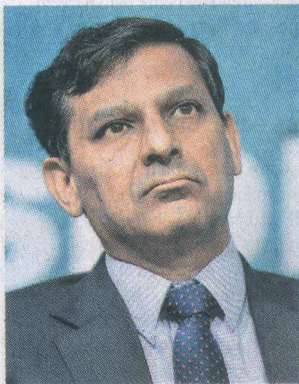


'Need to be tolerant for effective communication'

PUNE: Indians need to be more respectful and tolerant for effective communication Reserve Bank of India Governor Raghuram Rajan said after clarifying that his comment "in the land of the blind, the one-eyed man is king" was only intended to signal that India's outperformance was accentuated because the global economy was weak and that the country was hungry for more growth.

India's international reputation was one of a country with great promise, which has under-delivered in the past, the central bank governor said in a speech at the convocation of the National Institute of Bank Management (NIBM) in Pune.

"This is why we are still the poorest country on a per capita basis among the BRICS," Mr. Rajan, whose comments have drawn criticism from government ministers including Finance Minister Arun Jaitley and Commerce Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, apologised to the visually-challenged for the comment and asked, "how much of our language is tinged with meaning that is



Raghuram Rajan

liable to misinterpretation? How forgiving should we be of a bad choice of words when the intent is clearly different?"

The former International Monetary Fund chief economist cited the quote attributed to Mahatma Gandhi, "An eye for an eye will only make the whole world go blind", and said it was clear what it implied, that the whole world going blind is not a desirable state of affairs.

"One might take umbrage since it suggests blindness is an inferior state to that of being able to see, and the saying

could be seen as discriminatory.

Gandhi's focus

"Yet Gandhiji's focus was on the absurdity of a policy of revenge, not on blindness, and his intent was not to disparage the blind," Mr. Rajan said.

He called for an improvement in public dialogue and told speakers to be more careful with words and not be gratuitously offensive.

"At the same time, listeners should not look for insults everywhere, and should place words in context so as to understand intent. In other words, for effective communication and debate, rather than the angry exchanges that we see on some TV shows, we need both respect and tolerance," Mr. Rajan said.

"The greatest danger of all is that we do not communicate or debate, for then we will allow distorted stereotypes to flourish unchallenged, and divisiveness to increase. In a country like ours, conceived and flourishing in diversity, that will truly be a disaster," Mr. Rajan said.