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CPEC's Military Turn

Chinese tech firms could imperil India's security

TOI Editorials



Chinese foreign minister Wang Yi is currently on a two-day trip to India where his mission, among other things, is to foster closer people-to-people relations. That is unexceptionable in itself, and New Delhi on its part is acting to ease visa norms for Chinese nationals. Overshadowing his visit, however, is the news – confirming what was apprehended in India despite Chinese assurances to the contrary – that the China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) is taking a military turn. The Pakistani air force, together with Chinese officials, is

finalising a secret plan to co-produce advanced jets, weaponry and other military hardware as part of CPEC. Pakistan is also the only foreign country granted access to China's BeiDou Navigation Satellite System's military service, which can provide precise guidance for Pakistani missiles, ships and aircraft.

Clearly, India is the country whose security is most affected by such deals. At the same time New Delhi has invited Chinese telecom giant Huawei to start 5G trials in India and it may be part of Wang's brief to push Huawei's case for building India's 5G infrastructure. Such a prospect ought to cause security alarm bells to clang loudly in New Delhi.

Huawei is being restricted across Western countries due to the possibility of snoopware planted in its gear that would provide access to China's intelligence services. India is already one of the prime victims of asymmetric warfare. Having an insecure 5G infrastructure would enable the China-Pakistan axis to unleash devastating cyberwarfare against India, if it so chose. The Telecom Equipment and Services Export Promotion Council (TEPC) is alarmed and plans to write to national security adviser Ajit Doval on this issue. There is no reason for India to extend undue favours to China, at the expense of its own security, particularly when it gets little consideration from China for its interests.

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How to Rescue Democracy

Liberal education will teach us to do the right thing, at the right time, for the right reason

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Another series of elections has come and gone. Like an imminent surgery, an election has a way of crowding out all thoughts from the mind and turning the focus of politicians to populism and free giveaways, forgetting the difficult job of economic and governance reform. The results of the latest state elections have reminded us that Indians are by nature sceptical and not shy to change their leaders. The grand certainties of 2014 have suddenly become the grand doubts of 2019.

From earliest times, the Indian temper has been comfortable with uncertainty, beginning with ambiguity over how the cosmos was born in the famous Nasadiya verse in the Rig Veda and the doubting *neti, neti* ('not this, not that') method of Advaita. I believe our questioning nature is a strength in building citizenship and democracy. Unfortunately, our educational system, instead of nourishing inquiry, does everything possible to kill it through a rote learning system. The ascendancy of technology, engineering and 'useful subjects' has displaced the old-style liberal education that promoted inquisitiveness. A few excellent private liberal arts and sciences institutions are coming up, and they offer some hope for the future. Most of the older ones have faded into mediocrity.

In these times when 'liberal' has acquired a bad odour, it is worth reminding ourselves that it shares a root with 'liberty'. Liberal education is a method of learning rather than mastery of specific content, teaching one to reason and providing the confidence to judge for oneself. A liberal education befits a free human being, one who is capable of governing himself and participating in collective self-government. This ability translates at election time in distinguishing a charlatan from a sensible and sincere candidate. In the recent elections, it would have exposed the disastrous idea of farm loan waivers which rewards defaulters and punishes honest farmers, aside from bankrupting the states' treasuries, leaving no money for real agricultural reform.

If a liberal education is not only about book learning but an approach to learning, any subject – even manual labour – could be part of the curriculum, and help shrink some of our caste prejudice against working with our hands. When we study something for its own sake, it reinforces our early curiosity as children and builds upon our civilisation's ancient sceptical temper. Indeed, an interrogation of the Upanishads and the epics with a modern mind can be as valuable as reading Homer, Shakespeare and Marx.

A liberal education can also help to raise the tone of our political discourse that has plunged to great depths in recent years. All parties were responsible for the shameful lack of civility in the recent elections. Rahul Gandhi contributed to it with his persistent 'chowkidar chor hai' with regard to the Rafale fighter deal. He did not censure his functionaries who made obnoxious remarks about Modi's mother's age or cast aspersions on his father. It is to Rahul's credit that he apologised for a former minister's insulting reference to Modi's occupational caste. Earlier references to 'maut ka saudagar' by Sonia Gandhi were equally 'uncivil'.

BJP is no better. Modi has been guilty of uncivil language about the dynasty. A Gujarat minister falsely accused the late Verghese Kurien of diverting funds from Amul to Christian missionaries. Modi did not repudiate this aspersion on a bureaucrat who has made India the world's largest milk producer. All parties, especially AAP and Shiv Sena repeatedly abuse opponents – for example, "son of Khilji" is a sickening reference to Rahul's foreign origins.

