

NEWSMAKER: SHAKTIKANTA DAS/GOVERNOR /RBI

Bureaucrat's bureaucrat at Mint Road

A quintessential finance ministry insider takes charge of the central bank at a critical time in the relationship

ARUP ROYCHOUDHURY New Delhi, 12 December

The new Governor of Reserve Bank of India (RBI), Shaktikanta Das, gained fame of a sort during demonetisation. As the person hand-picked by the political leadership to face the media and explain the daily Reserve Bank of India notifications and dozens of rule changes to the general public, images of Das beamed into the living rooms of the nation every day for a month and a half.

He was chosen for this task because, by all accounts, the government was apprehensive that then RBI governor Urjit Patel would lose his legendary temper at the first sign of a tough question if he was asked to conduct daily media briefings. In that sense, it is almost ironic that he takes charge against the backdrop of increasing tensions over the central bank's autonomy.

But this sustained exposure in the last months of 2016 also means that Das became the person that people associated with a period of despair as they struggled to get access to their hard-earned cash. And often, he was the bearer of bad news. He announced the RBI's decision that daily withdrawal limit would be reduced to ₹2,000 from ₹4,500, that indelible ink will be used for those visiting bank branches so that they don't make multiple withdrawals—a decision which was later withdrawn after widespread outrage—and defended the government line that demonetisation would only cause a short-term impact.

A day after his elevation to the RBI, most of the criticism on social media focused on his role during demonetisation and his academic credentials as "just" a Masters in History from St Stephens College, New Delhi, compared to two of his immediate predecessors who hold doctorates from foreign universities.

And just like the last "bureaucrat governor" Duvvuri Subbarao, the commentariat feels that Das will be beholden to the government. Those who have observed policy from close quarters, however, know that once a person goes from New Delhi to Mint Road, he assumes a mind of his own.

Das, a 1980-batch Tamil Nadu cadre officer, has had two long stints in the ministry of finance, under four finance ministers: Pranab Mukherjee, Manmohan Singh (who as prime minister held additional charge), P Chidambaram and Arun Jaitley.

From September 2008 to December 2013, he served in the expenditure and economic affairs departments. As joint secretary of the budget division, he was instrumental in creating a "budget

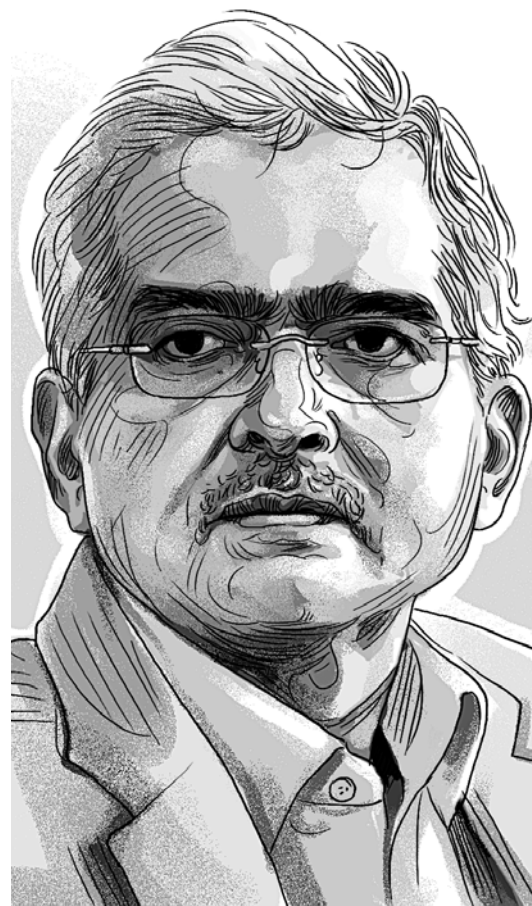


ILLUSTRATION: AJAY MOHANTY

manual" in 2010, which has since served as a proverbial standard operating procedure blueprint for officers when they swing into budget preparations each year.

From June 2014 to May 2017, he was, first, the revenue secretary and then the economic affairs secretary. In the two stints, he has been directly involved in shaping eight Union Budgets. When Jaitley presented his first budget, Das was the revenue secretary and gave Jaitley a way out of the issue of retrospective taxation that had plagued Mukherjee and Chidambaram.

Jaitley assured markets that the government would not make any retrospective changes to tax laws that would create fresh liabilities, and that all fresh cases arising out of the retrospective amendments of 2012 in respect of indirect transfers

would be scrutinised by a tax panel before any action is initiated.

A fiscal conservative, it is Das who is said to be the force behind Jaitley keeping the fiscal deficit target unchanged in his first budget and then subsequently sticking to a descending glide-slope every budget thereafter, except the 2017-8 budget.

Das also advised Jaitley to set up a new panel to discuss India's future fiscal roadmap. He was also the Economic Affairs Secretary, under which comes the budget division, when the budget date was advanced from February 28 to February 1 and the rail budget was junked with the Union Budget.

