

Goodbye to an all-time great

There is no appropriate way to say goodbye to a sporting star who graced the horizon for nearly a quarter of a century, gave countless moments of sheer joy to millions of fans around the world, and through it all stayed so gracious and charming that his fiercest competitors joined the farewell chorus too. There will never be, to use the word judiciously, another one like Roger Federer on the tennis courts, a sporting icon to whom the acronym GOAT (Greatest Of All Time) fits like a custom-made shoe. There will not be another Federer off the courts either.

Sporting achievements are counted in records and numbers. By these yardsticks, Federer ranks among the best in his sport. At 41, as he steps down after taking the court one last time at the Laver Cup, Federer has 20 Grand Slam titles, the most matches (369) in Grand Slam men's singles in the Open Era, a total of 103 titles on the circuit, the only player to reach the finals of all four Slams in a season thrice, the player with the most number of consecutive weeks (237) at Number 1 position in the circuit, and the oldest such Number 1 in ATP history. However, with all-time greats like Federer, records reveal only a sliver of their distinction; their greatness flows from that indescribable quality they bring to their sport itself. Federer lit up the arena he played in. Watching him in his sublime fluidity across courts, seeing his famous forehand shot glide the ball across his opponent, agonising over the points he could have but did not get, shedding a tear or two with him as he got emotional after a match, rooting for him even against other greats such as Rafael Nadal, all this lent an additional meaning to life. Off court, like on it, Federer was ever gracious and correct, his greatness and wealth sitting lightly on him.

In his message announcing his retirement — not a surprise for those closely watching his game in the last few years — Federer said, "Tennis has treated me more generously than I ever would have dreamt... I was lucky enough to play so many epic matches that I will never forget." In fact, Federer, whose movement on the court has been gloriously compared to poetry in motion or ballet, has treated fans and enthusiasts around the world more generously than we could have ever dreamt. We, who watched sports in his era, were indeed lucky enough to see so many epic matches that we cannot forget. Goodbye, Roger, tennis is poorer without you.

Ripping open an old fault line

When Vedanta-Foxconn signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Gujarat government this week to set up its multi-billion-dollar semi-conductor facility in the state that Prime Minister Narendra Modi hails from, it was more than a routine business announcement. It put Maharashtra Chief Minister Eknath Shinde, heading a faction of the nativist Shiv Sena in the "double-engine" Sena-BJP government, in an embarrassing position of having presided over the movement of this project from his state to neighbouring Gujarat. It led the Uddhav Thackeray faction to remark that "one engine had failed". Mr Shinde has since attempted damage control and made noises about other major projects coming Maharashtra's way. Vedanta chairperson Anil Aggarwal, accused of shifting loyalty to Gujarat, also promised to set up affiliates of the industry in Maharashtra.

However, Mr Shinde has revealed his helplessness in the face of the determination of his deputy Devendra Fadnavis (BJP) to run the Maharashtra government along the BJP's agenda. They are unlikely to convince people that the movement was a purely business one. Since the Modi government assumed power in 2014, there has been a concerted effort to divest Mumbai — and Maharashtra — of the economic and commercial strength it commands and elevate various destinations in Gujarat instead. This has opened old fault lines between the two states that go back all the way to British India and later to the states' reorganisation. As the colonial power built Bombay, the wealth and industry came largely from Gujaratis-Marwaris and Parsis while the working classes were predominantly Marathi. During the states' reorganisation on linguistic lines, in 1960, Gujarat wanted Bombay to be its capital; this led to an agitation by Maharashtrians — in which 105 died — so the city remained in Maharashtra.

The Vedanta-Foxconn move is being seen as emblematic of the unfinished business of the past. That this happens under the nose of a CM from the Shiv Sena, the party that claimed to uphold Maharashtra's interests for 55 years, has caused great consternation to many in Mumbai. But business bends to politics when convenient, and political power now rests in Gujarat.

INDIA 75 YEARS AGO
SEPTEMBER 26, 1947



Decks Cleared For Action Against Junagadh

OPEN WAR AGAINST NAWAB DECLARED

Bombay, Thursday: At the stroke of 6.17 p.m. this evening, amidst resounding cries of "Inqilab Zindabad", a mammoth gathering of Junagadh state subjects appointed a parallel provisional government "with all power, authority, and jurisdiction heretofore vested in and exercised by the Nawab of Junagadh", to adopt all means and steps necessary to the state acceding to the Dominion of India.

Reconciling FM's concerns on private investment

Spectrum

Madan Sabnavis



ic activity like roads, railways or urban development.

The crux to investment is consumption which needs to increase. Growth in consumption has the potential to increase capacity utilisation which in turn will make the relevant companies invest more to keep pace with growing demand. It must be mentioned here that the lockdowns in the last two years has dent the spending power of the households which has been further exacerbated by rising inflation of the order of above 5.5% for the last three years. This has cumulatively made them spend more on necessities, leaving less money for discretionary consumption which in turn has affected fresh investment by companies. The fact that consumption has been maintained despite high inflation has been reflected in a dip in financial savings as manifested in slow growth in deposits this year.

Further, the SME sector has been buffeted by the lockdowns and are in the process of recovering which means that it will take time before they invest more. Also several units have closed down and would need to recommence operations before investing in capital.

Therefore, for investment to revive, the demand side of the story has to play out across all sectors. There are industries like automobiles which are still grappling with supply chain issues of procuring semi-conductors which has now become a long standing problem. Therefore while demand is there, due to such disruptions investing in capital would not be feasible.

The other area to look at would



The challenge really today is that while the support from the government is good and proactive, demand needs to be there for investment to take place

be

infrastructure. Here the picture is mixed. There has been limited private investment in infra projects which still remains the domain of the central government. Interestingly state governments are also careful with their capex plans and in the past have cut back on such expenses to remain within the perimeter of the FRBM norms. This in turn has also had a bearing on private investment linkages.

There is also the issue of funding of infrastructure investment once the private sector is interested. Presently the main source of financing of infra projects is banks. The NPA issue which had plagued the system until 2020-21 was mainly

due to lending gone awry in this segment. While the system is now almost cleaned up, the preference for banks has shifted to retail lending where probability of delinquency is low. There needs to also be momentum in the corporate bond market which can provide funds for infra investment.

Here too the challenge is in companies raising funds given that the market is open virtually only for higher rated companies. The infra projects given their nature and design would be rated lower given that the revenue flows would be with a lag of two to four years. For these projects to be financially viable to raise money through the bond route, there have to be enhancements provided so that the rating

gets notched up. We need to have new instruments here to revive the market which the regulator SEBI has been working on. Infrastructure Investment Trust (InvITs), Real estate investment funds (REITs), CDS, credit enhancements etc. are some of the routes being propagated in this regard.

Can anything done about this? One way out can be for the government to give guarantees on infra projects which have been evaluated by some of the reputed credit rating agencies such as CRISIL, CARE etc. this can provide comfort to investors. The government can set up a fund for this purpose. Revisiting the PPP route (public-private-partnership) can also be undertaken to fill in the gaps which have not made them a big success.

The major challenge will be that India Inc. will have to undertake this journey just at the time when the RBI is increasing interest rates which means that the cost of capital will be going up gradually. While industry is prepared for variable interest rates during the tenure of their investment, high rates at the starting point could cause some delays.

But at the end of the day for investment to take place, there needs to be higher growth which creates jobs, incomes and higher consumption. It is a virtuous process that has to only takeoff — which takes time. Once the path is established, momentum comes automatically from within.

Madan Sabnavis is Chief Economist, Bank of Baroda and author of 'Lockdown or Economic Destruction'. Views are personal

Prashant Kishor has lost the Midas touch

To The Point



Neelu Vyas

India's first Western-style political consultant, Prashant Kishor aka PK, has travelled a long distance in politics over the last eight years. Once seen as the man with the golden touch on the electoral landscape, he has descended into inconsistency and unpredictability, driven by his own ambition. The man who got unprecedented victories for Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Mamata Banerjee, Nitish Kumar, Arvind Kejriwal, MK Stalin and Jagan Mohan Reddy with his out-of-the-box strategies, and campaigns that flummoxed even the tallest politicians, now looks like a man who is stymied and even disoriented because he tried to take a plunge into politics himself. While strategising and designing political narratives for various parties, PK was engulfed with the illusion that he himself could run a political party while keeping the business interests of his poll strategy group, Indian Action Political Committee (IPAC), alive. What PK perhaps did not realise was that he would destroy his credibility by keeping his foot in both camps.



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The Architecture of Life

— Ritesh Aswaney

Dwarka, the Golden Lanka and Indraprastha — what do these amazing creations have in common? Well they were all created by the same celestial being. Today, on the occasion of Vishwakarma Jayanti, as we venerate the Architect of the Gods, let's explore some of the uncommon stories surrounding him. It's also quite fortuitous that we just celebrated Engineers' Day in India a couple of days ago!

Vishwakarma descended from the lineage of Brahma, the Creator. His daughter, Sanjna, was married to the Sun God, Vivasvan, and they had the two twins Yama and Yami. However, with Vivasvan's blazing appearance and heat, Sanjna found it difficult to be around him and left her shadow self, Chhaya, in her stead. Lord Shani was born out of their union.

The Sun eventually realised that she wasn't his wife, abandoning Chhaya, went in search of Sanjna. He went to his father-in-law Vishwakarma, who chiselled off some of his glory, so that his daughter could once again be around him, helping the couple reunite. This story also helps astrology enthusiasts rationalise the tension between the Sun and his son, Shani or Saturn.

Vishwakarma in particular is worshipped by builders, craftsmen and engineers alike, and on this day, the instruments of the trade are also worshipped along with an image or idol of the divine architect. Construction sites in particular, can see some grand celebrations on this day, as ritual worship gives way to song and dance. This day provides a rare day off to this hard-working community, which creates the beautiful flats in the towering highrises in our cities. It is also a great day to express our gratitude to all the handymen and craftsmen who work selflessly to make our lives more convenient.

This is also an excellent opportunity to examine the architecture of our lives, which we would like to think is centred around happiness, but for the most part has become increasingly dominated by our financial commitments. Life is so fleeting and temporary, that oftentimes we lose sight of our mortality in our quest for material happiness. And there couldn't be a better time to remind ourselves of this universal truth and spend more time living in the present, than this fortnight dedicated to our ancestors, to whom we owe so much of our existence.

GUIDING LIGHT

— Ritesh Aswaney

government. Mr Kishor might not say in clear words but it's almost certain that he has kept his political aims aside after eyeing business prospects with the Opposition front.

With Mr Kumar on the opposition centre stage, it's clearly evident that PK's political ambitions at least in Bihar will be difficult to achieve, especially after the formation of the Mahagathbandhan

hamper

his business interests or

and if the Opposition comes together at Nitish Kumar's behest, India will definitely echo one sentiment, and that is that political parties are self-sufficient, and don't need strategists like PK any more. It's clearly a do-or-die battle for Prashant Kishor to keep himself relevant.

PK has deftly learnt the art of U-

turns as they say in politics, and

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Arms on the way

The commitment of the United States of America towards Ukraine and selected segments of Europe was reaffirmed last Thursday when the Secretary of State, Antony Blinken, made an unscheduled visit to Kyiv. In parallel, the Biden administration announced major new military aid worth more than \$2 billion for Ukraine and other European countries threatened by Vladimir Putin's Russia. The US administration has notified Congress of its intent to provide \$2 billion in long-term Foreign Military Financing to Ukraine and 18 of its neighbours, including Nato members and regional security partners, that are "most potentially at risk for future Russian aggression." Pending the expected congressional approval, about \$1 billion of that will go to Ukraine and the rest will be divided between Albania, Bosnia, Bulgaria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Georgia, Greece, Kosovo, Latvia, Lithuania, Moldova, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia, the State Department said. This is expected to help those countries "deter and defend against emergent threats to their sovereignty and territorial integrity" by enhancing their military integration with Nato and countering "Russian influence and aggression," the department said with the supplementary that "this assistance demonstrates yet again our unwavering commitment to Ukraine's future as a democratic, sovereign, and independent state, as well as the security of allies and partners across the region." Foreign Military Financing, or FMF, allows recipients to purchase US-made defence equipment, often depending on their specific needs. The financing comes on top of a \$675 million package of heavy weaponry, ammunition and armoured vehicles for Ukraine that Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin announced the same day. That package includes howitzers, artillery munitions, Humvees, armoured ambulances, anti-tank systems and more. In Austin's perspective, the war is at another key moment, with Ukrainian forces beginning their counter-offensive in the south of the country. He said that "now we're seeing the demonstrable success of our common efforts on the battlefield." The "face of the war is changing and so is the mission of this contact group," Austin told the meeting of the Ukraine Defense Contact Group, which was attended by Nato's Secretary-General, Jens Stoltenberg, and Ukraine's defence minister as well as officials from allied countries. Germany and the Netherlands will provide training in "demining" to Ukrainian soldiers as well as demining equipment, the countries' defence ministers said on the sidelines of the meeting with Austin. The training will be carried out in Germany. The two countries previously joined forces to send howitzers to Ukraine. Last week's contributions bring the total US aid to Ukraine to \$15.2 billion since President Joe Biden took office. US officials said the new commitments were intended to show that American support for the country in the face of Russia's invasion is unwavering. The announcements came as fighting between Ukraine and Russia has intensified, with Ukrainian forces mounting a counter-offensive to retake Russian-held areas in the south and east.

Africa anew

Even as India prepares to set the priorities for its upcoming presidency of the Group of 20 emerging economies, a contrarian focus on New Delhi's approach towards Africa may not be out of place. It comes on the back of the insightful book by strategic expert Ambassador Rajiv Bhatia - India-Africa Relations: Changing Horizons. Given the 20-year-long, intense wooing of key African countries by China in its effort to establish an energy security-rare earth minerals architecture and take leadership of the Global South, with Russia in recent years also working to establish closer ties with the continent building on its Soviet-era linkages, India cannot afford to play catch-up in yet another strategic theatre. Indeed, India and Africa together constitute one-third of the global population and New Delhi's leadership role in the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) through the second half of the 20th century helped it foster close relationships with multiple African nations which could ~ and should ~ be built on assiduously. The challenges and opportunities for India's Africa policy premised on its track record over the past two decades in the aftermath of the Cold War, however, need to be assessed realistically. As Peter Cozens, former Royal New Zealand Navy officer and currently Director of Victoria University's Centre for Strategic Studies, in his review of Ambassador Bhatia's book says: "The Organisation of African Unity which was founded in 1963 to advance the cause of post-colonial Africa found it hard going... (but) its successor organisation, the African Union formed in 2002 has a much broader mandate and includes a provision for India to be at the table." But India's so-called soft power outreach, exemplified by its relationship with 15 leading African countries including a New Delhi-run programme offering up to 50,000 academic scholarships for young Africans to study in India, remains small change in strategic terms. In the Indian Ocean, for example, in the face of an East-West contest around the "Island of Africa", the African Union has crafted the Africa Integrated Maritime Strategy 2050 which envisions a Combined Exclusive Maritime Zone of Africa and is working on fine-tuning the administrative tools to govern it, writes Cozens. It provides an ideal opportunity for India to get involved in helping Africa strengthen maritime security and work towards regional stability. The fact that India is seen as a non-hegemonic power and a friend of Africa needs to be leveraged by New Delhi. If India can double down on its NAM days approach of a partnership with Africa based on equality, mutual respect, and shared benefit, the slower pace of economic gains such a model offers when compared to the Chinese spray-and-pay approach would be offset by its potential longevity. As Ambassador Bhatia writes: "The Indian model of democracy with development moves at a slower pace but is more consultative, equitable, and inclusive."

A Wiser Path

Spiritual and cultural transformation brings peace. Inner and outer peace is needed to combat climate change. Inner peace changes the perspective towards humanity and treats the world as one family. Also, sharing and caring becomes part of basic nature. Inner peace leads to outer peace. Humanity with inner and outer peace would like to live in harmony with nature and with love for the world we inhabit



In 2022, as in recent years, we have experienced extreme heat waves worldwide. For example, some parts of India have seen temperatures reaching close to 50 degree Celsius. Meanwhile, in Europe also, many regions are facing exceptionally high spells of heat.

While this might be seen as an inconvenience, the knock-on effect is severe. We see droughts, wildfires, and devastating adverse effects on the agricultural community, and this will, of course, hit the food supply chain right up to the consumer. The cause, as we all know, is climate change. And the time for action is now.

Although I believe that all those who grace this planet owe it to themselves and those around them to leave it better than they found it, I also believe that individuals can only yield incremental improvements.

For significant and long-lasting improvements, we require States and Governments to collaborate and engage with the public and society.

As demand for energy rises globally, there is a growing need for tapping alternate energy sources that are greener, renewable, and plentiful in supply. Hydrogen is one such source that has a much higher energy output per unit mass.

India's advantage due to its geographical location, climate conditions, and abundance of renewable energy sources like solar, wind, and hydro make it ideal for becoming the world's cheapest hydrogen hub by 2030.

However, there are several

challenges regarding the cost of production with available technologies to meet the energy needs of the world population using green hydrogen in the near future.

Technologies are not proven for large-scale production, electrolyser production capacities are limited, hydrogen transportation is expensive, and storage requires very high pressure.

The use of hydrogen in various applications needs technological innovations. Carbon capture and its use are under development and expensive. The climate crisis needs an immediate solution as the world cannot afford to wait till 2030 or 2050. There is an existential crisis now. Ancient wisdom also offers solutions to climate change. Drawing from this,

Prime Minister Narendra Modi said, "change in lifestyle and to follow circular economy is the solution for climate change."

An environment-conscious lifestyle is needed, one that focuses on mindful and deliberate utilisation instead of mindless and destructive consumption.

The global community needs to follow the principle of reducing, reusing and recycling. This should become a part of culture and lifestyle.

As Mahatma Gandhi famously said, "The world has en-

ough for everyone's need, but not enough for everyone's greed."

Prof James Gustave Speth, a world-renowned researcher in the United States of America, expressed these truisms:

* I used to think the top environmental problems were biodiversity loss, ecosystem collapse, and climate change;

* I thought that with 30 years of

good science, we could address those problems;

* But I was wrong. The top environmental problems are selfishness, greed, and apathy, and to deal with those, we need a spiritual and cultural transformation, and we scientists don't know how to do that.

Spiritual and cultural transformation brings peace. Inner and outer

peace is needed to combat climate change. Inner peace changes the perspective towards humanity and treats the world as one family. Also, sharing and caring becomes part of basic nature. Inner peace leads to outer peace. Humanity with inner and outer peace would like to live in harmony with nature and with love for the world we inhabit.

Unfortunately, world leaders go on talking about peace, but they prepare for war. They say we are preparing for the world to preserve peace.

Their positions though are most irrational because to maintain peace, one should prepare for peace.

Leaders would need to learn to be more compassionate and have greater understanding of peace. Peace can better be achieved through yoga and meditation. World leaders with meditative minds can govern with simple living and high thinking.

On the other hand, the world is at a crossroads on to how to get rid of fossil fuels such as coal.

It is a fact that several billion dollars have been spent to suck each and every drop of fossil fuel with innovative technologies in the last few couple of centuries.

To develop altogether new technologies for renewable energy, particularly, in the form of green hydrogen, is a challenge no single company or country can achieve in a reasonable period of time by itself.

Advanced economies will have to join hands to develop new technologies for carbonless energy at an economically viable cost. Undoubtedly, production of green hydrogen would pave new paths and explore new avenues in containing climate change concerns but replacing fossil fuels with green hydrogen will still take time. Here, the ancient wisdom of the East and the legacies of Mahatma Gandhi and Buddha are needed to be pursued simultaneously with the development of innovative technologies for carbonless energy, to mitigate climate change, on a war footing.

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Ready to scale new heights

Iraq and China enjoy long-standing historical communications and well-established friendship. The ancient Chinese civilization and the Mesopotamian civilization came across each other and got acquainted with each other via the ancient Silk Road, with lots of stories about friendly exchanges between the two countries recorded in historical documents. Bilateral relations have maintained sound development with friendly exchanges at all levels since the countries established diplomatic relations in 1958. In December 2015, China and Iraq established a strategic partnership. For more than a century, the Communist Party of China has united and led the Chinese people in working tirelessly to make earth-shaking changes to the nation, with extraordinary historic achievements in economic, social, technological and cultural development that attract worldwide attention.

In uniting and leading the Chinese people in the tenacious struggle, the CPC, always with foresight and sagacity, has been paying high attention to following the tide of the times. Following an arduous journey through hardships and adversity, China has made the historic achievement of eliminating absolute poverty and

CHINADAILY
building a moderately prosperous society in all respects.

Today, China is dedicated to promoting high-quality economic growth to allow all people to benefit more fairly and thoroughly from the fruits of growth and to fulfill Chinese people's aspirations for a better life. China and other developing nations share vast common interests and have a solid foundation for further boosting cooperation. When handling its relations with the Middle Eastern countries, China has always attached great significance to regional security and stability.

As a friendly partner of the Middle Eastern countries, China has been supporting regional countries in solving their security issues with solidarity and collaboration, and in independently exploring their own development paths in accordance with their national conditions. China has been carrying out cooperation with the Middle Eastern countries in various fields including infrastructure construction, science and technology, economy and trade and striving for common development.

Furthermore, China has been vigorously assisting African countries' development, setting a good example for international cooperation with Africa. China proposed the Belt and Road Initiative in 2013, in an attempt to inherit and carry forward the Silk Road spirit and to bestow new connotations of the times to the ancient Silk Road.

PERSONAL

THANK You St. Jude for clear reports.
— D.S.



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

editor@thestatesman.com

Virtue more critical than success

SIR, "Success redefined" (30 & 31 August) by Arvind Saxena is the need of the hour to make this world a better place to live for a much longer period of time.

Success comes from experience, experience comes from mistakes. A man of virtue is better than a man of success. "Success" is external, dependent on others and determined by socio-economic criteria.

"Virtue" is internal, independent of others and not determined by socio-economic criteria. Instead of striving to become a "successful man" one should strive to become a "virtuous man".

For example, a rich man without virtue is universally considered as successful, whereas a poor man with virtue is universally considered as unsuccessful.

According to this criteria, the ambition to become successful is the root cause of the current crisis in almost every aspect of life – particularly environmental pollution and natural resource depletion, the very base of civilisations.

Success defined by achievement, ambition and recognition mainly determined by materials and money are unethical, unde-

sirable and harmful.

A modest living with ambition of reaching the pinnacle of Maslow's need hierarchy pyramid – from meeting the "basic needs of survival" to the "ultimate need of self actualisation" should be the goal of human beings, not the success as believed.

Entrepreneurship – the process of introducing a

new product, new method of production or new method of marketing involving risks – is considered as one of the universal ways of earning a profit to become successful. But distinction must be made between macro and micro-entrepreneurship. Macro-entrepreneurship, based on capitalism with environmental pollution and natural resource

depletion, must be discouraged and banned.

Instead, micro-entrepreneurship based on socialism without environmental pollution and natural resource depletion must be encouraged and promoted.

A radical change in the way success is defined and cherished will go a long way in solving the crisis the world is facing.



The political leaders, governments and citizens must change their mind set and strive towards achieving a "contented life" rather than a "successful life".

Yours, etc.,
Dr Samares Kumar Das,
Imphal, 12 September

MAMATA S CRISIS

SIR, Is Mamata Banerjee facing a crisis? A PIL has been filed, seeking investigation into the properties, movable and immovable, that have been accumulated in the name of her siblings. Her nephew, Avhishek Banerjee, received a notice from a central agency to appear before the agency officials to clarify his position in financial scams.

The agency is learnt to have collected corroborative evidence, allegedly enough to implicate him in financial irregularities.

The arrests of two heavyweights, like Partha Chatterjee and Anubrata, have quite obviously destabilized the CM's mental tranquillity and forced her to utter ravings in public as well as at press conferences.

Apprehending disgraceful consequences, she has started narrating her simple life-style to make people believe that she cannot be accused of any scam and is quite ignorant of alleged money-laundering her min-

ROAD SAFETY

SIR, Some of the Indian Highways are really dangerous and the attitude of the driver is more important than the sophistication of the vehicle.

The unfortunate death of the business tycoon Cyrus Mistry in a road accident is shocking. Sadly, India tops the world in terms of number of persons killed in road accidents every year. Better road safety should be ensured by all means. Driving recklessly (crossing the speed limit and overtaking) can really cause an irreparable loss. For their own safety, the passengers on the back seats must also use seatbelts.

Yours, etc.,
Dr Sunil Chopra,
Ludhiana, 6 September

isters and some party leaders have indulged in.

She thus, tries to hoodwink the people of the State as well as the country, pretending to be innocent of all such scams that have been continuing for years. Absence of her usual vitriolic and vindictive words and her pallid face speak a lot.

Yours, etc.,
Tapas Kumar Das,
Asansol, 2 September.

Kharkiv gives Ukraine reason to hope

FRANK LEDWIDGE

Most people outside Ukraine, even military analysts, have never heard of Oleksander Syrski. But Colonel General Syrski has a claim to being the most successful general of the 21st century so far. The success of this week's operation in eastern Ukraine – which he commanded – amounts to the most significant Ukrainian victory of the war so far, alongside the 57-year-old military commander's defeat of Russian forces before the gates of Kyiv in March.

Tactically, the assault towards Kupiansk and Izium was a well-planned and superbly executed strike at a weakly held part of the Russian lines. The success can partially be attributed to poor Russian and excellent Ukrainian intelligence.

A Ukrainian official commented: "They are blind, we see everything." It is likely that this was at least in part due to Ukraine taking temporary control of the air by destroying Russian radars and using their German-supplied Gephard anti-aircraft systems to shoot down their aircraft and drones.

The long-term telegraphing of the (successful and continuing) operation to retake Kherson in the south of Ukraine resulted in Russian commanders redeploying considerable forces to defend that sector. This served to thin out already over-stretched lines in the east.

All of this was followed by a swift combined arms strike, integrating tanks, infantry, artillery and air power in overwhelming force which



would have been considered a success had it only taken the vital supply base at Kupiansk. It has gone far further than that, with the even more important node of Izum now in Ukrainian hands.

In the face of this assault the Russians are in disarray and their military is running severely short of options, with all available forces committed to what amounts to fire-fighting, where the fire looks to be getting out of control.

The best the Russians can hope for is to try to consolidate their defences on the banks of the broad Oskil River in the east of the Kharkiv oblast and hope the Ukrainians pause to allow their logistics to catch up. The Kharkiv offensive has great significance off the battlefield. Vladimir Putin's imperial dreams of taking the whole country have evaporated. And retaking the key towns of Izum and Kupiansk has even compromised Russia's ability to hold captured territory in the Donetsk

oblast, which had become Putin's declared basic objective.

Across the Russian media there is generalised gloom. Even among Russia's cheerleaders there is a sense of anger and some desperation, including (or especially) among the most nationalist voices.

Igor Girkin – the pro-Russian commander of the breakaway so-called "Donetsk People's Republic" during the 2014–2015 campaign in Donbas and an influential and well-connected blogger – takes the view that: "We have already lost, the rest is just a matter of time."

Away from Russia, those countries who do not oppose the Kremlin (Putin has few allies) will be reassessing whether they have backed a loser. This especially includes China, whose leader Xi Jinping has met Putin this week.

On the other side, Ukrainians have been hearing their president, Volodymyr Zelensky, talk about liberating all of Ukraine's lost lands.

Now they believe it – and they are not alone. The offensive has demonstrated conclusively to western donors that Ukraine is capable of complex combined operations to retake its territory.

This is important. It is one thing to use complex equipment such as HIMARS rocket launchers effectively in small numbers. It's quite another to organise thousands of weapons systems in combination with tens of thousands of troops in fast-moving combat.

Allies and donors can now be confident that Ukrainian commanders are capable of using western aid not only in defence but, crucially, also in operations to retake land. In doing so, the narrative of Ukrainian success is firmly re-established in international media. This is vital for keeping the country's situation high on government agendas.

All of this asks questions of western strategy, which until now was predicated on weakening Russia and preventing Ukrainian defeat. Ukraine has now demonstrated that there is a real possibility to impose strategically significant costs on the invaders – and eventually defeat them.

The dilemma for Joe Biden and European leaders is whether to reinforce success and double down. The war is nowhere near over. One-fifth of Ukraine's territory is still under occupation, the criminal nature of which becomes ever clearer when the territory is retaken and atrocities revealed.

Syrski's boss, chief of staff of the Ukrainian armed forces General Valery Zaluzhnyi, recently co-authored an article asking how far

Ukraine's military ambitions should extend in 2023 and assessing what Ukraine will need from its partners to achieve them.

He sees the focus for Ukraine's operations as Crimea. The means for retaking Crimea, he says, are to be "ten to 20 combined military brigades" representing about 60,000 fully-equipped combat troops armed with modern western equipment.

Zaluzhnyi observes the essential and continuing disparity between Russia's weapons, which can – and regularly do – strike deep into Ukrainian territory, and those of the defenders which have only one-tenth the range. Ukraine needs the capability to threaten or impose costs deep into Russia if the war is not to go on and on. While that disparity continues, he argues, and given the nature of the Russian regime, the war could go on indefinitely no matter how much territory Ukraine has recaptured recently. Facing an all-out war wherein Ukraine is effectively defending the west, full-scale support is required, not simply replacement of losses.

Will the west have the courage to back him up? Last week, Zaluzhnyi's article would have seemed a quixotic fantasy. Now, with the blitzkrieg liberation of most of the Kharkiv oblast, and the obviously abject and ramshackle state of the Russian armed forces made even more apparent, Ukrainian victory looks truly achievable for the first time.

The writer is senior Lecturer in Military Strategy and Law, University of Portsmouth. This article was published on www.theconversation.com

100 YEARS AGO

OCCASIONAL NOTE

In Burma as well as in India the possibilities of hydro-electric development have occupied attention, and a glowing picture of these possibilities has just been laid before the Rangoon public by Mr. C. Mark Seymour, who has been engaged in investigations of the subject for some time past. If all Mr. Seymour's ideas could be realised, his scheme for utilising the waters of the Yunzalin river would make Rangoon a transformed city. The supply of power for industries is only one of the benefits foreseen. Other prospects suggested include the provision of a new and abundant source of water supply for Rangoon and for other places also; the electrification of railways; the lighting of streets and roads; a new system of sewage disposal, and other incidental benefits. One cannot but fear that Mr. Seymour is protesting too much, and that when the cost of his proposals comes to be counted his glowing visions will need to be considerably modified. Still, if Rangoon could only get a cheap supply of power for industries and lighting to begin with, this would be sufficient to command any promising scheme to the serious consideration of all concerned. Considering what has been done in Bombay and elsewhere, we certainly need not take a pessimistic view of any well-thought-out project for the development of hydroelectric power where conditions are

NEWS ITEMS

favourable.

MYSTIC ARRESTED FOR ALLEGED MURDER

Frank Katoshe, the Russian Mystic, whose lectures caused such a sensation in New York, has been arrested at Norbergen, New Jersey, accused of practicing witchcraft and causing the death of one woman and driving another insane. The accusations are brought by Mr. Emil Sabo at whose house Katoshe boarded. Katoshe is alleged to have fallen in love with Sabo's daughter, but she rejected his suit. He then left the house, after putting a "spell" on the girl, telling her that she would soon become insane. Miss Sabo's bedroom window was smashed one night about two months later and a man's head and outstretched arms, covered with blood, appeared in the aperture. The girl received such a mental shock that she became violently insane and had to be removed to Laurel Hill Asylum. The doctors now declare her condition to be hopeless.

PASTEUR INSTITUTE AT SHILLONG

The fifth annual report of the King Edward VII Memorial Pasteur Institute, Shillong, for the year ending December 31, 1921, states: The number of patients who completed treatment during the year was 1,455 consisting of 105 Europeans and 1,650 Indians. Twenty-seven patients discontinued treatment as the dog which bit them was alive and well; 6 left without completing treatment; and one died of pneumonia during treatment. The total deaths from hydrophobia among the cases treated numbered 15. Of these eight died during or within fifteen days of completion of treatment and are not recorded as failures of treatment. No cases of hydrophobia occurred among the Europeans treated. Advice was given to 120 people in whose cases treatment was not considered necessary.

DACCA UNIVERSITY COURT

DACCA, SEPT 16
The Dacca University Court, which is still sitting, has recommended the appointment of a committee, consisting of seven members of the court, to investigate the question of the lapse of a portion of the university grant. The recommendations of the Budget Committee are being considered. Among other things, the Court has accepted the recommendation that, on the expiry of the present term of the Vice-Chancellor, his salary should not exceed Rs 2,500 a month. It has also accepted the recommendations regarding new scales of salaries for professors, readers and lecturers. These are as follows: Professor Rs 600-50-1,250 a month, reader Rs 400-50-800 a month, lecturer Rs 250-25-500 a month.

STABILISING THE RUBBER INDUSTRY

LONDON, SEPT 16
At a meeting at the office of the Rubber Growers' Association, Mr. E.B. Davis, of New York, explained that he advocated a scheme for the formation of a big international company for the stabilisation of the rubber industry, and he declared that if the leaders of the industry, or a substantial proportion, were able to get together here they would receive ample support from the United States. It was finally decided further to examine the proposal at another meeting on September 20, on condition that the participants were not committed to endorsing the scheme. Mr. Davis is attend-

SATURDAY INTERVIEW

Public health our main concern'

Bhupinder Singh Bhalla is a 1990-batch IAS officer. He was serving as additional chief secretary (home) of Delhi when he was picked by the Centre to become the new chairperson of the New Delhi Municipal Council (NDMC). Anjali Bhatia caught up with him to find out his priorities and challenges.

Q. Recently, the New Delhi Municipal Council (NDMC) has increased the health license fee. Will it not affect health providers adversely as they are already down after the pandemic and business is slowly picking up?

A: Well the health license fee is increased every financial year based on WPI (wholesale price index) which is provided by the Finance Department. The same process has been followed since F.Y. 2018-19 based on Council Resolution No 16(E-06) Dated 23.08.2018. Even during the Covid period for the F.Y. 2020-21 and 2021-22, the Health License fee was increased based on WPI.

Besides, there are around 10 trades where there is no increase in the health license fee. There are more than 10 trades where there is an increase in health license fees between Rs 0 and 200 per annum. There are some trades where there is an increase in health license fees between Rs 200 and 400 per annum. There are around 10 trades where there is an increase in health license fees between Rs 500 and 1,000 per annum. There are two trades where there is an increase in health license fees between Rs 1,000 and 4,000 (restaurant and lodging houses) per annum. There is one trade (5-star hotels) where there is an increase in health license fees between Rs 1,000 and 4,000 per annum. The monthly increase in health license fee comes out to be between Rs 0 and 9,800 (i.e. the maximum increase is Rs 9,800 per annum) and Rs 0 and 1,441/month only. The increase in fees is therefore not likely to create any adverse effect as not all but very few trades would come in that slab.

Q. The NDMC hiked the renewal fees rather sharply. What do you have to say about that?

A: The maximum hike in the license fee is for five-star hotels, which were earlier paying Rs 65,500 and will now be required to pay Rs 75,300. Similarly, guest houses with over 100 beds will have to shell out Rs 30,100 annually instead of the earlier Rs 26,200. The annual license fee for butchers, fishmongers, and poulterers has been increased from Rs 1,300 to Rs 1,500.

The fee for guest houses up to 20 beds has been increased to Rs 3,000 from Rs 2,600; Rs 7,500 instead of Rs 6,500 for those with 21-50 beds; Rs 15,000 instead of Rs 13,100 for 50-100 bedded facilities.

While cafes and coffee shops with up to 50 seats will be required to pay Rs 7,500 instead of Rs 6,500, restaurants and coffee shops with more than 50 seats will be required to pay Rs 15,000 which was previously Rs 13,100. Cinema halls, dancing halls in hotels, clubs, and spas will have to pay Rs 7,500 instead of Rs 6,500. There will not be any increase in laundry services, boilers, diesel generator sets, hawkers, chef carts, dry cleaners, etc.

Q. There is a chronic problem of hawkers in New Delhi. Many times their shacks are demolished leading to losses. Don't you think there should be some way to solve this problem by giving them a proper space and license which would regularise their livelihood?

A: Enforcement NDMC is working hard to implement the provisions of the Street Vendors Act at the earliest so that all eligible vendors are given their rights as per law and any unnecessary harassment is avoided.

Q. Drinking water supply in the NDMC area is reduced by up to 60 per cent. This was reported by a civic body member to Delhi CM. Indeed, the NDMC area is having scarce potable water, nearly 50-60 per cent this summer. What steps are you taking to resolve this problem?



A: Well, from 15 May to 15 July 2022, the water supply in the NDMC area was very erratic. Against the minimum requirement of 125 MLD water at one point in time, the supply was around 60-70 MLD. At present, the supply is almost normal. To overcome the crises, the NDMC ensured the maximum possible potable water to its residents through water tankers. We are working on this issue but the magnitude of the problem is such that it will indeed take some time to eliminate it altogether.

Q: Are you in favour of increasing the penalty for breeding mosquitoes on the premises to fight dengue/malaria by ten times? Would it not be harsh on people and shouldn't the NDMC become more proactive in monsoon given the instances of water logging and other monsoon-related problems like the malfunctioning of street lights, signal lights, etc?

A: Public health is our primary concern and we would like to ensure that Delhi is kept safe from the spread of diseases. NDMC Council in its meeting on May 25, 2022, has already recommended that the penalty as mentioned under section 390 of the New Delhi Municipal Council Act, 1994 may be revised. Wherever the words "five hundred" and "twenty"

occur, they are to be substituted "by an amount as may be resolved by the Council from time to time". No proposal for increasing the penalty has been approved by the NDMC. Portable and permanent pumps have already been installed at all vulnerable points to avoid waterlogging. In addition to the above, six control rooms have been set up with manpower and tools and machinery for emergency response 24x7.

