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Thought for the Month

Nor can a bearer of burdens
Bear another's burden.
If one heavily laden should
Call another to (bear) his load,
Not the least portion of it
Can be carried (by the other)
Even though he be nearly
Related. Thou canst but
Warn such as fear
Their Lord unseen
And establish regular Prayer.
And whoever purifies himself
Does so for the benefit
Of his own soul; and
The destination (of all)
Is to Allah.

Al-Quran – 35:18

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FOCUS

In 2010, the good news for India-China people-to-people relations was that India's Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) decided to introduce Chinese language courses in the 11,000 schools affiliated to it from Class VI onwards beginning in 2011. The bad news was that finding teachers was a problem. The better news, according to a report in the English-language daily The Indian Express was that the Chinese government had offered to help with course material, and, if needed, also send language teachers.

According to another report in The Times of India, academicians said the language would find many takers. The newspaper had quoted Jyoti Bose, principal of Springdales School in Delhi, as saying, "We tried to introduce Chinese in our school last year and there were quite a few students who wanted to take it up, but the problem was finding teachers".

The decision to introduce Chinese as part of the CBSE curriculum had been announced by India's Minister for Human Resource Development Kapil Sibal after his talks on the subject with China's Education Minister Yuan Guiren on September 15 in Beijing.

The best way to introduce China in India was to introduce its language in schools so that "our kids develop interest and knowledge about China," Sibal had told reporters in Beijing on that occasion.

He felt it would be necessary for the Indian government to collaborate with China to specify standards of teaching and examination and the modalities of training Indian teachers. Soon after, an expert committee set up in November had finalized the curriculum and identified preparation of textbooks as the first priority.

Scholars and teachers were developing the curriculum and textbooks, and the CBSE was conducting courses to train teachers. According to The Indian Express report, schools interested in introducing the language from class VI in the upcoming academic year (2011-12) were asked to confirm the decision so that CBSE could work on the details and indicate their needs, if any, to the Chinese embassy. China had offered to help with state-of-the-art hardware and software.

Ahead of Wen's visit in December 2010, the report said, China had also offered to provide textual and audio-visual materials for the course. The CBSE offers 40 languages at the secondary and senior secondary levels, 12 of which are foreign languages.

Bose was quoted as saying that once the course is introduced, "it should be continued in senior classes". On the increasing interest in China and learning Chinese at the university level, The Times of India quoted Sreemati Chakrabarti, a China expert and Professor in the East Asian Studies Department of Delhi University, as saying, "We have been getting 700-800 applications for just 100 seats in the last few years". But, said Chakrabarti, "there is a huge shortfall of people who can teach Chinese in India".

She felt that introducing the Chinese language at the school level can make a "big difference in the long run" and ensure that there was more scope for interaction in the future.

From *Beyond Binaries – The World of India and China (2008-2022)*
by Shastri Ramachandaran (ed.), pp. 78-80

Activities of the IOS Headquarters

IOS organises Consultative Meeting on Waqf Amendment Bill, 2024

A consultative meeting on Waqf Amendment Bill, 2024 was organized by the Institute of Objective Studies (IOS) on August 25, 2024 at the Board Room of the Constitution Club of India, New Delhi.

The meeting was presided over by the former Union Minister of Minority Affairs, Government of India, Mr. K. Rahman Khan.

In his introductory remarks, Secretary General of the IOS, Mr. Mohammad Alam said, "The Institute of Objective Studies looks for academic and scholarly approach for issues and challenges. IOS has a long history of working on issues related to Waqf and produced valuable data and research on the subject." He observed that we have a lot many concerns which needed to be thoroughly dealt with, and an objective approach was adopted. "We also intend to form a core group which will not stop at engaging with the present situation but will work to define and design a strategy and plan as to how to educate the community on Waqf and its utility, its prudent management which can be properly utilized to empower the community and benefit the deserving people", he said.

