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EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Dr Sudhir Mahajan

EDITOR

Sanjay Kumar Verma

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Tel: 011-49407837, 41811157, 40793299

E-mail : ncui.pub@gmail.com

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Contact: Sanjay Kumar Verma

(Mobile No. 9871146034)

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T: 011-41659877, 09213132174

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Beginning of
New
Dawn...



With the
New Strength and
New Thoughts...



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HEAD OFFICE

425, Azamshaha Layout, Anand Nagar, Nagpur-440009 (M.S.) India

Phone : 0712-6473555

E-mail : adityaanagha@gmail.com

Website : www.adityaanagha.com

ENGAGING COOPERATIVES TO SECURE LIFE AND LIVELIHOOD OF CITIZENS

When oxygen shortages were reported from various parts of the country for a growing pool of patients under oxygen support during the second wave of Covid pandemic, fertilizer cooperative IFFCO decided to set up four oxygen plants in UP, Gujarat and Odisha. This galvanized other cooperatives. Soon KRIBHCO sprung into action and decided to produce oxygen at its two plants. Banas dairy in Gujarat set up an oxygen plant in a short span of just 72 hours to help a district medical college tide over oxygen shortage. In the wake of increasing number of Covid patients in Kozhikode district, Uralungul Labour Contract Cooperative Society started installation of oxygen plants. Campco, a cooperative of areca growers in Karnataka, decided to set up an oxygen plant in Dakshin Kannada district which will also supply oxygen to the neighbouring state of Kerala. To improve logistics, Gujarat's Registrar of Cooperative Societies directed all district cooperative milk unions throughout the state to arrange oxygen cylinders in their respective areas. Besides augmenting the supply of medical oxygen in the state of emergency, cooperatives also responded in many other ways to help the nation tide over the crisis posed by the second wave. For instance, NCDC pledged to lend Rs 10,000 crore to cooperatives for setting up new healthcare facilities, or upgrade the existing ones.

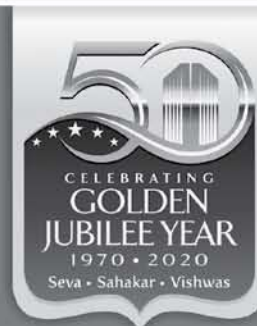
Last year also, during the first wave of Covid pandemic, AMUL, MILKFED, NAFED, MARFED and a host of other cooperative organizations had provided necessary services to the people despite the supply chain being terribly disrupted by the lockdown. Almost all the cooperatives during that period had mobilized their members who reached out to the people in distress and provided them food and other critical goods such as masks and sanitizers.

Why cooperatives are so proactive in the event of a community crisis! It's because cooperatives are community based organizations and thus have strong roots in the communities. In fact, 'concern for community' has been accorded as one of the seven cooperative principles making it obligatory for the cooperatives to serve community needs. History acknowledges the vital contribution of cooperatives in disaster management across the world, be it of any nature or scale. Indian cooperatives have also time and again proved their worth in rescuing the community from large scale crises. Kerala has been able to handle the pandemic quite effectively and keeping the mortality rate very low despite high infection rate also because there is a strong presence of cooperatives in the state, including in the healthcare sector.

We have more than eight lakh cooperatives in the country spread across about 90% of the villages and are engaged in almost all the areas of socio-economic activities, including healthcare. It's time the government roped in the cooperatives in tackling the pandemic to secure the life and livelihood of its citizens and also engaged them in building critical health infrastructure in the country ■



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NCUI ORGANISES NATIONAL CONSULTATION MEET

At a national consultation webinar on 'Separate Administrative Structure for Cooperatives' organized by NCUI on 10th May, 2021, Shri Parshottam Rupala, Union Minister of State for Agriculture said that cooperatives have a big role in creating Atmanirbhar Bharat. Highlighting some of the issues, he said there is a need to involve cooperatives actively in the field of food processing where they can successfully diversify their activities. Speaking further, he stressed on the need for strengthening primary agricultural cooperatives.

NCUI President Shri Dileep Sanghani, who chaired the meeting, said that this year's budget proposed creating an administrative structure for multi-state cooperatives to facilitate ease of doing business. He thanked Hon'ble Minister Shri Rupala for his efforts in convincing the government to accept this long-pending demand of the cooperative sector and said such administrative structure will solve the managerial problems of cooperative societies. He exuded optimism that this structure will meet the aspirations of Atmanirbhar Bharat, and will facilitate in doubling of farmers' income.

A number of high level functionaries from the cooperative sector, who were present at the meeting, demanded that the government should resolve pending issues related to the implementation of the 97th Constitutional Amendment Bill so that cooperatives can work as autonomous organizations. It needs to be recalled here that Gujarat High Court had stayed the implementation of the Bill, and the matter is now pending in the Supreme Court.

KRIBHCO Chairman and former President of NCUI Dr Chandra Pal Singh Yadav asked for setting up a separate ministry or department for cooperatives so as to avoid overlapping, and streamline the functioning



of cooperative organizations all over the country. Besides, he called for strengthening NCUI – the apex body of cooperatives in the country – so that it can effectively voice the concerns of the cooperatives in the country.

Shri G H Amin, Chairman of Gujarat State Cooperative Union and former President of NCUI, while highlighting the need for supervision of multi-state cooperatives and enhancing their business potential, also endorsed the idea of setting up a separate ministry or department of cooperatives.

Shri V P Singh, President of Delhi State Cooperative Union and a Member of NCUI Governing Council said that the government should ensure that the Constitutional Amendment Bill is passed by all the state legislatures. He also said that a Model Law should be formulated which take into view the issues pertaining to Constitutional Amendment Bill, and creation of administrative structure for multi-state cooperatives. He added that a committee should be constituted by the government to consider the above-mentioned issues.

Shri H.K. Patil, former Minister in the Karnataka Government said that such administrative structure should see that the autonomy of the cooperatives is not compromised.

Shri B. Subrahmanyam, Managing Director of National Federation of State Cooperative Banks said there are three alternatives before us – either we should create a separate ministry of cooperatives, or constitute a department of cooperation with the finance ministry, or thoroughly review the existing cooperation department.

Shri K. K. Ravindran, Managing Director of NCARDB Federation said that cooperatives should be provided same concessions and privileges to improve ease of doing business.

Dr K. K. Tripathy, former Director for VAMNICOM and currently Financial Advisor to the Government of India said that separate divisions related to IT, innovation, international programmes, plan, policy and programme may be created under the present cooperation department.

Reformulating national policy on cooperatives, providing same facilities/privileges to cooperatives as given to corporates for ease of doing business, need for registration of FPOs under Cooperative Societies Acts, etc. were some of the other important suggestions that came up during the meeting.

Dr Bijender Singh, Vice President, NCUI proposed vote of thanks on the occasion ■

Our strides are
Kerala's pride !

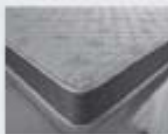


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RATIONALE OF RBI's VIEWS ON DIVIDEND PAYMENT

BHIMA SUBRAHMANYAM*

Cooperative Banks need to comply with applicable minimum regulatory capital requirements while declaring dividend on equity shares.

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) announced dividend payment norms for both commercial banks and cooperative banks on 22 April 2021. Cooperative banks include rural cooperative banks namely State Cooperative Banks (SCBs) and District Central Cooperative Banks (DCCBs) as well as Urban (primary) Cooperative Banks (UCBs). The conditionality imposed in the year 2020 not to pay dividend has been relaxed and the cooperative banks have now been permitted to pay dividend on equity shares from the profits of the financial year ended March 31, 2021 as per the extant instructions. Commercial banks have been allowed to pay dividend

on equity shares from the profits for the financial year ended March 31, 2021, subject to the quantum of dividend being not more than fifty percent of the amount determined as per the dividend payout ratio.

As is commonly known to all, 'dividend' means the amount paid, out of the profits of a cooperative society, to its member, proportionate to the shares held by him in such society. The payment of dividend depends upon the provisions laid down in the respective state cooperative societies' Acts and also Multi State Cooperative Societies Act, 2002. The provisions in the matter of payment of dividend are also linked to the directions by Registrar of

Cooperative Societies and Reserve bank of India (RBI). These statutory authorities exercise powers to lay down restrictions on payment of dividends based on the Acts/Rules/Byelaws.

According to the provisions of a State Cooperative Societies Act, "No society shall pay dividend to its members at a rate exceeding 15 per cent except with the prior sanction of the Registrar." As per the provisions of Multi State Cooperative Societies Act, 2002, no part of the funds, other than net profits, of a multi-state cooperative society shall be distributed by way of bonus or dividend or otherwise among the members; payment of dividend to

* Managing Director, National Federation of State Cooperative Banks, (NAFSCOB)

the members on their paid-up share capital shall be as specified in the bye-laws; and the bye-laws of a multi-state cooperative society may provide for distribution of patronage bonus to its members in consonance with the transactions of a member with the society. It has been understood that income-tax shall not be payable by an assessee, who is a member of a co-operative society, in respect of any dividends received by him from the society.

A view has also been expressed by some elected representatives of rural cooperative banks that any restrictions imposed on dividend payouts affect the financial health of grassroots level agricultural cooperatives, hamper their growth, and therefore voiced against the decision of RBI in 2020.

Let us now understand the provisions of The Banking Regulations Act, 1949. Section 15 of the Act deals with the 'restrictions as to payment of dividends' as follows:

- No banking company shall pay any dividend on its shares until all its capitalised expenses (including preliminary expenses, organisation expenses, share-selling commission, brokerage, amounts of losses incurred and any other item of expenditure not represented by tangible assets) have been completely written off.
- Notwithstanding anything to the contrary contained in subsection (1) or in the Companies Act, 1956 (1 of 1956), a banking company may pay dividends on its shares without writing off (i) the depreciation, if any, in the value of its investments in approved securities in any case where such depreciation has not actually been capitalised or otherwise accounted for as a loss; (ii) the depreciation, if any, in the value of its investments in shares, debentures or bonds (other than

approved securities) in any case where adequate provision for such depreciation has been made to the satisfaction of the auditor of the banking company; (iii) the bad debts, if any, in any case where adequate provision for such debts has been made to the satisfaction of the auditor of the banking company.

DECLARATION OF DIVIDENDS BY BANKS, GUIDELINES BY RBI & RELATED CHANGES

The policy approach adopted by the RBI with regard to payment of dividends by banks has been reviewed from time to time in consultation with the Standing Technical Advisory Committee on Financial Regulation (STACFR). RBI decided that the regulatory focus with regard to payment of dividend by banks should shift from 'quantum of dividend' to 'dividend payout ratio'. Accordingly, revised guidelines on eligibility criteria for declaration of dividends payable by banks without prior approval have been issued by RBI for the first time after 1995, on 23 April 2004 to all commercial banks. The relevant paras of eligibility criteria, quantum of dividend payable, interim dividend, etc. have been extracted and reproduced below:

ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA (2004) FOR DECLARATION OF DIVIDEND

- i. The bank should have CRAR of at least 11% and Net NPA of less than 3%.
- ii. The bank should comply with the provisions of Sections 15 and 17 of the Banking Regulation Act, 1949.
- iii. The bank should comply with the prevailing regulations/ guidelines issued by RBI, including creating adequate provisions for impairment of assets and staff retirement benefits, transfer of profits to Statutory Reserves and Investment Fluctuation Reserve, etc.

- iv. The Reserve Bank should not have placed any explicit restrictions on the bank for declaration of dividends.

The RBI also issued guidelines on the quantum of dividend payable subject to compliance of certain requirement and also penalties for violating the guidelines. These guidelines permitted banks to declare dividends subject to a ceiling of 33.33% on the dividend payout ratio, without obtaining the prior approval of RBI, subject to the fulfilment of the laid down criteria. No new amendments in Section 15 have been carried out in The Banking Regulation (Amendment) Act, 2017. However, RBI reviewed the policy approach again in 2005 based on the experiences gained and decided to grant general permission to banks to declare dividends subject to compliance of certain laid down guidelines. The most important guidelines on payment of dividend, quantum of dividend, conditionalities, etc. are extracted and reproduced below for better appreciation of the issue.

ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA (2005) FOR DECLARATION OF DIVIDEND

Only those banks, which comply with the following minimum prudential requirements, would be eligible to declare dividends:

- i) CRAR of at least 9% for the preceding two completed years and the accounting year for which it proposes to declare dividend.
- ii) Net NPA of less than 7%.

If any bank does not meet the above CRAR norm but is having a CRAR of at least 9% for the accounting year for which it proposes to declare dividend, then it would be eligible to declare dividend provided its Net NPA ratio is less than 5%. The dividend payout ratio shall not exceed 40%. The Reserve Bank will not entertain any application for a higher dividend payout ratio than the one for which the banks qualify.

RBI further directed the banks to ensure that the board approved policy be put in place based on these guidelines with regard to deciding on the proposals for declaring dividend after taking into account the interim dividend paid, the Annual Financial Inspection findings of the Reserve Bank with regard to divergence in identification of NPAs, shortfall in provisioning, the auditors' observations, the Basel II capital requirements, and the bank's long term growth plans, in the interests of all stakeholders. The bank should comply with the provisions of Sections 15 and 17 of the Banking Regulation Act, 1949.

Based on the guidelines released by RBI to commercial banks, NABARD issued circular to that extent to all the Registrars of Cooperative Societies in May 2004 with regard to the declaration of dividends by SCBs and DCCBs, reemphasising the shift from 'quantum of dividend' to 'dividend payout ratio'.

This means the payment of dividend by cooperative banks shift from the percentage of dividend payable in a year to the net profit earned during that year. The criteria for declaration of dividend by SCBs/ DCCBs vary from the criteria prescribed for commercial banks. They include: i) the banks' NPAs should not be more than 5% of net loans & advances outstanding as on 31 March of that related year, ii) the minimum CRAR of 5% was suggested to be fixed (in 2004) for the purpose of deciding the dividend, iii) the dividend payout ratio should not exceed 20%, iv) the banks with accumulated losses are not allowed to declare dividend.

The assessment by NABARD on the practices adopted by SCBs and DCCBs in 2005, in declaring dividends, according to sources from NABARD, revealed that a few banks have adopted incorrect procedure leading to incorrect

RBI guidelines issued to the cooperative banks may, in the present circumstances, be viewed as part of the overall strategy to prevent them from declaring dividends without actually considering their financial strength.

profit figures, a huge shortfall in provisioning against their impaired assets, and have declared a profit or dividend in violation of the norms laid down by the RBI.

It further observed that the eligibility criteria laid down have not been complied with by SCBs and DCCBs while declaring dividend.

Based on further review of norms, guidelines, experiences and practices adopted by the cooperative banks, the policy approach has been reconsidered by the RBI from time to time. RBI, on a serious reconsideration and in view of the ongoing stress and heightened uncertainty on account of Covid-19 in 2020, was of the strong view that it is very important and also imperative that banks continue to conserve capital to support the economy and absorb losses. "In order to further strengthen the bank's balance sheets, while at the same time support lending to the real economy, it has been decided that banks shall not make any dividend payment on equity shares from the profits pertaining to the financial year ended March 31, 2020", according to the circulars dated 17 April 2020 and 4 December 2020 released by RBI.

