PREFACE

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P. D. SARANGADHARAN,
SECRETARY,
KERALA LEGISLATURE.

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VOL. XLIV | DECEMBER 2014 | No.12

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The World Economic Forum Report, Geneva, 2014
India's Gender Gap

A. Chatterjee

Most Indians are very familiar with the gender gap issue in India. A female child is considered an unwanted gift and a burden for the family in many communities in India. A male child, on the other hand, gets access to available resources in the form of education, health care and jobs. A female child has to fight for all of these resources, mustering her moral strength in the face of these societal odds.

In many parts of India, especially in the villages, a girl is married at a very early age, and this often ends her dream to work towards any other ambitions other than being a housewife. In the work place, there is discrimination as male workers are paid much more than female workers for the same job. This of course is not an uncommon scene even in many advanced nations. In India it is very common to see women labourers working on construction sites doing unskilled jobs under miserable conditions and receiving very poor compensation. Women workers are employed in cities such as Delhi, Mumbai, Bangalore or Kolkata, and are a common sight, sweeping the streets with hand brooms for a very small wage. In the farming areas, one will see women doing hard and laborious jobs for a few rupees a day. In most households, one will witness the women doing cleaning & cooking at well below living wages. Women working in call centers or in factories even with good wages, do face unsecured and unsafe working conditions. Even today, some middle- class or higher income families do not allow women to work because of cultural attitudes.

These are not random stories. If one does a systematic research on India's gender gap issue, it will become evident what a sorry state of affairs there exists. The World Economic Forum 2014, recently released its report in Geneva, revealing a shocking picture of India's gender gap situation. According to it, India ranks at a low 114 among 142 countries surveyed. The report clearly documents that since 2006, India has not improved its score or its ranking.

For example, in 2007 India ranked 114 with a score of 0.59 and in 2008 the ranking was 113 and the score was 0.60. Although no country in the world has a perfect score, all Nordic countries such as, Iceland, Finland, Norway, Sweden and Denmark are on top of the list with close to 100% gender equality.

Table-1 shows India ranks very poorly in gender gap **problem even compared to India's neighboring economies.**

Table - 1

Global Gender Gap Index, 2014, India & Neighbouring Economies

RANK	ECONOMY	SCORE*
9	PHILIPPINE	0.78
59	SINGAPORE	0.70
61	THAILAND	0.70
68	BANGLADESH	0.69
76	VIETNAM	0.69
79	SRILANKA	0.69
87	CHINA	0.68
97	INDONESIA	0.67
112	NEPAL	0.64
114	INDIA	0.64

Source: World Economic Forum, Geneva, Switzerland, 2014
*Only two decimal shown. 0.00= inequality and 1.00= equality

It is worth noting that the World Economic Forum's score and associated ranking for countries that were surveyed, are all- inclusive macro indicators. There are some very important matrix that are considered in the study to arrive at the final ranking and score. These include labour force participation rate, earned income, literacy rate, life expectancy, women in parliament and women in ministerial positions. In this entire matrix, India performed very poorly as shown in the Table-2.

Table-2

India Score Card

Selected Indicators	Rank	Female	Male	Female-male Ratio
Labour Participation Rate	130	30	40	0.36
Estmated Earned Income (US$)*	135	$1980	$8087	0.024
Literacy Rate	126	51	75	0.68
Healthy Life Expectancy	96	58	56	1.04
Women in Parliament	111	11	89	0.13
Women in Ministerial Position	107	9	91	0.10

Source: World Economic Forum, Geneva, Switzerland, 2014

Purchasing Power Parity basis

It is clear from the Table-2 that India's gender inequality starts from politics. In India's parliament women represent only 13% of the total, while in ministerial jobs women represent only 10%.These numbers should be judged against the scale that in India overall male-female sex ratio is 1.07. From the economic perspective, women participation rate in the labour market is very low, only 30%, implying 70% of working age women do not join the work force, thus denied of contributing to India's GNP. As well, average earned income-gap is huge: female workers, on average get 24% of their male counterpart. This wage gap is correlated with a lower literacy rate among female workers in addition to the discriminatory wages practiced at the work place.

The World Economic Forum study in my opinion, should be taken seriously by all economic, political and social agents. Without attaining or at least working towards gender equality, no nation can sustain social harmony and economic prosperity. In a civil society, women should feel equal to men instead of being considered second-class citizens. Gender equality is fundamental to economic growth and economic prosperity. The World Economic Forum study shows high correlation between a country's economic performance and its gender gap. Lower the income gap, higher the economic expansion. All Nordic countries for example, show high per capita GNP as the gender equality is high, close to 100%. The report states, "Limiting women's access to the labour market is costly. For example, Asia and the Pacific countries reportedly lose US$42 billion to $47 billion annually as a region because of women's limited access to employment opportunities."

There is no single or easy solution to India's gender gap issue. It would take a long and robust research to list all factors needed to be done to come close to the gender equality that Sweden or Denmark have achieved. In my view, any solution should start with access to education-just not primary education, but also secondary and college education combined with skill-based training, so that women are marketable with work-skills.

Secondly, for women workers in factories or in call centers, a safe and secure work environment is paramount, so that they are encouraged to work with dignity and without fear. As well, more women should stand for parliament and should be given more positions at the ministerial level so that they can voice their concerns and educate the Indian public. This will provide a proper platform since women represent the 600 million strong Indian female population. When it is evident that the wage gap is due to discrimination, legislative action should be taken to narrow the gap. More importantly, there is an utmost need to change the mindset of Indian citizens and their cultural attitudes and to accept the fact Indian women are as good as Indian men. This is not an easy task. The gender gap cannot be narrowed overnight. All stake holders, politicians, corporate leaders, social activists and people at large must come forward and accept the challenge to change for the good of the country and thus for society at large.

It is generally believed that India's new Prime Minister, Mr. Modi with a majority in parliament, is a game changer. His priority, as we understand it, is economic prosperity and growth, so that people who have been marginalized to-date, would benefit from stronger economic growth and associated improved infrastructure. In this context I believe lowering the gender gap is part of the equation of economic growth & economic prosperity. If more and more women join the labour force, it will automatically increase India's GNP. This is a simple calculus of the measurement of GNP. Indeed, gender equality provides economic dividends. To increase the participation rate of Indian women in the labour market, Prime Minister Modi has to remove the obstacles that have been discussed in this paper.

Of course, this is a challenging task for Mr. Modi and his government but it is long overdue and must be done. India has to provide access to women to resources such as education, work related skill training and health care. A safe and secure environment, free of harassment in the work place, especially in factories and call centers must be put in place immediately. The wage gap between men and women resulting from discriminatory employment practices must be addressed through the legislative process. More importantly, there is an urgent need for a paradigm shift in people's minds about social discrimination and cultural attitudes towards Indian women. Without taking serious steps to narrow the gap as argued in this paper, India's score and ranking in future gender gap studies will continue to remain at the bottom of the world scale.

SOUTHERN ECONOMIST,
DECEMBER 1, 2014.

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Life Imprisonment Is Worse Than Death Penalty

Sanjeev Sirohi

The first question that I would pose to all my readers is: Why no one barring a few exceptions, like Justice Krishna Iyer, ever demands the permanent abolition of life imprisonment from our legal system while we keep hearing every now and then arguments for abolition of death penalty? Why should life imprisonment not be permanently abolished? Why should the life term punishment exist at all in our penal laws if it is worse than death penalty which it is actually about which there can be no two opinions as Justice VR Krishna Iyer has very rightly pointed out? Centre and our law makers must seriously deliberate on this to arrive on a conclusion.

