

## Course correction – Beyond recompense: on the ISRO spy case

### Act against police officers who framed scientists in the ISRO spy case

The 'ISRO espionage case' marked a disgraceful chapter in the history of police investigation in the country. The presence of a Maldivian woman in India became the pretext for a police witch-hunt against scientists belonging to the Indian Space Research Organisation in 1994. Three scientists were arrested on the grave charge of sharing official secrets related to space technology and launch missions with foreign agents. The order, mercifully, lasted only for a short time, as the investigation shifted from the Kerala Police to the Central Bureau of Investigation after a few weeks. The CBI recommended closure of the case, citing complete lack of evidence and pointing to grave lapses in the police probe, which also used questionable methods and proceeded on nothing but suspicion. Ever since the proceedings were dropped, one of those arrested, S. Nambi Narayanan, has been battling for the restoration of his honour and dignity. The attitude of the Kerala government has been obstinately ungracious. It opposed the CBI's closure report and made a peevish attempt to revive the investigation by its own police. It has been unsympathetic to the demand for action against its errant police officers, arguing petulantly that there is no court direction to take disciplinary action against them. The latest Supreme Court order, forming a committee headed by a retired Supreme Court judge to consider ways to take action against the officers, addresses this glaring inadequacy in the process of restorative justice for those maliciously arrested. The prosecution of these officers is long overdue.

The court has reaffirmed the principle that compensation is a remedy for the violation of human rights. But the so-called espionage case remains a study in the crude and archaic methods used by the police. For a country where it is not uncommon for those arrested for heinous offences to be exonerated after long years in prison, it is possible to argue that the compensation principle may open the floodgates for innumerable claims. The only way to avoid such a situation is to have a proper oversight mechanism to ensure that all investigation into crimes and complaints remains lawful. While granting Rs. 50 lakh to Mr. Narayanan, the court has taken note of his wrongful imprisonment, malicious prosecution and humiliation. While his honour and dignity were restored long back, the delay in a consequential inquiry into the conduct of the police officers concerned is disconcerting. Justice is not only about relief and recompense, and should extend to action against those at fault too. Much of the blame must fall on the Kerala government, which did not muster the courage to proceed against its police personnel.

### **Meanings of Difficult Words :**

- **Beyond** - further away than something else
- **Recompense** - payment that you give to someone who has suffered injury or loss because of you
- **Espionage** - attempts to discover your enemy's political, military, or industrial secrets using secret methods
- **Disgraceful** - extremely bad or shocking
- **Pretext** - a reason that you pretend to have in order to hide your real reason or intention
- **Witch-hunt** - an attempt to find all the people in a particular group in order to punish them or treat them unfairly
- **Grave** - so serious that you feel worried
- **Mercifully** - used for showing that you are grateful that something has happened, because it has prevented or ended something bad
- **Lack of something** - a situation in which you do not have any, or enough, of something that you need or want
- **Evidence** - facts or physical signs that help to prove something
- **Lapse** - a short or temporary period when you fail or forget to do something in the right way

