A Solid, Stolid & Entirely Consistent Effort

Modi’s ‘Act West’ Policy in Motion

India – Israel ties reflect newfound maturity

उद्यमियों से तय होगा नए भारत का भविष्य
“People should also realise that a vote is not an instrument of expressing gratefulness to any candidate but a mandate to carry out their wishes.”

-Pt. Deendayal Upadhyaya
Editorial Advisors:

Shakti Sinha, IAS (Rtd)
Former Power & Finance Secretary Govt. of Delhi

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Research Team

• Siddharth Singh
• Shivanand Dwivedi
• Ajit Jha
• Shailendra Kumar Shukla
• Shubhendu Anand
• Ayush anand
• Vaibhav Chadha
• Amit Kumar

Layout
Chandra Bhushan

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• भारतीय जनता पार्टी के राष्ट्रीय अध्यक्ष श्री अमित शाह द्वारा उत्तर प्रदेश, उत्तराखंड, मणिपुर और गोवा में भारतीय जनता पार्टी की पौर्णिमाकालीन और अमृतपूर्ण विजय पर की गई प्रेस सार्वत्रिक विधेयक

EVENT @ SPMRF

• SPMRF & NMML Organised a Conversation with Shri Arun Jaitley (Union Minister of Finance & Corporate Affairs) on “Towards a New Polity: Campaign Finance Reform in India” at NMML on 8th March, 2017
• Launch of “Parivartan Ki Ore”
• SPMRF & NMML Organised a Discussion on “Budget 2017: Remonetisation, Recalibration & Reform” on 8th February, 2017
The sweeping as well stunning electoral verdict in Uttar Pradesh in favour of the BJP announces a new era in Indian politics and marks a watershed in our national march, post independence.

But perhaps the greatest lesson from the Uttar Pradesh verdict is that it has given a decisive blow, as BJP president Shri Amit Shah reminded us, to the politics of appeasement that has held hostage our national aspirations in the last seven decades.

Throughout the hectic electioneering Shri Amit Shah was categorical that the mandate in Uttar Pradesh will actually announce the end of the politics of dynastyism, of casteism and of appeasement and launch the era of the politics of performance. No political formation till date had the gumption to speak along these lines.

The BJP under Prime Minister Narendra Modi, since 2014, has demonstrated a remarkable resilience in working to alter the political narrative of the country and to liberate it from the clutches of these negatives. As the results are analysed, as the details come in, it is for all to see how wide-sweeping the mandate has been and how it has cut across barriers. Those who minimise its symbolism are mostly those formations that have proved to be completely out of depth with the collective mind of the people.

The mandate for Uttar Pradesh and for the BJP across the country is aspirational. All through the last three years that he has been leading the government at the Union level, Prime Minister Modi has been successful in articulating and then working out a new narrative – a narrative which he has termed the “New India.” This new narrative has responded to the aspirations of all classes cutting across divides of various types.

Through his work, through his commitment and determination to transform India, Prime Minister Modi has earned the faith and trust of the people. This faith and trust has been acquired and won through ceaseless and credible work. His talk of empowerment and his actions in laying the foundations of that empowerment has made visible impact at the grassroots. When he talks of people wanting opportunities and not doles and handouts, Prime Minister reflects and articulates the actual aspirations of the vast multitudes that have hitherto faced marginalisation.

The mandate for such a vision is so decisive, that the losing side is yet to fathom all its dimensions. Some of them speak of the creation of a “myth” which people have lapped up. Such a talk only betrays their own disdain for the wisdom of the Indian electorate which has often displayed deep discernment in selecting their representatives.

The “New India” is in the wings, it is determined to combine aspirations with capacities and work towards creating and evolving a new narrative.
PM MODI’S VISION

SALIENT POINTS OF PM MODI’S ADDRESS AT SWACHH SHAKTI 2017 – A CONVENTION OF WOMEN SARPANCHES AT GANDHINAGAR, GUJARAT ON 8TH MARCH, 2017

- A Convention of Women Sarpanches at Gandhinagar, Gujarat on 8th March, 2017

- Salient Points of PM Modi's address

1. A Digital Sarpanch, Virtual Museum purush bapu's life

2. 2019, Mahatma Gandhi k 150 varsh hote hain. Purush bapu kahate the kahin dusutan gavno mein basa hua hai. Issi bata ek kahate the, kahin muek aaye aur swachhata aur swachhata, dono mein se phalti kuch pseend karna hai toh meh swachhata pseend karunga. Gandhi ke jeevan mein swachhata ka kirtana mahatmya vo unke ek Commitment se pata chalta hai.

अभी आपने फिल्म देखी, उसमें बांधा है, स्वच्छता के संबंध में पहले हमारा rank 42% तक था। इतने कम समय में हम 62 पर पहुंच गए। आर्यान, इतने कम समय में 20 प्रतिशत हम सुधार कर सकते हैं, तो आपने बातें डेड साल में हम और अधिक कर सकते हैं, तो साफ-साफ आप लोगों ने करके दिखाया है।

आज जिन माताओं, बहनों को समान करने का मुख्य अवकाश मिला, उनकी एक-एक मिट्टी की फिल्म छोटी-छोटी हमने देखी। कुछ लोगों का जो भ्रम रहता है, उस सबके भ्रम टोड़ने वाली ये सारी फिल्में हैं। कुछ लोगों का लगा है कि पढ़े-खिले लोग ही कुछ काम कर सकते हैं, इन बहनों ने करके दिखाया।

कुछ लोगों को लगता है यहाँ होंगे बोटी क्वाचन एंग्रेजी बोल पाए होंगे वो ही कर पाए हैं। ये अपनी भाषा के सिवाय कोई भाषा नहीं जानते, तो भी ये कर पाए हैं। अगर किसी विषय के साथ व्यक्ति जुड़ जाता है, तो आने वाले दो और अधिक चीजें हैं वे साफ-साफ आप लोगों ने इसकी चेहरी भी खोकी है।

जब भी, जो भी अवसर मिला है, उस काम को विदेशी करने का काम हमारी माताओं, बहनों ने किया है और इसलिए बेटी बचाओ, बेटी पढ़ाओ। ये हमारा सामाजिक दायित्व है, राष्ट्रीय दायित्व है, मानवीय दायित्व है। अमानवीय बात समाज में स्वीकृत नहीं हो सकती है और हमारे यहाँ तो शास्त्रों में कहा गया है, बेटी के महत्व कार्य करते हुए।

यावत गंगा कुकुरक्षेपे, यावत लिखिते मेदनी। यावत सीता कथालोके, तावत जिवेतु बालिका।

जब तक गंगा, कुकुरक्षेप और हिमात्य हैं, जब तक सीता की गाथा इस लोक में है, बालिका तुम्हारे जीवन तुम जीवित रहो। तुम्हारे नाम तुम तुमन्याय बाद रखें। तुम्हारे शास्त्रों में बेटी के लिए कहा गया है। और इसलिए बेटी बचाओ, बेटी पढ़ाओ; कोई भ्रष्टता नहीं।

हमारे सरपंच महिलाओं से मेरा आग्नेय है कि इस बात को आप अपने गांव में डूंगे की चोट पर देखें। अगर बेटा पढ़ता है गांव की बेटी भी पढ़नी चाहिए। गर्भ से गर्भ हो, और सरपंच ये न सोचे कि इसके लिए बजट की, बजट की जरूरत नहीं होती है। सरकार ने स्कूल बनाया हुआ है। सरकार ने टीचर रखा हुआ है। उसके लिए गांव को अलग खर्च नहीं करना है, सिर्फ आपको निगरानी रखनी है कि बेटियों स्कूल में जाती हैं कि नहीं, जैसे की बीज परिवार है जिसमें अपनी बेटी को स्कूल में नहीं रखा है। इतना सारा देख लीजिए।

आप गांव में कोषिश कीजिए, कुछ लोगों को लगाईए, Self-help group बनाईए। गांव के कुछ-कुछ में से Compost खातर बनाईए, गांव खातर की बिक्री होगी, पंचायत की आय होगी और जमीन का सुधार होगा तो गांव के लोगों की खेती भी अच्छी होगी।
The festivals of Vasant Panchami, Mahashivratri and Holi, impart hues of happiness to a person’s life.

My gratitude to lakhs of citizens for sending in a multitude of suggestions when I ask for them before#MannKiBaat

After the successful mission of sending Mangalyaan to Mars, recently ISRO scripted a world record in the arena of space.

India created history by becoming the first country to launch successfully 104 satellites into space at one go.

This cost effective, efficient space programme of ISRO has become a marvel for the entire world.

Particularly for my farmer brothers and sisters, our new Satellite Cartosat 2D will be immensely helpful.

It is a matter of exultation for us that the entire campaign was led & steered by our young & women scientists.

On behalf of our countrymen, I heartily congratulate the scientists at ISRO.