Q. Members of the NDMC have been interacting with the public grievance monitoring systems. The NDMC is organising camps with the residents of the NDMC for the speedy redressal of their grievances. Tell us more about it and how successful are such drives?

A: Camps have been organised by the NDMC since November 2018 as an interactive grievance redressal mechanism as well as a forum for providing information regarding various developmental initiatives of the NDMC. The purpose of the camp is to provide an instant grievance redressal mechanism to the residents and service users as well as employees of the NDMC. It provides an opportunity for the officials as well as the public to have a face-to-face interaction to resolve grievances. Our experience tells us such camps are extremely helpful and go a long way

in improving our services and connecting us to the citizens of Delhi

Q: Do tell us about your plans to make Delhi safer?

A: To make Delhi safe, especially for women, the NDMC is in the process of providing comprehensive pedestrian lighting on all roads. The feed from the CCTV cameras installed by the NDMC and monitored through its Command and Control Centre serve as an additional resource for the law and enforcement agencies.

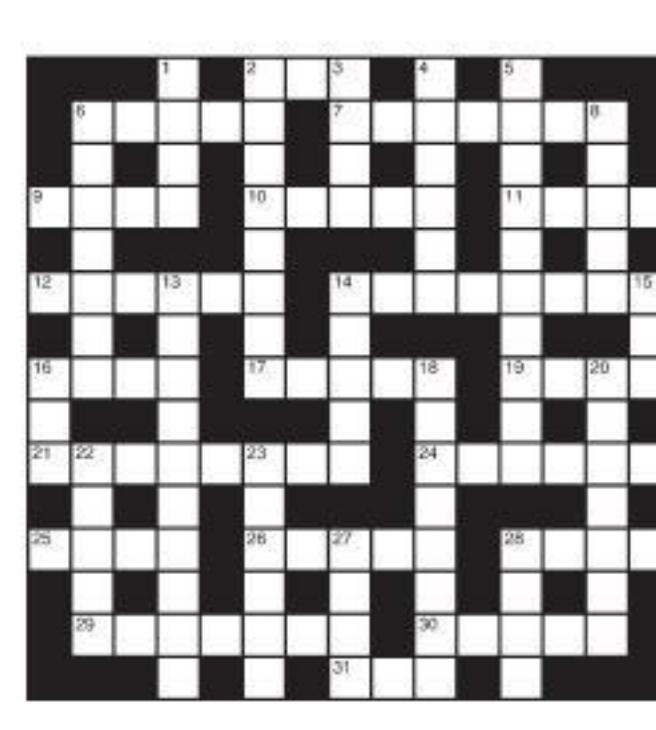
Q. What are your plans to make the NDMC more robust and effective in dealing with the problems of New Delhi?

A: We have to prepare for the future now. The challenges are many so our approach must be multi-pronged. To begin with, we are introducing NDMC 311 app/a toll-free number. To ensure women's safety we would replace the remaining light fittings with Smart LEDs and all light poles would be barcoded and geo-tagged. Citizens would be able to scan the barcode and upload a complaint about its non-functioning through the 311 app. We are also formulating a new solar policy. Also, there is a plan to implement rooftop solar power generation on all NDMC buildings. We are going to have state-of-art garbage disposal in place. All bins would be having unique IDs and barcode/QR-coded time of cleaning would be uploaded on the 311 app besides there would be RFID tag-based monitoring of door-to-door waste collection. All NDMC schools would have facilities for career counselling and sports facilities would be optimally designed. We are going to introduce drip irrigation in public parks. We are going to build cycle tracks for better public health.

To facilitate the property owners we shall change the annual cycle of property tax collection so that assessment is completed by April/May. We are also going to make Delhi differently-abled friendly in all government buildings and on all key roads, major public markets and nearby areas.

NO 292194

CROSSWORD



ACROSS

- 2 Worried — loathe having to leave hospital (3)
- 6 Note black Republican brought to First Lady (5)
- 7 Absolute Armada man taking ships (7)
- 9 Storm god not lacking in heart (4)
- 10 Love place to sunbathe avoiding cold spells (5)
- 11 Music scene wants backer in the circle (4)
- 12 Re-do it, emended for this boss? (6)
- 14 Fearsome shot with bowler receiving credit? (8)
- 16 Woodcutter advertising verbally (4)
- 17 Saw an early machine-gun (5)
- 19 Evaluation for Shell (4)
- 21 Purchase intact or otherwise (8)
- 24 Run joint and cause resentment (6)
- 25 Person's body sent back shortly (4)
- 26 Gather fuel — litres taken within (5)
- 28 Northern banker in St Helens occasionally (4)
- 29 Online movement generates strong feeling (7)
- 30 Somewhat wet old film shown outside (5)
- 31 Excellent service (3)

DOWN

- 1 Church officer, maybe Manx speaker (4)
- 2 Answer with blood, written up, and sign letter (8)
- 3 Rest in peace as expired (4)
- 4 Bacon slice monarch spots first (6)
- 5 Bird with nests in stylish home (4,6)
- 6 Bewhiskered and brave little 12 (7)
- 8 Trying experience in revolutionary state (5)
- 13 Condition of companion following ducks into river (6,4)
- 14 Dismiss boy speaking German (5)
- 15 Speed reduced in desert (3)
- 16 Fine to abandon truth in law passed (3)
- 18 Setter's engaged in
- 22 Flyer delivered by estate supervisor (5)
- 23 Maybe demonic look causes damage (6)
- 27 Regularly seen Neptunian feature that saves lava (4)
- 28 Hard one to stop 28 across producing puzzle? (4)

NOTE: Figures in parentheses denote the number of letters in the words required. (By arrangement with The Independent, London)



THE GOAN EVERYDAY

The best and most beautiful things in the world cannot be seen or even touched - they must be felt with the heart
Helen Keller

Oh God, BJP let down Digambar in his first test

The Congress-turned-BJP MLA Digambar Kamat faced a major humiliation after the BJP-backed candidate suffered a surprise defeat in the keenly-watched election of the chairperson of the Margao Municipal Council on Friday. In an unexpected turnaround, the BJP-backed councillors, who were clearly in the majority, cross-voted to give Vijai Sardessai's panel-backed candidate Ganashyam Shirodkar an overwhelming win. As a result, the hopes of the BJP holding the reins of power of the civic body after 17 long years have been blown apart.

The election assumed political significance because it came two days after eight Congress legislators, including Kamat, switched sides to the BJP amid a wave of anger and outrage among the electorate. While the merger of the breakaway faction took place and the Congress MLAs saddled themselves in the BJP ranks, there were questions over acceptability and compatibility between ground-level workers, even as murmurs of dissent in the saffron camps were growing louder.

The chairperson's election amplified the fact that cadres and party workers may not always be in sync with State-level politics. In the case of the MMC chairperson's election, the BJP group appeared a clear winner on paper. However, the political undercurrents could be felt as Chief Minister Pramod Sawant rushed to Margao and held elaborate meetings to clear differences and bring together the BJP and Digambar camps. Eventually, none of that worked, not even assurances given by the councillor to Sawant. The CM had to eat a humble pie since he had announced his confidence that the BJP panel would win with a clear majority.

The sudden marriage of convenience between the BJP and now-turned-saffron Kamat has been rejected, at least by the workers. The result reflects the mood within the BJP and has sent a clear message that the rank and file of parties may not change based on how politicians change colours. Moreover, the hollowness of acceptability of the change stands exposed.

The Congress, which has been severely crippled and reduced to three MLAs, will find some solace in the Margao development because this could rekindle their revival plans. Congress Goa in-charge Dinesh Gundi Rao's tweet of a congratulatory message to Goa Forward Chief Vijai Sardesai and a telephone call to the winning candidate Ganashyam not only reflect the mood but also goes to show how closely this election was monitored.

On the flip side, the CM called all the BJP councillors to Panaji and took a review showing that he meant business. Understandably, this is an embarrassment to the CM too. But for their tough political posturing and transactional politics, BJP may be knocking on the municipality's door again, and we may soon hear of Ganashyam ousted in a no-confidence move. But that's for another day.

The civic defeat has set the tone, and these are warning signs that the BJP will have to deal with as they move on with a new set of Congress-turned-saffron legislators. For now, it's time for Kamat to reconcile with political uncertainties and first find peace in the new ecosystem he has landed in.

OPEN SPACE >>

Goa has now got a new breed of politicians

Devels quoting the Holy Scriptures is old hat, a species that we had all heard of. But devils seeking and getting God's counsel and backing is a new breed altogether, emerging on the blessed soil of Goa.

Digambar Kamat -- "our" Digu who seems to be in direct line of evolution from Lucifer of the Dark Age -- is a recently discovered specimen here. He claims to have spoken to God and was given the green signal to defect by Him.

Digambar is very much alive and kicking. Will this former Chief Minister please share with us the channels of communication or the phone number so that we all can also have an audience with the Almighty? He, together with the others, should realise that Goans are no fools and that God's brunt will visit them for doing what they did.

Unfortunately the families of these eight will also have to live with the curses of the voters who have been cheated and taken for a ride, and await divine wrath. Thou shall not take God's name in vain -- certainly not to cover diabolical deals. God's justice may not be long in coming.

AIRES RODRIGUES, Ribandar

Cleanup operation for a clean coast & safe sea

The common man's involvement is needed to spread the message of a clean coast and safe sea for the socioeconomic prosperity of the country



»Dr. Luis is a senior Scientist working at NCPOR, Sada, and a freelancer from Taleigão

DR ALVARINHO J LUIS

International Coastal Cleanup Day is celebrated on September 17 to raise awareness about the growing pollution on the beaches. The main causes of pollution are human activities like industry, urbanisation, agriculture, aquaculture, and tourism.

The contaminants that are most frequently discovered on the beaches, coming from both point and nonpoint sources, are plastics, discarded fishing equipment, footwear, glass, food wrappers, beverage cans, cigarettes/cigarette filters tyres, and organic compounds.

Beach litter comes from land via the river runoff during monsoon, while in the fair weather season it comes mostly for tourism, shoreline and recreational activities such as picnicking and beach-going activities. About 80% of litter is generated onshore, while the rest comes from offshore sources. Marine trash is found all over the world and poses a growing hazard to our ecology. It frequently finds its way to the sea and eventually into the oceans. While the trash component that sinks stays in the sediments for many years, the suspended portion is regularly washed ashore.

Over the past 60 years, annual plastic manufacturing has grown significantly, from 1.5 million tonnes in the 1950s to 288 million tonnes in 2012, with roughly two-thirds of production taking place in East Asia, Europe, and North America. Single-use, disposable packaging makes about one-third of all global output and is often thrown away within a year. According to current estimates, between 4.8 and 12.7 million tonnes of plastic waste entered the marine environment in 2010 result of our carefree or throwaway culture and lifestyle. Due to their durability and inherent or acquired toxicity, plastic materials pose a specific threat.

Discarded plastics break down into millions of tiny particles known as microplastics, which are more likely to be ingested by a variety of marine animals, including primary producers and higher trophic level organisms, and to enter food webs.

Plastics can be chemically harmful to marine life, either because they are themselves potentially toxic or can absorb other toxic pollutants. In aquatic



IMPACTS OF MARINE DEBRIS ON MARINE AND COASTAL BIODIVERSITY

Marine debris has an impact on more than 800 marine and coastal species through habitat changes, ingestion, entanglement, ghost fishing, and rafting. Ingestion of, or entanglement with, marine debris -- which includes the results of ghost fishing -- affects more than 500 marine and coastal species.

The number of seabird and marine mammal species that are ingesting or becoming entangled in marine debris is rapidly increasing.

Preventing objects from becoming debris in the first place is a crucial strategy for dealing with marine debris. The most efficient way to lessen the effects of debris on marine and coastal biodiversity is commonly considered to be source prevention, which involves a variety of actions and strategies. Given the severity of the issue, cleaning up beach debris is a viable option to a limited area. It is especially impractical to remove microplastics from water or sediments.

Beach litter sampling was conducted between October 2013 and January 2014 and the results were published in the journal of the Marine Biological Association of India.

Goa beaches the highest quantity (205.75 g/m²) of beach debris. Grouped into categories, nylon nets/fishing lines (group A) registered highest mean (75.67 g/m²) in Goa. In group B plastics (single use carry bags and sachets of soft drinks, edible oils, detergents, beverages, cases of cosmetics, toothpaste, PET bottles, ice cream containers etc.) recorded highest mean of 25.47 g/m² from Goa coast.

As for group C (foot wear and plastic-foam slippers), highest mean of 57.87 g/m² was reported from Karnataka beaches.

Likewise, electric bulbs and glass bottles mostly of alcoholic beverages and aerated drinks (group D) also registered highest mean of 68.15 g/m² in Goa.

The study classifies Indian beaches and found that heavily littered beaches (debris >100 g/m²) were found in Karnataka, Goa, Gujarat, and Andaman Islands.

Although the consequences on ocean ecosystems and processes are not yet known, microplastics are also giving microbial species in the oceans a new habitat. Although studies conducted in the lab have suggested that plastics containing dangerous compounds may be harmful to marine organisms' health, this phenomenon has not been amply demonstrated in the marine environment.

A WAY FORWARD

The "Swachh Sagar, Surakshit Sagar" is a 75-day citizen-led campaign (from July 3 to September 17) for improving ocean health through cleanup. In Goa, the MoES-National Centre for Polar and Ocean Research (NCPOR), Indian Coast Guard, Mormugão Port Authority, Indian Oil Corporation, and other organisations will participate in the beach clean-up drive. The common man's involvement is to spread the message of a clean coast and safe sea for the socioeconomic prosperity of the entire country.

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The number of seabird and marine mammal species that are ingesting or becoming entangled in marine debris is rapidly increasing

THE INBOX >>

Constitution of India needs amendment

Indian constitution is one of the most recognised and adaptable constitution. The preamble is beautifully drafted but in practical it is not implemented.

The constitution also provides the age limit for various posts held in the government. However there is need for restrictions on candidate age for filing nominations for elections whether it is panchayat or Assembly. There is age limit for state government employees, central government employees and other public sector employees, however there is no age limit for contesting elections.

It is high time that our constitution provides age limit for contesting both panchayat and state assembly elections. Today even after 70 yrs one can contest elections irrespective of health status or capacity to deliver to the people. If there can be restrictions on workers in state government offices, central government and other public sector employees, teachers etc why there should be no cut off age to elections?

It's high time that age limit is fixed upto 55 years for those contesting elections.

RAJU RAMAMURTHY, Vasco

Operation Lotus blooms in Goa

Congress leaders switching to BJP saying 'Congress Chhodo, BJP Jodo' is unfortunate. The defecting MLAs said they were unhappy with the Congress leadership. The Congress is presently reduced to just 3 MLAs in a house of 40. Defections are not just a betrayal of people's mandate, but denigration and mockery of God. These legislators have decided, against all political propriety, basic decency and honesty, to pursue their greed for wealth

KG VILOP, Chorao

Cops can work better if given a free hand

The Goa Police reportedly cracked the kidnapping and robbing case of a bank at Kerli within 24 hours and arrested three of the five accused involved in the crime.

The police have managed to recover most of the robbed cash and gold from the accused. Eight teams of police from both the districts gathered technical and local intelligence and managed to make the arrests.

However two of the accused are still at large. In another case two Bangladeshi nationals involved in the theft of ATMs of two banks at Ponda were arrested by the police from their hideout in Andhra Pradesh.

Police are reportedly on a hot pursuit of four more accused involved in the theft case. The Goa police need to be commended for the task that was accomplished in both the cases after putting in tremendous efforts.

It must be said that the police force can do wonders in cracking a case if given a free hand and without any political interference. While solving complicated cases in quick time and arresting the culprits it is also important to prevent crime. Preventing a crime could be considered difficult as the police cannot be at all places all the time. Hence preventive-arrests of anti-social elements, after gathering intelligence reports, assume significance. Extensive interrogation of those detained can lead to arrest of more criminals. As they say goes 'prevention is better than cure'.

ADELMO FERNANDES, Vasco

and hunger for power. This shameless act of undisguised disloyalty and treachery towards the very people who elected them will never be forgotten by the people of Goa.

And the greed for power is putting democracy at risk.

The original that the saffron party had been tommoring was a slogan was for a 'Congress mukt Bharat'. But since 2019, there is an obsessive drive for an 'Opposition mukt Bharat'. Defection should be prevented in order to stop such developments.

KG VILOP, Chorao

Send your letters to us at editor@thegoan.net. Letters must be 150-200 words and mention the writer's name and location

Same excuses from defectors again

Congratulations to the three Congress MLAs who refused to jump to the ruling party and for standing up for true democratic values.

My point of view for elections from the beginning was to focus on the particular person and not the party! That being said, most of the 8 defectors, particularly the seasoned ones, always carried that tag of dishonesty and despite this the Congress leadership was naive to trust them.

Most of the defectors say that they did so for the betterment of the people and for development.

If this is so, it would be better if the gang of 8 had to resign their seats and contest again. If not that, I find the reasons just to be lame excuses.

ARWIN MESQUITA, Colva

Goan politics has gone down the drain

Elections have become a joke not only in Goa but across the country. People elect candidates only to see them jumping to another party in the name of development.

But it is not so, development is only for themselves and their families.

This time the rumour mill has it that Rs 40 to 50 cr were given to the defectors.

Some of the defectors have also given different excuses. An interesting one was from Digambar Kamat who said he had spoken to God and He told him to go ahead and take whatever action he felt was right.

It is great that Kamat can talk directly to God. We only hope he asks God to give him better sense and not to do any wrong to our State in his ripe age.

RONNIE D'SOUZA, Chandor



Focus needed

FM should focus on poverty, unemployment & inflation, and refrain from politicking

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman is right in her assertion that India could have become the fifth biggest economy much earlier itself, but the philosophy of socialism with its reliance on centralised planning hurt the country. Speaking at an event on Thursday, she was also critical of the way liberalisation began in 1991 under the Congress government, calling it as 'aadhe-adhure reforms' (half-baked reforms). This, she said, was in accordance with the strictures imposed on the country by the International Monetary Fund. But no economic progress happened till the National Democratic Alliance government under Atal Bihari Vajpayee came to power in 1998, she said. But after him, Sitharaman said, a decade was lost when the Congress-led UPA ran the government. Evidently, this sad state of affairs ended with Narendra Modi assuming office in 2014 and initiating fundamental path-breaking reforms, including the direct benefit transfer scheme. While she is not wrong on many points, her assertions smack of political prejudice: this is the propaganda of the BJP rather than sound economic analysis.

To begin with the beginning, the 1991 reforms were done under duress, but nobody—except Leftists loitering in Jurassic Park—can today call liberalisation bad. Further, taking the right call during an acute crisis—which the then prime minister PV Narasimha Rao and finance minister Manmohan Singh—should be lauded, not denounced. Portraying the periods as glorious when the BJP is in power and other periods as dark when its rivals were, convinces only BJP supporters.

The NDA governments, under Vajpayee and now under Modi, have taken some good decisions. For instance, these governments have performed much better than the UPA government in reining in the fiscal deficit (For this, some credit also goes to Sitharaman). The NDA regimes are also credited with undertaking privatization, beginning with Vajpayee and furthered by Modi. Ditto with infrastructure development. It was Vajpayee who began the ambitious highways project; this, along with other aspects of infrastructure, is being carried forward with considerable zeal. But all is not hunky-dory about the economy. The recently released Human Development Report 2021-22 showed that India's rank fell from 130 in 2020 to 132 in 2021. As per the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) report, India's HDI value at 0.633 was lower than the world average of 0.732. The World Inequality Report 2022, released in December last year, said that India was among the most unequal countries in the world, with rising poverty and an affluent elite. The Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy has estimated the unemployment rate in August at 8.3 per cent, the highest in the past 12 months. Inflation is also not coming under control despite rate cuts. Sitharaman should focus on these trouble spots instead of indulging in politicking.

PIC TALK



A vendor sells fruits on the eve of 'Vishwakarma Puja', in Kolkata

Back in the game

Uddhav must be thankful to BJP for giving him an issue on the platter to stage a comeback

After the coup d'état in June by Shiv Sena's henchman, Eknath Shinde in connivance with the BJP, Uddhav Thackeray and his leftover party must have been in disarray especially when it's one of the most vocal members Sanjay Raut is in the custody of Enforcement Directorate. The jolt was so sudden and vigorous that it must have shaken the very foundation of the party. Its leaders looked clueless about how to fight it and make a comeback. That opportunity has come now and the party is in no mood to let it go. At the core is a multi-billion project that would give 100,000 jobs to the local people. The plant that was to come up in Maharashtra has been moved to Gujarat. The plant in question is a \$20 billion project for building semiconductors. It is a joint venture between Vedanta and Taiwanese company, Foxconn, and the biggest so far. Maharashtra was the chosen place for setting up the plant but it was shifted overnight to the neighbouring State of Gujarat which is to go to polls shortly, much to the consternation of Eknath Shinde and his team. The sudden change has not gone down well with the people of Maharashtra for two reasons. One the Marathi sentiment has been hurt and they feel discriminated against, and the second it is pure economic loss for them and the State alike. The project would have meant a 1,00,000 jobs in Maharashtra and a handsome revenue to the Government.

Uddhav's Shiv Sena has lapped up the opportunity and in all likelihood would make it a big issue in the upcoming Mumbai Municipal elections. They are appealing to "Marathi Manoos" for avenging this wrongdoing to their land. Aditya Thackeray is leading the fight from the front and is getting a good response. The slogan "outsiders looting the State" works like a charm in Maharashtra. Job creation has always been an emotional issue in the State. Besides, this is not the first time that a project has been stolen from Maharashtra and given to Gujarat. Earlier, the diamond market was shifted out of Mumbai to Gujarat which was frowned upon by the locals. It also puts Eknath Shinde and Devendra Fadnavis in a bad light for not protecting the interests of Maharashtra and playing second fiddle to Modi and Amit Shah. But they hardly have a say as the Gujarat model must flourish before elections in Gujarat. Eknath and his team can fend for themselves in the Mumbai's municipal election, the BMC, to be held shortly.



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Fight tyranny with Bibi Zainab's grit

An upright Imam Husain told humanity how to hold on to cherished values in front of tyrants; Bibi Zainab showed how to deal with them

In the history of mankind, there have been virtuous people with great missions who maintained righteousness in this world. Imam Husain, the grandson of Prophet Mohammad was a man par excellence who maintained the highest standards set by the heroes and martyrs of all times.

After 50 years of Prophet Mohammad's death, in 680 AD, a hardcore terrorist Yazid son of Muawiyah hijacked the temporal and administrative seat of the Islamic Caliphate through the might of a sword and compelled the gullible Muslims to acknowledge him as the Caliph and leader of the faithful.

Yazid then compelled Hazrat Imam Husain to subscribe to him as Caliph and Commander of the faithful. Husain straightway refused to acknowledge him as leader of the faithful knowing well that a hardened criminal, a great drunkard, libertine, and a mass murderer, the barest mention of whose objectionable character is taboo in this civilized society cannot be acknowledged as Caliph of Islam.

On the contrary, Husain was known throughout the Arab world for his wisdom, compassion, and piety. Husain refused Yazid's allegiance. He as the Prophet's grandson had to do his duty to save Islamic values against transgression and terrorism as Yazid was committed to defacing and disfiguring the true faith and then a pseudo-religion would emerge under the guise of Islam.

Husain preferred death with honour to living with humiliation, moral slavery, and shame.

On October 10, 680 A.D., in the sandy desert of Karbala after keeping thirsty and hungry for three days, Yazid brutally assassinated Imam Husain and 71 of his family members and near ones including the six months old son of Husain, the buoyancy of whose innocent blood, refloated the sinking ship of Islamic tenets.

After the massacre of 72, the bodies of the martyrs were trampled by horses, their heads were severed and mounted on spheres



including that of six-month-old Ali Asghar, the innocent infant son of Husain. The tents of Husain's family were torched. The innocent children, ladies, and the only surviving ailing son of Husain, Zain-ul-Abideen, hungry and thirsty for three days were made prisoners.

Yazid played another trick by not disclosing the real identity of the victims and falsely propagated that they were some outsiders who have been killed during the course of action against their oppression. People would have believed Yazid's false propaganda, had Bibi Zainab, Imam Husain's sister not exposed the black deeds of Yazid. Through her sermons, she introduced Husain and his mission to the masses.

Bibi Zainab's balance of mind, tolerance, patience, fearlessness, determination, and spiritual stamina under heavily burdened adverse circumstances, is beyond imagination, and deserves full credit for the exemplary courage and aplomb with which she handled the ugly and the most difficult situation.

During a short pause of the caravan, in the bazaar of Kufa's main cross-road, which

was fully conglomerated, illuminated, and reverberated with the sounds of Yazid's Army bands and marching contingents, Zainab through her bold and eloquent sermons in that very state of captivity, bound in chains, with the heart-rending spectacle of the severed heads of her brothers and children, Zainab points her finger from the tightened hands at the thronging spectators and delivered a brief but revolutionary speech. Within minutes, her sermons changed the tide and people came to know that the innocent prisoners being humiliated and tortured are no aggressors but the Holy family of the Prophet Mohammad.

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MOHAMMAD

Prophet for no fault of theirs! Oh, cowards! What a big blunder you have committed by assassinating the most innocent souls for no fault of theirs, just to please the most tyrant ruler Yazid. You have satisfied the vanity and ego of a maniac transgressor but have earned the displeasure and wrath of the Almighty, the Lord of retribution. Oh the destructors of truth, await the painful chastisement you deserve for."

When this persecuted caravan was brought to the court of Yazid, again Zainab delivered a sermon addressing Yazid, "O Yazid! By closing down all exits, imprisoning, chaining, and parading us without food and water from place to place, have you thought that you lowered our image and considered yourself to be a respectful person? Or you are under the wrong impression that the tragedy we met at your hands has elevated your status and therefore you are acting most arrogantly! Oh the son of our freed slaves, is this the justice? Time will teach you a bitter lesson."

(The writer is a legal journalist and author. The views expressed are personal.)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

MINORS' RAPE-MURDER IS HORRIBLE

Sir — The post-mortem report of two minor Dalit sisters who were found hanging from a tree has confirmed rape and then strangulation which caused the death. The report said that the bodies were hanged after their death. SP (Lakhimpur Kheri) Sanjeev Suman said that after the post-mortem and other formalities, the bodies have been handed over to the family. The sisters, who were murdered after rape, were strangled by the accused because they insisted that since they had been violated, the men marry them. Then the accused got angry and strangled them with their dupattas.

They later called two of their friends, who helped them hang the girls so that it looked like a suicide. The main accused, Chhotu, had allegedly introduced the girls to three others but was not present at the scene of crime. The three, who carried out the crime, and the two, who helped them in a cover-up attempt, are from another village close to the girls. All six have been booked for murder and rape, besides under the Protection of Children Against Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act. Since it was a pre-planned crime, the accused deserve capital punishment.

Bhagwan Thadani | Mumbai

CONGRESS' WOES FAR FROM OVER

Sir — Ironically, Congress' woes are far from over, given yet another desertion by eight of its 11 legislators in Goa on Wednesday. This disgruntled lot not only jumped the ship but also joined the BJP bandwagon. This unabating exodus of the leaders actually snatches on the Congress leadership's inability to keep its flock together and, that too, at this crucial juncture when its leader along with many confidants is on a 3500-km 'Bharat Jodo Yatra' with the view to retrieving the electoral glory his party would formerly enjoy in the country for decades.

Article 370 back in discussion



It may be recalled that former Congress leader Ghulam Nabi Azad had opined that Article 370 cannot be restored. So it can be assumed that Azad has realised that it is an exercise in futility to press for restoration of Article 370 that was incorporated on October 17, 1949. Pt Jawaharlal Nehru was adamant at giving special status to J&K. But BR Ambedkar had differed with him. Now Azad has softened his stand on Article 370, stating that it can be restored by Parliament or the

Supreme Court but not immediately. This statement has emanated because those favouring the Article's restoration are not in majority.

This contentious Article, which people had believed that the Government had no political will to abolish, was repealed and in doing so the NDA Government proved its mettle. PDP chief Mehbooba Mufti had expressed displeasure sometime back over the Supreme Court taking three years to make a mention of such a "sensitive issue" like Article 370. Meanwhile, Azad has made it clear that he would not promise restoration of Article 370. It is better if Farooq Abdullah, Omar Abdullah and Mehbooba Mufti stop brooding over the defunct Article. They would be doing well if they join hands with Azad in concentrating on developmental issues and think of serving the people of J&K better.

KV Seetharamaiah | Bengaluru

Going by media reports about the favourable response the Congress' ongoing odyssey is receiving, it is the last-ditch attempt for Rahul Gandhi to prove that he is no more from a crude breed of leaders but a matured one. The fact remains that the Machiavellian approach by political parties has become the new norm as every party eagerly longs to enjoy the fruits of power by hook or by crook. As a matter of fact, the Congress' ineptitude as much accounts for its leaders' continuing exodus from the party as do the BJP's Chanakyan tactics.

Azhar A Khan | Rampur

FILLING UP 1 LAKH POSTS IN MP

Sir — Recently, Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan had announced that the Madhya Pradesh Government would give one lakh government jobs in one year and various vacant posts would be filled up. The Government has taken serious steps towards implementing this announcement. On Wednesday,

orders were issued to the effect that in the next one year, one lakh Government posts should be filled. One more thing is that the Government alone cannot undertake to provide jobs to lakhs of unemployed people. It is not even the Government's job alone.

Getting employment also depends on the efforts of the individual concerned. Recently, there were reports that there is a great need for professional and qualified people in big and small companies across the country, but they are not getting qualified people. On the other hand, lakhs of people are on the road. Therefore, society should also make its present and future generations job-worthy. There is no shortage of work, but our youth must prepare themselves for the type of work on offer. Only then the imbalance in employment will be corrected.

Divyansha Sharma | Ujjain

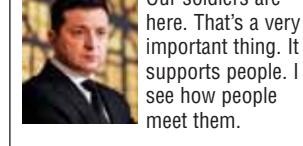
Send your feedback to:
letterstopioneer@gmail.com

SOUND BITE



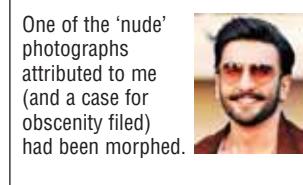
I conveyed India's concern to America at its decision to provide further assistance to Pakistan's F-16 aircraft fleet.

Defence Minister
—Rajnath Singh



Our soldiers are here. That's a very important thing. It supports people. I see how people meet them.

Ukraine President
—Volodymyr Zelensky



One of the 'nude' photographs attributed to me (and a case for obscenity filed) had been morphed.

Bollywood actor
—Ranveer Singh



I'm really happy; we played well. Everyone was looking forward to winning today.



India should play a vital role in bringing back peace in the trouble-torn Myanmar.

Mizoram Chief Minister
—Zoramthanga



HASAN KHURSHID



FIRST COLUMN

PITRIPAKSH GIVES DIVINITY TO SOUL

Scriptures state that 'Pitripaksh' is of much importance for Hindus as the soul never dies



PRAMOD PATHAK

The 15-day period preceding the Navratri is called the Pitripaksh in the Hindu religion. This is the period during which we perform various rituals to propitiate our ancestors and the relatives who have passed away. It is a belief that rests on the basic premise that the soul never dies, which is without a beginning and an end. This is also one of the principal teachings of the scripture Bhagavad Gita.

When the human being dies, it's the body that perishes but the soul leaves to another world that is called the pitrilok. However, if the soul is not satisfied, it remains wandering and is in perennial turmoil. The rituals performed during the Pitripaksh are to make the soul rest in peace and also to express the gratitude of the descendants to their ancestors.

The Upanishads and Bhagavad Gita tell us about the journey of the dead and the importance of the various rituals dedicated to them. The idea behind these rituals is to ensure the well-being of the departed ancestors and is a very lofty ideal of the Hindu religion that elevates ancestry to Godliness. Various acts and prayers performed during the Pitripaksh are for the peace of the dead relatives and their fond



remembrance. It is through the various offerings made during the period that we seek their blessings for our well-being.

It is a firm belief in the Hindu religion that even after leaving the body the soul remains and is active and agile and feels for its kith and kin because it is emotionally attached. If the soul is neglected and not given due respect during the Pitripaksh it is hurt and feels offended.

The neglect to the departed souls may even invite their ire and wrath. That is why it is said that 'Pitri kriya' is of far greater significance and implication than 'Dev kriya'. Our scriptures like the Garud Puran, Matsya Puran, Vishnu Puran and Vayu Puran give an account of the importance of Pitripaksh and Pitri kriya. These Purans tell us that by worshipping ancestors and performing 'Tarpam', we gratify our forefathers who get pleased and bless us. The worship that is called the 'shradh karm' is performed on the 'tithi' (date according to Hindu calendar) of the departure of the soul. This tithi is the lunar day which may be different from the calendar date.

The rituals performed during this period have great religious significance. The worship is performed with great sanctity and every effort is made to please the ancestors so that they can rest in peace for the rest of the year. The food that was the favourite of the departed person is prepared and offered after performing puja and feeding the Brahmins. Many feed the poor, too. A small portion of the food prepared is also offered to the cow, the crow and the dog. They are believed to help in connecting with the pitri lok, the abode of the ancestors.

The shradh performed during this period is a holy act like a yagn to worship the ancestors as deities. They are different from worshiping God. Shradh is mainly performed for three generations of pitris or ancestors. The procedures and practices of these rituals vary from culture to culture and region to region but their essence is the same. To express gratitude to our ancestors, remember them, seek their blessings, and pass a message to the next generation about the significance of ancestry. This is the greatness of Hindu religion. It worships the past generations while caring for the future generation.

(The author is a former professor of IIT, Dhanbad)



SHIVAJI SARKAR

A rank loss on the UN Human Development Index is a grave indicator of India's overall social and economic performance that invites investment and global participation. India slipped to 132 from 131 last year, which was 130 in 2015.

The UN Human Development Report (HDR) noted slippage on quality of life, attainments to basic schooling, healthcare, job losses, penury, and overall lack of opportunities during the Covid-19 pandemic in many countries.

India needs course corrections for holistic happiness and not mere cosmetic achievements. The growth as per HDI is not merely the GDP but beyond it. It was created to emphasise that

India's low HDI rank reflects poverty, inequality

The United Nations HDI Report must warn the policy makers in India of growing inequality and stress among people

(The author is a policy analyst)

people and their capabilities should be the ultimate criteria for assessing the development of a country, not the economic growth alone.

It is a complex composite index that reveals more than the GDP, a gauge of incomes or output. The HDI is computed on the basis of three parameters - life expectancy, mean years of schooling and average per capita national gross incomes. The per capita income of an Indian has fallen from Rs 94,270 in 2019 to Rs 85,110 in 2021 and per capita GDP as per World Bank at \$1961.42, 16 per cent of world average.

India's HDI value of 0.633, down from 0.642 in 2020, correlating to a "medium human development category country" denote miser-

able conditions, including falling life expectancy from 69.7 to 67.2. It is behind Bangladesh (129th), Bhutan (127th), Sri Lanka (73rd) and China (79th). Switzerland with 0.962 got the top global ranking, meaning less than the best UN parameters.

Income inequalities amplify failings on other HDI indices of human development. While most reports suggest inequality has increased in India because of a rise in poverty and shrinkage of the middle class, the report by National Bureau of Economic Research shows a decline in inequality. This is because Indians in higher percentiles of the income distribution saw larger relative income declines during the pandemic. However, it

fails to reflect the deprivations of poor households.

An Oxfam report, considered biased by the official agencies, says inequality has been rising sharply in the last three decades. For these three decades, since the 1990 neo-liberalism, rhetoric of open and free markets, less government and less regulation, more private players and entrepreneurs, has been concomitant with the slow death of key public institutions.

The HDR appreciates India's support to the vulnerable sections, South-South cooperation, International Solar Alliance and Coalition for Disaster-Resilient Infrastructure and net zero carbon emission targets. The State of Inequality in India Report released by Bibek

Debroy, Chairman, Economic Advisory Council to the Prime Minister (EAC-PM) in May, 2022, that inequities across sectors of health, education, household characteristics and the labour market make the population more vulnerable and triggers a descent into multidimensional poverty.

The World Inequality Report 2022 says the world's most extreme inequality has been observed in India. It notes India is a "poor country and very unequal, with an affluent elite". The WIR says the top 10 per cent of the country's population account for 57 per cent of the national income, of which 22 per cent is held by the top 1 per cent. While a small section of India's populace enjoys 5-star privileges, for the bottom

50 per cent sustainability of life is still a challenge. This is due to a variety of factors, including but not limited to, loss of job opportunities, an erratic unorganised sector, and rising poverty and inflation. The bottom 50 per cent are earning Rs 53160 and the top ten percent Rs 1166520, 20 times more.

The Gini (inequality in income distribution) coefficient points to an increasing inequality in India. The coefficient in 2014 was 34.4 per cent (100 per cent indicates full inequality and 0 per cent full equality). The coefficient increased to 47.9 per cent in 2018. India is said to be next to Russia in the world in terms of inequality.

The report also suggests that stress, sadness, anger, and

worry have been increasing over the last decade, now reaching record levels. The HDR cautions that "uncertainty, inequality and insecurity go hand in hand with polarization and lack of trust". It finds political volatility becoming reality.