- **Probe** - an attempt to find out the truth about an issue, problem, or accident
- **Questionable** - possibly not true, accurate, or complete
- **Suspicion** - a feeling that someone has done something wrong
- **Proceedings** - the actions taken, usually in court, to settle a legal matter
- **Restoration** - the process of putting something back into its original condition so that it looks cleaner and better
- **Dignity** - respect that other people have for you or that you have for yourself
- **Attitude** - someone's opinions or feelings about something, especially as shown by their behaviour
- **Obstinate** - not willing to be reasonable and change your plans, ideas, or behaviour
- **Ungracious** - not polite or friendly, especially towards someone who has been polite or kind to you
- **Peevish** - easily annoyed, especially by things that are not important
- **Revive** - to make someone become conscious or alive again
- **Unsympathetic** - not kind enough or interested enough to want to know about other people's problems
- **Errant** - behaving in a way that is bad or wrong
- **Petulant** - annoyed and behaving in an unreasonable way because you cannot get what you want
- **Address** - to give attention / deal with a particular problem
- **Glaring** - very obvious
- **Inadequacy** - the failure to be of the quantity or quality needed for a particular purpose
- **Malicious** - unkind and showing a strong feeling of wanting to hurt someone
- **So-called** - used for showing that you think a word used for describing someone or something is not suitable
- **Crude** - not exact or accurate, but often good enough for a particular purpose
- **Archaic** - old and no longer used
- **Heinous** - a heinous act or crime is extremely evil
- **Offence** - a crime or illegal activity for which there is a punishment
- **Exonerate** - to officially state or prove that someone is not to be blamed for something
- **Open the floodgates** - to suddenly make it possible or easier for a lot of things to happen
- **Innumerable** - too many to be counted: used for emphasizing a large amount or number
- **Oversight** - something that you do not notice or think of that causes problems later
- **Malicious** - unkind and showing a strong feeling of wanting to hurt someone
- **Humiliation** - the unhappy and ashamed feeling that you get when something embarrassing happens
- **Consequential** - happening as an indirect result of something
- **Disconcerting** - making you feel worried, confused, or surprised
- **Muster** - to try to produce as much of a feeling such as enthusiasm or determination as you can

## Course correction – Power games: on issues in the power sector

### Policymakers, not courts, should take charge to resolve structural issues in the power sector

The Supreme Court has ordered a stay on the Reserve Bank of India's February 12 circular asking banks to recognise loans as non-performing even if repayment was delayed by just one day, and resolve them within 180 days. If banks failed to comply with the RBI's new rules, these stressed assets had to be forced to undergo swift insolvency proceedings under the new Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC).

This comes just weeks after the Allahabad High Court refused to grant relief to troubled power companies facing action from the RBI. The apex court's decision to overturn RBI rules and transfer all pleas seeking exception from them to itself is clearly the biggest challenge against the IBC yet. It is likely to cause significant uncertainty in the resolution of stressed assets and undermine investor confidence in the bankruptcy process. The postponement of the Supreme Court's next hearing of the case to mid-November will send the signal that in contrast to hopes that asset resolution under the new bankruptcy regime would be done within a strict time frame, there are likely to be considerable delays in the resolution of stressed assets. Distressed power companies, and a number of other firms in the shipping, sugar and textile sectors, however, will be relieved as they are spared from bankruptcy proceedings for now. According to the Association of Power Producers, the Supreme Court's order will save stressed companies producing 13GW worth of power from being pushed to the doors of bankruptcy courts. Banks, too, will be happy as the reprieve will help them delay the recognition of bad loan losses. The Supreme Court's decision to intervene, however, will do very little good in the long run to either stressed power companies or their lenders. The troubles of power companies can be traced to structural issues such as the absence of meaningful price reforms, unreliable fuel supply and the unsustainable finances of public sector power distribution companies. Banks, on the other hand, are unlikely to make much money out of these stressed assets until these structural problems are sorted adequately to attract investors. Policymakers, not courts, need to take charge and resolve these issues. That said, the current insolvency resolution process is not without its flaws. According to a report released by the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Board of India earlier this month, lenders could realistically expect to recover less than a tenth of their dues if stressed assets are to be liquidated. This could be attributed to the IBC's overemphasis on the speedy resolution of bad loans over the recovery of maximum value from stressed assets. Not surprisingly, several power companies emphasise that their assets could yield better returns if the issues are resolved completely outside the purview of the IBC. The Supreme Court's decision has now provided lenders the chance to test this argument.