India has successfully tested Ballistic Interceptor.
Missile. This is a cutting edge technology in the arena of security

- Inquisitiveness has played a significant role in the journey of progression of human life and development

- The attraction of science for youngsters should increase. We need more & more scientists

- Our society is increasingly turning out to be technology driven. Systems are getting technology driven

- A lot of emphasis is being laid on #DigiDhan. People are moving towards digital currency. Digital transactions are rising

- Delighted to learn that till now, under Lucky Grahak & Digi-Dhan Yojana, 10 lakh people have been rewarded

- I urge my countrymen, especially youth of our country & those who have won prizes, to become ambassadors of these schemes

- This scheme will complete its 100 days on 14th April, the birth anniversary of Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar

- Remembering him, one teach at least 125 persons about downloading BHIM App & procedure of making transactions through it

- Agriculture makes a major contribution to the fundamentals of our country’s economy

- Economic prowess of villages imparts momentum to the nation’s economic progress

- The hard work of the farmers has resulted in a record production of more than 2,700 lakh tonnes food grains

- Government, society, institutions, organizations, in fact everyone, is making some or the other effort towards Swachhta

- Our Divyang brothers and sisters are capable, strongly determined, courageous and possess tremendous resolve

- Women players are bringing glory to the nation. Congrats to women players won silver at Asian Rugby Sevens Trophy

- The whole world celebrates 8th March as Women’s Day. In India, more importance needs to be given to our daughters

- ’Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao’ movement is moving forward with rapid strides. It has now become a campaign of public education
Salient Points of PM Modi’s Reply to ‘Motion of Thanks’ to the President’s Address, in Rajya Sabha on 8th Feb, 2017

Several members have shared their views and there was considerable discussion on demonetization.

The fight against corruption and black money is not a political fight. It is not to single out any particular party.

Corruption has adversely impacted the aspirations of the poor and the middle class.

We will have to be tough on those who are cheating the system. When we do that, the hands of the poor will be strengthened.

About 700 Maoists surrendered after demonetization and this number is increasing. Shouldn't this make us happy.

There is a horizontal divide- on one side are the people of India & Government and on the other side are a group of political leaders.

Today India is working to correct the wrongs that entered our society.

There was so much said about what is wrong with the nation...perhaps they were giving a report card of their own record.

Attacks on the party I belong to, our government, on me are understandable but why was the RBI dragged into this. It was not required.

Let us keep institutions above politics.

I was surprised that people made fun of the Swachh Bharat Mission also.

I want to congratulate the media, they have furthered the message of Swachh Bharat and created so much awareness.

Sanitation coverage in the rural areas has increased.
Various members of the House added vigour into the debate & shared insightful points. I thank the MPs for their participation

How can someone see 'SEVA' or any positive virtue in the word 'SCAM'

There is something very special about 'Jan Shakti'

We remember how democracy was under threat from 1975 to 1977, when opposition leaders were jailed, newspaper freedom curtailed

It is due to this 'Jan Shakti' that the person born to a poor family can become the Prime Minister of India

There are many people like me, who could not die for the nation during the freedom struggle but we are living for India & serving India

Somewhere on the way, 'Jan Shakti' was forgotten. We do not accept this

Let us understand & appreciate the inherent strength of our people & take India to newer heights. Faith in Jan Shakti will give results

I had said it from the Red Fort- every Prime Minister
has contributed to the nation

- I was surprised that there were some who made cleanliness also a political issue. Why can't we work together on ushering a Swachh Bharat

- When Rail budget was first presented, the transport sector was different. Now things are different & a more comprehensive look is needed

- From Day 1, we have been clear- we are ready for a discussion on demonetisation but some were more keen on TV bytes & not debates

- पहले होता था – कितना गया, अब होता है – मोड़ी जी कितना लाये... this is how discourse has changed after we have assumed office

- It does not matter how big you are, you will have to give back what belongs to the poor. My fight is for the poor

- My fight is for the poor and giving the poor their due. This fight will continue
n many ways, the Budget of February 1, 2017, came at a challenging juncture. Demonetisation, while an important step in a series of measures being taken by the Narendra Modi government to fight black money and illegal cash transactions as well as promote greater recorded and cheque or digital transactions, particularly in the B2B (business to business) chain, had caused some pain. It was likely to subdue consumer demand for about two quarters and had apparently hurt small businesses and traders, as well as those engaged in the mandis or big farmer markets.

Second, the election of Donald Trump to the White House and the likelihood of a global demand slump as America shut itself behind tariff walls and global trade went into decline was worrying Indians. Third, with the Goods and Service Tax, another piece of reform with long-term benefit but short-term disruption, expected in the middle of financial year 2017-18, domestic turbulence was also predicted.

In these circumstances, the economy wanted reassurance and surefootedness. This is exactly what Finance Minister Arun Jaitley delivered. His fourth budget was a solid, stolid and entirely consistent effort. It may not have been perfect and met every parameter of every analyst – no Budget ever can – but was remarkable in its unwillingness to resort to gimmickry and political populism even as critical elections approached in Uttar Pradesh and other states.

This followed a pattern. The fiscal deficit target had been a Lakshmanrekha for the Modi government from its first year itself, when Jaitley ambitiously adopted the number left to him in the vote-on-account presented by the outgoing UPA government. In 2017, after three years of fiscal consolidation, the NDA government had just that much more room to spend. Even here, Jaitley was judicious.

He refrained from going overboard, promised a fiscal deficit of 3.2 per cent of GDP this year and three per cent in the following year, but gave concessions and bigger outlays to infrastructure and housing in the hope of promoting private investment. Politically, he gave himself the space to spend intelligently in his final year (2018-19) – when the slow jog to the general election would commence.

Jaitley was right in offering a Budget with continuity and few shocks. He assessed the economy needed a balm – especially as, as the finance minister pointed out, “In several parts of the world, there are signs of increasing retreat from globalisation of goods, services and people, as pressures for protectionism are building up. These developments have the potential to affect exports from a number of emerging markets, including India.”

The impact of Donald Trump’s economic policies is a concern. These have the potential to trigger a United States trade war with China and a global
slowdown. India will not be unaffected; that meant the room for adventurism and risk taking was just not there for the Indian finance minister. It also suggested why the Economic Survey, while such a remarkable document this year, remained an aspiration, as it tends to each year, irrespective of the government in question. Political realities and now global conditions tend to make it difficult to embrace bold and daring ideas.

Both Modi and Jaitley have a habit of sticking to points and promises made and sometimes even obsessing over them. When demonetisation was announced, the two men had spoken of it being the first of several moves against black money and corruption, as well as a trigger to promote digital payments. Inattentive critics had scoffed at such reasoning and ascribed it to an afterthought following the cash shortage in the early weeks after November 8, 2017.

Today, not only is the bulk of that cash shortage behind us, both the endeavours – fighting corruption and promoting digital payments – are being pursued. The honest citizen and tax-payer is being rewarded or at least being told she is not a fool for being honest and those who act dishonestly will be put to considerable inconvenience.

Tax incentives for point of sales (POS) machines, announced a month after demonetisation, were broadened and institutionalised in the Budget. Payments to the government, by way of taxes for instance, will henceforth mandatorily follow the digital route beyond a certain (and to-be-announced limit). Cash transactions above Rs 300,000 have been plain abolished. One suspects that ceiling will be lowered still further in the years to come. Prime Minister Modi’s “war on cash” is a serious one.

An important aspect of the battle against corruption is cleaning up campaign finance and election funding. In this the reduction of individual cash donations to a political party to a limit of Rs 2,000 – from the earlier Rs 20,000 – is a strong move. True, parties will try and work around this and at some point cash donations will have to go altogether, but it is still a good start.

The mechanism of “electoral bonds”, to allow donors to buy bonds from banks and leave it to chosen political parties to redeem these, is also a welcome innovation. It will allow white-collar folk to donate to a political cause or party, without necessarily interacting directly with the party and its politicians.

Overall, this Budget stuck to the BJP-led government’s key themes: infrastructure, including in agriculture, entrepreneurship at the grassroots, an energy revolution – the availability of and access to power will certainly be among the BJP’s calling cards in the campaign of 2019 – and tackling corruption. The phrase “Swacch Bharat” has been expanded from physical cleanliness to a moral and systemic cleansing.

In that, with its appeal as well as warning to those Indians still avoiding taxes – “The number of people showing income more than Rs 50 lakh in the entire country is only 1.72 lakh. We can contrast this with the fact that in the last five years, more than 1.25 crore cars have been sold, and number of Indian citizens who flew abroad, either for business or tourism, is 2 crore in the year 2015” – the Budget persisted with a Modi-Jaitley resolve: the willingness to sacrifice short-run popularity, even among those who may be BJP voters, to effect a longer-run transformation.

That mission continues. Of course, it will require 2019 to be won. The BJP cannot afford to, once more, repair a wounded economy, nurse it back to health – and, as in 2004, leave it to a successor to fritter away a rich and undeserved inheritance.