Developing countries are entering a divergent social, political and economic period with sharp downside risks for the most vulnerable and regression in gender equality. India's per capita gross domestic product (GDP) increased five times between \$443 in 2000 and \$204 in 2019. This doesn't mean a uniform rise in income. The top one per cent in India earned 21 per cent of total country's income in 2019. This was 11 per cent in 1990.

Modi is Captain Cool of Team New India

With his equanimity and poise in the face of adversity, Prime Minister Narendra Modi is a role model for the nation's youth



SUMEET BHASIN



THE RUPAY CARD IS ACCEPTED GLOBALLY. THE JAM TRINITY HAS SCRIPTED THE HIGHEST EVER INCLUSION OF PEOPLE IN BANKING OPERATIONS, WITH MOST OF THE BENEFICIARIES BEING PEOPLE EKING OUT THEIR LIVELIHOOD IN THE INFORMAL SECTOR

(The author is Director, Public Policy Research Centre)

ship. Modi was responding to the low-level of personal attacks only during the election campaigns, while he stayed focused on the development works, and never let any emotions betray in public. This is remarkable since the youth or we may dare say the people in Delhi are on short fuse if someone scratches their vehicles on the roads. The depth of patience in PM Modi is remarkable, and truly a sign of a great leader.

It will not be out of place to say that virtues such as patience, tolerance and focus, as if one has blinkers on, are now too rare when the people are mostly reactive, combative and quarrelsome.

PM Modi was again the subject of the vilest and vitriolic personal attacks in the wake of the decision of demonetization. That was a bold decision, which required courage to do, and PM Modi stayed firm and steadfast on the objectives of the move despite the opposition parties running canard against him on a daily basis. Only a few have gone by, and India is now the world leader in the digital financial transaction. The scale of the digital financial operations in the country is astounding.

Now, the RuPay card is also internationally accepted. The JAM trinity has scripted the highest ever inclusion of the people in the banking operations, with most of the beneficiaries being people eking out their livelihoods in the informal sector. With the one click

of the mouse, crores of farmers receive their Pradhan Mantri Kisan Nidhi installment after every four months. They don't have to pay bribes to the middlemen or spend their precious time sitting with the Gram Pradhan. Digital architecture has done wonders.

The Covid-19 pandemic was once a century crisis for the country and the world. There was no know-how on ways to deal with the pandemic of such a scale. The developed countries shut themselves out. They were not forthcoming to share their knowledge and expertise. The crisis was overwhelming. India being the second largest population in the world had a huge challenge on its hands.

But PM Modi stayed steadfast. He was calm and composed. He exhibited rare patience as he sat out for marathon meetings with the scientists. He was listening to them. He trusted the best brains in the country. With the leadership at the top exhibiting unfathomable tolerance and patience, the scientific community had the maximum confidence to put forth their views and thus lay the roadmap to deal with the pandemic.

The principal job of a leader is to communicate. PM Modi held a number of meetings with the chief ministers, listening to their views and concerns, and enlisting them in the national response against the pandemic.

If PM Modi is seen in angrier frames, people would recall him wearing black clothes in the wake of the Pulwama terror attack, and that was also to send the loud message that his patience and tolerance cannot be tested when India is attacked.

The Indian made medicines and vaccines saved the lives of millions of people across the world. That was possible because India was being led in such a crisis time of grave proportion by Captain Cool whose eyes were set only on the aim that India's national interests must be guarded by all means.

If PM Modi is seen in angrier frames, people would recall him wearing black clothes in the wake of the Pulwama terror attack, and that was also to send the loud message that his patience and tolerance cannot be tested when India is attacked.

POINT COUNTERPOINT

SOME PEOPLE DON'T WANT FREE POWER. NOW ONLY THOSE CITIZENS WILL GET SUBSIDY WHO APPLY FOR IT.
—DELHI CHIEF MINISTER ARVIND KEJRIWAL



ARVIND KEJRIWAL HAS MADE THE CAPITAL BANKRUPT. HE HAS NO MONEY TO CONTINUE THE POWER SUBSIDY FOR ALL CITIZENS.
—OPPOSITION LEADER IN DELHI ASSEMBLY RAMVIR SINGH BIDHURI

(The author is a former professor of IIT, Dhanbad)

(The author is a policy analyst)

DECCAN Chronicle

17 SEPTEMBER 2022

Peace moves in N-E bring a ray of hope

The signing of a tripartite peace accord among the Union government, Assam state government and eight tribal outfits in the state on Thursday not only marks another milestone in the efforts to bring peace in the Northeast but also underscores the role negotiations play while seeking solutions to vexed issues.

As per the latest accord, members of the rebel groups, who have been living in designated camps after signing a ceasefire agreement in 2012, will now be free to pursue their political demands in a peaceful manner. On their part, the governments at the Centre and in the state will work for the uplift of the tribal population by investing in infrastructure and by protecting their cultural, linguistic and ethnic identities. There is also a provision to rehabilitate armed cadres. With this, all rebel outfits except the powerful faction of the banned Ulfa and the Kamatapur Liberation Organisation are onboard the peace wagon in the state.

Two years ago, a tripartite agreement in which three National Democratic Front of Bodoland (NDFB) factions were at a party was signed to end the insurgency which cost thousands of lives in the last five decades.

The Nagaland peace process is making slow progress as it has hit on contentious issues such as a separate Constitution and a flag for the Nagas; integration of all Naga-dominated areas into a 'Greater Nagaland'. The Isak-Muivah faction of the National Socialist Council of Nagaland (NSCN-IM) had walked away from the talks after the Centre's interlocutor refused to accommodate these key demands. A delegation led by the Nagaland chief minister was in Delhi this week to take the process forward.

The peace agreements together have resulted in thousands of rebels laying down their arms and in the reduction of insurgency-related incidents in the region. The Union government has responded positively to the developments and in April this year revoked the draconian Armed Forces Special Powers Act from several areas of Assam, Manipur and Nagaland.

Attempts to find a resolution to decades-old border disputes between the North-eastern states have also gained momentum of late. Assam has launched a series of negotiations with its neighbours Meghalaya and Manipur to settle the long pending border disputes. In March, Assam and Meghalaya signed an agreement to end disputes over six of the 12 contested locations between the two states; committees have been appointed to work out solutions for the rest. The chief ministers of Assam and Mizoram will be meeting later this month in Delhi seeking solution to the border dispute between the two states.

The disputes between the states have often resulted in the destruction of properties and disruption of normal life of a large section of people who fight a daily war to keep themselves afloat, given the backwardness of the region. The people who have been divided by borders within the same country engage in internecine fights to mutual detriment but talks and peace are the only viable options they should pursue.

The peace efforts and their success in the Northeast should persuade the Union government to follow the path in other parts of the country, too, instead of depending on the might of the state. If the strategy pays in the Northeast, it should pay elsewhere, too.

Exit Fedex: An era ends

Tennis will never be the same again. An era of gladiatorial contests which Roger Federer fought with the grace of a ballet dancer is over. He leaves tennis in good hands as young players of the calibre of Carlos Alcaraz Garfia are emerging. It is, however, doubtful if anyone will play the game with the elegance of Federer and his refined on-court manners, elevating sport to a sublime activity that everyone found inspiring.

Federer may have started out on the tennis pro circuit in the manner of many gifted players, as an angry young man. But the day he decided to give up being pensive on court and embrace higher sporting values he attained a stature that made him the game's finest ambassador. His peers Rafael Nadal and Novak Djokovic may have surpassed him in Grand Slam titles, which are still the gold standard in judging the all-time greats. But Federer signified something higher in tennis, as he also embodied sport's eternal values.

A number of new fans were attracted to tennis in the new millennium by the likes of Federer, Nadal, Djokovic and Serena Williams in the women's half of the draw. They raised the level of modern tennis to new heights in terms of living up to the performance metric as the game got tougher thanks to rising standards in fitness and stroke play even as each year seemed to get hotter on the court thanks to the ambient temperature also reflecting climate change.

Amid the competition getting fiercer with the rising prestige of Grand Slams, Federer relied on the basics but then he was gifted with that dulcet touch, sublime timing, genius of stroke production and a strategy to suit all court surfaces, save the French Open, which he won just once. But that super slow red clay was not suited to his aggressive serve-and-volley approach.

The fact is there never was a nicer champion - an empathetic person who once walked in areas devastated by the tsunami near Chennai to show his solidarity and raise money for the cause of humanity. And amid the demands of the pro tour, he was the ultimate family man, a loving husband and father to two sets of twins. History will measure him not only by the Grand Slams he won and the prize money he earned. He combined the conquest of technique like Don Bradman or Sachin Tendulkar with the grace of a Vaslav Nijinsky or Rudolf Nureyev and the politeness of sporting royalty.

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Farrukh
Dhondy



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— Add to your karma, that's beyond dispute.
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Why Sitharaman's appeal to India Inc seems misplaced

Parsa
Venkateshwar
Rao Jr

Though PM Modi has been talking from 2014 onwards of the importance of Start-Up India, Make in India and Skilling India... nothing substantial has been achieved on these fronts

U nion finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman threw a rhetorical question at India Inc recently asking them why they were so afraid to invest in India while everyone else in the world was looking towards India. She exhorted them by saying that like Hanuman, India Inc does not know its own strength. And she made it evident that the government's policies have been private sector-friendly through measures like the Productivity Linked Incentives (PLIs). She also said that no policy measure is final, and that it will be tweaked according to the changing situation. It would have been much better, though, if Ms Sitharaman had directed the question to herself, her ministry and her government. She should have conferred with her colleagues in her ministry and with her leader about the lack of interest from the private sector, and the reasons for that. She might have discovered useful data on what was causing the problem.

Perhaps the finance minister does not understand the downside of the demographic dividend. We have too many young people who do not have the matching skills for the jobs that are in demand, either in the IT sector or in the financial sector. Jobs in these sectors are going abegging due to the lack of a qualified workforce. And despite the growth in private engineering colleges and in computer courses in the universities, the students who are churned out of these courses don't seem to be qualified enough. The broad-visioned New Education Policy (NEP) which aims to absorb the cushioning to absorb losses is not there in the

does not address the immediate needs of the economy, perhaps rightly so.

But someone somewhere must attend to the specific problems of education and employment. There is then a need to stop boasting about the demographic dividend, which has been bandied about by educated and semi-educated politicians and the chattering classes and look at the quality of the education that is being doled out from our colleges and universities. The lazy answer that is offered by half-baked experts in the field is that we should allow foreign universities and foreign institutions to set up campuses in the country, a solution that has been adopted by a country like Singapore. In a majority of cases, the private colleges and private universities are a scandal in this country. The government must go back to the Yash Pal Committee report and speedily implement its recommendations for what they are worth.

But unless you have your own institutions which offer the highest standards of education, you cannot create a qualified workforce for an expanding economy like that of India. The fact has been bemoaned that there are not many universities in India that make it to world rankings. In a modern economy, it is the higher educational levels of the working force that drives growth. One of the big advantages that countries like the United States enjoy is that it absorbs a qualified work force through its liberal immigration policy. More than a decade ago it was noticed that India lacked civil engineers for its infrastructural projects, and companies like Larsen and Toubro had to

bring in retired civil engineers from abroad. Though Prime Minister Narendra Modi has been talking from 2014 onwards of the importance of Start-Up India, Make in India and Skilling India... nothing substantial has been achieved on these fronts

In states like Uttar Pradesh, the issue of low educational levels of most of the workforce and the social instability caused by Hindu communalists is a disincentive to India Inc to set up new projects. This is an issue over which finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman has little control, and it is unfair to expect that she should acknowledge the problem. The government and the political party of which she is a member believes in playing the Hindu-Muslim card for electoral purposes. The atmosphere of social tension that this communal stance creates is not conducive for the private sector to set up new enterprises. This negative communal atmosphere is actually hanging like a cloud over the whole of India.

The government has not really been friendly enough towards India Inc. Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Ms Sitharaman and many others have been wagging their finger at the private sector and almost giving them targets to fulfil. But it has not been fair-handed while dealing with entrepreneurs. This became evident when Bharat Biotech was chosen to manufacture the Covid-19 vaccine when it should have asked a number of others to do the same. The private sector doesn't know how to deal with the whims and fancies of those who are in power because those who are in the government are forever exhorting the private sector to do this and to do that. You can't tell the private sector to make toys as the government feels that it is a growth area. Telling the private sector what to do or not to do is a legacy of the little-lamented Soviet Union, which has now passed into history.

The writer is a Delhi-based commentator and analyst

The Supreme Court stated that those who feed stray dogs as a routine are to be held responsible if they bite other road users. This is a very strange stand. In what way do those who feed stray dogs out of compassion and kindness and also out of some religion-based beliefs can be held accountable if stray incidents like biting takes place. It is true that rabies a deadly disease is caused by dog bites. However this menace could be prevented if local authorities and veterinarians immunise the stray dogs with appropriate medicines so that they won't pass on rabies causing virus into human bodies. The dogs can be subject to compulsory sterilization too. However to make them die due to hunger is morality.

Kooduthurai,
Coimbatore

ROGER AND OUT

It is better to quit the game when people ask why? Roger Federer, who has won 20 Grand Slams, has announced that the 2022 Laver Cup will be his final ATP tournament. Roger Federer, regarded by many as the greatest male player to wield a tennis racket and who took the sport to new levels during a career spanning more than two decades, will retire after next week's Laver Cup in London. Federer, who dominated men's tennis after winning his first Grand Slam title at Wimbledon in 2003, has been troubled by injuries in recent years.

C.K.R.Nathan, Chennai

SRI LANKA IN SORRY STATE

Rajapaksa of Sri Lanka brought the Pacific conflict into the Indian Ocean by having a surreptitious agreement with China, and effectively surrendering the sovereignty of the island. China did 'threaten' Sri Lanka with severe consequences when SL put a hold on the snooping ship's arrival. India needs to step up efforts to ensure that rights of Sri Lankan Tamils are re-established. Removing Chinese naval presence from Sri Lanka should be a clear goal of India - otherwise the present 'commercial' port will surely evolve into a military outpost - and the Chinese communist party is one of the most untrustworthy entities in the world - and will expand its tentacles. Russia invaded Ukraine to protect the Russian minority in Easter Ukraine and in process it is destroying that country. Trust this will not be a precedent for India. It is better just to be a strong and stubborn.

M.R. Jayanthi, Coimbatore

BoJo, otherwise known as Carrie Antoinette, who articulated her contempt for the taste of the previous PM, Theresa May, calling it "John Lewis crap", or words to that effect.

(Carrie Antoinette actually "let them eat cake" at BoJo's birthday in an illegal gathering in Downing Street at the occasion labelled "Partygate").

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Then there is the price-of-energy crisis, which will affect the poor who won't be able to simultaneously afford food and heating their homes all through the coming winter. Liz and her *chamcha* chancellor of the exchequer, Kwasi Kwarteng, of Ghanaian parentage but rich enough to go to school in Eton and then to Cambridge, have announced that they will "cap" the price of energy to households at something in excess of £2,500 a year. This is double the price that most people pay and this "cap" will cost the UK Treasury £100 billion, which Ms Truss and her *chamcha* KK will borrow, adding to the national debt which future years and generations will have to bear.

Their argument, and this seems to be the answer to everything that Liz and *chamcha* have proposed, is that they will cut taxes and that will stimulate growth in the economy and that will tackle the debt. As we used to say in the Peeping Tom's Society of Poona (PTSP) — "dekhya jayega" — roughly translated as "we shall see".

Right! I've only hit on one of poor Liz's problematic inheritances. There's the absolute collapse of the National Health Service, the free medical treatment to which every citizen has been entitled since the 1945 Labour government of Clement Attlee brought it in after the Second World War. It's something generations of the British rely upon and its survival and progress has to be embraced and guaranteed by any party wishing to win an election. The NHS is today, in the way of true situational allegory, waiting to be admitted to A&E — Accident and Emergency — hanging about, perhaps fatally, for hours in an ambulance at the gates of an over-populated hospital with a shortage of 50,000 nurses and 10,000 doctors, to be admitted and not given a bed.

Will cutting taxes to boost the economy solve that? Discuss!

Then there is the Northern Ireland Protocol. This part of the UK doesn't have a functioning government because the Protestant Party, the DUP, who have the second largest elected representation in the Northern Ireland parliament, refuses to enter it until the Westminster government reneges on and reverses the part of the international treaty that BoJo signed called the Northern Ireland Protocol. I won't bore you with the details but Suella Braverman, now the home secretary (under Liz-how-long-will-she-last?), was the attorney-general under BoJo and said she would defy international law and the European Union's justifiable signed. Perhaps "principle" is not the appropriate word in this context. (*You idiot, the spelling is different!*)

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THE ASIAN AGE

17 SEPTEMBER 2022

Peace moves in N-E bring a ray of hope

The signing of a tripartite peace accord among the Union government, Assam state government and eight tribal outfits in the state on Thursday not only marks another milestone in the efforts to bring peace in the Northeast but also underscores the role negotiations play while seeking solutions to vexed issues.

As per the latest accord, members of the rebel groups, who have been living in designated camps after signing a ceasefire agreement in 2012, will now be free to pursue their political demands in a peaceful manner. On their part, the governments at the Centre and in the state will work for the uplift of the tribal population by investing in infrastructure and by protecting their cultural, linguistic and ethnic identities. There is also a provision to rehabilitate armed cadres. With this, all rebel outfits except the powerful faction of the banned Ulfa and the Kamatapur Liberation Organisation are onboard the peace wagon in the state.

Two years ago, a tripartite agreement in which three National Democratic Front of Bodoland (NDFB) factions were a party was signed to end the insurgency which cost thousands of lives in the last five decades.

The Nagaland peace process is making slow progress as it has hit on contentious issues such as a separate Constitution and a flag for the Nagas; integration of all Naga-dominated areas into a 'Greater Nagaland'. The Isak-Muivah faction of the National Socialist Council of Nagaland (NSCN-IM) had walked away from the talks after the Centre's interlocutor refused to accommodate these key demands. A delegation led by the Nagaland chief minister was in Delhi this week to take the process forward.

The peace agreements together have resulted in thousands of rebels laying down their arms and in the reduction of insurgency-related incidents in the region. The Union government has responded positively to the developments and in April this year revoked the draconian Armed Forces Special Powers Act from several areas of Assam, Manipur and Nagaland.

Attempts to find a resolution to decades-old border disputes between the North-eastern states have also gained momentum of late. Assam has launched a series of negotiations with its neighbours Meghalaya and Manipur to settle the long pending border disputes. In March, Assam and Meghalaya signed an agreement to end disputes over six of the 12 contested locations between the two states; committees have been appointed to work out solutions for the rest. The chief ministers of Assam and Mizoram will be meeting later this month in Delhi seeking solution to the border dispute between the two states.

The disputes between the states have often resulted in the destruction of properties and disruption of normal life of a large section of people who fight a daily war to keep themselves afloat, given the backwardness of the region. The people who have been divided by borders within the same country engage in internecine fights to mutual detriment but talks and peace are the only viable options they should pursue.

The peace efforts and their success in the Northeast should persuade the Union government to follow the path in other parts of the country, too, instead of depending on the might of the state. If the strategy pays in the Northeast, it should pay elsewhere, too.

Exit Fedex: An era ends

Tennis will never be the same again. An era of gladiatorial contests which Roger Federer fought with the grace of a ballet dancer is over. He leaves tennis in good hands as young players of the calibre of Carlos Alcaraz Garfia are emerging. It is, however, doubtful if anyone will play the game with the elegance of Federer and his refined on-court manners, elevating sport to a sublime activity that everyone found inspiring.

Federer may have started out on the tennis pro circuit in the manner of many gifted players, as an angry young man. But the day he decided to give up being peevish on court and embrace higher sporting values he attained a stature that made him the game's finest ambassador. His peers Rafael Nadal and Novak Djokovic may have surpassed him in Grand Slam titles, which are still the gold standard in judging the all-time greats. But Federer signified something higher in tennis, as he also embodied sport's eternal values.

A number of new fans were attracted to tennis in the new millennium by the likes of Federer, Nadal, Djokovic and Serena Williams in the women's half of the draw. They raised the level of modern tennis to new heights in terms of living up to the performance metric as the game got tougher thanks to rising standards in fitness and stroke play even as each year seemed to get hotter on the court thanks to the ambient temperature also reflecting climate change.

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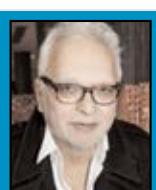
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Indian private sector and in the banking sector. It's an issue which analysts simply don't want to look at.

In states like Uttar Pradesh, the issue of low educational levels of most of the workforce and the social instability caused by Hindu communalists is a disincentive to India Inc to set up new projects.

This is an issue over which finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman has little control, and it is unfair to expect that she should acknowledge the problem. The government and the political party of which she is a member believes in playing the Hindu-Muslim card for electoral purposes. The atmosphere of social tension that this communal stance creates is not conducive for the private sector to set up new enterprises. This negative communal atmosphere is actually hanging like a cloud over the whole of India.

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The writer is a Delhi-based commentator and analyst

LETTERS GOODBYE, 'GOD'

Roger Federer's decision to call time on his glittering career after next week's Laver Cup marks the end of an era. The "god of tennis" enchanted tennis lovers with his sublime grace, skill and charm. His career, adorned with 20 Grand Slam titles, also featured an incredible run as World Number one for a record 237 consecutive weeks. Federer enjoyed a storied rivalry with Rafael Nadal and Novak Djokovic, and their high adrenaline clashes brought the best out of them. Thank you, Roger, for those unforgettable moments. We will miss you!

N.J. Ravi Chander
Bengaluru

AFFORDABLE DRUGS

THERE IS NO DENYING that cost of medicines occupies a large proportion of the expenditure incurred during the treatment of any disease. This is because the market prices of drugs are often kept much higher than their cost. The recent inclusion of thirty-four new additional drugs in the National List of Essential Medicines can be seen in the same context. The new initiative will reduce the cost of treatment of the patients with many serious diseases. This time anti-cancer drugs and vaccines have also been added to the list of affordable medicines, which will now be available at lower prices than before. This certainly spells relief for the general public.

Abhijit Roy
Jamshedpur

BREATHE EASY?

THE DIRECTOR-GENERAL of the WHO, Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, has announced that the world has never been in a better position to end the Covid-19 pandemic. The coronavirus, which wreaked havoc across the world, directly or indirectly led to the death of approximately 14.9 million people between January 2020 and December 2021. The WHO's recent assessment of the crisis is by far the most positive since the outbreak of the pandemic.

Sankar Paul
Chakdaha, West Bengal



Time to confront China on Uyghurs' plight

The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) describes specific medical concerns about the treatment of Uyghurs in Xinjiang, especially between 2017 and 2019. Testimonies were gathered that pointed to blood tests, injections, and medications being forced on Uyghurs without their consent. Episodes of sexual violence, including the rape of mainly women, "invasive gynaecological examinations," and sexual humiliation were described.

Investigations revealed that psychological torture produced mental suffering by creating an atmosphere of fear, stress, and anxiety. Serious concerns about widespread violations to the right to the highest attainable standard of health, lack of freedom to refuse

non-consensual medical treatment, lack of access to clean water and sanitation, and lack of an adequate supply of safe food are also there. Reproductive rights were also allegedly violated. There was a sharp rise in sterilisations in 2017 and 2018—243 per 100,000 inhabitants in Xinjiang, compared with 32 per 100,000 for China overall.

Forced sterilisations, forced placement of intrauterine devices, and forced abortions may have contributed to a rapid fall in the birth rate in Xinjiang. Although the OHCHR notes that it is unable to draw firm conclusions about the precise nature of some of these abuses, it comments that: "These first-hand accounts, although limited in number, are considered credible." Sadly, the world is turn-

ing a blind eye to the atrocities and violations of China in Xinjiang. The report goes beyond medical abuse—the referral of "a substantial proportion" of the Uyghur population to Vocational Education and Training Centres, where beatings, sleep deprivation, and starvation took place; restrictions on cultural, linguistic, and religious freedoms; intensive surveillance and control, with restrictions on movements; and enforced disappearances, family separations, denial of family contacts, and reprisals should individuals try to reach out to family members abroad.

The OHCHR concludes that, based on interviews with people who had first-hand knowledge of the conditions for Uyghurs in Xinjiang, "serious human rights vi-

lations have been committed in XUAR." Situation is so alarming that some quarters are demanding the acts as genocide against the Muslims. There is nothing wrong if it is called crimes against humanity. In addition, these are being perpetrated during the peace times and not during any war. The Chinese authorities, as usual, argued that the alleged evidence was "groundless" and based on "disinformation and lies." They said that the statements quoted are merely "smears and slanders." Instead, they suggested that China "is committed to promoting international human rights."

The work the government has undertaken in Xinjiang has been focused only on counterterrorism and deradicalisation. There has been no mass violation of human

rights, they said.

Despite the source of this report being the UN OHCHR, WHO has been silent. In a media briefing on the same day as the report's publication, WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus spoke about the humanitarian catastrophe in Pakistan, COVID-19, and monkeypox. On the alleged atrocities perpetrated against Uyghurs, not a word. Nor the following day, giving a keynote speech at the Health20 Summit in which he praised countries, including China, for their commitment to multilateralism, partnership, and equity. Why the apathy? What is the reason for the silence? Is the WHO afraid of China? Yes, by all means. It is high time that the world wakes up to reality and put an end to the fear, perhaps.

LETTERS

Roger strode like a colossus

It is better to quit the game when people ask why? Roger Federer, who has won 20 Grand Slams, has announced that the 2022 Laver Cup will be his final ATP tournament. Federer, regarded by many as the greatest male player to wield a tennis racket and who took the sport to new levels during a career spanning more than two decades, will retire after next week's Laver Cup in London. Federer, who dominated men's tennis after winning his first Grand Slam title at Wimbledon in 2003, has been troubled by injuries in recent years. Curtains will come down on the most illustrious tennis player. Tennis will not be the same again. Roger you have brought glory to the tennis world with your touch and volley game with a powerful service all the way.

- CKR Nathan, Ghaziabad

Turncoats betray public trust

Defection of eight Congress legislators in Goa openly depicts continuation of the frog mentality of our politicians in the face of their embracing BJP probably because of its stage management behind the curtains as in Maharashtra. These disloyal members of Congress took oaths of their office before various religious gods, thus cheating the gods, people, parent party and democratic principles and values. Rumours are rolling that repetition of a similar situation may happen in Punjab in near future.

- Dr NSR Murthy, Secunderabad

II

The eight Congress MLAs switching to BJP is not a blow just to Congress but to the Indian democracy as well. Now-a-days politics has become like a cattle market. Just pay and buy whichever cattle or buffalo you want. In Goa, BJP is in power not because of the mandate of the people but because of deceit and manipulation. Goa Forward party leader Vijay Sardesai rightly said that the eight Congress legislators who decided against all political property, basic decency and honesty to pursue their greed for wealth and hunger for power, stand today as the symbol of pure evil, displaying their shamelessness, selfishness, avarice and chicanery, in defiance of almighty God. He further said that people's representatives are sold like sacks of wheat to be bought for a price. Previously Arwind Kejriwal made an explosive allegation that BJP purchased 277 MLAs, spending Rs 5,500 crore. If the money and muscle power can dictate who comes to power then the voters will reprove little faith in electoral system.

- Zeeshan, Kazipet

A course correction, indeed

It is that 'The Places of Worship Act 1991' passed by the then Parliament such an edict given as if by the Almighty, that it is absolutely sacrosanct and can never be amended at all? A time has come with the Varanasi district court's latest order in the Gyanvapi mosque case to review and amend the same. Over a hundred amendments were so far carried out and heavens are not going to fall with another amendment to the aforementioned Act of 1991, all in the interests of effecting a course correction in the annals of our past history and thereby promoting peace, harmony and brotherhood in our democratic set-up.

- Seshagiri Row Karry, Hyderabad

Blaming 'Sanatana Dharma' bad

DMK leader and former Union Minister A Raja seems to be terribly uncomfortable being a Hindu - to be a dalit in particular. He spoke at length about the inability of Hindus to be assertive. He wondered why he was a born Hindu, and continues to remain as a helpless Hindu. His comment on 'Sanatana Dharma' for these ills is ridiculous. There is no wonder that the dalit stigma is hurting him most though Tamil Nadu is taking utmost advantage in terms of reservations and quota in the name of dalits and Dravidians, the advantages of which Raja too has been enjoying.

- KR Venkata Narasimhan, Madurai

Who is Father of Indian Constitution?

Telangana government took a decision to name the new Secretariat building after Dr BR Ambedkar and urged to the Central government to give the same name to the new Parliament complex at Delhi. My mediocre knowledge begs a point for clarification. The draft Constitution prepared by a judge of International Court of Justice, Sir Benegal N Rau, with the aid of Alladi Krishnaswamy Ayyar and KM Munshi under the guidance of Drafting Committee Chairman Dr BR Ambedkar, after thorough verification, was submitted to the Constituent Assembly. The draft, after several modifications, alterations, deletions and additions, was approved on November 26, 1948 by the Constituent Assembly under the Presidentship of Dr Babu Rajendra Prasad. Therefore, the Father of Constitution must be the Constituent Assembly, not any individual.

- N Ramalakshmi, Secunderabad

thehansreader@gmail.com



Vegetable prices skyrocket in Garden City; coriander bunch costs Rs 60

BENGALURU: The recent incessant rains have damaged the spinach and vegetable crops and the effect is already being felt by consumers. A bunch of coriander is being sold at Rs 60, and other vegetable prices too have been fluctuating. A few days ago, coriander was being sold at Rs 20 per bunch. APMC trader and K R Market spinach trader, Soppu Kumar said that the difference in the availability of products in the market is the reason for the sudden price rise. 'Due to rain, the price of greens has increased. In particular, the amount of planted coriander has decreased. A thick bundle is selling up to Rs 50-60. Sabsige soppu (Dill leaves) is being sold at Rs 40 per bunch. Methi (Fenugreek) and Palak prices have also increased and this situation will continue for some more days,' he said.

Potholes on 14,000-km long roads; people angry with poor work

BENGALURU: On one side, more than 50 layouts in Mahadevapura, Bommanahalli, East Zone of the city have been flooded due to rain. Apart from that, potholes have appeared on 14,000 km long roads of the city as a result of heavy downpour, and it is a challenge for Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (BBMP) to fix them.

There are a total of 14,000 km of roads under the jurisdiction of BBMP, of which 4,000 km are main and sub-main roads. Among them, 18,000 potholes were found and closed from last May till September first week. However, new potholes have been created along with the already closed road potholes due to the rains that have poured for the past one week. Accordingly, it is estimated that more than 15,000 potholes have been created on the main, sub-main and ward roads all over the city. People are angry, obviously.

Read more at
<https://epaper.thehansindia.com> (Bengaluru edition)



SUDHAKAR REDDY

THE Telangana Armed Struggle against the Nizam's autocracy in 1947 was an important historical event as the Nizam declared Hyderabad as an independent country in connivance with the British on September 11, 1947.

The Communist Party of India (CPI) gave a clarion call to the people to take up arms against the Nizam of Hyderabad Samsthan and for the merger of Hyderabad into the Indian Union. Comrades Ravi Narayan Reddy, Baddam Yella Reddy and Makhdoom Mohiuddin signed the statement on behalf of CPI, Andhra Mahasabha and All Hyderabad Trade Union Congress.

The urge for transformation to a democratic system and for a united Indian state was so strong among the people that most of the Samsthans agreed for merger with the Indian Union, except Hyderabad, Jammu and Kashmir, Tripura and Junagadh that declared independence.

The Hyderabad Nizam ordered weapons from Britain and transferred huge amounts to the Westminster Bank. The money is still with the British. The dispute between India and Pakistan is not yet settled.

The Andhra Mahasabha was the social organization of the Telugu speaking people and this was dominated by Leftists in the later years. Ravi Narayana Reddy was its president in the crucial period of 1947. The Nizam's private army, known as Razakars, unleashed terror on the people in the name of defending a Muslim kingdom. In fact, large numbers of Muslims were living in utter poverty. An overwhelming number of landlords who supported the Nizam were Hindus. Unfortunately, a section of the Muslim population did believe in the slogan of "Anal Malik" (I am the King) and extended support to the Nizam. But there were patriotic, democratic and progressive-minded Muslims who extended support to the anti-Nizam struggle. For example, Bandagi, a Muslim peasant, was killed by Hindu landlords. He was fighting for his land. Shoaibullah Khan, the courageous editor of Amroz, who opposed Nizam, was killed by Razakars.

In the Telangana area, where the Communists were leading the struggle, it never took a communal colour. It was a struggle against outdated and outlived feudalism. The situation was ripe and the CPI's clarion call for armed struggle was responded to overwhelmingly by lakhs of people who participated in it. As a matter of fact, the party's organisational infrastructure was weak in Telangana part, but the popularity of its leadership, the correct strategy and tactics helped the movement immensely.

The Andhra Party (it was a part of the composite Madras State) was organisationally better equipped. The infrastructure of the party organization was quite good. The leadership was ideologically and politically mature. It extended all help to the struggle of Telan-



gana. Armed training camps were held. Funds and weapons were collected. Volunteers joined the struggle in Telangana; many Andhra comrades were killed in Telangana.

Comrade C Rajeswara Rao was in Hyderabad from 1946 itself and other prominent leaders like Comrades P Sundarayya, Tammarreddy Satyanarayana, SVK Prasad and many others directly took part in and guided the struggle. Comrade CR created the first nucleus of the party in Hyderabad. Three thousand villages came under the influence of Communists. About 10 lakh acres of land was distributed to the landless. Zamindars and landlords ran away from villages and took shelter elsewhere.

There were two stages of the struggle. Stage 1 was from September 11, 1947 (the day the armed struggle started) to September 17, 1948 (the day the Indian Army marched on Hyderabad). Stage 2 was from that day till the withdrawal of the armed struggle in 1951.

In the first stage, there was wonderful support and sympathy of the people. Landlords ran away from villages. Their huge bungalows, which were known as Devidis, were burnt down as they were the shelters and centers of Razakars and the Nizam police. Lakhs of people participated in the struggle.

KM Munshi, a confidant of Sardar Patel, was the Agent General of the Government of India in the Hyderabad state. There was a standstill agreement between the Nizam and the Government of India. Though the Government of India wanted the Nizam to join the Indian Union, they did not want to use force. But as the Communists were becoming strong, there was fear of a Communist takeover of Hyderabad. The Congress leaders pressured the Central leadership for some action. The Indian Army marched on Hyderabad state from four sides on September 13, 1948, and the Nizam surrendered on September 17. The Nizam's army could not withstand the pressure of the strong military force of the Indian Union. The resistance was nominal. The Nizam declared his surrender and the merger of the Hyderabad state was announced.

The CPI, which was fighting the main battle sacrificing a large number of its comrades, was not consulted by the Government of India. It was a great betrayal. No discussions were held. The Nizam, who was to be overthrown, was given a respectable place and later declared as Raj Pramukh (equivalent to the Governor) with two crore rupees as annual compensation.

The Indian Army marched on the villages, hunting Communists. Khasim Razvi, the leader of Razakars, who committed heinous crimes on the people, was allowed to go to Pakistan after a small punishment. Razakars were freed but more than 3,000 Communists were killed by the Army. The CPI decided to carry on the struggle.

Distortion of History

Though the BJP or its predecessor Jan Sangh were not born at the time of the Telangana Armed Struggle, the RSS was very much in existence. It is said that once an RSS Sarsanghchalak was asked to leave Hyderabad, he immediately obliged.

The Arya Samaj put up resistance against conversions to Islam and carried on the campaign for re-convertions to Hinduism. Many Arya Samajists later joined the CPI. State Congress also played its role but to a limited extent.

But 74 years after the armed struggle, now the BJP and the Sangh Parivar are observing a Liberation Day, claiming all credit to Sardar Patel for liberating Telangana and accusing the Communists of waging a war against the independent India. They are also making baseless and shameless allegations that the Communists and the Razakars had joined hands. The whole purpose is to create an impression that the Telangana Armed Struggle was a liberation battle of Hindus against Muslim oppression. This is nothing but a dirty concoction. It is a blatant distortion of history. It is a struggle against feudalism headed by Nizam, supported by Hindu landlords and some Muslim Jagirdars. It is a struggle for merger to the Indian union.

tortion of history. It is a struggle against feudalism headed by Nizam, supported by Hindu landlords and some Muslim Jagirdars. It is a struggle for merger to the Indian union.

The Nizam, of course, was not a secularist but for his own reasons he did not pursue the communal agenda all the time. But certainly there was discrimination of language and religion. At the same time he patronised the Hindu Jagirdars and Deshmukhs. He had some Hindu officials who were needed for a link with the majority of his subjects in the kingdom. But the people who took up arms were very clear that they were fighting oppressive feudalism, not a religion.

The BJP is carrying on the dirty campaign which started during the NDA regime. It is the NDA and its Home Minister L K Advani, who refused to sanction pensions to thousands of Telangana freedom fighters, whose names were recommended by the Hyderabad State Freedom Fighters Screening Committee, an official committee appointed during the VP Singh regime, and later by Indrajit Gupta as the Home Minister of the United Front government.

The Sangh Parivar, which had no role in the struggle of the people against the Nizam, is shamelessly carrying on its dirty tricks to distort history even now. BJP is born in lies and grown in lies. If a country is liberated from foreign rule it is called liberation. Liberation has got broader meaning of liberating people from the foreign rule, from exploitation from oppressors and achieving true democracy socially and politically.

The Telangana Armed Struggle has to be analysed from different angles. Besides the poor, agricultural labour, small peasants led by the party, a broad section of middle peasantry, small, petty business people, intelligentsia supported the struggle and saved our underground leaders during the most difficult times. Poets, writers, journalists, government employees, Hindus, Muslims stood by the armed struggle. Women played an important role.