While reiterating the need for cooperative banks to conserve capital to support the economy and absorb losses, RBI vide circular dated 22 April 2021 permitted cooperative banks to pay dividend on equity shares from the profits of the financial year ended March 31, 2021 as per the extant instructions. RBI also added that all banks shall continue

to meet the applicable minimum regulatory capital requirements after dividend payment. While declaring dividend on equity shares, it shall be the responsibility of the Board of Directors to inter-alia consider the current and projected capital position of the bank vis-à-vis the applicable capital requirements and the adequacy of provisions, taking into account the economic environment and the outlook for profitability.

The decision with regard to the payment of dividend is always taken by the General Body of a cooperative society as recommended by the Board of Management within the statutory provisions and framework laid down by the statutory authorities/Act and Rules. The general body appreciates the fact that the guidelines issued by RBI and NABARD are no doubt in the form of well-considered advice and in the interests of stakeholders. It also appreciates that there is always a relationship between declaration and distribution (payment) of dividend to the members and their commitment and longer association with the society.

Against this background, the permission granted by RBI to the cooperative banks to pay dividend on equity shares from the profits of the financial year ended March 31, 2021 as per the guidelines/ instructions is in the appropriate direction. The guidelines issued to the cooperative banks may, in the present circumstances, be viewed as part of the overall strategy to prevent them from declaring dividends without actually considering the overall financial strength and then ensure their financial strength. As has been rightly advised by RBI, the Board of Directors of cooperative Banks need to assume the prudent responsibility to comply with applicable minimum regulatory capital requirements while declaring dividend on equity shares ■



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- Number of Primary Agriculture Cooperative Credit Societies mobilising Deposit: 2780
 - Number of live Kishan Credit Card holders as on 31.03.2020: 1492850
- Number of Self Help Groups nurtured by The WBSCB Ltd & CCBs: 203131
- Number of farmers availed crop loans (2019-2020): 1425153
 - Crop loan availed during 2019-2020: Rs 4051.86 Crore
- **Number of Self Help Group Credit linked (2019-2020): 89619**
 - Loan availed by Self Help Groups during 2019-2020: Rs. 1097.24 Crore
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Managing Director



RBI RESTRICTIONS ON DIVIDEND PAYMENT

ARVIND KUMAR SRIVASTAVA*

Are RBI restrictions on payment of dividend by cooperative banks justified?

The shareholders of an organization enjoy many privileges like voting rights on important decisions, participation in the annual general meeting of shareholders, etc., but more importantly a sense of ownership in the organization. The shareholders are the most important stakeholder having keen interest in the financial performance of the organization. In case of a company listed on the stock exchange, the value of its share on the stock exchange provides some indication of its performance. However, the profit earned by an organization and the consequent declaration of dividend is the ultimate test for shareholder about strong financial performance of the organization.

There is a great deal of difference between the shareholder of a company and cooperatives in the

country. While the shareholders of a company are primarily interested in the financial profit and increased market value of their share, the members of cooperatives being the user of services of cooperatives have greater interest in the organization. The profitability and sustainability of the cooperative society are of far greater importance to members than a company shareholder.

The cooperative societies in the country were established at the village level primarily to take care of the credit requirements of agriculture. Later on, those engaged in other economic activities also organized themselves into cooperative societies. Since economic activities require financial support, the cooperative societies federated themselves to establish a bank at district level or state level. This resulted in

establishment of Central Cooperative Banks (CCBs) at district level in many states. These CCBs got itself affiliated to State Cooperative Bank registered at State level to cater to their (includes affiliated societies) financial requirements. In other states, the primary cooperative societies became member of State Cooperative Banks and availed financial services directly. The development also witnessed establishment of Primary Credit Societies, largely in urban areas, which catered to the financial requirements of individuals who belonged to the lower strata of the society. All these cooperative societies are registered under State Cooperative Societies Acts of the state, where they operate. An important provision of the State Cooperative Societies Act requires societies to conduct Annual General Meeting of members to approve the

* General Manager (Retired), NABARD

financial results. The approval of dividend payment is an important agenda of these meetings. Since a major chunk of members do not possess great managerial and financial acumen, payment of dividend by cooperative societies serves as the most important evidence of smooth functioning and retains their confidence in the societies.

The importance of payment of dividend in the cooperative framework has been recognized for long. Appreciating its criticality to the cooperative structure, law makers did not consider it as directly related to banking activities. It was for this reason that the provisions in the Banking Companies Act, 1949 (Section 15) dealing with payment of dividend, were not made applicable to cooperative banks in the year 1966 when these banks were brought under regulatory fold of the Reserve Bank of India. As a consequence, the cooperative banks have continued to make payment of dividend to their members (both individuals and cooperative societies) after compliance with provisions of the State Cooperative Societies Acts/Rules.

It would be worthwhile to note the provisions in the State Acts to appreciate that a lot of importance has been accorded to creation of reserves and making adequate provisions before dividend is declared. For example, Rajasthan State Cooperative Societies Rules, 2003 (Rules 69 and 70) provide for deductions like financial expenses, operating expenses, etc. to arrive at distributable profits, transfer of 25% of profit to Reserve Fund (Section 48 of the Act), prescribing manner of distribution of profits and stipulating a ceiling of 10% of the value of shares as dividend payment. Similarly, Telengana Cooperative Societies Rules (Rule 34) restricts a cooperative society to utilize its net profit unless the audit certificate certifying the amount of net profit has been issued by the Chief Auditor. The Rules also provide for transfer of at least 40% of profit towards Reserve

Fund and Agriculture Credit Stabilisation Fund by Rural Cooperative Banks. It would suffice to state that the State Acts provide for adequate safeguards with regard to payment of dividend by cooperative banks.

Notwithstanding this, the protection of depositors' interest has forced regulatory/ supervisory authorities to issue guidelines to be complied with by cooperative banks for payment of dividend. There have been concerns because of availability of limited sources for augmenting their capital and the legislative stipulation (Section 11 of Banking Regulation Act, 1949) of requirement of a paltry sum of Rs. 1 lakh as minimum value of paid up capital and reserves for cooperative banks. The guidelines require cooperative banks to ensure compliance with liquidity requirements (Cash Reserve Ratio and Statutory Liquidity Ratio), capital requirements (Capital to Risk Weighted Assets Ratio) and operational benchmarks relating to provision and level of Non Performing Assets (NPA). Suggestions have also been made to restrict dividend payout ratio to 20% of profit during any year for rural cooperative banks.

It is in this backdrop that one has to examine the RBI instructions (RBI/2019-20/218 DOR.BP.BC. No.64/21.02.067/2019-20 dated 17 April 2020) issued to commercial banks and cooperative banks in the aftermath of Covid pandemic. The banks were restrained from making any further payout in respect of profit for the financial year ending March 2020. The same was reiterated by RBI circular dated 04 December

The cooperative banks should take a realistic view of their requirements of reserves and any distribution of profit by way of dividend must pass not only the test of members' aspiration but also bank's stability.

2020. In this connection, it must be kept in view that most of commercial banks have issued shares to public. The shareholding in a commercial bank is a matter of choice – a financial decision. The listing of their shares on stock exchanges provides an opportunity to shareholders to encash the value of their shares – even secure some capital appreciation. Further, these being listed entities; they publish their financial results on quarterly basis, while there is no such stipulation in case of cooperative banks. The same does not hold good for a shareholder in a cooperative bank. The shares are held by individuals and cooperative institutions primarily because of linking of borrowings to amount of share held by them. Further, the byelaws of Cooperative Societies Acts/ Rules do not generally provide for refund/ transfer of shares. The cooperative banks publish their accounts on annual basis and generally approve payment of dividends in the annual general meeting conducted thereafter. The receipt of dividend by shareholders of a cooperative bank provides them the confidence both about the financial performance and management of the bank. Dividend is also an important tool to maintain the goodwill, faith and reputation of the bank, which is even more important in case of a cooperative bank. Needless to add, dividend from a cooperative bank is a good source of income for affiliated cooperative societies and individual members. Many cooperative societies also look forward to decisions by bank on such matters and follow the same for their own members. RBI guidelines proved to be a great dampener to the entire cooperative credit structure. Incidentally, it may be noted that some commercial banks paid dividend (interim) for the year 2019-20. (HDFC Bank, Annual Report - 2019-20, Page 310)

The issue of payment of dividend by banks has hit headlines again with RBI instructions dated 22 April 2021 permitting commercial

banks to pay dividend upto 50% of the amount determined as per the dividend payout ratio prescribed by existing RBI guidelines. An important component of this instruction is permitting cooperative banks to pay dividend as per extant instructions. This brings us to the question of instructions governing payment of dividend by cooperative banks. It would be worthwhile to recall that provisions relating to payment of dividend in the Banking Regulation Act (Section 15) were not applicable to cooperative banks prior to the promulgation of Banking Regulation Amendment Act, 2020. The amendment has been notified for rural cooperative banks only with effect from 01 April 2021. The RBI's existing instruction (circular DBOD. No. BP.BC.88/21.02.067/2004-05 dated 04 May 2005) is meant only for scheduled commercial banks. RBI's decision to make the same applicable for cooperative banks and more so in the light of extant provisions of Banking Regulation Act does not appear to be justified and in alignment with the author-

ity provided by law. A query filed under Right to Information Act in July 2020 seeking RBI response on such an instruction by RBI to Cooperative Banks in the light of existing RBI instructions only to scheduled commercial banks and extant provisions of the Act, did not elicit requisite response.

In this background, RBI guidelines permitting payment of dividend by cooperative banks is a welcome step as it upholds the cooperative principles and reposes faith in the safeguards available under Cooperative Societies Act. However, as per the Financial Stability Report of the RBI issued in January 2021, there are indications that the gross NPA of the banks may increase substantially (from 7.5% in September 2020 to 13.5% by September 2021). It is feared that the position in respect of cooperative banks would be even worse keeping in view greater vulnerability of its clients. Further, majority of cooperative banks, whether it is Urban Cooperative Banks, DCCB or State Cooperative Banks,

are not yet declaring their position of NPA on system based calculation. Under these circumstances, the exact requirement of provision is anybody's guess. The limited maneuverability for raising capital resources is another handicap for these banks. Strangely, the requirement of minimum value of paid-up capital and reserves for cooperative banks continue to remain pegged at Rs. one lakh, stipulated more than half a century ago. The distressing fact is that a good number of cooperative banks are unable to comply even with this requirement.

In view of these, RBI guidelines permitting payment of dividend by cooperative banks casts enormous responsibility on the Board of Directors. The banks must prepare them well, particularly in the aftermath of Covid pandemic. Further, the cooperative banks should take a realistic view of their requirements of reserves and any distribution of profit by way of dividend must pass not only the test of members' aspiration but also bank's stability ■

No. 1

**Urban Co-op.
Bank in Gujarat**

**Kalupur
Bank**

The Kalupur Commercial Co-op. Bank Ltd.

SINCE : 1970 Multi State Scheduled Bank

Financial Highlights

as on 31-3-2020 (₹ in crore)

● Share Capital	94.45
● Total deposit	7837.03
● Total Advances	4918.24
● Total Own Funds	1446.40
● Working Capital	9890.42
● Gross Profit	209.70
● CRAR	17.60%
● Gross NPA	1.53%
● Net NPA	0.00%

The infographic displays various loan products and their interest rates in a cluster of hanging tags. The products and rates are: VEPAR MITRA YOJNA at 9.00%, MSME LOAN at 8.25%, CAR LOAN at 7.50%, HOME LOAN at 7.00% (with a note 'For Home Loan Subsidy under PMAY available'), EDUCATION LOAN at 7.50%, DOCTOR MITRA YOJNA at 8.25%, and LOAN AGAINST PROPERTY at 8.60%.

Network

59

62

Branches ATMs

**Head Office : 'Kalupur Bank Bhavan',
Ashram Road, Ahmedabad - 380014**

**For more details visit our website
www.kalupurbank.com**

**1800 233 99999 (TOLL FREE)
7378309191 (MISSED CALL)**

* T & C APPLY

Payment of dividend is an important aspect of profit distribution among shareholders/ members of a company or a cooperative organisation. It is the reward for taking risk by public capital in any business. In case of cooperatives, dividend is paid out of net profit to the members on their paid up share capital at a rate not exceeding the prescribed limit. Different states prescribe different rates for payment of dividend but it usually varies from 8% to 10%.

Since the dividend is paid out of profit, only profit making organisations are eligible to pay dividend, which otherwise means that regular dividend payment organisations are always the going concerns. Regular payment of dividend is an attraction for shareholders and they tend to invest more in capital of such concerns. Capital and dividend are in fact complementary and supplementary to each other – if more capital is subscribed then more dividend is received, and vice versa.

Capital is the basic element to start any business enterprise. Capital acts as a buffer in times of crisis or poor performance by an enterprise including banks. In case of banks, sufficiency of capital instills confidence in depositors. As such, adequacy of capital is one of the three conditions for licensing of a bank as well as its continuance in business. A bank's capital is required as a cushion to absorb losses which are borne by shareholders and also to meet expenses for infrastructure development of their banking business. Thus, public confidence in the banks is closely related to the capital funds of the banks. Based on this confidence, the banks mobilize deposits which are many times more than the capital.

Since banks' capital is the first line of defence to absorb losses, it needs to be censored and further strengthened. Last year, during Covid-19 pandemic where economic activities were halted due to lockdown, the RBI



RBI ALLOWS BANKS TO PAY DIVIDEND

SUBHASH GUPTA*

NAFCUB welcomes the decision of the RBI to allow cooperative banks to pay dividends

in order to maintain financial stability announced Covid-19 package for banks under which moratorium on payment of interest and installments of loan by borrowers from 1st March 2020 to 31st August 2020 was announced. It was also announced that in an environment of heightened uncertainty caused by Covid-19, it is important that banks conserve capital to retain their capacity to support the economy and absorb losses. As such, banks shall not make any dividend payouts on equity shares from the profits pertaining to the financial year ended March 31 2020 to strengthen their balance sheet while at the same time support lending to the real economy.

Now with easing of restrictions and economic activities picking up, especially in third and fourth quarters of the financial year 2020-21, the RBI has permitted banks to pay dividend on equity shares for the year ended March 31 2021. However, RBI has revived the dividend declaration norms and permitted commercial banks to pay dividend subject to the

quantum of dividend being not more than 50% of the amount determined as per the dividend payment ratio. Cooperative banks have been permitted to pay dividend on equity shares as per the existing norms. However, RBI has instructed both commercial and cooperative banks that they shall continue to meet the applicable minimum regulatory capital requirement after dividend payment.

In case of cooperative banks, it is a big relief since cooperative members and dividends are embedded in each other. Regular payment of dividend is a motivation as well as emotional fulfillment of members belonging to the cooperatives they promote and nurture from generation to generation.

UCBs would thus be able to supplement their capital by retaining present members and attract new members. UCBs would thus be able to grow and meet credit needs of their members. It is a welcome decision of the RBI and NAFCUB is happy that its demand has been accepted ■

* Former Chief Executive, NAFCUB

GUJARAT DY CM RELEASES AMIN'S BIOGRAPHY

Gujarat State Cooperative Credit Societies Federation Ltd in close cooperation with the Gujarat State Cooperative Union prepared a biography of the former President of NCUI Shri Ghanshyambhai Amin, an eminent cooperative leader, selfless Karmayogi and Sahakar Purush. The biography was released in the form of a book titled "Kalyanpathna Karmayogi", epitomizing his works, deeds and life journey as a leading cooperative leader, learned advocate, educationist, political leader, social leader, cooperative icon and a real gem of the cooperative sector. Shri Amin, while occupying important posts and positions, immensely contributed in making sweeping changes in the cooperative sector at all levels – rural, state, national as well as international, which has been appreciated from all quarters.