(The author is distinguished fellow, Observer Research Foundation. He can be reached at malikashok@gmail.com)
उद्यमियों से तय होगा नए भारत का भविष्य

बजट 2017 कई मायने में बड़ा अलग सा रहा है। वित्त मंत्री अरुण जेटली के पूरे बजट भाषण को देखने पर ज्यादातर समय ये नींद इंटजैसा ही दिखता रहा। क्योंकि, पूरे बजट में कोई भी ऐसा एलान नहीं हुआ। जो किसी खास वर्ग को अलग से कुछ देने की कोशिश करता दिखा हो। यहां तक कि विमुद्रक्षण से हुई परेशानी के बाद बड़े एलान वाली उम्मीद भी घरायाही हो गई। अब सबसे बड़ा सवाल ये है कि क्या सरकार ने बजट के जरिये रोजगार बढ़ाने की तरफ खास ध्यान नहीं दिया है। क्योंकि, सीधे तीर पर कोई भी ऐसा बड़ा एलान होता नहीं दिखा, जिससे लाखों-करोड़ों लोगों को रोजगार मिलता दिखा। लेकिन, ये अच्छा है कि वित्त मंत्री ने बजट में रोजगार की कोई तय संख्या नहीं दी है। लेकिन, वित्त मंत्री के दिमाग में रोजगार सबसे ऊपर रहा। ये इस बात से भी समझ में आता है कि वित्त मंत्री के बजट भाषण में 11 बार रोजगार का जिक्र आया है। लेकिन, रोजगार से भी ज्यादा बार वित्त मंत्री के बजट भाषण में जम्म मिला है स्किल को। स्किल को अगर धोड़ा सा और आगे ले जाएं, तो वो उद्यमिता की तरफ भी जाता है।

दरअसल इस सरकार की सबसे बड़ी आलोचना इस बात को लेकर
जरजरत के कलहाज से लोगों को तैयार किया जाएगा। शल भारत को मजबूत कसिल सेंटर खोलने जा रही है। इन्हें दोंदों जमरे शेष-कवेरिय क्षेत्र में रोजगार है। 600 कजलों में दौशल दोंदों को खोले जाएंगे। सरकार 100 इंकड़ा इंटरनेशनल सेक्टर में रोजगार के कलए सरकार ने पहले कवशेर योजना लागू कर रखी है। इसके लिए सरकार जीते रोजगार को लेकर आपने आत्म लगाया और कम हो जाएगा। वित्त मंत्री अरुण जेटली ने इस प्लान को ही ध्यान करते हुए कवशेर की कौशल की है। सरकार एकदम साफ़ है कि नए मौके के लिए लिखा ध्यान देना है। और सरकार उस तरफ खास ध्यान देती दिखाई है। 21.47 लाख करोड़ रुपए के इस साल के बजट में 3.96 लाख करोड़ रुपए इंकस्ट्रक्चर पर खर्च के लिए रखा गया है। वित्त मंत्री अरुण जेटली ने नई मेट्रो रेल नीति जल्दी ही शीर्ष करने की बात बजट में की है। साथ ही काबिया गया है कि इसे दें सारे बए रोजगार के मौके बनाएं।

वित्तमंत्री ने बजट में रोजगार का जिय करते हुए बताया कि भारत इलेक्ट्रॉनिक मैनुफैक्चरिंग से बनाने की कोशिश सरकार कर रही है। इसकी सफलता के बारे में उन्होंने कहा कि पिछला 2 साल में 1.26 लाख करोड़ रुपए की योजना शुरू हुई है। इलेक्ट्रॉनिक मैनुफैक्चरिंग में सरकार के नए मौके के लिए उन्होंने हालात दिखाई है। क्योंकि 2000 किलोमीटर के स्तर को भी सरकार ने विकसित करने के लिए बिन्दु स्थापित किया है। सरकार ने 2018 तक 3500 किलोमीटर नए रेलवे ट्रैक बनाने का भी लक्ष्य रखा है। सरकार की योजना सबक और रेलवे के जरीये बुनियादी सुविधाओं को उपलब्ध कराने के साथ युवाओं को रोजगार देने की भी है। यूरोप एस्ट्रेट क्षेत्र के मंत्री का दूर करने और रोजगार के मौके के लिए सरकार ने साल में पर बनाने की बुनियादी क्षेत्र का दर्जा दिया है। इससे बुनियादी क्षेत्र के मिलने वाले सभी फायदे सारे पर बनाने वालों को मिलेंगे। सिम्युटिक्रिक क्रम के बाद सभी योजना रोजगार की क्षेत्र में घटने की खबरें थीं। इससे रोजगार की क्षेत्र में रोजगार की गति को बढ़ाने के लिए भी वोरियों की कार्य करने के लिए सरकार ने साल में पर बनाने की बुनियादी क्षेत्र का दर्जा दिया है। इससे बुनियादी क्षेत्र के मिलने वाले सभी फायदे सारे पर बनाने वालों को मिलेंगे। सिम्युटिक्रिक क्रम के बाद सभी योजना रोजगार की क्षेत्र में घटने की खबरें थीं। इससे रोजगार की क्षेत्र में रोजगार की गति को बढ़ाने के लिए भी वोरियों की कार्य करने के लिए सरकार ने साल में पर बनाने की बुनियादी क्षेत्र का दर्जा दिया है। इसलिए लेटर और फुटवेर उद्योग को भी शामिल किया गया है। क्रेडिट उद्योग भी रोजगार के लिए भी महत्वपूर्ण माना जाता है। इसमें होने वाले फायदे के लिए कर्मचारियों को भी लाभ दिनेगी। इनमें होने वाले फायदे के लिए कर्मचारियों को भी लाभ दिनेगी।

जाने मान रहे हैं कि 50 करोड़ रुपए के लिए सरकार की तरफ से आयात भी करेंगे। इसीलिए उन्होंने बढ़ावा देने के लिए लिखा कर बनने आसानी करने के लिए सरकार की तरफ से आयात भी करेंगे। जाने मान रहे हैं कि 50 करोड़ रुपए के लिए सरकार की तरफ से आयात भी करेंगे।
Prime Minister Narendra Modi in his speech at the Raisina Dialogue on January 17, 2017 affirmed that in interactions with the countries of the Gulf and West Asia, his government has ‘not just focused on changing the perception. We have also changed the reality of our ties … despite uncertainty and conflict’. This is most pertinently evident across three key areas — enhanced high-level political interactions, the increasing salience of defence/security cooperation, and the greater thrust to involve the resources of the countries of the region in realizing the government’s ambitious transformative domestic economic agenda.

High-Level Interactions

High-level political interactions between India and West Asia have seen a dramatic increase since Prime Minister Modi took office in June 2014. Mr. Modi visited the United Arab Emirates (UAE, August 2015), Saudi Arabia (May 2016), Iran (May 2016) and Qatar (June 2016). These visits constitute just four of the Prime...
Minister’s 54 foreign visits so far (till February 2017). They are however significant given the long-running anomaly of limited high-level political interactions with the region, despite India’s oft-flagged high stakes vis-à-vis the region – which has been called its ‘proximate neighbourhood’ among many other evocative phrases. These include the security and well-being of the eight million diaspora, the huge remittances they send, and the critical role the countries of the region play in India’s energy security calculus.

External Affairs Minister (EAM) Sushma Swaraj on her part has visited Bahrain (September 2014), the UAE (November 2014), Turkey (January 2015), Oman (February 2015), Egypt (August 2015), Israel, Palestine, Bahrain (January 2016), and Iran (April 2016). In comparison to the above visits, which occurred within two years of the NDA assuming office, UPA Foreign Ministers Salman Khurshid and S.M. Krishna made a combined total of eight trips to the region during the entire second five-year term of the Congress-led coalition from 2009-14. The only Prime Ministerial visits by Dr. Manmohan Singh during that time period were to Riyadh in February 2010 (after a gap of 28 years) and to Iran for the NAM Summit in August 2008.

President Pranab Mukherjee has also made productive State visits to Jordan, Palestine and Israel (October 2015), MEA Minister of State M.J. Akbar visited the UAE (October 2015) and Palestine (November 2016). While Israel is keenly awaiting the first-ever visit of an Indian Prime Minister to that country, Israeli President Reuven Rivlin reciprocated the hugely successful visit of President Mukherjee in November 2015. India-Israel relations meanwhile continue to be on their upward trajectory. January 2017 marked the 25th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic ties between the two countries.

Apart from President Rivlin, some of the dignitaries from the broader region who have visited India since Modi came to power have included the Foreign Minister of Oman (June 2014), Foreign Minister of Bahrain (February 2015), the Emir of Qatar (March 2015), the Iranian Foreign Minister (August 2015), the UAE Foreign Minister (September 2015), Syrian Foreign Minister (January 2016), Crown Prince Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan (February 2016), Saudi Foreign Minister (March 2016), Egyptian president (August 2016), Turkish Foreign Minister (August 2016), and the Qatari prime minister (December 2016).

Defence/Security Component

By inviting Crown Prince Al Nahyan of Abu Dhabi to be the Chief Guest at the Republic Day celebrations in January 2017, India sent out a strong message of solidarity with an important Arab country that has lately been consistent in its appreciation of India’s security concerns — specifically those emanating from Pakistan. The terrorist strike on a UAE diplomatic delegation on January 10, 2017 in Kandahar starkly reinforced the dangers of the common threat posed by state-sponsored terrorism. The previous time a dignitary from the region graced the occasion was in 2006 when the Saudi King was the chief guest. January 26, 2017 was also the first time in recent memory when the chief guest was not a head of state. The Crown Prince gracing the occasion therefore was a natural corollary of the conscious policy decisions being pursued by the two governments in recent times to take steps that aid in the better understanding of each other’s strategic priorities.