In his presidential speech, Mr. K. Rahman Khan, former Union Minister of Minority Affairs, Govt. of India, held that the Waqf Amendment Bill, 2024 was being examined by Joint Parliamentary Committee (JPC). The Bill should be discussed clause by clause, before sending our objections and suggestions to it. He described the nomenclature of the Bill as unnecessary and undesirable. There was nothing logical in the nomenclature. The change in the name of the Bill smacked of malafide intention of the government. The change was sought to dismantle the entity of Waqf. The proposed Bill had no unified approach to the issue and no

provision for the development of the Waqf properties. He noted that an attempt had been made to sub-divide categories. As a former Union Minister, he addressed the issues of Aghakhanis and Bohra communities. There was also a question of viability in the proposed Bill. He said that a member of these communities could have been accommodated. But this was not done in the last 10 years, though there was concentration of population of that community in Surat. This was necessary because there was no operational Board for Shias. There were no Boards for them in the states other than Gujarat, he observed.

He further said that under Section-3 of the proposed Bill, no Mutawallis would be appointed verbally. The Waqf Boards would not have the power to appoint them verbally. He referred to a mosque in Chennai, where no record of its existence was available. Waqf meant the dedication of an asset for the pleasure of Allah. He described the proposed Bill as mischievous and suggested that all the questions arising out of the Bill should be put to members of BJP for their reply. While registering no opposition to provision for audit and accounts, he stressed that the amendments to the proposed Bill should be drafted. He called for rejecting the Bill in the present form. He also spoke on the creation of Waqf *Alal Aulad*. Problems arose due to the flaws of the country's legal system. He said that instead of the government, Muslims should have control over Awqaf. The Tirupati Temple Act and Kashi Vishwanath Temple Act provided that only Hindus would be nominated to their Boards. Contrary to this, why should then the provision for the nomination of non-Muslims as members of Waqf Boards be made, he questioned.

Participating in the discussion, Professor Emeritus Islamic Studies, Jamia Millia Islamia, and former vice-chancellor, Maulana Azad University, Jodhpur, Prof. Akhtarul Wasey, held that the Bill was the outcome of a

majoritarian approach which was unlikely to change. This only showed their arrogance. It was surprising that they did not show any inclination nor did they feel it necessary to bring the Bill during the last ten years of their rule. But they woke up to the need for change all of a sudden at the time of Lok Sabha elections. He suggested that Mr. K. Rahman Khan, former Union Minister of Minority Affairs, Govt. of India, Dr. Syed Zafar Mahmood, President of Zakat Foundation of India and Mr. Mohammad Alam, Secretary General, Institute of Objective Studies should sit together and prepare a questionnaire to be presented to the JPC for consideration. The said questionnaire should be given in writing on behalf of the community or Muslim organisations.

He called for giving the community's voice to others as well in order to seek their support. He held the community as well as the government for the present imbroglio. He said that the entire Bill had been designed with an ulterior motive to cause damage to Muslims. He suggested that a 4-member committee with Mr. Mohammad Alam as its convener, be set up to draw up a list of suggestions to be presented to the JPC.

President of the Zakat Foundation of India, Dr. Syed Zafar Mahmood, described the Waqf Amendment Bill as dangerous. He said they were attacking the legacy by making a provision for the appointment of the chairman of the Waqf Board by written order. "If a non-Muslim wants to contribute to waqf, he can do so. There is no justification for any amendment to the Act. Thus the amended Bill must be annulled in its entirety."

He further said this Bill is violative of Article 13 (2) of the Indian Constitution which reads, "The State cannot make laws that take away or limit the rights given by Part III of the Constitution." Under the provisions of the amended Bill, two members of the Central Waqf Council will be non-Muslims. It also provides for two non-

Muslim members of the State Waqf Boards. It has been further provided that a non-Muslim can also be the chairman of the Waqf Board.

Assistant General Secretary of the All India Milli Council, Mr. Shaikh Nizamuddin suggested that a core group be formed to prepare material for presentation to the JPC. He called for launching a mass movement against the Bill.

Chairman of the IOS, Prof. M. Afzal Wani held the IOS is an academic institution and thus it can not launch a campaign. "We can make a sound documentation and do research on the subject." He said that the lawyers should be engaged and the community leaders be also involved in making out a strong case against the arbitrary Amendment Bill. He noted that Waqf was a religious institution and it should not affect the freedom of conscience. "Waqf is dedicated for the pleasure of Allah. The purpose of Waqf is to feed the hungry." He said that the protection in favour of Waqf should always be there. He noted that the jurisprudence was developed on use and it was recognized everywhere.

Patron of the IOS, Prof. Z.M. Khan emphasized that all the organizations should be collated. He said that joint efforts should be made so that the government could realise that the Muslim community was agile.

