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Delhi consumed more electricity last year than all other metros put together(Power

Sector,Environment)

The domestic (household) sector is the biggest guzzler of electricity in Delhi, says an analysis by Delhi-based non-profit Centre for Science and Environment (CSE).

According to the newly released report of the Central Electricity Authority (CEA) on Load Generation Balance Report 2015-16, Delhi consumes more electricity than the states of Himachal Pradesh, Jammu and Kashmir, Uttarakhand, Chhattisgarh, Goa, Kerala, Bihar, Jharkhand, Odisha, Sikkim and all states of the North East. It also uses more power than all other metros put together.

Already, in Delhi, the household electricity consumption per capita is about 43 units per month against a national average of 25. Currently, domestic power tariff in Delhi is the lowest amongst all metros.

Anumita Roychowdhury, CSE's executive director of research and advocacy, says, "While the AAP government in Delhi is only concerned with increasing electricity supply and subsidising consumption, it has not paid attention to the urgent need to also reduce consumption with controls and energy pricing. This is imposing enormous environmental and economic costs."

She adds, "While it is important to improve energy access for all, especially the poor, steps are also needed to promote prudent and sustainable consumption of electricity."

The AAP government gives power subsidy of 50 per cent for monthly consumption up to 400 KWh. Delhi's average consumption is only about 181 Kwh, and nearly two-fifths of the households consume less than 100 KWh per month. The subsidy, thus, allows comfortable use of a number of appliances like air conditioners and cushions substantial household energy costs.

The CSE analysis also showed that Delhi's peak demand has doubled in the last 10 years, growing faster than the population of the city. It registered an all-time high peak demand in June last year at 6,006 MW. This demand was higher than the combined highest ever peaks of Mumbai, Kolkata and Chandigarh. CEA projects Delhi's peak will cross 6,300 MW this year and 12,000 MW by 2021.

CSE also observed that the day peak builds up late in the afternoon around 3.30 pm and the second peak hits around midnight. There was barely any difference between night and day peaks during the month of May. For example, on May 24, while the day peak demand was 4,667 MW, the night peak demand was 5,091 MW. The night demand was either higher or differed by 1 to 4 per cent. This, when at midnight, all commercial consumers—offices and retail—are closed.

Avikal Somvanshi, senior research associate with CSE's sustainable buildings programme, says, "It is the air conditioners in homes that skew the demand at night. This trend is starkly opposed to the trend in most other metros when demand during the night is lower than daytime as power-intensive sectors like industries, shops, offices and malls are closed."

Growing reliance on air conditioning upsets the energy balance in the city, explain the analysis. In Delhi, air conditioning now accounts for the highest consumption of electricity during the hottest months, accounting for about 28 per cent of the total monthly electricity consumption. According to an estimate by Bureau of Energy Efficiency (BEE), ACs contribute almost 60 per cent of Delhi’s peak electricity demand.

The 68th Nation Sample Survey of Household Consumption of Various Goods and Services in India found that in 2012, about 412 out of every 1,000 households in urban Delhi owned an air conditioner or air cooler as compared to the national average of 77. The survey noted that while ACs accounted for only 15 per cent of the national average, in metro cities their share can be as high as 60 per cent.

AC sales have been growing at a healthy 8 to 10 per cent annually and the industry is expecting it would accelerate to 15 to 20 per cent in coming years. Nationally, energy demand from ACs is expected to increase 10 times by 2030.

The way forward

Among measures to reduce energy consumption, CSE recommends that Delhi government must introduce a mandatory energy audit and consumption-based energy billing to improve operational efficiency of all buildings. It must also make it obligatory for all buildings to publicly disclose the data on annual energy usage along with the built-up area.

CSE says that both the Delhi and Central governments must provide incentives for green buildings to developers. These incentives must be linked with stringent benchmarks and quantifiable energy performance targets must be set for different building typologies to reduce overall energy intensity and consumption over time.