Along with former Chief Economic Advisor Arvind Subramanian, Das also attacked global ratings agencies for having different standards while assessing India and China, and in a meeting with one of the big-three agencies, also berated them personally.

A widely respected official, he has been called a "bureaucrat's bureaucrat" by Jaitley. One of his biggest strengths is his media-management. Never evasive or arrogant in his dealings with the press corps, Das has also been crucial in behind-the-scenes, informal communications between the RBI and government over the years. Officials who have worked with him in North Block say that he is accommodative of all views and will give everyone a patient hearing in meetings before taking a decision.

It is possible that Das will also be the governor most active on social media. As of writing this piece, his Twitter account is yet to be verified. However, he has tweeted actively on all government issues even after he retired in May 2017. Indeed, many considered his tweet on the one-year anniversary of demonetisation as singularly insensitive.

So it is not surprising that Das does not have a controversy-free track record. Bharatiya Janata Party's Member of Parliament and Jaitley's bête noire, Subramanian Swamy, has constantly attacked Das. He has been accused of helping Chidambaram in the Aircel-Maxis case, of being involved in a land allotment scam in Tamil Nadu, of nixing the Department of Revenue Intelligence's probe regarding coal imports, and of meddling in the affairs of the Enforcement Directorate. None of these accusations have been proven.

Just six months after retirement, Das was also made a member of the 15th Finance Commission. The Commission has already visited 13 states and is collating data to create its report. He also served as India's Sherpa to G-20.

Das comes at a time when the relationship between the government and the RBI have reached a nadir. On Tuesday, he already proved he is different from his predecessor by holding a long press conference and answering questions patiently. A governor who tweets regularly and answers media questions is quite unprecedented. Perhaps a sign of things to come.

One of his biggest strengths is his media-management. Never evasive or arrogant in his dealings with the press corps, Das has also been crucial in behind-the-scenes, informal communications between the RBI and government over the years.

Why Vietnam could be Asia's biggest trade war winner

BLOOMBERG 12 December

In the race to lure companies looking for alternative sites amid the US-China trade war, Vietnam wields a slew of advantages over its rivals.

Vietnam was ranked No. 1 among seven emerging Asian countries as manufacturing destinations by Natixis, which looked at demographics, wages and electricity costs, rankings in doing business and logistics, and manufacturing as a share of total foreign direct investment.

"Vietnam is poised to capture some of China's global market share in labour-intensive manufacturing," said Trinh Nguyen, a senior economist at Natixis in Hong Kong. "It's the clear winner from the trade war."

Prime Minister Nguyen Xuan Phuc is taking advantage of trade tensions to boost the nation's profile as a manufacturing and export powerhouse, selling everything from shoes to smartphones. Trade amounts to about twice its gross domestic product—more than any country in Asia apart from Singapore. Here's a look at what makes Vietnam attractive to foreign investors:

Cheap

Production workers in Vietnam are paid an average of \$216 a month, less than half what their peers get in China. Thanks to government subsidies, electricity is also cheaper at 7 US cents per kilowatt hour compared with 10 cents for Indonesia and 19 cents for the Philippines, according to GlobalPetrolPrices.com's June data. Vietnam also has one of the largest labour forces in Southeast Asia, at 57.5 million. That compared with 15.4 million for Malaysia and 44.6 million for the Philippines, according to the World Bank.

Deals, investment

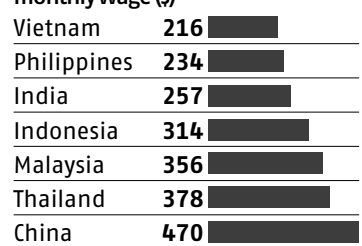
Vietnam's communist leaders have pursued free trade deals with South Korea and Europe and joined 10 other nations in March in signing a Trans-Pacific trade pact. Officials completed a trade deal with the EU in June that will eliminate almost all tariffs. In Southeast Asia, only Singapore has a similar agreement with the EU. The government is also making it

easier for foreign investors to do business with a proposed securities law that would allow 100 per cent foreign ownership of public companies, except those in restricted sectors like banking and telecommunication.

Foreign direct investment is surging, with the government expecting disbursed FDI to rise to a record \$18 billion this year. Hon Hai Precision Industry, the Taiwan-based manufacturer for companies such as Apple, is considering shifting some of its production to Vietnam as a hedge against the trade tensions between the US and China, said Vu Tien Loc, chairman of the Vietnam Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

CHEAP LABOUR

Vietnam's manufacturing wages are among the lowest in Asia. Manufacturing worker's monthly wage (\$) chart showing Vietnam at 216, Philippines at 234, India at 257, Indonesia at 314, Malaysia at 356, Thailand at 378, and China at 470.



Source: Japan External Trade Organization

Geography

Vietnam's proximity to China also adds to its appeal. The two share a land border, compared with countries like Indonesia, Philippines and Malaysia which are all much farther away.

