

# EDITORIAL

## No More Free Lunches

Politicians might fight each other in elections, but when it comes to their perks, they are a feisty and united lot, which is why the Uttar Pradesh Government's lawyers — a Government mind you that is led by Yogi Adityanath and the Bharatiya Janata Party — argued for an amendment that had been passed by the previous Samajwadi Party Government of Akhilesh Yadav that gave housing to previous Uttar Pradesh Chief Ministers for life. The Supreme Court, in its wisdom, struck down the amendment saying that once a Chief Minister demits office, he/she returns to being a "common man" and the public office held by them becomes "a matter of history". Indeed, it is not just Uttar Pradesh, but a practice in several States — from north to south and east to west — where the State takes over the responsibility of housing their former premiers.

The Supreme Court is right. Why should former Chief Ministers, or any former leader be housed by the State? An exception has been made for those whose lives are under threat, Special Protection Group (SPG) protectees, such as former Prime Ministers and in the case of Sonia Gandhi, their families which the Supreme Court themselves had ruled on in 1997 in a three-judge bench. However, it has become a norm for former leaders to treat the Government apparatus as their own and abuse the system. The adopted son of Bhairon Singh Shekhawat, Vikramaditya Singh, has been living on in the bungalow allotted to the former Vice President in Jaipur despite Shekhawat's death in 2010 and his widow Suraj Kanwar passing away in 2015. Another example was the violence threatened by Rashtriya Lok Dal leader Ajit Singh when he was asked to vacate his official bungalow on Tughlak Road because he considered it his "right", of course, he beat a hasty retreat out of the house once it was certain that it was a battle he could not win. Even though there are notable exceptions such as Tripura's former Chief Minister, Manik Sarkar who made his economic deprivation an election issue, the public at large considers most politicians wealthy enough to afford their post-office housing. After all, if they wear Hublot watches and fancy outfits, they are certain to be able to afford their own housing. In case they cannot, their political organisations owe it to them to find them housing.

## Who Holds the Trump Card?

In January this year, I had the privilege of meeting octogenarian former Prime Minister H D Deve Gowda at his house in Padmanabhanagar in Bengaluru. It was late in the night and he had been attending a series of meetings with party workers from across the State. He had a hectic day earlier that day attending four meetings across Karnataka. I did not have a formal appointment and was trying my luck. Finally, when I was called at 11:30 pm, after a three-hour wait, I thought I would barely be able to get his attention. Hesitant, I entered his room where I found him sitting composed with no signs of exhaustion whatsoever.

Sensing the precious opportunity I had of his audience, I blurted out all I could about how we were assisting political parties in their media and communication outreach, including professional management of social media. When I informed him about my academic and professional pedigree — a PhD from JNU and stint with three national dailies including The Pioneer — he took special interest and appreciated the work we were doing and also asked me to come the next day. What was remarkable was that when I was leaving, he personally handed over a banana to me. That was, I thought, an exceptional gesture. As I peeled it off on my way back, I admired his ability to lend that human touch to an insignificant meeting for him with a Dilli wala.

A fracture in my leg few days later did not allow me to pursue it further but as time progressed and I read about Karnataka election, I realised how significant Gowda would become in less than a week from now. Even though the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) seems set to snatch the State from the Congress, reducing it to what Prime Minister Narendra Modi called PPP or Punjab, Puducherry and Parivar, it is likely that the party would indulge Gowda post the election.

It was evident earlier last week as Modi generously spoke of the former Prime Minister. Modi had said that the son of the soil and former Prime Minister was among the tallest leaders of the country. "We have had political differences with Deve Gowdaji but there is no denying that he is among India's most respected leaders," said Prime Minister Modi, while in the same breath, attacking Congress president Rahul Gandhi for using foul language for Gowda. "The language Congress leaders have used for Deve Gowdaji is shocking. This shows their arrogance," he said.

Gowda reciprocated the compliments and said that it was because of Modi that he continued in the Lok Sabha. "Before the 2014 election, I had said I would resign my Lok Sabha membership if BJP gets a majority on its own. I decided to resign, but Modi persuaded me against doing so. He said the country needs the experience and services of senior leaders," National president of Janata Dal (Secular) (JD (S)), Gowda was quoted as saying by a newspaper.

The bonhomie of JD (S) and BJP, experts say, is also important given the fluid post-poll scenario as is being predicted by pre-poll surveys. A careful analysis of the BJP's strategy would reveal that it has nurtured a good relationship with its alliance partners. Even though there is no such understanding with the JD (S), in a dynamically changing political scenario and with an eye on the 2019 general elections, it would be in the interest of the BJP to nurture good relationship with Gowda. For Gowda, too, it makes better sense to align with the BJP, given that the issues he wants to be addressed can best be handled by the party in power at the Centre.

