

GROWING TROUBLE FOR PAK

Pakistan's troubles on account of uprising in Balochistan following the arrest of Dr Mahrang Baloch and several other leaders don't seem to be ending. On the other hand, Islamabad's decision to construct six canals to carry water of the Indus from Sindh province to Punjab has pushed the locals to raise their voice. After Baloch now Sindhis too seem to be at loggerheads with Islamabad. Shockingly, Islamabad seems not a bit concerned about the crisis going out of its hands. Negotiating with the people is not the way Pakistan functions; successive regimes in Islamabad only know how to let loose a reign of terror on those daring to stand up to the bullying of the rulers. Pakistan used the same tactics in West East Pakistan and then lost it. It's looting the minerals of Balochistan for the elite of Pakistan while no it even wants to use the Sindh waters for Punjab.

BANGLADESH TAKEOVER

While the big powers are juggling cards to bring Zelensky and Putin on the negotiating table to the end of the war, the world seems to be ignoring a major development in Bangladesh. India is highly concerned and is keeping a hawk's eye on the situation in the neighbourhood, where Islamist propped up by Pakistan seem to be getting better of the Muhammad Yunus administration. The total takeover of Bangladesh by the Jamiat-e-Islami and other such organizations may not be on cards officially but these organizations are ruling the streets, villages and small towns of a country which was formed on the basis of Bengali nationalism giving a lie to the presumption that religion is a binding force for a nation. India must do something to prevent this takeover. The US under Donald Trump is too busy with raising tariffs, threatening to raise tariffs, deportations and renaming the territories that Bangladesh is not a priority for it.

The ailing discoms need structural

Uttam Gupta

The power distribution companies (discoms) stand at the core of the power supply and distribution network in the country. Mostly owned and controlled by State Governments, they buy electricity from the generating companies (gencos) and supply it to the consumers. Yet, invariably, the financial health of discoms has been a matter of serious concern.

According to a report by the Lok Sabha's Standing Committee, the accumulated losses of discoms increased from Rs 545,000 Crores in financial year (FY) 2020-21 to Rs 584,000 Crores in 2021-22, Rs 647,000 Crores in 2022-23 to Rs 692,000 Crores in 2023-24. The government has sought to address these losses under a 'Reforms-Linked, Result-Based Scheme for Distribution' (RLRBSD). The Scheme was unveiled by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman in her Budget speech for FY 2021-22.

Involving an outlay of Rs 300,000 Crore for five years (FY 2021-22 to FY 2025-26), the RLRBSD was aimed at trimming discom Aggregate Technical and Commercial (AT&C) losses to pan-India levels to 12-15 per cent and gradually narrow the ACS-ARR gap (ACS stands for an average cost of purchase, transmission and distribution of electricity whereas ARR stands for the average revenue realized from its sale) by March 2026.

It has two components: (i) providing financial support for compulsory prepaid and smart metering to be implemented across the power supply chain, including in about 220 Million households and up-gradation and strengthening of the distribution infrastructure (ii) training and capacity building.

As reported in the Standing Committee, the Ministry of Power (MoP) has sought an extension of the Scheme by two years through FY 2027-28 to complete the envisaged targets.

Can the scheme deliver?

Before answering this question, we need to analyze the fundamental causes behind discoms losses. AT and C losses are a sophisticated nomenclature for leakage from the system or power theft. During FY 2015-16, these were 20.7 per cent. When, out of say 100 units of electricity that leave the generating stations or power dispatch centre, 20.7 units are stolen and hence not paid for, this is bound to have a debilitating effect on the discom operations.

The discoms could charge more on the sale of the balance 79.3 units to compensate for the 'nil' revenue on the 20.7 stolen units. But this is theoretical. So, the discoms would end up making a loss to the extent of revenue lost on stolen units. There is another potent factor that exacerbates their losses.

The Electricity Act (2003) and the Guidelines issued by the MoP require the discoms to fix the electricity tariff supplied to consumers in a manner such that the ARR from its sale is equal to the ACS.

Yet under diktat from the State Government, either they don't bill certain households (HHs) at all (on consumption up to 200 or 300 units a month in Delhi or Punjab) or give a flat subsidy of Rs 800 on monthly consumption (between 201 and 400 units a month in Delhi), besides free supply to farmers as in Punjab.

The discoms seek to make up for the resulting under-recoveries by charging more from industries and businesses for which the tariff can go up to a high of Rs 16 per unit as in Delhi (there being no more than two-three discoms in any jurisdiction hence an oligopolistic situation, they have no option but to pay). Moreover, the States not fully compensating discoms for the under-recoveries, despite making loud promises, further adds to the discom losses.