India is no longer a colony of Britain under the empire that the laws made in 1860 cannot be adequately amended in 2014 to meet the present circumstances. Laws should be retired precisely as they are made - routinely and continuously! The most disturbing thing is that now the life imprisonment has been made worst and we have left even the punishment given during British rule behind! During British rule, life imprisonment meant 14 years and after Independence even though in some cases they approved it but, of late, it has been meant to mean whole life without any remission as the Supreme Court recently held unless the governments prefers to do so under the relevant provisions of the CrPC. This is most concerning to note.

Life imprisonment is the worst crime that can ever be committed by anyone and even the state cannot be given the license to commit the most heinous crime on Earth! But what we see on ground is completely astounding and life imprisonment keeps getting conferred at the drop of a hat which is most unfortunate, to say least!

Yet, we never hear even a whimper of protest from any human right or social activist or any eminent legal luminary barring certain notable exceptions and that too not very vociferously. This itself proves that this burning topic which is the worst form of human rights violations has never received any attention of any kind from anywhere in the world and even our Law Commission has never given it a thought even though it keeps on reviewing death penal from time to time!

Sections in IPC or any other penal law which mandate death penalty can be counted in finger tips in one hand alone but life imprisonment is inundated in so many Sections and in so many penal laws that a lot of unremitting hard work has to be done to count the exact number of Sections which prescribe life imprisonment! Yet all the time we hear all the brouhaha over death penalty. Isn't it a supreme irony over which no one, not even our Law Commission, bothers to even brood over?

As a great civilisation which has always followed the non-violent, love and tolerant ideas of Buddha, Nanak and Mahatma Gandhi, India must put the punishment of life imprisonment to where it truly belongs - in the museum.

Not Justified

Life term under no circumstances can ever be justified. No matter how heinous any crime any criminal may have committed, there is always a possibility of reforming but life term forever closes that option. We need to change our mental level of thinking and learn to be more tolerant even towards those who have gone on the wrong track! Of course, they should be punished but simultaneously we must make sure that they too are given an opportunity of returning to the mainstream so that their whole family benefits especially those who are totally dependent on them like aged parents, wife and children etc.

What sense does it make to lock a person inside jail for whole life? Why should instead such person not be made to do service which can benefit the society at large without paying him or her anything in return and yes, if someone is dependent on him or her for survival then directly giving to the concerned dependent some money? Will this not benefit the whole society also his or her family who were not partner in the crime while punishing him or her at the same time?

When such an eminent jurist like Justice VR Krishna Iyer who is a former Judge of the Supreme Court can believe in "Operation Valmiki" then why can't the society as a whole believe in the same? Justice Iyer had hit the nail on the head when he had said a long time back that, "I believe in Operation Valmiki because every saint has a past and every sinner has a future." Even Oscar Wilde had said that, "The only difference between a saint and a sinner is that every saint has a past and every sinner has a future." Most unfortunately, this is what our lawmakers and successive governments in the Centre have always ignored! Rules made by our former colonial rulers – British who treated Indians like servants – are still continuing more or less intact and hardly few changes have been made which is the real tragedy! Just mourning won't do. Such outmoded and archaic laws needs to be thrown out or at least amended to meet the present circumstances!

Privilege for some

Supreme Court has clarified in many of its judgment including the one in the famous Rajiv Gandhi assassination case that, "Life imprisonment means [until the] end of one's life", but has

noted that the life term would be subject to provisions relating to remission by the appropriate government under the Code of Criminal Procedure. Here I would like to ask a volley of serious questions from our law makers and government: Why is it that only a privileged few get the benefit of remission alone? Why can't there be a uniform policy for all that after serving 10 or 14 or even 20 or 25 or at the most 30 years in prison they are released? What is the guarantee that state government will exercise or had exercised in the past its powers without indulging in partiality or favouritism?

Serious threat

Awarding of life sentence without remission has prompted many eminent legal jurists to raise a serious legal and Constitutional question - Can the Supreme Court take away the constitutionally conferred power on governments to remit sentence of a convict after a person has served 14 years in jail? Let me point out here that eminent legal jurist and top senior lawyer of apex court, Fali S Nariman, had sought an early adjudication of this very pertinent question which he had raised more than five years ago but most unfortunately it still remains pending.

Moreover, let us not forget the inevitable fact that keeping dreaded criminals alive in jail for whole life pose, a very serious threat not just to the society but also to the entire nation. Such dreaded criminals especially terrorists who get training in foreign countries on how best to destroy India can cause huge havoc if they are somehow able to escape by digging a tunnel or by any other means. This has happened also many times in Punjab and other states where terrorism thrives or thrived at one point of time or the other.

Also, let us not be oblivious of the pertinent and clinching fact that hostile nations like Pakistan and others can always resort to kidnapping innocent civilians in an aeroplane or from any other destination, as happened actually during the Kandhar hijacking case in 1999, and India was compelled to release three dreaded terrorists including Omar Sheikh and Maulana Masood Azhar who later founded notorious terror outfit - Jaish-e-Mohammad which was responsible for many daring attacks like the one on Parliament and J & K Assembly and massacred thousands of innocents and will continue to do so in future also till they are alive!

So now it is your turn to tell me - Should there not be mandatory death penalty for terrorists and no life term under any circumstances in the interests of millions of innocent Indians whose lives these terrorists are always desperate to take at the behest of hostile foreign nations like Pakistan and others? Needless to say, that more than 50 crores were spent on dreaded Pakistani terrorist Ajmal Amir Kasab who was sentenced to death and who stayed alive for just few years? If he was still alive and he was hardly in his 20s, imagine how much money would have been spent on keeping him in prison for the rest of his life!

Now coming to the other side of the fence, There are many who also believe that terrorists too can be brainwashed not in the manner Pakistan or other hostile nation does but in a real positive sense and they too, once reformed, should be allowed to come back to the mainstream and live a normal life like others and make positive contributions.

Big irony

What a supreme irony that according to the government itself, only 54 persons have been executed since Independence as reported in The Times Of India on 25 August 2014 but yet so much of brouhaha is made of death penalty! On the contrary, endless number of persons have been sentenced to life imprisonment since Independence and yet we hardly hear any voice to repeal it forever in the supreme interest of protection of humanity, life and personal liberty of not just common citizens but also criminals!

It is high time and now not just Centre but even our Law Commission, too, must do a thorough introspection and deep research on it to get to the bottom of the matter. I am sure that they too will ultimately come to the logical conclusion that in a modem, civilised society, life imprisonment simply serves no relevant purpose other than satisfying few sadistic egos and must therefore be stamped off all our statutes and penal laws. Only then can we call ourselves tolerant, civilised and modern in the true sense! At least I feel in this manner. You or for that matter anyone else including Centre can fully differ with me on this count.

Easy to Die

The Supreme Court earlier, while rejecting the challenge to the death penalty, had quoted the 1967 report of the Law Commission (which was 35th if I can recollect correctly) which had said that, "Having regard, however, to the conditions in India, to the variety of social upbringing of its inhabitants to the disparity in the level of morality and education in the country, to the vastness of its area, to the diversity of its population and to the paramount need for maintaining law and order in the country at the present juncture, India cannot risk the experiment of abolition of capital punishment."

The easiest way to die is by hanging. Don't we know this simple basic fact which is a matter of common knowledge that how many people commit suicide every year by hanging alone? What to say about committing suicide by other means? Why did the prime accused in the Delhi Nirbhaya gang rape commit suicide? Even eminent lawyers, judges, senior army officers, police officers and doctors etc keep on committing suicide time and again because it is most difficult to stay alive and lead a frustrated life! Such people cannot serve life term by staying alive even in open.