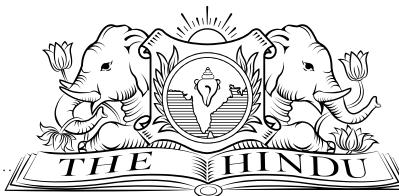
There is a necessity to study deeply the reasons that prompted different sections of society to support the Telangana Armed Struggle. Only that will help one to get a comprehensive understanding of the Telangana armed struggle.

Most of the writings on Telangana till now are from a limited angle of the struggle. Some have given only a partial account of this heroic battle. The split of the Communist movement has created a situation in which some writers tried to undermine the role of some important leaders and ignore them. History cannot be written based on the whims and fancies of the writers. I hope an impartial, comprehensive account of the Telangana Armed Struggle will be written by future historians without distortion.

September 17, 1948 was the day when the Indian Army marched on the Hyderabad state, annexed it from the Nizam and the merger of the Hyderabad state into the Indian Union was announced.

(Writer is former MP and former Secretary General of CPI.)





Eat and learn

Tamil Nadu's breakfast scheme is a good model for other States to follow

Sometimes the ability of a government to find resources for a good scheme is only limited by its intent. The Tamil Nadu government's launch of the free breakfast scheme for schoolchildren is an instance of a policy initiative with far-reaching consequences for school education and public health. As Chief Minister M.K. Stalin himself said at the launch of the scheme, provision of free breakfast is not a freebie, but the foremost duty of a government to ensure no child goes hungry. Mr. Stalin framed his words and deeds from the promontory of the progressive Dravidian model, which promises inclusive growth for all segments of the population. A key element is the welfare of children, which explains Tamil Nadu's early emphasis on feeding children in schools. The importance of a daily breakfast as the most important meal of the day is widely acknowledged. Multiple studies across the globe indicate that eating breakfast regularly confers positive outcomes on students, affecting their ability to focus, learn and retain information positively. School performance improves, as do behaviour and cognition, but a regular breakfast also takes care of diet quality, micronutrient sufficiency, anaemia and height and weight issues in children, and is even believed to sculpt BMI scores for the future. The government has targeted providing schoolchildren an average of 293 calories and an average protein input of 9.85 gm per day. The mid-day meal that is already being provided to students in schools comes up to an average of 553 calories and 18 gm of protein, giving every student who takes the food supplied in school about 846 cal and nearly 28 gm of protein a day. The Centre's midday meal guidelines prescribe between 450-700 cals per child per day, and a protein intake of 12-20 gm per day.

While the proposed menu for the Tamil Nadu government's breakfast scheme will take care of hunger, the calorific, energy and micronutrient requirements of the children, with a diet rich in local preparations and vegetables, it also has to provide adequate attention to taste and quality parameters. The government, rich with its experience of dealing with the mid-day meal scheme over several decades, must avoid the errors of omission and commission – including pilferage, poor quality of food, delays in sanctioning funds, and caste-related disruptions – that have been hurdles in its path earlier. Other State governments would also do well to be inspired by Tamil Nadu, which has allowed its intent to triumph over the state of its finances, finding money to fund this very crucial aspect of nation building – ensuring the growth and development of children.

The oppressor's wrong

Nothing can really scandalise a court peopled by judges of integrity

"Who breaks a butterfly upon a wheel?" asked Alexander Pope, wondering if strong means were needed to beat a petty adversary. The Madurai Bench of the Madras High Court has taken a sledgehammer to deal with YouTuber and blogger 'Savukku' A. Shankar, and sentenced him to a six-month jail term for some Tweets targeting the judiciary. As political commentary goes, his style of presenting his views is indeed quite trenchant. With a know-it-all air, he goes about giving purported background material, insinuating deals and designs behind developments, often without substantiation. It is no surprise then that he got into trouble. In his defence in the *suo motu* contempt proceedings, Mr. Shankar said his comments were aimed at questioning the under-representation of Dalits in the judiciary, and the excess representation to Brahmins, and that taken as a whole, his comments were aimed at improving the system. The court would have none of it, and deemed his comments contumacious. It noted that he expressed no regret or repentance, but affirmed that he would continue to speak about the judiciary after his release even if sent to prison. Even though Mr. Shankar made a personal insinuation against Justice Swaminathan, what really counted was his sweeping charge against the entire judiciary. This could have been dealt with by the Principal Bench in Chennai as the allegation was general in nature, but, unfortunately, it was posted before a Bench headed by Justice Swaminathan, who was the judge aggrieved by the earlier Tweet.

The purported logic behind courts retaining the power to punish for contempt is to save the institution from scurrilous attack so that the public does not lose its faith and trust in the judiciary. However, recent experience, as well as public criticism by former judges and legal luminaries, shows that the principal source of public disenchantment with the judiciary is the conduct of courts and judges. In 2018, four judges of the Supreme Court publicly accused the Chief Justice of India of misusing his power as Master of the Roster to influence the outcome of cases. Can there be anything more scandalising to the judiciary? Former judges and lawyers routinely pen articles questioning the commitment of the apex court to issues of personal liberty and even hint at complicity and craveness before the executive. Is there any point in going after laymen voicing their disenchantment with judicial wrongdoing? Criminal contempt is usually closed either by the court's tolerance or the contemnor's remorse, but, regrettably, neither happened in this case. If the court viewing any display of magnanimity as a sign of weakness is the 'oppressor's wrong', the defendant refusing to express regret is the 'proud man's contumely'. In truth, any conviction for criminal contempt is unwarranted, for nothing can really scandalise a court peopled by judges of integrity or save the image of a compromised institution comprising tainted individuals.

The consequences of declining fertility are many

A below replacement level fertility rate would mean a smaller dividend window than expected



SANTOSH KUMAR DASH & SIDHARTH R.

below the replacement level for the first time to 2.0 in 2021, according to the latest National Family Health Survey (NFHS). The rate has dipped 10% in just five years.

At the time of Independence, India's fertility rate was six per woman, and it had taken 25 years to reach five, with the government launching the first ever family planning programme in the world in 1952. India's fertility further declined to four in the 1990s when Kerala became the first State in India to have a fertility rate below replacement level; slowly, other States followed suit. As reported by the NFHS 2021, only five States have a fertility rate above the replacement rate: Bihar (3), Meghalaya (2.9), Uttar Pradesh (2.4), Jharkhand (2.3), and Manipur (2.2). The steady dip in fertility rates has been explained as an effect of increased use of contraception, more years of average schooling, better health care, and an increase in the mean marriage age of women.

Many economic implications

Countries in the earlier stages of demographic transition find positive effects of lower fertility on income as a major portion of the workforce moves to modern sectors of the economy with fertility dipping. Lower fertility rates can be viewed as both a cause and consequence of economic development. Lower fertility impacts women's education positively, which in turn lowers the fertility of the next generations. With better infrastructure development, better health care, and education, fertility drops and income rises. The spiral of lower fertility leads to a window of time when the ratio of the working-age population is higher than that of the dependent age groups. This high proportion of people in the workforce boosts income and investment, given the higher level of saving due to lower



S.R. RAGHUNATHAN

dependence.

The falling fertility rate will also lead to lower pressure on land, water and other resources and would also contribute to achieving environmental goals. After the window where a country reaps the benefits of the demographic dividend, the huge working age population moves to old age, supported by fewer workers.

Japan was the first country to experience the implications of falling fertility rates. The increasing dependency ratio has led to near zero GDP growth since the 1990s, and the country is facing fiscal challenges to meet rising social security costs. Other Asian countries such as South Korea are now reporting lower fertility than Japan which is now optimistic about having managed the lower fertility without moving to an utter demographic collapse.

A fall in fertility rate beyond replacement level would have a negative effect on the proportion of the working population, which in turn will affect output in an economy. A rise in education and independence among women would enhance their labour participation, which could arrest the fall in labour participation up to a limit. An influx of immigrants from countries with higher population growth could also play a positive part.

The impact of fertility drop on productivity is also highly debated. While a higher level of education and technological advancement in areas including artificial intelligence could increase the

productivity of the lower working age population, a paper, "The End of Economic Growth? Unintended Consequences of a Declining Population" by Stanford economist Charles Jones argues that falling fertility could diminish the creative capacity of humankind. He points to the need for ideas in technological advancement and productivity boost, which even artificial intelligence is still not capable of.

Countries across the globe are experimenting with policies to boost fertility. Germany found success in boosting births through liberal labour laws, allowing more parental leave and benefits. Denmark offers state-funded IVF for women below 40 years, and Hungary recently nationalised IVF clinics. Poland gives monthly cash payments to parents having more than two children, whereas Russia makes a one-time payment to parents when their second child is born. Russia also reinstated the Soviet-era 'Mother Heroine' title, who bore and raised more than 10 children amounting to almost a one-time payment of ₹13 lakh.

In perspective

Though the benefits of demographic dividend are being reaped, a below replacement level fertility rate would mean a smaller dividend window than expected. Although India's working-age population will continue to grow for many more decades, it would need to keep an eye on fertility dips. Liberal labour reforms, encouraging higher female labour force participation rate, and a higher focus on nutrition and health would ensure sustained labour supply and output despite lower fertility. India, like other countries in the globe, would need to be equipped to aid the patter of more tiny feet sooner or later.

Santosh Kumar Dash is an Assistant Professor at the Gullati Institute of Finance and Taxation (GIFT), Thiruvananthapuram. Sidharth R. is a postgraduate student in Economics at the University of Kerala

Remember Periyar with a pledge to embrace dissent

With majoritarianism on the rise, the iconoclast's ideas on debate and rationality of thought are more relevant than ever



K. KANIMOZHI

has the right to refute any opinion. But no one has the right to prevent its expression."

Periyar is often referred to as an iconoclast, for the rebellious nature of his ideas and the vigour with which he acted. His vision for the future was a part of all his actions. He did not merely aim at the eradication of social evils; he also wanted to put an end to activities that do not collectively raise standards of society. The radical nature of his ideas drew constant opposition.

Here, I would also want to debate some of the concepts propounded by Periyar. It is good that we refer to Periyar as an iconoclast and not an icon, because he would have dismantled that notion of an all-powerful icon himself.

He was one of the pioneering voices against the Kula Kalvi Thittam introduced by the then Chief Minister C. Rajagopalachari. It was not just a political statement; Periyar felt that it would encourage divisions based on caste that might cause irreparable damage to the social fabric. Kula Kalvi Thittam proposed to impose on schoolchildren a method of education, wherein students would learn their family's profession as part of the school curriculum. The proposal led to an uproar in the State led by voices such as Periyar and C.N. Annadurai. It was withdrawn and a message was sent to the wider



THE HINDU PHOTO ARCHIVES

world that Tamil Nadu stood united when it comes to caste oppression-related issues.

Foundation of rationalism

Periyar's vision was about inclusive growth and freedom of individuals. He was an important ideologue of his day because of the clarity in his political stand. More importantly, he understood the evolution of political thought and was able to glide through time with this. He presented rationalism as a solid foundation for thinking along these lines. He said, "Wisdom lies in thinking. The spearhead of thinking is rationalism."

Periyar was way ahead of his time. All the reforms he shared with people could not be implemented at the time because of the searing discussions they led to. It took years for the ideas to take shape in a way that could be implemented.

One such reform measure he felt was needed to change the caste dynamic in society was

'Priesthood for all castes'. Has the opposition to such ideas been reduced in a way? Not really. But we shall continue to maintain a civil debate for the overall betterment of society, as Periyar said.

The struggle against the eradication of social evils takes several decades and Periyar with his idea of meaningful rebellion has guided me to play a part in this movement. It will be a guiding force for every student reading Periyar too. "Whomsoever I love and hate, my principle is the same. That is, the educated, the rich and the administrators should not suck the blood of the poor."

Periyar said, "Any opposition not based on rationalism or science or experience, will one day or other, reveal the fraud, selfishness, lies, and conspiracies." We can posit this with regard to the extreme-right activities we see happening across the country and sometimes abroad too.

Spaces for debate are shrinking all over the world. Majoritarianism and populism are not enabling sensible conversations in any public sphere. At such a time, Periyar stands as a stellar precedent, reminding us of a time when people with opposing ideas were invited to the stage for a debate. As a part of creating a society with social justice at its core, let us pledge to create open spaces for discussions in our communities. If need be, let us spearhead such activities on whatever scale. Only these spaces have the potential of creating a positive change at an ideological level.

K. Kanimozi is a Member of Parliament (Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Letters emailed to letters@thehindu.co.in must carry the full postal address and the full name or the name with initials.

Breakfast, in school

The breakfast scheme launched by the Tamil Nadu Chief Minister for students of Classes I to V in government schools in the State is not only a novel one but also a first. The accompanying picture was a visual delight. The new scheme is without doubt a much-needed one. That many children attend classes each morning on a hungry stomach was thought-provoking. All efforts should be taken by the authorities to see that the quality of food is good and served under hygienic conditions.

SHALINI GERALD,
Chennai

■ For very young students who may not be able to express their state of mind and attend class hungry, this is a

remarkable scheme that will help in their cognitive development. It is also imperative that the Tamil Nadu government monitors the scheme which will help it reap the long-term benefits.

CHALLAPALLI NEEHARIKA,
Guntur, Andhra Pradesh

■ I am totally against freebies, but I staunchly support the breakfast scheme. A child cannot learn anything on an empty stomach. This scheme is sure to ensure the physical and mental well-being of children. Every right thinking person will extend his or her support for the laudable move.

SUBBIAH N.,
Chennai

■ "You cannot make people learn. You can only provide the right conditions for

learning to happen." These words by Vince Gowmon are completely aligned with the breakfast scheme. It will not only help in nourishment but also increase enrolment.

RISHAV,
Barnala, Punjab

■ A good breakfast will help a child have a good attention span, help him concentrate and make him happy – all important for learning in school. The Tamil Nadu government deserves praise.

K.M.K. MURTHY,
Secunderabad

■ The Chief Minister needs to identify the reason for many children going hungry. It could, in many instances, be the result of the head of the family spending a large part of his earnings on liquor. Welfare measures such as free breakfast, free monetary

allowances or free bus rides are meaningless unless we get to the root of the problem and in turn, the need for such schemes.

V. SUBRAMANIAN,
Chennai

■ A child who is well nourished would be able to climb the ladder to success quickly. The scheme is a boon for poor children. This is a timely and wonderful initiative.

LITTLE MERINTH AAMOSE A.,
Thiruvananthapuram

■ Retiring... Roger A leading sports journalist, in 2016, described Roger Federer's game this way: 'Tennis is much less demanding physically – especially if you can play with the graceful, unmatched effortlessness of a Federer.' The grace with

which Federer played the game made it look so beautiful that watching tennis was less intense and more divine.

He ruled the court with such panache that you could never hate him. He set

milestones which have now been bettered, but there is no denying that he raised the level of tennis which motivated many players to do well. We might have seen the last of Roger Federer the player, but Federer's indelible mark on the game will live on.

SUBASH BALAKRISHNAN,
Mississauga, Ontario, Canada

■ All good things have to come to an end. And so did Roger Federer's amazing tennis career. His long absence from tennis did give rise to speculation that the Swiss legend would hang his

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boots soon. His trophy-laden career has only left the tennis world awestruck.

R. SIVAKUMAR,
Chennai

■ The tennis world may never again witness such a complete player as Roger Federer in future. Many became tennis fans only because of his grace and humane touch.

MANUEL JOSEPH,
Muttom, Idukki, Kerala

■ My first introduction to Federer was in my school general knowledge book, in 2010. Even though I was never much into sports, I was drawn towards the game because of this great personality. Adieu Federer! MEDHA BARMA, Bengaluru

Caught in a zero-COVID trap

China's strategy of lockdown and mass testing that made sense in a world without vaccines is now past its sell-by date. **Ananth Krishnan** reports on what the extreme measures and the expansion of state power have meant for the daily lives of residents

In pre-pandemic times, visitors to Shenzhen would often feel as if they were travelling in time to the future. China's technology hub is famed for being at the forefront of adopting new technologies that still remain on blueprints in the rest of the world, from futuristic buildings with sprawling indoor gardens that appear right out of a sci-fi movie, to the ubiquitous use of facial recognition technology for everything from riding subways to entering supermarkets.

Today, arriving in Shenzhen still feels like time travel – except now it is to the past. More precisely, it is to two years ago at the height of the pandemic, when lockdowns were part of the daily vocabulary globally and COVID-19 was seen as a deadly and life-threatening disease in a world without vaccines.

On an afternoon this June, a group of travellers arrived in Shenzhen in the Chinese mainland from Hong Kong. The journey, once a smooth, 20-minute train ride, now involves a gruelling 12-hour exercise at the border control point. This includes two deeply invasive nasal swabs that, for some travellers, even drew blood. The group was greeted by an army of Shenzhen health personnel dressed in full-white PPEs.

The 'Big Whites' or 'Da Bai', as the PPE-clad healthcare enforcers are known in China, have in the past two years become the faces of the country's stringent COVID-19 regulations. China is the only country that still follows a heavy-handed 'dynamic zero-COVID' policy, which calls for mass testing, lockdowns and quarantining of close contacts to eliminate outbreaks in the shortest possible time.

"Keep on your masks!" a Big White yelled at one arrival whose mask had slipped slightly below her nose. The group cleared immigration after downloading and scanning numerous Chinese 'health code' apps that are an indispensable internal travel passport in the country today. They were then sprayed with disinfectant, along with their luggage, before being whisked away on buses, with full police escort, to be confined in a room for a mandatory 22-day quarantine. And these were all vaccinated travellers who had also been tested no less than twice in just a few hours.

While the rest of the world has sought to move on to some form of post-pandemic normalcy, China remains firmly in the grip of a harsh zero-COVID policy. China is where the pandemic began, and it appears increasingly likely that this is where the last chapter of the pandemic will end.

Endless lockdowns

On September 14, World Health Organization (WHO) director-general Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus noted that the number of weekly reported deaths from COVID-19 in the second week of September was the lowest since March 2020. "We have never been in a better position to end the pandemic," he said. "We're not there yet, but the end is in sight."

In China, however, there appears to be no end in sight to measures that were first imposed in Wuhan – at a time when the idea of a lockdown was still unheard of in the rest of the world – and remain a part of life for a third straight year.

Within China, through 2020 and 2021, the zero-COVID strategy was by most accounts widely popular as it ensured a degree of normal life while the rest of the world was dealing with waves of deaths and lockdowns. By the summer of 2020, China had in fact largely emerged from the pandemic's first wave quicker than most nations, with its stringent lockdowns and bans on international travel paying dividends. Outside of Wuhan and Hubei province, no cities faced mass deaths. Across China, schools remained open, and with the world closed off, domestic tourism boomed. So did manufacturing, with China's exports reaching a record high during those two years while factories in much of the world were hit by COVID-19 restrictions. Zero-COVID certainly saved hundreds of thousands of lives in 2020 and 2021, a point that the government uses to justify continuing the approach.

Yet, that has become an argument increasingly difficult to make. Confronted with more transmissible variants, the 'test and trace' bedrock of zero-COVID has struggled. The number of cities in China under lockdown now is the highest since the early days of the pandemic. Moreover, a strategy that made sense in a world without vaccines looks increasingly past its sell-by date as the rest of the world opens. If zero-COVID gave China an advantage in the first year of the pandemic, it has now left China struggling.

Harsher measures, mounting costs

As of early September, the Chinese magazine *Caixin* reported, 33 cities and an



The police work with railway authorities to check nucleic acid test reports and travel codes of passengers in Shenyang, Liaoning province. (Below): Passengers at the Hankou railway station in Wuhan. ■ GETTY IMAGES



death toll seen in the West (a fact highlighted ad nauseam by state media). Yet, three years into the pandemic, there are signs of public acceptance waning as more cities come under restrictions. Generally supportive attitudes to zero-COVID change overnight when one's own town is in lockdown. As Shanghai's residents faced two months of lockdown, thousands took to social media to ask what the point of the measures was when few severe cases had been reported officially.

No exit strategy

If China were to open tomorrow, its healthcare system would certainly be overrun and likely face a near-collapse (as India's did during the second wave). This is the argument from Chinese officials in justifying the current approach.

It is also the argument used right at the top. As more questions began to be raised about China's approach in sticking to zero-COVID, President Xi Jinping, during a symbolic visit to Wuhan in end June, mounted a robust defence of the measures, saying they "must be upheld daily life."

As variants began to spread more easily, the measures to tackle them became harsher. Shanghai was placed under a brutal lockdown of two months, with most residents not allowed to step out of their homes and many complaining of food shortages.

When an earthquake in early September struck Sichuan province, which was dealing with an outbreak, residents rushed to leave their apartment blocks to find Big Whites barring their exits.

When parts of Beijing came under lockdown in May, cancer hospitals stopped taking patients for treatment. "As long as it's not COVID that you die from, it seemed they did not care," the daughter of one of the patients told *The Hindu*.

In Yining in western Xinjiang, which has been under a harsh lockdown since early August, thousands of residents took to social media to complain of acute food and medicine shortages. Most of the posts were deleted, while state media responded with a campaign to show an efficiently managed city. One Yining resident posted that his young child had died in lockdown without access to medical treatment.

Meanwhile, economic costs are mounting. Currently, planning internal travel within China is a fraught exercise, as each city has its own health code app and internal quarantine rules. The health code app determines every aspect of life. In Beijing, residents have to take a PCR test every 72 hours to preserve a green code, without which they cannot access schools, hospitals, offices or public transport. Uncertainty of lockdowns has dampened business sentiment amid already brewing troubles in the property market, a lynchpin of growth. In the second quarter of the year, China's economy grew by 0.4%.

Most people in China have been largely accepting of the measures – they do not, of course, have a choice in the matter – seeing it as a price to be paid for normalcy and to avoid the high

Data from Hong Kong show that three doses of Chinese vaccines are effective in preventing serious hospitalisation and death. The efficacy falls significantly when only two doses are administered.

Local government officials say their health resources are being entirely spent on regular testing and lockdowns to ensure zero-COVID. The same health workers who could have been sent door-to-door to vaccinate the elderly are instead occupied with administering lockdowns and PCR tests.

China also briefly considered and then abandoned vaccine mandates. In July, Beijing rolled out the country's first vaccine mandate, but abandoned it within 24 hours without explanation, amid suggestions that authorities were alarmed by the number of the elderly who had not completed their full doses.

While the unvaccinated elderly remain a significant concern, also complicating any easing of zero-COVID is continued official messaging that portrays COVID-19 as a life-threatening disease. As one Beijing doctor puts it, "Even one asymptomatic case now means an entire neighbourhood will be locked down. How do you then communicate with people that at some stage we have to live with the virus?"

The politics of zero-COVID

That the doctor requested anonymity reveals how politicised this public health issue has become. There is no debate in China on the viability of the current measures, which are seen to have the personal endorsement of President Xi.

When Shanghai faced a surge in Omicron cases in February, the local health authorities, who had generally adopted a more open approach than elsewhere in the country, briefly suggested the city avoid a lockdown and adopt an approach that would mark a shift in China's COVID-19 strategy by only focusing on severe and elderly cases.

According to a recent account from the former Central Party School professor, in *Foreign Affairs* magazine, Cai Xia, who was removed in 2012 after criticising Xi's policies and is now living in the U.S., an online gathering of 60 experts

Even one asymptomatic case now means an entire neighbourhood will be locked down. How do you then communicate with people that at some stage we have to live with the virus?

A DOCTOR IN BEIJING

decided that life in the city could go on despite the cases. "But when Xi heard about it," Cai wrote, "he became furious. Refusing to listen to the experts, he insisted on enforcing his zero COVID policy... Just like that, a modern, prosperous city was turned into the site of a humanitarian disaster, with people starving and babies separated from their parents." Cai was referring to Shanghai authorities taking away COVID-19 positive children from their homes without their parents.

Asked why China hasn't considered planning an exit strategy, with 90% of its population receiving two doses and two-thirds receiving a booster dose – a number that would have been far higher with a sustained campaign – Chang Jile, who is the Vice Administrator of the National Disease Control and Prevention Administration, said the view is that the time isn't right. "Globally, the current pandemic is still at its height and the virus is still mutating," he said, reflecting a sharp divergence in Beijing's view and that of the WHO. "With the dynamic zero-COVID policy, we can bring infections under control in the shortest time and at the lowest social cost."

He also made it clear that this was the directive from the top. "President Xi has stressed the importance of targeted prevention, to get maximum results at the lowest cost, and to minimise the impact of the pandemic on social development. This requirement from central authorities is unchanged," he said. "Our philosophy on prevention and measures is about putting people and lives first... These measures may cause some inconvenience to normal functions and life, but we should bear in mind the overall interests of the country."

Leaving aside the fact that most residents who have suffered lockdowns would question his characterisation of "some inconvenience", the reality is zero-COVID has become intensely political in China, seen as one of Xi's legacies ahead of the start of his third term.

Some health experts privately hope that after the Communist Party's twice-a-decade conclave, on October 16, when Xi is expected to secure his third term, the country will begin to consider an exit. But there are few signs of a shift in approach in public messaging about COVID-19 to back those expectations.

What may prompt a change is the economic situation in China. Local governments, already dealing with a slowing economy, are running out of money to fund the continued testing and lockdown regime. From January 2020 until April 2022, according to *Caixin*, China

had carried out 11.5 billion PCR tests, costing \$45 billion.

A cautionary tale on state power
Within China, zero-COVID has been framed as evidence of the superiority of the Chinese political system. Yet, if it was hoped that China's extraordinary pandemic record in 2020 and 2021, after the missteps in Wuhan, would present to the world a model to be emulated, zero-COVID has instead increasingly become a cautionary tale on state power. The model has given the state extraordinary control over people's lives in China.

The potential for abuse has already come to light. When people converged in Zhengzhou in June, in the central Henan province, to protest a financial fraud that had cost them their savings, many arrived at the city's train station to find their health codes had turned red, meaning they would be immediately quarantined. The provincial authorities had tampered with their apps to prevent them from gathering. After the case caused an outcry, officials were later punished.

The other side of the lockdown model is the extraordinary power it has given local-level officials and neighbourhood committees, who haven't wielded this much influence on the lives of residents since the days of Mao Zedong. Officials now have the power to indefinitely confine residents to their homes or to close businesses by citing the pandemic. A new pandemic-centred bureaucracy now controls local-level governance in China. Signs are that it has been established for the long haul. All this has also marked a significant retreat in China's efforts to build a system of 'rule by law' as a constraint on official power. On the contrary, official power is arguably at its highest in decades.

Chinese social media is full of stories of local pandemic enforcers running amok, from confining residents to buildings during an earthquake to welding doors shut to prevent people from leaving. The system encourages the extremism, as a local outbreak, for Party officials, would likely be career-ending, taking precedence over every other aspect of governance, including driving economic growth. For the first time since the Mao era, the Chinese people need government permission to renew passports and leave the country.

On one recent afternoon in Beijing, Big Whites from a local neighbourhood committee descended on a small business in a Beijing complex and ordered it shut down, confiscating its property. Vague "pandemic violations" were cited for the move. When the employees protested that they had their rights under Chinese laws, the local officials said, "We can do whatever we want."

Rather than a model to be emulated, the zero-COVID machinery in China has emerged as a warning tale. When states accumulate extraordinary power, they are unlikely to easily relinquish it.





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RAMNATH GOENKA

BECAUSE THE TRUTH INVOLVES US ALL

STOCK TAKING

Low supplies in rice, wheat, sugar should not be a concern. State must pursue with exports, push crop, dietary diversification

RICE, WHEAT AND sugar are agri-commodities in which India's production, for much of the last decade and more, has been surpassing its consumption requirement. This has resulted in overflowing godowns and the country also turning into a significant exporter. During 2021-22, exports of rice alone were valued at \$9.7 billion, with sugar and wheat accounting for \$4.6 billion and \$2.1 billion respectively. But those surpluses suddenly seem a past story. Public wheat stocks on September 1 were at a six-year-low for this date. Mills will begin the new sugar season from October with carryover stocks that are the lowest in five years. While the rice situation is relatively comfortable, there are questions on the size of the current kharif crop, given deficient monsoon rains in the Gangetic plains and reports of a new virus causing stunting of plants in many parts of Punjab and Haryana. Moreover, low wheat stocks means that much extra pressure on rice to feed the public distribution system.

Not for nothing that the Narendra Modi government is worried, especially with annual consumer food inflation at 7.62 per cent in August and 9.57 per cent for cereals. In mid-May, it completely banned exports of wheat. Last week, it did the same for broken rice, besides slapping a 20 per cent duty on all other non-parboiled non-basmati shipments. Exports of sugar were moved from the "free" to "restricted" list on May 24, with a total quantitative limit of 10 million tonnes (mt) set for the 2021-22 season that was subsequently raised to 11.2 mt. While the new season is to start from next month, the government is yet to announce a quota. According to a report in this newspaper, it may initially allow 5 mt of exports — half of last year's — and take a call on further quantities after February. Simply put, after the wheat fiasco, where the production loss from the March heatwave was seriously underestimated, it does not want to take a chance in rice and sugar.

That said, one mustn't lose sight of the basic fact of the three commodities being prone to structural overproduction, as against occasional supply challenges of the kind now. The case for reducing acreages under them and inducing farmers to plant more oilseeds, pulses and other less water-intensive crops remains as compelling as the need to ensure dietary diversification from calories to protein and micronutrient-rich foods. The Modi government should persist with the policy of conservative minimum support price hikes on paddy, wheat and sugarcane and lift the present curbs on exports sooner than later; if at all, tariffs can be imposed instead of quantitative restrictions. With intelligent stock management, this supply challenge shouldn't last.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Breakfast in Tamil Nadu schools helps to foreground education as a political campaign tool. It's a welcome shift

CHIEF MINISTER M K Stalin's initiative to provide free breakfast to students in primary schools takes forward the idea of welfare that previous governments in Tamil Nadu have championed. This welcome step, expected to cost Rs 12.75 per student and benefit a total of 1.14 lakh students in classes 1 to 5 across the state, takes forward the universal mid-day meal scheme that the state pioneered in 1983. CM Stalin, however, has sought to frame the initiative in the context of the ongoing debate on freebies and spin it as evidence of an alternative political approach to governance. He said, "It is not a freebie, charity or incentive because it is the government's responsibility." This is in sharp contrast to his predecessors, who understood the electoral potential of free food to school children but did not bother to project it as an instrument of the ideal of social justice championed by the Dravidian Movement.

The Dravidian Movement saw education as a key factor in empowering the masses, especially those from the socially and educationally backward communities. The mid-day meal scheme in schools, universalised under M G Ramachandran in the 1980s, helped in improving school enrolment and nutritional levels among children. The Stalin government, however, seems to recognise that while free food can be an eye-catcher, the issues in education are far more complex, especially in the wake of the crisis triggered by Covid-19, and cry for out-of-the-box policy interventions. For instance, the pandemic years have led to a marked decline in learning outcomes. The initiatives launched to address these concerns may have a deeper bearing on the education sector than the breakfast scheme, which, of course, is a necessary intervention, particularly since a government survey had found that over 25 per cent students attend school without having breakfast. Initiatives such as Illam Thedi Kalvi (Education reaches home) and Ennum Ezuthum (Arithmetic, reading and writing) are aimed at bridging learning deficiencies by reaching out to students in their homes. Similarly, schemes such as Puthumai Penn Thittam for college girls and Naan Mudhalvan for preparing high school students about courses and careers are potentially transformative programmes. But these will be judged on how well they deliver on ground.

What's welcome is the emergence of education as a political campaign plank, an idea that the AAP tested with some success in the Delhi assembly elections. The contours of the campaign can be designed as per local needs and contexts, but in a country that has historically been stingy about investing in education — about 3 per cent of GDP is spent on education as against the NEP proposed benchmark of 6 per cent — political parties foregrounding education as a "duty" is welcome.

A DREAM IS OVER

A beautiful mind has taken leave of tennis with a graceful bow.

There will not be another Roger Federer ever

MAYBE THE TENACITY will upgrade to another level with Carlos Alcaraz, and the tempestuous Nick Kyrgios will raise the tantrum decibel in coming years. But tennis will forever be shorn of the tasteful elegance of Roger Federer, after the legend announced his retirement in what resembles a global dimming autumn of sport. Cold, clinical, numbers put Rafa Nadal and Novak Djokovic ahead of Federer in the GOAT race of tennis. But a perfect score of 20 Slam titles somehow suffice, or even render those ahead of him or those in pursuit quite irrelevant, when the nebulous beauty of Federer's game conjures images of a glorious sheepdog who keeps the flock in geometric precision fil from the back, rather than the silly bleating on, of herds and goats. Roger Federer won by inventing beautifully original angles of tennis strokes, not on automaton contests of "who blinks first?"

They say Federer had 20 variations of the forehand, arguably not the prettiest of his ogle-worthy ordnance, which was firmly the enduring silhouette of the gorgeous backhand. Nadal instead, could trigger 20 more revolutions on the ball, with his top-spin, to play his grunge game, in outlasting opponents. Yet, Federer had the slice and a serviceable top-spin and most importantly the half-volley, with which he countered the brute of baseliners. Tennis must tearfully accept there won't be another Federer. A dream is over.

Federer summoned those angles and changes of pace and spin and positioning, in that LIVE moment, on the spot. It is said he was precocious enough to kick a football at age 1 and his footwork could make him seem like he glided inches off the floor. But it was the pure glee he derived from keeping every stroke different and unpredictable and creative that made him uncloneable. There was a beautiful mind — intent on staying beautiful and not turning deliberately brutal to stamp his authority — that had taken leave of tennis with a graceful bow. Let the tears flow.

WORDLY WISE
WHEN YOU DO SOMETHING BEST IN LIFE, YOU DON'T REALLY WANT TO GIVE THAT UP.

— ROGER FEDERER

The administrator-statesman



PRATAP BHANU MEHTA

Madhava Rao's treatise on governance offers an alternative modernity, secularism. It remains relevant

THERE ARE MOMENTS in intellectual history that open up new vistas. The publication of Rahul Sagar's brilliant *The Progressive Maharaja: Sir Madhava Rao's Hints on the Art and Science of Government* is one such moment. The book gives fertile material for thinking about what an alternative state and constitutional imagination based on the princely states would have looked like. In the late 19th century, many princely states — Mysore, Travancore, Baroda — were experimenting with a form of government that would keep the sacral and symbolic power of the monarchy intact, create very limited avenues of representation, but would devolve power largely into the hands of capable administrators, who would impartially modernise the states, and its capabilities. They also had intellectual ambitions. Think of Baroda's roles in the life of both Ambedkar and Aurobindo Ghosh, or Vivekananda's reliance on the Maharaja of Khetri. There were other radical experiments like the constitution of Aundh, where a princely state converted itself into a Gandhian one.

But these modernising states created an extraordinary space for a forward-looking pan-Indian cadre of administrator-statesmen, wary of popular government, as much as they were of absolutist ones. Growing up in Jaipur, the joke used to be that there are two pan-Indian road initials: MG Road, after Mahatma Gandhi, and MI Road, after Sir Mirza Ismail, who had roads named after him in Jaipur, Mysore and Hyderabad. But the jewel in the crown of these administrator-statesmen was Sir Madhava Rao, the brilliant administrator at the heart of three of India's most politically important states — Travancore, Indore and Baroda. He transformed Travancore and Baroda — fixed the revenues of these states, encouraged industry, modernised their practices, created new administrative cultures, and propelled them into an ambition about learning and culture. One of India's more revered statesmen, he is now all but forgotten. The book's riveting introduction is an act of retrieval.

Monarchs, in the final analysis, rest upon nothing but the virtue of their rulers. One of Madhava Rao's tasks was to educate Sayajirao Gaekwad. For this purpose, he delivered a series of lectures, "Hints on the Art and Science of Government", a treatise in the education of the

The book is not a liberal tract in the modern sense of the term, where the starting point is the freedom and equality of citizens. The word liberal and its cognates, liberality, are used a lot. But that is in the 19th century sense of cultivating an elevated, open and magnanimous character. It broadly advocates a form of what might be called strong state liberalism. It grants great deal of personal liberty, moderate taxes, due process and equality before law, strong rule of law, strong emphasis on public health and education, and even a taxation policy that encourages manufacturing, open to men of talent (like Madhava Rao himself), without being a meritocracy.

Ruler". Like Machiavelli's *Prince*, the text was not immediately published, but it had a fugitive afterlife, with references and summaries showing up here and there. But the original text had never been seen. In recent years, interest in the text was revived by Justice Rama Jois, whose post-retirement scholarship was devoted to thinking about Indic political theory. He also published *Raj Dharm: With Lessons on Rajneeti*. The second part of the book dealt with the teachings of Sir Madhava Rao based on a garbled text. The foreword to the book, which singled out the second part for special mention, was written by Narendra Modi.

What Modi picked out from Jois's summary is an intriguing matter. In his foreword, he singles out the need for professionalism in the context of administration and statecraft. He praises Madhava Rao's emphasis on teamwork and fair play, and argues that after selecting officers for capacity "the minister should treat them with confidence".

It ends with the resounding recommendation that "his (Madhava Rao's) teachings have the potential to solve any problem faced by Governments and the Corporate World".

In a magnificent feat of detective work, archival research, dogged perseverance, Rahul Sagar managed to find the original text of Sir Madhava Rao's lectures. *Hints on the Art and Science of Government* is, now, finally in our hands. It is an astonishing window into that alternative modernity statesmen like Madhava Rao were trying to induce — a non-representative, non-absolutist, impartial administration. Historians of Indian political thought and politics owe Rahul Sagar a debt too deep to be formulated.