The twin problems of AT and C losses and under-recoveries on sale to HHs or farmers have existed for close to

a quarter century. Since the beginning of 2000, the Centre has come up with four financial restructuring packages (FRPs) to help discoms.

While, the first two (2002, 2012) merely sought to condone their losses, the third namely the Ujwal DISCOM Assurance Yojana (UDAY) launched in November 2015 required discoms to set their house in order and achieve certain milestones in exchange for financial assistance.

Under UDAY, discoms' mammoth debt of about Rs 400,000 Crore was condoned. Instead of this, they were required to reduce AT and C losses from 20.7 per cent during FY 2015-16 to 15 per cent by FY 2018-19. Further, they were to reduce the ACS-ARR gap from Rs 0.59 per unit of electricity during FY 2015-16 to 'zero' by FY 2018-19. But, the discoms failed to deliver.

During FY 2019-20, AT&C losses were 18.9 per cent against the 15 per cent target for FY 2018-19. The ACS-ARR gap during FY 2019-20 stood at Rs 0.42 per unit against a target of 'zero' for FY 2018-19. During FY 2020-21, AT and C losses zoomed to 22.3 per cent and the ACS-ARR gap scaled up to Rs 0.69 paise per unit. In the following years, despite some improvement, the AT and C losses still stood at a high of 16.87 per cent during FY 2023-24. No wonder, discoms were grappling with cumulative loss of Rs 692,000 Crore in FY 2023-24.

The RLRBSD launched in FY 2021-22 talks of lowering AT&C losses to 12-15 per cent by the end of FY 2025-26, a level that should have been reached in FY 2018-19. As for the ACS-ARR gap, it merely talks of 'gradually narrowing' the gap forgetting the 'zero' target that UDAY sought to achieve by FY 2018-19. Now, the MoP has shifted the goalpost to the end of FY 2027-28.

The Scheme seeks to address discoms losses by up-grading the distribution infrastructure, prepaid and smart metering, training and capacity building and so on. Out of Rs 300,000 Crore outlay proposed for implement-

ing it, the Centre was to provide gross budgetary support (GBS) of close to Rs 100,000 Crore and funding by Power Finance Corporation (PFC) and Rural Electrification Corporation (REC) under irrevocable State Government guarantee. The fund's release is subject to discoms meeting the pre-qualifying criteria and achieving the basic minimum benchmark in reforms.

As for the follow-up action, in reply to a question in Parliament given by then Power Minister RK Singh in December 2023: "Till today, detailed project reports (DPRs) having total outlay of Rs 120,000 Crore has been approved for loss reduction works and Rs 130,000 Crore for smart metering works." Further, as of January 2024, the total loan disbursed by PFC-REC was Rs 112,000 Crore for 16 States, against the sanctioned amount of Rs 133,000 Crore.

As for the GBS, the release of funds by the Centre during FY 2023-24 was a mere Rs 6,000 Crore against the budget allocation of Rs 12,000 Crore.

During FY 2024-25, as of February 10, 2025, 96 per cent of the Rs 12,665 Crore allocated for the scheme was utilised as per the revised estimates for 2024-25. So, the money spent (GBS plus loans from PFC-REC) has been less than half of the intended outlay. But, more worrisome is the outcome.

Till last year, 'against the sanctioned smart meters of around 220 Million, only about 0.8 Million had been installed'. During the current FY, till February 10, 2025, 20.8 million smart meters have been installed.

That takes the total to 21.6 million. This is less than 10 per cent of the target. The scheme merely addresses the 'technical' side of the problem. It barely touches the fringe. The real problem has to do with free or heavily subsidised power and theft assured or facilitated by the political brass just to win elections. For this, it rides piggyback on discoms. Till this is addressed, discoms will continue to remain under serious financial stress.

THE ART OF STRESS-FREE MANAGEMENT

Rajyogi Brahma Kumar Nikunj Ji

Most of the people working in the corporate field would agree to the fact that in the fast-paced world of modern business, stress seems to be an unavoidable companion for every manager. This is mainly because the pressure to meet deadlines, satisfy stakeholders, and navigate through uncertain environments creates a constant state of tension.

And that is why the topic of "Management Without Stress" has become very popular and nowadays it is being discussed in all corporate seminars and plenaries that are held all over the globe. It's a known fact that the world over, corporations spend millions and, in some cases, even billions to find that magical technique of management without any kind of tension.