Why do most of us fail to appreciate the basic fact that rigorous life imprisonment is much more painful than capital punishment where a criminal is killed in just one stroke? It should not be lost on us that even Afzal Guru who had been hanged in Parliament attack case had rued when

alive that, "I don't think the UPA Government can ever reach a decision. Congress has two mouths and is playing a double game. I really wish L.K. Advani becomes next PM as he is the only one who can take a decision and hang me. At least my pain and daily sufferings would ease then. Cumbersome legal procedures and prolonged periods of solitary confinement are inhuman and cruel. Life has become hell in jail. I don't wish to be a part of the living dead." This itself is adequate testimony to prove my basic point that life term is worse than capital punishment which under no circumstances can ever be justified! We must think from a more broader angle of devising more ways and means to curb the increasing crime by striking at the very root of the problem due to which more and more persons are becoming criminals and this again is possible if their basic mindset is changed and they are made to believe that their best interest lies in reforming themselves!

Centre must learn something from Punjab government who worked out the premature release of Gurmeet Singh Pinky, a Babbar Khalsa militant-turned-inspector convicted of murder where life term was done in 7 years and seven and a half months and will spend the rest of his life as a free citizen as was reported in The Indian Express dated 21 August 2014! There are many such unreported cases but what is most unfortunate is that only a few offenders having some push and pull have been able to avail of such exclusive benefit and majority of them are still compelled to languish in jail for the rest of their life.

ALIVE,
DECEMBER 2014.

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To the edge and back

R. Krishnakumar

A single bird looked ruffled and out of place within a large flock of ducks foraging in a swathe of recently harvested paddy fields. By nightfall, its beak had started quivering and it looked truly sick and despondent.

Farmers of Kuttanad are good at spotting trouble, and K.T. Kuttappan-as rustic as his name sounds and with a family tradition of rearing ducks for a living-said that was how Kerala's first-ever outbreak of the highly pathogenic bird flu began on November 9.

"By next morning, about 15 other birds were showing similar signs. I took one to the veterinary centre at Mannady. They wanted to inspect some more birds from the lot and came to the conclusion that it must be some kind of infection. Birds began to die one after the other. Costly tablets, injections and edible 'powders' were prescribed in the ensuing days, before the number of deaths came down. By then I had moved the flock to another place," he told Frontline.

Soon, though, ducks and other birds began to die all over the place and the ranks of farmers with similar stories began to swell. The State government got its first report on November 20, according to officials. Laboratory tests done locally had raised the suspicion of a serious contagion of H5N1 avian influenza. But it was on November 24 that the State government finally got official confirmation from the High Security Animal Disease Laboratory in Bhopal-as required under the Government of India's avian influenza action plan - that the deaths were indeed caused by the highly pathogenic avian influenza virus H5N1.

Over a dozen villages of the upper Kuttanad region, spread over three central Kerala districts of Alappuzha, Kottayam and Pathanamthitta, had by then come under the grip of the bird flu virus.

Never had Kuttappan imagined that the seemingly innocuous signs first found among his flock of ducks would spread so devastatingly and, within days, wipe out or lead to the largescale

killing of an entire population of birds being reared by farmers like him for the lucrative Christmas-New Year holiday season, as per tradition.

By early December, when Chief Minister Oommen Chandy announced that the spread of the virus was finally under control, apart from the hundreds of birds that died of H5N1 infection, nearly 2.5 lakh ducks and other poultry, within a radius of one kilometre of all affected areas in the three districts, were put to death and "destroyed scientifically" by specially equipped rapid action teams. The State government also launched an intensive awareness, surveillance and disinfection campaign around each area to ensure that the virus did not spread farther.

There were no reports of the H5N1 virus affecting humans, including those who had been in close contact with the birds. The Health Department put under observation around three lakh persons and sent its workers to over 80,000 households in the affected areas, in the initial phase. Although duck deaths continued to be reported from many other parts of Kerala, tests showed they were not caused by H5N1 virus infection, according to State Animal Husbandry Department officials. No case of the highly pathogenic H5N1 virus infection had been reported in Kerala earlier and the Kuttanad region, famous for its distinctive pattern of rice cultivation below sea level-with the fields being prone to frequent floods as well as seawater intrusion-was perhaps the ideal place for the virus strain to begin an "invasion". The unique wetland ecosystem, which attracts a lot of migratory birds and tourists every year, has been under much ecological stress of late, with choked waterways and poor drainage, extreme levels of fertilizer and other toxic pollution, hostile spread of invasive plant species such as water hyacinth, loss of healthy fish populations, and proliferation of waterborne parasites and predators affecting human health.

"But duck rearing is a passion in Kuttanad, and for many farmers the birds that they nurture to adulthood are like their own children," U. Prathibha Hari, Alappuzha district panchayat president, told Frontline. "I doubt whether outsiders can fathom the agony that we witnessed as flocks of men in protective gear caught hold of all those birds for slaughter, broke their necks, dug holes, poured kerosene and lit the fires. We saw distraught farmers following them everywhere, without gowns, gloves, goggles or boots. We saw ducklings run helter-skelter with their wings on fire. We heard distressing cries from traditional duck farmers for more compassion."

Providing adequate compensation to farmers was crucial to the difficult task of such mass culling of all the birds within a radius of one kilometer from the affected areas. Farmers said an adult duck would fetch around Rs.300 in the open market, but the government initially announced a compensation of Rs.75 for ducklings up to two months andRs.150 for the adult birds. On second thoughts, it was later raised to Rs.100 and Rs.200 respectively.

Kuttappan said that only about 6,000 of his flock had died of the disease, and the remaining 18,762 ducks were culled. Another farmer, C.O. Thomas, said he was going to present all his birds for culling. "I cannot let them out. Fear has gripped the area. I have to find food for them

every day. Those who own the fields are reluctant to let us leave the birds there. What else should we do but kill them all?"

According to the State government, Rs.80 lakh had been disbursed as compensation until November 30, when about 50,000 more birds remained to be culled. "Distressing though it was to all concerned, the government had no other option but to go for mass culling. It was the only way we could contain the spread," Dr V. Brahmanandan, Director of the State Animal Husbandry Department, told Frontline.

The emergence of the highly contagious and rapidly fatal H5N1 bird flu virus in 2003 and its continuing circulation in poultry and ducks in Asia and many other regions have been most worrisome for governments and scientists ("Avian epidemic", Frontline, February 27, 2004). That it has caused so much mortality in ducks in Kerala this time is further evidence that the virus continues to mutate and evolve into highly pathogenic forms.

"Ducks have been known to be carriers of the virus and usually do not get sick because of them, though there have been exceptions, as understood from some outbreaks in Vietnam and China. But, in Kuttanad, the high mortality in ducks may indicate that the virus has mutated and its virulence has increased. Persistent mutations in the virus is a sign of danger, as it could then evolve into a subtype that can infect human beings," Dr E. Sreekumar, a senior scientist at the Viral Disease Biology wing of the Rajiv Gandhi Centre for Biotechnology in Thiruvananthapuram, said.

According to Dr Brahmanandan, avian influenza viruses are highly contagious among poultry, and in the Kuttanad setting with free-range rearing of ducks, they can easily spread the virus from place to place and to chickens (where its repercussions are known to be lethal) and other birds. Animals like pigs can also get infected, a worrisome prospect (because pigs are susceptible to infections of both avian and human influenza viruses). This would provide a platform for a virus like the H5Nl to mutate further and turn into a form that can infect human beings. "Chances of further mutations would mean it can acquire the capability to jump from humans to humans and start another devastating killer flu pandemic," he said. In Kerala, the virus has so far caused sickness only in birds. But the virus is known to affect humans at times. According to the World Health Organisation (WHO), from 2003 to October 2, 2014, there were 668 confirmed cases of infection in humans, of which 393 resulted in death.