A liberal education is beneficial in cultivating the habit of respectful engagement in a community, dedicated to finding workable answers rather than resorting to insulting innuendos about the ethnic identity of opponents. It also leads generally to a centrist position in politics, eschewing the extreme right and left. The political centre is accommodative, tends to harmonise social and cultural contradictions and appeals to the average voter, especially the minorities. Hence, most elections in India since Independence have been won by moderate candidates. Even the Modi wave in 2014 was the result of Modi adopting a centrist promise of *vikas* and jobs, which attracted the aspirational, young voter. It is quite another matter that the promise has not been fulfilled and Modi is a worried man today.

Finally, approaching education in a liberal manner can also make us better human beings. By freeing us from the demands of getting a job and making a living, it offers the freedom to reflect upon existential questions of who we are and why we are here. It turns our attention away from ourselves to our place in the world, making us see that we are part of something larger than ourselves. This 'self-forgetting' is always good for building character. When combined with action and experience, it leads to prudence (*phronesis*) as Aristotle suggested – to do the right thing to the right person, at the right time, in the right manner, and for the right reason.

But how can a poor or middle class Indian family afford the luxury of not preparing its children for a job? Surely, a four-year undergraduate American liberal education is a luxury that most Indians cannot afford. Indeed it can, if you view liberal education not as content but as an approach to learning; it should begin in primary school and go right through postgraduate education. Liberal education is not an end but a means to prepare a young person to become a thoughtful member of society. It does not exist in isolation from making a living or becoming a good citizen. It merely reminds us that there is more to life than consumption and production.

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Snooping State Vs The Right to Privacy

Privacy ruling has killed 2009 snooping rule

ET Editorials

The government's empowerment of 10 agencies to carry out electronic snooping on citizens at will is anti-democratic and should be withdrawn. The government's defence that the action merely exercises the power contained in a 2009 rule to implement the Information Technology Act 2000 is not tenable. Since that rule was framed in 2009, there has been considerable clarity on the status of privacy in India's constitutional scheme of things. The Supreme Court has ruled, in a unanimous, nine-bench finding in August 2017, that the right to privacy is a fundamental right, dismissing the government's plea that the Constitution does not offer such a right.

The 2009 rule, allowing designated officers to intercept and decrypt any electronic information stored anywhere or in transit, conforms to the erroneous view on privacy thrown out by the court. That rule should be junked, and the authorisation of agencies to snoop derived from that rule. This does not mean that intelligence and law enforcement agencies cannot abridge the right to privacy in certain

circumstances. There must be a law that allows such encroachment of privacy, there must be a reason that fits the standard for legitimacy laid down in the law, and the encroachment of privacy must be proportional to the need. A court order must be mandatory to authorise every instance of snooping. And every act of snooping must be justified, subsequently, to a committee of Parliament, preferably one on intelligence, to rule out arbitrary exercise of powers by arms of the State.

The police forces must have multiple lines of accountability: to the executive, to a committee of the legislature, and to the Human Rights Commission. In such a scheme of things, privacy can be breached by authorised personnel without fear of the system degenerating into a police state. The police and intelligence agencies today enjoy arbitrary, excessive powers over the citizenry in a manner wholly out of place in a democracy. And Parliament can play a big role in changing this state of affairs, by making its committees powerful bodies of oversight and accountability. More than a tweak of the law is in order.

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अति महत्वाकांक्षी लक्ष्य

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मोदी सरकार की खासियतों में से एक यह भी है कि वह विभिन्न कार्यक्रमों के लिए महत्वाकांक्षी लक्ष्य निर्धारित करती है और उन्हें हासिल करने के लिए प्रतिबद्ध प्रयास करती है। नीति आयोग द्वारा जारी किए गए दस्तावेज 'स्ट्रैटेजी फॉर न्यू इंडिया एट 75' में भी यह महत्वाकांक्षा साफ नजर आती है। परिभाषा के आधार पर देखा जाए तो चार वर्ष से कम अवधि में 'नया भारत' बनाने की किसी भी कोशिश को शंका की दृष्टि से देखा जाना चाहिए। फिर भी इसके विस्तृत ब्योरे पर नजर डाली जानी चाहिए। वर्ष 2022-23 तक 9-10 फीसदी की जीडीपी वृद्धि दर हासिल करने का लक्ष्य कुछ ज्यादा ही बड़ा है। उस तक पहुंचने के लिए कई छोटे लक्ष्य तय किए गए हैं। ये कितने विश्वसनीय हैं? कुछ बातों पर नजर डालते हैं (टिप्पणियां कोष्ठक में हैं):

