক ভূখণ্ডগুলিও কবির রচনায় অনুল্লেখিত। তবে কি এই সব রাজ্যের নামও জাতীয় সঙ্গীতে ঢুকাইবার আবদার উঠিবে? যদি দেশের ভৌগোলিক বিবরণ সঠিক রাখাই উদ্দেশ্য হয়, তবে সঙ্গীত ছাড়িয়া একটি তালিকা আওড়াইলেই হয়! জাতীয়তাবাদ যখন একটি বদ্ধ জলায় পরিণত হয়, তখনই এমন প্রবণতা দেখা দেয়।

'জনগণমন'কে জাতীয় সঙ্গীতে পরিণত করার জন্য রবীন্দ্রনাথ তদবির করেন নাই, জাতিই গানটিকে এই মর্যাদায় ভূষিত করিয়াছে। কোনও কবির রচনা সংশোধন করার অধিকারের প্রশ্নটি যদি ছাড়িয়াও দেওয়া যায়, তবু এমন সংশোধনের প্রয়োজনীয়তা সম্পর্কে সংশয় থাকিয়া যায়। জনৈক বর্ষীয়ান সাহিত্যিক সিন্ধুর বদলে কাশ্মীর বসাইবার ফলে ছন্দবিপর্যয়ের কথা বলিয়াছেন। যাঁহারা জাতীয় সঙ্গীতে জাতির ভূগোল-ইতিহাসের নিখুঁত বিবরণ চাহেন, তাঁহাদের কাছে ছন্দজ্ঞান অপ্রাসঙ্গিক। কিন্তু ভারতের জাতীয় সঙ্গীতে 'সিন্ধু'র উল্লেখ পাকিস্তানের সার্বভৌমত্ব ক্ষুণ্ণ করে, এমন চমকপ্রদ যুক্তির জন্য তাঁহারা পাকিস্তানের শাসক গোষ্ঠী কর্তৃক 'কায়েদ-এ-আজম' উপাধিপ্রাপ্ত হইতে পারেন। কেননা ভারত সর্বদাই ইসলামাবাদের সার্বভৌমত্ব ও আঞ্চলিক অখণ্ডতা বিনাশের ষড়যন্ত্রে লিপ্ত বলিয়া যাঁহারা বিশ্বাস ও প্রচার করেন, সেই পাক শাসকরাও কখনও এমন একটি দৃষ্টান্ত তুলিয়া ধরিতে পারেন নাই। যিনি বা যাঁহারা জাতীয় সঙ্গীতের শোধন চাহিতেছেন, তাঁহাদের উদ্দেশ্য আখ্যা দেওয়াও যায় না। এমনও বলা যায় না যে তাঁহারা কিছু না পাইয়া অকিঞ্চিৎকর সব বিষয় লইয়া আত্মপ্রচারের নিষ্ফল ছল রচনা করিয়া চলিয়াছেন। কারণ দেশের সর্বোচ্চ আদালতে এই মর্মে একটি আবেদন গৃহীত হইয়াছে এবং কেন্দ্রীয় সরকারকে একটি বিজ্ঞপ্তিও সুপ্রিম কোর্ট জারি করিয়াছে।

Edu sector uses reforms carrot for NRI funds

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Mumbai: Indian education is set for reform at all levels, if the education system's representatives at the Pravasi Bharatiya Divas (PBD) are to be believed. Hardly surprising, considering the announcements regarding reforms were made to an audience full of People of Indian Origin, and the thrust was clearly on getting them to put their money where their mouth is.

University and higher education in India is an area that the ministry for Human Resources Development (HRD) aims to improve and make more attractive for foreign students. B S Baswan, secretary, secondary and higher education, HRD ministry, reiterated at a conference at the PBD on Saturday that an Indian Institute of Management would be set up in the North-East, either in Shillong or Guwahati. Baswan said that a formal announcement would be made in two weeks.

Prof Ashok Misra, director of Mumbai's Indian Institute of Technology (IIT), the other famous Indian education brand-name, announced that there would soon be "less differential fees for Indian and foreign students at the IITs". This came in response to complaints from several NRIs that it was unfair that their children were charged exorbitant fees at the IITs and other educational institutions. "We have also arranged to provide better hostel rooms for foreign students, because Indian students can sometimes take care of things that foreign students can't," he added.

Misra, however, made it clear that there would be no direct admission for foreign students and that they would have to take the IIT's joint entrance examination, like Indian students.