The book, Kalyanpathna Karmayogi was released on the 21st of March 2021 by Shri Nitinbhai Patel, Hon'ble Deputy Chief Minister of Gujarat in the august and gracious presence of Shri Bhupendrasinh Chudasma, Hon'ble Education Minister of Gujarat, Dr. Chandra Pal Singh Yadav, Chairman of KRIBHCO, Shri Narharibhai Amin, Member of Parliament, Shri Sunil Kumar Singh, Vice Chairman of NAFED, Shri Ajaybhai Patel, Chairman of Gujarat State Cooperative Bank and other dignitaries.

Releasing the book, Shri Nitinbhai Patel stated that as Gujarat is quite often bestowed with well-deserved honour for its contribution in the cooperative movement, but the credit must go to the grassroots level cooperative workers like Shri Ghanshyambhai Amin. The success of Shri Amin is attributed to the factors like hard work, sacrifice, commitment to cause, diligence, and above all, the struggle waged by him during his entire career, he said.

"Ghanshyambhai has earned name and fame not only in the cooperative sector, but has strong academic



credentials and rich advocacy experience," said Shri Patel, adding that Shri Amin's biography will be an inspirational guide to the youth of today. He further said that the presence of various cooperative leaders from across the country clearly shows that the works and selfless services of Shri Amin are well known in every nook and corner of the entire country. His dedication towards cooperative sector is really commendable, stated the Deputy CM and wished Shri Amin a healthy and long life.

Reminiscing over the work of Shri Amin, Dr Chandra Pal Singh Yadav, the guest of honour for the function stated that Ghanshyambhai has played a vital role in strengthening the cooperative movement at national level and has taken effective steps to strengthen cooperative education in the country. He further said that after taking over as the Vice Chairman of ICA (Asia-Pacific) in 2008, Shri Amin made the nation proud. He also acknowledged Shri Amin's hard work and commitment to the cause for strengthening the cooperative movement while serving for two terms as the President of NCUI. He hoped that the biography of Shri Amin will inspire the young generation to associate itself with the cooperative movement.

Speaking on the occasion as another guest of honour, Shri Sunil Kumar Singh wished Shri Amin a long life and stated that one has to put in gigantic efforts for achieving name and fame as Kalyanpathna Karmayogi. He said that Shri Amin has done a great job by safeguarding the larger interests of the farmers of the nation and is showing

a new way and direction for agricultural development of the country. Shri Amin, at the time of the formation of WTO, safeguarded the interests and welfare of the farmers of the nation by constituting Asian Farmers Group in Japan and this group protects the interests and welfare of farmers, he pointed out.

Addressing the function, Shri Narharibhai Amin appreciated and admired the great work done by Shri Amin in the fields related to cooperatives and advocacy.

Thanking the guests, Shri Amin said that commencing the life career as an advocate, he took each and every task of his life as challenge and put in vigorous and unceasing efforts to achieve success in his field. He expressed satisfaction that he was able to perform several tasks successfully in the capacity of the chairman of the bar council in the larger interests and welfare of the legal fraternity.

Recalling his engagements with national and international cooperative movement, Shri Amin said: "Mere thinking does not lead you to success. It's my experience that you have to do a lot of research, put in hard work, and undertake vigorous efforts keeping in mind a specific goal."

On the occasion, a blood donation camp was also held. Cooperative workers and dignitaries across the state participated in large numbers by donating blood and making the event successful. Dr. Jivrajbhai Godhani proposed vote of thanks to all the guests and dignitaries attending the function ■

Traditional training methods are changing rapidly with the advancement of technology and connectivity in India. Technological revolutions also have changed the cooperative sector creating new forms and patterns of work and leading to wider societal changes. On the other hand, the current wave of pandemic has created a profound impact on the business of cooperatives as well as methods of cooperative training.

While there are numerous training methods, most of the traditional methods used in offline classes can be applied equally and efficiently in online mode. The trend of online training is increasing day by day and it has now become an integral part of teaching and learning. Cooperative training institutions in India have already initiated the online training, utilising their technical advancement and reach. Thanks to good internet connectivity across India, it is now possible to reach every corner and impart cooperative training through online mode.

REQUIREMENTS

1. Hardware: Mobile or Laptop or all-in-one PC or a desktop with webcam, mic and speaker
2. Software: Video conferencing app/software or an online meeting platform
3. Stable internet connection

While choosing the online meeting platform, the user should consider few things which are: user licences - free or paid, capacity of participants, PC OS support - Windows/Mac/Linux, mobile OS support - Android/iOS/Win, audio support - uni/bi directional, video sharing support, video quality VGA/HD 480/720/1080p, chat support, screen sharing support, white board support, security access, encrypted communication, host meeting from mobile,



ONLINE COOPERATIVE TRAINING

SC PRADHAN*

What are the requirements of cooperative training in online mode and how to prepare for it?

recording capabilities, VoIP facility, co-browsing, cloud based meeting, file transfer, and unified communication.

Few names of the popular online platforms are Google Meet, Microsoft Teams, CISCO Webex, Zoom Meeting, GoTo Meeting, Jio Meet, Airtel BlueJeans, WhatsApp Group Meeting, Vconsole and many others.

Vconsole, a product of Kerala based Techgentsia Software Technologies Pvt. Ltd. is the winner of innovation challenge for development of video conferencing solution conducted under Digital India Program. The company received a grant of Rs 1 crore for this development from Govt. of India.

PLANNING

Plan, whether webinar is the right tool for target audience, subject matter, and the time needs to cover the topics.

PRIOR TO A MEETING

- When using equipment or locations not regularly used, test your meeting connections in advance.
- When possible, establish online video conferencing connections several minutes before the meeting start time.
- Create a backup communication plan in case you have trouble connecting with remote participants. A backup plan can include asking onsite participants to connect to the meeting through their laptops, using a mobile or speakerphone, and/or collaborating through an online collaboration tool (e.g., Google docs, Office online).

DURING A MEETING

- Ensure all participants can see and hear all other participants, as appropriate.

* Principal, Delhi State Cooperative Training Centre

- Ensure conference room microphones are distributed appropriately to pick up all speakers.
- Ensure location lighting does not limit a participant's visibility (e.g., avoid backlighting from windows or lamps).
- Have participants mute their microphones if their location has excessive background noise or they will not be speaking.
- Make sure all participants have equal access to content by sharing all content within the video conferencing connection and using online tools whenever possible.
- **Have a meeting Facilitator**, the person who called the meeting. The facilitator is responsible for:
 - providing an agenda to participants — ahead of the meeting is nice, but minimally at the start of the meeting — that includes an overview of topics to be covered and planned outcome;
 - establishing the visual or verbal cues, such as raising a hand, to indicate when someone wants to actively contribute verbally to the meeting;
 - engaging participants at all locations to ensure discussion understanding, and alignment;
 - limiting “side conversations” and multitasking or ensure all participants are made aware of that content;
- Have the Presenter(s) or subject experts. Ideally, presenters should be able to concentrate their efforts on preparing and delivering their presentation.
- Have the Assistants, who can help by answering technical and logistical questions (“Am I audible?” for example). Experienced facilitator often conducts webinars without any assistance, but you should consider asking for help if you or your audience is unfamiliar with webinars and webinar tools.

FORMAT OF WEBINAR

One Speaker: A single presenter speaks, demonstrates, and answers questions from the audience.

Interview Style: Interviewer asks a set of predetermined questions.

Panel Discussion: Multiple people on the line at the same time, with a moderator facilitating the discussion.

Interactive Training: Use of PPTX, Audio-Video, short film, Interactive board, Unified Communication

STRATEGIES

1. Know the technology
 - A. This is new to everyone, so be prepared to troubleshoot.
 - B. Inform about the App prior to the session
2. Expect the unexpected & remain flexible
 - A. Technology may fail sometimes
 - B. Audio or Video may not work
 - C. Back up your plan, keep alternatives
 - D. Learn to solve technical challenges, real time
3. Create & maintain a strong presence
4. Set clear expectations for the course
5. Establish a sense of comfort
6. Request feedback and be mindful of misinterpretation

BEST PRACTICES FOR ONLINE TRAINING

PRIOR TO TRAINING

- Test your equipment and Software
- Establish online video conferencing connections several minutes before meeting.
- Create a backup communication plan in case of failure.
- Be acquainted with App & its features
- Send agenda/topics prior to meeting
- Keep time zone in mind

- Make sure of stable Internet connection
- Get rid of distraction, mobile etc
- Dress properly
- Get a uniform illumination
- Select a clean background, surroundings
- Mind your posture
- Instruct (if needed) prior to start
- Have a Moderator/ facilitator
- Be on time
- Frame camera properly
- Choose a quiet location, no noise
- If you're using external mic, speaker, headphone, camera, external keyboard, mouse, do a trial run.
- While using Mobile for the webinar, fix on a stand as per your convenient.
- use Laptop for better view
- Use Paper, pen for quick note.

DURING THE TRAINING

- Ensure all participants can see and hear
- Instruct to mute their mic
- Mute when you are listening
- Never speak at the same time
- While presenting look into the camera
- Instruct to raise the hand, while speak
- Position your camera at your eye level
- If Connection is slow share PPT only
- Instruct others to use audio only, for slow connection.
- Engage participants by showing Video, animation & other inter-actives.
- Share your PPT and recording for better understanding
- Content on the slide of PPT should be short and with larger font size.

AFTER THE TRAINING

- Get the feedback from the participants verbally
- Use online Feedback form (google/ Microsoft form)
- Share Recording of Online Training
- Share the documents, like PPTs and AVs ■

Departmental Promotion Committee is constituted to judge the suitability of officials of the establishment for promotion. All cases for regular promotions are to be first considered by the Departmental Promotion Committees (DPC for brevity), which have to be constituted for category-wise posts. The DPC is to be guided by the instructions as issued from time to time and the office is required to place complete and correct information before the DPC.

Members included in DPC should be at least one level above the post to which promotion is to be made. The DPC is to consider and recommend the names of officials for promotion/ confirmation in respect of various services/posts. For holding meetings of the DPC, the precise number of vacancies for which select-list is to be prepared has to be worked out. For one vacancy, five officers are considered. If there are two vacancies, eight officers will be considered, the formula being $2(x)+4$, where 'x' stands for number of vacancies. To illustrate the formula, if there are ten vacancies, twenty four officers will be considered for the post, i.e. the zone of consideration is twenty four. To assess the relative merit of officers the Confidential Reports for equal number of years in respect of all officers being considered for a particular post are scrutinised. DPC recommendations are advisory in nature and have to be approved by the appointing authority before they are given effect.

The proceedings of the DPC are reduced in writing in the form of DPC minutes. When promotion is denied to an official he is entitled to challenge the action of the authorities before the proper forum in the manner known to law. To ventilate his grievance, he is entitled to have a copy of the DPC minutes to establish why his name was not



DIVULGING DPC MINUTES UNDER THE RTI ACT

R. MURALIDHARAN*

When can DPC proceedings be disclosed, and to whom?

considered by the DPC. It is not out place that a third party also applies under the Right to Information Act, 2005 for copy of minutes of DPC for one reason or other. This article analyses the case laws of the Central Information Commission (CIC) and High Court on the instances under which the applicant is entitled for copy of the DPC minutes.

CONSISTENT (AT TIMES, CONTRADICTIONARY) VIEWS OF THE CIC

- The Full Bench of the CIC in Rakesh Kumar Singh and others

vs. Assistant Director, Lok Sabha Secretariat and others, Complaint No.CIC/WB/C/2006/00223 dated 23.4.2007 considered, inter alia, on disclosure of minutes of the DPC. It observed that however insofar as the departmental examinees are concerned or the proceedings of Departmental Promotion Committees are concerned, the Commission tends to take a different view. In such cases, the numbers of examinees are limited and it is necessary that neutrality and fairness are maintained to the best possible extent. Disclosure of proceedings

* Puducherry Civil Service Officer (Retired), Director, Catalyst [The Training People]

or disclosure of the answer sheets not only of the examinees but also of the other candidates bring in fairness and neutrality and will make the system more transparent and accountable. The Commission moreover finds that the proceedings of the Departmental Promotion Committees or its minutes are not covered by any of the exemptions provided for under Section 8(1) and, therefore, such proceedings/minutes are to be disclosed.

- Another Full Bench of the Commission in *Ms. J.D. Sahay, Chief Commissioner of Income Tax-I vs. Ministry of Finance Department of Revenue, New Delhi*, Appeal No. CIC/AT/A/2008/00027 and 33 dated 6.2.2009 held that as regards the documents concerning DPC, the concerned Public Authority is directed to make available information in terms of request of the appellant but there shall be no obligation to disclose details concerning third parties. The respondent Public Authority may suitably use the severability clause in Section 10(1) of the Right to Information Act.

- The DPCs prepare their minutes and make recommendations after examining ACRs of the employees due for promotion. Disclosure of the complete proceedings of the DPC and the grades given by various officers to their subordinates may lead to disclosure that by inference the DPC proceedings should be similarly barred. However, in all such cases the CPIO and AAs should apply the doctrine of severability and should provide him the information, which can be provided under Section 10(2), vide 2009 (2) ID 426 (CIC, Delhi).

- However, a third party cannot seek the copy of minutes of the DPC. In *Shri M.P. Dixit vs. Income Tax Department, Patna*, CIC/LS/A/2010/000097 dated 31.3.2010, the CIC held that needless to say DPC proceedings are confidential in nature. Hence, third party cannot

have a claim to seek copy of these proceedings. However, it has been held by the Commission in a number of its decisions that the affected personnel have a right to obtain a copy of these proceedings. The appellant is Advocate by profession and, therefore, is a third party and has no title to obtain a copy of the DPC proceedings. Both CPIO and AA are in error in denying DPC proceedings only on the ground that disclosure thereof will enable the affected party to prosecute his case more effectively in the Court of law. In fact, it should be other way around. Contesting a case in a Court of law is, indeed, a good ground to seek a copy of the DPC proceedings, particularly when an affected person feels aggrieved by the decision of the competent authority, as reflected in the proceedings.

- The proceedings of the DPC cannot be denied just because it may contain the ACR grading of other officers/employees. It is true that the ACR of any government employee cannot be disclosed to any other unauthorized person; but in case of the DPC, what is normally taken into consideration is not the entire ACR but only the grading. Since this input is an essential precondition for promotion, therefore, in respect of the recommended candidates at least, the ACR grading must be placed in the public domain to show that the DPC process has been transparent. [*Arti Sinha vs. Debts Recovery Tribunal, Allahabad*, CIC/SM/A/2012/000985 dated 31.12.2012].