It is possible that the virus made its first appearance in the State through migratory birds, which are known reservoirs of avian influenza viruses and often may not show signs of disease. But further studies are required to confirm it, or to understand the exact role of these wild birds, said Dr C. Latha, head of the Department of Veterinary Public Health of the Kerala Veterinary and Animal Sciences University.

Though the H5Nl virus is known to be more of a lethal killer agent in chickens than in ducks, the mortality was more in the latter group of birds, more so because the infection came during the

holiday season, when traditionally the duck population is much higher in the area. According to Dr Brahmanandan, while at other times the duck population would be around seven lakh, it would be around 15lakh or more at this time of the year. This increased the chance of a virulent spread. The farmers usually make their highest profits during this period-something that would often see them through until the next season.

The outbreak of H5Nl has mainly affected ducks, but it has brought the booming poultry trade in the State to a halt. The economic impact is going to be very high, according to K.N. Noushadh, Managing Director of the Kerala State Poultry Development Corporation. "As a result of the recent events, the price of broiler chicken fell drastically, much below the production cost. The fear of virus transmission also brought to a standstill the movement of broiler chicken and eggs [from other States too]. Farmers are therefore forced to feed them and look after them well, but cannot sell them. We estimate the immediate loss in the broiler market to be Rs.100 crore."

It is important to know the risks involved in dealing with such strains of a highly pathogenic virus to understand the logistics involved in trying to contain an outbreak, Brahmanandan said. ''We were dealing with a threat that we had never faced before. First the disease had to be confirmed by the laboratory in Bhopal for the State government to make the announcement at the local level. Then we had to prepare the ground properly, make the farmers aware of the need for killing the birds en masse and also decide the compensation. Culling teams-about 70 of them, each having five or six members-had to be trained, equipped and deployed. We had to take extra care because of the waterlogged geography of the region, which ruled out the option of deep burial. That left us with only one choice to burn the carcasses of nearly 2.51akh birds. We had to scrounge throughout the country for the required protective gear, which was in short supply. But we needed them fast and they could be used only once and had to be destroyed immediately after that. Finally when the gear did arrive, there were problems in airlifting all the pieces together apart from questions about their validity period," he said.

PREVENTIVE MEASURES

Farmers and traders are hoping that the fear of infection will recede soon. There is already a clamour for immediate measures to keep the virus at bay in future and to have early detection and warning systems and preventive measures in place.

"For now, swift control measures have helped contain the spread but long-term surveillance is a must from now on," Dr Sreekumar said. "This time the heavy mortality in the duck population made the presence of the H5Nl virus obvious. But next time, it could be a different strain of the virus. Careful genome sequencing studies are needed to understand the origin and nature of the

virus strains. The tools for such studies are now available. But only two laboratories in the country are authorised to do them, because we need good precautions while handling the H5Nl virus. Its infection in humans has a severe mortality rate of 60 per cent and its management is very difficult."

Kerala, with its huge poultry trade and the highest (10.8 kg) per capita annual consumption of poultry meat in India, must now implement immediate biosecurity measures to reduce the risk of highly pathogenic bird flu virus infection in its farms, live bird markets and slaughterhouses, Noushadh said. It must also undertake regular screening of migratory birds. "But the most important lesson in all this lies in how we lost valuable time after the infection was detected first by the farmers, in reporting it and initiating containment measures. We must strengthen farmer-government ties to ensure that such events are reported promptly and in a transparent manner," he told Frontline.

FRONTLINE,
DECEMBER 26, 2014.

സാങ്കേതികവിദ്യയും ഭരണവികസനവും

ബിജു. എസ്.കെ & അനിൽകുമാർ പി.വൈ

ഏതൊരു സാങ്കേതികവിദ്യയും കണ്ടുപിടിത്തവും പൊതു സമൂഹത്തിനു കൂടി അനുഭവവേദ്യമാകുമ്പോഴാണ് അവ സ്വീകാര്യത നേടുന്നതും ജന പിന്തുണ ആർജ്ജിക്കുന്നതും. ചൊവ്വാ ഗ്രഹത്തിലേക്കുള്ള മംഗൾയാൻ ദൗത്യം ഇന്ത്യ ആദ്യ പരീക്ഷണത്തിൽ തന്നെ അഭിമാനപൂർവ്വം പൂർത്തിയാക്കിയതോടെ ബഹിരാകാശ ഗവേഷണത്തിലും സാങ്കേതിക വിദ്യയിലും മുൻനിര രാജ്യമായി ഇന്ത്യ. ഇന്ത്യ യിലെ ദാരിദ്ര്യം മാറ്റിയിട്ടു മതി കോടികൾ മുടക്കിയിട്ടുള്ള ഇത്തരം സാങ്കേതിക വിദ്യയെന്ന പഴയ പല്ലവി ഇപ്പോൾ കേൾക്കുന്നുമില്ല. ഇന്ത്യ സ്വതന്ത്രയാകു മ്പോൾ സാങ്കേതികവിദ്യ നമുക്കത്ര പ്രാപ്യമായിരുന്നില്ല. എന്നാൽ ഇന്ത്യയുടെ മാനവശേഷി മറ്റുരാജ്യങ്ങൾ വളരെ ഫലപ്രദമായി പ്രയോജനപ്പെടുത്തിയിരുന്നു. അതാകാം ഒരു പക്ഷേ ശാസ്ത്ര - സാങ്കേതിക രംഗത്ത് ഇന്ത്യയെ മുന്നോട്ടു നയിക്കാൻ പ്രേരകമായത്.

വിനിമയ രംഗത്തെ വിപ്ലവം

വിരൽത്തുമ്പ് - വിവരങ്ങളുടെയും വിജ്ഞാനത്തിന്റെയും വിനോദത്തിന്റെയും വിസ്ഫോടനം ആകുന്നു ഈ നൂറ്റാണ്ട്. അലക്സാണ്ടർ ഗ്രഹാംബെൽ 19-ാം നൂറ്റാണ്ടിൽ ടെലഫോൺ കണ്ടുപിടിക്കുമ്പോൾ ഇന്നു കാണുന്ന ഈ രംഗത്തെ നല്ല മാറ്റത്തിന്റെ അടിസ്ഥാനം ടെലഫോൺ (ഇപ്പോൾ മൊബൈൽ ഫോൺ) ആയിരിക്കുമെന്ന് ഒരു പക്ഷേ വിഭാവനം ചെയ്തിരിക്കാം. സാങ്കേതിക വിദ്യയിൽ ഈ ഉപകരണം മനുഷ്യന്റെ ജീവൻ നിലനിറുത്തുന്ന ഒരു അവയവത്തെപ്പോലെ