The issue of reservation in colleges was also addressed by Baswan. "For Scheduled Castes and Sched-



TALKING HEADS: NRIs at the NCPA on Saturday

Study Flow Of Funds

How much it costs to:

- ▶ Set up a school (building and equipment) for Std I to V: US \$61,000
- ▶ Set up a school for Std I to VIII: US \$104,500
- ▶ Educate a girl from Std I to VIII: US \$100

Source: Union HRD ministry and Maharashtra government

uled Tribes, reservations are the state's way of taking affirmative action for socially disadvantaged groups. But there could be legal flaws in having reservations for NRIs and foreign students, and this is being discussed," he said. Baswan said that while these seats had been considered legal since they were super-numerary (over and above open seats), this was now being debated and could be reformed.

Top Area Of Interest

Elementary education (Std I to VIII) is clearly the area where NRIs are most interested in investing their money, but the poor quality and insufficient reach of public education was cause for concern. Kumud Bansal, secretary, elementary education and literacy, HRD ministry, assured the audience that under the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyaan (SSA), all children would be assured access to elementary education.

"We are also looking at expanding secondary education to accommodate all the new students who will be getting primary education through the SSA," said Bansal. The Central Advisory Board of Education will submit a report on the feasibility of a Common School System—as is followed in many parts of the world—in February, and a policy announcement will be made by May, before the new academic year, Bansal added.

দ্বৈত নাগরিকত্বে মিলবে না ভোটাধিকার, বিতর্ক শুরু

স্টাফ রিপোর্টার, নয়াদিল্লি, ৮ জানুয়ারি: প্রবাসী ভারতীয়দের দ্বৈত নাগরিকত্বের সুযোগ দিতে প্রধানমন্ত্রীর ঘোষণার পরেই মুম্বইতে তৃতীয় প্রবাসী ভারতীয় দিবস অনুষ্ঠানে তথাকথিত দ্বৈত নাগরিকত্ব নিয়ে নতুন করে বিতর্ক শুরু হয়ে গিয়েছে। প্রবাসীদের জন্য কোন দলের সরকার কত কাজ করছে, কৃতিত্ব কার বেশি, এ নিয়ে চাপানউতোর শুরু হলেও বাস্তবে কিন্তু মনমোহন সিংহের সরকার প্রবাসী ভারতীয়দের সত্যিকারের দ্বৈত নাগরিকত্বের অধিকার দিচ্ছে না। সরকার প্রবাসী ভারতীয়দের জন্য ভারতীয় পাসপোর্ট, ভিসা ফি মকুব, বা লগ্নির ক্ষেত্রে কিছু বাড়তি সুবিধার কথা বললেও নাগরিকত্বের প্রধান শর্ত ভোটাধিকার থেকেই তাঁরা বঞ্চিত থেকে যাচ্ছেন। আর্থিক সংস্কারের ফলে বিদেশি বিনিয়োগের বাধাই যেখানে অনেকাংশে দূর হয়ে গিয়েছে, সেখানে প্রবাসীদের এই সুবিধা কতটা বাড়তি উৎসাহ জোগাবে, তা নিয়ে প্রশ্ন রয়েছে। আগে সরকার মোটামুটি একই রকমের সুবিধা দিতে অরেঞ্জ কার্ড দেওয়ার প্রস্তাব করেছিল। কিন্তু এখন দ্বৈত নাগরিকত্ব দিতে রাজি হয়েছে প্রায় একই সুবিধা দিতে চাইছে।

আজ বি জে পি নেতা যশোবন্ত সিংহ প্রধানমন্ত্রীকে আক্রমণ করে বলেছেন, “১৯৯৪ সালে অর্থমন্ত্রী হিসাবে আমেরিকায় গিয়ে মনমোহন সিংহ বলেছিলেন, ভারতীয় বংশোদ্ভূতদের অরেঞ্জ কার্ড দেওয়াই যথেষ্ট। নাগরিকত্ব দেওয়ার পক্ষপাতী তিনি ছিলেন না। এটা খুব আশ্চর্যের যে এখন তিনি কেমন সুর বদলে ফেলেছেন।” তাঁর এ কথা বলার উদ্দেশ্য কাল প্রধানমন্ত্রী মুম্বইয়ে যা বলেছিলেন তার জবাব