### ***Meanings of Difficult Words :***

- **Circular** - sent to a lot of people at the same time
- **Non-performing loan** - a sum of borrowed money upon which the debtor has not made the scheduled payments for a period of usually at least 90 days for commercial banking loans and 180 days for consumer loans
- **Repayment** - the process of paying someone money that you have borrowed from them
- **Comply with** - to obey a rule or law, or to do what someone asks you to do
- **Undergo** - to experience something, especially something that is unpleasant but necessary
- **Swift** - happening quickly or immediately
- **Insolvency** - the state of not having enough money to pay what you owe
- **Proceedings** - the actions taken, usually in court, to settle a legal matter
- **Bankruptcy** - a situation in which a person or business has officially admitted that they have no money and cannot pay what they owe
- **Apex** - top
- **Overturn** - to say officially that something such as a decision or law is wrong and change it
- **Significant** - very large or noticeable
- **Uncertainty** - the fact that something is not known or has not been decided
- **Hearing** - a meeting of a court of law or official organization to find out the facts about something
- **In contrast to** - to be very different from something else

- **Reprive** - to stop or delay something bad that was going to happen
- **Intervene** - to become involved in a situation in order to try to stop or change it
- **Reform** - a change that is intended to correct a situation that is wrong or unfair, or make a system work more effectively
- **Unreliable** - not definitely true or accurate
- **Unsustainable** - not capable of continuing at the same rate or level
- **On the other hand** - used for giving two different opinions about something
- **Sorted** - arranged, or dealt with
- **Adequately** - in a way that is good enough or large enough for a particular purpose
- **Investor** - a person or organization that invests money
- **Invest** - to use your money with the aim of making a profit from it, for example by buying property or buying shares in a company
- **Flaw** - a mistake or fault in something that makes it useless or less effective
- **Liquidate** - to close a business and sell everything that it owns, usually in order to pay money that is owed
- **Overemphasis** - the tendency to treat something as being more important than it really is
- **Yield** - to produce something useful such as information or evidence
- **Purview** - the area of responsibility or influence that a person or organization has

## Course correction – The rupee problem

### Ad hoc steps to check the currency's decline must not deflect from the deeper problems

The rupee, which is currently the worst-performing currency in Asia, is finally receiving some help from the authorities. The Union government, after a meeting with Reserve Bank of India Governor Urjit Patel, on Friday announced a list of measures to arrest the sharp decline in the currency, which has lost about 12% of its value since the beginning of the year. These include steps to curb the import of non-essential goods and encourage the export of domestic goods, which will help in addressing the country's burgeoning current account deficit that hit a five-year high in July. Other steps such as removing restrictions on foreign portfolio investments and encouraging Indian borrowers to issue rupee-denominated 'masala bonds' were also announced to facilitate the inflow of dollars and de-risk the economy from fluctuations in the exchange rate. Further, the term limit imposed on borrowings of manufacturing companies is to be shortened further in order to curb dollar demand. The response to the move from the markets will need to be carefully tracked. Even before the official announcement on Friday, the rupee witnessed some recovery against the dollar amidst hopes of favourable government intervention, while stocks and bonds also recovered.

These steps to strengthen the rupee in the short term are welcome, given the large-scale outflow of capital from emerging markets to the West. These *ad hoc* steps to avoid an immediate crisis in the external sector, however, should not deflect attention from the more fundamental reasons behind the decline of the rupee. India has been unable to boost exports over the years for various reasons. At the same time, it has been unsuccessful in finding sustainable domestic sources of energy to address the over-reliance on oil imports. This has meant that the rise in the price of oil has traditionally exerted tremendous stress on the current account deficit and the currency, as is happening now. The government needs to think of a long-term plan to boost exports, preferably through steps that remove policy barriers that are impeding the growth of export-oriented sectors, in order to find a sustainable solution to the problem of the weakening rupee. The depreciating rupee is also a symptom of

persistently higher domestic inflation in India over many decades. For example, in line with vastly different inflation rates in India and the U.S., the rupee has lost about 60% of its value in the last 10 years against the dollar. So this problem cannot be addressed without drastic changes in the style of monetary policy conducted by the RBI, which is an unlikely proposition. Until then, the best that can be hoped for is a steady drop in the value of the rupee without any drastic shocks to the economy.