Mujaddid IOS Centre for Arts and Literature organizes discussion on the book "Dr Mohammad Manzoor Alam: Unkahi Kahani (Insaf, Shumuliya Aur Barabri Ki Jidd-o-Joh'd)"

A discussion on the book "Dr Mohammad Manzoor Alam: Unkahi

Kahani (*Insaf, Shumuliya Aur Barabri Ki Jidd-o-Joh'd*)", written by the senior journalist, A.U. Asif, was organised by the Mujaddid IOS Centre for Arts and Literature at the IOS conference hall on August 17, 2024.

It may be recalled that Dr. Mohammad Manzoor Alam is the founding chairman and chief patron of the Institute of Objective Studies. The book, published by Genuine Publications & Media Pvt. Ltd., focuses on his life and contribution to the promotion of constitutionalism, federalism and the uplift of socially and economically backward sections of the society.

book. Claiming that the book was of a different type, he said that not many books had been written in the lifetime of a personality. Referring to his first encounter with Dr. Alam, he said that Dr. Sanaullah who was a doctor by profession and lived in USA once told him that he (Dr. Alam) became popular in Aligarh Muslim University. Dr. Sanaullah came to know of this fact while travelling from Aligarh. Dr. Alam was keenly interested in knowing the world, the country and its burning issues, he added.

Mr. A.U. Asif said hundred personalities have given their opinion about Dr. Manzoor Alam, and all of them have been included in the book.

Fifty others have also written about him. Besides, 16 scholars are from outside the country who expressed their views on him. Twenty others include the ex-Vice President of India, Dr. Hamid Ansari and the ex-Chief Justice of India, the late Justice A.M. Ahmadi. One hundred and one persons shared their opinion on the personality and other

aspects of the life of Dr. Alam. The late Qazi Mujahidul Islam, ex-General Secretary of the All India Milli Council and the late Amin Usmani, Secretary, Islamic Fiqh Academy (IFA) had a high opinion about him. He held that it was a difficult task to persuade Dr. Alam to talk about himself. But this was made possible only after he had several sittings with him. Commenting on his brief visit to the United States of America at a time when 9/11 incident took place, he said that Dr. Alam was invited to speak on it in a nearby mosque. Incidentally, it was Friday that day. In his speech, he warned the U.S. against violence. Senior journalist, Mr. Santosh Bhartiya, in his latest book wrote that Dr. Alam did not offer



L-R: Mr. Anjum Naim, Mr. Arif Iqbal, Mr. Ahmad Javed, Mr. A.U. Asif, Prof. M. Afzal Wani, Mr. Suhail Anjum and Dr. Ishrat Zaheer releasing the booklet titled "Ta'assuraat" on the book titled "Dr. Mohammad Manzoor Alam".

Introducing the book, Mr. A.U. Asif said that the book was based on a personality who devoted his life to promote objectivity. He drew a parallel between the book profiling the life sketch of Sir Syed Ahmad Khan and the present book focusing on Dr. Manzoor Alam's journey of life. While the former was written by Khwaja Altaf Husain Hali, the latter was authored by him. Hali also wrote on the celebrated Urdu poet, Mirza Ghalib. He noted that writing a book for him was a challenge as well as an adventure. He said he has been writing since very early age and so far worked on 1000 personalities. He also wrote in the defunct Hindi Weekly *Dharmyug* and *Hindustan*. It took him 10 or 11 years to plan the

politics as a subject in post-graduation because his teacher disliked the subject. He took a cue from his teacher and did not offer politics in higher studies. Instead, he chose Economics as a subject of study. He concluded that the book did not look like a biography.

Convener of Mujaddid IOS Centre for Arts and Literature, Mr. Anjum Naim drew a parallel between the prominent Muslim leader, Syed Shahabuddin and Dr. Manzoor Alam. Both of them ceaselessly worked towards the establishment of Muslim identity. Dr. Alam firmly believed that no ill was beyond treatment. That is why he focused on research and thought in the IOS. He is an ardent supporter of dialogue and mutual understanding among different religions. Keeping this in view, he brought several institutions on one platform. *Ta'assuraat*, a small booklet as a supplement to the main book was also released on the occasion.