দেওয়া। প্রধানমন্ত্রী বলেছিলেন, “আমি জানি যে গত দু’বার (প্রবাসী ভারতীয় দিবস অনুষ্ঠানে) এই বিষয়ে যা প্রতিশ্রুতি দেওয়া হয়েছিল, তা রাখা হয়নি।” প্রবাসীদের জন্য বর্তমান সরকার যে যথেষ্ট যত্নবান তা বোঝাতে মুম্বইয়ে প্রবাসী ভারতীয় সম্মেলনে কেন্দ্রীয় মন্ত্রী গুলাম নবি আজাদ, কর্ণেল সিবাল প্রমুখ একের পর এক প্রকল্প ও কর্মসূচির কথা বলেন, যেখানে প্রবাসীরা বিনিয়োগে আগ্রহী হতে পারেন।

২০০৩ সালের ডিসেম্বরে যখন নাগরিকত্ব (সংশোধনী বিল) আইনে পরিণত হয়, তখন তৎকালীন স্বরাষ্ট্রমন্ত্রী লালকৃষ্ণ আডবাণী বলেছিলেন, “বিদেশি নাগরিকত্ব পেয়েছেন এমন ভারতীয়রা দ্বৈত নাগরিকত্ব পেলে ভারতের উন্নয়নে তাঁদের অবদান রাখতে পারবেন।” সেই সময়েই বিরোধীপক্ষ থেকে প্রশ্ন তোলা হয়েছিল, প্রবাসীরা ঠিক কীভাবে ভারতের উন্নয়নে সাহায্য করবেন? বিরোধীদের কেউ কেউ এই আশঙ্কাও প্রকাশ করেছিলেন যে, এটা শুধু প্রবাসীদের কিছু বাড়তি সুযোগ (যেমন ভারতীয় পাসপোর্ট বা লগ্নির ক্ষেত্রে অতিরিক্ত সুবিধা) দেবে।

আর ঘটনা হল পুরো বিতর্কটাই কিন্তু চলছে প্রবাসী ভারতীয়দের নাগরিকত্ব দেওয়া নিয়ে। পৃথিবীর অনেক দেশেই কিন্তু এমন ব্যবস্থা রয়েছে, যার ফলে দু’দেশের মানুষই অন্য দেশের পাসপোর্ট ব্যবহার করতে পারেন। ১৯৯৬ সালে লেখা মার্কিন আইনবিদ জর্জ ভার্গসের একটি নিবন্ধ অনুযায়ী পৃথিবীতে এমন দেশের সংখ্যা ৪০। আবার কিছু দেশ অন্য দেশের নাগরিকত্ব গ্রহণ করাটাকে মোটেই খারাপ চোখে দেখে না।

এর পর পাঁচের পাতায়

দ্বৈত নাগরিকত্বের কৃতিত্ব

প্রথম পাতার পর

যেমন ব্রিটেন। ব্রিটিশ দূতাবাস সূত্রে বলা হয়েছে, ১৯৮১ সালে ব্রিটিশ ন্যাশনালিটি অ্যাক্ট ১৯৪৮ সালের আইনকেই অনুসরণ করেছে। ৪৮ সালের আইন অনুযায়ী মার্কিন যুক্তরাষ্ট্র-সহ অতীতের উপনিবেশগুলির মানুষেরা তাঁদের নিজেদের দেশ এবং ব্রিটেনের নাগরিকত্ব যুগপৎ বজায় রাখতে পারেন। অর্থাৎ কোনও ব্রিটিশ নাগরিক যদি মার্কিন নাগরিকত্ব নেন তাহলেও তাঁর ব্রিটিশ নাগরিকত্ব থাকবে।

তবে আমেরিকা তার নাগরিকদের অন্য দেশের পাসপোর্ট ব্যবহার করাটাকে মোটেই ভাল চোখে দেখে না। এমনকি ব্রিটিশদের ক্ষেত্রেও নয়।

মার্কিন দূতাবাসের নাগরিকত্ব সংক্রান্ত একটি নথিতে বলা হয়েছে “মার্কিন সরকার একথা স্বীকার করে যে দ্বৈত নাগরিকত্ব রয়েছে কিন্তু নীতিগতভাবে একে উৎসাহ দেয় না। কারণ এর ফলে নানা সমস্যা তৈরি হতে পারে।” এমনকি অন্য দেশের পাসপোর্ট ব্যবহার করলে মার্কিন আইনে সমস্যা দেখা দিতে পারে বলে তাঁরা মার্কিন নাগরিকদের সতর্ক করে দিয়েছেন।

