

**When you go into court you are putting your fate into the hands of twelve people who weren't smart enough to get out of jury duty**  
Norm Crosby

## Apex court on unopposed wins

A three-judge division bench the Supreme Court, headed by the Chief Justice has upheld the election of 20,159 candidates who were 'elected' unopposed in the panchayat elections held in West Bengal in May this year. All these candidates belong to the ruling Trinamool Congress. Three opposition political parties of the State had moved the apex court for quashing these elections because, they alleged, the TMC had, by threats and intimidations, prevented their candidates from filing their nominations. The apex court has held that elections of so many candidates cannot be quashed because it would be 'prejudging' the issue. What it has suggested is that the aggrieved candidates who could not file their nominations can file election petitions within 30 days of the results being official declared.

The main objection raised by the opposition parties, however, does not get invalidated by the apex court verdict. Even if it is assumed that the election of candidates who won unopposed is valid, the larger question that involves the functioning of a democracy is, what were the circumstances in which so many candidates other than those of the ruling party could not file their nominations for so many seats. The apex court has not gone into this question but in a functioning democracy this question has to be gone into and answered. Unless this issue is addressed, it is perfectly possible that in any election - panchayat or civic or assembly or parliament - candidates not belonging to the ruling party (whichever party it may be) will find it impossible to file nominations because of terror and violence by the footsoldiers of the party in power. Or, in a booth of a thousand voters, the ruling party candidate polls 900 odd votes while his rival candidates get eight or ten votes.

This is not a hypothetical possibility but a real one in the situation prevailing in the country. The State and Central Election Commissions will have to find a way to deal with such situations. The foundation of democracy is free and fair elections in which the voter can exercise his or her franchise without fear. If fear prevents a candidate from filing his nomination or a voter from voting or compels him to vote for a candidate against his conscience, then democracy becomes a farce. In the communist countries there used to be one party and that party won again and again. Already one hears slogans like "One country, one nation, one election." From this to One Party, One Leader, is but one remove.

# Fear stalks rain-ravaged Kerala

## REFLEX ACTION

P. Sreekumaran

These are not frightening frames from an Alfred Hitchcock movie. These are shocking sights of a real-life tragedy unfolding its horrors. And it has been the lot of God's Own Country to witness it.

Kerala is no stranger to rain havoc and the resultant flood fury. But the ordeal by water the state is undergoing at present has no parallels. The solitary exception, perhaps, is the rain of misery which battered the state 90 years ago. To say that fear and tension stalk the state is perhaps an understatement. The people of Kerala are petrified by the ferocity of the rain-triggered floods ravaging the state. What is adding to their fears is that there are no signs of the rain fury abating. It has been raining death and destruction for over a fortnight. The most redeeming feature of an otherwise grim situation is the unity shown by various political parties in this hour of grave crisis. The usual blame game which attended natural disasters in the past is refreshingly absent this time. It was a gratifying sight to see the Leader of the Opposition Ramesh Chennithala accompanying Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan during the visit to the state by Union Home Minister Rajnath Singh, who was visibly shocked by the enormity of the unfolding disaster.

Equally heartening is the Centre-State synergy on show. The Centre has already sanctioned an amount of Rs 100 crore and promised to grant more funds in future. Another Central team is scheduled to visit the

state to assess the enormous damage. Conservative estimates by the state government put the damage at a staggering Rs 8,038 crore!

The hour of unprecedented tragedy has brought out the best in the people not only in the state but also outside. Contributions are pouring in from all quarters to the Chief Minister's Relief Fund. In a heart-warming display of compassion and sympathy, Tamil film world is going out of the way to reach out to the hapless victims of the flood-hit. Superstar Vijay leads the list with a generous contribution of Rs 15 crore. Malayali NRI businessmen M A Yusuf Ali and Ravi Pillai have forked out Rs 5 crore each. In a prompt response to the SOS from Kerala, the defence forces have slipped into relief mode. Army, Air Force and Navy personnel - eight columns of army in particular - have been deployed in different parts of the state to deal with the rain-related disasters.

The Indian Army's Kerala-Karnataka sub-area, with its headquarters in Bengaluru, is supervising the operations in Kerala entitled "Operation Sahyog". The Indian Air Force, too, has deployed helicopters for

search-and-rescue operations. Likewise, the Navy has pressed into service its boats and helicopters to help the people stranded in various parts of the state. The Navy is doing a commendable job in reaching out to the stranded in the hardest-hit districts like Idukki, Pathanamthitta, Wayanad and Malappuram. Already over 140 stranded people have been brought to safety by the Navy personnel. No word of praise is too high for the magnificent manner in which the defence forces are handling the grim situation caused by the deluge of death and destruction.

The statistics on death and destruction are mind-boggling. So far, 38 lives have been lost. Over 20,000 people in various districts have been rendered homeless. More than 38,000 people have been accommodated in relief camps opened across the state.