# Failing on Defence Planning, as Always

Four years after coming to office, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) led Government hurled a surprise at the defence and strategic community with newspapers last month splashed with the news of a new high-powered Defence Planning Committee (DPC) under NSA Ajit Doval to steer the country's military security strategy and develop defence capability. Instead of first establishing Integrated Theatre Commands, appointing a Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) and creating jointness in existing planning headquarters, like the Ministry of Defence (MoD) and Integrated Defence Staff, the DPC appears as an attempt to obfuscate defence planning and higher political management.

India has waited for a CDS for 50 years. The first time this acronym was heard was after the 1971 war when Prime Minister Indira Gandhi told late Field Marshal Sam Manekshaw that he would be made CDS, but the idea whose time had come, never materialised. In 2001, following the Group of Ministers (GoM) report after the Kargil Review Committee report had recommended and the Government accepted 340 defence reforms, and some were implemented, the name of Admiral Sushil Isaacs as

CDS was the breaking news on TV, his office chosen and rehearsals carried out for his appointment. The screens then went blank; the CDS disappeared into oblivion. It was not until the Naresh Chandra Task Force (NCTF) was set up in 2011 that the CDS was resurrected from among 97 recommendations made by the Task Force.

Defence Minister AK Antony, influenced by the bureaucracy, refused to approve the appointment of the CDS. By the end of September 2012, the MoD had accepted all the NCTF recommendations except two: Integration of the MoD and IDS; and the appointment of Permanent Chairman Chiefs of Staff Committee in lieu of CDS.

Of the three Defence Ministers appointed by this Government (Arun Jaitley twice holding additional charge of defence) only Manohar Parrikar was seriously working towards the CDS. He announced half a dozen times that a CDS will happen — in six months time.

With the CDS missing, without a genuinely integrated Inter Services Staff and several recommendations of the GoM not implemented, erecting a new defence planning architecture is creating another organisation

on a weak platform. Without foundational reforms — missing CDS and no integration for jointness in planning structures — the DPC will be like a house of cards. Previously, the Government had tried working at National Security Council (NSC), National Security Advisory Board (NSAB), and other ad hoc committees. The versatile and immortal Governor of Jammu & Kashmir, NN Vohra, has suggested a Ministry for National Security but India never produced a single worthwhile document on security and defence strategy.

But the reincarnated DPC is meant to be a permanent body consisting of the three Service Chiefs (one of whom is rotating chairman of CoSC) Secretaries of Defence, Foreign Affairs and Expenditure. The chief of IDS is member secretary who will service the DPC. IDS currently has five departments — Doctrine, Organisation and Training; Perspective Plans and Force Structures; Intelligence; Operations; and Medical. Because it is not fully staffed, does not have anyone from the Ministry of External Affairs, for example, and other expertise, there are holes in its output.

In April 2017, the IDS produced the joint doctrine of the Indian Armed Forces which

was a very shoddy work and was criticised by the strategic community. Missing was the concept of jointness, joint war fighting capability and interoperability. Till some of the basic shortcomings of jointness and integration are rectified through joint commands, truly integrated headquarters and the CDS, the DPC will make no substantial difference to the existing outcomes. In the IDS, operations are planned and fought single service and separate defence plans are merely stitched together.

Almost similar to the IDS, the DPC has four subcommittees: Policy and Strategy; Planning and Capability Development; Defence Diplomacy and Defence Manufacturing. The last two would have been in IDS had the Ministry of External Affairs and Defence Research and Development Organisation initially posted their officers instead of keeping these slots vacant. The DPC will produce position papers which the MoD and IDS do today and forward them to the Raksha Mantri (RM). In other words, NSA will report to the RM. How all this will sharpen defence planning and capability building is hard to visualise. This one extra layer of bureaucracy of very busy bureaucrats will in no way cata-

lyse strategic processes and tactical procedures as long as strategic political guidance is absent. The RM's operational directive is currently written by the IDS and not the CCS or NSC.

Thus, the left arm does not know what the right arm is doing as illustrated by the establishment of yet another advisory panel for RM. A 13-member committee has been formed to explore why procurement procedures on capital projects exceeding five billion rupees face long delays. Ironically, principal resistance to its formation has come from MoD. The RM should also task the panel to investigate why modernisation funds, meagre as they are, are usually not utilised in full, usually for reasons of financial expediency — balancing the fiscal deficit.

The truth about higher defence management, defence planning and capacity building is the surfeit of ad hocism. Prime Minister Modi ordering 36 Rafale instead of allowing the fruition of the 126 Rafale aircraft deal, is a classic example. As long as the Government does not traverse the established planning processes, starting with a National Strategic Defence and Security Review, followed by building requisite military capability

— which has never been done — Governments will indulge in bouts of tinkering and tampering as has been the practice excluding the KRC report. Even a White Paper on defence has never been attempted. The NSAB and IDS were asked to draft a National Security Strategy. The UK last carried out its SDSR in 2011 and keeps updating it along with periodic military capability review.