ভারত কিন্তু তার নিজের নাগরিকদের অন্য দেশের নাগরিকত্ব পাওয়ার পথ মোটেই ব্রিটেনের মত খুলে দিচ্ছে না। বরং সেখানে মার্কিন যুক্তরাষ্ট্রের ধাঁচেই চলছে নয়াদিল্লি। ভারত যা করছে তা হল শুধুই প্রবাসী ভারতীয়দের মন জয়ের চেষ্টা।

ANADARAZAR PATRICKA

9 JAN 2005

26 JANUARY 1950 TO BE CUT-OFF DATE: PM

Dual citizenship dream comes true



Dr Manmohan Singh lights a lamp to inaugurate the third Pravasi Bharatiya Divas in Mumbai. — AFP

Press Trust of India

MUMBAI, Jan. 7. — Dual citizenship will be extended to all overseas Indians who migrated from India after 26 January, 1950, as long as their home countries allow it under their local laws. Announcing the decision while inaugurating the Pravasi Bhartiya Divas in Navy Nagar here, Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh said today that his government will simplify the application form for citizenship for overseas Indians. A new, user friendly form, combining the three forms prescribed earlier, has also been evolved and will be notified soon, he added.

The Prime Minister said his government would simplify the format of the certificate of registration of overseas citizens of India. Various options, including the possibility of introducing a smart card, are being considered, he said.

Similarly, he said his government had unveiled a Civil Aviation Policy to meet the requirements of overseas Indians by allowing Indian private airlines to fly abroad. The government is building new international airports in major metros and will soon modernise 30 other airports across the country, Dr Singh said.

The Prime Minister observed that Indian

airports were getting "increasingly clogged" by growing traffic. "That is why our government has unveiled a new Civil Aviation Policy to meet the requirements of modern times," he said. The government had "already opened up our skies in the peak season" and allowed Indian private airlines to fly abroad, he added.

About 2,500 delegates, including 1,500 overseas Indians from 60 countries, are participating in the three-day meet which will also have a special plenary session on disaster management in view of the devastating tsunami tragedy and deliberate over problems faced by Indians in the Gulf.

Dr Singh said the government should try and wean away the NRIs in the Gulf from bank deposits to even equity oriented savings. He noted that India owes a lot to the people of Indian origin in the Persian Gulf whose regular financial remittances home have played an important role in building the country's foreign exchange reserve that now amounts to over \$130 million.

There are many issues of concern for NRIs in the Gulf, including those pertaining to work contract and conditions, Dr Singh said. He assured them that the ministry of overseas Indian affairs would try to resolve these issues and also protect the returns on their savings.

The Prime Minister, a product of the Partition, said he understood the complex psyche of Indian immigrants well as he himself had migrated from his place of birth under difficult circumstances, in a time of crisis. "As migrants in search of a home and a living, my family and many other families like mine had to work harder."

Dr Singh also called for "massive investment in infrastructure, both social and economic, rural and urban, to step up the rate of economic growth to seven to eight per cent per annum". "I believe the economy must absorb up to \$150 billion of investment in infrastructure over the next decade for us to be able to increase our growth rate," he said. "India needs your investment. We are committed to make India attractive enough for you to invest here. I commit our government to work to creating an environment conducive to the growth of the spirit of adventure and enterprise."

Only one organisation, the Indian Association in Sharjah, boycotted today's programme protesting the decision not to open up the India-Gulf sector for private airlines.

PC calls for NRI investment: page 8

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Economic issues dominate Pravasi Divas session *qudina*

By Arunkumar Bhatt

MUMBAI, JAN. 7. Diverse subjects were discussed at the plenary session of the Third Pravasi Bharatiya Divas here today — the theme of which was 'India: A hub for globalisation'. However, the thread running through most of the discussions was the economic progress of India.

'Colonial hangover'

The ball was set rolling by Raghuram Rajan, economic counsellor and Director of Research of the International Monetary Fund, who insisted that the Indian economy was still not very open to foreign goods and services, labour or knowledge.

On the IMF's trade restrictiveness index, India had a score of 8 that placed the country amongst the most restrictive ones.