These are lectures for the edification of a prince; they are not sustained pieces of argument. They have two objectives. On the one hand, they articulate the aims and ends of government in a way that is impressively wide ranging. The book is not a liberal tract in the modern sense of the term, where the starting point is the freedom and equality of citizens. The word liberal and its cognates, liberality, are used a lot. But that is in the 19th century sense of cultivating an elevated, open and magnanimous character. It broadly advocates a form of what might be called strong state liberalism. It grants great deal of personal liberty, moder-



KAUSHIK DAS GUPTA

THERE COULD BE two ways to look at the government's Central Vista project. One, as an intervention to revamp parts of the public space to improve interface between the governed and those who govern. It's in another aspect that the project has drawn more attention, the makeover touted by the government as a long overdue unshackling of the nation's colonial fetters.

That shouldn't be surprising: All urban plans, especially those of capital enclaves, have ideological moorings. What should, however, be contested is the course the conversation is taking.

In an article in this paper ('Decolonising the Indian Mind', IE, September 15), BJP Rajya Sabha MP Rakesh Sinha writes of the makeover as part of the Modi government's "determination" to "decolonise" the Indian mind.

Sinha begins his arguments in ways not typical of an ideologue. A respected academic, erudition is writ large in his evocation of scholars — Tagore, Frantz Fanon, K C Bhattacharya, Ngugi wa Thiong'o, Namvar Singh — to talk of the "salience of cultural concerns" in anti-colonial struggles.

wa Thiong'o's writings have become the go-to-works for post-colonial initiatives not just because the Kenyan writer gave up writing in English for the Gikuyu language but also because he underlined that vocabulary is crucial to people claiming ownership of resources rightfully theirs. Sinha's evocation of wa Thiong'o to make a case for the "indigenous" arouses hope that he can help turn the

MISREADING THE GREATS

Evoking decolonisation to support Central Vista does a disservice

Sinha cites the eminent critic Namvar Singh's lament on the 'missing attitude of militant decolonisation' and then goes on to devote paragraphs on PM Modi in ways no different from several of the hagiographic content churned by his peers in the BJP — somewhat at odds with his parent organisation RSS's disavowal of the personality cult.

discourse on Central Vista to conversations on knowledge systems that have eluded India because its intellectual elites have been "feeble" decolonisers. His article belies that hope.

For the ideologue seems to be doing most of the talking. Sinha cites the eminent critic Namvar Singh's lament on the "missing attitude of militant decolonisation" and then goes on to devote paragraphs on PM Modi in ways no different from several of the hagiographic content churned by his peers in the BJP — somewhat at odds with his parent organisation RSS's disavowal of the personality cult.

What begs for more creative interpretation from Sinha are Singh's words of caution in the essay he refers to. "How should we oppose the new onslaught of colonisation? With our tradition? But which tradition? Tradition itself is a reconstruction: The rediscovery of the past by the present as desired. The colonialists of yesterday and the imperialists of today are presenting an image of our past which is primitive and chiefly an index of our backwardness. And closer at home, the tradition presented by Hindu fundamentalists is something else altogether, something extremely one-dimensional and narrow."

Like Sinha, Singh, too, draws from wa Thiong'o — even in the title of his essay, 'Decolonising the Indian Mind'. But in the questions, he asks, the critic is inspired by the African writer's call to resistance in ways that are at odds with the BJP ideologue: "If we were to pit an image of our nation against colonialism, whose nation would it be? The nation of those

who hold the reins of the state? But what then will be the nation of those who feel oppressed? For how long a Dalit can go on sacrificing his identity for the identity of the nation?"

In the late 1970s, wa Thiong'o was arrested by the Kenyan government and spent a year without trial in prison, writing on toilet paper supplied by the prison authorities. He has lived in "exile" for close to 40 years — alerting us to the authoritarian tendencies that have marred the tryst of large parts of Africa with decolonisation and reminding us about colonial legacies that stifle dissent.

In 1945, Nehru donned the lawyer's robe to join the defence team for INA officers charged under Section 121 of the IPC for waging war against the nation. However, despite admitting to problems with the sedition rule, his government persisted with the colonial law — here Nehru indeed fits Sinha's bill of "lazy decoloniser".

But despite the Modi government's claims to root out colonial laws — Sinha underlines this — BJP-run governments, including at the Centre, have weaponised the law to showcase its might against a range of dissenters. Conversations on decolonisation must go on. But they must be about addressing the core concerns of expanding democracy. A great disservice is done when it becomes an exercise in identity politics and, worse, hagiography.

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SEPTEMBER 17, 1982, FORTY YEARS AGO

NEW ANDHRA CM

KOTIA VIJAYABHASKARA REDDY was unanimously elected leader of the Andhra Pradesh Congress (I) Legislature Party. The new leader is expected to be sworn in along with his ministerial team. The outgoing Chief Minister Bhavanam Venkataram will submit his resignation to the governor some time before the swearing-in ceremony.

ISRAEL TAKE OVER

IN SPITE OF fierce resistance by Lebanese left-wing militiamen, invading Israeli troops with

their numerical and weapons superiority captured most key points in West Beirut. Pockets of resistance, however, remain. Fighting was reported in the heart of the city, around Prime Minister Shafik Wazzan's office and the tourism ministry, with Israelis using tanks and artillery fire to demolish buildings.

IRAN DISSIDENT KILLED

SADEQ GHOTBAZADEH, FORMER foreign minister of Iran, has been executed after being found guilty of plotting to overthrow the government and kill Ayatollah Khomeini.

KUWAITI CONSUL SHOT

A GUNMAN SHOT and killed the Kuwaiti consul in Madrid, Spanish radio reported. According to the radio, police captured the assailant who fired two shots at a car carrying the Kuwaiti diplomat.

MINIMUM WAGE

STATE LABOUR MINISTRIES have cited a series of problems in the implementation of the 20-point programme for minimum wages. They have sought more funds from the Centre.

Taking Ambedkar forward

In almost every government action, every policy to help the poor and vulnerable, Prime Minister Narendra Modi is working to realise the dreams of Babasaheb



RAM NATH KOVIND

AS INDIA CELEBRATES 75 years of its Independence, it is an opportune moment to remember the father of our Constitution, Babasaheb Bhimrao Ambedkar, who gave wings to the dreams and aspirations of the weaker and poorer sections of our society. Though governments have contributed toward nation-building since Independence, it is the Narendra Modi government that has realised the unfulfilled dreams of Babasaheb Ambedkar.

Today is also the birthday of our beloved Prime Minister, with whom I have had a long and memorable association. I have seen him work as an organisation man, chief minister and now as Prime Minister of India. PM Modi's zeal and his monumental work for the uplift of the downtrodden and weaker sections of our society – his concern for Dalits, Adivasis and women – impressed me the most. As a true disciple of Babasaheb, he has been striving hard to make India an egalitarian society.

The influence of Ambedkar on Modi is clearly visible in all his actions, programmes and policies. He has always followed the path shown by Babasaheb. In the form of "Panchteerth", PM Modi has given the nation and the world a gift. It is Modi who not only decided to celebrate the birth anniversary of Babasaheb as "Samrasta Diwas" but also gave India its Constitution Day on November 26. It was at the initiative of PM Modi that the United Nations celebrated Babasaheb's 125th birth anniversary.

Two important actions of the Narendra Modi Government which realise the unfulfilled missions of Babasaheb Ambedkar are the abolition of Article 370 and the making of Atmanirbhar Bharat.

Despite the strong objections of Ambedkar, Article 370 became part of our Constitution, which stalled the integration of Jammu and Kashmir with India. It is due to the commitment and willpower of PM Modi that Article 370 was abrogated thus leading to the unification of Jammu and Kashmir with India.

PM Modi has been working on a mission mode to make a strong, self-reliant India. Ambedkar knew that only an "Atmanirbhar Bharat" can be a developed nation. Previous governments lacked the will and commitment to take India on the path of self-reliance. It is PM Modi who started this course correction and showcased to the world the prowess of India. Today, the world acknowledges our strength.

The democratisation of the Padma Awards typifies the Modi style of governance. From being awards that looked like "extra-neous considerations" for the affluent class, the Padma Awards have now found their lost connection to the "aam aadmi". These awards are now specifically dedicated to those who are rooted and down to earth.

I would also like to mention two of the important initiatives of the Narendra Modi government that have written a new chapter of growth and development in the most backward areas and impacted the lives of those at the bottom of the pyramid – the Aspirational District Programme and the Adarsh Gram Yojna. It is PM Modi's unique quality to think out-of-the-box, his impeccable planning and flawless execution have brought tangible changes to the lives of the poorest. Several social welfare schemes are



CR Sasikumar

beneficiaries of government schemes get money directly transferred into their accounts. All the schemes of the Narendra Modi Government reflect compassion for the poorest of the poor.

Another area of deep concern for PM Modi is the control of our democratic system by dynasty politics. He has always been vocal about how dynasty politics has been usurping the rights of genuine and hard-working political workers. First, as an organisation man, later as Chief Minister of Gujarat and now as Prime Minister, Narendra Modi has always promoted leaders and workers based on merit. The war that he has waged against dynastic politics has already started to show its impact. Merit-based – not DNA-based – politics will make our democracy more vibrant and stronger.

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The last eight years under PM Modi have been remarkable. He draws inspiration from several leaders, but the imprint of Babasaheb Ambedkar on his style of governance is omnipresent. I see PM Modi as a true follower of Bharat Ratna Ambedkar, who used to say that Indianess is our true identity and to build a strong nation we all have to rise above caste, creed and religion. Following the footsteps of B R Ambedkar, our Prime Minister has made "Nation First" his motto, while good governance, social cohesiveness and discipline are the hallmarks of his government.

The writer is former President of India

great examples of this. The most prominent, perhaps, is the Pradhan Mantri Gareeb Kalyan Anna Yojna, the world's largest free ration scheme that has benefited over 80 crore people as Indians valiantly fought the Covid-19 pandemic.

I have seen closely how PM Modi led from the front in India's fight against the deadly virus. It was due to his hand-holding and encouragement that our scientists and doctors succeeded in developing not one but two Made in India vaccines, which not only gave us a safety cover but also helped several other nations. The PM undertook the mammoth task of vaccinating over 100 crore Indians when the pandemic was at its peak, thus kickstarting the world's largest and fastest vaccination programme. When Covid paralysed developed countries, PM Modi strengthened and expanded our health infrastructure. Through his timely policy initiatives, the PM also ensured that our economic growth is not stifled.

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WHAT THE OTHERS SAY

"It has become a convention for Chinese and Russian heads of state to have bilateral talks on the sidelines of the SCO summit. This is not only crucial for the development of bilateral relations, but it's also very beneficial for regional peace and stability."

— GLOBAL TIMES, CHINA

Putin's European winter

With Russia cutting off gas supply, Europe is in for a harsh season ahead unless Ukraine turns the tide of the war



OPENING ARGUMENT

BY MENAKA GURUSWAMY

RUSSIA'S INVASION OF Ukraine, and the unexpectedly sturdy fight put up by the much smaller nation has led to dramatic consequences. Russia provides a substantial amount of natural gas through a pipeline to Europe. In early September, annoyed with Western military support for Ukraine and sanctions, Russian Premier Vladimir Putin turned off Nord Stream, the natural-gas pipeline. Nord Stream is controlled by Gazprom PJSC, a Russian state producer.

Even before the shutdown, the Atlantic Council, an American think tank, estimates that Russia had reduced its supply of natural gas to Europe by almost 40 per cent. In anticipation of such a cut-off, Europe has stockpiled gas up to 82 per cent of its storage capacity. The use of natural gas as an instrument of foreign policy by Putin is not a phenomenon only surfacing now.

Putin's control over Gazprom was planned in 2000. In *Putin*, the new biography by Philip Short, the author describes how the Russian premier decided to bring oil and gas – which account for half of Russia's export earnings – under his personal control. At the time Russia had only five board seats on Gazprom in contrast to other private parties and oligarchs who had six seats. The private parties were rumoured to be siphoning away \$2-3 billion out of Gazprom every year and were hostile to the Kremlin having a say in the company.

Short writes that Putin summoned the then CEO Rem Vyakhirev in October 2000 for an hour-long private meeting, after which Vyakhirev resigned as CEO without giving any reasons. The Russian premier soon installed a loyalist as CEO and chairman of the board, after which Gazprom's shares on the London Stock Exchange shot up by 134 per cent.

Putin's shutdown means that Europe will likely face a very cold winter. And that's not all. The European economy – already reeling from the after-effects of the pandemic and the war in Ukraine – will likely be pushed to the "brink of a recession", as the *Wall Street Journal* (WSJ) writes. As the WSJ explains, Europe's economy has long relied on steel makers, chemical producers, and car manufacturers – all energy-intensive industries. With the shortage of cheap Russian natural gas, power has become more expensive and as a result, some industries are forced to close or reduce their hours of work.

European winters are legendary and have played a critical role at various points in history. Putin and the Russians know a thing or two about how to deploy the cold when battling adversaries. Russian children are taught about the Soviet Union's greatest victory: Stopping Hitler's 30,00,000 men and Germany's technologically superior army in the suburbs outside Moscow in the winter of 1941.

Let's step back in time to World War II.

The writer is a Senior Advocate at the Supreme Court

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

SCO SUMMIT

THIS REFERS TO the report, 'SCO summit begins today, PM at talks table with Xi, Putin' (IE, September 16). The SCO summit is understood to be crucial in keeping with the current international scenario. With the presence of Pakistan's new PM Sharif at the summit and considering the nature of disputes India has with both China and Pakistan, bilateral meetings on summit sidelines seem insufficient to make meaningful developments. India's pursuit of strategic autonomy and investing in areas where there is an overlap of interests between countries, is a wise step forward.

Vijai Pant, Hapur

The latest round of defections in Goa is a repeat of what has been happening too often. The BJP may, at times, be triggering the crisis, but as the editorial points out, the crossovers also indicate a malaise that runs deep in Opposition politics. Keeping the spirit of the cadres and leaders upbeat when out in the wilderness for long isn't easy. Increasingly, the Opposition leaders do not see a future in their own parties and are tempted to jump across the aisle. Add to it, the erosion of morals in politics, and lack of a political ideology – we'll find that the era of defections is here to stay.

Sanjay Chopra, Mohali

BUSINESS CALL

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'Whose project' (IE, September 16). The editorial's declaration that the decision to locate the Vedanta-Foxconn project in Gujarat has political overtones ignores facts as to how business decisions of this magnitude are made. Professional considerations like geography, communication networks, ease of doing business, work culture, basic infrastructural integrity, proximity to natural resources etc go into making these calls. In fact, any sensible business owner would ensure that their venture is fire-proofed against likely political upheavals.

H N Bhagwat, Chiplun

WEAK OPPOSITION

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'Aya Ram, Gaya Ram' (IE, September 15).



ADAR POONAWALLA

Making vaccines a jan andolan

How political leadership, private sector worked together to make immunise a nation

IN THE "FAR from normal" last two and half years, when humanity came the closest to living in a science fiction, India and Indians under the untiring leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi can collectively claim to have learnt crucial lessons. We demonstrated resilience, determination and strength that has earned respect the world over. This is an accomplishment unto itself.

Such a claim can be made for the vaccine space too. Be it the vaccine manufacturing prowess of India; be it innovations trials in R&D; be it unleashing the potential of public-private partnerships; be it digitalisation of the vaccination drive; be it how government departments come together on a mission mode; how under the leadership of the PM efforts taken to communicate and convince a billion people to take life-saving jabs, we can claim to have put together lessons of decades into two years to succeed on many fronts. That's no small achievement, particularly amid rapidly shifting realities and constantly evolving science, and given social discord and vaccine hesitancy in so many different countries.

The development of safe, effective vaccines for a novel virus like SarsCoV2 in less than a year will go down as one of the most impressive feats in the history of modern science. The role of India's vaccine ecosystem will get etched in that history. Despite myriad local challenges such as accidents and global difficulties such as acute shortage of raw-materials, the Serum Institute of India, the world's largest vaccine manufacturer by doses, and other Indian vaccine-makers churned out well over two billion doses, sufficient to cover al-

most a third of humanity – if one dose offered immunity to an individual. That scale of manufacturing is a mere indicator of what India has to offer to the world as vaccines grow more high-tech and offer life-course protection against several other diseases across ages.

The country also excelled in providing health tech solutions best showcased by CoWin, the digital backbone of the vaccination drive. The speed with which India adapted e-Vin, its smart vaccine supply chain management system used in the universal vaccination programme meant for children and expecting women, into CoWin has been exemplary. India had started issuing digital vaccine certificates right from the start, at a time when many developed countries were struggling to do so. CoWin remains that valuable platform that can prove handy if other universal or age-specific vaccines are to be administered, either responding to an emergency or in a well-planned programme. It's an asset that can also be adapted for other public health programmes.

Three areas where the country took a leap in attempting novel experiments and reaped rich learnings are vaccine R&D, the drug regulatory system, and deep engagement of the government across departments with private players to shape the Covid-19 response. First, fully aware of how uncertain the path of vaccine discovery could turn out to be, the government chalked out a well-thought-out strategy. That made sense as one didn't know at the time which one would click, and even if multiple vaccine candidates succeeded, which one would emerge the safest, most efficacious

and most convenient to use. In vaccine-making, science is so complex, that the first is not necessarily the best. Betting on a pipeline that was numerically rich, and technology-wise diverse, meant that the scientific community and innovation ecosystem packed a decade of learning into a year. It also showed us what was possible in vaccine development if companies, policymakers, and scientists came together.

Our drug-regulatory system, traditionally badgered as slow-moving, learnt to put in place accelerated pathways to approve vaccines, like many global regulators in mature markets. Keeping patient safety as the top priority, these lessons of agility and efficiency should seep into the work-flow of the regulatory system if the war against other diseases, equally or more dreaded than Covid-19, has to be waged effectively and forcefully.

What also helped in shaping the pandemic response was the way the government turned into one "whole". Under the guidance of the prime minister, a number of inter-disciplinary inter-departmental empowered groups broke the culture of working in silos and practiced what is now hailed as a "whole of government" approach in taking swift decisions.

Industry too was involved as a stakeholder in many areas. All stakeholders including media, local influencers, civil societies and international as well as national partners played supportive roles. Continuing this approach well into the future has the potential to strengthen our country's response to other public health challenges.

Finally, one of the most fundamental but

valuable lessons we have learnt is to communicate transparently and engage effectively with the community in public health contexts and exhort them to place their faith in science in a language they understand best. From cutting-edge technologies like drones, to deeply traditional auspicious symbols such as turmeric, from 24x7 public health and risk-related messages disseminated across the country, a range of innovative communication strategies were employed to invite people for vaccination or reach the last mile with vaccines.

At a time when many developed countries struggled with the anti-vaxxers movement, Indians participated in large numbers in the vaccination drive that it's a country where scientific temper trumps hesitancy hands down – 96.7 per cent of the eligible population have been vaccinated with the first dose, 89.2 per cent have taken both doses, and over 18.7 crore precaution doses have been administered. It is a clear testament to the vaccination's grand success. Special campaigns are being conducted across the country to encourage eligible beneficiaries to take up their due doses.

In 2021 alone, Covid-19 vaccination programmes averted nearly 20 million deaths globally, according to an estimate cited in Human Development Report 2022. Despite all the challenges, India, under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi has truly turned the response to the pandemic into a jan andolan (people's movement).

The writer is Chief Executive Officer, Serum Institute of India

The cheetahs are coming

THE BIG SEVEN: KNOW YOUR BIG CATS

The cheetah will be the fifth of the world's seven big cats — members of the generaes Panthera, Puma, and Acinonyx — to have a home in India. The tiger, lion, leopard and snow leopard are the other four. Jay Mazoomdaar reports

GENUS PANTHERA

Large wild cats that roar but can't purr. Among them, the lion, leopard, and jaguar are more closely related; the other strand has the tiger and snow leopard. The snow leopard is an exception in that it can't roar.



TIGER
(PANTHERA TIGRIS)

SIZE: 75-300 KG

STATUS: ENDANGERED

JIM CORBETT'S "large-hearted gentleman with boundless courage", the solitary and strongly territorial tiger is the largest of all wild cats and the most ancient of the Panthera. Primarily a forest animal, its range is the Siberian taiga to the Sunderban delta. It's the national animal of India, Bangladesh, Malaysia, and South Korea.



LION
(PANTHERA LEO)

SIZE: 100-250 KG

STATUS: VULNERABLE

NATIVE TO Africa and Asia, the lion is the most social cat, and lives in groups called 'prides'. They prefer open forests such as scrubland, and adult males have a prominent mane. The lion is among the most widely recognised of animal symbols — from the pillar of Ashoka to the main entrance of Buckingham Palace to the logo of MGM.



JAGUAR
(PANTHERA ONCA)

SIZE: 50-110 KG

STATUS: NEAR THREATENED

The largest cat in the Americas, the jaguar has the strongest bite force of all wild cats, enabling it to bite directly through the skull of its prey. Melanistic (black) jaguars are common, and are often called black panthers. Jaguar was a powerful motif in the Mayan and Aztec civilisations.



LEOPARD
(PANTHERA PARDUS)

SIZE: 30-90 KG

STATUS: VULNERABLE

SIMILAR IN appearance to the jaguar with a rosette patterned coat, the leopard was described by Jim Corbett as "the most beautiful of all animals" for its "grace of movement and beauty of colouring". The most adaptable of all big cats, they occupy diverse habitats at all altitudes across Africa and Asia. Like black jaguars, melanistic leopards are called black panthers.



SNOW LEOPARD
(PANTHERA UNCIA)

SIZE: 25-55 KG

STATUS: VULNERABLE

GHOST OF the mountains, this smokey-grey cat lives above the snow line in Central and South Asia. The most elusive of big cats, it cannot roar, and has the longest tail of all — which comes in handy for balance while hunting along cliffs, and also gives warmth when wrapped around the body. The snow leopard is the state animal of Ladakh and Himachal.

GENUS PUMA

Closely related to the domestic cat, this genus has only one extant species, the cougar.



COUGAR (PUMA CONCOLOR)

SIZE: 40-100 KG | **STATUS:** LEAST CONCERN

THE COUGAR is the second-largest cat in the Americas; jaguar is largest. Cougars are also called mountain lion /panther across their range from the Canadian Yukon to Southern Andes. Concolor is latin: "of uniform colour".

GENUS ACINONYX

This is a unique genus within the cat family, with only one living member, the cheetah.

CHEETAH (ACINONYX JUBATUS)

SIZE: 20-70 KG

STATUS: VULNERABLE

FASTEAT land mammal; only cat without retractable claws — the grip helps it accelerate faster than a sports car (0-100 km/hr in 3 secs). They are not aggressive towards humans; they have been tamed since the Sumerian era. They don't breed well in captivity — females play hard to get. Cheetahs are not big; they hunt during the day to avoid competing with other big cats.

Graphic: Anirban Sengupta; Photos: Cheetah Conservation Fund, Express, Wikimedia Commons



How cheetahs went extinct, and why they are being brought back

ESHA ROY
NEW DELHI, SEPTEMBER 16

OVER 70 years after it went extinct in India, the cheetah will return to the country on Saturday, September 17, coinciding with Prime Minister Narendra Modi's birthday. Eight African cheetahs from Namibia will be translocated to the Kuno National Park in Madhya Pradesh, where they will be released as part of India's Rs 90-crore Cheetah Introduction project.

India was to receive 20 African cheetahs this year — eight from Namibia and another 12 from South Africa — but Environment Ministry officials have said that while all the protocols

from the Indian side have been completed, as sent from the South African government is still awaited. This is the first time in the world that a large carnivore will be relocated from one continent to another.

How did cheetahs go extinct in India?

The cheetah has an ancient history in the country, with a Neolithic cave painting of a 'slender' spotted feline being hunted' having been found at Chaturbunj Nala in Mandsaur, Madhya Pradesh.

The name cheetah is believed to have originated from Sanskrit word *Chitrak*, which means 'the spotted one'.

The cheetah is believed to have disap-

peared from the Indian landscape in 1947 when Maharaja Ramanuj Pratap Singh Deo of Koriya princely state hunted down and shot the last three recorded Asiatic cheetahs in India. The cheetah was officially declared extinct by the Indian government in 1952.

While over-hunting was a major contributing factor for the cheetah's extinction, the decimation of its relatively narrow prey base species and the loss of its grassland-forest habitat also played a role.

Since the 1940s, the cheetah has gone extinct in 14 other countries — Jordan, Iraq, Israel, Morocco, Syria, Oman, Tunisia, Saudi Arabia, Djibouti, Ghana, Nigeria, Kazakhstan, Pakistan, and Afghanistan.

The cheetah is believed to have dis-

Why is the cheetah being brought back?

The aim behind the translocation is not only to restore India's "historic evolutionary balance", but also to develop a cheetah "metapopulation" that will help in the global conservation of the animal. As it is a flagship species, the conservation of the cheetah will revive grassland-forests and its biome and habitat, much like Project Tiger has done for forests and all the species found in them.

The translocation project has also helped conservation efforts in Africa, in particular South Africa. The South African cheetah population had dwindled two decades ago, before the conservation programme ensured that the numbers increased. Today, 4,500 of

the world's 7,000 cheetahs are in South Africa.

Why was Kuno National Park chosen?

Six sites, which had been previously assessed in 2010 for the translocation of the Asiatic lion, were re-assessed by WI in 2020. Kuno National Park was found to be ready to receive the cheetah immediately. Both cheetahs and Asiatic lions share the same habitat — semi-arid grasslands and forests that stretch across Gujarat, Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh.

While Kuno itself has a healthy prey base (*chital, sambar, neelgai, wild pig, gazelle, langoor, peafowl*), 700 more such herbivores have also been introduced, officials said. In Sheopur district, where Kuno is located, rainfall level,

temperature and altitude are similar to conditions in both South Africa and Namibia.

What are the future plans?

Over the coming 15 years, the Indian government will acquire two to four cheetahs from Africa, with the process undertaken at an interval of one to four years, to establish a breeding cheetah metapopulation of 35-40 in the country.

Once the population in Kuno National Park has adapted and is flourishing, the Indian government will expand the effort to reserves in other parts of the country as well.

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Climate change likely made Pakistan's extreme rainfall more intense: study

THE TORRENTIAL monsoon that has submerged more than a third of Pakistan was a "one in a 100" year event likely made more intense by climate change, scientists have said.

In Sindh and Balochistan, where August rainfall was seven to eight times heavier than usual, climate warming made average five-day maximum rainfall about 75% more intense, according to a report by World Weather Attribution (WWA), an international research collaboration that studies the role of climate change in extreme events.

WWA previously analysed the deadly heatwave that scorched India and Pakistan in March and April, with temperatures reaching 50 degree Celsius.

In Telangana today, same event, 2 celebrations

SHREENIVAS JANYALA
HYDERABAD, SEPTEMBER 16

TO MARK 75 years of the merger of the princely state of Hyderabad with the Indian Union, the central and state governments will hoist national flags at separate events in Telangana on Saturday.

Union Home Minister Amit Shah will unfurl the flag at 8.45 am at the Parade Ground in Secunderabad to celebrate 'Hyderabad State Liberation Day', while Chief Minister K Chandrasekhar Rao will hoist the Tricolour at 10.30 am in Public Gardens in Hyderabad as part of 'Telangana National Unity Day' celebrations.

The history of union

When India became independent on August 15, 1947, it was still struggling to bring the 500-odd princely states dotting its territory into the union. Among the states that had not acceded to the union was Hyderabad, leading Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel to famously

note that an independent Hyderabad would constitute a "cancer in the belly of India".

In the 1940s, a strong peasant movement, led by the communists, had started against the government of the Nizam. When discussions about accession to India started, the Nizam and the nobility were in favour of an independent Hyderabad, but the majority of the population, including peasant protesters, wanted to join the Union of India.

The Nizam used a paramilitary force called the Razakars to terrorise and suppress the peasantry, and to lead the armed resistance against joining the Union. The Razakars plundered villages and killed indiscriminately to crush the demand for merger with India, including 96 villagers in Bhairanapally on August 27, 1948.

On September 17, 1948, the Indian Army entered the princely state, which consisted of modern-day Telangana and some areas of Maharashtra and Karnataka, as part of Operation Polo. In less than a week, the Nizam and the Razakar squads surrendered.

The political context

With the Assembly polls in the state scheduled for next year, the BJP is seeking to turn the anniversary of the historic occasion into an opportunity to score political points against the TRS and its ally, the All India Majlis-e-Ittehadul Muslimeen (AIMIM) led by Hyderabad MP Asaduddin Owaisi. It has attacked the ruling party for not observing the occasion in the eight years it has been in power, and has sought to link it to the TRS's alleged "reluctance" to upset Owaisi.

The Razakars had links with an outfit called the Majlis-e-Ittehad-ul-Muslimeen, or AIMIM. The Owaisi-led party says that this original Majlis ceased to exist after September 17, 1948. According to historian Mohammed Nooruddin Khan, the president of the AIMIM, Kasim Razvi, and other senior leaders of the outfit left for Pakistan after handing over the reins of their party to Abdul Wahed Owaisi, who was the grandfather of Asaduddin Owaisi. Abdul Wahed Owaisi had not been associated with the outfit before that, says Mohammed Nooruddin Khan.

BJP national general secretary Tarun Chugh has claimed that the TRS was forced to announce plans to observe 'Telangana National Unity Day' after the Centre said that it would commemorate the 'Day of Liberation'.

While Maharashtra and Karnataka already commemorate this day as Marathwada Liberation Day and Hyderabad-Karnataka Liberation Day (some areas in the two states fell under the Hyderabad princely state respectively), the Centre aims to celebrate the day across the three states.

"It is only after the Centre's announcement that the state government decided to celebrate it. Not only the TRS, the Congress and the AIMIM have also been forced to acknowledge it. It is the BJP that has been demanding for many years that this event should be celebrated as Telangana liberation day," state BJP chief Bandi Sanjay Kumar said earlier this month.

EXPLAINED BOOKS
WILL RETURN NEXT SATURDAY

What's with this colonial nostalgia?



CHEAP THRILLS
NISHA SUSAN

Are we really not supposed to say anything bad about people after they die? That whole "*de mortuis nil nisi bonum*"—of the dead, (say) nothing but good—tag which has floated from the ancient Greeks to the Anglophone world over centuries, does that apply to all of us now? Christopher Hitchens said, "Never say anything nasty about the dead that you weren't brave enough to say while they were alive. Everything else is fair game." I want to tell the late Hitchens, some people make it very hard to say bad things about them when they are alive, so we bank on the opportunity to say it when they are safely (we hope) dead.

I ask because I have been agog while watching the whole "don't say bad things about Queen Elizabeth II" drama. While I have many gossipy rabbit-holes I thoroughly enjoy, the British royal family is not one of my beloved spectacles. But millions of people around the world have been fans, devotees and hate-watchers. And if there were any who were too young to really get into the Buckingham Palace franchise, the immense success of the Net-

flix show *The Crown* is likely to have caught them. With the result that when the 96-year-old, who was monarch of a country for 70 years, died, there were rather a whole lot of opinions. If, as someone pointed out, every six days a different country commemorates its independence from said country, one would assume the opinions would be rather mixed. Yes? In Kerala, we like to say, *ammeey thaloyalum randu paksham*. Meaning, even in the seemingly undebatable matter of someone beating up their mother, there is likely to be someone who has a different opinion. Apparently, fans of the British royal family and the colonial legacy seem to think that this is a moment for all of us to stand up and put our finger on our lips, taking this digit off only to sing praises of Elizabeth.

When the Queen was critically ill, a Nigerian-born US professor, Uju Anya, tweeted her wish for an excruciating death for the Queen. I flinched a little reading it but Jeff Bezos, the billionaire co-founder of Amazon, with his massive reach, criticised her from his own Twitter handle, a rare event. The Carnegie Mellon professor replied, "May everyone you and your merciless greed have harmed in this world remember you as fondly as I remember my colonizers." It's the kind of all-encompassing, juicy curse that Shakespearean witches would envy. And instantly I felt embarrassed for having winced in the first place. Of course, the white-washing reach of the British royal establishment



A screen showing archival footage of Queen Elizabeth in London. REUTERS

and all those who have inherited its ambitions would behave as if Elizabeth II was a nonagenarian who deserved a peaceful death. But all the millions of the elderly and young who had neither peaceful lives nor deaths in the British colonies as recently as 50 years ago, who is flinching on their behalf, where is their mourning period? Even for the

posthumous diss, there has been a disproportionate backlash against people of colour. When football fans in Ireland sang "Lizzy's In A Box" at Dublin's Tullagh Stadium, it was deemed "tasteless". When Argentinian TV host Santiago Cúneo popped open a bottle of champagne live on air while announcing the death, he was declared the chill-

est Argentinian. Anya got an avalanche of hate mail, was locked out of Twitter and criticised by her university.

No one could make the case against the colonial nostalgia lens with Uju Anya's efficiency but the American right-winger and TV anchor Tucker Carlson gave it an old-school try. In his show, he condemned the "ghoulish critics" and said the British empire was more than "just genocide". He asked, "And after 75 years of independence, has that country (India) produced a single building as beautiful as the Bombay train station that the British colonials built?" I am no architecture expert but I imagine Carlson launched a million WhatsApp forwards right away, the same million we were spared, as a brilliant person on Twitter said, when Rishi Sunak failed to become the British prime minister.

The current British regime seems to be having a gigantic attack of something inexplicable. Is it nostalgia? They have announced a 10-day mourning period; and on the Queen's funeral on 19 September, thousands of medical appointments have been cancelled—everything from cancer care to cataract surgeries and hip replacements. The genius behind this probably does know that if your grandmother's chemotherapy appointment or father's funeral was postponed because of the Queen's funeral, it's not winning her any fans.

And that is why this looks less like grief and more like what author and film-maker Naomi Klein called the

Shock Doctrine—"the exploitation of national crises (disasters or upheavals) to establish controversial and questionable policies, while citizens are too distracted (emotionally and physically) to engage and develop an adequate response, and resist effectively". In the course of a week, can you push the idea of what civility and respectability looks like to mute free speech? Anti-monarchs have been arrested in the last week for protesting the accession of King Charles III. A climate activist claims he was warned by a police officer that if he held up a blank piece of paper opposite the British Parliament, he would be arrested. Another man was arrested after heckling Prince Andrew (because of the widely cited paedophilia allegations) as he walked behind the Queen's coffin in Edinburgh.

This is also the month that a young American TV star, Jennette McCurdy, has launched her memoir, *I'm Glad My Mom Died*. After the shock passes and you read what her mother did when she was a child star, you are likely to wonder why she didn't speed along her mother's demise. As one critic thoughtfully said, "The actor Jennette McCurdy's memoir is a confessional feat that asks what, if anything, adult children owe an abusive parent." One could argue, only a "Ding Dong, The Witch is Dead".

Nisha Susan is the editor of the webzine *The Ladies Finger* and author of *The Women Who Forgot To Invent Facebook And Other Stories*.

There is no substitute for trained, talented editors

David Davidar on his new anthology and the fact that writers today haven't come up with entirely new forms of the short story

Vangmayi Parakala
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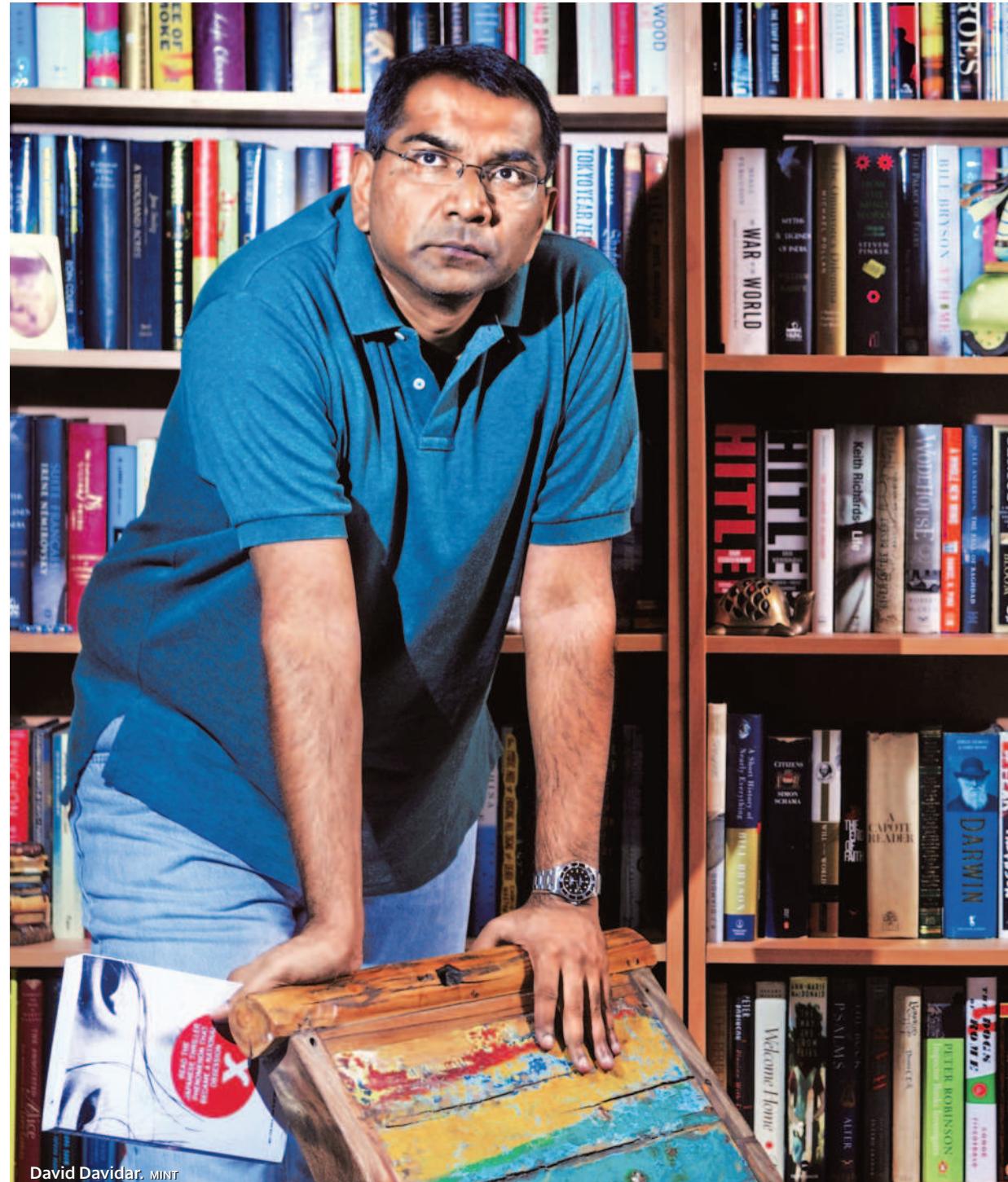
The writing is electrifying, there is no denying that. The stories are wide-ranging—some slice-of-life vignettes that offer a picture bigger than you would expect, others fully fleshed out with lively characters. Most of the 40 stories in *A Case Of Indian Marvels: Dazzling Stories From The Country's Finest New Writers*, edited by author and publisher David Davidar, are pleasurable and effective—providing glimpses of the people, places and politics of contemporary India.