Mr. Arif Iqbal, the editor of the 'Urdu Book Review', described the biography of Dr. Alam as a research work done by a research scholar. The Sirah of the Prophet (PBUH) is another biography that is in circulation for hundreds of years. He said that the biography penned by Mr. A.U. Asif was a multi-faceted work which was no less than a precious gift to the readers. Journalist, Dr. Ishrat Zaheer narrated a story about Dr. Alam in which he quarreled with his grandfather over a Dalit boy of his village. He disagreed with his grandfather and defended the Dalit boy. With the passage of time, his concern for depressed and deprived sections grew and he came out in support of these sections. Senior Urdu journalist and writer, Mr. Ahmad Javed said that he and Dr. Alam belonged to the same area in Bihar. His native village was about 15 kilometers away from his hamlet. Referring to his idiosyncrasies, he held that Dr. Alam was blessed with the power of tolerance, firm belief and determination. He knew very well of the value and the punctuality of time. He noted that biography writing was an

art. He termed it as the finest profile book. It detailed Dr. Alam's concern for the country and the Muslim community. He said that the pages of the book were worthy of emulation for the people like him. They were also indicative of the lessons to learn. He maintained that more often than not, people conceded defeat very easily when confronted with obstacles. "Easiness always brings comfort and happiness quickly, but the hurdles are very disappointing". He said we think and make plans, but when it comes to translating them into action, they deter us because of the lack of strong will, efforts and consistency. If one analysed the history of the world from East to the West and peeped into the lives of various personalities, he would find that they were similar to Dr. Manzoor Alam. Dr. Alam was the living symbol of strong will and an urge to do something tangible. He said that Dr. Alam was a strong link between the academic institutions of the Islamic world.

Senior Urdu journalist and a representative of the Voice of America (Urdu service) in India, Mr. Suhail Anjum, said that everyone who wanted to do something positive in life should read this book. He observed that this was a long-awaited book. There were so many facets of his life which were inspiring for those who wished to do something concrete for the well-being of humanity, he added. Journalist, Mr. Javed Iqbal held that Dr. Alam endured extra-ordinary passion to do something as an 'odd man out'. Nothing worthwhile was possible with strong passion, he said. Ibne Saud from Chennai stated that he knew Dr. Alam since 1979. He used to meet him while in Delhi. He had been constantly in touch with him. Ex-editor of Urdu magazine 'Aajkal', Dr. Abrar Rahmani, shared his views on the life and work of Dr. Alam.

In his presidential remarks, the Chairman of the IOS, Prof. M. Afzal Wani, praised Mr. A.U. Asif for authoring a book on a person who devoted his entire life for the cause of

objectivity. He wanted to know how many people understood what the objectivity was. He said that the personality of Dr. Manzoor Alam is identified with a thought that wanted to reach out to every individual. He said we pay more attention to the structure than the thought behind the work, whereas the real stimulant to a work is the thought. But the tragedy of our time is that the thought is not explored, he noted.

Prof. Wani pointed out that Muslims were millionaires and they could have created 10 universities like the AMU. But since they did not have the thought, this could not become possible. Thus what was important was the spirit behind the work. He said that there was no emphasis on thought in the Muslim community. We must see what we are giving to the community. Here comes the need for objectivity. If one is institution-builder, he must keep this in mind. Referring to the contribution of Dr. Manzoor Alam, he said that he worked for better education, equal opportunities, constitutionalism and federalism. He headed India's best think-tank. If one sought a person who understood economy, geo-politics and religious studies then he would find only one person. And he is none else but Dr. Manzoor Alam. He gave expression to thought, Prof. Wani concluded.

Mr. Anjum Naim conducted the proceedings and proposed a vote of thanks to those who attended the function.

IOS Discussion on "Waqf (Amendment) Bill 2024"

An open-house discussion on "Waqf (Amendment) Bill 2024" was organised by the Institute of Objective Studies at its auditorium on August 16, 2024.

Opening the discussion, Professor Emeritus, Islamic Studies, Jamia Millia Islamia, Prof. Akhtarul Wasey said, "Waqf is not a new thing as the Prophet (PBUH) liked it much. Waqf is dedicated for the pleasure of Allah and the welfare of the community." He

questioned the timing of bringing the Bill. The government woke up in 2024 after the target to achieve 400 plus seats in parliamentary election came a cropper. The proposed amendment Bill was aimed at targeting Muslims. Under the new provisions, district magistrates have been given the power to decide if an asset was Waqf or not. Being a government servant, a district magistrate could not remain neutral. He could not go against the wishes of the government. He asserted that the inclusion of non-Muslims as members of the Waqf Council could never be accepted. If Waqf Act had to be amended, it could be done keeping in view the wishes of the waqif who executed the waqf or the Aimmah (Imams), he held.