- It is apposite to quote the decision of the CIC in *R K Ratudi vs. THDC India Limited, Rishikesh*, CIC/LS/A/2012/002538SM dated 4.1.2013. The objective of the Right to Information Act is to bring about transparency in the functioning of the public authorities. All decision making in the government and all its undertakings must be objective and transparent. It is only by placing the details of all decision making in the

public domain that such objectivity and transparency can be ensured. Therefore, there is no reason why the DPC proceedings, specially, the comparative gradings of those recommended for promotion should not be disclosed. It is not at all correct to claim that such information is held in a fiduciary capacity. After all, the DPC operates as a part of the administrative decision making process in any organisation. The material that it considers is also generated within the organisation. Therefore, it is not correct to say that the DPC proceedings including the recommendations made by it can be said to be held by the public authority in a fiduciary capacity.

- Making a reference to the decision of the of the High Court of Delhi in the case of *THDC India Ltd. vs. R. K. Raturi*, decided on 8.7.2014 [discussed below] in regard to disclosure of marks of DPC, the CIC rejected the claim of the appellant on the ground that he has not established any larger public interest for disclosure of the information regarding third party employees to him, except for making an unsubstantiated allegation regarding favour shown to some employees by the respondents in the matter of promotion.

- Relying on yet another decision of the High Court of Delhi dated 30.4.2015 [W.P (C) No. 4735/2011 – *Union of India vs. D.S. Meena*], the CIC in *S. Jayaram vs. Department of Posts, Chennai*, CIC/BS/A/2015/000056/9501 dated 14.1.2016, RTIR I (2016) 188 held that DPC minutes/proceedings of other officers cannot be disclosed unless warranted by larger public interest.

- In *Laxman Singh Hada vs. Ministry of Communication & IT Department of Posts, New Delhi*, CIC/BS/A/2015/001764/11925 dated 16.12.2016, RTIR I (2017) 129 the appellant has sought information relating to promotion

of officers in Rajasthan in Class I cadre on regular basis during the year 2014-15 including minutes of DPC. As regard to DPC proceedings, the CPIO stated that the applicant was not a candidate and in any case the information relates to third party and cannot be disclosed being exempted under Section 8(1)(j) of the RTI Act. The Commission held that DPC proceedings relating to other officers cannot be disclosed unless the CPIO is satisfied that larger public interest warrants such disclosure.

- Though it is the prerogative of the employer to proceed against the employee in accordance with the rules but principles of natural justice as well requirements of Section 4(1)(d) of the RTI Act require that reasons for every administrative action must be disclosed to the person who is adversely affected. The right of appellant to know reasons for his ordeal assumes greater significance as other similarly situated persons have been promoted by the DPC. The suitability of appellant for promotion is to be evaluated by the DPC. As per the dicta laid by Supreme Court in *Union of India (UOI) and others vs. K.V. Jankiraman and others*, MANU/SC/0445/1991 the DPC recommendations qua a delinquent employee are to be kept in sealed cover till the conclusion of departmental action/ Court proceedings. However, specific reasons for keeping recommendations of DPC in sealed cannot be kept in sealed cover. That is, the decision of competent authority to not act upon the DPC recommendations is administrative order and must be supported with reasons, specifically when there is an allegation that other similarly situated persons have been promoted, vide *Raj Kumar vs. Deputy Commissioner of Police, Establishment/Headquarters*, CIC/DEPOL/A/2017/193783 dated 11.7.2018, RTIR I (2019) 77.

- In *Pritam Dhanraj Motghare vs. NTPC Ltd., New Delhi*, CIC/

NTPCO/A/2017/606030 dated 13.6.2019, RTIR IV (2019) 40, it was held that marks of the promoted/non-promoted employees cannot be provided to the appellant as the same relate to personal information of third parties, hence, its disclosure is exempted under Section 8(1)(j) of the RTI Act.

ESSENCE OF JUDGMENTS OF THE HIGH COURT

It is curious to note that all the decisions on the subject are rendered by the High Court of Delhi.

(i) In *Union of India vs. Sita Ram Verma and another*, W.P. (C) No. 5525 of 2008 dated 4.5.2011 the petitioner was seeking information concerning the DPC proceedings in which his case was considered for promotion. The disclosure of such DPC proceedings to the petitioner cannot in the circumstances be denied. It is not covered under the exemptions under Section 8 (1) (j) of the Act. The identity of the officers, who may have taken part in the deliberations at the DPC may be withheld by applying Section 10 of the Act.

(ii) The petitioner, which is a public sector undertaking, has laid a challenge to a common order passed by the Central Information Commission to the extent it directs provision of minutes of the Departmental Promotion Committee, pertaining to promotions made in THDC India Limited vs. T. Chandra Biswas, RTIR III (2013) 67. The Court was not persuaded by the argument of the petitioner that the information with regard to the DPC proceedings would fall within the exception provided under Section 8(1)(d) of the Act. Information with regard to DPC proceedings cannot come within the ambit and scope of any of three exclusions i.e. commercial confidence, trade secret and intellectual property rights. The information regarding assessment of employees by a DPC is neither commercial

in nature nor is it a trade secret or intellectual property which could harm the competitive position of another employee i.e. a third party. The expression competitive position of a third party i.e. other employees of the petitioner has to be read in consonance with the nature and the kind of information to which the said expression applies. None of the expressions used i.e. commercial secrets, trade secret and intellectual property would envelop the assessment of a DPC carried out in a service environment.

The contention of the petitioner is that the information contained in the DPC minutes would advert to the ACR gradings of the other employees who may wish to object to the said information being disclosed to the respondent, and if, the CIC was of the view that such information ought to be disclosed in public interest, notwithstanding the intrusion into the private domain of other employees, the procedure prescribed under Section 11 of the RTI Act ought to have been followed. The argument being notice ought to have been issued to the employees who would then, have taken a call, as to whether or not they would want to oppose the disclosure of information pertaining to them, contained in the DPC proceedings. The interest of justice would be served if the direction of the CIC contained in the impugned order is set aside and the matter remanded for a de novo hearing by the CIC. It was ordered accordingly.

(iii) A perusal of the Second Schedule which enumerates the intelligence and security organisations established by the Central Government which are in Section 24 of the Act would show that Aviation Research Centre is included in the said list at serial No.7. Admittedly the respondent was working in the Aviation Research Centre only. Therefore, the provisions of the RTI Act would not apply to the aforesaid organisation except in the

matters relating to allegations of corruption and human rights violation. The information sought by the petitioner pertained to various DPCs held from 2000 to 2009 and such information is neither the information related to allegations of corruption nor to human rights violation. No violation of human rights is involved in service matters, such as promotion, disciplinary actions, pay increments, retiral benefits, pension, gratuity, etc. The Commission, therefore, was clearly wrong in directing supply of said information to the respondent. For the aforesaid reasons the impugned order of the CIC was quashed in Directorate General of Security and another vs. Harender, RTIR IV (2013) 109.

(iv) In the case of Arvind Kejriwal vs. Central Public Information Officer, AIR 2010 Delhi 216, the Court has held that service record of a Government employee contained in the DPC minutes/ACR is 'personal' to such officer and that such information can be provided to a third party only after giving a finding as regards the larger public interest involved. It was also held in the said judgment that thereafter third party procedure mentioned in S. 11(1) of the RTI Act would have to be followed.

ACR grading/ratings as also the marks given to the candidates based on the said ACR grading/ratings and their interview marks contained in the DPC proceedings can be disclosed only to the concerned employee and not to any other employee as that would constitute third party information. The Court is also of the opinion that third party information can only be disclosed if a finding of a larger public interest being involved is given by CIC and further if third party procedure as prescribed under Sections 11(1) and 19(4) of the RTI Act is followed. Accordingly, the writ petition in THDC India Ltd., vs. R.K. Raturi, W.P. (C) 903/2013 dated 8.7.2014

was allowed and the matter is remanded to CIC.

(v) The petitioner impugns an order passed by the Central Information Commission allowing the respondent's appeal and directing the petitioner to provide information relating to the proceedings of the Departmental Promotional Committee for the years 2006, 2007 and 2009. The petitioner has submitted that DPC proceedings contain confidential information about other officers and this being third party information cannot be disclosed to the respondent. It is contended that such information is exempt from disclosure under Section 8(1) (e) and Section 8 (1) (j) of the Act. It is further contended that the CIC had not found that the disclosure of such information was necessary in public interest. In addition, neither proceeding under Section 11 of the Act nor under Section 19 (4) of the Act was followed. The learned counsel referred to the decision of the Court in THDC India Ltd vs. R.K. Raturi, W.P. (C) 903/2013 rendered on 8.7.2014 and contended that the issues agitated were covered by the said decision.

The reasoning of the CIC that the respondent being an officer of the petitioner cannot be considered as a third party, is not sustainable. The information relating to ACRs and grading of an employee are personal to him and in this respect other employees are, definitely, not entitled to share that information. Accordingly, the petition is allowed and the impugned order was set aside in THDC India Limited vs. T. Chanda Biswas, W.P. (C) 7923/2013 dated 21.11.2014.

(vi) It is a settled law that for seeking personal information regarding any employee of the public authority the applicant must disclose a 'sustainable public interest'. Section 8(1)(j) was enacted to ensure that all information furnished to public authorities including personal information

is not given free access to. As per this Section unless the PIO or the appellate authority, as the case be, is satisfied that the larger public interest justifies, the disclosure of any such information that invades the privacy of an individual is not permissible.

So far as the respondent sought the information regarding the DPC and the minutes of such proceedings, the Court is of the opinion that the same cannot be disclosed except for in public interest. In the instant case, the information sought by the respondent pertains to the ACRs of three government servants and the DPC proceedings so conducted. The reasons provided by the respondent are not convincing enough to establish that disclosure of ACR details of the said three persons and the DPC proceedings is important for larger public interest. Merely because the respondent wants to avail such information, does not form a substantial reason so as to why the Court should allow disclosure of such information. In the absence of any cogent reasons brought on record to establish the necessity of disclosure of the information sought by the respondent in the interest of public, the Court is not inclined to violate the right to privacy of the said three public officers which is a fundamental right embedded in our Constitution, vide Union of India vs. D.S. Meena, RTIR II (2015) 221.

AN OVERVIEW

In summation and in the result, the fallout of the afore decisions/judgments is that as the DPC contains the ACR gradings/ratings, such proceedings can be disclosed only to the concerned employee, that is to say only to those who fall within the zone of consideration and to none other. Here again, there should be a finding of larger public interest. The grading of the other officials should be masked to prevent third party information being in public domain ■

During May 2020, the Prime Minister of India Shri Narendra Modi announced a package of Rs.20 lakh crore under the Aatma Nirbhar Bharath Abhiyan to ease the coronavirus distress. The motto was to make the country self-reliant with adequate focus on local manufacturers and service providers. This was expected to strengthen the economy, improve standard of living of the people, and most importantly, bridge the trade deficit of the country. The country would march on the path of self reliance in all spheres – from manufacturers to end users of the products – which will support the country to reduce its dependence on imports and in the process may also give a boost to exports, it was said.

During the lockdown period, most of the business organisations faced problems as they had to close down their operations. Not only there was financial loss, but it had an adverse impact on productivity too. Employees had to migrate to their respective places due to loss of work and financial burden. The announcement of this package provided a great opportunity to many sectors to bounce back and start their new ventures. Important sectors were covered under this package and they opened their eyes to grab the opportunities and utilize the chances to show their strength. The concept of Atmanirbhar Bharat can be understood through coopreneurship.

Coopreneurship means the concept of entrepreneurship applied to the cooperatives when the members start the activities right from the beginning. The members are people living in a particular area coming together to achieve their common goals. Cooperatives can give two kinds of benefits to the individuals – first, to work as entrepreneurs as members of the cooperative societies, and second, as members they have a great opportunity to start their business activities which is fully

** Lecturer, ICM, Hyderabad*



ATMANIRBHAR BHARAT THROUGH COOPRENEURSHIP

A. ESWAMOORTHY*

Cooperatives can help fulfill the dreams of Atmanirbhar Bharat provided they are properly governed and maintained by all the stakeholders.

supported by all the stakeholders. In case of other types of business organization, it is not possible to get such support from the stakeholders, which is the case in cooperative organizations, as cooperatives are recognized by all and they are primarily member-centric business organizations. Cooperatives provide support to all types of business activities, most importantly the welfare of the poor and downtrodden sections of the community. The best example of such cooperative society is Gujarat Cooperative Milk Marketing Federation that sells AMUL milk products which have worldwide recognition.

An organization, which has the objective to promote economic interests of its members in accordance with cooperative principles, can be registered as a cooperative society. A registered cooperative society can hold property, enter into contracts, institute and defend suit and other legal proceedings and to do all things necessary for such purposes in accordance with its constitution.

A registered society can give loans only to its members. However, it can give loans to another registered society with the permission of Registrar of Cooperative Societies.

A look at the nature of various kinds of cooperative societies is imperative here to understand the concept of coopreneurship. Consumers' cooperative societies are formed to protect the interest of general consumers by making consumer goods available at a reasonable price. They buy goods directly from the producers or manufacturers and thereby eliminate the middlemen in the process of distribution. Producers' cooperative societies are formed to protect the interest of small producers by making available items of their need for production like raw materials, tools and equipments, machinery, etc. Handloom societies are examples of producers' cooperative society. Cooperative marketing societies are formed by small producers and manufacturers who find it difficult to sell their products individually. The societies

collect the products from individual members and take the responsibility of selling those products in the market. Cooperative credit societies are formed to provide financial support to the members. The societies accept deposits from members and grant them loans at reasonable rates of interest in times of need. Cooperative farming societies are formed by small farmers to work jointly and thereby enjoy the benefits of large-scale farming. These societies are formed to provide residential houses to members. They purchase land, develop it and construct houses or flats and allot the same to members.

Innovative cooperative societies include tourism cooperative societies, transport cooperative societies, educational cooperative societies, hospital cooperative societies, canteen cooperative societies, washer-man cooperative societies, etc. As these cooperative societies are unitary in structure, they require a lot of efforts for successful operationalization.

YUVA SAHAKAR BY NCDC

National Cooperative Development Corporation (NCDC) is the national level agency started with a view to supporting the cooperatives in many activities such as production, processing, marketing, storage, export and import of agricultural produce, foodstuffs, industrial goods, livestock, certain other commodities and services on cooperative principles. It is working under the administrative control of the Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare. NCDC introduced Yuva Sahakar – Cooperative Enterprise Support and Innovation Scheme 2019 for enabling the formation of startups in cooperative sector. According to this scheme, any type of cooperative society with new, innovation and value chain enhancement indented projects are eligible to apply. Minimum of three months of operation is required. The period of loan can be upto 5 years including 2 years moratorium on payment of principal on the security of assets

including assets to be created under the proposed project, guarantee of State or Central Government, etc. Subsidy is also available under the Central Sector Integrated Scheme on Agricultural Cooperation or any other source will also be applicable.

STARTING OF COOPERATIVE BUSINESS

PHASE I: DEVELOP THE COOPERATIVE BUSINESS IDEA

For a new cooperative to be successful, it must firstly be borne out of an idea that seeks to address a need in the marketplace that is not being satisfied by the traditional players. Once the idea is clarified and agreed to, the next step is to arrange a meeting with potential members to determine the extent to which wider support may be solicited for working upon the business opportunity. The process from discussions and meetings is initiated to investment of time and allocation of financial resources. A feasibility study is very important to test the viability of the idea before members start investing their resources further.