This is a solid list of new and contemporary writers who represent India's literary riches and diverse points of view, both socially and in terms of literary style. In all, a great introduction to writers we don't yet know, it is also a reminder of those we do but don't ordinarily consider contemporary stars. Up-and-coming talents such as Bhavika Govil, Lakshminithi Ayyagiri, Riddhi Dastidar and Urooj, as well as new voices like Aravind Jayan, Neel Patel and Meera Ganapathi, rub shoulders with acclaimed writers like Meena Kandasamy, Hansda Sowvendra Shekhar, Srinath Perur, Tanuj Solanki and Prayaag Akbar. Their stories range from those that quietly observe our internal worlds, to ones that document sociopolitical experiences, as well as stories that imagine bittersweet, dystopian futures.

For example, Ayyagiri's *The Accounts Officer's Wife*, set a few decades ago, comments on sisterhood (or the lack thereof), arranged marriage, love, infidelity and its consequent freedom. Ganapathi's story, *Mrs. Nischol*, exhibits with flair the internal and external life of a married woman. In the 19th century, when masters of the short story emerged, such stories were deemed "domestic fiction", often a term used with derision. Over time, though, these stories have been understood for what they are—incisive, psychological takes on everyday life, as seen in both Ayyagiri's and Ganapathi's stories.

Another standout example is the fable-like dystopian fiction by Kanishk Tharoor. *Swimmer Among The Stars*, first published in an eponymous story collection in 2016 by Aleph Book Company, picks up the academic process of language documentation and archiving and imbues it with a clinical emptiness. In a system that mostly spotlights best-sellers, stalwart authors and other headline-grabbers, Davidar's packaging of these voices as "the country's new writers" is smart messaging.

Among the earliest editors in the Indian commercial publishing landscape—he was one of the founding members of Penguin India in the late 1980s, publishing authors like Ruskin Bond, Arundhati Roy and Dom Moraes, before setting up Aleph 22 years ago—Davidar is also the author of three books, *The House Of Blue Mangoes* (2002), *The Solitude Of Emperors* (2007), and *Ithaca* (2011). *A Case Of Indian Marvels* is his second



David Davidar. MINT

The challenge facing today's writers in India is this: How do you make a genre that's over a century old fresh and arresting so readers will embrace it?

“

storytelling to create a new hybrid that's fast-paced, clever, and yet does not sacrifice depth and insight.

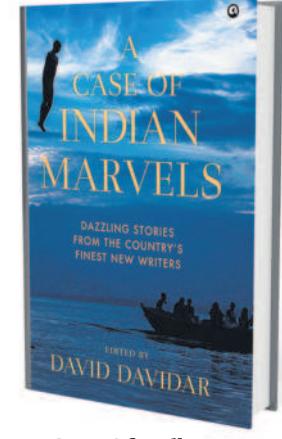
You write rather passionately in your introduction that while age is no marker of achievement, being formally published is a litmus test to establish worth. At a time when young writers are on online platforms like Tumblr and Wattpad, do you think that will change?

Tumblr, Wattpad, Scribd and other similar writing and publishing platforms perform a very useful service but the problem is always with such platforms: this is true of social media platforms as well—is that the quality of the writing is patchy. Without filters, this is unsurprising. Also, there is so much stuff on these

platforms that excavating scintillating writing from beneath the dreck will always be an arduous task.

It's true that these platforms get would-be writers started on their craft. However, there is no substitute for having creative work assessed by trained, talented editors. Equally important is the editorial process, where the work of writers is edited and polished to be the best it can possibly be. I think there is no book that cannot be improved upon and I am no believer in books that fall perfectly formed from the heavens. So, yes, I think it's important for writers to be edited and published by credible publishers, although these do not necessarily have to be traditional print publishers.

Non-fiction and self-help always do



A Case Of Indian Marvels—Dazzling Stories From The Country's Finest New Writers: Edited by David Davidar, Aleph Book Co., 408 pages, ₹999.

better commercially. Literary fiction is a slow-mover—is the short story form the one remaining hope for it?

Big, ambitious, category-breaking non-fiction books are the most exciting thing about the Indian writing and publishing scene these days. This was long overdue as our non-fiction earlier was limited to largely unreadable scholarly books bristling with footnotes aimed at the academic community, or superficial popular books. The situation in India not so long ago was in stark contrast to the US and UK, where monumental biographies, histories and books about science, sport, culture, the environment, current events and so on were being published. These not only possessed impeccable scholarship but were also lucid, accessible and immensely readable. That's starting to happen here and I couldn't be happier.

If literary fiction isn't working as well as it used to, that's probably because, some exceptions notwithstanding, it's not good enough to attract a substantial readership. I don't think the short story can save the day for literary fiction as a whole.... I don't think writers today have come up with entirely new forms of the short story, although, refreshingly, their concerns and plots are new.

There are only five translated works among the 40 stories...

The challenge when it comes to finding new and exciting talent in languages other than English is straightforward: Very few of us read in more than one language and so it's very unlikely that we are going to be routinely spotting talented writers in India's many languages.

Despite a renewed interest in translations on the part of publishers and readers, we have barely scratched the surface when it comes to translating the best writing from the past 100 years from the dozens of languages in which our literature was created.... Hopefully, in the future, more great work by young writers working in languages other than English will be translated and brought to the attention of readers.

Climate change as business

Climate change has become the survival challenge of the 21st century. Now that "net zero" goals for carbon emission have gained near-universal acceptance, they will begin to drive transformational economic change through massive waves of investment. Change will sweep across virtually every major industry and activity (from energy to transport, and construction to heavy industry), and boost related businesses like solar panels and batteries, and businesses further upstream like electronic chip-making (which consumes a lot of energy) and special metals. New hydrogen pipeline grids may supplement existing ones for gas and oil, and charging stations could be everywhere. It is difficult to think of a major industry that will not be affected, whether fertiliser made with green ammonia, or steel without using fossil fuels. In a couple of decades, the economy may be unrecognisable from today's.

With good reason, for every week's headlines drive home the imperative for change. Pakistan is drowning, its economy taking a 9 per cent hit from unprecedented floods; the rains are said to have been magnified by 50 per cent because of climate change. The generally less predictable weather has affected agricultural sowing patterns, set off forest fires, and made places like Britain as hot as an Indian summer. Sometimes it feels like an almost end-of-times situation as Himalayan glaciers recede, gigantic bits of Antarctica break off, the seas rise, and all forms of life (from butterflies to beavers) move from the warming zones to colder ones.

And so, if one looks at the investment plans being announced by large companies, the biggest have to do with climate change. That includes enterprises placing big bets on electric cars and scooters, a complete switch to electric traction for the railways, and the further scaling up of solar and wind energy farms, to be used increasingly to make green hydrogen. Think also of traditional businesses going green, and the pressure to use less energy, create less (and recycle more) waste, and become less material-intensive. Every business from cement and steel to consumer packaging and even shipping (smoother paint for a ship to slice more easily through water) is caught up in the transformation.

The de-carbonisation of human activity will build on what has already been made possible by digitisation and the communications and data revolution. That means an end to the daily commute, virtual meetings, telemedicine, even (though more dubiously) education — along with the transformation of banking from physical to virtual. Covid has helped push these changes along.

These could spur longer-term lifestyle changes. Like living further away from the big metros, in new, friendlier enclaves with supporting infrastructure. The faster inter-city trains being launched would help. Why not live in more spacious homes in less hurried Chandigarh or Jaipur, and commute to Delhi when needed if the journey takes only a couple of hours? Or Meerut if you are so inclined, with a train commute of less than an hour?

The combination of crisis and opportunity has brought governments together with businesses like only a crisis can, though in Europe and elsewhere the Ukraine conflict has pushed many countries back to carbon dependence. Still, countries have emission targets to meet, prompting incentives and subsidies for the desired investments. Reliance is reported to have asked the Gujarat government for 1,800 sq km of land in Kutch for its green energy project — that is an area slightly bigger than Delhi state. It's not just Ambani and Adani, and Tata. Public sector giants like Indian Oil and NTPC, Larsen & Toubro and ReNew Power, among others, have latched on to the new opportunities. A ride-hailing company like Ola is into e-scooters, and home delivery is already changing retailing.

Some businesses will suffer, of course: The travel and hospitality segments, the office-wear market, cinema halls challenged by video streaming, and commercial real estate as companies downsize if not give up offices. In their place, pied-a-terres in metros for those living beyond even the exurbs might spell real estate opportunity. In any case, India as a late-comer has an unplanned advantage: It has to destroy less of the old to make way for the new.

Chance to reform, redeem

The Supreme Court has another opportunity to fix India's distorted system of electoral funding. It is also a chance for the top court to redeem itself

ILLUSTRATION: BINAY SINHA



At the root of all political corruption is electoral funding. It began with the first general election in 1952. Three generations of the wisest Indians failed to defeat it over 65 years.

Finally, on April 1, 2017, it was legalised with the passing of the Union Budget. So, it has remained for five crucial years while a new national government and two dozen state governments have been elected, toppled, re-elected and so on.

Now, with the long-frozen hearing on the challenge to the Narendra Modi government's anonymous electoral bonds (inserted in that 2017-18 Budget) finally listed by the Supreme Court registry for September 19 (it isn't on its roster formally yet, so fingers crossed) India will see one last opportunity. It was in early April 2019, that a high-powered three-judge Supreme Court Bench headed by Chief Justice Ranjan Gogoi, and including Justices Deepak Gupta and Sanjiv Khanna, passed an interim order. It was, regrettably, so indecisive that it made it seem as if Alexander Pope had written his "willing to wound, and yet afraid to strike" line specifically for it.

We have to weigh our words carefully in questioning the top court at any time, but especially in this case. Because, more than passing an interim order that would allow them to revisit the case in detail soon, it seemed more like a case of kicking the can of worms down the road indefinitely. That "indefinitely" has already consumed three and a half years and the tenure of three chief justices since. Chances are, by the time this hearing gathers pace, we will be in the era of the fifth.

We are inured to endless judicial delays. This has provided a perennial theme for Bollywood movies. So deeply ingrained have the judicial delays and their acceptance become in our culture that even our top judges now use that immortal "tareekh-pe-tareekh" line from Sunny Deol's *Damini* (1993) when they berate some slow-moving high courts.

This case, however, seemed more like a victim of the usual delays. This looks, and I say it with the greatest humility and respect, a case of risk avoidance. It looks too messy, let's leave it for later. In any case, many states had already voted in the first phase of the 2019 general elections the previous day. For sure there should be transparency, the Bench said in that interim order. And they indeed gifted us transparency. It is just that it was the transparency of the sealed envelope.

They said every party had to give the details of donations received through these anonymous electoral bonds to the Election Commission of India (ECI) by May 30, 2019. It was then left to the ECI to decide whether, when and how to reveal these. In effect, they tossed the ball sideways in the adjoining court: The ECI has sat tight on these details. It would be foolhardy for mere superannuated civil servants to rush wherein the apex court judges fear to tread.

Now, fear is a rude word, but I merely use an established, clichéd phrase. We can put it differently, using a line from Chinese strongman Deng Xiaoping. In the 1988 summit meeting with Rajiv Gandhi in Beijing, he made his case for putting the border dispute out of the way by arguing, with typical Chinese flourish, that "our generation perhaps did not have the wisdom to resolve an issue as complicated as the border. Let us, therefore, leave it to a wiser generation in future and progress where we can".

It seems more reasonable that the interim April 2019 order reflected some such thinking. The question is, has the generation of judges with that wisdom risen now.

Even when the late Arun Jaitley brought in these electoral bonds in his 2017-18 Budget, he had conceded that it was only a partial reform. This was just the first step, he said, to take black money out of electoral funding. That was a reasonable point as until then rich individuals, corporations, good or not-quite-so-good property sharks, mining barons, criminals, smugglers, thugs, just anybody could bring cash in wheelbarrows and give it to the political parties and leaders they



NATIONAL INTEREST

SHEKHAR GUPTA

believed in—or needed to cultivate. Now they were able to buy bonds from the State Bank of India. Obviously only from their white money.

They had a further incentive in keeping it in the white domain because political contributions through these bonds were tax deductible. It also enabled the political class to migrate to the same white environment because the contributions they received were tax-exempt. But, if it was the first step towards transparency, the exclusion of the logical next made it a remedy worse than the disease.

This is how it worked out. A donor — usually a corporate — could go to the State Bank of India and buy the electoral equivalent of a bearer cheque or bond. These could just be given away to the party of their choice. Which, in turn, would deposit it into a designated bank account. The donor doesn't need to tell anybody who the bonds are being given to, the recipient doesn't need to disclose where they've got it from.

So, while the first step brought electoral funding from black into white money, the second brought it in the cloak of anonymity. It was still like money being passed between interested parties in total darkness without the voter knowing who paid whom and how much. Or the citizen and any of the institutions knowing if any decisions could've been influenced by such payments. An anonymous contribution would still draw by default the suspicion of being a bribe. It was now worse than before. Fully legalised electoral corruption.

Let's explore it further. The voter, the citizen, did not know who was paying whom or whether any decisions came as a result of this. Who knows, for example, why massive tariff raises were suddenly handed out to one sector, say steel, when we had no way of ruling out a cartelised industry making a sizeable purchase of the same bonds?

Further, while no one outside knew anything, the "system" knew it all. After all, a public sector bank knows exactly who has bought or which political party has deposited how much. The rest needs a simple matching of bond numbers. Determining who's a friend and who the foe is as simple as that for those owning the "system". The government of the day would therefore know not only who to reward but also who to punish if so wished.

Now you understand why we say the 65-year battle against electoral corruption was lost on April 1, 2017, and why the new electoral bonds instead of cleaning up the system legalised corruption.

Given what our expectations from the political class are, nobody believes the Bharatiya Janata Party government will keep its promise of further reforms. The real disappointment was the too-hot, leave-it-to-a-wiser-generation response of the Supreme Court of India.

It's been more than five years since India's system of electoral funding is now more distorted than in the era before this cynical "reform". Can India count on its most respected institution to bring clarity, and redeem itself in the process?

By special arrangement with *ThePrint*

What an uncle can teach his nephew



PLAIN POLITICS

ADITI PHADNIS

Never has aloo break caused such brouhaha in a political party. The Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) held a convention in Delhi last weekend. Party leader Ajit Pawar, also party chief Sharad Pawar's nephew, was present on the dais. But he walked off the stage when the dais. But he walked off the stage when he was invited to the deal-making department and, after the Assembly elections, went to the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) with an offer it could not refuse. He returned to the family bosom when he couldn't muster enough numbers.

A recent book by Priyam Gandhi-Mody asserts otherwise: That Ajit had the full support of his uncle in jumping ship.

The book records a call Devendra Fadnavis made to Sharad to seal Ajit's defection when talks appeared to be at

such an advanced stage that the NCP and BJP discussed not just portfolios but even

guardian ministers once they'd helped

each other to form the government. It also

describes a conversation between Sharad and Prime Minister Narendra Modi that

suggests talks had progressed — before Senior Pawar changed his mind, plumping for other friends.

If this is true, Ajit, who was acting as an honest broker, must have felt pretty small. There are other past slights and frustrations. Before the 2014 Lok Sabha elections, he insisted on a ticket for his son Parth for the Maval Lok Sabha seat though Sharad publicly counselled against the move. Parth lost the election. In 2012, then chief minister Prithviraj Chavan announced the government would release a white paper on the status of irrigation projects in Maharashtra. The minister on whom the white paper would have sat in judgement was Ajit Pawar. The announcement — maybe — took his uncle too by surprise.

The latest provocation that caused fury was the fact that Mr Patil had been given prime place rather than him. When the Uddhav Thackeray government fell, the Shiv Sena split, and the Shinde Shiv Sena faction formed the government with the BJP, it was not Mr Patil who was named leader of the Opposition in the Assembly but Ajit Pawar. Mr Patil had already staked claim to the position and, as president of the party's Maharashtra unit, was required to write to the speaker. When he was told it was Ajit who would be occupying the position, he simply sat on the letter: It took two calls from Mr Patel to get him to issue it.

There's a lesson in all this. Despite his political caprice, how has Senior Pawar lasted so long in politics and has earned the respect even of his adversaries? It has to do with conduct. Mr Pawar is a Congress politician cast in the older mould — who does not believe in turning political rivalries into personal feuds. He never uses harsh language about his political opponents, even during election rallies. In fact, he tries to build bridges with all his political opponents, which is why, despite being in fierce competition for number one position in Maharashtra, he shared an excellent personal rapport with the late Sena supremo Bal Thackeray and would almost certainly have managed to get his support for prime ministerhip if he had ever made a bid for it.

And the one thing he has certainly never done is flounce out of meetings where a rival was given pride of place. Younger leaders like Mr Fadnavis have been withering in their assessment of Sharad Pawar. At a media conclave some years ago, Mr Fadnavis said in reply to a question: "He likes to play chess and I don't like the game much. Sharad Pawar is incessantly obsessed with the politics of power and subterfuge, but I am only interested in development." But Sharad Pawar is still around, and the politics of power and subterfuge is not unknown to Mr Fadnavis as recent events have shown. There is much to be said about being comfortable in your skin in politics. That comes from self-confidence — and a control on ego.

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Forget the speakers, the Bose logo itself has always fascinated me. It is made up of a simple wordmark. But it's not a boring, outdated or static design. In fact, it's quite the opposite. The Bose logo is a slightly italicised logo, slanting to the right to give off the feeling of movement. The Bose brand name is made up of block-like lettering. It's big and bold and bubbly, but also carries with it a very edgy, angular and geometric vibe that calls back to the brand's technical roots. I just love it.

So what has made a brand launched by a professor of Indian descent in the US such a world beater that his parent nation of 1.4 billion people has not been able to catch up? I think, first and foremost, it has been relentless research; which has led to unparalleled innovation; and resulted in unbeatable excellence, such that Bose has become the platinum standard of the audio industry. Few Indian brands are that passionate, or that possessed. Or that proud.

In 1968, the company introduced the Bose 901 stereo speaker system, which used eight mid-range drivers pointing towards the wall behind the speaker, and a ninth driver towards the listener. The purpose of this design was to achieve a dominance of reflected over direct sound in home listening spaces. The design used in the 901 was unconventional compared with most systems, where mid-range and high-frequency speakers directly faced the listener. The 901 was an immediate commercial success. The rest, as they say, is history. Last year, Bose Corporation's annual sales were \$3.2 bil-

lion, and the company employed approximately 7,000 people.

Bose headphones are worn today by professional pilots and have been worn by space shuttle astronauts. Its car audio systems have been factory-installed in luxury brands such as Maserati and Maybach. Bose speakers were the first audio system custom built for the interiors of the 1983 Cadillac Seville. And the list of achievements stretches on.

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The Queen on screen

EYE CULTURE

DEBARGHYA SANYAL

Elizabeth II, the world's longest-serving monarch, was also a character — or several. As a Bond Girl, she jumped out of a helicopter with James Bond and landed at the London Olympics stadium. As an animated character, she TKO'd Stuart the Minion. To Paddington Bear, she revealed that she carried a marmalade sandwich in her handbag for emergencies.

Helen Mirren, whose portrayal of the former monarch in *The Queen* (2006) is one of the most acclaimed, once described her as a submarine. "The Queen's feelings, her history, and her emotions — everything she was as a human being — remained underwater. And the queen that we see is like the periscope that comes up and looks around." Perhaps it was this discretion, this propensity to swim beneath the surface that also made her a favourite icon in Western cinema. Directors and writers have taken various degrees of creative freedom imagining the Queen, churning out an abundance of caricatures and satires.

Nor was Elizabeth II solely confined to British and American pop-culture texts. In India at least, I have the not-so-fond memory of Hrithik Roshan dressed as "the Queen" and sand surfing in *Dhoom 2* (2006). There's also Samantha Glendinning, as a stiff-upper-lipped Elizabeth who is almost offended by Krishnamachari Srikkanth's face twiching in *83* (2021). However, while commercial ventures have mostly achieved lampoons, a more colourful study of the Queen's connection with the Commonwealth can be found in documentaries.

There's the Reuters-Gaumont British Newsreel documentary of her 1952 trip to Kenya, where Princess Elizabeth became the Queen. Five years into her marriage with Prince Philip, the future Queen was at her Kenyan home Sagana Lodge when she received the news of her father's demise and her accession to the throne. The film is rife with all the usual "Royal Visit" flavours — parades and polite smiles, garland and handwavers from open-top cars. But tucked away amidst these are a few amusing scenes meant to document the royal couple's personal moments at the Treetops Hotel. One wonders what brief the filmmakers must have received, for filming these scenes. As the Prince and Princess marvel at Kenya's wildlife reserves, engrossed in private conversations, the camera obstinately holds on to long or medium-long shots, as if the viewers are themselves spying two exotic creatures in the safari. One almost expects David Attenborough's

voiceover to boom out, goading us to silently observe their "regal restraint." While the production mostly holds the mould of state-sponsored documentaries, the setting of the African savannah and the peculiar cinematography presents a unique post-colonial commentary on the eve of King George VI's passing. Incidentally, though, these shots also provide a rare glimpse at the queen as a young woman, in equal parts curious and apprehensive as she traverses new terrains, both literally and metaphorically.

Two years later, Queen Elizabeth would star in the first feature-length documentary made in colour in Australia, documenting her first visit as the reigning monarch in 1954. The Queen in Australia is a very different, very extravagant affair. Kevin Murphy, director of the News and Information Bureau, Department of the Interior, had decreed that the film should "present Australia against a royal background, rather than royalty against an Australian background." As if on cue, the 1-hour film lays out elaborate panoramic shots of Australia's cricket grounds, tennis courts, beaches, safaris, and broad streets thronged by its masses as they wave to the Queen. There are multiple scenes of Australian people listening to the Queen's speech on the radio. This is not in fact a film about her, but about a nation in thrall of her, hungry to prove their Britishness. Here, the Queen is but a catalyst for Australia to precipitate on screen.

The images aren't always as flattering, however. Amidst the several horse races, rose-garden tours, or the visits to the Victoria Memorial and the Taj Mahal, that mark the Queen's three trips to India (1961, 1983, and 1997), lies hidden yet another piece of amusing documentary filmmaking. In a short clip from the '83 trip, available now on the Royal Family's official YouTube channel, is a snide piece of commentary on

Fruitless journey

Without a strategy or party haul, Congress's Bharat Jodo Yatra unlikely to revive the Opposition

The criticality of a revival in Opposition politics in India today cannot be overstated. Congress general secretary Rahul Gandhi's attempt at mass action with his Bharat Jodo Yatra is an expression of this political necessity but it needs to be viewed in the light of three simultaneous developments. The first is the declaration by Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal that the "Congress is finished" and that the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) would be contesting all the seats in the upcoming Gujarat assembly elections. AAP is running an energetic campaign in the western State where it has had no prior accomplishments. In contrast, the Congress is plagued by a series of high-profile defections and infighting. The second notable event took place in Goa where eight out of 11 MLAs in the State Congress Legislature Party merged with the BJP taking the NDA's majority in the State Assembly to 33 in the 40-member House. The third is the Congress's ongoing organisational elections wherein Rahul Gandhi's declaration that neither he nor any member of his family would take the top job is being sharply contested by senior leaders who assert that the party continues to be run by Gandhi and his various "minions". Whether Gandhi would be the next President or he wants to install his appointee in the driving seat is not yet clear while the chorus for him as President grows. These events underline the most critical faultline in the principal opposition party's current revival strategy. This faultline lies in the Congress's proclivity to confuse mass action with political strategy, programme, organisational strengthening and credible leadership.

To be sure, there is an undeniable correlation between mass action and mainstream politics, easily understood in historic precedents such as the Ram Janmabhoomi movement that propelled the BJP's meteoric rise. Or, in more contemporary times, Anna Hazare's movement for Lok Pal that crafted the downfall of the UPA and generating the kind of momentum that helped candidate Narendra Modi in the 2014 general elections and Arvind Kejriwal in the Delhi Assembly elections six months later. But the difference between these precedents and the Congress's Yatra is that in all previous instances, mainstream parties that benefited from mass action had a ready strategy, political plan, organisational preparedness and leadership. In the case of the BJP, the Ram Janmabhoomi movement had a clear ideological agenda and ready leadership. When the BJP aligned with Anna Hazare's movement in the period before the 2014 general election campaign, there was a simultaneous organisational haul that included ruthlessly ridding the top tier of the same old guard that had brought the party from the fringes to the mainstream of Indian politics. In June 2013, then BJP President Rajnath Singh anointed Modi as the chairman of the party's national election committee and de-facto PM candidate despite LK Advani resigning from all party posts over the decision. Similarly, in the case of AAP, Arvind Kejriwal literally designed and created his party in the aftermath of the anti-corruption movement.

The Congress's present tack seems to not have factored in these realities as the Yatra meanders its way across the country with its political message of a more inclusive India and constitutionalism, as opposed to the BJP's ultra-nationalism. These are noble ideas but bereft of strategy, organisational strengthening and leadership, such mass action would not amount to any significant revival of the Opposition space.

OTHER VOICES

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

EUROPE

McDonald's and the crisis of Chicago

McDonald's Corp. calls Chicago home, with its corporate headquarters and some 400 restaurants, but CEO Chris Kempczinski issued a frank warning Wednesday about the city's crime and social deterioration. "Everywhere I go I am confronted by the same question these days: 'What's going on in Chicago?'. There is a general sense out there that our city is in crisis," he said, and he's right. The fast-food chain moved its headquarters to the Loop from the suburbs in 2018, and Kempczinski estimates its economic contribution to the city at \$2 billion a year. But lawlessness is taking a toll. NEW YORK, SEPTEMBER 15

THE STRAITSTIMES

Making digital banks more inclusive

One of the rationales for the licensing of digital banks in Singapore was that they would accelerate financial inclusion by serving those segments of the population and business community that are not served adequately by traditional banks, such as new entrants into the workforce, gig economy workers and micro-businesses. But there is a risk that some segments of the population may remain underserved. There is a real risk that people such as retirees may be among those excluded from accessing certain services by at least some digital banks. SINGAPORE, SEPTEMBER 16

Will G7 move to cap oil price work?

Unlikely, as Russia can cut supplies and push up global oil prices steeply. Also, the G7 proposal can distort the oil market



RICA MISHRA

CAPITAL IDEAS

On September 9, at a special briefing on 'G7 Price Cap on Russian Oil', Elizabeth Rosenberg, Assistant Secretary for Terrorist Financing and Financial Crimes, US Department of the Treasury, said: "The price cap policy is an important tool to put downward pressure on global energy prices by allowing Russian oil to continue flowing to the global markets, which will help to mitigate price spikes and put downward pressure on oil prices. That's good for countering inflation..."

The price cap policy is also expected to deny Russian President Vladimir Putin revenues to fund his war in Ukraine.

This is not the first time that a "price cap" is being discussed. The Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) had a concept of price band, which was subsequently suspended. While the idea of a price cap by G7+EU is to reduce Russia's oil revenue and deter financially from prolonging the Ukraine war, the ground reality could be different. Here is why.

Due to higher international crude prices, even with a discount, Russia has been earning healthy oil revenues. And suppose the cap does come into effect, given the sheer volume that Russia produces, and if China and India remain the main buyers, it can still make money.

But first let us understand the cap that G7 is talking about.

According to Rosenberg, "The price cap policy itself builds on the

European Union's sixth sanctions package that enters into force on December 5. Specifically, the EU has announced prohibition of services like insurance, banking or brokering for the seaborne shipment of Russian oil and products globally. So, the new announcement from the G7 confirms that all its members will bring into force similar prohibitions.

"Critically, the provision of these services will have an exception, which is to say that oil, Russian oil, sold under the price cap or product sold under the price cap will be expressly permitted. Given that the EU and the UK provide 90 per cent of global shipping insurance and G7 countries provide an overwhelming majority of payment and financing services for the global oil trade, there will be great effectiveness and the policy will be quite far-reaching."

According to Rosenberg, "the US and allies and partners and many broadly in the G7 have announced plans to wind down their own imports of Russian oil, so the price cap won't change that commitment, whether this has to do with the services that they provide or purchases of Russian oil by others. Importantly, and I want to stress this, if the G7 did not put in place this price cap policy, we anticipate that it could have led to significant global price spikes, which would harm consumers and businesses around the world... That would let the Kremlin take advantage of this price spike to further pad its own pockets and sell oil at a significantly higher price."

Not an effective way

While it is a fact that the price cap will allow flow of Russian oil into global markets, it may not be the most effective way to keep oil market well supplied and keep energy prices low. On the other hand, it will distort the market, given the various markers like Brent, WTI, Bonny



Due to higher international crude prices, even with a discount, Russia has been earning healthy oil revenues AP

Light, Opec Basket and Murban all sell at different prices.

A debate is still on regarding the basis of determining the cap price—will it be on cost of production basis or some historical average price and will it be linked to a benchmark, say, Brent with deep discounts?

Says Rosenberg: "There are several key data points we are considering in how the price should ultimately be set, and that includes the marginal cost of production for Russian oil—that is to say, the price cap price should be over the marginal cost of production for Russian oil—as well as it should be in line or consistent with historical prices accepted by Russia in the global market."

"Over the coming weeks, we in the G7 and this price cap coalition will work together to determine the price cap and to bring forward the legal regimes in our own jurisdictions that will be of more specificity and clarity to exactly how this will work operationally," Rosenberg added.

The main premise of G7 is that it can enforce a price cap by asking insurance companies (Western insurance companies + Japan control 90 per cent of the business) not to ex-

tend cover and, thereby, restrict tankers from transporting Russian crude.

However, given that crude is more fungible compared to gas in international trade, Russia can still create havoc by reducing supplies, which may lead to a crude price spiral. On the ground, the enforcement of a price cap will be a big challenge. Russia can calibrate its position with time to hit back at Western countries, and the ripple effects may be felt by other importing countries. Remember, this is a sector where a million barrels a day cut in supply can lead to a price surge.

Artificial price

As Probal Sen, Analyst, ICICI Securities, puts it: "The move will result in artificial price of fungible commodities in the world. While details are yet to be disclosed on what will be the mechanism adopted for deciding the cap, there is also a challenge as to how much Russian crude can consumers like India absorb."

Another question is: Will major importers like China and India support such a move? Some experts feel that as countries are looking to control inflation, they may avoid taking the risk of supporting the price cap.

But there is also another side to it. If there is a cap, it could be an advantage to consumers like India as they can easily increase the volumes from Russia and buy crude oil at a discounted price.

Of course, Russia will seek to sell its oil to countries outside the price cap, but doing so will come at a cost to Russia and the buyers, who will face higher prices for the services necessary to ship oil without access to G7 services, believe the Americans.

On what it means for consumers like India, the US feels India will have access to lower price, to more affordable energy. India till now has been clear in its position—whichever market gives it the best price, it will source crude oil from there.

Price cap or no cap, it will remain an advantage India so long as it gets crude oil at a discounted price, but it will definitely distort the oil market, particularly the price dynamics in the long term, making it more volatile. For a consumer like India, it is important to maintain a clear stance and keep its energy basket well expanded. What remains to be seen is how consistent will New Delhi be on the policy front.

How States can give a boost to agri-tourism

Apart from having their own policies, States must involve the local administration and create awareness

SSARATH/SD SIVAKUMAR

Globally, the agri-tourism market was valued at \$42.46 billion in 2019 and is projected to reach \$62.98 billion by 2027, growing at a CAGR of 13.4 per cent from 2021 to 2027. Agri-tourism includes a variety of activities and services and it is in general considered to be a low-investment, low-risk sector. It can fuel rural economies through the multiplier effect and the benefits shared amongst different businesses within the community.

Agri-tourism was officially initiated and recognised by Italy in 1985, when the country's parliament and senate passed the National Legal Framework for Agri-tourism. The fundamental concept of agri-tourism was entrepreneurial diversification of a farm. This was later amended to 'Regulations of Agri-tourism', which privatised and extended the concept of agri-tourism to agricultural firms.

Agri-tourism is regulated at the regional level in some countries, such as Spain, rather than at the national level, or through a national framework regulation. This is due to the regional autonomous com-

munities' expertise in tourism management. Many states in the US have passed agri-tourism laws, which may provide an affirmative defence to lawsuits brought by injured customers.

Agri-tourism in India

Revenue from agri-tourism is growing at an annual rate of 20 per cent in India. Maharashtra is the first state to formulate an agri-tourism policy, which aims at rural development. The policy governs who can engage in agri-tourism and how to apply for loans and tax benefits. It also directs that for registration approval, agri-tourism centres must have some basic requirements.

In 2018-20, 17.9 lakh tourists visited these agri-tourism centres in the state, helping farmers earn ₹55.79 crore. It also generated one lakh jobs for rural women and youth.

Karnataka's policy addresses two key challenges—awareness and capacity building—for the development of agri-tourism in the state.

The policy also seeks collaborative support from various departments and institutions. According to the policy note, agri-tourism projects



Tourism festivals must be organised

are eligible for incentives, subsidies and concessions.

Kerala, on its part, has decided to set up the Kerala Agri-tourism Network to guarantee monetary benefits to the farming community, by linking farming activities with tourism.

The report of the committee on Doubling of Farmers' Income (DFI) emphasised the need for a policy for developing agri-tourism. Keeping this in view, the Ministry of Tourism recently came up with a 'Draft National Strategy for Promotion of Rural Homestays-An initiative towards Atmanirbhar Bharat'. Under this, agri-tourism has been included.

However, regional development policies are equally important in the push for agri-tourism. Regional policies are vital as they focus on better exploitation of local resources, and provision of appropriate infrastructure network and essential services to tourists in a specific region.

Some of the measures that must be considered while implementing agri-tourism are:

State governments must form a separate committee for formulating guidelines for agri-tourism. The guidelines may include not serving prohibited materials and providing for utmost safety of the customers.

State tourism departments must provide a separate licence under agri-tourism to be eligible for getting loans and tax benefits. Cooperative societies may be included in providing loan facilities to develop agri-tourism.

Local administrations such as village panchayats can help in the coordination and facilitation of agri-tourism because panchayats have a strong influence on local communities and their support is important to the success of agri-tourism.

State tourism departments must organise seasonal festivals along with agri-tourism farms for a wider reach.

Rural youth may be trained for agri-tourism by offering diploma/certified courses.

Awareness of agri-tourism has to be increased through online and social media platforms because tourists are highly influenced by social media. For instance, Incredible India and Enchanting Tamil Nadu digital platforms can be utilised for promoting agri-tourism.

Marketing may be in partnership with the travel trade and online platforms, as agri-tourism centres can benefit from the former's network and marketing expertise.

The hospitality services of agri-tourism farms can be improved by roping in professionals to impart training. State governments must organise workshops to enrich the hospitality skills of farm resort owners and local communities of the region, to ensure better customer experience.

Sarath is ICSSR Doctoral Fellow, and Sivakumar is Professor, Tamil Nadu Agricultural University, Coimbatore

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Send your letters by email to bleditor@thehindu.co.in or by post to 'Letters to the Editor', The Hindu Business Line, Kasturi Buildings, 859-860, Anna Salai, Chennai 600002.

Happiness and wealth

Apropos 'Time for economies to look at happiness and well-being' (September 16), it is wrong to assume that the citizens of all economically strong nations are happy. The quality of life one leads is more important than one's bank balance.

In India, comparing different generations is not a right approach. Each generation will have its own strength and weakness, and to think that those who lived hard lives earlier were happier is certainly a mistake.

The Human Development Index gives a better idea of which nations are happier, and the GDP which nations are rich. Both are not the same. Which means money cannot be equated with happiness.

Anthony Henriques

Mumbai

Micro entrepreneurs

The rural economy is not just

about raw produce and employment of base level labour. The sector's untapped potential for wide ranging products and services needs to be imaginatively exploited. Technological interventions can exponentially augment scale of agro production. With tools of IT, good political leadership, quality educational institutions and healthcare facilities, a new class of rural micro entrepreneurs will emerge.