The populace by and large is satisfied with the arrangements made in these camps. But their biggest worry is the uncertainty looming large over their future when they return to their homesteads battered by the rains and flood waters. True, the state government has plunged itself heart and soul into the daunting task of reaching out to the victims. Ministers themselves have been given the job of personally supervising relief operations in all the 14 districts of the state. How serious is the situation can be gauged from the fact that a red alert has been sounded in all the districts. (IPA)



People rest on the Black Sea beach during sunset in the village of Vitino, Crimea--REUTERS

# Inflation threat is there

## FOCUS

Mrinal K. Biswas

Arun Jaitley's return to finance ministry after convalescence from serious surgical operation will give him little respite as he will be under tremendous pressure to firefight the multiple heads of discord in the country's economy. To keep the threat of inflation away is the most important task before the government at this critical juncture of uncertainties on the global and domestic fronts. Inflation hits the commoners most and the power that is looking askance at this threat in the election time round the corner.

India has once ceased to enjoy the advantage of an economy of autonomy after it being integrated with rest of the world. With signs of volatility in the international money market looming large, developed countries have once again been resorting to monetary stimulus which is certain to affect liquidity flows to emerging markets like India. While stimulus makes the national governments to compensate any liquidity

shortfall in these well-off countries flow of funds outside their economies to countries like India is bound to dry up as a consequence.

Apart from tighter global financial conditions in the wake of a rich nations' retreat from economic integrations combined with the spillover of global trade conflicts and ever present inter-State tensions India's domestic market is confronted with multiple challenges on the economic front. Reserve Bank of India, international financial institutions and rating agencies are concerned about India and her economy. The most important points whether the monetary authorities and the government will be able to keep the fiscal deficit target of 3.3 per cent of GDP for this financial year. While the government maintains a brave face RBI takes cautious moves with its understanding that inflation remains a headache.

Fiscal deficit occurs when in a particular year government meets its expenditure requirements by borrowings. If

expenditures go up government borrowings increase. The government borrowings leave smaller amount of money available for the non-government sector. Money becomes dearer making non-government projects costlier and shooting up of goods prices.

Inflation stares in the economy. The current target of 3.3 per cent of fiscal deficit is 0.3 per cent higher than the government aim of bringing it down to 3 per cent by 2020-21. This target was fixed after 2003 enactment of Fiscal Responsibility and Budget Management Act.

Of the two authorities, the government is to keep expenditures under leash through budgetary policy but often it fails because of increasing number of projects, HRAs, subsidies, government employee payment hikes,

pensions etc. RBI on the other hand determines policy rates of interests of the money side and set it go higher if the government borrows more to meet its increasing costs. That is the time when money is not available at reasonable rates for the non-government sectors because of government's large grab on the money market.

As the government is committed to change on the higher side the minimum support prices for the agricultural produce and account for stiff rise of the global oil prices, apart from meeting ever increasing revenue expenditures on things like project costs and payments to government employees, this will be a tall order to keep the fiscal deficit under the mandated level. The recent dip of the rupee value vis-a-vis US dollar, requiring

more money for imports, and Kerala flood relief costs add further pressures on the expenditure side.

Coming up of all these is the risk of failing to achieve the inflation target of 4 per cent. Already in July this year inflation reached 4.17 per cent (against 2.36 per cent in July last year; almost 70 per cent is to increase this year).

Reports say that India imported about 220 million tonnes of crude oil last year for USD 87.7 billion at an average of Rs 65 per dollar. The same foreign exchange payment may go up by Rs 60 crore. There is a fear that a dollar-denominated imported inflation will hit the Indian economy. RBI officials however maintain that any run on the rupee is not on the cards as it is a contagion (infection in economic jargon) effect impacting all emerging economies not unseen in the global scenario. But fear persists that a bid to arrest inflationary pressures the government may be forced to shed some of the domestic expenditures if crude import account remains inelastic.

**Conventional Crossword**

1	2	3	4	5	6
8		9		10	11
	12			14	15
16			17		
			18		19
20	21	22	23		
		24			
25			26		

**ACROSS**  
1 Meal  
5 Domestic animal  
7 Wall painting  
8 Quickness of perception  
10 Thickness  
12 Part of a shoe  
13 Take nourishment  
14 Scheme  
15 Finest quality  
17 Digit  
18 Strong taste  
20 Spinning toy  
23 In truth  
24 Entity  
25 Gratuity  
26 Walk as an infant

**DOWN**  
1 Bell  
2 Temporary stops  
3 Separate metal from ore  
4 Melody  
5 Headwear  
6 Everyone  
9 Water filled trench around castle  
11 Japanese monetary unit  
14 Body of water  
15 Traditional story  
16 Sporting item  
17 Dance  
18 Tinge  
21 Kimono sash  
22 Vigor

**SUDOKU: 2294**

4			2				7
1						4	
9	7			6	1		
3			5	7			
4	6					9	3
		1	8				4
		3	2		4		9
8							2
2		3					6

**Yesterday's Solution 2293**

5	9	6	1	8	7	3	4	2
1	4	3	5	2	6	7	9	8
7	8	2	4	9	3	6	5	1
9	6	1	8	7	5	4	2	3
2	3	7	9	1	4	5	8	6
4	5	8	6	3	2	9	1	7
6	1	4	3	5	8	2	7	9
3	7	9	2	4	1	8	6	5
8	2	5	7	6	9	1	3	4

**Yesterday's Cross Word Solution 302**

S	P	O	T			H	E	R	O
T	M	I	X			E	V	E	N
A	B	E	T			P	R	I	D
M	N	A	V	E		C			
E			N	O	R	T			
N	I	L		W	I	G			A
			E		L	A			N
S	T	A	L	L		V	O	I	D
P	A	V	E		P	E	N		I
A	P	E	D			L	E	N	T

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