He attributed the Indian tendency to be so closed to their colonial experience and said some Indians saw the process of opening up as neo-colonialism by foreign multinationals foisted upon them "by a fifth column of neo-liberal Indian economists." There was a big difference between a monopolist colonial power and a multinational and there was no credible evidence that foreign firms had conspired to exploit India or they had misbehaved any more than similarly placed Indian firms.

To argue that the Indians were admirers of the multinationals at micro levels, Mr. Rajan said: "And in the most revealing of markets — the Indian marriage market — getting a job in a multinational has always been seen as a plus, almost on par with being in the IAS."

'Tell the West'

Industrialist Rahul Bajaj, who presided over the deliberation, did not seem to agree with Mr. Rajan's comments. Mr. Bajaj suggested that the economist tell some of these ideas to the U.S. President, George W. Bush, and others in the West to get



The Suriname Vice-President, Jules Rattankoemar Ajodhia, lighting a lamp along with the Prime Minister, Manmohan Singh, to inaugurate the third Pravasi Bharatiya Divas in Mumbai on Friday. — Photo: Vivek Bendre

their agricultural sector liberalised. He said the restrictive and protectionist policies of the U.S. and the West in the agricultural sector were "shameful" and detrimental to India.

The Union Finance Minister,

P. Chidambaram, was of the same view but expressed himself more diplomatically. As an Indian and an administrator, he perceived globalisation as the reaping of the advantages of the global market and the seizing of

the opportunity it afforded to abolish poverty and provide a decent life to all Indians.

He said the Indian service sectors had reaped the benefits and the manufacturing sector was poised to do so but the same was being denied to the agricultural sector. That meant 65 per cent of Indians were being denied the benefits because the developed countries did not want to open their markets.

'Waiting for the cobra'

The beer baron, Karan F. Bili-moria, chief executive of Cobra Beer Ltd, U.K., and one of the most successful Indians abroad, said that a majority of Indians earned less than a dollar a day, a situation that was not acceptable. He asked the Indian Government to emulate England where the enterprise was so free that he needed no licence or permission to start his industry.

Other countries had acquired sobriquets such as tigers, lions or dragons because of their robust economies and growth, he said, adding that he was confident the Indian economy would be known as cobra!

"Investments of NRIs will be safe"

MUMBAI, JAN. 7. The Minister for Overseas Indians Affairs, Jagdish Tytler, today assured the Indian Diaspora that their investments and property in the country of their birth would be safeguarded.

Addressing the plenary session, "Initiatives for the Diaspora" at the NCPA here today, Mr. Tytler said his Ministry had suggested that special courts be set up to hear cases of property and investment of NRIs. "Let's see what happens," he said.

Mr. Tytler said there were cases of Indian workers in the Gulf, especially housemaids

and nurses, being ill-treated and about 12,000 girls abandoned by NRIs after marriage. "Give me six months time and you will get a positive signal in affairs related to you," he said.

S. Krishnakumar, Secretary in the Ministry, said dual citizenship would enable overseas Indians to invest in agriculture property in India.

This benefit would be apart from the Person of Indian Origin (PIO) card that enables visa-free travel and educational facilities, among other things. The details and modalities of dual citizenship were being worked out. — UNI

দ্বৈত নাগরিকত্ব সর্ব্বার জন্য: মনমোহন

মুম্বই, ৭ জানুয়ারি (পি টি আই)— তৃতীয় প্রবাসী ভারতীয় দিবসের উদ্বোধনী ভাষণে প্রধানমন্ত্রী মনমোহন সিংয়ের ঘোষণা, ১৯৫০ সালের ২৬ জানুয়ারির পর যারা দেশ ছেড়েছেন তাঁদের প্রত্যেকেই দ্বৈত নাগরিকত্বের জন্য আবেদন করতে পারবেন। অবশ্য ওই প্রবাসী ভারতীয়রা যে-দেশে থাকেন, সেই দেশের আইনে দ্বৈত নাগরিকত্বের সুযোগ থাকতে হবে। অন্য দিকে এ ব্যাপারে আবেদনের পদ্ধতিরও সরলীকরণ করবে সরকার। দাঁ বছর আগে কাজপেরী সরকার এজন্য নাগরিকত্ব আইনের সংশোধন করলেও তাঁর পর আর কিছুই করেনি, বলেন প্রধানমন্ত্রী। তাঁর প্রতিশ্রুতি, শিগগিরই এমন একদিন আসবে যেদিন প্রত্যেক অনাবাসী ভারতীয়, যারা আগ্রহী, দ্বৈত নাগরিকত্বের অধিকারী হবেন। ৬১টি দেশের প্রায় ২৫০০ প্রতিনিধি মুম্বইয়ের এই তৃতীয় প্রবাসী ভারতীয় সম্মেলনে অংশ নিয়েছেন। এবারই প্রথম