പ്രാധാന്യമുള്ള ഒന്നായി മാറി. വിവരാധിഷ്ഠിത സമ്പദ്ഘടനയിലും സേവന മേഖലയിലും ഇത് ഉണ്ടാക്കിയ സ്വാധീനം വിവരിക്കാനാവാത്തതാണ്. ഒരു കൈയ്യിൽ ഒതുങ്ങുന്ന പാകത്തിലുള്ള ഒരു യന്ത്രമായി ഈ സാങ്കേതിക വിദ്യ ലോകംതന്നെ ഒരു തരത്തിൽ ചുരുക്കി ചെറുതാക്കിക്കൊണ്ടിരിക്കുന്നു. കൃഷി, വിദ്യാഭ്യാസം, ആരോഗ്യം, കാലാവസ്ഥ, വ്യവസായം, വാണിജ്യം, ഗതാഗതം, വിനോദം എന്നിങ്ങനെ എല്ലാ മേഖലകളിലും, അദൃശ്യ സാന്നിധ്യമാണ് വിവരാധിഷ്ഠിത സാങ്കേതിക വിദ്യ. സുതാര്യതയുടെ പര്യായമാണ് എന്ന് വേണമെങ്കിൽ നമുക്കീ മേഖലയെ ചൂണ്ടിക്കാട്ടാം. സദ്ഭരണം പ്രദാനം ചെയ്യാൻ ഇന്റർനെറ്റ് എന്ന മായിക വലയത്തിലൂടെ ഇ-ഗവണേൻസും എം ഗവേണൻസും സാധ്യമാകുമ്പോൾ ഡിജിറ്റൽ ഇന്ത്യ എന്ന മൊബൈൽ അധിഷ്ഠിത സേവനങ്ങളുടെ കാലമാണ് വരുന്നത്. ഇതിനായി അടുത്ത മൂന്നുവർഷം കൊണ്ട് രണ്ടര ലക്ഷം ഗ്രാമപഞ്ചായത്തുകളിൽ ഓപ്റ്റിക്കൽ ഫൈബർ നെറ്റ് വർക്ക് വ്യാപകമാകുമ്പോൾ ഓൺലൈനിലൂടെ സർക്കാർ രേഖകൾ, സർക്കാർ ആനുകൂല്യങ്ങൾ, സേവനങ്ങൾ എവിടെയും ലഭ്യമാക്കാനുള്ള ബൃഹത് പദ്ധതിക്കാണ് കേന്ദ്ര ഗവൺമെന്റ് രൂപം നൽകി വരുന്നത്. എല്ലാ വീടുകളിലും ഒരാളെങ്കിലും കമ്പ്യൂട്ടർ സാക്ഷരത നേടിയാൽ മാത്രമേ ഈ ദൗത്യം പൂർണ്ണമാകൂ. അതിനുള്ള ശ്രമങ്ങൾക്കായിരിക്കണം പ്രാധാന്യം നൽകേണ്ടത്.

സാക്ഷരതയിലും, പഞ്ചായത്തിരാജ് സംവിധാനത്തിലും ഇതര സംസ്ഥാനങ്ങളേക്കാൾ ശാക്തീകരിക്കപ്പെട്ട കേരളം സാങ്കേതിക വിദ്യയുടെ വ്യാപനത്തിലും ഏറെ മുന്നിലാണ്.

വിവരസാങ്കേതികവിദ്യ ഭരണസംവിധാനത്തിൽ

ഇന്ത്യൻ ഭരണ സംവിധാനത്തിൽ വിവരസാങ്കേതികവിദ്യയുടെ നാഴികക്കല്ലായി കണക്കാക്കപ്പെടുന്നത് 1977-ൽ നാഷണൽ ഇൻഫർമാറ്റിക് സെന്റർ (NIC) സ്ഥാപിതമായതോടെയാണ്. എന്നാൽ 1999-ലാണ് വിവരസാങ്കേതികവിദ്യാ മന്ത്രാലയം രൂപീകരിക്കുകയും വിവിധ വകുപ്പുകളിൽ വിവരസാങ്കേതികവിദ്യയുടെ സഹായത്തോടെ ഭരണസംവിധാനത്തിന് ഗുണമേന്മ വരുത്തണമെന്ന് കേന്ദ്ര സർക്കാർ തീരുമാനിക്കുകയും ചെയ്തത്. വിവര സാങ്കേതികവിദ്യ ഉപയോഗിച്ച് ഭരണചക്രം ചലിപ്പിക്കുന്നതിനെയാണ് ഇ-ഗവേണൻസ് എന്നു പറയുന്നത്. ഇ-ഗവേണൻസ് സംസ്ഥാന സർക്കാരുകളിലും പ്രാദേശിക സർക്കാരുകളിലും ഉപയോഗിച്ചാൽ സദ്ഭരണ സാധ്യതകൾ ഏറും എന്നും സേവനം വേഗത്തിലും വസ്തുതാധിഷ്ഠിതവുമായ തീരുമാനമെടുക്കലിനും സാധ്യമാകും എന്നുമുള്ള

തിരിച്ചറിവും കേരള സർക്കാർ പ്രാദേശിക ഭരണസംവിധാനം പൂർണ്ണമായും വിവരസാങ്കേതികവിദ്യയുടെ സഹായത്തോടെ ആക്കുവാൻ തീരുമാനിച്ചു.

കേരള സർക്കാർ നടത്തിയ ഇ-ഗവേണൻസ് പ്രവർത്തനങ്ങളും ലക്ഷ്യങ്ങളും പട്ടിക 1 ൽ വിവരിക്കുന്നു.

ഇ-ഗവേണൻസ് പദ്ധതികളുടെ ലക്ഷ്യങ്ങൾ

ഇ-ഗവേണൻസ് പ്രവർത്തനങ്ങളും നേട്ടങ്ങളും

ഐടി അടിസ്ഥാന സേവനങ്ങൾ പ്രദാനം ചെയ്യുന്നതിൽ കാര്യക്ഷമതയുണ്ട് എന്നതിനു തെളിവാണ് കേരളം കരസ്ഥമാക്കിയ അവാർഡുകൾ. ഇ-വേൾഡ് അവാർഡ്, അങ്ങനെ 17-ൽപ്പരം അവാർഡുകൾ വിവിധ വർഷങ്ങളിലായി നേടി. കൂടാതെ മെഡിക്കൽ-എഞ്ചിനീയറിംഗ്, ഉന്നത വിദ്യാഭ്യാസത്തിലെ വിവിധ കോഴ്സുകൾ, ഹയർ സെക്കന്ററി കോഴ്സുകൾ എന്നിവയിലേയ്ക്കുള്ള പ്രവേശനം സുതാര്യമായും സമയബന്ധിതമായും ഓൺലൈനായി ചെയ്യുന്നതും വളരെയധികം പ്രശംസ പിടിച്ചു പറ്റിയിട്ടുണ്ട്.

പദ്ധതികൾ	ലക്ഷ്യങ്ങൾ
ഫ്രണ്ട്സ് (2000-ൽ തുടങ്ങി)	വൈദ്യുതി ബോർഡ്, ജല അതോറിറ്റി, റവന്യൂവകുപ്പ്, മോട്ടോർ വാഹനവകുപ്പ്, യൂണിവേഴ്സിറ്റികൾ, ബി.എസ്.എൻ.എൽ എന്നിവിടങ്ങളിലേക്കു പണം അടയ്ക്കാനുള്ള ഏക ജാലക സംവിധാനമൊരുക്കൽ
അക്ഷയ (2002-ൽ തുടങ്ങി)	എല്ലാവർക്കും വിവരസാങ്കേതിക സാക്ഷരത
ഇ-കൃഷി	കൃഷി സംബന്ധമായ എല്ലാ വിവരങ്ങളും പരിഹാരമാർഗ്ഗങ്ങളും എല്ലാവരിലേക്കും എപ്പോഴും എത്തിക്കുക.
ഇ-ടിക്കറ്റ്	കെ.എസ്.ആർ.ടി.സി ടിക്കറ്റ് ഇന്റർനെറ്റിലൂടെ എടുക്കുവാൻ സൗകര്യമൊരുക്കുക