### ***Meanings of Difficult Words :***

- **Ad hoc** - done only when needed for a specific purpose, without planning or preparation
- **Decline** - to become less or worse
- **Deflect** - to make someone change their plans or stop what they are doing
- **Decline** - to become less or worse
- **Curb** - to control or limit something that is harmful
- **Import** - a product from another country, that is bought with money from your country
- **Non-essential** - not really necessary
- **Export** - the practice or business of selling goods to another country
- **Domestic** - relating to the country being talked about, and not other countries
- **Address** - to give attention to or deal with a matter or problem
- **Burgeoning** - growing or developing quickly
- **Current Account Deficit** - a measurement of a country's trade where the value of the goods and services it imports exceeds the value of the goods and services it exports
- **Foreign portfolio investments** - consists of securities and other financial assets passively held by foreign investors
- **Masala bonds** - bonds issued outside India but denominated in Indian Rupees, rather than the local currency
- **Facilitate** - to make it possible or easier for something to happen
- **De-risk** - to remove risk, especially financial risk, from a situation or process
- **Fluctuation** - frequent changes in the amount, value, or level of something
- **Witness** - to be the evidence that something is true
- **Amidst** - in the middle of or surrounded by
- **Intervention** - a situation in which someone becomes involved in a particular issue, problem etc in order to influence what happens
- **Large-scale** - involving a large number of people or things, or happening over a large area
- **Outflow** - a movement of large amounts of money or large numbers of people from one place to another
- **Crisis** - an urgent, difficult, or dangerous situation
- **Sustainable** - capable of continuing for a long time at the same level
- **Reliance** - the state of depending on a particular person or thing
- **Exert** - to use influence, authority, or power in order to affect or achieve something
- **Tremendous** - used for emphasizing that something such as an amount, achievement, or feeling is extremely great, important, or strong
- **Impede** - to make it more difficult for someone to do something or more difficult for something to happen
- **Depreciate** - to become less valuable than before
- **Symptom** - a sign of a larger problem

- **Persistent** - continuing to exist, especially for longer than you would like
- **Inflation** - an economic process in which prices increase so that money becomes less valuable
- **In line with** - similar to someone or something
- **Drastic** - a drastic action or change has a very big effect

## **Course correction – Lethal filth: India's manual scavenging problem**

### **The law should be enforced vigorously to eliminate manual scavenging in its entirety**

The death of five young men who were employed to clean a septic tank in an upmarket residential community in New Delhi is a shocking reminder that India's high-profile sanitation campaign has done little to alter some basic ground realities. Around the same time as the Delhi incident, five workers died in a septic tank in Odisha. The law is not being enforced, and there is no fear of penalties. The workers in Delhi were apparently asked to perform the task in violation of Section 7 of the Prohibition of Employment as Manual Scavengers and their Rehabilitation Act, 2013; a violation can be punished with two years of imprisonment or fine or both. Under the provision, no person, local authority or agency should engage or employ people for hazardous cleaning of sewers and septic tanks. Mechanised cleaning of septic tanks is the prescribed norm. But in spite of a well-funded programme such as the Swachh Bharat Abhiyan in operation, little attention is devoted to this aspect of sanitation. The requirements of worker safety and provision of safety gear for rare instances when human intervention is unavoidable are often ignored. Mere assertions by the Centre that it is pressing State governments to prosecute violators, therefore, ring hollow. More and more incidents are being reported of workers dying in septic tanks. In the absence of political will and social pressure, more lives could be lost because more tanks are being built in rural and urban areas as part of the drive to construct toilets.

