



Defection, disaffection

The Tenth Schedule is meant to curb opportunistic party-hopping, not stifle dissent

The disqualification of dissident Janata Dal (United) leaders Sharad Yadav and Ali Anwar as members of the Rajya Sabha was done in needless haste. Even if it did not violate the letter of the anti-defection legislation, the Chairman of the Rajya Sabha, Vice-President M. Venkaiah Naidu, could have considered whether it militated against its spirit. In his order, he cited the time-consuming procedural requirements as the justification for not referring the issue to the committee of privileges. Mr. Naidu took the view that all such cases should be disposed of within three months as any delay would be tantamount to subverting the anti-defection law. But neither Mr. Yadav nor Mr. Anwar posed a threat to any government to warrant such fast-tracking of the disqualification process. The decision under the Tenth Schedule of the Constitution was sought to be justified on the basis of the argument that the two members voluntarily gave up the membership of their party when they attended political rallies organised by rival parties. Mr. Naidu went by the fact that the faction led by Mr. Yadav did not command a majority within the JD(U) legislature party in the Rajya Sabha. Quite correctly, he did not accept the contention of the two members that it was the JD(U) leader Nitish Kumar who had given up membership of the party by quitting the Mahagathbandhan, the grand political alliance that had brought the party to power in Bihar. It is current political affiliation and not past electoral alliance that is relevant to the disqualification process. However, neither Mr. Yadav nor Mr. Anwar had disobeyed a whip or posed a danger to the stability of any government. Given this, the Rajya Sabha Chairman could have taken the assistance of the privileges committee before deciding the case. It is the fact that he did not exhaust all the procedural avenues before him that has left him open to charges that his ruling has a political hue.

The JD(U) order is the latest in a long list of contentious decisions on disqualification by presiding officers. In many State Assemblies, such disqualification proceedings have had an impact on the very survival of the government, most recently in Tamil Nadu and Uttarakhand. Invariably, presiding officers take a politically partisan view, necessitating judicial intervention. India's party-based parliamentary democracy requires MPs and MLAs to strike a fine balance between their roles as representatives of the people and of a political party. As members of the legislature are elected by votes sought in their own name and in the name of their party, the provisions of the Tenth Schedule should not be misused to stifle dissent, whether inside or outside the House. The anti-defection law works best as an insurance against violation of the people's mandate for a party, but it cannot be made a tool to stifle all dissent.

Capital crisis

By recognising Jerusalem as Israel's capital, the U.S. has endangered the peace process

U.S. President Donald Trump's decision to recognise Jerusalem as the capital of Israel, despite warnings at home and abroad, will worsen the Israel-Palestine conflict. Jerusalem, which houses holy places of all three Abrahamic religions and is claimed by both Israelis and Palestinians, is at the very heart of the dispute. Israel built its seat of power in West Jerusalem decades ago and occupied the East during the 1967 war, and later annexed it. Palestinians insist that East Jerusalem should be the capital of their future state. Even though there is a Congressional resolution in the U.S. urging Washington to relocate its embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem, previous American Presidents avoided doing so given the legal, ethical and political implications of the issue, besides their commitment to a negotiated two-state settlement. By breaking with this consensus, Mr. Trump has in effect endorsed the Israeli claims to East Jerusalem. The decision will likely help him bolster his image among the Jewish lobby in Washington as well as American evangelical groups, his social base. Israel is obviously happy. Though Arab countries have voiced protest, they are unlikely to challenge an American decision. Mr. Trump's move raises vital questions about U.S. diplomacy in the region besides putting new roadblocks in the peace process. It could be viewed as illegal as the Israeli claim that Jerusalem "complete and united" is its capital has been declared "null and void" by UN Security Council Resolution 478, which also asks member-countries to "withdraw diplomatic missions from the Holy City". The U.S. is now acting against the spirit of this resolution.

The Jerusalem gambit risks triggering another cycle of protests and repression in the Occupied Territories. In 2000, Ariel Sharon's visit to the al-Aqsa compound in the Old City sparked the second *intifada*. Palestinians are expressing similar distress today. The peace process is not going anywhere, while Israel has gradually been tightening its occupation and building new settlements. Hamas has already called for a third *intifada*. In the longer term, Mr. Trump has just made the two-state solution more complicated. The Israeli-Palestine conflict can be settled only after an agreement is reached on the status of Jerusalem. The city was not part of Israel in the original 1947 UN plan to partition Palestine. Jerusalem, which was supposed to be ruled by an international trusteeship, was conquered by Israel. This is why the UN has not recognised it as Israel's capital. With his latest announcement, Mr. Trump has endorsed the occupation. And in doing so, he has undermined the U.S.'s position as a neutral broker in Israeli-Palestinian talks. In short, he has dealt a blow to the peace process.