PHASE II: COORDINATE THE COOPERATIVE'S ACTIVITIES

With a common vision supported by a group of committed individuals and a study indicating favorable conditions for starting such type of venture, the next phase in starting a cooperative focuses on enterprise development. Members now begin to put in place the necessary structure required to govern and manage the enterprise in accordance with the cooperative values and principles. Completion of the business plan is another foundational step that will determine whether activities may continue leading to formation of a cooperative. The business plan can also be viewed as a roadmap for further development of the cooperative.

PHASE III: ORGANIZE AND START-UP THE COOPERATIVE

At this stage, the cooperative starts building up the governing structure

in a detailed manner. The purpose of defining and establishing specific committees is to encourage participation from the members, ensure accountability of assigned tasks, and to distribute the workload among the members of the temporary board of directors. Some of the committees that may be formed at this stage may include planning committee, training committee, and committee to draft bylaws.

While organizing the cooperatives, the internal structure must be created to serve its members in accordance with the vision of the organization. This includes governance and management, organizing business activities according to departmental requirements, deciding internal and external sources of capital, recruitment, selection and training of staff, ensuring the legality of the business.

CONCLUSION

Cooperatives are a vehicle for the people collectively working for themselves – whether that's responding to a market opportunity, or meeting an identified need that neither the market nor the public purse provides. They engage people to come up with their own solutions and enable members to share the risks and development costs of the business. They also benefit from the knowledge, skills and expertise that diverse members bring in the functioning of cooperatives. Cooperatives provide their members mutual support, are democratically owned and run, give members real control over the direction of their enterprise and enable all stakeholders to contribute to the success of the business. Through cooperatives, people can identify business opportunities, create jobs, sell products or provide services, improve quality of work, step up income generation, and develop self reliant economy. Hence, we can say with a firm conviction that the cooperatives will definitely create Atmanirbhar Bharat with a condition that they must be properly governed and maintained by all the stakeholders ■

It's a devastating and heart wrecking times in India where countless deaths are taking place by fractions of seconds. It's sad and unimaginable how the medical system has failed beyond words. Everyday people are losing someone from their family, friends, relatives, neighbors and the list is never ending. The impact and aftershocks of the traumatic deaths and struggles to see someone slipping off to death due to lack of basic resources as oxygen or even a bed in the hospitals, is something which one will take years to come out from, or rather some may never be able to come out from this shock. No doubt, one feels severely defeated, helpless, angry and frustrated. The feeling of losing someone as a part of one's own self is overpowering.

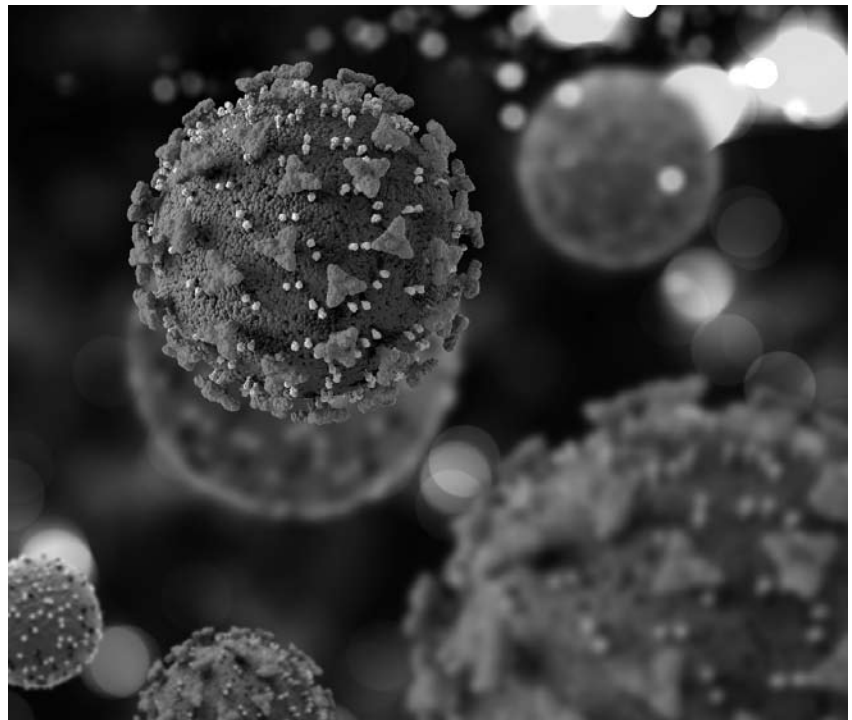
I wish to see a secure social system where building up a sound health-care system is given the topmost priority. Yet, my heart goes out for all those who struggle to sustain themselves on a daily basis.

India is my home. The memories of my parents who struggled to give me a loving childhood are fresh in my mind. Then there are my dear friends who consider me an important part of their lives till date. I am proud of my upbringing built upon ethics and honesty which I fortunately inherited from some of my elders.

I hear each day people discussing how disgusting the situation in India is, and how awful it is to live here. I feel disgusted to see people discussing about corruption, dirty politics and many other issues which make your thinking negative. The list of such issues is endless. The gap between the rich and poor is widening day by day. While many struggle for their existence, there are many who live a luxurious life showing their wealth and power.

My point here is not to sound as if I

** Assistant Director, NCUI*



INDIA IS BURNING & SO IS HUMANITY

INDERPREET KAUR*

am the most patriotic person born on this earth and neither it's about being right or prove anyone else wrong. It's irrelevant to judge anyone for that matter. It's all about how consciously one is living today. It's no more a talk about mind & matter, but about soul & matter. If one's soul is not alive at a conscious level, then we are just like dead people. We are people just busy filling up our pockets and building up bank balances by taking advantage of people around us. We have to undergo a journey of lifetime to bring ourselves to a level of consciousness where it's not about I, me, or myself, but about humanity and for that we have a long way to go.

I can't help if my soul is as helpless and hurt as those of millions of people who are facing the crisis on a daily basis. I feel the burns of those who are cremated in the crematoriums. I can't help if my heart

cries out when I watch the news and witness the scenes of people who can't even touch their loved ones for one last time!!

Yes, the system and the structures have failed at many levels, but that's not the issue which needs to be addressed or criticized. The priority today is to muster up courage so as to provide support to ease the pain of someone who is facing despair in this hour of crisis. Let's all not mock or criticize or gossip; let's act and do whatever is within our reach to make some difference and create impact in a positive way. Working for the cooperative sector, I am happy that many of the cooperative organizations like IFFCO, KRIBHCO, AMUL, etc. have taken the necessary steps to provide help to the needy.

May God help all and stand by everyone, in these difficult times ■

With more than 8 lakh cooperatives having significant presence in all areas of socio-economic activities, digitalization based on latest technologies is considered very important for cooperatives to contribute their best in India becoming a 5 trillion dollar economy by 2024. Cooperatives face a big challenge of using latest technology based communication system to not only interact with their members and external stakeholders to improve their governance system for making it autonomous and self-sustaining, but also use it to enhance their business as well as advocacy, autonomous and promotional role so as to compete in the market economy.

Though digital changes have been taking place in the cooperative sector, steps related to identification and measurement of digital economy for cooperatives has not been undertaken till date. There is little awareness about its significance in the cooperative sector, and therefore, a study on this vital aspect is of paramount importance.

Digital identification, or digital ID, is very important as India is making rapid strides in digitalization. Cooperatives are inclusive organizations benefitting poorer sections of the society. Digital identification can ensure more inclusive access to the services provided by cooperatives in the areas of credit, healthcare, education, etc. for the poor. Similarly, measuring economic and social impact of digital measures as seen in digital transactions, use of platforms, ICT initiatives, etc., is also very important. This article explores these areas so that a model or framework for identification and measurement of digital initiatives in cooperative sector emerges which can be useful in policy-making.

DIGITALISATION OF COOPERATIVE BANKS

In the changing market economy, cooperative banks are fast adapting

** Dy. Director, NCUI*



IDENTIFICATION AND MEASUREMENT OF DIGITAL TRANSACTIONS

SANJAY KUMAR VERMA*

As cooperatives are steadily marching towards digitalisation, identification and measurement of digital transactions are important for them to devise effective strategies.

themselves to the demands of digital economy. In the wake of rising consumer expectations, high levels of NPA, and the need to serve their prime – the poor and weaker sections of the society, banks are adopting core banking systems (CBSs), ATMs, netbanking, and other modes of digital transactions. There is a strong realisation that in the wake of fast emerging digital trends cost effective digital solutions are imperative for smooth functioning of these institutions. The cooperative banks are also realising that digital transaction management system are important to reduce costs, enhance customer experience and strengthen security and compliance.

The union government has made a provision of Rs. 1,900 crore towards computerisation of primary agriculture credit cooperatives, the bottom tier of the short-term cooperative credit structure. This shows the

desire of the government to provide a level-playing field to cooperatives like commercial banks in the pursuit of digitalisation. The cooperative banking credit sector was recently hit by a massive fraud in PMC Bank, which clearly showed glaring deficiencies in the regulatory mechanism of cooperative banks, which has led to the RBI strengthening its monitoring of mechanism and coming up with a regulatory framework for the urban cooperative banks. In the wake of this, there is a strong realisation that cooperative banks must adopt effective digital measures to streamline their banking measures, more particularly digital measures adopted in these banks.

Cooperatives as Inclusive Organisations Inclusive growth ensures that the benefits of a growing economy extend to all segments of the society. Financial services are important for inclusive growth. Cooperative

banks are playing a major role in inclusive growth by providing financial services to the underprivileged sections of the society – farmers, rural artisans, landless labourers and women. Access to financial services and creating identical opportunities enable such people to participate better in the economy, helping them to contribute to poverty eradication.

Cooperative banks have a larger client base, but the share of cooperatives in institutional credit is lower than that of commercial banks. The average loan size of cooperatives is smaller as compared to commercial banks. No doubt, the cooperative clientele comprises of small and marginal farmers and other poorer segments of the society which are key targets of financial inclusion.

Cooperative banks have been following the principles of good cooperative government. Based on democratic principles, they help people in the rural areas to come out of the clutches of moneylenders. They have a clear advantage over other banking institutions in creating opportunity for employment and income generation. Thus, there is a need to support and strengthen cooperative banks so that they can play an important role in inclusive growth in our country. As inclusive growth is integration of virtual, physical and social networks, which also include digital platforms, digitalisation is a key component of inclusive growth through cooperatives.

DIGITAL IDENTITY AND FINANCIAL INCLUSION

Digital financial services enabled the digital identities have the potential to bring financial inclusion to the people who are out of the financial system, means the poor and deprived sections of the society. According to McKinsey, the widespread use of digital finance can boost annual GDP of all economies by \$3.7 trillion by 2025. By enabling people to prove their identity

conveniently, digital identity builds up trust, ensures ease of use and lower costs which is vital for adoption of financial services. It protects personal data from theft, unauthorised sharing and usage and only discloses the credentials that are needed for each specific service.

Aadhar is a popular mode of digital identity. However, it is not mandatory to furnish Aadhar to open a bank account. The people can use Aadhar card for identity and address verification on a voluntary basis. For the cooperative banks, reaching out to their customers in the remote and inaccessible areas is a big challenge. The cooperative banks in this regard face a bigger challenge more than the commercial banks which are well equipped to open branches in the remote areas as they have more services and are backed up by full government support.

Digital identification for the cooperative banks is also important at a time when the public distrust in these institutions has increased due to various irregularities reported in the functioning of these banks. Viable digital identification option has to be explored taking into account ground realities like the local contexts, strong community orientation of cooperative institutions and the need to develop a strong monitoring mechanism which can look after the hazards of governance of cooperatives.

Jharkhand State Cooperative proving the tribal customers in the remote areas has come up with a financial inclusion solution consisting of a software gateway and fingerprint sensors embedded into micro-ATMs. This ensures biometric capture and identity verification and allows customers to access services such as cash withdrawal, cash deposit, balance enquiry, mini-statement, account opening, etc. A large number of bank agents have been equipped with biometric enabled ATMs serving the banks' customers in more than 40,000 villages.

The cooperative banks in other parts of the country should adopt similar software for digital identification. Adequate training for this must be provided so that all are well-equipped to handle this technology. The poor customers of cooperative banks have to travel long hours to reach bank premises. If cooperative banks employ agents who can serve customers with digital identification and other services at their doorsteps, this can be cost-saving for both the banks and customers.

WHY MEASUREMENT FOR DIGITAL TRANSACTION IN COOPERATIVES?

The business world is seeing a great change in how impact is regarded and measured, and how organisations, business, etc., are evaluated. There is an increasing interest in measuring and evaluating cooperative performance. Besides, cooperatives are considered key organisations for achieving UN Sustainable Development Goals, in which digitalisation is also an important parameter. The measurement and impact of cooperatives to Sustainable Development Goals is a fast emerging area of interest and study.

Against the backdrop, it will be interesting to try to build a framework for measuring digital transactions in cooperative banks, which can provide a model for other sectors of the cooperative movement to emulate.

FRAMEWORK FOR MEASUREMENT

Digitalisation is not just about technology, it is about having meaningful criteria to measure business transformation progress to adopt with the changing context. The banks should build up their criteria to measure the progress of their digital adoption strategy by measuring digital engagement performance. For cooperative banks this is of paramount importance as currently they lag behind commercial banks which are more equipped with more modern means of digital

transactions, and more active customer digital engagement considering the fact that these banks are more urban-based with clients who are more educated to handle digital technologies.

Against the above backdrop, the framework for measuring digital transactions in the cooperative banks may include the following:

Active Clients: Considering that many of the online customers of the cooperative banks may be inactive, evaluating the number of customers who use the application regularly is very important. A careful analysis of the active uses of online platforms needs to be done to enable the cooperative banks to boost user experience, and grow the number of active users of the application. The evaluation of active users can be done as a daily, weekly or monthly basis. More frequent analysis can lead to more interesting results. The results may indicate the nature of the users – rural or urban based. If the rural customers, who are the key targets of cooperative banks, are aloof from digital use, then the banks may have to reorient their digital strategies.

Digital Customer-base and Transactions: Percentage of digital customer and increase in percentage are also important yardsticks for measurement. Similarly, volume of digital transactions and percentage of increase in the digital transactions are also important yardsticks of measurement. All these can effectively provide a good picture of the digital progress of cooperative banks. Are the customers willing to switch over their loyalties to digital use? Are they comfortable in using the technology? Do cooperative customers feel that the trust which they had built in the cooperative banks earlier through their face-to-face interactions with the bank officials may diminish due to their digital use? Answers to these questions may come from these measurement indices.

Measuring Engagement of Digital Users: The engagement of digital users of the cooperative banks is also an important measurement yardstick considering that there are highs and lows in digital engagement of the customers. Identifying the activities of the users can also be an effective way to measure engagement. This can help in finding out the meaningful impact of the digital use of the customers, instead of their routine or mundane use. Measuring engagement is also important to gauge the rate at which the online applications solve the need of the users, or the time taken to complete the tasks with an application?

Customer Feedback Surveys and Customer Retention: The customer feedback surveys of the cooperative banks are important to assess whether the digital use is benefiting the customers, the deficiencies in it, and whether the customers can recommend the online banking system to others. Considering the fact that the customers of the cooperative banks may quickly switch their loyalties to the commercial banks if they find the digital services satisfactory, it is important to devise various indices like repeat purchases and satisfaction measuring score to assess whether the customers will stick to digital use.