সম্মেলন হচ্ছে দিল্লির বাইরে। তিন দিনের সম্মেলনের আত্মই ছিল প্রথম দিন। প্রধানমন্ত্রী মনমোহন সিং তাঁর ভাষণে, দেশের বিদেশি মুদ্রা সঞ্চয়ের ক্ষেত্রে অনাবাসী ভারতীয়দের বাড়িতে পাঠানো টাকার ভূমিকার সপ্রশংস উল্লেখ করেন। বলেন, বিশেষত উপসাগরীয় অঞ্চলের ভারতীয়দের ধন্যবাদ, দেশের মুদ্রার সঞ্চয় এখন ১.৩ হাজার কোটি টাকারও বেশি। প্রসঙ্গত, অনাবাসীদের আশ্রিত করেছেন মনমোহন যে, দেশে তাঁদের সঞ্চিত বিত্ত থেকে উপার্জনের হার যাতে ঠিক থাকে, সেটা দেখবে সরকার। ভারতের অর্থনৈতিক সংস্কার প্রক্রিয়াও চালু থাকবে। অনাবাসী ভারতীয়দের প্রতি প্রধানমন্ত্রী এদিন আবেদন জানান, দেশের পরিকাঠামোর উন্নয়নে বিনিয়োগ করুন। প্রাথমিক শিক্ষার প্রসারে সরকারি কর্মসূচি ছাড়াও অনেক এন জি ও কাজ করছে, তাদের অর্থসাহায্য দিন।

AAJKAL

8 JAN 2005

Controversy over anthem irks Sindhi community

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Ahmedabad/Vadodara: The anthem row, sparked by a petition in the Supreme Court seeking deletion of the word 'Sindh' from the National Anthem, has evoked an angry response from the Sindhi community in Gujarat.

What is it that makes up Sindh? Is it merely a piece of land that they lost in the bloody Partition, or does it also include the

Sindhi people and the culture they brought to India? Sindhis ask. For many Sindhis, deleting the word 'Sindh' from the National Anthem is like adding insult to injury. "You may argue that the province does not belong here. But what about the Sindhis who live here? There are around 70

lakhs of us in the country and our sentiments should be taken into account," says Parmanand Khattar, a former minister.

According to Amar Doulatani, president of All-India Sindhi Chamber of Commerce and Industry, an apex body of several Sindhi organisations, this is for the first time that such an issue has been raised. "It's not a question of a province or a piece of land but that of millions of Sindhis who feel strongly for the country," says Doulatani, who is also the secretary-general of Sindhi Council of India.

However, community leaders in Vadodara handled the issue with remarkable poise. "The issue had cropped up even when Jawaharlal Nehru was prime minister and he had resolved the matter, saying that Sindh also

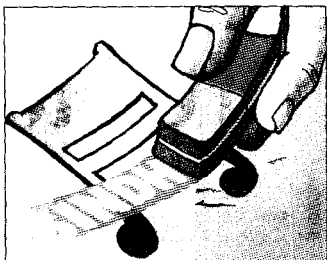
represented the Sindhi people and should not be deleted from the National Anthem," says Harish Jethmalani, vice-president of the Akhil Bharatiya Sindhi Boli Aur Sahitya Sabha. "Without any fresh cause, there is really no reason to raise the issue now and unnecessarily create hatred in the minds of the people of the two countries."

Jetho Lalwani, director of the National Council for Promotion of Sindhi Language, says that any move to delete 'Sindh' will only

be political as the word 'Sindh' also finds mention in the Vedas. According to him, it is an integral part of the Indian civilisation. "The word 'Hind' comes from the word 'Sindhu', which later became 'Indus' and 'India,'" he says. "Many important Hindu texts were conceived on the

banks of the Sindhu river. The Sindhis may have lost the region called Sindh, but they have always been identified with India."