Getting back on track

The GDP numbers are good but for growth to pick up further, we need to push private investment



C. RANGARAJAN

The national income numbers for the second quarter of 2017-18 has come as a relief. Gross Domestic Product (GDP) has grown at 6.3% year-on-year compared to 5.7% in the first quarter. The trend of declining growth rate quarter after quarter, which was seen in the last one year, has been reversed. This is a welcome sign. However, doubts and concerns persist for some.

Signs of revival?

Is this a flash in the pan or is it a sign of a revival? Can we expect a further rise in the growth rate in the rest of the year? Some people are disturbed by the excessive focus on GDP and its growth rate. It is true that development has many dimensions and for a balanced view, one must look at all of them. Nevertheless, GDP is an important indicator of the performance of the economy, and a faster rate of growth is most often a prerequisite for rapid social development.

What are the encouraging signs flowing out of the data on GDP for the July-September quarter? For this, we need to look at sectoral growth rates. The most encouraging sign is the performance of the manufacturing sector which grew at 7% against 1.2% in the previous quarter. This is really a turnaround, if we don't dispute the number. In the corresponding quarter in the previous year, the growth rate was 7.7%. It appears that the manufacturing sector has come out of the disruptions caused by demonetisation and more particularly, the implemen-

tation of the goods and services tax (GST).

Three other sectors which have grown strongly are the two subsectors under services – trade, hotels, etc., and public administration – besides electricity and other utility services. The trade sector grew by 9.9% and there is some indication by the Chief Statistician, T.C.A. Anant, that there could be some underestimation here.

Public administration grew at 6%, much lower than the previous quarters but still reasonably high. In fact, it is a good sign that despite a lower growth of government expenditure, overall growth rate picked up. Some calculations show that excluding agriculture and public administration, the GDP growth rate in Q2 was 6.8% compared to 3.8% in Q1. The electricity sector has done well with a growth rate of 7.6% compared to 7.0% in Q1.

The growth rate in agriculture was low at 1.7%. This was to be expected because the growth rate in agriculture was very strong the previous year. Even though the monsoon has been good, one should not expect a much stronger growth over a good year. The construction sector grew at 2.6% only. It is yet to recover from the impact of demonetisation. But that should not come as a surprise as demonetisation was directly meant to hurt the way business was being done in this sector.

Discouraging signals

The most discouraging sign is the behaviour of the Gross Fixed Capital Formation (GFCF). It is true that GFCF at current prices grew at 6.3% in Q2 against 2.9% in the corresponding period last fiscal. This shows an improvement in terms of sentiment. However, as the growth rate of GFCF fell below the growth rate of GDP, the ratio of GFCF to



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GDP has fallen from 27.1% to 26.4%. This is truly disturbing. The fall must be due to a decline in private investment, as public investment during this period has done reasonably well. Without a rise in the private investment rate, sustained high growth cannot be maintained.

There are some doubts about the high growth in manufacturing. In this context, analysts draw attention to the disparities between the rate of growth in the index of industrial production (IIP) and national income statistics. For example, in Q2 of 2017-18, manufacturing under IIP grew at 2.2%. There is, of course, a difference between the national income and IIP figures, the former dealing with value added and the latter with total production. Nevertheless, such sharp differences raise some concerns. In the new methodology in estimating value added in the manufacturing sector, corporate data play a major role. This approach is not incorrect. Though many committees, including the one headed by me, on savings have recommended the use of corporate sector data, some cross-checking is needed. The government has set up the National Statistical Com-

mission to give credibility to the Indian Statistical System. It must make effective use of it. Perhaps a clear statement from the National Statistical Commission will help to put the doubts at rest.

The road ahead

What do the numbers say about the future? After staying at the same level for two quarters, Gross Value Added (GVA) has moved up. This may be broadly taken to mean that the decline in growth rate has bottomed out. Perhaps the glitches caused by GST have been overcome. That only amounts to the removal of a negative factor. Therefore, the immediate prospect is some improvement in the growth rate in the next two quarters. In the next two quarters, there is not much space for public administration to push the economy. Last year, a reasonable rate of growth was achieved because of the strong growth of government expenditure in all quarters. This year, at the end of the third quarter, fiscal deficit has almost reached the budgeted level. Even after allowing for some slippage, it is unlikely that government expenditure can act as a driver of growth. Thus, while one

can expect the growth rate to pick up in the second half, any substantial increase depends on the behaviour of private investment which remains intractable.