Recommendations also include asking the Bureau of Energy Efficiency to improve building star rating programme, to make star rating mandatory to improve operational performance and to make appliance rating more stringent for quicker uptake of super-efficient technologies.

India, Bangladesh ink 22 key agreements during Modi’s maiden visit(hindu,IR)

India and Bangladesh today inked as many as 22 agreements, including on curbing human trafficking, smuggling of fake currency and setting up an Indian Economic Zone, to boost bilateral ties.

The agreements were signed on the first day of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's maiden visit in the presence of other leaders, including Bangladeshi premier Sheikh Hasina and West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee.

Land boundary agreement

Exchange of Instruments of Ratification of 1974 Land Boundary Agreement and its 2011 Protocol; Exchange of letters on Modalities for implementation of 1974 Land Boundary Agreement and a renewed Bilateral Trade Agreement were inked during Modi's two-day visit.

Bus services

Agreements on two key bus services were also reached, including the Kolkata-Dhaka-Agartala route that will benefit the commuters by reducing travel time by nearly one-third.

Another Dhaka-Shillong-Guwahati route was also flagged off by the three leaders.

Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs) on Prevention of Human Trafficking; Prevention of Smuggling and Circulation of Fake Currency notes; and setting up an Indian Economic Zone were also reached by the two sides.

US$ 2 billion line of credit

In another key development, a Memorandum of Understanding for Extending a New Line of Credit (LoC) of US$ 2 billion by India to Bangladesh was signed.

A renewed Protocol on Inland Water Transit and Trade besides an Agreement on Coastal Shipping between Bangladesh and India were among the other deals reached.

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PARLIAMENTARY COMMITTEES(Polity)

FINANCIAL COMMITTEES

	Public Account Committee	Estimate Committee	Public Undertakings
Created on	1921	Standing EC in 1921 and then first EC in 1950	1964
Members	22(15LS + 7RS)	30LS	22(15LS + 7RS)
Representation	Both LS and RS	No representation of RS is allowed	Both LS and RS
Term of office	1 year	1 year	1 year
Principle of election	Proportional representation	Proportional representation	Proportional representation
Chairman of the Committee	Appointed by Speaker from opposition party	Appointed by Speaker from ruling party (LS)	Appointed by Speaker from LS only
Can Minister be appointed	NO	NO	NO

DEPARTMENTAL STANDING COMMITTEES

Created on 1993

Members: 31(21LS + 10RS)

Principle of Election: Nominated by Speaker from LS + Nominated by Chairman from

RS
Term of
Office: 1 year
Can
Minister be appointed: NO
24
Departmental Standing Committees: 16LS + 8RS
LIST OF
NO. OF MEMBERS IN THE RESPECTIVE COMMITTEES

Committee	Members
FINANCIAL COMMITTEES	
Public Account Committee	22(15LS + 7RS)
Estimate Committee	30LS
Public Undertakings	22(15LS + 7RS)
DEPARTMENTAL STANDING COMMITTEES	31(21LS + 10RS)
COMMITTEES TO ENQUIRY	
Committee on Petitions	25(15LS + 10RS)
Committee on Privileges	25(15LS + 10RS)
Ethics Committee	Not mentioned
COMMITTEES TO SCRUTINISE AND CONTROL	
Committee on Government Assurances	25(15LS + 10RS)
Committee on Subordinate Legislation	30(15LS + 15RS)
Committee on Papers Laid on the Table	25(15LS + 10RS)
Committee on Welfare of SCs and STs	30(20LS + 10RS)
Committee on Empowerment of Women	30(20LS + 10RS)
Joint Committee on Offices of Profit	15(10LS + 5RS)
COMMITTEES RELATING TO THE DAY-TO-DAY BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE	

Business Advisory Committee	15LS(including Speaker) + 11RS(including Chairman)
Committee on Private Members' Bills and Resolutions	15LS(including Deputy Speaker as its Chairman); No such Committee in RS
Rules Committee	15LS(including Speaker as Chairman) + 16RS(including Chairman as its ex-officio Chairman)
Committee on absence of Members	15LS; No such Committee in RS
HOUSE KEEPING COMMITTEES	
General Purpose Committee	
House Committee	12LS + RS_Not Mentioned
Library Committee	9(6LS + 3RS)
Joint Committee on Salaries and Allowances of Members	15(10LS + 5RS)

Credit, Structure and Double Financial Repression: A

Diagnosis of the Banking Sector(Banking, Economy)

The challenges in the Indian banking system classified into two categories: policy and structure.