When Prime Minister Modi visited the UAE in August 2015 for instance — the first such visit in 34 years, the decision to elevate the bilateral relationship to a ‘Comprehensive Strategic Partnership’ was taken, and an agreement to this effect was signed in January 2017. The first ever Strategic Dialogue was held on January 20, 2017 (with MOS Akbar leading the Indian delegation), while Manohar Parrikar became the first defence minister to visit the UAE in May 2016. Joint exercises between the air forces of the two countries, was held after a gap of eight years, in May-June 2016. Both countries have pledged to further strengthen defence cooperation, including ensuring maritime security in the Indian Ocean region. The MEA, in a briefing ahead of the visit of the Crown Prince, indicated that the UAE was even looking at the possibility of joint production of aircrafts since the UAE and India are inducting similar aircraft (Rafale), among other areas of potential cooperation.

While the India-UAE strategic partnership has witnessed strong growth, India’s defence and security
cooperation with other key countries of the region is also growing apace. The Modi government has continued to build on the institutional mechanisms already in place to further strengthen such cooperation. India and Saudi Arabia for instance have a Joint Committee on defence cooperation since September 2012 and a MoU on defence cooperation signed in February 2014. During Modi’s April 2016 visit to the Kingdom, both sides agreed to further intensify their defence cooperation, including pertaining to the ‘supply of arms and ammunition and their joint development’. A MoU on combating money laundering and terrorism financing was also signed while the Joint Statement called for dismantling of terrorism infrastructures and cutting off of support for terrorist activities.

Some of the pertinent bilateral defence-related institutional interactions since mid-2014 have included the eighth meeting of the India-Oman Joint Military Cooperation Committee held in February 2016, the Chief of Air Staff visiting Oman and UAE in August 2015, the fourth meeting of the India-Qatar Joint Defence Committee (JDC) meeting in January 2015, the Egyptian and Palestinian security personnel undergoing Special Forces training at Agra in Dec 2014-Jan 2015 and January 2015 respectively, among others. Security cooperation was an important arena of focus during the interactions with the dignitaries from the region, including relating to the fight against terrorism, sharing of information on intelligence matters, combating cyber crime, training for security forces, among others. When Union Home Minister Rajnath Singh visited Qatar in December 2016, the offer of training Qatari police personnel by India was accepted by his hosts.

Economic Component – Investments and Energy Security

The Modi government is actively engaging with the countries of the region to seek their participation in realizing the government’s transformative domestic economic agenda. Efforts being finalised to obtain $75 billion of UAE sovereign wealth fund for the India Infrastructure Investment Fund are a pertinent example in this regard. Reports noted that India received close to a billion dollars of foreign direct investment from the UAE during the past year. The agreement between the Abu Dhabi National Oil Company (ADNOC) and Indian Strategic Petroleum Reserves (ISPR) that would allow the UAE firm to store its crude at the Mangalore facility in indeed significant.

As regards a key energy and connectivity partner Iran, the coming to power of President Donald Trump has the potential to alter regional stability. Most analysts note that the administration may not back out of the UNSC-recognised (and approved by the US Congress and the Iranian Majlis) Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) — negotiated in 2015 by the permanent members of the UN Security Council and Germany with Iran, despite threatening to do so throughout his campaign. He has however taken punitive actions against Iran’s ballistic missile activities and resolutions are being considered in the US Congress to make Iran more accountable for its alleged destabilizing activities in the wider region in places like Syria and Yemen.

In Closing

The Modi government has demonstrated a pro-active approach to secure the interests’ and well-being of its citizens. The evacuation of Indian nationals from the region in times of distress — 7000 from Iraq (2014), 3750 from Libya (2014), and 6700 from Yemen (2015) — with active role of MOS Gen. (Retd.) V.K. Singh, was noteworthy, as indeed EAM Swaraj’s active responses (particularly on social media platforms) to pleas from help from Indians in distress. The decision to open additional Indian Worker Resource Centres (IWRC) in Sharjah, Riyadh and Jeddah, apart from the one functioning in Dubai, is a welcome step. The further strengthening of the three key elements of Modi’s ‘Act West’ policy as delineated above would indeed enhance India’s developmental and national security goals as well as contribute to regional security and stability.

(The author is Associate Fellow, Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses (IDSA), New Delhi.
The views expressed are his own)
The presence of a high amount of counterfeit currencies in the Indian economy was one of the principal reasons cited by Prime Minister Modi while doing away with currency notes of high denomination from the midnight of November 8, 2016. The rationale behind this move has been questioned by many scholars, politicians and the media fraternity, who believe that the quantity of counterfeit currency was not at an alarming level for any government to take a step as big as demonetization.

The recent policy of demonetization has apparently targeted the realtors, hoarders, black marketers, illegal trade, funding of terrorist, hawala transactions etc. Implementation of the policy of demonetization, however, does not block the possibility of other measures or policy decisions that government could undertake to tackle other forms of black money. In fact it has provided a foundation for anti-black money drives and has created a fear in the mind of people involved in corruption.

The data on withdrawn currency notes deposited in banks till December 30, 2016, can help government identify the individuals who evade income tax. Hasmukh Adhia, the union revenue secretary, in an interview to a national daily (Indian Express February 3, 2017), mentioned that a set of puzzling figures emerged from the database of deposits till December 30, 2016, which hints towards tax evasion at a larger extent. According to him, the bulk of deposits made after demonetization in terms of banned notes of 500 and 1000, were of those above Rs 2 lakh. As people thought a deposit of Rs 2.5 lakh could be safe, so most of them deposited around Rs 2.25 lakh (deposits) in 10-15 accounts. A lot of cases were found where 20 accounts were connected to a single PAN.

During the period of demonetization, deposits of amount between Rs. 2 lakh and Rs 80 lakh, were deposited in 1.09 crore accounts, and deposits of over Rs 80 lakh were entered into 1.48 lakh accounts. It can be clearly contrasted with the figures on income tax returns filed in 2015-16, which indicate only 76 lakhs individual assesses have declared their income above Rs. 5 lakh. The number of people showing income more than Rs. 50 lakh in the entire country is only 1.72 lakh.

However, the main intention of writing this piece is not to evaluate the effects of the policy of demonetization on the Indian economy, which is difficult to measure in its entirety at this juncture, but to point out misplaced data on counterfeit currency used for a purpose to settle political scores, not just by some politicians inside or outside parliament, but...
also by some of the most respected academicians in various journals of repute, to counter government’s claim that substantial amount of fake currencies existed in Indian economy especially in large denomination.

It is not much known to the common readers that how some academicians and some journals as reputed as the Economic & Political Weekly (EPW), have indulged in misleading the nation on the figures related to counterfeit currency notes, just for the sake of criticizing the current government. As much as 5 editorials and more than 15 articles were published in the EPW, dedicated to views against demonetization, except for one. Though writing against any policy or view is very much accepted in democracy, the problem arises when the counter views are conveniently suppressed in a very sophisticated way by the print media as they are owned by some few elite belonging to a particular ideology.

Interestingly the lone article (Gupta, 2017) which questioned the usage of misplaced data to belittle the amount of counterfeit currency specifically in an article—‘Demonetisation: 1978, the present and the aftermath’ (EPW, 26 November 2016), was given space only in ‘web exclusives’ section (not in printed version). Moreover, this article was deliberately kept out from the list of articles shown on ‘web exclusives’ page of EPW site for a long time. Effectively the article was published while ensuring that it doesn’t get any currency/readership.

On the issue of counterfeit currency, an article written by Rajakumar and Shetty (2016, EPW), went on to say, “Counterfeit notes have generally constituted less than or around 0.002% of notes in circulation”. This claim was made on the basis of Table VIII.8 of RBI Annual Report. Gupta (2017) tried to point out how the above mentioned article (even many others), cited RBI figures on counterfeit currency in a misplaced manner ignoring four crucial points; First, difference between volume and value of counterfeit currencies. Second, difference between volume/value of counterfeit currencies in circulation and volume/value of counterfeit currency seized in a particular year. Third, impossibility of estimation of counterfeit currency in Indian economy due to attached illegality with the same. Fourth, misleading ratio of counterfeit currency with total currency in circulation.

Ignoring the difference between the volume of counterfeit currencies and value of counterfeit currencies may produce misleading results, since both are different, and the difference between these two increases with increase in the denomination of counterfeit currency. Similarly, what authors were calling the ratio of counterfeit notes to total notes in circulation is actually the ratio of the value of seized counterfeit notes with the value of total notes in circulation. The ratio of seized counterfeit currencies with total currency in circulation is 0.0007, not 0.002 mentioned by the authors (see Table).