Prof. Wasey refuted the contention that the Sachar Committee had recommended amendment to the Waqf Act. In fact, the BJP had opposed the Committee and its recommendations at that time. He alleged that the BJP launched a sustained campaign against the Topi (head gear) and the beard. "We can not allow this to happen". He urged the Muslim leadership to garner support of the NDA partners. He reiterated that Muslims could sacrifice their lives but would never compromise on faith. He called for launching the country-wide campaign against ill-motive of the government. This campaign should also include non-Muslims. He questioned if the government had the temerity to interfere with the religious affairs of Sikhs.

Former Union Minister for Minority Affairs, K. Rahman Khan commented that the Bill sought to revert to pre-1995 position. The Arbitration Act was proposed to be applied to the Amendment Act. If the said Act was

enforced then the encroachment on waqf land and property which was existing since long could not be removed. Many public sector units which were occupying space on waqf land could not be dispossessed. He said that the proposed Act conferred sweeping powers to district collectors. Collectors could not remain unbiased because they were supposed to work as directed by the government. This government wanted to give all powers relating the waqf to collectors. Collectors would enjoy all powers of decision making in respect of waqf. They would decide the status of the property, whether it was waqf or not, he noted.

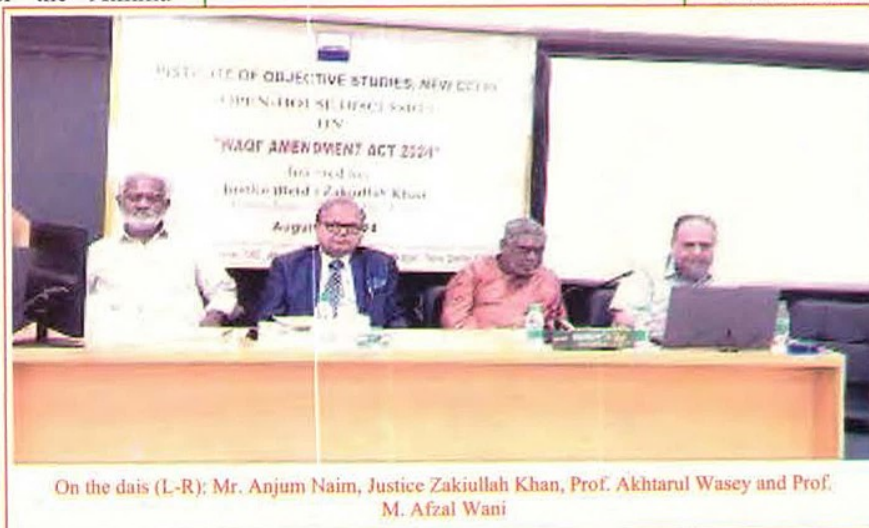
Former judge of the Allahabad High Court, Justice Zakiullah Khan stated that waqf was in existence since ages. Waqf was aimed at benefiting the Muslim community in terms of education, medical treatment, etc. He said that any adult person can execute waqf in his life-time. The first Waqf Act was made by the Britishers with the intention to take control over waqf property. Thereafter Acts were passed in 1938 and 1940. In 1956 a complete Act was made followed by another Act in 1960. He categorically stated that waqfs could be managed by Muslims only, though a non-Muslim could also will his property as waqf. The role of a non-Muslim was confined to the execution of waqf. He said that the Act

of 1995 was comprehensive and inclusive as necessary amendments were made in it. Since no rules were framed till sometime after Partition, refugees from across the border were allotted land on rent at nominal rates. But after sometime, the allottees stopped paying rent. The income by way of rent was proposed to

be utilized for opening and running colleges and schools.

Referring to the appointment of the chief executive officer of the waqf board, he said that in Uttar Pradesh, it had been statutorily provided that the CEO of the state waqf board would not be below the rank of the Additional District Magistrate. The proposed Bill had made the collector the sole authority to decide about the status of the waqf. No district magistrate could dare go against the policy of the government. He could not function independently of the government; he could not remain unbiased, he noted.