Yet another factor influencing growth is exports. India's export performance has picked up in the current year. In terms of growth rate, it was doing reasonably well. During April-September, exports grew by 11.52%. But there was a setback in October with the export growth rate turning negative. However, the world economy is generally looking better this year. World trade in 2017 is expected to grow at 1.7% compared to 0.8% in 2016. Improvement in the external environment may help to raise our exports. This may be another positive factor influencing growth, even though it is difficult to say how strong it will be. All in all, it appears that the GDP growth for the year as a whole may be around 6.5%.

For growth to pick up in a strong way, policymakers need to address the issue of declining investment rate. As pointed out already, the GFCF ratio has fallen to 26.4%. As late as 2014-15, the GFCF rate was 30.8%. Only when the reversal of this trend happens can we be assured of a sustained high growth of 7% plus. The excess capacity built up during the boom period must have been used by now. A complex set of factors is keeping down the private investment rate. These factors need to be addressed in order to push up private investment, even as the pace of public capital expenditures, which have shown a pick up recently, is maintained.

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Underwater reinforcements

On the 50th anniversary of the Navy's submarine arm, a wake-up call on acquiring dedicated rescue vessel



C. UDAY BHASKAR

Chief of the Naval Staff Admiral Sunil Lanba provided the appropriate context for the 50th anniversary of the Indian Navy's submarine arm, which falls on December 8, when he indicated that the steadily shrinking force levels of the 'boats' would be augmented in a significant manner over the next two decades.

Acquisition plan

Admiral Lanba detailed an ambitious acquisition plan for the Indian Navy that includes six diesel electric Scorpene-class submarines; three SSBNs (nuclear-propelled submarines equipped with a nuclear-tipped ballistic missile) to follow INS Arihant; and six SSNs (nuclear-propelled submarines) used in an attack role. When all these boats are operationally inducted, India will have a very credible underwater capability with a judicious mix of conventional and nuclear-propelled submarines.

India acquired its first submarine, the INS Kalvari, on December

8, 1967, six years after the Navy acquired its first aircraft carrier in 1961. In the intervening decades, the nation and its Navy have graduated to designing and indigenously building SSBNs – the INS Arihant. Concurrently, the Navy is also invested in building conventional boats in India through partnership programmes with foreign suppliers. For the record, India is the first country in the world to move straight to designing and building an SSBN, without moving up the scale from conventional boats and then SSNs.

This level of professional accomplishment in the underwater domain has been realised against many odds and much of this has been possible due to the dedication and rigorous professionalism of the human resource that lies at the core of the submarine arm, from its formative years to where it is now poised. Thus it is appropriate that the President's Colours will be presented to the dolphin arm on Friday in Visakhapatnam.

Submariners the world over are aware that they have chosen what may be the most hazardous and high-risk military specialisation and have internalised the 'iron-coffin' syndrome. This is the un-stated anxiety of the stoic submarine captain every time a boat



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dives that if it is unable to surface, the closure is the iron-coffin at the bottom of the sea. To prepare for such an exigency, every submarine-operating navy also invests in a deep submergence rescue vessel (DSRV) or has access to the same with navies that have such a capability.

Accidents and tragic incidents do occur and the Navy's submarine arm has the ignominy of losing a boat in harbour. The most recent accident is that of the Argentine Navy's submarine, the San Juan, first reported 'missing' on November 15 and now deemed to have been lost with 44 crew members on board, including a lady officer. Sadly, the Argentine Navy did not have a dedicated DSRV and there is considerable specula-

tion if this tragic loss of lives could have been averted had there not been such an inventory void.

It merits notice that the Navy does not have a dedicated DSRV even as it enters its 51st year and this void will be filled only later in 2018. The long-delayed DSRV acquisition symbolises much of the systemic ineptitude that characterises the Indian military machine and its many inadequacies.

Why the delay?

Without sounding like the bad fairy at the party, the inability of the Indian higher defence management ecosystem (from the Cabinet Committee on Security downwards) has resulted in denying the Navy's submarine arm a critical rescue capability for decades and had a worst-case exigency ever occurred, the price paid would have been very high.

This complacency in decision-making and fecklessness in critical policy formulation have adversely impacted the growth of the Indian military profile in many ways. The submarine trajectory is illustrative. Indigenous submarine-building capability got off to an encouraging start in the mid 1980s with the West Germany yard, HDW. Two boats were acquired from abroad and two were to be built at

Mazagon Dock, Mumbai, as the foundation for an indigenous submarine programme.