Policy challenge

Financial repression is a term that describes **measures by which governments channel funds to themselves as a form of debt reduction**. It means funds are channeled to the government that would otherwise flow elsewhere.

The Indian banking system is suffering from “**double financial repression**” i.e financial repression on the asset side as well as financial repression on the liability side .

Financial repression on the liability side

Average rate of return on deposits = weighted average return on term deposits (as per RBI) – CPI-IW inflation rate (as per CSO).

This shows the annual percentage return realized on an investment, which is adjusted for changes in prices due to inflation or other external effects.For example, let’s say your bank pays you interest of 8% per year on the funds in your term deposit account. If the inflation rate is currently 6% per year, then the real return on your savings today would be 2%.

Financial repression on liability side arose from high inflation since 2007, leading to negative real interest rates, and a sharp reduction in households’ financial savings.

Household savings continue to be the largest contributor to gross capital formation.The household savings in India can be broadly categorized into the following types:

- Savings in physical properties =10.6 % of GDP in 2013-14
- Savings in financial instruments = 7.2 % of GDP in 2013-14
- Total Household savings   =17.8 % of GDP in 2013-14

Gross savings =30.6 % of GDP in 2013-14

The contribution of physical assets to household savings has stood above 60 per cent all through the last decade because average rate of return on deposits is very low or negative.

As India exits from liability-side repression with declining inflation, the time may be appropriate for addressing its asset-side counterparts.

Financial repression on the asset side

It has 2 components – SLR & PSL

Statutory Liquidity Ratio

The Statutory Liquidity Ratio is a requirement on banks to hold a certain share of their resources in liquid assets such as cash, government bonds and gold.

SLR requirements varied from 38 per cent in the period before 1991, to about 21.5 per cent on Feb 4, 2015.

Banks typically keep more than the required SLR, the current realised SLR is in fact over 25 per cent. This is probably due to the high level of stressed assets which encourage over investment in risk free government securities to maintain a respectable risk-weighted capital adequacy ratio.

In practice, the SLR has become a **means of financing (at less than market rates presumably) a bulk of the government's fiscal deficit**, suggesting that SLR cuts are related to the government's fiscal position.

Reducing the Statutory Liquidity Ratio

The **SLR is a form of financial repression** where the government occupied domestic savings at the expense of the private sector.

The argument has always been that SLRs can only be reduced if the government's fiscal situation improves.That is only partly correct because stocks rather than flows should condition SLR reform.

This opportunity to phase down the SLR in India is provided by

1. **Steadily improving public debt situation** that will continue to improve because of India's growth and inflation compared to borrowing costs. Overall indebtedness (center and states) has declined from over 80 percent to 60 percent in a decade and will continue due to favorable debt dynamics(Click here to know more).

Reducing SLR will definitely increases the cost of government's finances but the magnitudes are likely to be small for two reasons:

- Costs will rise only on debt that is maturing, which over the next five years is about 21.1 per cent of total outstanding debt; and
- The macro-environment and progress in curbing the inflation favour lower real interest rates.

2. The second reason relates to the **health of the banks**.

As interest rates decline, SLR reductions could allow them to offload G-secs and reap the capital gains which could help recapitalise them, reducing the need for government resources, and helping them raise private resources.