Even, the volume or value of counterfeit currencies cannot be estimated in any economy due to the sense of illegality attached with the same. Data on counterfeit currencies shown by RBI reports are highly underestimated, as it excludes currencies seized by police and other law enforcement agencies as well. Moreover, counterfeit notes that are still in circulation, which couldn’t be caught by the banking system, were not considered in the calculation, due to unavailability of the data. Apart from the issue of sense of illegality attached with counterfeit currencies, the number of unreported cases in the banking system are also very high as banks do not provide any credit for any reported case of counterfeit currency. And also due to a highly cumbersome process of reporting a matter to the police or any other government agency, people generally refrain from reporting such matters.

Gupta (2017) explains that even the use of the ratio of the total number/value of seized counterfeit notes by banks (FICN) with the total number/value of notes in circulation (NIC) as an indicator of extent of counterfeit currency is a misleading indicator. Though both NIC and total fake currency in the economy are stock, but FICN, which is being used as proxy of total fake currency by most scholars, is a flow concept calculated over a period of one year. Using this ratio of FICN to NIC as an indicator of the extent of fake currency in the economy is based on an unrealistic assumption that counterfeit currencies seized in a particular year comes into circulation in the same year, an assumption that points towards ignorance.
### Table: Denomination wise counterfeit notes detected by banks and their values

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Denomination of currency</th>
<th>counterfeit notes seized from April 2015 to March 2016</th>
<th>Notes in circulation total in end March 2016</th>
<th>value of counterfeit notes seized during April 2015 to March 2016</th>
<th>value of total notes in circulation in end March 2016</th>
<th>((2)/(3))*100</th>
<th>((4)/(5))*100</th>
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<tr>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>11626000000</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>40691000000</td>
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<td>10</td>
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<td>96</td>
<td>4924000000</td>
<td>1920</td>
<td>984800000000</td>
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<td>0.0000</td>
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<td>50</td>
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<td>3890000000</td>
<td>322650</td>
<td>194500000000</td>
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<td>14310000</td>
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<td>296425917</td>
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<td>0.0007</td>
<td>0.0018</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Taken from Gupta (2017) based on RBI annual report 2015-16

Given the impossibility of the estimation of the exact amount of counterfeit currencies in the economy, it will not be a correct premise to conclude that the level of fake currency is not alarming, just on the basis of counterfeit currencies seized by banks.

Most academicians and academic journals took the advantage of the ignorance of common readers who do not understand the difference between seized counterfeit currency and total counterfeit currency, and perceived data on seized counterfeit currency as total counterfeit currency. Interestingly none of these articles ever mentioned that they are talking only about seized currency. In this way they have done something unethical just for the sake of their shallow political gains. They have also been successful in blocking the readership of any voice which has the potential to expose their lie, since they have control over most of the academic journals and newspapers, with large circulation. By doing so they have set another example of academic intolerance.

(Writer teaches economics at University of Delhi.)

### Reference
Historians rarely mention an event which had the most serious strategic consequences for India; it is the 1953 closure of the Indian Consulate in Kashgar in Xinjiang, formerly Eastern Turkestan.

The Indian government was then not ready to read beyond the Chinese rhetoric and Zhou En Lai’s assurance of ‘eternal’ friendship; the closure of the trade with Xinjiang should have been seen as an ominous sign. It was not to be.

As in several other cases, Nehru tried to justify the Chinese diktats, without taking any retaliatory measures or even protesting. India’s interests were lost to the ‘revolutionary changes’ happening in China.

In December 1953, Nehru declared in Parliament: “Some major changes have taken place there [Kashgar]. …But when these changes, revolutionary changes took place there [we had to close our Consulate], it is perfectly true that the Chinese Government, when they came to Tibet, told us that they intended to treat Sinkiang [Xinjiang] as a closed area.”

India agreed to close its Consulate without even a discussion.

India had been trading with Central Asia and more particularly Kashgar, Yarkand or Khotan for millennia. Just because ‘revolutionary changes’ had occurred in China, Delhi accepted the closure of the trade with Xinjiang as a fait accompli. At that time, the Karakoram Pass was still witnessing a large numbers of caravans, trading between Kashmir and Central Asia.

A few months later (April 1954), instead of using the opportunity of the negotiations for the Panchsheel Agreement to clarify the contentious border issue and the closure of the trade, the Chinese were allowed to walk away with making a vague statement. It was indeed a great victory for Beijing.

The main reason for wanting India to close the Kashgar Consulate was that China was building a road across the Aksai Chin area on Indian territory. The Communists did not want any witness. The Government of India never acknowledged it, but it had information about the Aksai Chin road as early as 1954-55. So did the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) which recently released several lakhs of historical documents.

A CIA note

A couple of Information Reports dating from 1953 bring some light on the issue. On July 15, 1953, a note deals with “Chinese Communist Troops, West Tibet” and “Road Construction, Sinkiang to Tibet and Ladakh”. It says that late 1952 the 2 Cavalry Regiment, commanded by one Han Tse-min, had set up his headquarters at Gartok (the main trade centre in Western Tibet). It mentions that the regiment had 800 camels and 150 men garrisoned at Rutok, in the vicinity of the Panggong lake, shared with Ladakh.

The same report affirms that another PLA’s regiment is stationed on the Tibetan side of the Tibet-Ladakh border, near Koyul in the Indus Valley in Ladakh. According to the US document, the 2 Cavalry’s commandant announced the Chinese intention to built
A road from Rutok to Keriya, south of the Taklamakan desert in Xinjiang (the construction is ‘contemplated’ says the report); on the eastern edge of the Aksai Chin.

A motorable road from Khotan to Suget Karaul ending at Vanjilga (at the western end of the Aksai Chin)

A road from Khotan (or Hotan) to Rutok to be completed in June or July 1953.

The second road is clearly the Aksai Chin road (now National Highway 219), though the alignment may have been slightly different from the present one and it was then probably impracticable for heavy vehicles (only 4 years later, heavy trucks were able to ply on the road).

The Hindi-Chini bhai-bhai wave (or was it a tsunami?) was most likely too strong and Nehru’s collaborators (BN Mullick, the IB Chief in particular) had ‘more important’ subjects to deal with than a road!

The local Chinese commander Han Tse-min asserted that “when these roads were completed, the Chinese Communists would close the Tibet Ladakh border to trade.” It is what they did soon after the signature of the infamous Panchsheel Agreement. Worse, the CIA document says that Han declared that “the Chinese Communists in Sinkiang [Xinjiang] were telling the people that Ladakh belongs to Sinkiang.”

Ten days later, another CIA note detailed the trade between Ladakh and Xinjiang, giving the coordinates for each place: “The Tibetan traders who visit Leh, are from the Chang Tang area, an arid plateau region in northern Tibet [plain between Xinjiang and Tibet] …These traders follow the Chushul [in Ladakh] route from Tibet to Leh. Border check posts on this route are at Chushul and Koyul.” This shows how flourishing the trade was in 1953 …for a few months more. All this ended once the Aksai Chin road became fully operational.

The CIA remarks: “The only Chinese in northwestern Tibet are the Chinese Communist troops, seven or eight hundred of whom are stationed along the Tibet-Ladakh border. They first appeared in northwestern Tibet in 1951, having come from the Khotan.”

The CIA papers tend to prove that the Indian Government knew about the Aksai Chin road much earlier than thought, but it only became official on October 6, 1957, when a Chinese newspaper, Kuangming Jihpao reported: “The Sinkiang-Tibet – the highest highway in the world – has been completed. During the past few days, a number of trucks running on the highway on a trial basis have arrived in Gartok in Tibet from Yecheng in Xinjiang [near Yarkand]. The Xinjiang-Tibet Highway… is 1179 km long, of which 915 km are more than 4,000 meters above sea level; 130 km of it over 5,000 meters above sea level, with the highest point being 5,500 meters.” The reporter spoke of: “thirty heavy-duty trucks, fully loaded with road builders, maintenance equipment and fuels, running on the highway on a trial basis” heading towards Tibet. The Aksai Chin road was officially opened.

It should have been obvious for everyone, even for the blindfolded Intelligence Bureau Director, B.N. Mullick, that India’s Kashgar Consulate had been forced to close to hide the fact that the Communists were building a road on Indian soil; still, the government took nearly two more years to make the news public in India.

In recent weeks, one question has often been raised by Indian think tanks: should India participate in the new trade routes initiated by China?

Apart from the fact that nobody dares to question the viability of such a project, after all it is part of President Xi Jinping’s Dream of a ‘Revitalized China’ for which he has envisioned a mega “One Belt, One Road” (OBOR) project to connect Asia (read China) with Europe and Africa via the ancient trading centres of Central Asia and Eastern Europe, a modern Silk Road.

However, at the same time, all the ancient trade routes between India and Central Asia remain closed.

The time has perhaps come for India to ask China to reopen the Consulates in Kashgar and Lhasa, then India could perhaps sincerely participate in the Belt and Road project!