However, allegations of financial impropriety in the HDW deal led to then Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi preemptively cancelling the whole programme – and the indigenous submarine programme was set back by three decades. Insulating core national security interests from the vagaries of mercurial political/electoral compulsions is a matter that warrants the most serious and urgent deliberation by legislators. Alas, this kind of legislative commitment and nurturing the integrity of decision-making remains an institutional void.

Anniversaries have their own ceremonial symbolism and sanctity and the 50th milestone is to be cherished, but the substantive policy-related issues should not be glossed over. An objective review of lessons learnt from the CCS' consideration in relation to the Indian submarine story is called for. On a personal note, a hat-tip to the intrepid submariners who shaped my formative years.

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Letters emailed to letters@thehindu.co.in must carry the full postal address and the full name or the name with initials.

A reckless move

U.S. President Donald Trump's decision has been condemned by many leaders across the world, including the U.S.'s close allies ("Jerusalem is Israel's capital: U.S.", Dec. 7). In one stroke, Washington has undermined the two-state solution and undermined all the efforts taken so far to achieve peace. Mr. Trump has forfeited the moral authority to act as a peace broker in the region. Regrettably, his decision goes to legitimise, and even encourage, the continued Israeli occupation of Palestinian territories. The principle that 'might is right' is totally unacceptable in a civilised world. Maintaining Jerusalem's status quo is important to avoid an escalation of the conflict.

G. DAVID MILTON, Maruthancode, Tamil Nadu

Former U.S. Presidents Dwight Eisenhower, John K. Kennedy, Lyndon B. Johnson, Richard Nixon and Gerald Ford all contributed to escalating the Vietnam war. Then George W. Bush worsened the war in Iraq. Now Mr. Trump wants to stir up a hornet's nest in Jerusalem. U.S. Presidents are expected to behave like statesmen, not cause sleeping volcanoes to erupt. President Trump's actions undermine all that his predecessors have done in the region. Hopefully, he will restore the status quo.

A.V. NARAYANAN, Tiruchi

Mr. Trump should have weighed the pros and cons of his decision and imagined the gravity of it before making the announcement. There is no other way to resolve the

issue other than encourage Israel and Palestine to continue their talks towards an amicable resolution. Arriving at an accord will bring stability to the battered region. World leaders, and particularly the U.S. President, need to play a responsible and balanced role without prejudice and bias.

R. RAMANATHAN, Coimbatore

Mandir politics

Kapil Sibal behaved more like a Congressman rather than a lawyer in court ("Why link Ayodhya dispute case with polls, asks PM", Dec. 7). Mr. Sibal is worried that the BJP may derive political benefits from a potential settlement in the Ayodhya dispute. His was a political speech, not a legal argument. The Congress is playing a double game in its campaign. While Rahul

Gandhi is trying to appease Hindu voters in Gujarat. Mr. Sibal is trying to appease the Muslims.

A. SRIKANTIAH, Bengaluru

With the Congress asking Kapil Sibal to stay away from Gujarat following his controversial statement, and with the Sunni Wakf Board too disassociating itself from his statement, Mr. Sibal has been left in the lurch. It is better that he acts cautiously and desists from pleasing the Congress high command while fighting in court.

V.S. GANESHAN, Bengaluru

The Babri case has been pending for more than two decades. More adjournments mean more money for advocates and a waste of valuable time. This could have been avoided

with an out-of-court settlement. Since this is not happening now, the Supreme Court must give its judgment soon. We must keep in mind that there will always be some disgruntled party even if there is a more or less "fair" verdict given. This does not mean the case should drag on.

C.K. SUBRAMANIAM, Mumbai

Healthcare for all

We need an integrative approach for universal health coverage ("Universal health coverage is the best prescription", Dec. 7). If schemes like the Integrated Child Development Services work together with the Swachh Bharat Mission and the National Health Policy, we may see results. It is not just the state of infrastructure in hospitals but the surroundings too that cause problems. It is

high time citizens too performed their duties in keeping the environment clean. This will reduce the burden of diseases.

MEGHA NAIR, New Delhi

Refreshing photograph

It was a welcome change to see a tiger's photograph on the front page rather than that of a politician ("Curious cat" and "Look who turned up for lunch", Dec. 7). The image says a lot. While thankfully the workers and tourists were not injured, the photo also shows how mindless deforestation in the name of development has taken place to an extent where wild cats are forced to take away the lunch boxes of human beings.

N. NAGARAJAN, Secunderabad

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