3. The third reason relates to the recent experience of **infrastructure financing**.

PPP-based projects have been financed either by public sector banks or through foreign currency-denominated debt (ECBs), contributed to decline in corporate sector profitability especially in the infrastructure sector- investors borrowed in dollars and their revenues were predominantly in rupees so that when the rupee depreciated their profitability and balance sheets were adversely affected.

Other forms of infrastructure financing, especially through a bond market are also available. But SLRs have prevented the development of government bond markets, as government financing through SLR route is available, which in turn prevented the development of corporate bond markets. Reducing SLRs are therefore critical to finding better sources of infrastructure financing.

SLR and the Capital to risk weighted assets ratio (CRAR)should be combined into one liquidity ratio set at a desirable level depending on international norms.

Priority Sector Lending (PSL)

A key component of equality of credit in India has been the so called “priority sector lending”. All Indian banks are required to meet a 40 per cent target on priority sector lending.(All about Priority sector lending)

Greater attention must be given to ensure that the **deployed means are the most effective in achieving the desired ends**. There is hence greater need for evidence-driven policy and example below illustrates this point in relation to agricultural lending.

Agricultural Credit: Scratching the Surface of Rising Numbers

1. In nominal terms, agricultural credit has grown more than 8 times in the last 15 years compared to that agriculture's share in GDP has remained almost constant, and significant urbanisation has occurred in this time.
2. A sharp increase in the share of large-sized loans in agricultural credit which warrants scrutiny.
3. A substantial increase in share of agricultural credit outstanding from urban and metropolitan areas, which is deeply puzzling.
4. Banks possibly raise their lending activity in months , January to March, when farmers may not necessarily need it the most.
5. A sharp decrease (70 % in 1991-92 to 40 % in 2011-12) in the share of long-term credit in total agricultural credit which means capital formation in agriculture has become small.

The implication of this evidence is that **lending to agriculture may be excessive and going predominantly to large farmers. It is not being used for agricultural capital formation.** Perhaps most significantly a large share of it may not be going to core agricultural activities at all.

The main lesson is that a much more careful approach needs to be applied in defining what constitutes priority sector and closer monitoring of how these funds are disbursed. This is especially important because a 40 per cent requirement absorbs a large fraction of the banks' resources.

Structural challenge

The answers to certain questions would make the picture clear. The questions are :

Is India credit-addled and over-banked?

India has witnessed a credit boom over the last decade, with the share of credit-GDP increasing from 35.5 percent in 2000 to 51 percent in 2013, with the bulk accounted for by bank lending. As countries become richer, they tend on average to see a rise in credit. For **India it indicates that for its level of development, credit levels are reasonable**.

Whether India is over-banked?

Banking should shrink in size over the course of development relative to other sources of funding such as capital markets. Here too, India is well placed. **India is neither over-banked nor are capital markets too small at this stage of development**.

Whether the Indian banking and financial system has been especially irresponsible and imprudent in the growth phase?

India's credit bubble was not worse than the experience of countries during comparable times. Other countries such as Japan and China saw faster credit growth during boom years. Thus, even in the last phase of rapid credit growth during the 2000s, **the Indian financial system was no more irrationally elated than those around the world**.

What then is the problem on the

structural side?

Is there adequate competition?

There is lack of sufficient internal competition. India’s approach was not privatisation of public sector banks, rather it was based on allowing entry of new private banks. This strategy worked reasonably well in the telecommunication and civil aviation sectors but in banking the results have been mixed.India saw a steady rise in the size of private sector banks till 2007. Thereafter, the process slowed down.

So, **It was a case of private sector led growth without private sector bank financing.**

Level of competition with respect to other sources of funding ,as capital markets, is similar to other countries at same level of development.

Of course, over time, if India grows at 8 percent a year for the next twenty years, a rapid shift in the composition of India’s financial sector away from banking is desirable. This shift will encourage transparency and better pricing of corporate risk.

Are Public Sector Banks uniform in performance?

there is a lot of variation within the public sector banks.