A Defence Planning Staff was established in 1985 with hands on involvement of service chiefs and the defence Minister in systematising defence planning and higher defence management. It wrote the first ever 15-year Long Term Integrated Defence Plan which was recognised in Parliament. DPS was the harbinger of jointness and integration — with it morphing into IDS, but with jointness absent. The middle-headedness will continue with NSA replacing Defence Secretary as virtual CDS. What is really needed is the revival of the Cabinet Committee on Defence. In many ways, the DPC is too little too late and akin to the Government's charade of the latest RFI for 110 fighter jets. The missing defence reforms have to be forced top down, overruling the babocracy.

# Builder-buyer Impasse

Indian societies, since time immemorial, have been a witness to different kinds of mafias which posed serious challenges to governance. Even in the modern era of democracy, these mafias, in league with powerful people, are subverting the rule of law for selfish monetary gains. The growing demand for housing in the last few years has given birth to several real estate mafias in the country, who had been taking home buyers for a ride in the belief that the law will never catch them.

The policies of the Government in the past two decades, controlled by the political and bureaucratic nexus, has led to the creation of real estate mafias all over the country. Previously, till a decade and a half ago, the Government policies have been to promote urban housing societies constituted by different groups of people by allocating them Government-acquired land and a large number of people, especially the middle income and salaried class, could own decent apartments and houses in Delhi and other cities at affordable prices.

However, slowly, the grip of these real estate mafias grew with the growth of the

economy and with money in the hands of the buyers. These mafias hoodwinked the Government and the people with a promise to modernise the housing sector with better technology. Corrupt politicians, like the one being witnessed in Noida and the National Capital Region (NCR), saw it as an opportunity to make quick moolah (money) in league with real estate builders and even floated their own companies.

Urban housing became a business venture with various Government agencies auctioning lands acquired from the farmers under different provisions by invoking emergency public interests clauses. It, thus, became a money-spinning venture for the agencies and authorities; and in essence, both the farmers and buyers suffered. This has been reflected in the last few years through the farmers' agitation in Noida and elsewhere. With this, group-housing societies were buried for the sake of builder-oriented housing schemes for which the Government gleefully acquired lands by trampling on the rights of the farmers and created city/town specific development authorities or agencies, as they are called, to be domi-

nated by bureaucrats, and indirectly controlled by influential local politicians.

The Government auctioned/allotted the plots to the builders at a very high price. This has, on the one hand, increased the cost of houses/flats. On the other, promoted builders-criminal nexus in cities like Noida, Gurgaon, Faridabad, Chandigarh, Bhopal, Jaipur and several other cities and towns with skyscrapers.

Consequently, prices of apartments and plots skyrocketed, compared to previous years. This was a win-win situation for both, Government agencies controlling the housing business as also for the real estate developers. In this case, people were the last losers. The quick flow of money in the hands of ill-equipped and 'nouveau riche' developers, like Amrapali, Unitech and Jaypee builders, overnight transformed them as modern-day superstars of the Page 3 crowd partying at the cost of poor investors. They used the money collected to fulfil personal whims and fads. Their actions are nothing shorter than looters and daylight pick-pockets. But the most overlooked fact is the unscientific way of creating these

skyscrapers. In foreign countries, after due scientific and technological studies, high-rise above six-storey are allowed under proper technical supervision. In Noida and other places, builders are constructing such buildings not only in very sensitive seismic zone but also at the unstable Yamuna banks. It, however, needs to be verified what precautionary world-class technological steps had been taken by Government authorities to ensure the safety of these high-rise buildings. The Indian Constitution, however, empowers the people, through judicial intervention, to seek justice and to protect their fundamental and other rights. The Supreme Court of India is the last refuge for harassed citizens. One of the highest points of the Indian judiciary's positive contribution is the interest the apex court takes in some issues, where the executive fails to deliver.

In 1996, the Supreme Court took upon itself to set the mess right in the field of environmental and forest conservation and Government comments at the Centre and State were forced to take action. The recent focus of the top court in cases registered against the Amrapali group,

is yet another sign that the judges have decided to stem the rot by regularly hearing the cases filed before it. When a few property buyers found that members of the National Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission (NCDRC) were taking very long time in deciding the cases filed against the Amrapali group, they filed a Special Leave Petition in the apex court and the issue immediately received the attention of the entire nation.

