

New Wine In An Old Bottle

Modi government schemes go beyond ribbon cutting, they are meant to produce results

Ravi Shankar Prasad



We often see that Congress has a standard response when it comes to any achievement of the Modi government. It says 'we started this scheme' or 'Modi is just following our schemes'.

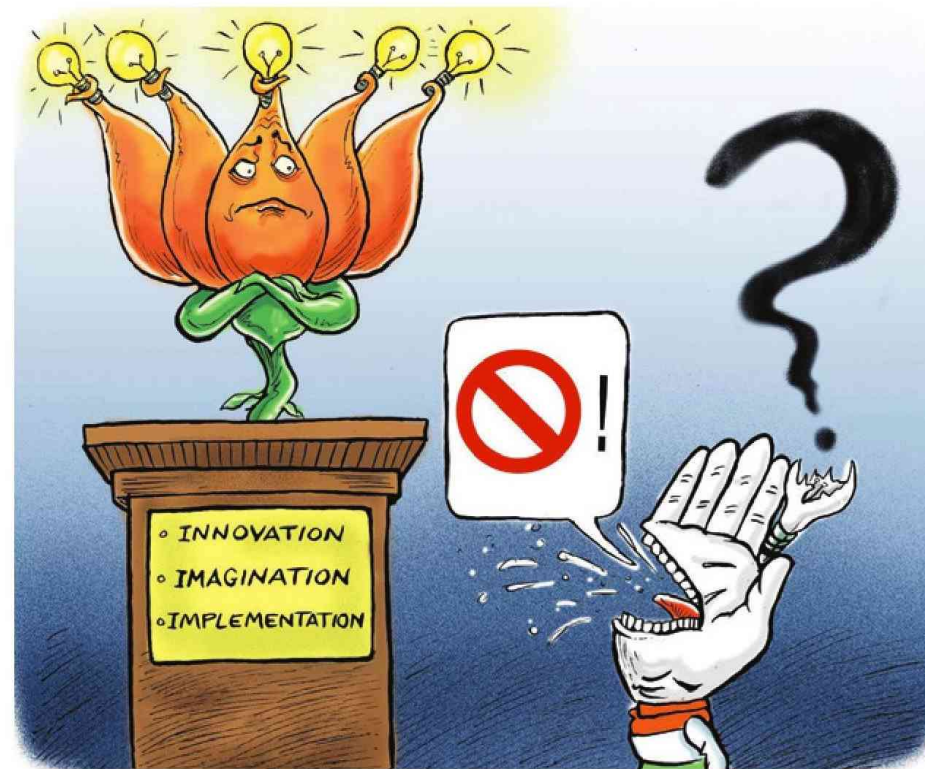
Congress makes a mockery of itself when it doesn't realise that basic responsibilities of all governments are the same. Governments are expected to deliver on infrastructure, health, education, employment opportunities, and so on. So, no party has a trademark on construction of roads. Just for the sake of novelty, spaceships can't be constructed when the requirement is a school.

What sets Prime Minister Narendra Modi apart is innovation, imagination and implementation. Schemes unthinkable in air conditioned offices are envisioned with the help of ground experience, for example Mudra Yojana. Sectors which were untouched for decades have been reinvigorated and great results are seen, for example Swachh Bharat. The scale of schemes has been huge while implementation has been immaculate.

Congress party's behaviour is sometimes like asking Sachin Tendulkar what is the novel thing he does, when every Indian can bat. Just as Sachin bats with the same bat, on the same pitch and with the same rules as thousands of cricketers, governments also have to perform under similar conditions and have to be tested comparatively. What matters is quality of work, imagination, implementation and end results.

In a short span of three years the Modi government has provided social security to around 13.5 crore people, almost equal to Russia's population. It has opened bank accounts for more than 28 crore people, a little short of the entire US population. It provided more than seven crore collateral free loans to small entrepreneurs, more than UK's population. It is providing clean cooking gas to five crore households, similar to the population of Spain.

Let's come now to the allegations of Modi government simply carrying



forward Congress schemes. Governments across the world have various forms of job guarantee schemes. India too has had such schemes running for a long time. MGNREGA is not the first, nor the last such scheme. The first such scheme was started in Maharashtra in 1972 under the name of Employment Guarantee Scheme. It was enacted as the Employment Guarantee Act in 1977.

Since then there has been the National Rural Employment Programme, Rural Landless Employment Guarantee Programme with a guarantee of 100 days of employment, Jawahar Rojgar Yojana, Sampoorna Gramin Rozgar Yojana, National Food for Work Programme, et al.

Our government has changed MGNREGA in many ways to fix its various flaws. Productive assets are being created, leakages have gone down drastically, wages are reaching on time, more work is being generated than before and money is reaching the bank accounts of beneficiaries directly.

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The story of Aadhaar is the same. It is not something the UPA government either started or completed.

In May 2001, under the previous NDA government, a group of ministers submitted a report and accepted the recommendation for a multipurpose identity card. In 2003 the Citizenship (Amendment) Bill was introduced in the Lok Sabha, which included the clause "the central government may compulsorily register every citizen of India and issue national identity card".

For one full term UPA did nothing substantial on this; it took upto June 2009 for the UPA government to establish Aadhaar. It took another year to launch

the name 'Aadhaar' and its logo. But, did BJP taunt Congress for copying its idea and launching Aadhaar?

On Aadhaar the UPA government neither had vision, nor a sense of mission. For them, it was just another scheme to operate in a silo. For five long years, they did not even bother to obtain for it parliamentary approval. Government departments had no clarity about Aadhaar's purpose. In fact there was no Aadhaar to the use of Aadhaar!

Our government has made Aadhaar a critical component of public service delivery and made it a part of more than 100 schemes. The Modi government's proactive use of technology with Aadhaar has helped save more than Rs 50,000 crore in a short span of time.

While Congress and some commentators spread the canard that NDA government has just continued with old schemes, this narrative is far from the truth. The Modi government may have launched fewer schemes than the UPA government in terms of ribbon cutting events. This is because for the Modi government, schemes are meant to produce results and are not just ribbon cutting exercises.

All schemes started by our government have been innovative, with a view to solving actual problems on the ground. They are not just a result of armchair experts' theories, but involve a lot of imagination to address issues that people have been facing for decades.

All schemes started by our government focus on sound implementation. There are stringent monitoring procedures and flaws are fixed quickly. Jan Dhan Yojana, Mudra Yojana, Ujjwala Yojana, Start Up India, Stand Up India, Fasal Bima Yojana, Swachh Bharat are just a few examples.

Thus, it is time Congress and commentators who regurgitate its narratives conceded that the Modi government has been better in terms of designing new schemes and improving previous schemes. That is what governance is all about. If just launching new schemes was governance, perhaps Congress would have never gone out of power!

The writer is Union Minister for Law and IT