(The author is a veteran Sinologist, Tibet expert, columnist and author who has lived in India for the last four decades. The views expressed are his own)
सरकार की कृषि नीतियों का दिखने लगा असर, फसलों के उत्पादन में हुई रिकॉर्ड वृद्धि

टबंि्री िे  बाि कवरोकध‍यों द्ारा सबसे ज्‍यािा इस बात पर बवाल कि‍या ग‍या कि इससे किसानों और खेत्री िो बहुत नुकसान पहुंचेगा। कृषि व्यवस्था बर्बाद हो जाएगी। लेकिन, अगर इस साल के पैदावार से समायोजित आंकड़ों पर गौर करे तो विरोधियों के सभी दांषों की पोट खुलकर सामने आ जाती है। चालु, फसल वर्ष में अवसर की समायोजित पैदावार हुई है। पैदावार बढ़ने का समय बढ़ जाए तो इस साल का काफी अच्छा रहा है, लेकिन साथ ही केंद्र सरकार द्वारा किसानों के लिए शुरु की गयी योजनाएं व नीतियाँ भी इस बढ़े उत्पादन में महत्वपूण्च कारक रही हैं।

गत दिनों कृषि मंत्रालय द्वारा जारी किए गए आंकड़ों के मुताबिक इस बार मानसून अच्छा रहने और केंद्र सरकार द्वारा किए गए अधिकार प्राविशों के कारण कुल फसल का उत्पादन 27.19 करोड़ टन होगा। यह देश के कृषि उत्पादन के इतिहास में अब तक का समय बढ़ा रहा है। पिछले फसल वर्ष उत्पादन का यह आंकड़ा 26.55 करोड़ टन तक हो सकता था। दलदल फसलों की पैदावार में इस फसल वर्ष में 35.54 प्रतिशत वृद्धि दर्ज की गयी है। कृषि मंत्रालय के मुताबिक इस बार दलदल के खेतर में उत्पादन 2.21 करोड़ रहने के आसार लगाए जा रहे हैं। उल्लेखनीय होगा कि केंद्र सरकार की ओर से दलदल की खेती की प्रोत्साहन करने के लिए किसानों को पार्क बीज, खाद और कृषिनाशकों की उपलब्धता सुनिश्चित कराई गई थी।

अगर भारत में ही पैदावार पर्याप्त हो जाए तो केंद्र सरकार को दालों का विवेक दे सकता है कि इस साल के आसार लगाए जा रहे हैं। कृषि मंत्रालय के लिए है उन्हें फसल पर अधिकार करना चाहिए। केंद्र सरकार द्वारा किसानों के लिए कई योजनाएं लेखी जा रही हैं। किसानों को राहत देने के लिए केंद्र सरकार स्वाभाविक फसल बीमा योजना, सिंचाई योजना और उन्नत बीमा के साथ संयुक्त खादों की आपूर्ति कर रही है, तो दूसरी तरफ अधिकारी वीडियो कांफ्रेंसिंग और फोन पर बातचीत के लिए किसानों से संपर्क करने उन्हें नए तरीकों से पैदावार बढ़ाने के लिए टिप्स दे रहे हैं। सरकार के इस सब कदमों और प्राविशों का परिणाम ही फसलों के इस बढ़े उत्पादन के रूप में सामने आया है।

(लेखका पेशे से पत्रकार हैं। ये उनके निजी विचार हैं।)
रत्नी प्रधानमंत्री मोदी द्वारा अपने वक्तव्यों में जिस बात की सर्वाधिक चर्चा की जाती है, वो यह है कि भारत का स्वावलंबित युवा आबादी संपन्न देश होना उसकी सबसे बड़ी तात्कालिक। मोदी की इस बात को वैश्विक मान्यता तथा भिन्न जब संयुक्त राष्ट्र ने साल 2014 नवम्बर में ‘5.8 अब लोगों की तात्कालिक’ नाम से वैश्विक आबादी पर जारी की अपनी एक रिपोर्ट में बताया कि आज भारत दुनिया का सबसे युवा देश है।

कुछ आबादी के मामले में तो चीन भारत से आगे है, लेकिन जब बात स्वावलंबित युवा आबादी की आती है तो भारत चीन को पछड़ने हेतु एक पुराना ज्ञान है। अंतर्राष्ट्रीय युवा संसद के मुख्याध्यापक के शिवाय बीजेपी के 65 प्रतिशत आबादी की उम्र २५ साल से कम उम्र की है और उनमें भी ५० प्रतिशत आबादी की उम्र २५ साल से कम नीचे है। इस आंकों के आधार पर गणितीय विश्लेषण करने पर स्पष्ट होता है कि वर्ष 2020 में हर भारतीय की औसत उम्र २६ साल होगी और तभी भारत दुनिया का सर्वाधिक युवा राष्ट्र रहेगा, जबकि तब चीन की औसत उम्र ३७ और जापान की औसत उम्र ४८ साल होगी।

अब 2020 में जब एक तरफ भारत-चीन-जापान में आबादी के ये समीकरण बन रहे हों, वहीं दूसरी तरफ दुनिया के विभिन्न हिस्सों में लगभग 6 करोड़ कुशल कामगारों की कमी आयेगी। कामगारों की इस कमी का स्वावलंबित प्रभाव अमेरिका, युक्तिस्थल, चीन और जापान में होगा, क्योंकि इन देशों की अपरिवर्तित युवा आबादी तब तक बढ़ जाएगी हो और नागरिकों की स्थिति तब तक अपर्याप्त होंगी कि उनके लिए इन देशों की निगमक और सीख भारत की तरफ होगी। इसीलिए इन प्रभावों के साथ ही भारत ने अपने आबादी की तात्कालिक तय किया था और इसके लिए जो सबसे महत्वपूर्ण और आभारी ने आई २००९ के ‘भारत कौशल विकास नीति’ पर लगाया गया था। इसके तहत भारतीय कौशल विकास प्रशासन (ईन्फ्रास्‍टरकर हब) को जैसा विकसित दिखाया जा रहा है तो यह प्रमाण बनाने के लिए सबसे महत्वपूर्ण नागरिकों की स्थिति बनाने वाला अंतरराष्ट्रीय संकल्प है।

जयपुर सरकार की गंभीरता का अंदाजा इसी बात से लगभग जाता है कि उसने इस क्षेत्र के लिए कौशल विकास और उद्योगविवेक नामक एक नया मंत्रालय शुरू कर दिया है। साथ ही, प्रधानमंत्री मोदी द्वारा स्थापित इंडिया काम नामक अल्पकालिक कार्यक्रम आरम्भ किया गया है। इससे केंद्रीय सरकार ने 2019 की राष्ट्रीय कौशल विकास नीति के जगह राष्ट्रीय कौशल विकास एवं उद्योग नीति – 2019 की घोषणा भी की गई जिसके साथ विकल्प इंडिया के लक्ष्यों को पूरा करना है। इसके अंतरराष्ट्रीय मोदी सरकार द्वारा देश में कौशल विकास को एक उच्च स्तर दिया गया है और इसके साथ-साथ इंडिया ने एक सतत रूप से तकनीकी और प्रौद्योगिकी के विकास के लक्ष्यों को पूरा करने के लिए लगातार नोटिस दे रहा है।
विधानसभा चुनाव परिणामों के निहितार्थ