Evolving enabling systems and infrastructure, besides minimising traditional distress of the farmer, can set direction to optimise productivity and establish nodal agro-processing centres to profitably utilise perishable agro produce.

R Narayanan

Navi Mumbai

Governance and road safety

Recent events have again turned national debate onto road safety, with focus largely on saving lives

during accidents—seat belts, air bags, etc—and rightly so. Alongside, we need informed debate on avoiding accidents in the first place. This requires a deeper understanding of traffic dynamics and its rapidly changing character.

On road architecture, while there have been good developments in road-building, some cardinal principles seem discarded. For example, road curvature which allows water to drain quickly to the sides instead of accumulating on the surface. Alongside is the absolute necessity of storm-water drains which carry such water away.

Additionally, improving governance can help. Wrong side driving (even on highways), prohibited vehicles entering highways, ill-maintained and confusing road signs, are examples of less than excellent governance. And what about distracting billboards?

V Vijaykumar

Pune

Reinforcing RRBs

This refers to 'FinMin to allow RRBs raise funds via IPOs, rights issue' (September 16). RRBs were an overnight creation to fill a gap in banking outreach to a large geographical area where the formal banking system hesitated to move in for several, mostly cost-related, reasons.

Quickly they multiplied into almost a couple of hundred individual entities and effectively served the purpose of their coming into being. Their growth, subsequent consolidation, and the evolution to the present status are part of India's banking history, starting with establishment of SBI.

Kudos to the government and the RBI for the present initiative to strengthen the rural banking infrastructure by improving the capital base of RRBs. HR management (from board level appointments to recruitment of staff and career progression), is another neglected area in the banking system, which,

if not prioritised and overhauled, will do irreparable damage to the Indian financial sector.

MG Warrier

Mumbai

Scale up the patent office

This is with reference to 'Why India needs a larger patent office' (September 16). An evolved Intellectual Property Rights regime is the basic requirement for a knowledge-based economy.

Friendshore in Deed Works Only to a Point

Politics can't override competitive advantage

Indian companies are reportedly exploring 'friendshoring' options to preserve continuity of supplies. The latest trend in de-globalisation comes at a cost by preferring friendly economies for supply of inputs over the most efficient ones. This is, of course, a less demanding path to ensuring resilience than full-blown onshoring, in which the cost would be higher. For one, replacing the most established supplier of, say, computer chips involves substantial investment in the ecosystem as well as logistics. This still does not ensure the alternative source will acquire the efficiency of the incumbent. China is at the centre of global supply chains because of enormous investments in logistics that competing economies will find difficult to replicate. Integrating logistics chains across economies involves another set of challenges.

Then there is the question of building scale. Creating secondary clusters would require concerted buying in disregard of competition over price of the end product. This flies in the face of profit maximisation. In most cases,

the cost advantage in manufacturing is lent by productivity of labour and capital, and these are functions of an economy's investment in social infrastructure and the state of its market economy. These do not lend themselves to quick-fix solutions. Competitive advantage derives from a host of factors that can't be overridden by political considerations.

The pursuit of business in friendly economies can also lead to polarisation that further fragments the free movement of goods and services. This has an avoidable inflationary effect by reducing overall productivity. Historically, polarisation has occurred principally among economies that are highly connected through trade, such as Germany and Britain a century ago, and the US and China or the EU and Russia now. Economic engagement has been a significant cause of changes in geopolitical power equations. Reducing this interconnection is no guarantee new polarities will not emerge. In the bargain, the economic outcome is suboptimal.

India RedisCOVERS Its Cheetah Spots

Nearly 70 years after they went extinct in India, the cheetah returns to the country. Eight big cats, travelling from Namibia, will be released today at the Kuno National Park (KNP) in Madhya Pradesh, marking the beginning of a conservation experiment. Success will require addressing risks — survival of the animals, and possibility of increased cheetah-human conflict. Robust monitoring and calibration will be essential. If successful, the benefits to ecology and economy are considerable. The cheetahs went extinct in India due to human pressure, including hunting, and habitat loss. While some of these factors have increased exponentially, the reintroduction can open the door to tackling them in a sustainable manner. Steady fund flow for the project — the fund of ₹50.22 crore from Indian Oil to kick-start matters — can help with the rewinding and rehabilitation of habitat. The cheetah's hunting style of picking off the weakest prey will likely ensure a revival of biodiversity and restore the natural balance among the animal population. The reintroduction should propel discussions on improving habitats through improved management, rewinding and reconsidering how human activities and intrusions take place. This is an opportunity to essay a new chapter in India's biodiversity management. Regulation will be critical. Improved biodiversity, habitat regeneration and economic opportunities make it a winning proposition.

This reintroduction project is a test of the strength of India's conservation infrastructure and its capacity to strike the right balance between economic benefits and biodiversity. Ensuring areas around KNP emerge as models of sustainable conservation economy will be as much a challenge as keeping the cheetahs safe.

JUST IN JEST
Blame it on the Latinate, the only reason midday and midnight are mixed up

All This A.M.-P.M. is Too Time-Confusing

Let's blame it on the world continuing to use Latin so as to imbue something with seriousness, shall we? Because blaming the enforcement directorate for a 'typo' helps no one. Last week, Maneka Gambhir — who just happens to be the wife of Mamata Banerjee's nephew and TMC national general secretary (read: No. 2) Abhishek 'I Would Have Shot Them Here, In the Head' Bandopadhyay — was summoned by the agency. She duly turned up according to the time the ED letter had asked her to — 12 a.m., September 12. Like many of us, the good people of ED can often mix up ante meridiem and post meridiem, known more familiarly as a.m. and p.m., before and after midday, respectively. Things get mighty confusing even for the smartest watchmen when it comes to the 12 a.m. buffer zone that's the Nehruvian 'midnight hour'. The problem stems from the SOP of treating a.m. as day and p.m. as night. Midnight being night is often misconstrued as 12 p.m. when, in actuality, it is 'Other'.

Gambhir, however, was serious enough to turn up at midnight in the ED Kolkata office, only to find it shut. The next day, the investigators realised their mistake and blamed it on a 'typographical error'. We blame it on the confusing Latinate. May we suggest the more reliable way of summoning people at the right time by using the time followed by 'in the morning' or 'at night'.

The Central Vista is one of the paths set by Narendra Modi to reclaim India's national consciousness

On Kartavya's Crossroads



Hardeep S Puri

Less than 10 days before his 72nd birthday, the first Indian prime minister born after the country's independence inaugurated Kartavya Path, the first phase of the redeveloped Central Vista Avenue. The renaming of Rajpath (Kingsway before Independence) to Kartavya Path was yet another pointer towards India reclaiming its national consciousness, shedding its British colonial baggage.

The PM's framing of the inauguration of the Kartavya Path as the nation freeing itself of 'ghulami ki mansikta' (slavish mindset) is both consistent with an independent ethos and opposite to the aspirations of an emerging superpower. It is only fitting that we assume a distinct Indian identity as inheritors of an ancient civilisational legacy rather than a 190-year colonial association.

Discussions such as these, understandably, tend to lean towards ideological debates. That is very essence of cultural politics. When detract-

ors criticise, they miss both the point of symbolism as well as the deeper intent and meaning. The Narendra Modi government does not shy away from admitting that it suffuses its actions with an Indian ethos. Extra dimensions of knowledge, perspective, continuity as well as pride are important ingredients in nation-building.

But it is important to separate pride from vanity. Some critics have suggested that Central Vista is a vanity project. This could not be further from the truth. The project was needed to revitalise degrading public and administrative spaces, streamline and optimise governance, and increase inclusivity and ecological sustainability of an overstressed, yet indispensable, node of the nation's capital. The need to considerably increase the capacity of government buildings and make the area more accessible was long recognised. Yet, previous regimes had not acted.

Sum of the Parts is Greater

Criticisms include that the project being anti-democratic, and that it will harm the local heritage and green cover. This government is extremely careful of the importance of public welfare and value addition. Those considerations, above all else, drive its decision-making processes. Not only were public consultations conducted in the full spirit of co-creation, but even the high court and Supreme Co-



The journey is the destination

urt dismissed various petitions against the project.

Central Vista increases green cover and reduces carbon footprint. It enhances public spaces through public amenities, does not damage any listed heritage building, and uses the latest sustainable technologies. The massive footfall seen around India Gate since the inauguration clearly demonstrates that the project is already beginning to achieve its stated goals.

'Rajpath' represented an unquestionable deference to rulers and the state, a philosophy that is a residue of colonial rule, and continued to be played out in the halls of government buildings before 2014. Since then, governance has not been about the privilege of rulers, but about the people being served. Kartavya Path is a reminder of that fundamental duty to serve.

Accusations of cultural erasure are also way off the mark, and belie historical analysis. It is not just India that has dabbled in the politics of reclaiming culture through toponymy.

Past colonial societies have witnessed similar aspirations elsewhere. Prime minister Modi's message of September 8 will resonate in all post-colonial societies.

In Letter and, More So, Spirit

The symbolism of renaming Rajpath a Kartavya Path provides a permanent emotional elevation, not cultural erasure as some critics have accused the government of. It is cultural evolution. The writing of history is a continuing process of discovery and determination where layers of contested thought superimpose themselves on each other, even as new interpretations are conceived as time moves along.

By the power of people's mandate, the Modi government has assumed responsibility to take on a cultural transformation of the nation. Kartavya Path is just one road to reach that destination.

The writer is minister of housing and urban affairs, GoI



Wake Up in Happiness

OSHO

In the morning, early morning, when the earth is awakening and the trees are awakening and the birds are awakening and the sun is awakening, when the whole atmosphere is full of awakening, you can use this situation. You can ride on this tide of awakening and you can enter into your own being, awake, alert, aware. And your whole day will be transformed.

The first thing to do in the morning is to imagine yourself tremendously happy. Get out of bed in a very happy mood radiant, bubbling, expectant — as if something perfect, of infinite value, is going to open, happen, today. Within days, you will see that your pattern has changed.

Don't rush, feel the morning... When in the morning you feel that sleep has broken, do not just jump out of the bed. Remain there for five minutes. Feel again the sheets, the warmth, the coldness, or the rain falling on the roof. These five minutes will become meditative.

In the morning, when the mind is fresh after a night's sleep and the body is relaxed, feel everything for five minutes and then come out of your bed. But be alert that you are coming out of the bed. Take every step with full awareness. Be sensitive to everything around. You will have a taste of being totally aware in the moment, and this is what meditation is.

Abridged from Make The Most Of Your Life, Osho Times International, courtesy Osho International Foundation, www.osho.com

Citings

Roger-Mirka Mixed Doubles

CHRISTOPHER CLAREY

On the court, Swiss tennis player Roger Federer is famously precise, powerful, determined, tough and dominant... His personal life keeps him just as busy: he's been married to Swiss tennis player Mirka Federer since 2009, and the couple has four children....

Though it is hard to imagine now, friends tried to talk the 19-year-old Federer out of starting to date the 22-year-old Mirka after the 2000 Olympics. The friends could sense that with Mirka, who was more mature and polished than Federer at that stage, the relationship could get serious quickly. 'We all kind of said, "Roger, no, no. You're too young. Just stay free a little bit longer,"' but he went against our advice,' [former Dutch professional tennis player] Sven Groeneweld told me. 'And obviously he made the right choice.'

Mirka was Federer's serious girlfriend before he became a full-blown tennis star. Federer appreciated that and trusted in that. 'I got together with her when I had zero titles, and we kind of went through all of this together; and now we have a family,' Federer told me. He liked that she understood and played the game at a high level.... Bill Ryan was Federer's agent when he and Mirka began dating. 'She was clearly the boss once they got together,' Ryan said. 'You could see he was smitten with her.'

From 'The Master: The Long Run and Beautiful Game of Roger Federer'

Chat Room

His Memories are The Memorabilia

Apropos Roger And Out: Game, Set, Match, Tennis' by Martyn Herman (ET Sport, Sep 16), like every good thing, Roger Federer's amazing journey too has come to an end. His contemporaries, Rafa Nadal and Novak Djokovic, may have won more Grand Slams than him, but his body of work has ensured that his legacy will live on and his emphatic 20 Grand Slams and mastery over Wimbledon will be difficult to match or surpass. Federer would have been a great mathematician if not a tennis player because he mastered the geometry of the rectangular tennis box. He may not have been as athletic as today's generation of players, but he was grace and elegance personified on the court. Such was Federer's popularity that he was voted the second most-respected person on earth after Nelson Mandela. With him and Serena Williams hanging up their racquets, it's the end of a memorable era.

BAL GOVIND
Noida

The Federer Moments Have Passed



Soumya Bhattacharya

It has been coming for a while. Now it is here. Roger Federer, 41, has announced his retirement from tennis. The Laver Cup in London is when we will see the last of him on a tennis court.

Elite athletes die twice: once, when they retire and vanish from our gaze; and then, when they do actually pass away. To fans, both seem like personal losses. I felt it, twice over, with Diego Maradona. And I felt it again on Thursday evening when the news of Federer's retirement lit up my phone screen.

Federer won 20 Grand Slam titles. He reached 23 consecutive Grand Slam semifinals. He won 103 ATP singles titles. His 369 singles victories in Grand Slam tournaments is a record on the men's circuit. At 36, he became the oldest man to claim No. 1 ranking, a tribute to his astonishing longevity.

Those statistics are staggering. But Federer has never been all about the numbers. During his pomp, he was the most scintillating player in the history of tennis. The flick of the elastic wrist made of something other than bone and tissue. The wicked, one-handed backhand. The forehand that was one of the greatest the game has ever seen. The fluid service action, as though it were fuelled by some otherworldly lubricant. The sweep towards the net and the pounce for the volley. The snap and crackle of the smash. The overhead with perfect balance. The guile of the drop shot. Speed, power, precision.

And the movement: all glide and

flow, seamless, seemingly effortless. Federer was ballet in tennis shorts.

In 2006, David Foster Wallace wrote a long essay about Federer for The New York Times. It has since passed into the canon of sports literature. Wallace opens his essay: 'Almost anyone who loves tennis and follows the men's tour on television has, over the last few years, had what might be termed Federer Moments.' These are times, as you watch the young Swiss play, when the jaw drops and eyes protrude and sounds are made that bring spouses in from other rooms to see if you're O.K.' The essay was titled 'Roger Federer as Religious Experience'.

Now, can you imagine likening watching any other player to a religious experience? That was another thing with Federer: you could use any hyperbole, however outlandish, and you would still sound reasonable. When

He united fans in a way few players have.

There was a time between 2004 and 2007 (a period in which he won 11 Grand Slam titles) when, if you were not a Federer admirer, you were a philistine.

Even Federer walking onto the court, impeccably styled, was a Federer Moment. It was imbued with what Saul Bellow once called 'event glamour'.

Once he began to play, you sensed that anything, simply anything, was possible. There have been many great tennis players. But none has stretched the boundaries of his sport like Federer; none has expanded its possibilities like him.

He united fans in a way few players have.

There was a time between 2004 and 2007 (a period in which he won 11 Grand Slam titles) when, if you were not a Federer admirer, you were a philistine.

And he combined his preternatural ability on court with a winsome, graceful personality. He appeared to be a doting father, a loyal son, a loving husband. Unlike brash, entitled contemporary India cricket players, he conducted himself with dignity whether he won or lost.

It is impossible to talk about Federer without alluding to his two great rivals, Rafael Nadal and Novak Djokovic. Together, they dominated the men's game in a way never seen before in men's tennis. Like Björn Borg and John McEnroe during their all-too-brief rivalry, these three men spurred each other on to greater heights, unfurling, between them, the greatest era in the history of the men's game.

Now, Federer is gone. Serena Williams, another contender for the title of Greatest Of All Time, retired earlier this month. Djokovic, because he is unvaccinated against Covid, finds it impossible to play at all the majors. Nadal, ravaged by injury, is on his last legs. It seems a truly generational shift is at hand in tennis.

Iga Swiatek, if she can raise her all-surface play, seems set to rule the women's game for some time to come. Carlos Alcaraz, 19, the reigning US Open champion and youngest-ever World No. 1 in the history of the men's ATP tour, is an outstanding talent who is poised for big things.

Federer won his first Wimbledon title when Alcaraz was two months old. The torch must inevitably be passed. It is time to embrace new champions. As Philip Larkin wrote in The Trees, 'Yet still the unresting castles thresh/ In fullgrown thickness every May.' Last year is dead, they seem to say. Begin afresh, afresh, afresh.

The writer is author of All That You Can't Leave Behind: Why We Can Never Do Without Cricket



A slice of beauty is a joy forever

GETTY IMAGES

The writer is author of All That You Can't Leave Behind: Why We Can Never Do Without Cricket

OPINION

The
Hindustan Times
ESTABLISHED IN 1924

{ OUR TAKE }

Roger Federer transcends sport

The 20-time Grand Slam champion is more than just a sporting legend; he is an icon of our times

What is sport if not a saga of legendary stories that offer life lessons on how to win, how to lose, how to strive for excellence, and how to never give up. What is sport if not a pantheon of icons whose exploits mark our personal histories and change the world we inhabit. Roger Federer entered our consciousness two decades ago, and he brought with him implements and values that would redefine our worldview — for some fanatics in large measure, but even for the more detached in tiny ways that may not immediately make themselves apparent.

First, came the tennis. The uncomplicated serve, the inside-out forehand, the shots behind the body and between the legs, and the ethereal single-handed whiplash backhand that was an offering to the gods. There was a grace to Federer's movement on the court that seemed unworldly, the silhouette in each stroke appeared designed to a fault — like a perfectly constructed film shot, or a perfectly blended sonata. Sport is usually a series of imperfect motions that come together to create perfection, but this was different; every tiny motion was perfection in itself. When we saw him play, it was like witnessing not just a person on a tennis court but bigger things that chart the march of the human race — science, architecture, engineering, art.

Then, came the reign. The joy that Federer unleashed on a tennis court appeared to mesmerise his followers and opponents alike. Though we saw him at his best on the hallowed turf of Wimbledon, where he won six titles in seven years between 2003 and 2009, the title counter started ticking at an unreal pace. Ten, 12, 14, 16, 18 Grand Slams (it eventually stopped at 20); 25, 50, 75, 100 victories (it eventually stopped at 103). Through the 2000s, he was an all-consuming force that graciously swallowed up all who stood before him. His great rival, Rafael Nadal, had Roland Garros. Federer seemed to have all else (and even got a French Open crown to boot).

Then, we got to know him. Federer's personality as a champion was only less beguiling than his craft. For two decades, the world looked for flaws in his character — not humble enough, not polite enough, not punctual enough, not faithful enough, not kind enough — in vain. He would smile at all his fans, applaud all his opponents, speak immaculately in all his interviews, dress perfectly for each occasion, weep at all his defeats, sometimes even at his victories.

Then, came the competition. The Federer years were not a tyranny of grace and beauty. The last 15 years also gave tennis its greatest rivalry — first Roger vs Rafa, and Novak Djokovic later expanded it to a triopoly sport may never witness again. The three sparred from surface to surface, country to country, Slam to Slam, sparking a legitimate debate on who between them is the greatest men's player of all time. Nadal and Djokovic now have more Slams, and better head-to-heads against Federer, and may well be stronger candidates on those parameters. In truth, it becomes a futile discussion once you zoom out far enough.

For, as Federer finally walks into the sunset at 41, will he be remembered as the greatest tennis player to walk the planet? Perhaps not. Will he, however, be remembered as one of the greatest sporting icons of all time? Undoubtedly. He redefined excellence on court and what being a role model is off the court in a way few others in public life do. Michael Schumacher could be arrogant to the point of being unfair, Lance Armstrong could cut corners to the point of cheating, and the outing of Tiger Woods's troubled personal life took a toll on his image and his craft. In the middle of these other legends of his time, Federer stood luminescent on the court and unblemished off it. Not just shoulder to shoulder with them, or Ali, Phelps, Bolt, Maradona, Jordan; but with other pathbreakers across sectors. For, what is sport if not a saga of legendary stories and a pantheon of icons. What is sport if not about Roger Federer.

The end of a golden era of a folk tradition

In the hinterlands of Bihar where I grew up, autumn weekends were pregnant with excitement. With *Chhath* round the corner and a nip in the air, our village would gather at the playground for *naach*, a unique folk tradition where performers present plays through the night, interspersed with short bursts of singing and comedy. Performances spill over into the morning, crowds shuffle in and out — my friends and I would be sent home, only for the more daring of us to sneak back into the crowd — and the performers take turns to entertain the audience. Most plays would be based on social issues written by the famous Bihar playwright, Bhikhari Thakur, with



Jainendra Kumar Dost

migration, dowry, rights of the girl child and rural distress as common themes. *Naach kaanch hai, baat sach hai* (*naach* is a mirror and reflects the truth) was a common refrain of the village elders.

Like other folk traditions, when

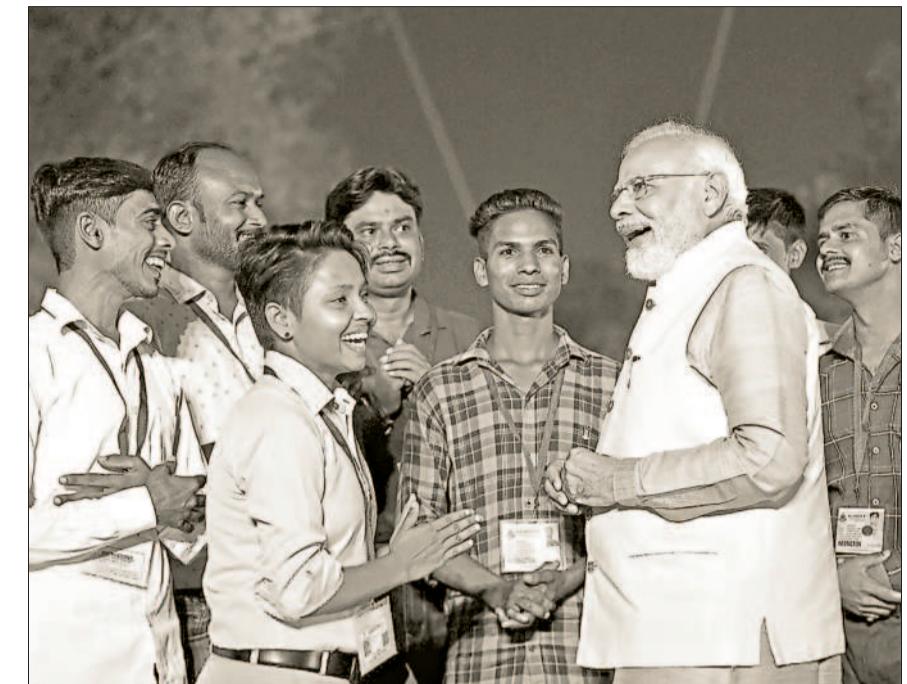
naach was gaining hold in the 19th century in the Purvanchal region, women were banned from the stage. Men dressed in sarees, therefore, took their spot, starting a venerable tradition of female impersonators that cut across ages, regions and communities and gave

naach its prefix *launda* (male). In Bihar, *naach* was performed largely by lower-caste and Dalit actors, thereby separating it from other traditions such as *jatra* in Bengal that also employed female impersonators. This fast-diminishing community of impersonators who comprise a unique cultural heritage of India lost arguably its seniormost member last week, the Padma award recipient Ramchandra Manjhi. He was 98.

An illiterate man born in the Dusadh community in Chharpur, Manjhi formed the core of the golden era of *naach*. Though he had almost retired when I met him in 2010, he never tired of telling me how he started performing as a teenager and travelled the length of the country even as the advent of television and the internet transformed the craft in fundamental ways. His most famous roles — as Rakhelan in *Bidesiya* (on a young man who migrates from Bihar to erstwhile Calcutta for work) and Hajaam in *Beti Bechwaa* (the notorious tradition of parents selling their young daughters to older men for marriage) — inspired not only a generation, but also singers, dancers and younger Bhojpuri cinema artists. He would often be the opening act before political rallies by Jawaharlal Nehru, Indira Gandhi, Jagjivan Ram and Lalu Prasad, among others. Despite being arguably the tal-

lest folk artist in the state, recognition for his talent had eluded him for the majority of his life. In a state where caste biases often decided what got recognised as classical art and what was derided as mere *tamasha*, the denial of recognition to Manjhi was corrected only in the last decade of his life, when he received in quick succession accolades from the Sangeet Natak Akademi, Bihar government's lifetime achievement award and the Padma Shri. In his life, he presented a rare paradox of caste and gender, one that often flummoxed the many researchers who flock to him — as a female impersonator, he was clear about the lines dividing stage and life, femininity as a performance and being a man as his identity, and marking a distinction between imitating femininity and being a woman. His grace and quiet presence lent dignity to the art he gave his life to, and the country is the poorer in his departure.

Jainendra Kumar Dost is director, Bhikhari Thakur Repertory Training and Research Centre, Bihar
The views expressed are personal



The concept of *Jan Bhagidari* (people's participation) implies the role of the collective in implementing policies. Harnessing the power of the people has been the central aspect of implementing the government's policies in India.

ANI/PIB

concerns — a true illustration of the power of dialogue used for transformative change.

PM Modi has undeniably been successful to motivate the masses to go the last mile. People have answered his clarion calls not once or twice but multiple times for converting policies on paper to success in reality. When put in numbers, the numerical and data-driven success of schemes can seem flat or unidimensional. However, the beauty in the schemes envisioned and implemented by PM Modi is in their multi-dimensionality. His words are a testament that he thinks in terms of the holistic development of the people, leaving no soul in the journey of holistic development.

As a leader, PM Modi's resolution to involve every citizen in policies and benefits to reach all is consistent throughout his vision and governance. For example, the issue of open defecation was addressed by PM Modi in his first Independence Day speech as PM. He asked citizens to take part in the Swachh Bharat Abhiyan. A mass movement that has now culminated into over 100,000 open defecation-free-plus villages and more than 110 million toilets in just 60 months, a feat that has amazed the world. Though it might seem like a cleanliness mission, it has also ensured dignity and safety for women, saved the lives of children and prevented many girls

from dropping out of school. Take another example of the Jal Jeevan Mission, ensuring over 100 million tap water connections in villages. In the PM's words, "the success of Jal Jeevan Mission is based on people's participation, partnership with all stakeholders, political will and optimum utilisation of all resources." The delivery of such basic needs of the people is now a reality. Women don't need to travel hours to fetch water, and diseases spreading through contaminated water have been curbed while also providing ease of living to rural families.

Yet another proof of the strength is the over 2 billion Covid-19 vaccination record, which was no mean feat to achieve in 18 months, but we did it. While it was the product of cumulative effort, it was led by PM Modi, resonating with his sense of determination to achieve the

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— Ramnath Goenka

DELHI LIQUOR ROW FINDS ECHO IN GUJARAT CAMPAIGN

The political tremors of the alleged liquor scam in Delhi are felt more in Gujarat than where it originated. The BJP and the AAP are involved in a bitter slugfest over the issue in election-bound Gujarat. The state BJP has gone the whole hog to portray the AAP as a party run with cash from corrupt deals. The AAP claims its increasing popularity in Gujarat is why its ministers in Delhi are being raided and charged-sheetsed. The AAP has launched a shrill campaign in Gujarat. Its plan to enter the state's tribal areas in alliance with the Bharatiya Tribal Party did not work. Still, Kejriwal is drawing crowds in urban centres, especially in Surat and Ahmedabad. The two districts are BJP strongholds and account for 28 of 182 constituencies. Arvind Kejriwal had recently announced that the surveys conducted by his party show the AAP leading in seven seats in Surat where the party had won its first municipal seat. He said his party's tally would improve further as campaigning picks up. The AAP campaign has sent alarm bells ringing in the BJP.

The ruling party's margin of victory against the main opposition party—the Congress—was thin, and many of its seats came from urban areas. Despite being out of power in the state for decades, the Congress continues to enjoy considerable support in the rural areas of Gujarat. With the Congress holding fort in rural Gujarat, and Kejriwal launching an onslaught on the BJP's urban citadel, the ruling party has its hands full trying to defend its stronghold. The ruling party's attack is focused more on the AAP than on the Congress. The fight between the two parties will get dirtier as the state election gets closer.

The Enforcement Directorate has already arrested Delhi health minister Satyendar Jain and it is only a matter of time before another minister, Manish Sisodia, is arrested. Sisodia is the minister of finance and excise, the two departments directly connected with the formulation and implementation of the new liquor policy in Delhi. He is also the second most important person in the AAP as deputy chief minister in the Kejriwal government. With relentless raids on scores of locations, the ED is said to have gathered evidence against Sisodia. His arrest will be the BJP's big play in the Gujarat election.

INVESTMENTS SHY OVER GROWTH WORRIES

It's not one thing, it's another holding back private investments. First came the twin balance sheet problem, followed by the slowdown, the Covid-19 pandemic, and now, global uncertainty due to the Russian war, supply chain disruptions, recessionary fears and persistent inflation. Consequently, India's investment to GDP ratio slipped from a peak of 38% during the last decade to about 10% now. The quarter ended June 2022 saw investment proposals worth ₹3.57 lakh crore, which is heartening, but this is nearly half that of the preceding quarter, which saw ₹5.91 lakh crore worth of proposals. A visibly disappointed Nirmala Sitharaman, who's been waiting for animal spirits to be unleashed since 2019, when she took charge of the finance ministry, didn't hold back in asking why industries weren't investing, despite corporate tax cuts and production-linked incentives, besides others.

She has a point. The balance sheets of both corporates and banks are clean. The corporate debt to GDP ratio slipped to a decade-low, and profitability has increased. The Central government's Capex spending is on track, while capacity utilisation at over 74% is above the pre-pandemic levels and inching closer to the 2019 peak of 76%. Unarguably, foreign investors and industries see India as an opportune market, while companies moving out of China see India as their next stop. In fact, Bob Sternfels, chief of McKinsey, believes this century belongs to India, not just the decade.

But homegrown companies aren't entirely in the mood for risk-taking, perhaps, ramming home the point that it isn't government Capex or low interest rates that drive private investments but durable growth and robust demand. Both are eluding India as of now. India's per capita income fell below the previous year, and as if the declining purchasing power isn't enough, inflation is making it worse. And rising interest rates could affect household spending, thereby denting demand further; adding to investors' uncertainty. Lastly, businesses prefer smooth compliance and policy stability before embarking on their next investment cycle. Sitharaman may be right in equating India Inc's abilities to Hanuman's, who was often reminded of his strengths. But it's also true that Hanuman was known for holding back his supreme energy and using his might only when the situation so demanded. Even if investors respond to investment appeals, their decisions should be solely guided by market dynamics to avoid the mistakes of the previous decade.

QUICK TAKE

REFORM JUVENILE JUSTICE SYSTEM

The Supreme Court laments that juveniles caught in the criminal justice system can't get out of it unscathed. Nothing new.

How to plug the loopholes that victimise minors awaiting criminal trials is well-known, but they won't help till officials adopt a sensitised mindset. Juvenile suspects suffer on two counts. One's ascertaining their age. Only a digitised database can resolve their problem. The other is the pathetic state of their transit homes. Stories of physical assault and abuse abound. The officialdom must realise even children held for heinous crimes need care and protection lest the system harden those caught in it.

The Tokyo Olympics in 2020 was India's most successful Olympics ever, where I, too, won a medal for my country. There was euphoria all around the Indian contingent when we returned home. Before leaving for Tokyo, we met Prime Minister Narendra Modi. He motivated us to give our best. So, we were again anticipating a meeting with the PM after our return. Within a few days, we were invited to Lok Kalyan Marg.

We had a very interesting interaction with Modi ji where we shared our experiences with him. Modi ji lauded all of us and exhorted us to strive to do better in future. He shared his government's roadmap for Indian sports and sought our cooperation to make India a sporting superpower. He asked us to help youngsters and budding sportspersons, groom them and share our experiences and expertise with them. It was a meeting worth remembering.

But a surprise awaited me. As we all enjoyed our snacks after the meeting, Prime Minister Modi came up and offered me my favourite ice-cream. He was fulfilling a promise which he had made to me before my departure to Tokyo. He had promised to have ice cream with me if I won a medal in the Tokyo Olympics. That moment will remain with me forever.

Who can forget how Prime Minister Modi comforted the inconsolable Indian women's hockey team after they had lost the bronze medal match in the Tokyo Olympics? Similarly, when the Indian women's cricket team lost the gold medal in the recently held Commonwealth Games, Modi ji lauded the team for their spectacular performance and motivated every player. When the Indian women's cricket team captain Mithali Raj retired after a highly successful career in international and domestic cricket, Prime Minister Modi wrote to her, thanking her for her contributions to Indian cricket and sports and how she made India proud. He also exhorted the youth to take inspiration from the life of Mithali Raj. All these instances reflect the personal touch of PM Modi with sportspersons.

I have interacted with Prime Minister Modi on several occasions. He has always called or met me whenever I won a tournament or a medal. All this motivates me and encourages me to do well for my country. He has always inspired every sportsperson and athlete to give their best without worrying about the result. His involvement in sports, his understanding of the needs of sportspersons, his interesting initiatives in

The creation of a separate Sports Ministry in 2020 speaks volumes about Prime Minister Modi's passion for sports

INDIA BID UNDER MODI TO BECOME SPORTS SUPERPOWER

P V SINDHU

Olympic medalist and ace badminton player



SOURAV ROY

sports, and his efforts in developing infrastructure and giving special attention to the needs of sportspersons—have all made a huge difference in India's performance at global events.

The vision of Prime Minister Modi and the mission mode in which his government is working to promote sports and support sportspersons reflects in his unique schemes and programmes. For instance, the 'Target Olympic Podium Scheme' (TOPS), which was introduced in 2015, is a path-breaking scheme that has been instrumental in ensuring that a "core group of athletes" have all the necessary personalised support in terms of foreign exposure, hiring of specific coaches, training and competition abroad. TOPS, which supports

a "core group" of athletes and sportspersons like me, besides younger athletes training for the Olympics in 2024 and 2028 in the "development group", has significantly propelled the level of results athletes are producing today. It has led to India's best-ever Olympics and Paralympics performance in 2020, a Thomas Cup win after 73 years, and many such sporting achievements.

Athletes today have all the facilities they need, and the facilities are extended seamlessly by the government through the Sports Ministry and Sports Authority of India. This constant support ensures that athletes do not have to take stress regarding the funds needed for their training, and can concentrate on their game instead.

Today, most of us train in the best facil-

TELLING THE BEES THE QUEEN IS DEAD

PRATIK KANJILAL

Editor of *The India Cable*

SPEAKEASY

The death of Queen Elizabeth II mostly evoked fond memories in South Asia, where we still think of the English as jolly good fellows who taught us the pleasures of cucumber sandwiches and buttered scones, the crack of willow on leather and the romance of the rails. Of course, there is an uneasy understanding that the railways were developed to open up hinterlands and speed up troop movements—the need was keenly felt after 1857—rather than to help the natives holiday. But never mind, the English and their royals were all right, even if they did pinch the Kohinoor and now charge exorbitant sums to let you see it in the Tower of London.

But times are changing rapidly, and the old admonition against speaking ill of the dead is out of date—that, too, was a British import, derived via the Enlightenment from Chilon of Sparta (6th century BC). Bashing Nehru is a profitable industry, and other worthies of the period are not immune. Earlier, UK dignitaries visiting India only feared demands for an apology for the Jallianwala Bagh massacre. Now that it's been Indianised into an entertainment venue with a laser show, attention has shifted to the Kohinoor, which is of more material value. The Shri Jagannath Sena of Odisha wants the hot rock returned to the Lord of the World and has asked the President, who will attend the Queen's funeral, to do the needful.

Queen Elizabeth II assumed the throne in 1952, in another period of rapid change. Ten days before she became Queen, Black Saturday rioters burned down the business district of Cairo, particularly targeting British businesses. Nine months later, the Crown declared martial law in Kenya and viciously suppressed the Mau Mau rising, in which at least 11,000 were killed. Ironically, that was precisely where the Queen was honeymooning in a treehouse—amidst a large company including Jim Corbett when she received news of her father's death, and the princess who climbed a tree famously came back down a queen. In Asia, the Jewel in the Crown went native, with Jawaharlal Nehru heading the first elected government in May. When Elizabeth took the throne, it was sunset in the empire on which the sun had never set. Its shrinkage has continued, and today, the UK is neither united nor a real kingdom. She kept up appearances in an institution that has been irrelevant for 75 years but memories of occasional brutality and systematic extraction ... remain

Colston in the drink. There is uneasiness about the dirty money from slavery and conquest in the very foundations of Britain's institutions. The East India Company was the world's first transnational narcotics cartel, forcing peasants in Bihar and UP to grow poppy and attacking China to create a market for opium. The Doctrine of Lapse used against Indian states like Awadh and Jhansi was blatant trespass. And the Queen's prime minister Winston Churchill is understood to have precipitated the Bengal Famine of 1943. By modern conceptions of rights, these were criminal projects, and the Queen's death brought them up again.

But it also resurrected a delightful tradition: telling the bees.

The day after she died, John Chapple, 79, the beekeeper of Buckingham Palace, bound the beehives with black ribbons and told their inhabitants that their mistress was dead, that King Charles III was their new master. They should be nice to him and not buzz off because you can't live life king size without a spot of honey on your breakfast toast.

Telling the bees is an ancient Celtic tradition,

from when bees were believed to flit between worlds. But maybe it's only because until colonialism began in earnest, Megasthenes, the Greek ambassador to the Mauryan court, was perhaps the only European to have encountered sugarcane. Until the slave-powered Caribbean cane plantations were set up in Britain, sweetness meant honey. No wonder Melissa ('honeybee' in Greek) remains a popular name.