If the law on manual scavenging is to be effective, the penalties must be uniformly and visibly enforced. It is equally important for State governments to address the lack of adequate machinery to clean septic tanks. The Ministry of Drinking Water and Sanitation in its manual of 2016 on toilet design acknowledges that in rural areas, mechanical pumps to clear septic tanks are not available. In the southern States, sanitation has expanded along with urbanisation, but it has brought with it a higher number of deaths as workers clean septic tanks manually. For instance, Tamil Nadu recorded 144 fatalities of workers engaged for septic tank cleaning in the past three years, according to official data. On the other hand, toilet designs proposed by the government include those in which fully composted waste must be removed from pits every two years. The Centre must ensure that this does not become a fresh avenue to oppress members of some communities who are expected to perform such work, reflecting social inequalities. India's sanitation problem is complex, and the absence of adequate toilets is only one lacuna. The Swachh Bharat Abhiyan should make expansion of the sewer network a top priority and come up with a scheme for scientific maintenance that will end manual cleaning of septic tanks. The law should be enforced vigorously to eliminate manual scavenging in its entirety.

### **Meanings of Difficult Words :**

- **Lethal** - very dangerous and able to kill you
- **Filth** - dirt that is especially unpleasant, usually because there is a lot of it
- **Scavenge** - to search through things that other people have thrown away in order to see if there is anything that you want
- **Enforce** - to make sure that a law or rule is obeyed by people

- **Vigorously** - in a way that is very forceful or energetic
- **Entirety** - the whole of something
- **Septic tank** - a large container buried under the ground and used for collecting waste from toilets
- **Upmarket** - upmarket services or goods are designed for people who have a lot of money
- **High-profile** - often seen in public, mentioned in newspapers, or appearing on television
- **Sanitation** - conditions and processes relating to people's health, especially the systems that supply water and deal with human waste
- **Campaign** - a series of actions intended to produce political or social change
- **Alter** - to make something or someone different
- **Enforce** - to make sure that a law or rule is obeyed by people
- **Apparently** - based only on what you have heard, not on what you are certain is true
- **Violation** - an action that is in opposition to a law, agreement, principle etc
- **Rehabilitation** - to return someone to a good, healthy, or normal life or condition after they have been in prison, been very ill, etc
- **Imprisonment** - the punishment of being put into prison
- **Hazardous** - dangerous, especially to people's health or safety
- **Sewer** - an underground pipe or passage that carries sewage
- **Prescribed** - decided by a law or a rule
- **Norm** - something that is usual or expected
- **In spite of** - used for referring to a fact that makes something else surprising
- **Well-funded** - well financed; with plenty of money
- **Devoted to** - containing or dealing with one particular thing
- **Gear** - the equipment, clothes, etc. that you use to do a particular activity
- **Instance** - an example of something happening
- **Intervention** - a situation in which someone becomes involved in a particular issue, problem etc in order to influence what happens
- **Mere** - only / just
- **Assertion** - a definite statement or claim that something is true
- **Violator** - someone who breaks a law
- **Ring hollow** - to sound false or not sincere

- **Rural** - relating to the countryside, or in the countryside
- **Urban** - relating to towns and cities, or happening there
- **Uniform** - the same everywhere
- **Enforce** - to make sure that a law or rule is obeyed by people
- **Address** - to give attention to or deal with a matter or problem
- **Adequate** - good enough or large enough for a particular purpose
- **Acknowledge** - to accept or admit that something exists, is true, or is real
- **Urbanisation** - the process by which towns and cities grow bigger and more and more people go to live in them
- **For instance** - for example
- **Fatality** - a death caused by an accident, war, violence, or disease
- **On the other hand** - used for giving two different opinions about something
- **Avenue** - one of the methods you can use to achieve something
- **Adequate** - good enough or large enough for a particular purpose
- **Lacuna** - an empty space where something is missing
- **Come up with** - to think of something such as an idea or a plan

**STUDY HARD.**

**DO GOOD.**

**AND THE**

**GOOD LIFE**

**WILL FOLLOW.**