- the leverage ratio for the best bank is about 1.7 times more than for the worst, and
- the Gross NPAs plus restructured assets are 4 times more for the worst bank than the best.
- It is also important to note that the best amongst the public sector banks are often performing less than the private sector

average, although this fact should be seen against the greater social obligations imposed on the PSBs.

Hence , the structural problems relate to competition and ownership.

1. there appears to be a lack of competition, reflected in the private sector banks’ inability to increase their presence.
2. the share of the private sector in overall banking aggregates barely increased at a time when the country witnessed its most rapid growth and one that was fuelled by the private sector. It was an anomalous case of private sector growth without private sector bank financing.
3. Finally viewing public sector banks as one homogenous block would be a mistake.

Two other observations are:

1. First, the variation in the Leverage Ratio is much more than in CRAR.
2. second the return on assets has declined and stressed assets loans have increased to worrying levels with substantial variation across banks.

As presented below, especially for India, using the leverage ratios to measure, test, and monitor financial stability is more important than the CRAR ratio.

Leverage Ratio

Almost all stress tests formerly were based on ratio of a risk weighted measure of capital to the total assets.

In India, CRAR- Capital to Risk (Weighted) Assets Ratio- has been the used.

There is however growing international discontent with the measure because CRAR failed to capture risk appetite before the financial crises in the US and in Europe. For this reason the focus is shifting to giving more weight to the Leverage Ratio.

What is leverage ratio?

RBI : the ratio of total assets to total capital,

BIS : the ratio of “capital” to “assets”. It is inverse of RBI definition.

To know more click here

Correlation between leverage ratio (as defined by BIS) and CRAR

These two measures were highly correlated in the 1990s but the correlation between them broke down in the early 2000s for the largest banks. Leverage ratios of large European banks fell between 2000 and 2007, and – Tier 1 capital to risk-weighted assets (CAR) – remained relatively stable.

In Europe, the correlation has steadily became negative for the last few years.By 2012, the correlation had turned strongly negative.

Hence **leverage ratio is better indicator of risk appetite of banks**.

For the public sector banks in India, the correlation of the average of last three years of CRAR and Leverage Ratio is positive. But, the average of Leverage Ratios for public sector banks varies from 7.8 to 4.5.

It is important to note that if a bank has a moderate-low leverage ratio, and excellent return on assets and negligible NPAs, the leverage ratio is less of a concern. But, this changes dramatically when there is a substantial quantity of toxic loans on its books.

Why we should focus on the leverage ratio in India?

1. First, the CRAR can be a very poor indicator of stability, especially in adverse situations when risk weights loose meaning and value.
2. More important, given weak governance systems within banks and the difficulty of regulating them from the outside, it is difficult to know how the risk weights are being assigned. This becomes more important because of the size of stressed assets.

Indian regulators and policymakers should therefore elevate the role of the leverage ratio in financial stability and soundness assessments.

Policy Implications

Four key policy recommendations which we call the four Ds:

1. Deregulate (in relation to financial repression)

- As the banking sector exits the financial repression on the liability side, aided by the fall in inflation, this is a perfect opportunity to relax asset-side repression which can be done by:
- Gradually relaxing SLR requirements. This will provide liquidity to the banks, depth to the government bond market, and encourage the development of the corporate bond market. The right sequence would be to gradually reduce SLR and then provide incentives for a deeper bond market.
- PSL norms can be re-assessed. There are two options: one is indirect reform, bringing more sectors into the ambit of the PSL, until in the limit every sector is a priority sector; the other is to redefine the norms to slowly make priority sector more targeted, smaller, and need-driven.

2. Differentiate (within the PSBs)

There is sufficient variation in the performance of public sector banks. The policy implication is that a one- size-fits-all approaches to governance reforms, public ownership, exit and recapitalisation should cede to a more selective approach.

3. Diversify within and outside the banking system

More banks and more kinds of banks must be encouraged. Healthy competition from capital markets is essential too which will require policy support.