Chinese companies that need raw materials from the US will find it easier to source these goods via Vietnam. Vietnam is China's largest trading partner in Southeast Asia as the two nations become more central in each other's production chains.

Stability

Vietnam boasts one of the world's fastest-growing economies, forecast to expand at about 7 per cent this year. The dong has been relatively stable in 2018, compared with other currencies in Asia like the rupee and rupiah which suffered large declines.

GOVERNMENT OF KARNATAKA (Public Works, Ports and Inland Water Transport Department) National Highways. Office of the Executive Engineer, National Highway Division, Urva Store, Ashoknagar, Mangaluru - 575 006. Ph: 0824-2450415 Email: eehdmg@yahoo.com

हेवी इंजीनियरिंग कॉर्पोरेशन लिमिटेड Heavy Engineering Corporation Limited. TENDER NOTICE. NIT No.: RT/P&A/HEC/HRIS/Tenders : 1484 dated 12.12.2018. Notice inviting tenders for providing consultancy services for implementation of Human Resource Information System (HRIS) through ODOO.

DEMAND NOTICE. Under Section 13(2) of the Securitisation And Reconstruction of Financial Assets And Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 (the said Act), read with Rule 3 (1) of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002 (the said Rules).

पुणे महानगरपालिका टेंडर सेल विभाग. शुद्धीकरण. उप आयुक्त परिमंडळ क्र. ४ क डील जाहिरात क्र. ४२-DC-४-२०१८. अन्वये महाराष्ट्र टाईम्स, दै, बिजनेस स्टॅन्डर्ड वर्तमानपत्रामध्ये दि. १०.१२.२०१८ रोजी प्रसिद्ध करण्यात आलेल्या निविदा जाहिरातीमधील हद्दपसर-मुढवा क्षेत्रिय कार्यालय टेंडर क्रमांक २६ विक्री-२०१८ कामाचे नाव - प्रभाग क्र २२ ड मधील स.नं. ७९ रासगे आळी येथे समाजमंदिराची उर्वरीत कामे करणे या ऐवजी प्रभाग क्र २३ ड मधील स.नं. ७९ रासगे आळी येथे समाजमंदिराची उर्वरीत कामे करणे असे वाचण्यात यावे.

RS SOFTWARE (INDIA) LIMITED. (CIN : L72200WB1987PLC043375) Corporate Office: "FMC FORTUNA", 1st Floor, A-2, 234/3A, A.J.C. Bose Road, Kolkata - 700 020. Tel.: 033-22876254/6255/5746. Fax: 033-22876256. Website: www.rssoftware.com

INC-26 PUBLIC NOTICE. [Pursuant to rule 30 the Companies (Incorporation) Rules, 2014] Before the Central Government Regional Director, Western Region, Mumbai. In the matter of sub-section (4) of Section 13 of Companies Act, 2013 and clause (a) of sub-rule (5) of rule 30 of the Companies (Incorporation) Rules, 2014.

Notice is hereby given to the General Public that the Company proposes to make application to the Central Government (Power delegated to Regional Director) under Section 13 of the Companies Act, 2013 seeking confirmation of alteration of the Memorandum of Association of the Company in terms of special resolution passed at the Annual General Meeting held on September 28, 2018 to enable the Company to change its Registered Office from "State of Maharashtra" to "State of Gujarat".

optiemus INFRACOM LIMITED. Regd. Office: K-20, 11nd Floor, Laipat Nagar, Part-2, New Delhi-110 024. Corporate Office: Plot No. 2A, First Floor, Sector-126, Noida- 201 301, U.P. CIN: L64200DL1993PLC054086 | Email: info@optiemus.com

Table with 5 columns: S. No., Folio No., Name of Shareholder, Certificate No., Distinctive No., No. of Shares. Contains details for Inder Pal Singh and a Total row.

FOR OPTIEMUS INFRACOM LIMITED. Date: 12/12/2018 Place: Noida (U.P.) Vikas Chandra Company Secretary & Compliance Officer

Kotak Mahindra Bank Limited SALE NOTICE FOR SALE OF IMMOVABLE PROPERTIES. REGISTERED OFFICE: 27 BKC, Z-27, G-BLOCK, BANDRAKURLA COMPLEX, BANDRA (E), MUMBAI, MAHARASHTRA, PIN CODE-400 051. E-Auction Sale Notice for Sale of Immovable Assets under the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 read with proviso to Rule 8 (6) of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rule, 2002.

NOTICE FOR TRANSFER OF EQUITY SHARES TO INVESTOR EDUCATION AND PROTECTION FUND. This Notice is published pursuant to the provisions of the Investor Education and Protection Fund Authority (Accounting, Audit, Transfer and Refund) Rules, 2016, as amended ("the Rules") and notified by the Ministry of Corporate Affairs. Pursuant to Section 124(6) of the Companies Act, 2013 ("the Act") read with Rule 6 of the Rules, all shares in respect of which dividends remain unclaimed/unpaid for seven consecutive years or more, shall be transferred by the Company to the Demat Account of IEPF Authority.