Sudhir Khurana, the managing trustee of Sindhu Seva Samaj, a socio-cultural organisation, was just 13 during the Partition. Khurana recalls how the issue was raised after the Partition. "Sindhis suffered the most in the Partition. Unlike Punjab and Bengal, India never got its part of Sindh, rendering the entire community homeless. But in no time, we became a part of the mainstream India. And if someone still raises such an issue, it pains us. After all, 'Sindh' in the National Anthem does not merely represent the land, but also stands for the people, the language and culture," he says.



5 JAN 2005

THE TIMES OF INDIA

5 JAN 2005

FARMERS' SUICIDES

Policy Changes Needed To Remove Rural Disparities

By YP GUPTA

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In the recent past, there has been a wave of farmers' suicides in Andhra Pradesh. The suicide by seven debt-ridden farmers in August, 2004 would show that these are continuing unabated, and the farmers continue to be a frustrated lot. It was earlier reported that 750 farmers in this state had committed suicide in recent months, and around 950 farmers had committed suicide last year, and over 3,000 in the last five years.

Also, more than 850 farmers in Karnataka had committed suicide in 2003-04, and 49 farmers in Maharashtra had committed suicide since June 2004. Hundreds of farmers in the past also ended their lives in different parts of the country as they could not stand the impact of natural calamities and owing to their inability to repay loans.

Crop failures

Hundreds of farmers in and around Kanpur threatened to commit suicide in 2002 because of crop failures. These suicides by farmers mostly took place in the cotton and groundnut growing areas of Andhra Pradesh, and cash crop plantations in Kerala. Rural indebtedness, the unbearable pain of hunger, and failure of crops due to either supply of spurious fertilisers and pesticides or due to unseasonal rains and hailstorms or drought contributed to the suicides.

These farmers have also not been getting proper remunerative prices for their produce. The liberalised import of farm products also had an adverse effect on domestic growers. To check such distressing events, and to help the farming community, the government has made certain policy changes. It has removed restrictions on storage, sale and movement of food and agro-products. And it has decided to remove export controls, and to build cold storages and rural godowns. These steps did not prove effective in checking these tragic events. There is a need to ensure food availability to poor farmers.

The Economic Survey has underlined the need for reorientation in the overall agricultural strategy to reform procurement and price support policies, to focus attention on improving non-cereals production and to develop the rural infrastructure. Decentralisation of procurement was also recommended.

The agro policy envisaged an annual growth of over four per cent. It provided a comprehensive crop insurance for farmers from sowing to post-harvest operations to protect their interests. Agriculture has also been accorded a status of industry.

In the past, it is the rich and progressive farmers who have

been beneficiaries as a result of which the disparity between the rich and the poor farmers increased manifold. These poor farmers took loans to keep up with the rich farmers, but they have been unlucky when their crops failed. Also, agricultural development in the state did not generate sufficient employment opportunities. As a result, the number of unemployed educated youth increased manifold. Therefore, the farm policy has to implement land reforms speed-

private sector participation through contract farming, correcting imbalances of the eastern, hilly, rainfed and drought-prone areas, augmenting income of the farming community, thrust in processing, marketing and storage facilities.

The policy envisaged an effective pricing strategy to ensure remunerative and profitable prices to farmers for their produce and a better public distribution system for the needy. There would be flexibility in the fixa-



ily. India's new economic policy has been posing new challenges to the farm sector because of growing population, dwindling natural resources, depleting underground water resources and growing indebtedness. In recent years, there have been a disturbing trend in respect of stagnating yield and decline in productivity. Also, the problems arising out of green revolution are now emerging resulting in general degradation of environment and natural resources.

Major challenges

The national agro policy was framed to meet the major challenges of Indian agriculture on increasing production and productivity to ensure food security for the rising population, and to restructure the farm front to benefit the farming community. It highlighted various shortcomings in the rural sector in respect of regional disparities regarding uneven development and low levels of productivity, low incomes and unfavourable prices, problems in relation to rainfed and dryland areas, unemployment, lack of rural industry, constraints on movement, storage and sale of agricultural products, etc.

The policy was aimed at achieving growth based on efficient use of resources, conserving soil, water and biodiversity, and meeting the challenges of economic liberalisation. A major highlight of the policy was promotion of

tion of support prices on a regional basis depending on the transport cost. There is also a provision to protect farmers from the adverse impact of price fluctuations in the world market. It is proposed to remove regional imbalances to accelerate economic development to cover all sectors of agriculture including horticulture, livestock, fisheries and sericulture. Also, land ceiling laws would be enforced, and women headed families would be preferred in the matter of distribution of land.