സ്വാൻ	സെക്രട്ടേറിയറ്റ്, വികാസ്ഭവൻ മറ്റു പൊതു ഓഫീസുകൾ എന്നിവ സമന്വയിപ്പിച്ച് പേപ്പറിലല്ലാതെയുള്ള ഫയൽ കൈമാറ്റം
സ്പാർക്ക്	ഉദ്യോഗസ്ഥർക്കുള്ള ശമ്പളവും മറ്റ് ആനുകൂല്യങ്ങളും വിതരണം ചെയ്യാൻ സഹായിക്കൽ
കിസാൻ	കൃഷിക്കായുള്ള വിവരവ്യൂഹം
കെ.പി.എസ്.സി	ഉദ്യോഗാർത്ഥികളെ തെരഞ്ഞെടുക്കുന്നത് ഇ-ഗവേണൻസ്
ഇ-നേബ്ളിഗ് പാഡി	നെല്ലിന്റെ ശേഖരണ സംസ്ക്കരണ വിപണന വിതരണ പ്രക്രിയയെ സഹായിക്കുവാൻ
വാണിജ്യ നികുതി, ഇ-ഫയലിംഗ്	പേപ്പറും തെറ്റുകളും കുറവുകളുമില്ലാതെ സുതാര്യമായ നികുതിശേഖരണം
സ്വീറ്റ്(SWEET)	കേരള സർവ്വകലാശാല പരീക്ഷാവിവരങ്ങൾ
ഇ-നിയമം	ഡിജിറ്റൽ ഫയലിംഗ്, വേഗത്തിലുള്ള നിയമോപദേശം.
ഐഡിയാസ് (IDEAS)	ഗവൺമെന്റ് ഓഫീസുകളിലെ ഫയൽ ട്രാക്കിംഗ്
സുതാര്യ കേരളം	മുഖ്യമന്ത്രിയുടെ നേരിട്ടുള്ള പരാതി പരിഹാര സംവിധാനം
മെസേജ്	ഇന്റർനെറ്റിലൂടെ പൊതുജന സേവനങ്ങൾക്കുള്ള അപേക്ഷ
ഐ.ടി @സ്ക്കുൾ	ഹൈസ്ക്കുൾ വിദ്യാർത്ഥികൾക്ക് കമ്പ്യൂട്ടർ പഠന പരിപാടി
Dr. SMS (2008-ൽ തുടങ്ങി)	മൊബൈൽ ഫോണിലൂടെ ആരോഗ്യ വിവരങ്ങൾ അറിയിക്കാൻ

ഇ-ഗവേണൻസ് പ്രവർത്തനങ്ങൾ പ്രാദേശിക ഭരണ സംവിധാനത്തിൽ

കേരള സർക്കാർ പ്രാദേശിക സ്ഥാപനങ്ങൾക്ക് ആവശ്യമായ കമ്പ്യൂട്ടർ വാങ്ങുവാനും സോഫ്റ്റ്‌വെയറുകൾ വിന്യസിച്ച് സാങ്കേതികവിദ്യ പരമാവധി ഉപയോഗിക്കാനും സേവന ഗുണമേന്മ വർദ്ധിപ്പിക്കുവാനുമായി സർക്കാർ ഉത്തരവിലൂടെ നിർദ്ദേശിക്കുന്നു. 1999-ൽ ഇൻഫർമേഷൻ കേരളാ മിഷൻ എന്ന സ്ഥാപനം ആരംഭിച്ചതു തന്നെ കേരളത്തിലെ 1209 പ്രാദേശിക

സർക്കാരുകളെ പൂർണ്ണമായും ഇ-ഗവേണൻസ് സംവിധാനത്തിലേയ്ക്ക് മാറ്റി സേവനപ്രദാനം മെച്ചപ്പെടുത്തുക എന്ന ഏക ലക്ഷ്യത്തോടെയായിരുന്നു. കൂടാതെ പ്രാദേശിക സർക്കാരിനെ സംസ്ഥാന സർക്കാരുമായും സംസ്ഥാന ആസൂത്രണ കമ്മീഷനുമായി ബന്ധിപ്പിക്കുകയും ചെയ്തതോടെ പ്രാദേശികഭരണ സംവിധാനം കാര്യക്ഷമമായി. ഈ കാലയളവിൽ ഐ.കെ.എം പ്രാദേശിക സർക്കാർ ജനങ്ങളുമായി സുതാര്യമായും വേഗത്തിൽ ഇടപെടുവാനും ഗുണമേന്മ സേവന വിതരണം ഉറപ്പുവരുത്താനും 17 സോഫ്റ്റ്‌വെയറുകൾ വികസിപ്പിച്ചു. അതിൽ 12 എണ്ണം എല്ലാ പ്രാദേശിക സർക്കാരുകളിലും വിന്യസിക്കുകയും പ്രവർത്തന സജ്ജമാക്കുകയും ചെയ്തു. കേരള സർക്കാരിന്റെ ഇ-ഗവേണൻസ് പ്രവർത്തനങ്ങൾ സേവനരംഗത്ത് ഒരു വിപ്ലവം തന്നെ സൃഷ്ടിച്ചു.

പ്രധാന സോഫ്റ്റ്‌വെയറുകൾ

സേവന - ഐ.കെ.എം തയ്യാറാക്കിയ സോഫ്റ്റ്‌വെയറുകളിൽ ഏറ്റവും പ്രധാനപ്പെട്ട 'സേവന' കേരളത്തിലെ 455 ആശുപത്രികളിൽ നിന്നും ഓൺലൈനായി 24 മണിക്കുറും ജനനമരണം രജിസ്റ്റർ ചെയ്യാനുള്ള സംവിധാനമാണ്. കൂടാതെ ജനനമരണ സർട്ടിഫിക്കറ്റുകൾ ഏതു സമയത്തും പൊതുജനങ്ങൾക്ക് ഡൗൺലോഡ് ചെയ്തു പ്രിന്റ് എടുക്കുവാനും സാധിക്കും. പ്രതിരോധ കുത്തിവെയ്പ്പുകൾക്കുള്ള എസ്.എം.എസ്. സംവിധാനവും വിവാഹ രജിസ്ട്രേഷനും ഈ സോഫ്റ്റ് വെയറിലൂടെ സാധിക്കും.

സേവന പെൻഷൻ - ഏകദേശം 18.5 ലക്ഷം ജനങ്ങൾക്ക് സാമൂഹ്യ സുരക്ഷാ പെൻഷൻ വിതരണം ചെയ്യുന്നത് ഈ സോഫ്റ്റ് വെയറിന്റെ സഹായത്തോടെയാണ്. പെൻഷൻ തുക നേരിട്ട് ബാങ്കിലേക്കോ പോസ്റ്റ് ഓഫീസ് മുഖാന്തരം മണിയോർഡറായോ പൊതുജനങ്ങൾക്ക് എത്തിക്കുവാനും പരാതികൾ രജിസ്റ്റർ ചെയ്യുവാനും ഈ സോഫ്റ്റ്‌വെയർ സംവിധാനമൊരുക്കുന്നു.

സുലേഖ - രണ്ടു ലക്ഷത്തിലധികം പ്രോജക്ടുകൾ രൂപീകരിക്കുവാനും അവയുടെ പ്രവർത്തനം വിലയിരുത്തുവാനും അങ്ങനെ പ്രാദേശിക സർക്കാരുകളുടെ പദ്ധതി വിഹിതം കാര്യക്ഷമമായി വിനിയോഗിക്കുവാനും സഹായിക്കുന്ന സോഫ്റ്റ്‌വെയറാണ് 'സുലേഖ'. കേന്ദ്ര സർക്കാരിന്റെ സ്വർണ്ണമെഡൽ നേടിയ ഈ സോഫ്റ്റ്‌വെയർ പൊതുജനങ്ങൾക്ക് പദ്ധതിയുടെ പ്രവർത്തന പുരോഗതി വിലയിരുത്തുന്നതിനും ഒപ്പം സർക്കാരിന് വിവരവ്യൂഹം രൂപീകരിക്കുന്നതിനും സഹായകമാണ്.