4. Disinter (to create more efficient exit)

- Better bankruptcy procedures for the future is essential.
- Debt Recovery Tribunals are over-burdened and under- resourced, leading to delayed turnaround times and delayed justice.
- The ownership structure of Asset Restructuring Companies in which banks themselves have significant stakes creates misaligned incentives.
- The SARFAESI act seems to work more against the smallest borrowers and medium sector enterprises.
- Distressed assets require creative solution such as an **Independent Renegotiation Commission** with political authority and reputational integrity to resolve some of the big and difficult cases.

Regulating India’s nuclear estate(Nuclear Policy, Defense)

For the country’s nuclear energy sector plans to be effective, the government should lift the veil of opaqueness surrounding its civilian programme. The first step would be to establish an autonomous, transparent and accountable regulatory institution

The 2014 Nuclear Materials Security Index prepared by the Washington-based Nuclear Threat Initiative (NTI) has ranked India 23rd out of 25 countries with weapons-usable nuclear materials. While the NTI ranking has been criticised for a variety of reasons including inadequacies in its methodology, it has rightly pointed out the absence of an independent nuclear regulatory mechanism in India with the mandate to ensure that high standards of safety and security are observed in India’s civilian nuclear facilities. Even though many Indian analysts and officials dismiss the NTI ranking as being uninformed, New Delhi needs to take such criticism seriously given its long-standing desire to mainstream itself into the global nuclear order including gaining membership to key international export control cartels such as the Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG). Given this context, there is a need to take a critical look at the proposed Nuclear Safety Regulatory Authority.

Background to the Bill

Currently, the Atomic Energy Regulatory Board (AERB), established in 1983 through a gazette notification, is tasked with regulating the safety and security aspects of the country’s civilian nuclear facilities. However, it is not an autonomous body as it depends on the Department of Atomic Energy (DAE) for all practical purposes. It has, as a result, been unable to perform its regulatory functions effectively. The demand for establishing a truly autonomous nuclear regulatory authority has been a long-standing one. In 1997, the Raja Ramanna Committee report had recommended that the Atomic Energy Act (1962) should be amended to enhance the effectiveness of the nuclear regulatory system in the country. Even though the Union government, in 2000, had directed the DAE to suggest the necessary amendments to the 1962 Act, nothing substantial happened for almost a decade. Finally, it was the Mayapuri radiation accident (New Delhi) in 2010 and the Fukushima disaster (Japan) of 2011 that served as a wake-up call for the DAE.

“Since the NSRA Bill will now have to be reintroduced in Parliament, the Department of

In 2011, the Nuclear Safety Regulatory Authority (NSRA) Bill was drafted by the DAE and submitted to the Union Cabinet for approval. The DAE note that sought approval from the Cabinet to introduce the Bill in Parliament had cited both the Mayapuri and the Fukushima accidents as the factors that

Atomic Energy should try and accommodate the eminently useful suggestions given by the standing committee and other independent experts”

contributed to the urgency to strengthen the country’s nuclear regulatory mechanism. However, even the NSRA, as currently envisioned by the DAE, does not propose the establishment of a truly autonomous regulatory authority. The Bill, first introduced in the Lok Sabha in 2011, has now lapsed and will have to be reintroduced in the new Lok Sabha. Before the NSRA Bill is reintroduced in Parliament, there is a need to strengthen the powers of the regulatory authority that it proposes to set up.

CAG and Committee reports

Even as the DAE was preparing to table the NSRA Bill in Parliament, the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) of India had undertaken a “Performance Audit on Activities of Atomic Energy Regulatory Board.” The CAG report, tabled in Parliament in August 2012, concluded that “the legal status of AERB continues to be that of an authority subordinate to the Central Government, with powers delegated to it by the latter,” and recommended to the government to “ensure that the nuclear regulator is empowered and independent. For this purpose, it should be created in law and should be able to exercise necessary authority in the setting of regulations, verification of compliance with the regulations and enforcement of the same in the cases of non-compliance.”