Justice Khan raised the question of the rule of law in U.P. and Madhya



On the dais (L-R): Mr. Anjum Naim, Justice Zakiullah Khan, Prof. Akhtarul Wasey and Prof. M. Afzal Wani

K. Rahman Khan pointed out that the government wanted to abolish waqf. That was the reason for deleting 12 sections in the new Bill. All the Muslims should protest against the Bill and compel the government to withdraw it. He held that Bill was sans transparency. Besides, the Bill had made 40 amendments. He asked the Muslim organizations to come forward and oppose the Bill. He also impressed upon them to contact leaders of different political parties in order to enlighten them on the Bill. He was skeptical about the resolution of issues in the Joint Parliamentary Committee on Waqf Amendment Bill 2024.

Pradesh where houses of a particular community were being bulldozed without following proper procedure. This was nothing but a sheer mischief. This Amendment Bill had been brought to subject Muslims to harassment. By changing the name of the Act, they were depriving poor Muslims of their right. They were also making the Limitation Act enforceable in the amended law. This was aimed at declaring a waqf property as non-waqf. After 1857, the English government grabbed waqf land and converted it into Nazul land. This government also was trying to convert waqf land into Nazul land. They were busy preparing a framework for Nazul land to make a new waqf law. They completely dismantled the structure of waqf. He called upon the beneficiaries to educate the members of the community about the purpose and management of waqf. He said, "once waqf shall always remain waqf". He urged the community leaders to remain united for the protection of waqf property. Waqf land could be used for opening a dispensary for the use of the poor and deprived people of the community. Citing a glaring example of the occupation of waqf land, he said that Ambani's 26-storey building in Mumbai was built on the waqf land. In a similar case in NOIDA, a temple came up on the Waqf land earmarked for the graveyard. This Bill should not be allowed to be passed in Parliament. A campaign to create awareness among Muslims about the Bill should be launched, he added.

President of the All India Milli Council, Maulana Hakim Abdullah Mughisi, observed that the open-house discussion on the issue was well-timed. He expressed that the unity in opposition to the Bill displayed by the community leaders, ulema, Imams and the Members of the Parliament would continue till the Bill was withdrawn. He assured that he would work shoulder to shoulder with the opponents of the Bill. But the protest against the proposed law should continue because it was a ploy to dismantle the very system of Awqaf, he stressed.

Senior lawyer of the Supreme Court, Yusuf Hatim Muchhala congratulated the IOS for organizing the discussion on a very important issue. The matter had been referred to the JPC for examination. He disagreed with K. Rahman Khan's view that the JPC would do nothing in the matter. He opined that giving power of waqf commissioner to district magistrates was against the basic principles of law. "Collector is nothing, but a paid officer of the government. Waqf property is for the benefit of the downtrodden in the Muslim community". He saw in the Bill a hidden motive to grab waqf land. The collector was a mere puppet of the government. They could not divide Muslims into two categories. While the stakeholders knew nothing about the members of the JPC, the issue was very serious for the community. He pleaded that the title of the land should be decided by a judicial officer. He also quoted the late Qazi Mujahidul Islam that the work of judicial review should be assigned to the Shariah Court. He suggested that a committee should be formed to take necessary steps to look after the matter. He also said that seminars similar to this should be organised everywhere to sensitise the community members about the Bill. He asked the stakeholders to prepare papers for presentation to the JPC.

Javed Alam, an active worker for the cause of waqf, held that the Bill was based on UP model. He said that a survey of the waqf properties in the state was undertaken by the government. Non-Muslims were sensitized about the waqf property and its market value. He called for mass awakening and mass mobilization of Muslims for the cause.

Raees Ahmed, an advocate from Delhi informed that there was a big graveyard near the airport in the city. He said that about 522 graveyards belonging to Muslims had disappeared with the passage of time.

Chairman of the IOS, Prof. M. Afzal Wani, said that a judicial authority should be put in place to decide whether

a property was waqf or not. He noted that the waqf property was a sentimental creation which connected the waqf with Allah. If the waqf's intention was diluted, then the waqf would lose its sanctity. The spirit behind willing a waqf property should be purely religious. Waqf came under the Shariah category. Thus the real property should be tied up. One who determined the property should be of the same faith. He held that the waqf was a charitable institution and its benefits would accrue to non-Muslims as well during natural calamities, like floods and drought. He repented that though the Muslims had property, they did not know how to manage it. Allah had given gold mines to Muslims, but they were in a slumber. He said that the waqf property should remain in the hands of a faithful. He called for working devotedly, but with detachment. He counselled against giving the property to a novice. He briefly spoke about the IOS. He said that the Institute was engaged in promoting constitutionalism and federalism.