Comparison of Online and Other Platforms: A comparison of the offline and online use of the platforms in cooperative banks would be an interesting way to measure the customer mood besides assessing cost-effectiveness. If the customers prefer digital use, then this means that this may be cost-effective for the banks as the offline ways may cost more. If the customers are reluctant to digital use, then the banks must strengthen their training plans for customers, or devise more outreach customer programmes to convince them about the benefits of digital use.

Return on Investment in Online Platform: Return on investment in

the online platform for many of the cooperative banks matters as they face a big challenge to utilise their limited resources in an effective manner as compared to commercial banks. If there is cost-reduction due to providing some of the services online and there is higher engagement with customers online, then the returns on the investment may have their own logic and significance.

Safeguards in Digital Use: Uninhibited digital use may lead to ... when a large number of loans are approved by a single person in a span of few days. Measuring this through an appropriate tool, and create alerts and notifications become very important in this regard.

Measurement of digital transactions in the cooperative banks is very important as it creates a learning culture not only to improve the functioning of digital services in the cooperative banks, but also this helps decision-making purposes. This enables the banks to know whether they are achieving the goals or not so as to undertake corrective measures if needed.

As cooperatives are slowly and steadily marching on the path of digitalisation, identification and measurement of the digital transactions are very important for them to devise effective strategies so that they service their key clientele in the best possible way. For the cooperative banks, this is the need of the hour as they face a big challenge to professionalise their services, and retain their clients at a when the regulatory mechanism of the government is becoming stiff. In the times to come, they have to embrace superior technologies like artificial intelligence, predictive analytics, etc., which may be more challenging. They must prepare and equip themselves with a proper mechanism for identification and measurement of digital interventions ■



With Compliments From

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“Sahyog”, B/h-Jyoti Sangh, Relief Road, Ahmedabad-380 001

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सहकारिता भारत को बदल रहा है। गांव-गरीब की नित मदद कर रहा है। बीते सदी की शुरुआत से सहकारी संस्थाएं उद्यमिता को बढ़ावा देने में लगी हैं। सहकारिताएं मौजूदा सदी में तकनीक पर सवार हो विकास को अंजाम देने में थक नहीं रही हैं। जमीन पर सहकारिता के व्यापक कामकाज को समझने के लिए बीते 22 फरवरी 2021 के अखबारों में छपी कुछ खबरों की बानगी पर नजर फेरते हैं।



1. बिहार के सीतामढी से खबर है कि प्रदेश सरकार ने सहकारिता विभाग के माध्यम से बिहार राज्य सब्जी प्रसंस्करण एवं वितरण योजना प्रारंभ की है। जिलाधिकारी अभिलाषा कुमारी शर्मा सहकारी संस्थाओं के निबंधन को बढ़ावा देने में लगी हैं। जिले के 17 में से 15 प्रखंडों में प्राथमिक सब्जी उत्पादक सहयोग समिति लिमिटेड का निबंधन किया जा चुका है। इन सहकारी समितियों की ओर से सब्जी खरीदने की पहल ने खेतिहरों में खुशी की लहर पैदा कर दी है। यह जिले के किसानों की आय में वृद्धि में मील का पत्थर साबित होगा।

2. बक्सर डेटलाइन से खबर छपी है कि न्यूनतम समर्थन मूल्य पर किसानों से धान अधिप्राप्ति का कार्य संपन्न हो गया। जिले में करीब 89 हजार मीट्रिक टन धान खरीद की गई। धान अधिप्राप्ति की यह जिम्मेवारी सहकारी समितियों को दी गई थी। धान की अधिप्राप्ति का आंकड़ा अबतक का सबसे ज्यादा है। धान खरीद 118 समितियों के जरिए की गई। इनमें 111 पैक्स (प्राथमिक सहकारी समिति) व 6 व्यापार मंडल शामिल हैं।

3. उत्तर प्रदेश के आगरा की खबर है कि सहकारी ग्राम विकास बैंक लि. की शाखाओं से वितरित ऋणों की वसूली नहीं हो पा रही। 36 सहकारी समितियों के लगभग 7773 से अधिक सदस्यों पर लगभग 13.52 करोड़ रुपये बकाया है। वसूली न हो पाने से जिला प्रशासन की नौद उड़ी है। जिलाधिकारी ने बकायेदारों को बिना ऋण जमा कराये अदेय प्रमाण पत्र जारी न करने के निर्देश दिये हैं।

4. उत्तर प्रदेश के अमरोहा की खबर है कि सहकारिता विभाग और बैंकों के बकाएदार त्रिस्तरीय पंचायत चुनाव नहीं लड़ पाएंगे। जिले के 33 हजार से अधिक किसानों पर 45 करोड़ रुपये का कर्ज है। किसानों ने सहकारी समितियों से यह कर्ज लिया था।

सहकारी संस्थाएं रोजमर्रा के कामकाज से जुड़ी हैं। लेकिन सहकारी बैंकों से ऋण लेकर चंपत हो जाने की प्रवृत्ति, संचालन का दोष, जिम्मेदारी की कमी और सहकारी संस्थाओं के राजनीतिक विवाद ने सहकारिता को काफी बदनाम किया है। उससे सहकारी आंदोलन की प्रतिष्ठा को धक्का पहुंचा है। फिर भी वास्तविकता है कि लोकतांत्रिक व्यवस्था पर टिकी सहकारिताएं जमीन पर चमत्कार कर रही हैं। छोटे बड़े विवाद और चंद विफलता के बीच सहकारिताओं के सफलता की अद्भुत कहानियां हैं। कृषि, दुग्ध, मत्स्य, पशुधन, आवास, स्वास्थ्य, बैंकिंग, इंफ्रास्ट्रक्चर, स्कूल-कॉलेज, आदि कोई क्षेत्र नहीं है जहां सहकारी संस्थाएं शानदार प्रदर्शन नहीं कर रही। रोजगार के मामले में सहकारिताओं ने बहुराष्ट्रीय कंपनियों तक को कड़ी टक्कर दी है। एक अनुमान

के मुताबिक अपने देश में आठ लाख से अधिक सहकारी संस्थाएं हैं। इनसे 30 करोड़ भारतीय आजीविका हासिल कर रहे हैं। सहकारिता की पहुंच भारत के सौ फीसदी गांवों और 97 फीसदी ग्रामीण परिवारों तक है।

विश्व महामारी के चपेट में है। सकंट का दौर है। पारंपरिक व्यवसाय हिल रहा है। अर्थव्यवस्था की हालत डवांडोल है। आगे क्या है? इसका सटीक आंकलन नामुमकिन है। ऐसे दुनियां को भारत से बड़ी उम्मीद है। प्रधानमंत्री नरेन्द्र मादी ने आत्मनिर्भर भारत की सकल्पना की है। इसे पूरा करने में सहकारिताएं महती भूमिका अदा कर सकती हैं।

सहकारी आंदोलन का अतीत समृद्ध है। आजादी के बाद भारत ने सहकारिता के रास्ते हैरतअंगेज सफलता हासिल की है। उद्यमिता के लिए सहकारिता एक व्यवस्था है। इसमें तरक्की की रफतार के साथ संपत्ति को चंद लोगों की मुट्ठियों में सिमट जाने से बचाया जा रहा है। यह मल्टीनेशनल कंपनी या निजी व्यापारिक उपक्रम के व्यक्तिगत लाभ आधारित व्यवस्था से अलग है। अमीरी-गरीबी की खाई को पाटने में यह समर्थ साबित हो

रहा है। सहकारी उपक्रम का लाभांश मेहनतकश शेयरधारकों में समान रूप से बांटा जाता है।

हालांकि उदारीकरण का सहकारिता आंदोलन पर प्रतिकूल असर पड़ा है। खुली अर्थव्यवस्था के प्रोत्साहन के दौर में सहकारी संस्थाओं को असीमित चुनौतियों का सामना करना पड़ रहा है। फिर भी वैश्विक स्तर पर सहकारिता के जरिए हम एक अलग मुकाम और प्रतिष्ठा हासिल कर चुके हैं।

आधुनिक सहकारी संस्थाओं के विकास के पहले प्राचीन भारत में सहकार का भाव रहा है। सहकारिता शब्द की उत्पत्ति भी सहकार से हुई है, जिसका मतलब मिलकर काम करना है। हरित और श्वेत क्रांति को सहकारिता ने ही साकार किया है। मत्स्यपालन, श्रम, हैण्डलूम और महिला सशक्तीकरण के साथ सहकारी संस्थाएं जनजातीय क्षेत्रों में महत्वपूर्ण भूमिका निभा रही हैं। आवास सहकारिताओं ने आम लोगों के लिए घर के सपनों को साकार करने में मदद की है।

आजादी के बाद हमने विकास के लिए महात्मा गांधी की प्रेरणा से सहकारिता को प्रोत्साहित करने का रास्ता चुना। यह सर्वांगीण विकास की जटिलताओं को सुलझाने में मददगार साबित हुआ। बताने से पहले अपनाकर देखने की मिसाल पर चलते हुए गांधी के अनुयायी सरदार बल्लभ भाई पटेल ने बारदोली चीनी मिल की सफलता को मिसाल बनाकर पेश किया। इससे बिचौलियों की भूमिका समाप्त कर लाभांश सीधे खेतिहर और श्रमिकों तक पहुंचाने का मार्ग प्रशस्त हुआ। बीते सदी के आखिरी तीन दशकों में कृषि क्षेत्र से पैदा हुई विशाल उपज का आधार सहकारिता आंदोलन है। सहकारिता देश की आत्मा है। इसे ध्यान में रख कर आगे देश में सहकारिता क्षेत्र के विकास की नीतियां बनीं। पहले प्रधानमंत्री पंडित जवाहर लाल नेहरू ने इस क्षेत्र को खास समर्थन दिया। सहकार बंधु वैकुण्ठ भाई मेहता ने भारत में सहकारिता को एक नया आधार दिया। गांधीवादी वैकुण्ठ भाई मेहता ने सहकारिता के विकास में पूरा जीवन लगा दिया। भारत के सहकारिता

आंदोलन में लक्ष्मणराव इनामदार, वर्गीज कुरियन, मधुसूदन दास, वी. रामदास पंतुलू, त्रिभुवनदास पटेल से लेकर उत्तर प्रदेश में बाबू बनारसी दास और देश भर के सैकड़ों क्षेत्रीय हस्तियों ने सहकारिता की जड़ों को मजबूत किया। भारतीय सहकारिता क्षेत्र का अग्रणी नाम अमूल आज देश का सबसे बड़ा खाद्य ब्रांड बन चुका है और इसका लगातार विस्तार हो रहा है। इसने बिचौलियों को समाप्त कर दूध उत्पादकों तथा उपभोक्ताओं के बीच सीधा लिंकेज स्थापित किया। खरीद, प्रसंस्करण और विपणन का नियंत्रण दुग्ध उत्पादकों, यानि किसानों के द्वारा होता है। इसकी मजबूत बुनियाद इसके संस्थापक अध्यक्ष त्रिभुवनदास पटेल ने रखी और महान नायक डॉ. वर्गीज कुरियन ने इसे विस्तार दिया।

आज भारत दुग्ध उत्पादन में दुनिया में पहले पायदान पर है तो इसमें सबसे बड़ा योगदान सहकारिता का है। प्रो. एम एस स्वामीनाथन से सलाह मशवरे के बाद प्रति बूंद अधिक फसल, कृषि लागत में कमी, खाद्यान्न भंडारण, खाद्य प्रसंस्करण, ई कृषि बाजार, फसल बीमा योजना और बागवानी, एकीकृत कृषि, पशुपालन, मत्स्यपालन, मधुमक्खी पालन एवं मुर्गी पालन जैसे मुद्दों को हाथ में लेकर किसानों के कल्याण की दिशा में पहल की है।

दुनियां भर में सहकारिता के विकास का इतिहास दो सदी से भी पुराना है। तमाम देशों में सहकारिताएं छोटे किसानों और गरीबों के लिए बहुत मददगार रही हैं। भारत में सहकारी प्रवृत्ति का उदय भी दरअसल किसानों को साहूकारों के शोषण से बचाने के लिए हुआ। आजादी के बाद आर्थिक विकास प्रक्रिया में सहकारिता का निजी और सार्वजनिक क्षेत्रों में तेजी से विकास हुआ। सरकार ने सहकारी संस्थाओं की शेयर कैपिटल में भागीदारी की। केंद्र सरकार ने बहुराज्य सहकारी समिति अधिनियम 2002 के तहत स्वायत्तता और लोकतांत्रिक प्रबंधन मुहैया कराने की पहल भी की। भारत सरकार केंद्रीय स्कीम के माध्यम से सहकारी समितियों की भूमिका को बढ़ावा दे रही है। विभिन्न सहकारी समितियों के सदस्यों और कर्मचारियों के लिये प्रशिक्षण

समेत कई कदम उठाए गए हैं। राष्ट्रीय सहकारी विकास निगम यानि एनसीडीसी कृषि क्षेत्र की सहकारी समितियों के माध्यम से फसलोपरांत क्रियाकलापों को बढ़ावा देने के लिए सहायता देता है। इसमें कृषि आदानों की आपूर्ति के अलावा कृषि उत्पादों का विपणन, भंडारण और प्रसंस्करण भी शामिल है। आवधिक ऋण के अलावा राज्यों की श्रेणी के आधार पर सहकारी समितियों को 15 से 25 फीसदी तक सब्सिडी प्रदान की जाती है। सरकार नेफेड के खरीद कार्यों के लिए गारंटी भी देती है।

सहकारिता की सोच में गांव और किसान हैं। इसी के मद्देनजर 1967 तक इसे योजना प्रक्रिया में पूरी अहमियत मिली। बाद में प्राथमिकताएं बदलीं तो सहकारी क्षेत्र की चुनौतियां बढ़ीं। सहकारी क्षेत्र के दिग्गज राजनीतिक दलों में बहुतायत में हैं। सत्तारूढ़ दल सहकारिता पर कब्जा करने में लगे हैं। चलन है कि जिसकी सरकार उसका सहकार। सहकारी रजिस्ट्रार पहले गाइड की भूमिका में था लेकिन आज कंट्रोलर है। इससे इसकी स्वायत्तता और स्वरूप दोनों प्रभावित हुआ है।

आज देश में 55 प्रकार की सहकारी समितियां कई स्तर की आर्थिक गतिविधियों का केंद्र बनी हुई हैं। उनके माध्यम से सबसे अधिक सामाजिक पूंजी का सृजन हुआ है। 2012 में 97वें संविधान संशोधन के बाद तस्वीर बदलने लगी थी, लेकिन उसे उच्च न्यायालय में चुनौती देकर सुधार के सुगम रास्ते पर रोड़ा अटका दिया गया है।

निजी क्षेत्र और कारपोरेट्स तमाम हथकंडे अपना कर कई जमीं जमायी सहकारी संस्थाओं को कमजोर कर रहे हैं। फिर भी तमाम नए क्षेत्रों में सहकारिता आंदोलन नयी ताकत से खड़ा हो रहा है। मत्स्यपालन, पशुउत्पादन, मधुमक्खी पालन, पर्यटन और पनबिजली जैसी गतिविधियों में यह हाथ पांव चला रहा है, जिसमें व्यापक संभावनाएं हैं। कई सहकारी संस्थाएं संचार और सूचना क्रांति का भरपूर लाभ उठाते हुए विभिन्न मोबाइल एप्लीकेशन्स से अपने लाभार्थियों को सहायता प्रदान कर रही