The NCDRC is prevaricating in its hearing in Amrapali case and what is objectionable is the fact that one of the members had forced the buyer to publish the notice in three costly newspapers identified by him. It appears that the NCRDC process is helping the builder more than disposing off the case fast and it is a matter for the Government and the Supreme Court to order an investigation on a manner the cases are held up. When the Yogi Adityanath Government came to power in Uttar Pradesh, the Chief Minister set up a three-member Cabinet committee to solve the problem. But it proved to be a big fiasco and the committee became a laughing stock in the eyes of property owners. It

is high time this ministerial group is disbanded. Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister must decide before the 2019 General election as the resentment for not taking action against the builders is writ large now. The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) president Amit Shah must ask the national spokesperson and advocate Gaurav Bhatia to immediately withdraw from representing the Amrapali group or else it will affect the fortunes of the party. All eyes are now on the Supreme Court's hearing. People have faith in the top court and are hopeful that it will sort this matter by punishing these looters. The judicial process also has an opportunity to improvise the functioning of local bodies like the incompetent Noida Authority to seriously take action in the interests of the buyers and even forge its claim of earning profit from the sale of land for flats. In fact, the whole gamut of real estate management is a scam and needs to be looked into. Today, if someone decides to buy a property from an existing owner, he has to pay a very heavy price for transferring the lease in his name to the Noida Authority as well as to the housing society.

# Our Democracy Is for the Many

Our democracy is different from all. Because of all the others, in practically every country in the world, democracies are formed by and are for the elites. They are democracies where what is fair is what suits a few. They are class democracies, where the many are seen as mere quantity, not quality. Not in Venezuela. In Venezuela, democracy is for the many, and what is right is what is good for all the people. And as the needs of people change, articulate and renew, so does our revolutionary project constantly change. For example, 20 years ago, it was normal to be born in Venezuela in the midst of obsteric violence. And it was hard for us to even imagine that at the moment of birth, not only the health of the newborn is important, but also the health and rights of the mother and her family. But the revolution changed

and it became feminist. And among all of us, we decided to remove sexist violence from our health system and empower women through the national human birth programme, respecting each mother's project and decisions about delivery and upbringing. Twenty years ago, before the Bolivarian revolution, it was normal to blame the young people for unemployment, and the idea that the poor were poor was because they were lazy, and thus, deserved poor health, low salaries, hunger and living without a roof. But with us in the Government, things changed. And we knew to say with a force that it is not justice that someone continues being poor if he works all day. That is why during the Chávez Governments, we promoted a policy of full employment, and in my Government, we have launched, thanks to the country's new

digital, "Homeland Card" — which is a system that digitally integrated all Venezuelans — the Chamba Juvenil plan (a youth work programme), to guarantee our youth, an access to jobs and a brighter future. We also said 20 years ago that it was unfair that the home itself was a dream for the people, but a reality only for the elites, and then we created the Great Housing Mission plan, with which we have built and delivered more than two million housing units. Quality and free for poor families, and with which we have projected to reach, in a few years, the goal of five million homes built. As of this year, I will also implement a new social security plan so that Venezuela will have that education and health that it had before the attacks and the economic war, and that had us as an example of

quality for Latin America. A social security that will be

sustained on a stable productive economy, sovereign and

prosperous, and not subject to the swings of oil prices.

**PUBLIC NOTICE**

**ICICI Home Finance**

**Regd. & Corporate Office:** ICICI Bank Towers, Bandra-Kurla Complex, Bandra (E), Mumbai 400051

A notice is hereby given that the following borrower/s have defaulted in the repayment of principal and interest of the loans facility obtained by them from the secured creditor and the loans have been classified as Non Performing Assets (NPA). The notice dated. were issued to them under Section 13 (2) of Securitisation and Re-construction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act-2002 on their last known addresses as provided to the secured creditor by them, that in addition thereto for the purposes of information of the said borrowers enumerated below, the said borrowers are being informed by way of this public notice.

Sr. No.	Name of the Borrower/ Co-Borrower/ Guarantor (Loan Account Number & Address)	Property Address of Secured Asset / Asset to be Enforced	Date of Notice Sent/ Outstanding as on Date of Notice in Rs.	NPA Date
1.	Lajja Shah / Mitika Gami - NHBHO00000818409, A- 702 Bhadraklok, 7th Floor Old Padra Road, Vadodara, Gujrat - 390020	Flat No 404, 4 Th Floor, C Wing, Everglades II, Mahavir Universal Complex, Villaga Pashthal, Boisar Wests No 59 1AP 59 1, Boisar - 401504	April 6, 2018 RS. 9,73,875.00/-	9/1 2018

The above borrower/s and/or their guarantors (where ever applicable) are advised to make the payments of outstanding within period of 60 days from the date of issuance of notice U/s. 13 (2) failing which, further steps will be taken after the expiry of 60 days from the date of issuance of notice U/s. 13 (2) dated \_mentioned above\_ as per the provisions of Securitisation and Re-construction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002.

Sd/-  
Authorized Officer  
For ICICI Home Finance Company Ltd.

Date : 10-May-2018  
Place: Vadodara