IOS organises Panel Discussion on Union Budget-2024

A panel discussion on "Union Budget-2024" was organised by the Institute of Objective Studies on August 1, 2024 at its auditorium at New Delhi.

The discussion began with the recitation of a verse from the Holy Qur'an by Mr. Shamshad Ahmed with its Urdu translation.

The first panelist was Prof. Amitabh Kundu, Professor Emeritus, L.J. University, Ahmedabad. It may be recalled that he was the chairperson of the post-Sachar Evaluation Committee, set up by the Ministry of Minority Affairs, Government of India. In his presentation, Prof. Kundu, held that some points came to his mind to understand whether efforts were made to reduce regional disparities in the budget. If steps had been taken to give some sops to backward states? Since the Planning Commission had been

dissolved, states could not forcefully plead their case at other forums. But the current budget allocated more funds to Bihar and Andhra Pradesh. He questioned if the states which had been given special facilities deserved that. He also quoted the leaders of India Alliance terming the budget as "*Kursi Bachao Budget*" (Save the chair budget). He said that it was not correct to state that the two states received large amounts as special assistance. Bihar had been allocated a big amount for the construction of roads, bridges and new buildings for IIT and hospitals. Meaning thereby funds for the development of infrastructure. In fact, Andhra Pradesh deserved the financial assistance for the development of its capital, Amravati. Funds for Andhra Pradesh would be arranged through the multinational companies. He held that the central government would have its say in the funds allocated to Bihar. It would have been better if the state also had its say in the utilisation of the assistance. It was difficult to say whether the special central assistance given to Bihar and Andhra Pradesh would have any impact on other states, he noted.

Referring to the allocation of budget to the Ministry of Minority Affairs, he said that according to the Union Finance Minister, Ms. Nirmala Sitharaman, this year's budget provided Rs. 500 crore additional to the Ministry compared to last year's budget. It would have to be examined what had been done to benefit the minorities. He referred to the ex-Prime Minister, Dr. Manmohan's announcement on the floor of the House that Andhra Pradesh would be given special financial assistance. He said that the allocation to the Ministry of Minority Affairs stood

at Rs. 3097 crore for the financial year 2023-2024 while it accounted for Rs. 3,183 crore for the current financial year. Regarding Muslim children in the age group 6-14 years attending school, he observed that while Muslims accounted for 88.9 per cent, 99 per cent children of upper castes were going to school. Thus no big difference between the two attending school was noticeable. As far as the students of the age of 16 years and above going to higher secondary school is concerned, while the percentage of upper caste Hindus stood at 40 per cent as against 15 per cent of the Muslims. Similarly, in terms of technical education, upper castes stood at 21 per cent as against the Muslims at 12 per cent. Highlighting

The second panelist was Prof. Arun Kumar, Malcolm Adiseshiah Chair Professor, Institute of Social Sciences, New Delhi. He spoke on Union Budget 2024-25 for the few: A sub-optimal Macro strategy, and Micro strategy. He said that it was a coalition government and thus the corporate sector was worried. But Bihar and Andhra Pradesh benefited from the budget. This worry stemmed from the fact that taxes were paid by the corporate sector. Comparing the current budget with the last year's, he said that the increase this year in total was only 7 per cent, from Rs. 47.66 lakh crore to Rs. 48.20 lakh crore. Thus there was no big increase in the size of the budget. Announcement to achieve 5-year expenditure target

was to make it look like big. Commenting on the internship scheme under which 500 companies would provide internship to 1 crore youth over a period of 5 years, he said that the allocated amount of Rs. 10,000 crore had not yet been spent.