पांच राज्यों के चुनाव परिणाम आए हैं। हर-जीत के क्यामूलस्य
अब नतीजों में तब्दील होकर देश के सामने है। पांच राज्यों में से दो, उत्तर प्रदेश और उत्तराखंड, जहां भाजपा के पास सत्ता नहीं थी उनमें भाजपा ने सत्ता में मजबूती से बापसी की है। पूरीति भारत का एक राज्य मणिपुर, जहां भाजपा न के बाहर थी वहां भाजपा ने सबसे ज्यादा 36.3 फीसद वोट हासिल किया है और 21 सीटें भी हासिल की है। गोवा राज्य में भाजपा सत्ता में थी लेकिन वहां इस चुनाव में किसी की बहुमत नहीं मिला है लेकिन मत फीसद के लिहाज से यहां भी 32.5 फीसद वोटों के साथ भाजपा ने अपनी मजबूत उपस्थिति कायम रखी है। वहाँ पहली बार चुनाव में उत्तर आम आदमी पार्टी काफी पीछे नजर आती है। अगर पंजाब की बात करें तो यहां भाजपा और अकाली गठबंधन दस साल से सत्ता में था। पिछले चुनाव की तुलना में पंजाब में अकाली-भाजपा गठबंधन अच्छा नहीं कर सका है। हालांकि इसका केंद्र का क्यामूलस्य पहले ही लगाए जा रहे थे कि पंजाब में अकाली सरकार के खिलाफ सत्ता विरोधी तारह मुख्य अधिक है। ऐसे में चुनाव से पूर्व लड़ाई कांग्रेस निर्माण आम आदमी पार्टी बताई जा रही थी। लेकिन परिणाम देखने के बाद ऐसा लगता है कि मतों के बंटवारे के मामले में कांग्रेस की लड़ाई अकाली-भाजपा गठबंधन से ज्यादा थी न कि आम आदमी पार्टी से अधिक। बोट प्रतिशत पर नजर डालने तो अकाली दल को अंकलें 25.2 फीसद बोट मिले हैं जो आम आदमी पार्टी के बोट फीसद से लगभग 1.5 फीसद ज्यादा है। पंजाब में भाजपा लगभग 23 सीटों पर चुनाव लड़ी थी। ऐसे में अगर भाजपा के बोट फीसद को मिला दें तो अकाली-भाजपा गठबंधन की 30.6 फीसद बोट मिले हैं। आम आदमी पार्टी इस लिहाज से बेहतर ब्रह्म की पंजाब में करती नहीं नजर आई है जिसका विवाद मोदीपुरा पूर्वनामानुसार अथवा अरविंद केजरीवाल द्वारा किया गया रहा है। विकल्प देखने के रूप में क्या कुछ बहर बताने वाला केजरीवाल का दावा भी खोखला साबित हुआ है। दस साल की सत्ता विरोधी तारह के बावजूद पंजाब ने कांग्रेस को आम आदमी पार्टी से बेहतर विकल्प के रूप में स्वीकार किया है और अकाली-भाजपा भी अपना बोट आधारित जनाधार बचा पाने में कामयाब रहे हैं। खैर इन छोटे राज्यों से इतर अगर देश के निगम सबसे ज्यादा नहीं थी तो वह उत्तर प्रदेश है। जनसौंदर्य के लिहाज से देश का सबसे बड़ा राज्य उत्तर प्रदेश ही है। यहाँ 80 लोकसभा सांसद, 31 राज्यसभा सांसद और 403 विधानसभा के 100 विधान परिषद सदस्य निर्वाचित होते हैं। लोकसभा चुनाव 2014 की मोदी लहर में भाजपा की अभूतपूर्व सफलता फिरी है। वहाँ से कुल 42 फीसद बोटों के साथ भाजपा 71 सीटें अंकलें दम पर जीत कर आई थीं। इस प्रचंड जीत के बाद राजनीतिक विमलों ने इसे न भूलो न भविष्यतों जैसा परिणाम करार दिया था। अर्थात् वह मान लिया गया था कि अब यह आंकड़ा भाजपा खुद दोहरा नहीं पाएंगे। लेकिन विधानसभा चुनाव 2017 के परिणाम के बाद संगठ राजनीतिक अनुमान गलत साबित हुए और भाजपा ने उसी इतिहास को
िोहरा कि‍या है. अगर कवधानसभा रुनाव िे  ‍टेंड िे  कलहाज से मूल्‍यांिन िरें
तो ‍यह ज्रीत लोिसभा से भ्री बड़ी नजर आती है. भाजपा को कुल अमले
लगभग 40 पीसि के आसपास वोट मिले हैं और भाजपा अपने सहयोगियों
के साथ 325 सीटि जीतकर इतिहास रच चुकी है. इस परिणामों के बाद ऐसा
कहा जा रहा है कि मोही लहर बरिरार है. भाजपा अपने सहयोगियों
वोट कमले हैं और भाजपा अपने सहयोगियों
साथ 325 सीटें ज्रीतें इकतहास रर रुिी है. इन पररणामों िे  बाि ऐसा
िहा जा रहा है कि मोि्री लहर बरिरार है. शा‍यि ‍यह ज्री प‍या्चप्त आिलन नहीं
है. मोि्री लहर बरिरार ह्री नहीं है बकल्ि उठान िी ओर है. अगर कवधानसभा
रुनाव, जहाँ राज्‍य म ुख‍यमंरि्री रुनना हो और भाजपा िे  िो-िो कवपक्ष्री िल
अपना मुख‍यमंरि्री रेहरा लेिर रुिी हैं. में ‍यकि भाजपा मोि्री िे  ढाई
साल िे  िा‍य्चिाल िे  बाि इतन्री सफलता िो हाकसल िर पाई है तो अगर
अगले लोिसभा रुनाव में नरेंद् मोि्री प्धानमंरि्री िे  फ े स होंगे तो सामने
होगा ? इसमें िोई िो रा‍य नहीं कि भारत्री‍य राजन्री कि‍या था. नरेंद् मोि्री िी
राजन्री कि‍या जो समझते
होंगे वो अबति ‍ये जान रुिे  होंगे कि मोि्री िाटिर ‍छोट्री िरने िी
बजा‍य बड़ी लिीर खड़्री िरने में ‍यिीन रखते हैं. वे जब 2014 में भाजपा िे
प्धानमंरि्री पि िा रेहरा बने तबति उन्होंने गुजरात में अपने राजन्रीकति एवं
प्शासिी‍य प्िश्चन िो साकबत िर कि‍या था. उनिे  कखलाफ तमाम किस्म
िे  प्ोपगंडा िो हवा तब भ्री ि्री जात्री थ्री और आज भ्री ि्री जात्री है. लेकिन
प्ोपगंडा बनाम परफोममेंस िी लड़ाई िो मोि्री िे  परफोममेंस ने लगातर कशिस्त
ि्री है. अब जब प्धानमंरि्री िे  रप में उनिा ढाई साल लोगों ने िेखा है, उनिी
न्री‍यत िेख्री है, िाम िरने जूनून िेखा है, उनिे  अथि पररश्म िो िेखा है,
जनता से जुड़ने और संवाि िरने िी कनरतंरता िो िेखा है तो लोगों िे  मन
में ‍यह भावना स्व-कविकसत हुई है कि ऐसा ह्री उनिा अपना प्धानमंरि्री होना
राकहए. उतिर प्िेश ने 2014 में कजस आशा और कवविास से मोि्री िो जनािेश
कि‍या था, कवधानसभा िे  जनािेश से उन उमम्रीिों में अपना कवविास जता‍या
है. ‍यह्री वजह है कि भाजपा िो उतिर प्िेश में हर वग्च, हर सम ुिा‍य िा वोट
कमला है और प्िेश में कवपक्ष्री िलों िी कस्थकत िमजोर हुई है. सतिाधार्री िल
समाजवाि्री पाटटी िो कप‍छले कवधानसभा िी तुलना में लगभग 8 फीसि िा
नुिसान हुआ है और वे स्रीटों िे  मामले में लगभग वह्रीँ खड़े हैं जहाँ 2012
में भाजपा खड़्री थ्री. बसपा िी कस्थकत वोट फीसि िे  मामले में बहुत िमजोर
नहीं हुई है लेकिन उसिो सपोट्च  िरने वाला वोटबैं ि अब साथ नहीं रहा.
प्िेश िी राजन्रीकत से 2017 कवधानसभा रुनाव में वोटबैं ि िी ठे िे िार्री
(लेक्चर डी श्यामा प्रसाद मुखिजी रिसच्च फाउंडषेशन में रिसच्च फैलॉ हैं
एवं नैशनलसि ऑनलाइन डॉि कॉम में संपादक हैं.)
BJP CONSOLIDATES ITS HOLD ON MAHARASHTRA

The first civic elections after 25 years to be fought independently by the BJP and the Shiv Sena, has seen BJP fall short in the Mumbai metropolis by just 3 seats. It won 81, out of the 227 seat Bombay Municipal Corporation (BMC).

The BJP has also scored decisive wins in the hinterland of Maharashtra, and thrown the question of which formation can control the BMC independently into considerable confusion. Congress has 31, others have 24, and MNS scored with 7 seats. Either BJP or Shiv Sena will need 30 seats, or more, and this near impossibility, given the options, may thrust them, once again, willy-nilly, into each other's arms.

Shiv Sena, despite a strenuous bid to go it alone and win a majority, has struggled to barely keep a nose ahead, at 84, in the end. It has just retained its title as the single largest party in the Mumbai BMC, but well short of the majority mark at 114. The BJP nearly trebled its tally, up to 81 from 32 in 2012.

The BMC, with a budget of some Rs. 40,000 crores, the largest in the country, is viewed as a prestigious prize. But retaining control of it, despite very patchy governance marked by allegations of corruption over its last term, is a matter of its very survival for the Shiv Sena. This, given that it has no footprint at all outside Maharashtra.

And yet, it is evidently in no position to do much except share power and decision-making once again. It has also managed to top out and hold on in adjoining Thane. But its grip on a demographic that is rapidly changing to contain almost as many people from North India, Gujarat, and elsewhere, as it has Marathi speaking natives, is definitely slipping.

In the hinterland, the municipalities of Pune (last with Sharad Pawar's NCP), Nasik (last with Raj Thackeray's MNS), and Nagpur (its own last time too), went outright to the BJP. Pune, a large industrial and urban hub, another prize in particular, has moved out of Sharad Pawar's grasp.

Raj Thackeray is ostensibly barely hanging on in the power equation of Maharashtra. These other municipality wins in the partially rural interiors, serviced largely by cooperative banks, were meant to have been hard hit by demonetisation. That they have voted solidly for BJP proves that the public there appear to be in support of the move. This contradicts the negative rhetoric put out on the matter by the Shiv Sena, Congress, and others.