Following the CAG report, the Public Accounts Committee (PAC) of Parliament also produced a report in 2013 entitled “Activities of Atomic Energy Regulatory Board” in which it agreed with the view taken by the CAG on the functioning of the AERB. The PAC also highlighted the observation made by the “Parliamentary Standing Committee on Science and Technology, Environment and Forests” in 2012 that the NSRA lacks autonomy. The PAC, in the light of the observations made by the standing committee and the CAG, was critical of the functioning of the AERB as well as the proposed NSRA Bill and stated in its report that the “DAE should seriously re-examine the provisions of the Bill and take necessary steps urgently so as to ensure that the nuclear regulator becomes an independent and credible body at par with similar regulators in other Countries.” In other words, the NSRA Bill, as it stands today, is far from satisfactory even though the DAE has made the assurance that the Standing Committee’s recommendations would be seriously considered.

Issue of authority

The Council of Nuclear Safety to be established by the NSRA Bill — with the Prime Minister as the Chair and mostly government representatives as members — will be a very powerful body with the power to appoint the chairperson and members of the new regulatory body. This will diminish the powers of the regulator since it will be subordinate to the Council chaired by the Prime Minister. We will, as a result, end up having a government-controlled regulator all over again. The NSRA Bill is explicit on the ability of the government to control the regulator: “the Central Government may, by notification, supersede the Authority for such period, not exceeding six months, as may be specified in the notification.”

The NSRA also does not say which facilities would be put under the new authority – currently, the AERB can only oversee the civilian facilities. The Bill states that “the Central Government may, for the purposes of national defence and security, exempt any nuclear material, radioactive material, facilities, premises and activities; the premises, assets and areas associated with material and activities from the jurisdiction of the Authority.” So, the question is this: who will oversee the safety and security of the strategic facilities and programmes for which there is currently no regulatory authority? The Bill mentions that new regulatory bodies can be created to regulate the strategic programmes. The Department-Related Parliamentary Standing Committee had recommended the creation of other bodies to do so. However, there has not been any movement so far on that front. Another issue is the exclusion of the NSRA from the purview of RTI Act, thereby reducing the requirement for the regulator to be transparent.

This is not to say that the NSRA Bill is not an improvement from the existing AERB. Clearly, there are significant differences between the two. For one, while the AERB was set up by a government order, the new regulator will be established by an Act of Parliament, thereby making it more powerful. More so, while the AERB reported to the AEC, the new authority will not report to the AEC but will submit its report to Parliament.

Way ahead

It is unknown how many of the amendments suggested by the standing committee have been incorporated by the DAE. Since the Bill will now have to be reintroduced in Parliament, the DAE should try and accommodate the eminently useful suggestions given by the standing committee and other independent experts. The new government should encourage the DAE to carry out at least the following three amendments: one, the new regulatory body should be given complete financial, administrative and institutional autonomy from the Central government and made accountable to Parliament; two, the new regulatory body should also include persons from outside government such as scientists, civilian auditors, environmentalists and independent experts; three, given the crucial role that the NSRA will play in the years to come, the selection of its members should be done by a body comprising the Leader of the Opposition and the Speaker of the Lok Sabha.

If India’s plans to drastically expand its nuclear energy sector have to be effective, and acceptable to the people at large, it should bring the country’s civilian nuclear establishment out of the thick layers of secrecy and opaqueness within which it has traditionally operated. The first step in that direction will be to establish a genuinely autonomous, transparent and accountable institution that is capable of regulating the country’s “nuclear estate.”

The words of Professor Kiyoshi Kurokawa, who chaired the Fukushima Nuclear Accident Independent Investigation Commission are eminently appropriate in the Indian context as well: “What must be admitted – very painfully – is that this was a disaster 'Made in Japan.' Its fundamental causes are to be found in the ingrained conventions of Japanese culture: our reflexive obedience; our reluctance to question authority; our devotion to 'sticking with the program'; our groupism; and our insularity … nuclear power became an unstoppable force, immune to scrutiny by civil society. Its regulation was entrusted to the same government bureaucracy responsible for its promotion."