സാംഖ്യാ - അക്രൂവൽ അടിസ്ഥാനത്തിലുള്ള എൻട്രി അക്കൗണ്ടിംഗ് സംവിധാനമാണ് 'സാംഖ്യാ' സോഫ്റ്റ്‌വെയർ. അതാതു ദിവസങ്ങളിലെ വരവു ചെലവുകൾ രേഖപ്പെടുത്തുന്നതിനും, വരവു ശേഖരണത്തിന്റെ പുരോഗതി, ചെലവുകളുടെ കാര്യക്ഷമതയും പുരോഗതിയും ഒപ്പം മാസാന്ത്യ, വർഷാന്ത്യ കണക്കുകളും റിപ്പോർട്ടുകളും വിരൽത്തുമ്പിൽ ലഭിക്കത്തക്കവിധമാണ് ഈ സോഫ്റ്റ്‌വെയർ വികസിപ്പിച്ചിരിക്കുന്നത്.

സൂചിക - ഉദ്യോഗസ്ഥർക്കും ഒപ്പം പൊതുജനങ്ങൾക്കും ഫയൽ പുരോഗതി അറിയാൻ സഹായിക്കുന്ന സോഫ്റ്റ്‌വെയറാണ് 'സൂചിക'. കേരളത്തിലെ എല്ലാ പഞ്ചായത്തുകളും ഇപ്പോൾ ഈ സോഫ്റ്റ്‌വെയർ ഉപയോഗിക്കുന്നു.

മറ്റു സോഫ്റ്റ്‌വെയറുകൾ

പഞ്ചായത്ത് മീറ്റിംഗിന്റെ മിനിറ്റ്സ് രേഖപ്പെടുത്താനും പ്രസിദ്ധീകരിക്കാനുമുള്ള 'സകർമ്മ' സോഫ്റ്റ് വെയറും ലൈസൻസ് വിതരണത്തിനായി 'സഞ്ചയ'യും ജീവനക്കാരുടെ ശമ്പളബിൽ തയ്യാറാക്കാനുള്ള 'സ്ഥാപന'യും പൊതുജനങ്ങളുടെ വിവരവ്യൂഹത്തിനായുള്ള 'സാമൂഹ്യ' യും മനുഷ്യവിഭവ പരിപാലനത്തിനുള്ള 'സാഫല്യ'യും സാമ്പത്തിക പരിപാലനത്തിനുള്ള 'സുഭദ്ര'യയും ആസ്തികളുടെ വിവര വ്യൂഹമുണ്ടാക്കാനുള്ള 'സുചിത്ര'യും പൊതുമരാമത്ത് പണികളുടെ തുക മുൻകൂട്ടി കണക്കാക്കാനുള്ള 'സുഗമ'യുമാണ് മറ്റ് സോഫ്റ്റ്‌വെയറുകൾ.

ഈ സോഫ്റ്റ്‌വെയറുകളിലൂടെ സുതാര്യതയും ഉത്തരവാദിത്തബോധവുമുള്ള പ്രാദേശിക സർക്കാരുകളാക്കി മാറ്റുക എന്നതാണ് ലക്ഷ്യം. ഈ ലക്ഷ്യ പ്രാപ്തി കൈവരിക്കുന്നത് ജനങ്ങളും ജീവനക്കാരും ഇവ ഉപയോഗിക്കുകയും അതിലൂടെ ഗുണമേന്മാ സേവന പ്രദാനം നടക്കുമ്പോഴുമാണ്.

കമ നം.	സോഫ്റ്റ്‌വെയർ	ഉപയോഗിക്കേണ്ട സ്ഥാപനങ്ങൾ	പ്രവർത്തന സജ്ജമായവ	%
1.	സുലേഖ - പദ്ധതി മോണിറ്ററിംഗ് സിസ്റ്റം	1209	1209	100
2.	സേവന - സിവിൽ രജിസ്ട്രേഷൻ	1043	1043	100
3.	സേവന - സാമൂഹ്യ പെൻഷൻ	1043	1043	100
4.	സേവന - വിവാഹ രജിസ്ട്രേഷൻ	1043	1036	99.33
5.	സാംഖ്യ - അക്കൗണ്ടിംഗ്	1209	1209	100
6.	സ്ഥാപന-ജീവനക്കാരുടെ ശമ്പളം	1209	1209	100
7.	സൂചിക- ഫയൽ പുരോഗതി	1209	981	81.14
8.	സുചിത്ര- ആസ്തി വിവരം	1209	1209	100
9.	സുചിത്ര- മാപ്പ് കളുടെ ശേഖരം	1043	821	78.71
10.	സുഗമ- പൊതുമരാമത്ത് തുക കണ്ടെത്തൽ	1208	17	15.47
11.	സഞ്ചയ- ലൈസൻസ് വിതരണം	1043	85	8.15
12.	സഞ്ചയ- ഇ-പേയ്മെന്റ്	1043	25	2.4
13.	വിവാഹം- ഓൺലൈൻ രജിസ്ട്രേഷൻ	1043	1027	88.47
14.	സഞ്ചിത- നിയമവും ചട്ടങ്ങളും	1209	1209	100
15.	സംവേദിത - പ്രാദേശിക ഭരണ പോർട്ടൽ	1209	1209	100
16.	സങ്കേതം- കെട്ടിടനിർമ്മാണ അനുവാദം	1043	61	5.84

കണ്ണമംഗലത്തെ വിശേഷങ്ങൾ

മലപ്പുറം ജില്ലയിൽ കണ്ണമംഗലം ഗ്രാമപഞ്ചായത്ത് ഭരണം മൊബൈലിലാണെന്ന് കേട്ട് അത്ഭുതപ്പെടേണ്ട. ഗ്രാമപഞ്ചായത്ത് എല്ലാ വിശേഷങ്ങളും ഫോണിൽ ലഭ്യമാക്കുന്ന സംവിധാനമാണിവിടെ ശ്രദ്ധേയമാകുന്നത്. കാര്യങ്ങൾ

അറിയാൻ ഇനി ഗ്രാമപഞ്ചായത്തിൽ വരേണ്ട. ആനുകൂല്യങ്ങളുടെ ഗുണഭോക്തൃ പട്ടിക അന്വേഷിച്ച് ഓഫീസ് കയറി ഇറങ്ങേണ്ട. എല്ലാ വിവരങ്ങളും മൊബൈൽ വഴിയാവുകയാണ് ഇവിടെ. ഗൾഫിൽ ജോലി ചെയ്യുന്ന ഗ്രാമപഞ്ചായത്തിലെ വലിയൊരു വിഭാഗത്തിന് നാട്ടിലെ വിവരങ്ങൾ അപ്പോൾ അറിയാം. എം-കണ്ണമംഗലം എ ആപ്പ് ഗൂഗിൾ പ്ലേ സ്റ്റോറിൽ ഇവയെല്ലാം ലഭ്യമാണ്. പുതിയ അറിയിപ്പുകൾ വന്നാൽ നോട്ടിഫിക്കേഷൻ വരും. എല്ലാ അറിയിപ്പുകളും അപേക്ഷാ രജിസ്ട്രേഷൻ മുതൽ പരാതി സമർപ്പിക്കൽ വരെ നടത്താമെന്നതാണ് ഇവിടുത്തെ സവിശേഷത.

സാങ്കേതികവിദ്യ ജനസൗഹൃദമാക്കുന്നതിന്റെ ഉത്തമ ഉദാഹരണമാണ് കണ്ണമംഗലം ഗ്രാമപഞ്ചായത്ത്. ഇത്രയും വൈവിധ്യമാർന്ന ഇന്ത്യാ മഹാരാജ്യത്ത് ഇത്തരത്തിലുള്ള സാങ്കേതികവിദ്യയുടെ ഉപയോഗം കാര്യക്ഷമതയുള്ള സർക്കാരുകൾക്കും ഗുണമേന്മയുള്ള സേവനപ്രദാനത്തിനും ക്രിയാത്മകമായ സമ്പദ്വ്യവസ്ഥയ്ക്കും വഴി തെളിക്കും.