He noted that this was nothing extraordinary. In 2023-24, it was increased to Rs. 324,641 crore, but the

expenditure was Rs. 273,985 crore. He described the special assistance given to Andhra Pradesh and Bihar as a gimmick. Expenditure to key heads were increased to cover inflation. Giving an example of agriculture and allied activities, he remarked the funds were allocated but not spent. There was no funding for the schemes for marginalized sections in real terms. He held that the country was said to be on the path of fiscal consolidation. But it was pure deficit financing. F.D. expected to be at 5.9 per cent of GDP in 2023-24 had been brought down to 5.6 per cent. This might benefit the middle class which was out of the ambit of Income Tax, he said.



On the dais (L-R): Prof. Arun Kumar, Prof. Naushad Ali Azad, Prof. Amitabh Kandu and Prof. Asheref Illiyaz

main features of the current year's budget, he said that under the internship scheme announced in the budget, 4.1 crore youth would be provided employment, skill-training and other opportunities over a 5-year period with an outlay of Rs. 2 lakh crore. This internship would be made available to them through big companies. Prof. Kandu expressed doubt about the implementation of the internship scheme, and he had his own reasons for it. According to him, IITians covered under the scheme will not get job. Since there was caste bias in the companies, it cast doubt on the implementation of the scheme. It was difficult to reach out to the weaker sections. He urged the government to look at these aspects.

Prof. Arun Kumar pointed out that 1.5 crore were the effective tax payers. About 2 crore people belonging to the middle class were paying income tax. While 5 per cent were paying direct taxes, 25 per cent were indirect tax payers. There was net decrease of taxes worth about Rs. 7000 crore which worked out to 0.18 per cent. He observed that the international financial institutions limited the size of the government's budget. They wanted to limit the role of the government, so that the private sector could expand. It dented the ruling party's claim of making the country "Atma Nirbhar" (Self-reliance) or "Vishwa Guru" (World Teacher).

There was 80 billion dollars deficit in China. There was also the admission of the weakness of Indian economy and an overwhelming dependence on Chinese imports. He noted that the demand for labour was shifting from unorganized to organised sector. He made out a case for making India a part of the Chinese supply chain and dent "Atma Nirbharta". While the organised sector was increasing, the unorganized sector was declining. Unemployment and crisis in the agriculture was a matter of concern. Fiscal deficit was dictated by international financial institutions, he concluded.

The third panelist was Prof. Asheref Illiyan, Head of the Department of Economics, Jamia Millia Islamia, New Delhi, who focused on agriculture and allied

sectors. He said that several measures had been announced for the development of agriculture and the allied sector. Growth in agriculture came down by 4.5 per cent. In 2024-25, the Ministry of Agriculture had been allocated Rs. 1,32,470 crore which was 2.7 per cent of the total budgeted expenditure. This was estimated to be 5 per cent higher as compared to the revised estimate of 2023-24 of Rs. 1,26,666 crore. He noted that the allocation for the ministry of fisheries was declining in real terms. PM's Fasal Yojana too registered a decline by 2.7 per cent. Thirty per cent farmers were covered by the crop insurance scheme. He cited the example of the South Korean government which paid the premium of the insurance. No allocation for research and development in the sector had been, he added.

Chairman of the IOS, Prof. M. Afzal Wani said that every programme of the government should be part of human being. Just treatment should be given to people and remedies of every sort be made available to them. He explained the difference between Indian and British justice system. He pleaded that the justice system be made available to everybody.

In his presidential speech, former Head of the Department of Economics, Jamia Millia Islamia, Prof. Naushad Ali Azad, explained that budget was an exercise by the government to take money and give it back to various sectors. Budget was the source of money coming and going. He said that

this budget was influenced by elections and the government was forced to present the budget. He held that unemployment was a core issue and it had been given some space. Special financial aid given to Bihar was impacted by election results. He observed that every government presented its budget according to its priorities. Indian economy was characterised by so many things. Unemployment and employment were two different issues. Future of work was discussed at the meeting called by the Ministry of Finance before the budget. He said that jobs were shrinking due to the advancement of technology. Thus the nature of work had to be defined. Situation had come to such a pass that even the technocrats did not want to work in the corporate sector. They wanted to work as freelancers. The good thing is that India is a big market of technology. It offered demographic dividends and was a partner of global value change. India's growth rate was consistently high in the past one or two decades. He concluded saying "No country in the world is like India".

The Panel Discussion ended with a vote of thanks extended by the Vice-Chairperson of the Institute, Prof. (Ms.) Haseena Hashia. A fairly good number of economic experts, teachers and university students attended the panel discussion.

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