विनिर्माण वृद्धि दर को 7.7 फीसदी से दोगुना बढ़ाना। खनन क्षेत्र की वृद्धि दर को वर्ष 2017-18 के तीन फीसदी से बढ़ाकर 14 फीसदी करना। इसके लिए वर्ष 2018-23 के बीच 8.5 फीसदी की दर हासिल करनी होगी। सभी खेतों को सिंचाई सुविधा। हवाई अड्डा क्षमता में पांच गुने से अधिक का इजाफा ताकि हर वर्ष 100 करोड़ यात्राओं से निपटा जा सके। शिक्षा पर सरकारी व्यय को दोगुना कर जीडीपी का 6 फीसदी करना। (यह बार-बार दोहराई हुई बात है।) औपचारिक रूप से कुशल श्रमिकों के अनुपात को श्रम शक्ति के मौजूदा 5.4 फीसदी से बढ़ाकर कम से कम 15 फीसदी करना (यानी हर वर्ष करीब एक करोड़ श्रमिकों को कुशल बनाना।) कर-जीडीपी अनुपात को 16-17 फीसदी के स्तर से बढ़ाकर 22 फीसदी करना। सार्वजनिक निवेश को जीडीपी के 4 फीसदी से बढ़ाकर 7 फीसदी करना (प्रश्न: जबकि कृषि ऋण माफी के मामले बढ़ रहे हैं?) देश में आने वाले वैश्विक पर्यटकों की संख्या को 1.18 फीसदी से बढ़ाकर 3 फीसदी करना। परंतु (इसमें विरोधाभास है) विदेशी पर्यटकों का आगमन 88 लाख से बढ़कर केवल 1.2 करोड़ होने की बात कही गई है।

राष्ट्रीय राजमार्गों की लंबाई को 2022-23 तक बढ़ाकर 2 लाख किलोमीटर करना जो अभी 1.22 लाख किलोमीटर है। (हकीकत में यह वृद्धि 64 प्रतिशत होगी और इसके लिए रोज 60 किमी राष्ट्रीय राजमार्ग बनाना होगा। यह काम राज्य राजमार्गों तथा अन्य सड़कों के अलावा है।) सड़क दुर्घटनाओं और उनमें होने वाली मौतों की संख्या को 2020 तक 50 फीसदी कम करना जबकि रेलवे दुर्घटनाओं में मृत्यु के मामलों को पूरी तरह समाप्त करना। ब्रॉड गेज ट्रैक का 100 फीसदी विद्युतीकरण करना। यह 2016-17 तक 40 प्रतिशत था। शोध एवं विकास व्यय को जीडीपी के 0.7 फीसदी से बढ़ाकर 2 फीसदी करना। खनन के लिए संभावित क्षेत्र को 10 फीसदी से बढ़ाकर 20 फीसदी करना। प्रमुख बंदरगाहों पर पलटी के समय को 2016-17 के 3.44 दिन से घटाकर 1-2 दिन के वैश्विक औसत पर लाना। सन 2020 तक निर्यात के लिए व्यापक अनुपालन समय को घटाकर 24 घंटे और आयात के लिए 48 घंटे करने का लक्ष्य। सन 2022-23 तक राज्य, जिला और ग्राम पंचायत स्तर पर सारी सेवाओं को डिजिटली प्रदान करना और डिजिटल खाई को पूरी तरह पाटना। इन भौतिक लक्ष्यों के अलावा हर क्षेत्र के लिए नीतिगत उपायों का भी उल्लेख किया गया है। यह स्पष्ट नहीं है ये भी आर्थिक समीक्षा और पुरानी पंचवर्षीय योजना के तर्ज पर किए गए दावे हैं या फिर इन्हें हासिल करने के लिए प्रयास भी किया जाएगा। इसके बावजूद कुछ नीतिगत उपचार इस प्रकार हैं: अर्थव्यवस्था को पूरी तरह औपचारिक स्वरूप प्रदान करना।

जिन सरकारी उपक्रमों की प्रकृति सामरिक नहीं है उनका निजीकरण करना। बड़े उपक्रमों के लिए व्यापक धारिता वाली कंपनी बनाना ताकि निवेश कम करके ऐसे संस्थान बनाए जाएं जहां एकल प्रवर्तक का नियंत्रण न हो (सरकार समेत)। सरकारी बिजली वितरण कंपनियों का निजीकरण। बिजली शुल्क दरों को तार्किक बनाना ताकि भारतीय उपक्रम वैश्विक प्रतिस्पर्धा कर सकें। (यानी उच्च औद्योगिक विद्युत शुल्क दर में कृषि और घरेलू उपभोक्ताओं के लिए रियायत नहीं होगी?) रेल शुल्क दरों पर नए सिरे से दृष्टि डालना ताकि यात्री और मालवहन क्षेत्र में स्थायित्व आ सके। माल भाड़ा, सड़क परिवहन की लागत की दृष्टि से प्रतिस्पर्धी होना चाहिए। (स्थायित्व और प्रतिस्पर्धा में विरोधाभास हो सकता है।) अनिवार्य जिस अधिनियम का खात्मा करना। कुछ वर्ष पहले जब अटल बिहारी वाजपेयी प्रधानमंत्री थे तो मैकिंजी ने उन्हें ऐसे ही महत्वाकांक्षी लक्ष्य सौंपे थे। इस पर उनका जवाब था, 'यह सब कैसे होगा?' पुरानी स्कॉटिश कहावत याद आती है: अगर इच्छाएं घोड़ा होतीं तो भिखारी उन पर सवारी करते।