हैं। इससे पारदर्शिता और मजबूत हुई है, और विश्वसनीयता भी। जैविक खेती में भी कुछ जगहों पर सहकारिता क्षेत्र आगे बढ़ने का प्रयास कर रहा है।

सहकारी संस्थाओं ने समाज के सबसे कमजोर तबकों के जीवन स्तर को उंचा बनाने के साथ साथ उनके शोषण को रोकने में भूमिका निभायी है। डेयरी सहकारिता करोड़ों महिलाओं का जीवन बदलने का प्रेरक बना। इस क्षेत्र में कमजोर महिलाओं के सबल बनने की अनगिनत कहानियां हैं। छोटे किसानों की अल्पावधि कृषि संबंधी आवश्यकताओं को पूरा करते हुए सहकारिता क्षेत्र ने उनको साहूकारों के चंगुल से मुक्ति दिलायी, वहीं आदिवासी अंचलों में भी सहकारिता ने तस्वीर बदली है।

आदिवासियों के लिए लघु वनापेज सबसे बड़ा सहारा है। वे परिवार के साथ जंगलों में जाकर इन उत्पादों को एकत्र कर हाट-बाजारों में औने पौने दामों में बेच कर जरूरतें पूरी करते रहे हैं। भारत में करीब एक लाख करोड़ रुपए के लघु

वनापेज निकलते हैं। पांच हजार से अधिक आदिवासी हाट बाजारों में बिचौलये और भ्रष्ट व्यापारी उनका भारी शोषण करते रहे हैं। लेकिन भारतीय जनजातीय सहकारी विपणन विकास संघ यानि ट्राइफेड के समर्थन से उनकी दुनियां में कई बदलाव दिख रहे हैं। जंगली शहद, चिरौंजी, महआ का फूल और बीज, हरड, इमली, लाख, गुग्गल और गोंद समेत 24 उत्पादों के लिए समर्थन मूल्य योजना लागू करने के साथ प्रसंस्करण की पहल भी की गयी है।

आजादी मिली तो भारत की आबादी 30 करोड़ थी और 82 फीसदी लोग गांवों में रहते थे। भारत तब वास्तव में कृषि प्रधान देश था। उसकी अर्थव्यवस्था कृषि पर ही आधारित थी। हमारी जीडीपी में भी खेती-बाड़ी का योगदान 50 फीसदी तक था। तब देश की कार्यशक्ति का 72 फीसदी से अधिक हिस्सा खेती में ही लगा था, जबकि कुटीर उद्योगों में 11 फीसदी और बड़े उद्योग में 20 फीसदी श्रमिक लगे हुए थे। आज हमारी आबादी करीब 132 करोड़ तक पहुंच गयी है।

यही रफ्तार रही तो जल्दी हम चीन को भी पछाड़ सकते हैं। आज भी तमाम बदलाव के बाद हमारी 58 फीसदी से ज्यादा आबादी खेती-बाड़ी पर निर्भर है। लेकिन जीडीपी में खेती का योगदान घट कर 16 फीसदी के करीब हो गया है। आजादी के बाद कई सालों तक खेती-किसानी सबसे सम्मानजनक पेशा थी। लेकिन आज वह बात नहीं है। तमाम नौजवान सहकारिता की ताकत को समझे बगैर खेती से मुंह मोड़ रहे हैं।

शहरों की ओर भागने वालों के लिए कोविड-19 सबक है। गांव में बड़ी आबादी लौटी है। एकल परिवारों को समाजिकता की जरूरत समझ आने लगी है। सहकारिता का वास्ता समाजिकता और लोकतांत्रिक उद्यमिता से है। सहकारी उपक्रम की शुरुआत की सलाह के लिए देश के हर जिले-कस्बे में सरकार की ओर से सहकारी अधिकारी नियुक्त हैं। सहकारिता विभाग काम कर रहा है। कारोबारी सरोकार से जुड़ा कोई भी समूह सहकारी संस्था के जरिए उद्यमिता शुरू कर सकता है।

विश्व स्वास्थ्य दिवस पर दिल्ली हैल्थ केयर कोआपरेटिव सोसायटी द्वारा वेबीनार आयोजित

विश्व स्वास्थ्य दिवस के अवसर पर 7 अप्रैल 2021 को दिल्ली हैल्थ केयर कोआपरेटिव सोसायटी लि द्वारा शाहदरा, दिल्ली में एक वेबीनार आयोजित किया गया। श्री गजेन्द्र पाल सिंह सारन की अध्यक्षता में आयोजित इस कार्यक्रम में भारत सरकार, स्वास्थ्य मंत्रालय से उपायुक्त डॉ सुशील कुमार विमल, पोर्ट ब्लेयर से डाक्टर शारदा कोठारी, श्री देवेन्द्र पाल सिंह, गुरुग्राम आर डब्ल्यू ए मुख्य कार्यकारी श्रीमती हिना शुक्ला, गुना, मध्य प्रदेश से श्रीमती संध्या श्रीवास्तव, पूर्व उप शिक्षा निदेशक, दिल्ली सरकार श्री एम पी एस दांगी जी ने विश्व स्वास्थ्य दिवस मनाये जाने के उद्देश्य, आवश्यकता एवं उपयोगिता पर प्रकाश डाला।

डाक्टर सुशील कुमार विमल जी ने विश्व स्वास्थ्य दिवस कार्यक्रम आयोजित करने के लिए दिल्ली हैल्थ केयर कोआपरेटिव सोसायटी को बधाई दी। डाक्टर शारदा कोठारी ने कोरोना संक्रमण से बचाव हेतु रोग-प्रतिरोधक क्षमता बढ़ाने के लिए



ध्यान, योग एवं व्यायाम के साथ-साथ होम्योपैथिक चिकित्सा की आरसैनिक 30 को बहुत लाभप्रद बताया।

पूर्व विज्ञान शिक्षक श्री देवेन्द्र पाल सिंह ने बताया कि विश्व स्वास्थ्य संगठन ने विश्व के विभिन्न क्षेत्रों में समय-समय पर आने वाली महामारियों से लड़ने में कारगर सफलता हासिल की है। चेचक, मलेरिया, पोलियो, टी सी जैसी बीमारियों पर नियन्त्रण करने में डब्ल्यू एच ओ ने बहुत बड़ी भूमिका अदा की है।

श्रीमती हिना शुक्ला ने बताया कि संतुलित भोजन, रात्रि विश्राम, तनाव मुक्त जीवन तथा नियमित व्यायाम ही विश्व स्वास्थ्य दिवस की कुंजी है।

श्री एम पी एस दांगी जी ने विश्व स्वास्थ्य दिवस कार्यक्रम में शामिल सभी प्रतिभागियों को हार्दिक बधाई दी तथा दिल्ली सरकार द्वारा कोरोना संक्रमण के विरुद्ध उठाये गये कदमों की भूरी-भूरी प्रशंसा की।

IFFCO sets up oxygen plant at Kalol

Responding to the widespread crisis of oxygen being reported from various parts of the country, cooperative major IFFCO has announced setting up an oxygen plant at its Kalol unit in Gujarat.

IFFCO MD Dr U S Awasthi has also announced that three more oxygen plants are being set up to take care of the growing needs of the life-saver across the country. IFFCO has once again underlined the human face of cooperatives, felt several cooperators in Delhi.

A release from IFFCO reads: “We at IFFCO humbly share that on nation’s service, IFFCO is putting up an oxygen plant with the capacity of 200 cubic mtr/hr in its Kalol unit in Gujarat. IFFCO will give free oxygen to hospitals. Each cylinder of 46.7ltr.”

IFFCO release clarifies that oxygen plant in Kalol will generate medical grade oxygen and fill 700 big D type cylinders daily and also 300 medium B size cylinders on demand which will be supplied to all hospitals free.

IFFCO will fill up free of cost the oxygen cylinders for hospitals. They need to bring their own cylinders for refill. A security deposit will be taken against cylinders taken from IFFCO to avoid hoarding of oxygen, said the IFFCO MD in a tweet.

(www.indiancooperative.com)

Gujarat cooperatives setting up oxygen plants

The Indian Farmers Fertiliser Cooperative Limited (IFFCO) is working on war footing to make an under-construction oxygen plant at their Kalol unit in Gujarat operational by May 15 to provide free oxygen to hospitals facing a shortage. IFFCO is setting up a total of four oxygen plants in India at a cost of about Rs. 30 crore. Like IFFCO, Kribhco and UPL Ltd are also setting up oxygen plants at their units to boost its supply for treatment of Covid patients.

Gujarat’s Registrar of Cooperatives has directed all the district cooperative milk unions throughout the state to arrange oxygen for their respective areas. This comes after the success of Banas Dairy. A team of engineers at Banas Dairy in Banaskantha district set up an oxygen plant in just 72 hours to help its district medical college tide over the severe shortage. It generates oxygen equivalent to 70 jumbo oxygen cylinders or 680 kg, sufficient for 35-40 patients for a day.

Online milk sale by cooperative booms in Ernakulam region

The online sale of milk by the Ernakulam Regional Co-operative Milk Producers’ Union (ERCMPU) in Kerala is witnessing a boom.

John Theruvath, chairman of the regional milk cooperative, said the sale in collaboration with its partner AM Needs had gone up to around 3,000 packets per day. Mr. Theruvath said the second wave of Covid-19 had not had much of an impact on milk procurement and sale. According to the latest figures, ERCMPU procures around 3.80 lakh litres of milk a day, and the sale volume stands at around 3.6 lakh litres.

The region had achieved self-sufficiency in procurement earlier this year. The arrival of young entrepreneurs is one of the key features in recent times, as the pandemic has restricted employment opportunities.

Meanwhile, Mr. Theruvath was honoured by the State Milk Marketing Federation for the efficiency with which milk procurement and sale were conducted in the Ernakulam region during the pandemic.

RBI to strengthen risk-based supervision of banks, NBFCs

The Reserve Bank has decided to review and strengthen the Risk Based Supervision (RBS) of the banking sector with a view to enabling financial sector players to address the emerging challenges.

The RBI uses RBS model, including both qualitative and quantitative elements, to supervise banks, urban cooperatives banks, non-banking financial companies and all India financial institutions.

“It is intended to review the supervisory processes and mechanism in order to make the extant RBS model more robust and capable of addressing emerging challenges, while removing inconsistencies, if any,” the central bank said while inviting bids from technical experts/consultants to carry forward the process for banks.

In case of UCBs and NBFCs, the Expression of Interest (EOI) for ‘Consultant for Review of Supervisory Models’ said the supervisory functions pertaining to commercial banks, UCBs and NBFCs are now integrated, with the objective of harmonising the supervisory approach based on the activities/size of the supervised entities (SEs).

It is intended to review the existing supervisory rating models under CAMELS approach for improved risk capture in forward looking manner and for harmonising the supervisory approach across all SEs,” it said.

(www.livemint.in)

Participants seek moratorium on loan at NAFSCOB meeting

The apex body of State Cooperative Banks and District Central Cooperative Banks, Nafscob organized its board meeting virtually recently in which Nabard Chairman G R Chintala was a special invitee. Besides discussion on several issues pertaining to State Co-op Banks and DCCBs, the representatives of co-op banks wanted RBI to announce yet another round of loan moratorium scheme in the wake of lockdown in different states due to Covid surge.

There should be an expert committee to address the issues related to cooperative banks as was done by the RBI for urban cooperative banks in February 2021, felt several participants. NCUI President Shri Dileep Sanghani also spoke on the occasion.

Nafscob Chairman K Ravindra Rao, Vice-Chairmen Dan Singh Rawat and Ramesh Chandra Chaubey, MD Bhima Subrahmanyam, Assam State Co-op Bank MD Dombu Saikia, Meghalaya State Co-op Bank MD Osmand E.J.Nongbri, Nagaland's State Co-op Bank Vice-Chairman Kekhwengulo Lea and MD Abhijit Kumar Deb, Himachal Pradesh State Co-op Bank Chairman khushi Ram balnatah also attended the meeting.

Dan Singh Rawat said computerization of PACS was one of the top agendas of the discussion.

Nabard Chairman urged the representatives of state co-op banks to replicate the Telangana Cooperative Bank model which has almost done with the job of computerization of PACS. It is the first state in the country to do so, Rao informed.

Reacting, Rawat added that in Uttarakhand also almost 80 percent work of the computerization of PACS is over and the remaining work will be completed sooner than later, he claimed.

Participants in the meeting also demanded that RBI and Nabard should extend the home loan limit applicable in case of co-op banks. "At present State Cooperative Banks and DCCBs are allowed to give home loans only up to Rs 30 lakh and Rs 20 lakh respectively. The limit should be doubled," they demanded.

The issue of delay in the reimbursement of interest subvention amount was also taken up as several participants pointed out the deleterious effect the delay has on the financial position of their banks. "As our money gets locked, the delay causes direct loss to us," they stressed before Nabard Chairman.

Discussion on the Banking Regulation Amendment Act was also held. NAFSCOB Chairman suggested that the

NABARD should come forward and conduct virtual workshops for the benefit of state cooperative bank staff members.

(www.indiancooperative.com)

Wheat procurement continues at Khetia in MP despite pandemic

Amid increasing number of novel coronavirus cases, wheat procurement at Khetia situated scheduled caste service cooperative society is going on at a rapid pace without any interruption. So far, 3346 quintals of wheat of 81 farmers have been purchased on the support price from March 27 till date here at Krishi Upaj Mandi Samiti Khetia.

Areca Growers' Association tells farmers not to do panic selling

The All-India Areca Growers' Association (AIAGA) has asked arecanut growers not to resort to panic selling of the commodity in the wake of 14-day lockdown in Karnataka. The Karnataka government has implemented a 14-day lockdown from April 27 to May 12 to control the Covid spread in the state.

Mahesh Puchhappady, General Secretary of the AIAGA, said some growers suffered losses as they rushed to sell arecanut after panicking during the lockdown in 2020. The main reason for the panic selling then was the reduction in the prices of arecanut by private traders at that time.

Some private traders are using the same tactics this year also. Growers should not become victims of such tactics, he said.

"The arecanut cooperatives in the State are buying the commodity to a limited extent while adhering to the Covid protocols. Growers can take the benefit of such efforts, and help maintain stability in the market," he said.

Last year, the Central Arecanut and Cocoa Marketing and Processing Cooperative (Campco) Ltd was the first cooperative to buy the commodity from the growers amid the lockdown. The office bearers of the cooperative then had stated that Campco had taken the decision to protect the interest of farmers in spite of the closure of markets in the areca consuming centres.

S N Khandige, Vice-President of Campco said that the cooperative will replicate the model it implemented during the last lockdown and continue purchasing the commodity from growers at the Campco branches in Karnataka. Campco's move last year had helped in bringing stability in the market, he said.

(Business Line)

NCDC to lend Rs 10,000 crore for upgrading healthcare infrastructure

Amid the second wave of the pandemic sweeping across the country, the union health ministry has sought the help of the National Cooperative Development Corporation (NCDC) to provide crucial medical supplies to the healthcare sector. This development follows a high-level meeting between union health secretary Rajesh Bhushan and the empowered group.