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Keywords: Atomic Energy Regulatory Board, Department of Atomic Energy, Nuclear Threat Initiative, 2014 Nuclear Materials Security Index, PAC, CAG report, Nuclear Safety Regulatory Authority (NSRA) Bill, Fukushima Nuclear Accident Independent Investigation Commission

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Time for new environmentalism (Down to Earth ,Environmental movements,new social movemnet,polity)

This piece has been excerpted from Down To Earth Editor Sunita Narain's article in State of India's Environment 2015—A Down To Earth Annual. For the complete article, please **click here**.

India's environmental movement is at a crossroads. On one hand, there is a greater acceptance of our concerns, but on the other there is growing resistance against required action and, more importantly, every indicator shows that things on the ground are getting worse.

Our rivers are more polluted; much more garbage is piling up in our cities; air is increasingly getting toxic; and hazardous waste is dumped, and not managed. Worse, people who should have been at the frontline of protection are turning against the environment. They see it as a constraint to their local development and even as they may protest against the pollution of neighbourhood mines or factories, they have no reason to believe that their livelihood from natural resources is secured. They are caught between the mining companies and the foresters. Either way, they lose.

So, I believe, it is time we took stock of developments and future directions.

In the past four decades—the beginnings of India’s environmental movement can be traced to the early 1970s, when the country saw its first environmental movement (Chipko), the launch of Project Tiger and enactment of the water pollution law—much has changed. And yet, not changed.

The worst indictment is that over 700 million people in India still use dirty, polluting biomass for cooking food and that an equal number defecate in the open. They do not have access to the basics—clean water, hygienic toilets that do not end up polluting rivers and groundwater, and energy for lighting or cooking. Clearly, somewhere we are going wrong, very wrong.

We must also realise that even as the problems have grown, the institutions for their oversight and management have shrunk. Many actions have been taken but, equally, many more actions that have been taken have come to naught. Most importantly, while the environmental constituency has grown—many more people are interested in environmental issues—principles of environmentalism have got lost. In this way, the underlying politics has been neutered.

It is important we point to the fundamental weaknesses and contradictions. It is only then that we can deliberate on the directions for future growth of the environmental movement. In my view there are distinct trends that need elaboration.

One, we have lost the development agenda in environmental management. Instead of working to regenerate the natural capital for inclusive growth, we have increasingly framed action as “development versus environment”.

As a result, even though environmental imperative is now better understood, the constituency which is asking for protection has changed or will change. The management of natural resources—swinging between extraction and conservation—is leaving out millions who live on the resources. These people cannot afford either degradation of the resources or pure conservation. They need to utilise the natural resource for their livelihood and economic growth. In this way, the environmental movement is in danger of making enemies of the very people whose interest it is working to protect.

The debate on environmental issues is increasingly polarised and seen as obstructionist. In this way, the positive agenda gets negated and lost.

Environmental struggles are increasingly about not-in-my-backyard (NIMBY). This is understandable as people are the best protectors of the environment and are saying that pollution must not happen in their backyard. But the problem in a highly iniquitous country is that this can simply mean that we do not want something in our backyard, but it can move to some place where the less powerful live.

But we must realise that even as middle-class environmentalism will grow, which is important, it will not be enough to bring improvement or change. The reason is that solutions for environmental management require inclusive growth. Otherwise, at best, we will have more “gated” and “green” colonies, but not green neighbourhoods, rivers, cities or country.

It is important also then to look for solutions, not just pose problems that do not go away. But this search for technologies and approaches to environmental management will have to recognise the need to do things differently so that sustainable growth is affordable to all. It also recognises that new age institutional strengthening is vital—we cannot improve performance without investment in boots on the ground.

This demands a new way of environmentalism—one that can move beyond the problems of today and yesterday—to embrace ideas without dogma, but with idealism and purpose. But for this to happen, it is time we imbibed politics that will make this environmentalism happen.