The rural-based approach is intended to meet socio-economic aspirations of the farming community to improve their living standards. Today's agriculture is a high cost and energy intensive technology, which needs high inputs in respect of quality seeds, chemical fertilisers, pesticides, irrigation, farm mechanisation, etc. Therefore, farming became costly even though the fertiliser subsidy continued. But small and marginal farmers have not been able to afford these inputs. It is the rich and progressive farmers who could provide them and have been beneficiaries. There was no mechanism to help poor farmers per se.

The present policy of a tax-free farm income largely benefited rich farmers who became richer from the green revolution. They became big landlords and a privileged group, which created disparities in the rural areas.

Also, technological developments increased rural disparities. The gap between rich and poor farmers widened. The rich became richer and the poor became poorer. The farm policy has to work out a mechanism to take the benefits of subsidised inputs and incentive pricing to poor farmers to lift them above the poverty line. In rural India, agriculture is the most important means of livelihood for over 65 per cent of the population. It is thus necessary to achieve sustainable development of agriculture. The policy is intended to create employment potential and year-round work for farming families so that small and marginal farmers and agricultural labourers are gainfully employed and do not seek employment elsewhere, and their income level is raised.

Disparities

As such, there should be proper development of agro-based industries like fruits and vegetable processing facilities on the pattern of milk processing facilities provided under Operation Flood, and there should be impetus for development of livestock. It is only balanced development of both agriculture and industry, which could help in removing socio-economic disparities.

Our food output in 2003-04 is estimated to be around 211 million tonnes, which came down to 183.2 million tonnes in 2002-03 from 212 million tonnes in 2001-02. It is likely to decline in 2004-05 due to deficiency in monsoon rainfall. The present estimate would not suffice to feed our growing population of over 1080 million, if the entire half-fed population is fully fed. At present, one-third of the population is half-fed due to poverty and lack of purchasing power. A determined effort is, therefore, required to improve our food productivity.

It is unfortunate that the right to food has not been given overriding priority as there is hardly any concern for poor farmers' sufferings. The public distribution system has to be revamped; the "Antyodaya Anna Yojna" programme has to be expanded to cover rural households and to create employment opportunities to generate income of poor farmers to enable them to procure food. There is an urgent need to overhaul socio-economic and farm policies to remove rural disparities and to alleviate rural poverty. Massive efforts are required for increasing crop yields to improve the rural infrastructure. The task of ensuring food to the vast population particularly to the poor to make India hunger-free is most challenging. It is the responsibility of the state governments to implement poverty-alleviation programmes and prevent starvation deaths among poor farmers.

All about a word

On Monday, SC issued a notice to the Centre on a petition that has sought deletion of 'Sindh' from the national anthem and its replacement with a 'proper' word, such as 'Kashmir'

Petitioner argued Sindh has become a part of Pakistan. Its recitation in our anthem violates Pak's sovereignty and hurts the feelings of 100 crore Indians'

Petition cited the precedent of Russia, which changed its anthem in keeping with the changing geo-political realities

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Need to rewrite anthem?

Nandini R. Iyer and Samanwaya
New Delhi, January 3

'KASHMIR' INSTEAD of 'Sindh' in the national anthem? Culture czars, writers and legal experts are livid at the thought of anyone revising Tagore's poem to "Punjab, Kashmir, Gujarat, Maratha...." Though it's up to the apex court to decide whether to uphold or reject a petition that seeks to replace "Sindh" with "Kashmir" in the anthem, everyone seems firmly against any such move.

"No writer or poet worth his salt will cede authority to a government or a court to alter his work," said Gopi Chand Narang, chairperson, Sahitya Akademi. "At best, he will decline to allow his work to be used. But Tagore is not here to de-

fend himself. *Jana gana mana* is an artistic expression of patriotism; it's not a political statement and doesn't violate political sovereignty."

The sentiment was echoed by Khushwant Singh. "We as a nation go in for trivial things," he said. "The poem was composed in 1911 or 1912. Replacing 'Sindh' with 'Kashmir' will ruin its rhythm."

Lawyers reluctantly conceded that the rewrite can be done, as the anthem is not constitutionally protected. "You don't have to amend the Constitution," said senior counsel Anil Diwan. "It can be changed by a law." Shanti Bhushan agreed. "The people are sovereign. So, if Parliament wants, it can change the national anthem. But where is the justification for such a change?"