Pot-holes likened to craters, and flooding, in the absence of adequate drainage/the destruction of mangrove swamps etc. poses serious risks every single monsoon. These two grouses are amongst a host of other shortcomings that make the richest municipality in the country amongst the poorest in terms of delivery. And this in a city that has impossibly high real estate rates and massive over-crowding. If BJP/Shiv Sena do get together again, they will have to do much better this time.
The Devendra Fadnavis led BJP government in Maharashtra, with grudging Shiv Sena support, has evidently consolidated its hold after the results of these civic polls. These results make it even more difficult for the Shiv Sena to withdraw support, particularly with the NCP still waiting in the wings to make up the difference.

That it has come to this between the ostensibly uneasy allies, both at the state and centre, does not affect BJP as much as it does the Shiv Sena. The saffron regional party, that has been unable to spread outside Maharashtra, appears to be in decline.

The Maharashtra municipal elections and its apparent endorsement of demonetisation also augurs well for similarly profiled urban and rural interior assembly seats in the ongoing elections in Uttar Pradesh, conducting its fourth phase simultaneously.

BJP has, from all reports, a very good chance of winning a majority in Uttar Pradesh, and some of the other smaller states presently. If it does win in the 403 seat Uttar Pradesh Assembly, come the results on March 11th, it will be able to considerably improve its numbers in the Rajya Sabha, and be in a much better position to pass legislation preparatory to the general elections in 2019.

The favourable “semi-final”, it is thought, will harbinger the outcome of the final.

A broader point, in the backdrop of both Maharashtra and Uttar Pradesh, and indeed the ongoing tussles in Tamil Nadu and lesser problems in other states, such as Bengal, Orissa, Karnataka and Delhi, is that the regional parties, and not just the Congress shrunk to likewise size and stature, seem to be self-destructing. This happening simultaneously in different parts of the country, is entirely to a resurgent BJP’s advantage. The SP internal feud is a case in point. The AIADMK in the aftermath of the death of J.Jayalalithaa, is another.

How the centrifugal and centripetal forces in the regional parties will multiply, particularly without the oxygen of power going forward, is something we will have to wait for in order to see.

(The author is a senior columnist & political commentator. This article was written on February 23rd just after the Maharashtra municipal polls. The views expressed are his own)
PRIME MINISTER NARENDRA MODI’S PROPOSED VISIT TO ISRAEL, perhaps on his return from G-20 summit in Germany in July this year would be a high water-mark of our growing bilateral ties with Israel. Although Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon did visit India in 2003 during Vajpayee’s government, there has been no return visit from our side so far. Modi would be the first ever Indian Prime Minister to embark on a visit to Israel. 2017 marks the silver jubilee of the establishment of our diplomatic relations with Israel and that makes the visit truly special.

For me, personally, it is an occasion for fond recollection, since I was tasked with the responsibility of opening the Indian Embassy in Dan Panorama hotel close to Jaffa on the sea shore in Tel Aviv in May 1992. The warm reception accorded to my small team from India by the Israeli government and the people alike made us feel completely at home. For the 70000 strong Indian Jewish community, to see the Indian flag fly in Israel was a long cherished dream and it went out of its way to make us feel comfortable and appropriately networked in the establishment. Zubin Mehta, the famous music composer was choked with emotion while conducting the Indian national anthem when our first ambassador presented his credentials at the State House.

Right from the beginning, there was strong interest on both sides to take our bilateral relations forward rapidly, as if to make up for the lost time. Areas of water conservation, agriculture, drip irrigation and solar energy, in which Israel had registered remarkable success, drew particular attention in India and Prof Swaminathan was deputed to Israel by the then Prime Minister Narasimha Rao soon after opening of our Mission to recommend how we could proceed with cooperation in those areas in concrete terms.

At the political level the lead at that time was taken by our state governments particularly since at the federal government level we were still somewhat hesitant and ambivalent with regard to the visibility for our relations with Israel. Incidentally, the first high level visitor to Israel, within a few weeks of the establishment of our Mission, was by Chiman Bhai Patel, the Chief Minister of Gujarat and he was so impressed with the technologies available in Israel that he arranged a steady flow of business and PSU delegations from his state in the following weeks to ensure adoption of those technologies and practices in Gujarat.

Our foreign policy had traditionally been driven by our overriding concern to safeguard our key interests in the Middle East which hosted a large number of Indian workers and which was our major supplier of oil and gas. As such the decision to establish diplomatic relations with Israel was admittedly a bold
one but the subsequent years saw a fine balancing act on our part to ensure that our growing linkages with Israel were not taken amiss in the Arab capitals.

Viewed in this context, the decision by PM Modi to undertake a stand-alone visit to Israel without combining that with a trip to Palestine, brushing aside possible objections from Arab countries and domestic lobbies, amounts to a significant shift in the basic orientation of our foreign policy. For long, we have allowed our policy to remain a hostage to ideological high moral parameters. PM Modi has injected the much needed realism in dealing with other nations and critical global issues, benchmarking our foreign policy on the consideration of ‘national interests’.

At a broader level, this new approach is reflective of the newfound maturity and self-confidence on the part of India. We have shown requisite resolve to develop our relations independently with competing power centres in the world in a manner designed to optimize our interests. Questions have no doubt been raised but we have assertively deflected those maintaining our sovereign right to calibrate our relations with different countries in an independent manner. That is the essence of Nonalignment which we so loudly professed in the yesteryears. There is no reason why the same principle should not be applied to our relations with Israel and Palestine without any hyphenation and need to indulge in hypocrisy.

Our commitment to Palestinian cause has always remained immutable. We fully support the aspirations of Palestinian people to an independent State and remain firmly opposed to illegal settlement activities in the Palestinian territories even as our relations with Israel have advanced to strategic level. Using the same logic, our principled stand on the Palestinian issue should not be allowed to impact on harnessing our bilateral relations with Israel insofar as those benefit our nation.

Our economic and business linkages with Israel have already grown to a robust level with crucial Israeli investments in agriculture and high tech areas. Annual bilateral trade is nearing US $ 5 billion mark without including the rapidly expanding defence trade. Israel has indeed proved to be a reliable partner and supplied the urgently needed defence equipment and ammunition to us during the 1999 Kargil War. We are already collaborating in the development of wide range of weapon systems including missiles, UAVs, night vision equipment and electronic warfare systems. Much of the technologies available from Israel are indigenously developed without any encumbrance of end-use requirement. Viewed differently, the entry of Israel in our defence supplies market puts competitive pressure on our erstwhile suppliers and it makes enormous business sense to fully leverage diversification of our options in order to secure most optimum terms for large defence purchases.

We have also expanded our cooperation with Israel in combating terrorism. Both our countries are targeted by Islamic terrorist organizations and it is only logical that we pool our resources and share intelligence in dealing with this menace effectively.

Despite our divergent approach towards Iran and Syria, we have not hesitated to develop close bilateral relations with Israel which have proved advantageous to us. The pragmatic handling of our ties with Israel indeed characterizes the growing maturity and confidence in the overall conduct of our foreign policy in the Middle East.

Prime Minister Modi’s anticipated historic visit shall propel India-Israel relations to a hitherto unreached level and dimension. From civilisational friends we also evolve into pragmatic and strategic partners.

(The author served as Indian Ambassador to many countries including South Africa before his retirement from the Indian Foreign Service recently. He opened the Indian Embassy in Israel in May 1992 and now holds the position of President of the International Cooperation Council, New Delhi. The views expressed are his own)
भारतीय जनता पार्टी के राष्ट्रीय अध्यक्ष श्री अमित शाह द्वारा उत्तर प्रदेश, उत्तराखंड, मणिपुर और गोवा में भारतीय जनता पार्टी की ऐतिहासिक और अभूतपूर्व विजय पर की गई प्रेस वार्ता के मुख्य बिंदु
SPMRF & NMML Organised

A conversation with

SHRI ARUN JAITLEY

(UNION MINISTER OF FINANCE & CORPORATE AFFAIRS)

on “TOWARDS A NEW POLITY: CAMPAIGN FINANCE REFORM IN INDIA”

at NMML on 8th March, 2017
LAUNCH OF
‘PARIVARTAN KI ORE’

Book Launch of “Parivartan Ki Ore” by Shri Amit Shah (National President, BJP) at Gorakhpur, Uttar Pradesh on 18th Feb 2017

Discussion on ‘Parivartan Ki Ore’ with Shri Dharmendra Pradhan (Union Minister of State (Independent Charge) Ministry of Petroleum & Natural Gas) & Shri Shyam Jaju (National Vice President, BJP) at IIC, New Delhi on 1st March 2017

Discussion on ‘Parivartan Ki Ore’ with the writers of the book on 4th March, 2017 at Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts
SPMRF & NMML Organised

A discussion on

“BUDGET 2017: REMONETISATION, RECALIBRATION & REFORM”

on 8th February, 2017
“The gigantic task of reconstruction, cultural, social, economic and political can be rendered possible thought coordinated efforts of bands of trained and disciplined efforts of bands of trained and disciplined Indians. Armed with the knowledge of Indian’s past glory and greatness, her strength and weakness, it is they who can place before their country a programme of work, which while loyal to the fundamental traditions of India civilisation will be adapted to the changing conditions of the modern world.”

-Dr. Syama Prasad Mookerjee
Convocation Address delivered at Gurukul Kangri Viswavidyalaya, Haridwar, 1943