But still, no company has found that magical technique. Why? After a lot of mind churning and keeping a pragmatic approach, it can be said that the art of tension-free management is mainly about using the 8 M's, 7 P's, 6 S's and lastly 5 T's in an organised way and useful, profitable and peaceful manner and to the maximum possible satisfaction of and justice to all concerned. The 8 M's are: men, money, materials, machines, marketing, mutual connections, mutual relations and

means. The seven P's. These are: productivity and performance, price and profitability, planning ahead of time, pecuniary discipline, publicity, public relations and politeness, punctuality and personal commitments. The six S's are: skills, standards, strategies and speed, salesmanship, systems and structures social good and finally the 5 T's are: time and time sense, technology or techniques, teamwork, treatment of each other, thanks giving habits.

Now, to be a good manager, one has to have a good judgement of men, materials, movements and moments and one has to have the abilities of innovation, intuition, entrepreneurship and enthusiastic efforts. One has also to have the qualities of farsightedness, global thinking, humility, integrity and lastly humour.

Since this is the era of increasing competition, rapid changes in technology and trends and doing things in ever new ways and at a great speed, one must have the abilities of resilience and feel relaxed in the face of all these and many more pressures, else one would lose one's health and happiness and temper and tranquillity.

If one plans, organises and manages the above factors properly and has the essential abilities and qualities, some of which have been mentioned above, one can sustain an atmosphere of growth and can achieve success for himself and all the members of the team, else one is bound

to be a failure in life, business and industry or administration and organisational work.

Now, to attain success in achieving the goal of one's life, we must add 2 M's, P's, S's and T's, to the above list viz: moral values, meditation, purity, peaceful personality, spiritual study, soul-consciousness, truthfulness and trusteeship.

"If we practice Meditation, there would be no mental tension" and that is why it is generally explained to managers and administrators that one must spend some time daily in meditation to do management without tension. But one thing that is being very much neglected today is that, in many places, there is tension without management.

Since there is neither any planning, nor any fixed priorities, neither fit personnel nor any fixed protocol, neither any sincerity nor any spirit of cordiality, neither any impartial judgement nor any mutual understanding, there is a great mental tension. Finally, leading by example is perhaps the most powerful way to promote stress-free management.

Managers who prioritise their well-being, practice effective stress management techniques, and cultivate a positive work culture set the tone for their team members to follow suit.

By modelling healthy behaviours and attitudes, managers can inspire their team members to prioritise self-care, communi-

cate openly, and embrace flexibility, ultimately fostering a more resilient and productive work environment.

It should also be remembered that meditation and management have an intimate connection. One who can manage well can also meditate well and vice versa of it also is true.

So, while there is tension in many places because there is management without meditation, there is tension in many places because there is no proper management at all and, in the disturbed atmosphere, many find it difficult to meditate also. There is thus the need to follow good principles of management to be able to facilitate good and easy meditation at workplaces. This would automatically bring in a stress-free environment and stress-free life for everyone.

A stress-free work environment is crucial in today's corporate world, where managers face relentless pressures.

Adding moral values, meditation, and self-awareness further enhances efficiency. Ultimately, leading by example, fostering open communication, and prioritising well-being create a productive, stress-free atmosphere.

Integrating meditation with management ensures mental clarity and balance, proving that structured leadership and inner peace go hand in hand for lasting success.

Importance of Himalayan glaciers and risks posed by climate change

Himanshu Upadhyaya

Himalayan glaciers are not just frozen reservoirs of water; they are the lifeblood of South Asia. These colossal ice masses feed major river systems, including the Ganges, Indus, and Brahmaputra, directly impacting over a billion people. However, these glaciers are vanishing at an alarming rate, putting millions of lives, biodiversity, and entire ecosystems at grave risk.

Among them, the Gangotri Glacier stands out, supplying water to the sacred and economically crucial Ganges River. The glacier's retreat is not just an environmental concern but a looming humanitarian crisis, threatening water security, agriculture, energy production, and even cultural heritage.

The Gangotri Glacier is just one part of a larger crisis, other Himalayan Glacier including Yamunotri, Pindari, Milam and Sunder Dhunga Glaciers are also Shrinking impacting tributaries such as the Yamuna, Kali and Ramganga rivers. This accelerating glacier retreat is disrupting the delicate balance of the Ganga River system.

The Himalayas are warming at nearly twice the global average, causing glaciers to melt at an accelerated pace. Several studies, including those conducted by the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO), confirm that Himalayan glaciers have lost over 20 per cent of their ice mass in the last four decades.