Responding to the developments, NCDC Managing Director Sundeep Nayak said, "Under the Ayushman Sahakar scheme, NCDC stands committed to lend Rs 10,000 crore to co-operatives either to set up new healthcare facilities or to upgrade the existing ones."

The rise in Covid-19 cases due to the second wave of the pandemic has brought the Indian healthcare system to its knees, with hospitals across the country being unable to manage the excessive inflow of patients.

Under the current circumstances, Nayak believes that there is an urgent need to increase the number of beds in the 51 hospitals that are part of the cooperative sector. Currently, only 5,000 beds are available in these hospitals.

Nayak further said that 18 NCDC regional offices spread across the country will act as a nodal point for cooperatives to plan and set up new hospitals or upgrade the existing infrastructure. Cooperatives can approach their regional office to process their application and facilitate the approval of financial assistance. "There is a special emphasis on Covid care," Nayak informed.

NCDC had launched the Ayushman Sahakar scheme last October. Through the scheme, NCDC aims to upgrade the healthcare infrastructure across the country. Under the scheme, funds worth Rs 10,000 crore have been allocated to be disbursed to eligible cooperative bodies throughout India.

(www.outlookindia.com)

Veteran trainer Hema Yadav takes over as Director of Vamnicom

Director of NIAM Jaipur, Hema Yadav has joined as the new director of Pune based prestigious cooperative institution Vamnicom recently. The tenure of Yadav will be for three years.

Hema joined in the presence of just a few staff members as due to the Covid scourge, the institute is running with reduced strength of staff members.

Confirming her joining the prestigious co-op institution as its head, Hema said, "I will strive my best to take

Vamnicom to greater heights so that it helps strengthen the cooperative movement in the country."

Hema said she had been to the Vamnicom campus on earlier occasions as well but coming here as its head gives a different feeling. "I see it as a God sent chance to play my bit in the co-op movement of the country", she added.

(www.indiancooperative.com)

Rajasthan State Coop Consumer Federation to sell masks at low cost

Rajasthan State Cooperative Consumer Federation will provide N-95 and surgical masks for Rs 20 and Rs 3 respectively in view of the surge in coronavirus cases, Minister Udai Lal Anjana said recently. The federation has decided to provide high quality five-layer N-95 and three-layer surgical masks to the people at affordable rates, he said in a statement.

Sad demise of VR Patel and Dr G N Saxena



Kribhco's former Chairman V R Patel and IFFCO's former Director of Cooperative Relations Dr G N Saxena are no more as they have succumbed to Covid.

Kribhco MD Rajan Chowdhary wrote: "Very sad news! Our Ex-Chairman Shri Vaghajibhai Boda succumbed to Covid-19 today (24 April)." Bismaun Chairman Sunil Singh, who has worked with Patel in the Kribhco Board in the past, offered tributes to the departed soul on behalf of Bismaun and the state of Bihar.

Kribhco Chairman Dr Chandra Pal Singh Yadav expressed shock and dismay at the news of the death of VR Patel. "He had a long association with Kribhco as its Director, Vice Chairman and Chairman. He was an upright person fully devoted to the cause of co-operative," said Dr Yadav while revealing that Vaghajibhai Boda was instrumental in establishing many cooperative societies in Gujarat and nurtured them to success.

Dr Saxena is also credited with working hard in the matter of the return of shares to the govt. "Dr Saxena had a role to play in the tag which you see today beneath

the IFFCO's logo "Wholly owned by co-operatives," said an IFFCO official. As Chairman of ICA-AP Research Committee, Dr Saxena played an important role in strengthening cooperative research in the region.

(www.indiancooperative.com)

Government urged to set up a co-op. online agri marketing platform

As the State of Karnataka has imposed restrictions following the second wave of Covid-19, there is a sense of anxiety in the farm sector though the government has made it clear there will be no curbs on the movement of farm produce.

Restrictions during the first wave had demonstrated the difficulties involved in getting a market for farm produce at the right time under similar circumstances.

T. N. Prakash Kammaradi, agricultural economist and former chairman of Karnataka Agricultural Price Commission (KAPC), has suggested to the government to come out with a cooperative online agri marketing platform to help farmers sell their produce without hassle.

"It is difficult for an individual farmer to sell his entire produce through online mode as logistics would be an issue. If the government steps in and helps in linking farmers' groups such as farmers producers' organisations with bulk buyers such as big apartments through a cooperative online marketing platform, it will be a win-win situation for both farmers and consumers," he said.

Kammaradi has suggested the government to rope in residents' welfare associations of apartments in big cities such as Bengaluru and convince them to provide space for selling farm produce. This will prevent apartment dwellers from scouting for fresh produce outside during the pandemic while farmers would get a direct market.

"Health and food occupy the centre stage during Covid times. It is a criminal offence to allow food to go waste. But our survey has shown that about 28% of the farmers who were surveyed could not sell their produce in the first phase of Covid-19 from May to September last year," he said. Of this, about 17% of the farmers could not get market access, while 11% lost their produce as it was rotten. Only around 30% were able to sell their produce properly in main markets, while another 43% managed to sell in small markets, he added.

(*Business Line*)

Dairy cooperative in Gujarat builds an oxygen unit for its hospital in 72 hrs

While the metros gasp for oxygen to support critical Covid-19 patients, a team of engineers of Banas Dairy

in Banaskantha district in North Gujarat surprised many by setting up an oxygen plant in 72 hours to help its district medical college tide over the severe shortage of the gas. The Dairy-supported Banas Medical College & Research Institute at Palanpur faced a severe crisis last weekend, running short of oxygen for 125 Covid in-patients. The situation was saved by managing to get some cylinders.

"We thought, how long should we depend on the external sources? We wanted to make some arrangement of our own," Shankar Chaudhary, Chairman of Banaskantha District Cooperative Milk Union (Banas Dairy) said. "With the help of our team and vendors, we got the plant running in 72 hours," he claimed.

It generates oxygen equivalent to 70 jumbo oxygen cylinders or 680 kg, sufficient for 35-40 patients for a day.

(www.thehindubusinessline.com)

NCDC signs MOU with IIT Kharagpur

IIT Kharagpur and the National Cooperative Development Corporation (NCDC) have signed an MoU towards greater collaboration in issues and areas related to the development of cooperatives, agriculture and allied sectors. The scope of the MoU will involve advancement of training, action research, studies, policy analysis, policy advice, consultancy, monitoring, evaluation, system development and technology development.

Both organizations will collaborate and supplement the utilization of resources and facilities on matters pertaining to 'Formation and Promotion of Farmer Producer Organisation', with a focus on sustainable business, capacity building, training and skill development of stakeholders. Furthermore, skilling of youth through trainee/student exchange program including providing internship opportunities to students or alumni will be pursued under the Sahakar Mitra – NCDC Scheme on Internship Program (SIP).

A Joint Working Group will also be set up to monitor various activities under the MoU and suggest necessary measures for its development. "IIT Kharagpur has been working in various skill development and sustainable development projects through various programs and outreach initiatives at the Deptt. of Agricultural and Food Engineering and Center for Rural Development and Innovative Sustainable Technology. Keeping in mind the need to strengthen the rural workforce and build sustainable solutions for them would require more exposure of the students and researchers as well as the target groups and end-users. We believe this collaboration with NCDC will augment a holistic growth towards Atmanirbhar Bharat," said IIT Kharagpur director Prof VK Tewari.

AP Amul project launched in Guntur

Chief Minister Y. S. Jagan Mohan Reddy launched the A. P. Amul Palavelluva Project in Guntur district virtually from his office recently.

On the occasion, Mr. Reddy said the project was intended to give a fillip to the empowerment of women self-help groups by encouraging milk cooperatives in the government sector.

The project was first started on December 2, and milk was being collected from 400 villages in Chittoor, Kadapa and Prakasam districts. Milk would now be collected from 129 villages in Guntur district.

(www.hindu.com)

TMCCC turnover crosses 27K crore

Karnataka based Multi State Cooperative Society – Tumkur Merchants Credit Cooperative Limited (TMCC) has crossed a turnover of more than Rs 27K crore in the 2020-21 financial year.

The society Chairman Jayakumar says: “It is a joyous moment for us because we have crossed the total turnover of Rs 27k cr. The deposits of the society at the end of the year have increased from Rs 927 crore to Rs 1141 crore registering a growth in this FY.”

The bank loans and advances increased from Rs 873 crore to Rs 981 crore during the FY 2020-21, he said while underlining the society’s achievements. The society’s net NPA remains “zero” at the end of the FY and the society has earned a net profit to the tune of Rs 30.55 crore which was Rs 27.70 crore in the last fiscal,” he claimed.

Jayakumar further said that with a view to expanding our area of operation we will open branches in Maharashtra. “As we have applied for the opening of branches in Karnataka and Maharashtra, we hope that the central registrar would give the green light soon,” he said.

The society was registered as Souharda Credit Cooperative Limited on 23rd March 2006. It commenced operations on 30 April 2006. One of the novel services offered by TMCC is cash pickup and cash withdrawal at the doorsteps of its customers.

(www.indiancooperative.com)

N Satya Narayana takes over the charge of NFLC

The recently retired Chief Executive of NCUI, N Satyanarayana took over as the Managing Director of apex body of labour cooperatives.

“It is not money but a challenge to turn the co-op body around with huge potential that has brought me here,” Satya Narayana said while explaining his decision to join the co-op organization.

(www.indiancooperative.com)

Ravindra seeks relaxation in NPA classification norms

Chitturi Ravindra (Ex-MP), Chairman of Andhra Pradesh State Cooperative Urban Banks and Credit Societies Federation has written a letter to the Executive Director of Reserve Bank of India requesting a temporary relaxation in NPA Classification Norms.

The letter has been addressed on behalf of the urban cooperative banks of Andhra Pradesh.

“We request you to allow temporary reprieve to UCBs, and permit classification of NPAs on the basis of 180 days norm instead of the present 90 days norm,” the former Member of Parliament demanded.

The letter further reads: “RBI and Government of India have taken several measures to kick-start the economy. Most of these measures were in the form of offering financial stimulus to borrowers in the form of restructuring of loans, rescheduling of payments, conversion of interest accrued into another credit facility, granting of moratorium etc. These have been beneficial to the borrowers and as a result of various measures the economy is limping back”.

However, the lockdown and the slow revival of the economy have severely impacted the recovery of loans, especially in urban cooperative banks.

Despite several concessions, the borrowers are not able to manage timely repayment of installments and interest resulting in mounting of NPAs, it argues.

“The six months of lockdown and slump in business activities across the board have adversely affected business growth of banks, recovery of advances and interest income during the year 2020-2021,” the letter reads.

“The outbreak of COVID-19 posed enormous challenges for life and livelihood globally, warranting policy response from national governments and central banks at an unprecedented scale. Besides fiscal stimulus, several unconventional monetary policy tools (UMPTs) were deployed by central banks to unfreeze financial markets and revive economic activity,” it concludes.

There are 47 urban cooperative banks in Andhra Pradesh and only one UCB is multi-state namely the Visakhapatnam Cooperative Bank.

IFFCO orders 4th oxygen plant at Paradeep

After ordering for three oxygen plants at its Kalol, Aonla and Phulpur unit, now IFFCO has ordered setting up of its 4th oxygen plant at Paradeep, Odisha.

“IFFCO has taken various initiatives and now given order for its 4th oxygen plant in Paradeep, Odisha. IFFCO will be giving free oxygen to hospitals in the nation’s service. The capacity of this new oxygen plant is 150 cubic mtr/hr,” reads a note sent by IFFCO. IFFCO will fill up free of cost the oxygen cylinders for hospitals in Odisha and adjoining areas. They need to bring their own cylinders for refill. A security deposit will be taken if cylinders are taken from IFFCO to avoid hoarding of oxygen.

The plant will commence by 15th June. Both Aonla and Phulpur plants will, however, start producing oxygen by 30th May. It’s time to fight this pandemic together and take the country out of this situation. IFFCO has always given its service for nation building, said its MD.

Transposition of these plants requires some time. A dedicated separate team has been also assigned for this project in all the plants. It’s an automatic cylinder filling turnkey plant, said IFFCO officials.

The groundwork for all new oxygen plants by IFFCO has already started. “We at IFFCO are educating farmers and villagers at the remotest level about this pandemic. Last year also, IFFCO did a countrywide campaign called #IFFCOFightsCorona & Break The Corona Chain. Distributed face masks, medical soaps, sanitizers & vitamin c tablets along with free ration wherever it was required for labourers, etc.”

(www.indiancoopertative.com)

IFFCO Bazar’s 5 years: 2K outlets & Rs 1000 cr of business target

Established in April 2016, the 100 percent owned subsidiary of the fertilizer cooperative IFFCO, IFFCO Bazar has completed its five years in existence. Its Chairman Dr U S Awasthi who is also the MD of IFFCO has congratulated the entire team of IFFCO Bazar.

IFFCO Bazar Managing Director Yogendra Kumar said, “There is no doubt that in the span of five years we have achieved a lot but we are making efforts to take the IFFCO Bazar to newer heights. We are getting a good response from the farmers and in the current financial year we have set a target to open 1000 sale points in different locations of the country.”

“At present there are over 2k outlets in the country. We have planned to increase the total revenue of more than Rs 1000 crore till the completion of the current financial

year. Under IFFCO Bazar, farmers of the country are getting good quality products at a cheap rate,” Yogendra said.

In the financial year 2020-21, IFFCO Bazar has achieved the highest ever sale of 12.07 lakh MT bulk fertilizers. The total estimated revenue for 2020-21 is Rs 1710 crore, 40% higher than the last FY, claimed Dr U S Awasthi.

Since the inception, the company has expanded its operations in 26 States. Having outlets in different parts of the country, IFFCO Bazar is providing modern retail experience to the Indian farmers by delivering agricultural inputs and other services under one roof.

IFFCO Bazar also provides services like soil testing, health check-up, etc. at its outlets. The products being made available to the farmers are seeds, fertilizers, bio-fertilizers, pesticides, bio-stimulants, cattle feed, sprayers and other agri-implements. IFFCO Bazar also provides other products and services such as health check-up, micro banking, solar LED lights, etc.

(www.indiancooperative.com)

State Cooperative Department of Bihar launches Web Portal

The State Cooperative Department of Bihar recently launched a web portal www.tarkarimart.in to supply locally green fresh vegetables to residents of the state capital and East Champaran. Launching the portal, Coop Deptt. Secretary Ms Vanadana Preyasis said the project was preponed to discourage people visiting vegetable markets putting their lives at risk.

(www.timesofindia.com)

Cosmos Bank wins award for Digital Services from ASSOCHAM

The Cosmos Cooperative Bank Ltd. is declared winner under the ‘Digital Services with the Cooperative Bank Category’ by Associated Chambers of Commerce and Industry of India (ASSOCHAM). The award was presented to Cosmos Bank during the ASSOCHAM National E-Summit & Awards Banking & Financial Lending Companies “Digital Financial Services: Response To Atmanirbhar Bharat” on 29th April 2021.

Cosmos Bank is a leading cooperative bank which is at the forefront in offering latest digital services like internet banking, mobile banking, UPI, IMPS, etc. It is well known for its delightful banking services. It is at par with other private banks in giving customer-centric service. The expert jury of ASSOCHAM selected Cosmos Bank for the most coveted award of Digital Services in Cooperative Banking Category ■