യോജന,
ഡിസംബർ 2014.

BOOK REVIEW

OUR LAWS AND THEIR FLAWS

By Nick Robinson

Leila Seth is one of India's great liberals. She is the first woman to be a judge in the Delhi High Court and the first female chief justice of a high court. An unflagging advocate of the rights of women, she has served as a member of the Law Commission of India and more recently of the Justice J.S. Verma Committee, which spearheaded legal reform in the wake of a highly publicised rape and murder of a young woman in Delhi in 2012.

Seth's recent book, Talking of Justice, is an edited collection of her speeches. It also includes a separate chapter that gives a vivid account of the whirlwind 29 days in which the Verma committee and a dedicated team of volunteers worked non-stop to prepare recommendations for the government as thousands of young people took to the street calling for an end to sexual violence. The book's final chapter, 'You're Criminal if Gay', is a poignant article Seth penned at the beginning of this year criticising Justice G.S. Singhvi's Supreme Court judgment in December 2013 that upheld Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code (IPC) which outlaws sodomy. Leila Seth's son, the noted writer Vikram Seth, is openly gay and has also been a vocal opponent of Section 377.

At 84, Seth writes in a humane and accessible style that makes clear that the principles of furthering human dignity and human rights that permeate the book are both long-held and intimately

lived. According to her, India has made much progress in implementing the rights-based vision laid out in the Constitution, but much work is left to be done. For example, with the passage of

the Criminal Law Amendment Act in 2013, the government adopted the Verma committee's recommendations to add new offences like stalking and acid attacks to the IPC, but other recommendations were passed over. Strikingly, marital rape, the most common type of rape in India, was not made a crime, essentially depriving women of their personal autonomy once they enter marriage. Nor did the government adopt recommendations to make rape gender neutral, leaving both men and transgender persons more vulnerable to sexual attacks.

Elsewhere in the book, Seth unabashedly advocates a Uniform Civil Code (UCC), which would include Muslims, so as to better secure the rights of Muslim women. This stance is controversial, as many, particularly on the Left, view the country's Hindu majority as attempting to push the UCC on an unwilling Muslim minority. But for Seth, principles of gender equality trump other concerns. She writes, "Law and religion are separate. There can be one law for all Indians even if many religions are practiced and diverse customs followed". For her, education and incremental victories are the best way to combat the twin evils of patriarchy and religious fundamentalism.

The strongest chapters of the book are when she speaks from her own experience: recounting frantic days during which the Verma committee put together its recommendations or the personal disappointment she felt at the Supreme Court's 377 judgment that, in her words, criminalised the "right to love". Perhaps not surprisingly for a former judge, much of the rest of the book makes a case for more abstract principles, such as the rights of children, prisoners and women. It rarely delves into how laws passed to further these rights might create unintended consequences in a country where lived experiences on the ground often differ considerably from liberal ideals. For example, some feminists claim that Hindu wives in polygamous marriages are worse off under the UCC because their marriage would not be recognised, and Muslim women in polygamous marriages would face a similar fate if the UCC was applied to them. Nor does the book seem to doubt that the liberal principles in the Constitution will win out in the end or that there is much need to worry if they are compatible with Indian identity.

A dedicated constitutionalist, Seth still has plenty of criticism for the judiciary. She argues that Indian judges need to be more sensitive about gender and advocates for more female judges on the bench. Seth also rightfully notes the absurdity of having only two Supreme Court judges decide the constitutionality of Section 377, instead of a larger bench that might have produced a more robustly reasoned judgment.

Though a harsh critic of the judiciary, Seth is an ardent supporter of judicial independence. Notably, she argues that the recent constitutional amendment to create a judicial appointments commission likely violates the judiciary's independence since judges do not comprise more than half of the commission. Consequently, she thinks we may see the Supreme Court intervening in the future to restore judicial supremacy in the appointments process.

Leila Seth has become one of the most prominent retired judges in the country. Unlike many others, she routinely takes a stance on issues of gender and the rights of the marginalised, including prisoners, children and the LGBT community. India has gained much from her voice, which speaks with both conviction and insight.

INDIA TODAY,

DECEMBER 8, 2014

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THE LEGISLATIVE BODIES IN SESSION DURING THE MONTH OF DECEMBER 2014

SI No.	Name of Assembly/Council	Duration
1.	Assam Legislative Assembly	15.12.2014 - 19.12.2014
2.	Bihar Legislative Assembly	30.11.2014 - 05.12.2014 19.12.2014 - 23.12.2014
3.	Chattisgarh Legislative Assembly	15.12.2014 - 17.12.2014
4.	Himachal Pradesh Legislative Assembly	05.12.2014 - 12.12.2014
5.	Karnataka Legislative Council	09.12.2014 - 20.12.2014
6.	Karnataka Legislative Assembly	09.12.2014 - 20.12.2014
7.	Telengana Legislative Assembly	10.11.2014, 19.11.2014, 24.11.2014, 28.11.2014 - 05.12.2014

Site Address of Legislative Bodies in India

Sl.No	Name of Assembly/Council	Site Address
1.	Loksabha	loksabha.nic.in
2.	Rajyasabha	rajyasabha.nic.in
3.	Andhra Pradesh Legislative Council	aplegislature.org
4.	Andhra Pradesh Legislative Assembly	aplegislature.org
5.	Arunachal Pradesh Legislative Assembly	arunachalassembly.gov.in
6.	Assam Legislative Assembly	assamassembly.nic.in
7.	Bihar Legislative Assembly	vidhansabha.bih.nic.in
8.	Bihar Legislative Council	biharvidhanparishad.gov.in
9.	Chhattisgarh Legislative Assembly	cgvidhansabha.gov.in
10.	Delhi Legislative Assembly	delhiassembly.nic.in
11.	Goa Legislative Assembly	goavidhansabha.gov.in
12.	Gujarat Legislative Assembly	gujaratassembly.gov.in
13.	Harayana Legislative Assembly	haryanaassembly.gov.in
14.	Himachal Pradesh Legislative Assembly	hpvidhansabha.nic.in
15.	Jammu and Kashmir Legislative Assembly	jklegislativeassembly.nic.in
16.	Jammu and Kashmir Legislative Council	jklegislativecouncil.nic.in
17.	Jharkhand Legislative Assembly	jharkhandvidhansabha.nic.in
18.	Karnataka Legislative Assembly	kar.nic.in/kla/assembly
19.	Karnataka Legislative Council	kar.nic.in/kla/council/council
20.	Madhya Pradesh Legislative Assembly	mpvidhansabha.nic.in
21.	Maharashtra Legislative Assembly	mls.org.in/Assembly

22.	Maharashtra Legislative Council	mls.org.in/Council
23.	Manipur Legislative Assembly	manipurasembly.nic.in/
24.	Meghalaya Legislative Assembly	megassembly.gov.in/
25.	Mizoram Legislative Assembly	mizoramassembly.in
26.	Nagaland Legislative Assembly	http:/nagaland.nic.in
27.	Odisha Legislative Assembly	
28.	Puducherry Legislative Assembly	
29.	Punjab Legislative Assembly	punjabassembly.nic.in
30.	Rajasthan Legislative Assembly	rajassembly.nic.in/
31.	Sikkim Legislative Assembly	
32.	Tamil Nadu Legislative Assembly	assembly.in.gov.in
33.	Tripura Legislative Assembly	tripuraassembly.nic.in/
34.	Uttar Pradesh Legislative Assembly	uplegassembly.nic.in
35.	Uttar Pradesh Legislative Council	upvidhanparishad.nic.in
36.	Uttarakhand Legislative Assembly	
37.	West Bengal Legislative Assembly	wbassembly.gov.in/
38.	Telengana Legislative Assembly	telenganalegislature.org.in