The Gangotri Glacier, which feeds the Ganges, has retreated by approximately 1,500 meters since 1935, with an annual recession rate of 10-22 meters. Scientists warn that by 2050, many smaller glaciers feeding the Ganges may completely disappear, leading to severe water shortages across northern India, Nepal, and Bangladesh.

The situation is dire for other glaciers as well for example Yamunotri Glacier (source of the Yamuna River) is shrinking, affecting water supply to Delhi and surrounding regions. Pindari, Milam, and Sunderdhunga river area depleting, impacting tributaries such as the Kali, Ramganga. Chorabari Glacier (Kedarnath region) is receding, increasing the risk of glacial lake outburst floods (GLOFs), similar to the catastrophic 2013 Kedarnath floods.

The retreat of Himalayan glaciers will severely impact freshwater availability. The Ganges, which supports more than 400 Million people, is at risk of reduced flow in the dry season. This would devastate agriculture in the Indo-Gangetic plains, one of the most fertile regions on Earth. Without adequate glacial meltwater, farmers will face severe droughts, reducing crop yields and leading to food shortages.

As glaciers melt, rivers swell, leading to devastating floods. Initially, increased meltwater boosts river flows, but as glaciers deplete, erratic water patterns emerge, alternating between excessive flooding and extreme drought.

There are over 2,500 glacial lakes in the Himalayas, with more than 200 classified as dangerous and among them 50 glacier lakes in the Himalayas as "very highly hazardous". These lakes, formed by melting glaciers, can burst due to landslides or earthquakes, triggering catastrophic floods downstream.

As a result of glacial melting and heavy rainfall, the flash floods killed over 6,000 people, in Kedarnath in 2013 washing away entire villages. A

chunk of the Nanda Devi Glacier collapsed, leading to floods that killed over 200 people and destroyed two hydroelectric projects in Chamoli in the year 2021.

The melting of permafrost (frozen ground) destabilises mountain slopes, triggering landslides and rockfalls. Roads, villages, and even major infrastructure projects like dams and tunnels are at constant risk.

Uttarakhand Tunnel under construction in the Himalayas collapsed, trapping dozens of workers due to unstable, melting permafrost and excessive rainfall.

Entire villages in Himachal Pradesh, Nepal, and Arunachal Pradesh are being abandoned as the land underneath them becomes unstable.

Glacial meltwater is the primary source of many South Asian rivers. If glaciers continue to retreat at the current rate the Ganga will dry up during summer months, leading to severe water shortages and the Indus and Brahmaputra Rivers will also suffer reduced flows, threatening millions in Pakistan, India, and Bangladesh and Salinity levels in coastal Bangladesh will rise, destroying freshwater

ecosystems.

Himalayan forests depend on glacial-fed rivers. As river flows decrease, many plant species will perish. Endangered species like the snow leopard, Himalayan brown bear, and black-necked crane are at risk as their habitats shrink.

Even the fisheries in the Ganges and Brahmaputra will collapse due to erratic water temperatures and reduced oxygen levels in the rivers.

As glaciers melt, ancient pathogens trapped in ice for thousands of years may resurface. Scientists warn that melting permafrost in the Arctic and Himalayas could release deadly viruses and bacteria.

Rising temperatures also increase the spread of waterborne diseases like cholera and dysentery due to contaminated water sources.

For millions, the Ganges is not just a river but a sacred entity. Hindu beliefs hold that the Ganges descended from the heavens to cleanse humanity's sins.

The Gangotri Glacier, the river's source, is thus considered divine. The retreat of the Gangotri Glacier represents not just an environmental disaster but a spiritual crisis.

Many believe that a receding Ganges is a sign of moral and ecological imbalance. The river is celebrated in countless hymns, scriptures, and festivals, yet today, it is polluted, shrinking, and at risk of vanishing. Air pollution is accelerating glacial melting. Black carbon (soot) from vehicles, industries, and crop burning settles on ice, reducing its reflectivity. As a result, glaciers absorb more heat, melting 50 per cent faster than they would naturally.

A study by the International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD) found that black carbon contributes to nearly 30 per cent of the total glacier melting in the Himalayas.

The burning of fossil fuels in India, Nepal, and China is significantly worsening the problem.

Regional and Global Consequences like Hydropower projects in Nepal, which rely on glacial meltwater, are at serious risk due to erratic water flow.

The cities like Kathmandu face severe drinking water shortages, impacting millions and in the Tibetan Plateau, known as the "Water Tower of Asia," is drying up, affecting the Mekong, Yangtze, and Yellow Rivers.