The UK press dismissed telling the bees as superstition. They had earlier ridiculed Prince Charles for conversing with plants and trees, which kept him "somewhat sane". But when it was discovered that plants could communicate, they declared that he was ahead of his time.

Bees also have a language—an aerial

dance which workers perform to point their

colleagues to a good patch of flowers by de-

scribing the angle at which the sun strikes the eye. Maybe the Queen's bees understood what the beekeeper told them. Maybe they danced in reply. If not, perhaps King Charles III would be happy to talk to them about it.

(Tweets @pratik_k_k)

ence to royalty interferes with mental hygiene: "The mind accustomed to political kings can easily be reconciled to social kings—capitalist kings of the workshop, the mill, the railway, the ships and the docks. Thus, coronation and king's visits [George V was swimming into Connally's ken at the time] are by our astute never sleeping masters made into huge Imperialist propagandist campaigns in favour of political and social schemes against democracy."

Black Lives Matter has made the UK it-

self aware of its historical lack of demo-

cratic values. In 2020, protesters in Bristol dumped the statue of slave trader Edward

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ties in India and abroad, funded by the government. We don't have to worry about our training, getting the right coaches, sports science support or specialised training equipment. This kind of support is not extended to sportspersons in most countries. The government's constant engagement with athletes right from the grassroots level—Khelo India—to the elite athletes in TOPS, is a huge change that I have seen as an athlete in the last few years. This is the key to why India is doing so well. Thanks to these unique initiatives of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, I am certain that India will continue to excel in sports in the years to come and emerge as a global superpower in major international sporting events.

I see Modi ji as a very able sports administrator. His passion and vision for Indian sports became evident when, as Chief Minister of Gujarat, he organised a one of its kind Khel Mahakumbh in the state. As prime minister, he conceptualised yet another unique scheme—Khelo India Youth Games—an initiative to search for young sporting talents from India's villages and small towns. To carve out future talents, the Narendra Modi government has created several Khelo India Kendras. The creation of a separate Sports Ministry in 2020 speaks volumes about his passion for sports and his commitment to making India a superpower in sports.

Sports today are not just confined to tournaments and events. A holistic approach of the Narendra Modi government towards sports is going to change the way India takes its sports and games. The creation of India's first National Sports University in Manipur with an expenditure of ₹800 crore in one big step in this direction. Similarly, Major Dhyan Chand Sports University is also coming up in Uttar Pradesh for higher education in sports. The Narendra Modi government has come out with the National Air Sports Policy, another important initiative to help grow our sports.

During his popular 'Mann Ki Baat' programme, Modi ji has been regularly talking about sports and sporting personalities. He has been motivating young talents, besides warning them that there are no shortcuts to achieving success. He has been telling us not to lose hope in defeat and also not lose focus after success. The motivation from Prime Minister Modi, efforts and policy initiatives from his government on the ground, and transparency in the Indian sports administration—all augur well for the future of Indian sports. Our journey towards a bright sporting future has just begun.

MAIL BAG

WRITE TO: letters@newindianexpress.com

Goodbye, Roger that!

Apropos of *Time to say goodbye* (Sep 16). All good things inevitably come to an end. So did Swiss legend Roger Federer's 24-year-long tennis career. His trophy-laden tryst with the sport left the world astonished and awestruck not once, but multiple times over the years. And now, the tennis world has a void.

R Sivakumar, Chennai

Federer's poetry in motion

What a glorious career it has been for Federer. He strode the tennis arena like a colossus and he played his games like, as they say, 'poetry in motion'. Now, a new set of players is set to rule the court. But, there only was, is and will be, one Roger—he will be missed.

C M Umanath, Calicut

Tennis world has lost a gem

Curtains down for the most illustrious tennis player Roger Federer. Tennis will not be the same again. Roger, you have brought glory to the tennis world with your touch and volley game. You will be missed.

C K R Nathan, Ghaziabad

Sino-Indian instability

China is in an expansion mode and it will be an uphill task to handle it. It does not care for global opinion. India should continue to strive for peace, but at the same time, be ready for any eventuality as China wants to stall our progress. Why India is going in for trade with a hostile state—with more imports and fewer exports—is not clear.

Vishal Mayur, Tumkur

E-bike precautions

Apropos of *After e-bike fire, quality control of batteries need of hour* (Sep 16). The editorial rightly points out that quality control is necessary. Essentially, if EV technology was adopted to cut CO2 emissions, then it needs to be responsibly manufactured as well.

Companies must take the precautions cited.

S Chockalingam, Kottaram

**A thought for today**

Time goes, you say? Ah, no! alas, time stays, we go

HENRY AUSTIN DOBSON

Battling Backlogs

CJI reform in listing cases should be taken up by HCs

The new Supreme Court case listing system devised by CJI Uday Lalit seems to be effective, going by a sharp reduction in pendency. In 13 days, SC disposed of 5,200 cases and admitted 1,135 fresh matters – 70,310 matters were pending as of September 1. There's a long way to go but pendency will reduce if cases disposed steadily outnumber new cases. Essentially, CJI's new listing system attempts to expedite hearings in after-notice matters, which keep getting backlogged, by listing more of them on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday afternoons. Also, more fresh admission matters are being listed on Mondays and Fridays.

While one two-judge bench confessed its inability to hear all the afternoon matters listed, another bench last week had critiqued a lawyer for seeking adjournment despite judges working longer hours preparing for cases since the new listing system began. Promptly filling four vacancies in SC – by November, there will be seven vacancies if these four are not filled – can reduce pressure on judges. SC should also be choosier when admitting matters. Many PILs admitted by SC end up in unhelpful court interventions in policy, political and socio-cultural issues.

SC's urgency in whittling down pendency must also rub off on high courts where 59 lakh cases are pending. 2019 was a rare year where HCs recorded more case disposals than fresh cases. But the pandemic increased the backlog again. Like SC, around 70% of HC pendency involves admission stage matters. So similar reforms in listing must be pursued in HCs too. Central and state governments, the biggest litigants, must help in upgrading judicial infrastructure, promptly filling judicial vacancies and weeding out frivolous litigation. Why not a one-year action plan to reduce pendency from present levels by 25% in HCs and by 50% in SC?

The Federer Way

Tennis genius showed success & humility can coexist

Roger Federer will be missed not just for his tennis. The Fedex age saw the rise of a sporting genius who not only brought back beauty and artistry to the game but did so, despite the flood of encomia, with humility and gentility. At his peak in the 2000s when Federer's game had reached a zen-like quality, the Swiss maestro wore his crown lightly. His on-court behaviour has always been near impeccable and off-court he remained jovial, courteous and humble despite his life-defying achievements.

Even more instructive for all successful people, Federer changed. As a junior talent, he was a cantankerous, racquet-smashing player. And the unconquerable game of his acme years could have turned him into a prima donna. But neither happened. This is all the more remarkable because, especially in recent media-driven decades, too many sporting superstars across disciplines have made in-your-face personalities their calling cards.

It was a measure of Federer's genius that greatness from other sports – ranging from Tiger Woods to Sachin Tendulkar – gravitated to his matches, recognising in him a true legend. Federer further lived up to that stature when he described Rafael Nadal as his greatest rival and friend, showing that there can always be respect between fierce competitors. In that sense, the Swiss maestro represented ideals that went beyond tennis – equanimity, humility in success and never taking oneself too seriously. Would that all super-successful people were like Federer.

Why The Whole World Loves A Good Murder

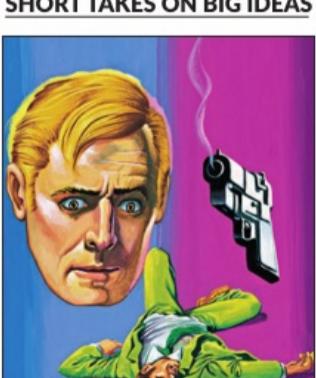
Crime fiction is much more than just crime

Who doesn't love a whodunit? Or a whowasdunin, or a whodounwhat? Crime fiction has been the most popular genre of writing in the last century, and the appetite for it is still going strong. Once dismissed as a sub-literary pursuit, this caste system has given way to a new appreciation of its pleasures, says Martin Edwards in his survey *The Life of Crime: Detecting the History of Mysteries and Their Creators*.

While the Golden Age of detective novels was clearly the interwar period, the genre has older roots. In the 19th century, Thomas de Quincey's satirical consideration of murder as one of the fine arts and Edgar Allan Poe's stories fired imaginations. Charles Dickens experimented with it, and Arthur Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes stories were enduring and macabre masterpieces, bringing a new attention to science and forensics. GK Chesterton's Father Brown foregrounded questions of sin and social justice.

The Detection Club, a social network of crime writers, was formed in 1930. The Queens of Crime were Agatha Christie, Dorothy L

mindfield SHORT TAKES ON BIG IDEAS



Sayers, Margery Allingham and Josephine Tey, the settings were usually English country houses, impossible crimes and locked room mysteries intrigued readers. There were departures from this form too. Frances Iles, for instance, focused more on character studies and homicidal psychology, influencing later crime writing.

Meanwhile in the US, Dashiell Hammett and Raymond Chandler and others swerved into series detective novels written in a sparse, slangy style, all about police work minutiae. Their heroes were not erudite riddle solvers, but hard and shifty cops, world-weary detectives among California's booze and corruption. The detective is a

redemptive hero who goes down the mean streets as "a man who is not himself mean, who is neither tarnished nor afraid", in Chandler's words.

In Europe, Georges Simenon eclipsed others in his popularity. He was a "connoisseur of souls", his clues are not mud or hair or bloodstains, but the gestures, words, the slow revelation of the criminal and the psychological necessity of the act.

Crime novels come in many forms, of course. It could be the ambitious nature of justice that goads the imagination, as in the legal mysteries and courtroom dramas of "fiction factory" Erle Stanley Gardner and John Grisham. Spy thrillers are an adjacent genre. Some have brought a Marxist sensibility to crime, others have explored multiple viewpoints and shifting mental states.

The book ranges around the world, from the British police fiction of Ruth Rendell and PD James to lurid true-crime stories, from popular Scandi noir to Australian and Dutch writers, from Patricia Highsmith's elegant ruthlessness to the long Japanese tradition with writers like Soji Shimada and Masako Togawa.

India's beloved detectives Byomkesh Bakshi and Feluda also get a mention as does Inspector Ganesh Ghote of HRF Keating's novels. "There are thirty-two ways to write a story, and I've tried them all," said true-crime writer Jim Thompson, "but there is only one plot: things are not as they seem."

Crime fiction has evolved in the 21st century, with more racial and cultural viewpoints, the "women in jeopardy" trope has given way to complex portrayals in *Gone Girl* or *The Girl on the Train*. Will it run out of themes, characters and storylines? Not as long as people are still interested in the essential mystery of "what makes men and women tick," says Edwards.

Nitin Gadkari



Since 2014, when Narendra Modi embarked upon his journey as Prime Minister to create a self-sufficient nation, where all sections of society have access to basic amenities, the speed and scale of development have become the hallmark of a new, rising India.

Having succeeded to a great extent in instilling a culture of efficiency, transparency, faster and smoother last mile delivery of services, this government wanted to scale greater heights with better coordination and synergies among various Union ministries and state governments, with a motto of 'sabka saath, sabka vikas', envisioning India as a \$5 trillion economy by 2024-25.

In 2021, the PM launched 'PM Gati Shakti National Master Plan'. 'Gati' of infrastructure was to be given greater 'shakti' in building a new India. "With the resolve of Aatmanirbhar Bharat, the foundation of India for the next 25 years is being laid ... We have not only developed a work culture of completing the projects in time but efforts are to complete the projects ahead of time," the PM had said.

This also showed how India was determined to make rapid strides after fighting the pandemic crisis, which had disrupted all development activities in the country.

This Master Plan, as conceived by the PM, aims at making India a developed nation in the next 25 years. It is essentially a digital platform that brings 16 Union ministries together, including my ministry of road transport and highways (MoRTH), for integrated planning and coordinated implementation of infrastructure connectivity projects for comprehensive and inclusive socio-economic progress in different parts of the country, especially in all aspirational districts, tribal belts, hill areas and the Northeast.

In the last few years, GoI has ensured unprecedented focus on infrastructure through a holistic outlook. This helped address past issues through institutionalising holistic planning for stake-



holders for major infrastructure projects. Instead of planning and designing separately in silos, projects will be designed and executed with a common vision on a single platform under this National Master Plan.

MoRTH, pioneering a quick pace of building countrywide state-of-the-art multi-modal infrastructure, has made significant progress under this National Master Plan.

The PM always adds value and gives innovative ideas after my various presentations before the Cabinet. He constantly monitors and, in the case of some of the most prestigious projects, even personally supervises their progress. He encourages all stakeholders, especially the workforce, and praises them for their valuable contribution

"my Warkari brothers":

- Trees along walkways along the highways
- Arrangement for drinking water at specific distances along the roads
- And making Pandharpur the cleanest pilgrimage site in India

The PM's idea of development has two important aspects:

- First, modernity
- Second, rejuvenation of cultural and civilisational heritage

Our Bharatmala Pariyojana programme is both an enabler and beneficiary of

other key initiatives of the PM such as Sagarmala, Dedicated Freight Corridors, National Logistics Policy and industrial corridors, UDAN-RCS, BharatNet, Digital India, Parvatalma and Maks in India.

The Bharatmala Pariyojana is an ambitious centrally-sponsored flagship programme for construction of new highway projects across the country. Special emphasis has been given to providing connectivity to far-flung border and rural areas including tribal and backward areas.

The National Highways Authority of India (NHA) and the National Highways and Infrastructure Development Corporation Limited (NHIDCL) are rapidly completing various greenfield expressways and 35 multi-modal logistics parks (MMLPs), as part of the Bharatmala Pariyojana.

Some of the major expressways and corridors, which are under completion are:

- Delhi-Mumbai Expressway
- Ahmedabad-Dholera Expressway
- Delhi-Amritsar-Katra Expressway
- Bengaluru-Chennai Expressway
- Ambala-Kotputli Expressway
- Amritsar-Bhatinda-Jamnagar Expressway
- Raipur-VZG Expressway
- Hyderabad-VZG Expressway
- Urban Extension Road-II
- Chennai-Salem Expressway
- Chittoor-Thanjavur Expressway

Some of the key infrastructure projects, which are at different stages of construction include the prestigious Zojila Tunnel and Z-morh which will connect Srinagar and Leh.

All the unprecedented progress and development of road and highways infrastructure under my ministry would not have been possible without the able and dynamic leadership and vision of the PM. He relentlessly works round-the-clock, and his efforts and unstinted guidance have continuously directed us to realise his vision of new India.

As our beloved and most adored PM turns 72 today, we are all set to celebrate the day in a unique manner by dedicating all the development work under my ministry in his honour on his birthday.

'Cheetahs will do well as India has history of their presence'

With the help of Namibia, the species is being reintroduced into the Kuno National Park today

Known as the 'cheetah lady', Pradnya Giradkar is the country's first cheetah conservation specialist, having trained with Dr Laurie Marker who has played a key role in the plan to reintroduce the species in India. She runs Wildlife Conservation & Rural Development Society, an NGO spreading scientific knowledge among the schools, farmers, and indigenous communities around wildlife parks. On the eve of the reintroduction of cheetahs in Kuno National Park by PM Modi, she talked to Vijay Pinjarkar about the conservation science that informs the project:

Q&A

● How were you introduced to cheetah conservation?
 I did my doctoral research on tiger conservation and taught wildlife as a special subject at Mumbai University. Since the cheetah went extinct in India in 1952, I have always felt that it should be reintroduced. In 2011, I was selected for cheetah conservation training in Namibia. This was organised by international cheetah conservationist Dr Laurie Marker, who is also the founder and executive director of the Cheetah Conservation Fund (CCF), which is bringing cheetahs to India.

● Tell us about your training in Namibia?
 We worked in Otiwarongo forest with 52 cheetahs and Herero and Himba tribes. I learnt DNA sampling, scat analysis, caring for cheetahs, vaccination, temperature monitoring, transect

survey etc, and community-based conservation. I loved teaching local kids and communities about predators' identification and how to coexist with wildlife and the environment. I also gained a true picture of the man-animal conflict and what it means for the survival of the cheetah.

● Will cheetahs survive in India's habitat?

Kuno is the same place where cheetahs once existed. The area has grasslands and forest habitats appropriate for this species. The government believes reintroducing cheetahs will encourage healthy biodiversity. But Project Cheetah is a big challenge and needs community support. For the long-term presence of cheetahs, conservation awareness needs to improve among the poor local farmers.

● Is it sensible to reintroduce cheetahs when we have so many tigers and leopards?

I see no problem. The habitat of cheetahs is totally different from that of tigers and leopards. Cheetahs thrive in grasslands while tigers and leopards survive in dry deciduous

forests. Tigers and leopards are propagating well. Even cheetahs would do well as there is a history of their existence here. Moreover, African and Indian cheetahs have little genetic difference as per well-known genetic expert Dr Stephen O'Brien.

● Exactly how are they being reintroduced at Kuno?

A plan has been elaborately chalked out by scientists. The cheetahs will be first released in large fenced areas for adapting to the new environment. They will be fitted with satellite collars to track their movements. After a short stay, they will be released into a large enclosure to make them familiar with the new environment. Here they will remain for around a month before being released into the wild.

Their movements will be monitored by researchers and if any cheetah strays too far afield, it will be brought back into the park. This action plan was decided by Dr Marker during my training in Otiwarongo. We worked between 52 cheetahs. The same

plan will be implemented here.

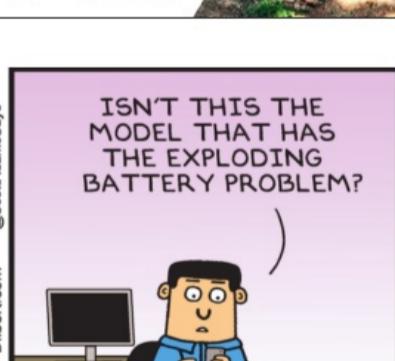
● How will reintroduction of the species help?

Bringing back cheetahs will restore the historic evolutionary balance to the benefit of all species. It will also uplift the livelihood of the indigenous forest communities and increase tourism as India is the only country where all the six big cat species are found. In saving the cheetah, grasslands, arid regions, and other grassland-dependent species like caracal, Indian wolf, and the endangered Great Indian Bustard, which are on the brink, will also be saved.

I believe Project Cheetah will boost the ecosystem and biodiversity where it will live. Just as the tiger is the flagship species of the forest, the cheetah is the flagship species of grasslands, scrublands and open forests. With the reintroduction of cheetahs, these dryland ecosystems of India will have a chance to return to their natural state. But bringing cheetahs back from extinction is a huge challenge and requires strong political will.

● Will changes in the cheetah's prey impact its health and adaptation?

Not at all. Prey of cheetahs includes deer and antelopes. In Africa, they prey on springbok, gemsbok, impala, kudu and eland. In Kuno, deer, antelopes, sambar and black bucks are found in sufficient numbers. Both deer and antelope species are herbivores and only the genus is different.



Sacredspace

Work And Play

A master in the art of living draws no sharp distinction between his work and play; his labour and leisure...

He simply pursues his vision of excellence through whatever he is doing, and leaves others to determine whether he is working or playing.

To himself he always appears to be doing both.

Yvon Chouinard

Kartavya Is Your Password To Excellence

Jaya Row

The Bhagwad Gita glorifies karma, action. It says we cannot remain inactive even for a second. Everyone is helplessly driven to action. There are three kinds of action. Niyamat karma, obligatory duty, is the best quality of action. We all have duties – to our family, society, country, humanity and to ourselves. We know what we should do. But desire takes us away from our duties. We stray into kamya karma, desire-driven activity. The entire world is chasing after desire. When desires mount to unsustainable levels and they can no longer be fulfilled by legal and ethical methods, we cross the line and perform nishiddha karma, actions prohibited by our own conscience.

Action is fuelled by desire. A musician has a desire to sing, an artist the urge

to paint and a businessman to do business. Desire springs from thought. And thought from vasana. Vasana is a deep-rooted interest, inherent leaning, innate passion for a thing. When you act merely because you desire it, you create more such desires in your system. And you are caught in the endless loop of vasana – thought – desire – action – and vasana again.

To break free from this cycle, you need to elevate yourself to kartavya, obligatory duty, the ability to do a thing because you ought to, whether you like it or not. This requires a shift in attitude – from claiming rights and privileges to appreciating the bounty you have been blessed with and developing gratitude for it. Then you look for opportunities to serve, contribute, add value to others. Your mind expands to

accommodate the wellbeing of a larger cross-section of people. Kartavya purifies you of existing desires without adding more to your personality.

Desire-driven action agitates the mind. While acting, your mind wanders to the unproductive channels of worry over the past and anxiety for the future. Only the present is under your command. Focus on it and give it your best. Every action then becomes perfect.

Success is yours. So, rise above desire. Find fulfillment in the action itself. You will be happy irrespective of the result.

Desire is the greatest obstruction that stands between you and the object of desire. When a corporate executive is obsessed with becoming the CEO, it does not happen. When he drops the desire and just does his job, he gets the

position. So drop the fixation with desire. Focus on fulfilling your kartavya to the best of your ability, wholeheartedly. You will meet with serendipitous experiences. The result will be way beyond your imagination. When Albert Einstein was working on the Theory of Relativity, he had no clue he would get the Nobel Prize.

As desires reduce, you become a towering personality. There is a meteoric rise in your spiritual level. You no longer want petty, insignificant

The Tribune

ESTABLISHED IN 1881

End of the Federer era

A magical 24-year journey is over

ROGER FEDERER broke a million hearts when he announced that he would retire from tennis after next week's Laver Cup. The announcement wasn't a surprise: the Swiss master is 41 and hadn't played a match since his defeat in last year's Wimbledon quarterfinals. Yet, hoping against hope, his fans wanted one final hurrah — maybe a 21st Grand Slam trophy, or even a lower-ranked ATP Tour tournament win, to add to his 103 titles. But realistically, the possibility of Federer holding another trophy aloft was minimal because he has endured several knee surgeries in the last six years, three of them in 2020-21. He was quickly running out of time as a top tennis player. Federer put it perfectly when he said: 'My body's message to me lately has been clear. I have played more than 1,500 matches over 24 years. Now I must recognise when it is time to end my competitive career.'

The universal sense of sadness that has greeted his announcement is testimony to the love and respect he gained by playing the game with matchless elegance — and behaving with grace and modesty off the court. It could be argued that globally, he is the most-loved sportsperson of the 21st century — perhaps of the last 50 years. His game was marked by beauty that had vanished with the wooden racquets, which were replaced by power-generating, lightweight racquets in the 1980s. Federer's court movement — economic, graceful, balletic — was a sight to behold, and it was matched by wonderful ball-striking. Using the graphite racquet to manipulate the ball in the manner of a wooden racquet, he made the greatest players gasp at his genius. Federer matched his beautiful game with immaculate conduct away from the sport, raising funds for charities across the world, and his interactions with fans and media were marked by grace, humility and respect.

Federer's career of 24 years ends next week, but the debate over his position in the tennis pantheon — especially with respect to his great rivals Rafael Nadal and Novak Djokovic — will rage forever. For now, Billie Jean King's words may be taken to represent the consensus among tennis players: 'A champion's champion. He has the most complete game of his generation and captured the hearts of sports fans around the world...'

Dalit sisters' rape-murder

Girls remain vulnerable to heinous crimes

THE horrific rape and murder of two Dalit sisters aged 15 and 17 years, who were found hanging from a tree in Lakhimpur Kheri, Uttar Pradesh, underscores the continued vulnerability of women, especially of lower castes, to heinous crimes. The deeply entrenched patriarchal and misogynist social norms relegating women to a subordinate status continue to rule the roost despite all laws securing their defence and equality. The Lakhimpur Kheri case comes two years after the appalling Hathras case in which a 20-year-old Dalit woman was assaulted and gang-raped and forcibly cremated by the police when she died two weeks later. One would think that the outrage triggered by this horrendous crime and the authorities' assurances of 'exemplary' punishment to the culprits would have instilled fear into anyone else daring to cross the line.

But, clearly, the ground reality is far from it. The Lakhimpur Kheri case is the manifestation of similar audacity. This time, the perpetrators are not upper-caste Hindu men, but Muslim men. Perhaps, that explains their quick arrest, unlike last time when even getting the accused to trial was an ordeal. Thus, UP Deputy Chief Minister Brajesh Pathak's promise of 'such an action that future generations of the accused will shiver' sounds like sheer bluster. Equally bleak is the justice delivery scenario. With four Dalit women raped every day, as per a report, there are thousands of invisible victim families — already placed unfairly down the socio-economic ladder — fighting for justice right now. As per data shared by Law Minister Kiren Rijiju recently, with 60,000 pending cases, UP tops the list of states where trials in cases of rape and those under the POCSO Act are yet to be concluded.

More pitiable is that the victims are so downtrodden and suppressed that they are easily bought over with a few lakh rupees of 'compensation' and, if the case becomes high profile, perhaps, an additional promise of a government job to the kin. How many more Dalit girls will be sacrificed before the community enjoys its right to live fearlessly and with dignity?

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

When hatred becomes cowardly, it goes masked and calls itself justice. — Arthur Schnitzler

ON THIS DAY...100 YEARS AGO

The Tribune.

LAHORE, SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 17, 1922

THE MULTAN RIOTS

WE have published three separate accounts of the Multan riots and connected events, those of the Congress deputation, our special representatives and the Punjab Hindu Sabha deputation. The first two, while differing from each other in certain particulars, are substantially at one on most of the broader issues. The third is in some respect the most detailed of the three, while the fact that the deputation included two members of the Legislative Council, one of whom, besides occupying a high social position, is an ex-official of great administrative experience and a lawyer of distinction in whom the Government itself not long ago showed its confidence by appointing him a member of the Martial Law Compensation Committee, lends importance to this report which neither of the other two reports could possibly claim. And yet the keynote of this report is just the same as that of the other two. The facts clearly show that it was the Mahomedan mob which included the aggressors on the 3rd September; that both on the 3rd and the 4th, the worst excesses were perpetrated by them; that they were solely responsible for the destruction and desecration of sacred places, and the burning of sacred books, and lastly that much of this damage to person and property and of the mischief done in the way of sacrileges could easily have been avoided if the Police had been active and had done its duty. It is worthy of note that this essentially and exclusively Hindu deputation, representing a public body whose sole object is to protect and advance Hindu interests, does not utter a single word in anger. We have not been able to discover one single strong adjective used by the deputation even with reference to the mob. The deputation, indeed, is concerned only with the doings of the mob and not with the mob itself.

Bilkis and Joseph

Test cases for justice and living metaphors for what's wrong with our society

NOUS INDICA
RAJESH RAMACHANDRAN

INJUSTICE: The cases of Bilkis Bano and TJ Joseph ought to become call signs of public morality for politicians, activists, academics and journalists. TRIBUNE PHOTO & FACEBOOK



The talisman for true journalism in India will have their names in it. We need to ask: Are we doing right by them?

BILKIS BANO and TJ Joseph are two living metaphors that ought to become call signs or entry codes of public morality for politicians, activists, academics or journalists. The celebration of 75 years of India's Independence was soiled by the release of 11 convicts who had gang-raped Bilkis Bano and killed her 14 relatives, including her three-year-old child. These rapists and murderers were feted outside the jail of their choice in Godhra and later at their village in Randhikpur, with relatives distributing sweets, bursting crackers and singing and dancing to the tunes of a disc jockey.

A momentous occasion was marred and a day of deep significance was defiled for a bunch of criminals who never deserved the remission in the first place. The Godhra train tragedy — criminal arson or terrorist attack — and the killing of 60 pilgrims cannot justify the release and public adulation of people who committed heinous crimes. And this one episode has made Bilkis a metaphor for all that is wrong with our sense of justice as a society.

Worse, this episode sends a chilling message down the spines of all Indians: criminals will be pardoned for their worst transgressions if they are done in the name of a religion or a religious group. The next time around, won't the people of Randhikpur repeat the gang-rape and murder, knowing well that they would be let off on an Independence Day and feted by their neighbours? Why just Randhikpur, will not this remission reassure criminals across the country? All that they need to do is to double-check their political and religious credentials — do they belong to the right religion and the right party? And the religion can get replaced by

caste in certain cases. This was the BJP's biggest grouse against caste-based parties in the Hindi heartland, yet it seems to have successfully replicated the model by replacing caste identity with religious identity, offering the same impunity.

Hopefully, the Supreme Court will soon review the remission granted by the Gujarat Government and offer a legal cure to this terrible injury to our body politic. Along with the Supreme Court, the BJP and the Sangh Parivar should adopt a civilisational view and analyse this act of injustice towards a woman and its impact on the practice and principles of law in India. The BJP will not remain in power for all times to come in all states or the Centre, but if the Supreme Court does not overturn this decision, it will become the law of the land: any executive could then let off any convicted criminal depending on his caste, religion or political affiliation.

This will make a mockery of the Indian judiciary, within our country and all across the world. The victim always need not be a Muslim. And that brings us to the case of Prof TJ Joseph of Newman College in a small town of Kerala. About 12 years ago, he was brutally attacked and his hand was chopped off in the presence

of his family while he was returning from church. The intention of the attackers, in all likelihood, was to sever his hands and feet. This teacher of Malayalam was attacked for a reference to a character named Mohammed in a question paper that he set for a semester exam. Mohammed is the name of the Prophet, but it is also the most common Muslim name, and in the context of a passage referring to a Muslim character, the use of this name could only be considered a casual act of classroom indulgence.

But the Islamist lawgivers of Kerala decided that Joseph had committed blasphemy and deserved severe punishment. So they sent out their law-enforcement squad to chop off his limbs. After his right hand was severed and he was undergoing treatment, the Christian management of his college dismissed Joseph from service for setting a paper that 'hurt religious sentiments'. Of course, the then progressive and secular Marxist government left it to the victim to appeal to the university tribunal, not taking any action against the college management. And Joseph was not spared homilies on good conduct by the minister concerned.

The mouthpiece of PFI cannot be treated differently from those of some *gauraksha dals* that keep sprouting regularly to lynch cattle traders or murder innocents like Mohammed Akhlaq of Noida. Of course, a journalist, as a pure professional, can offer his services to a radical religious newspaper and all employees need not share the political or communal ideology of the newspaper owner. But in this case, nobody has even tried to examine whether this celebrated PFI-linked journalist is a radical Islamist propagating hand-chopping ideas. The talisman for true journalism in India from now on will have two names in it: Bilkis and Joseph. And the question we always need to ask ourselves is: Are we doing right by them?

A Captain's word mattered more

LT GEN HARWANT SINGH (RETD)

IT WAS a Captain in Srinagar sub-area when in May 1963 the stocking of Ladakh commenced. I was tasked to oversee the running of transit camps and movement of convoys.

The movement plan of convoys was issued by the Border Roads Organisation (BRO): two convoys — on the same night — would arrive at the Bodkharbu transit camp (340 km from Srinagar). The camp catered to 200 transients while in these two convoys the strength of troops would go up to 1,500. Thus chaos prevailed.

I suggested to the sub-area commander (known as Joe Dass) that we should reschedule the movement

plan so that only one convoy halted at the camp for the night. Up and down convoys could cross each other at Lamayaru. The Brigadier approved my suggestion.

A week later, there was a conference at the Corps HQ, where the Army Commander too was present. Dass raised this problem at the Bodkharbu camp and presented the suggested movement plan. The BRO commander pointed out that it was not possible for two convoys to cross each other. He said he had built that road and knew every inch of it.

The point was much argued, and when even the Army Commander did not agree to this plan, Dass told him that in case he failed to implement the new plan, the Army Commander could find someone else to command the sub-area.

On return, Dass told me what had transpired at the conference and gave the go-ahead to implement the plan.

That day itself, I put the new movement plan in operation and left for Bodkharbu. From the transit camp, we collected about 18 men with spades, etc. At Lamayaru, as one travelled towards Leh, there was an embankment of mud, about 10 ft high. Travelling on this road, one could not see the vast open ground beyond. That is how the BRO commander was not aware of it.

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On reaching the spot, we broke down the embankment at two places:

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Opposition unity

Refer to 'The Oppn's dark horse'; the writer lays bare the ambitions of many hopefuls like Rahul Gandhi, Arvind Kejriwal and Nitish Kumar. No Opposition unity is possible unless there is a consensus on the Prime Ministerial candidate.

The 2024 election is still far. PM Modi has many admirers and vast support of people. Do we have an Opposition leader to match his stature? It will be difficult to dislodge him even if the Opposition unites. One does hope that the opposition parties put up a good fight and get enough seats to act as a strong Opposition, which will be good for the country and the democracy.

WG CDR CL SEHGAL (RETD), JALANDHAR

Deportation of youths

Reference to '40 Punjabi youths face deportation'; it is a matter of shame that Canada has decided to deport 40 youths to Punjab for misbehaving with the police. This is not a first such incident. Several incidents of Punjabi students creating ruckus on roads and in parties have been reported. Canada is not like India where you can go scot-free after damaging public property or disrespecting the law. Parents of students take loans on higher rates to send their children abroad for a better future. Due to a few students, the

whole community faces humiliation and hatred. Those aspiring to settle in Canada must learn from this incident.

TARANPREET SINGH, MOGA

AAP's publicity drive

The AAP government in Punjab has inserted full-page advertisements in various national and vernacular newspapers highlighting its achievements of six months. It is a sheer wastage of taxpayers' money to get publicity not just confined to Punjab, but as far as Gujarat and the Andamans. The state is reeling under a burgeoning debt burden and has been unable to even square off the salary bill of employees. Such misuse of the state's meagre resources should be stopped. The money should be utilised for the servicing of the debt portfolio and urgent development works. The Comptroller General should take cognisance and restrain the DIPR from using treasury for publicity purposes.

ANIL VINAYAK, AMRITSAR

Burden of freebies

Apropos of 'Freebies strain Punjab's financial resources'; promising freebies by political parties nullifies election regulations as the parties overstep the prescribed election expenditure using public money instead of their respective party funds. Promising the moon if they

come to power, and leaving it to the public to test its efficacy is a mockery of democracy. When a party announces, say, that it will waive farmers' debt, it is a violation of banking regulations. The Election Commission has left it to the public to judge. How can it be left to prospective beneficiaries? The commission and judiciary should intervene.

GAURAV BADHWAR, ROHTAK

Hijab row

The best way out for the apex court is to refer the matter to its Constitution Bench for a final verdict on the issue ('We aren't interpreters of Quran: SC on hijab row'). Muslim women wear hijab for privacy. Hitherto, the issue of wearing hijab in educational institutions was never raised. How come the need to ban it has suddenly arisen? The issue is nothing but a result of Hindu-Muslim rivalry. If hijab is considered risky from the security point of view, questions could be raised about 'ghunghat' as well. Sentiments of all religions should be respected for maintaining communal harmony.

RAVINDER SINGH, JALANDHAR

Quota crutch

Refer to 'Hathee community of HP gets ST status'; it brings to an end the 20-year struggle of this community living in the remotest corner of

Himachal. Reservation to SC/ST have been continuing since 1950s. Has this brought a tangible change in the quality of their life? Only politicians of every hue have reaped electoral harvest in elections. Just for this reason, they are continuing with this lopsided policy. The right thing would be to provide these communities with good education and financial help in academics. After this, they should be left to compete in whatever field they wish to pursue. Otherwise, they will always bear a life-long stigma of 'reserved category', even if most of them may prove to be competent. The quota crutch should be done away with.

LR SHARMA, SUNDERNAGAR

Federer bids adieu

The tennis world has suffered a blow after Roger Federer, an icon who transcended the sport, announced his retirement. While it is a sad development, there is much to celebrate about his career. He built a stunning tennis profile with eight Wimbledon titles, 20 Grand Slam singles titles and not having retired mid-match in over 1,500 career matches. His constant quest for improvement took him to insurmountable heights. His demeanour, humility and elegance made him popular. He is also known for philanthropic activities.

ADITYA SINGH, KARNAL

Harbinger of hope on the ecological front



DEVINDER SHARMA
FOOD & AGRICULTURE SPECIALIST

AT a time when the monarchy has been reduced to doing the usual duty of gracefully smiling, ribbon-cutting and waving to the crowds, the accession of King Charles III to the British throne throws up an immense possibility of providing the world with a 'Green King' — a sensitive person, with a mind of his own, and a passion to save the planet.

"In his early twenties, he gave prescient speeches on pollution. In his middle age, he founded high-profile sustainability initiatives. And in January, at age 73, he issued his most stark call for radical climate action by business and government," wrote the *Time* magazine, aptly summarising his journey over the decades as the King-in-Waiting. Soon after inheriting the throne, and while addressing British parliament, the King said he feels the 'weight of history' and in an earlier statement he had acknowledged: "It will no longer be possible for me to give so much of my time and energies to the charities and issues for which I care so deeply."

But knowing his credentials, and the deep commitment he has towards protecting the environment, I don't think history can keep him confined to the role of a ceremonial monarch. Most of the royal attendees at Queen Eliza-

beth's funeral — and that include lesser-known Kings and Queens from a number of European countries, besides the Emperor and the Empress from Japan — have one thing in common: None of them have had their lives so meticulously scrutinised, and written about. Nothing unusual; after all, they kept their opinion to themselves and therefore had little to be talked about. That was an easy option they exercised.

But King Charles — even during his long wait as the Prince — was cast in a different mould. Never hesitating to speak his mind, even if it ended up ruffling a few feathers, he had the courage to stand up and be counted. We haven't seen any member of the royal family anywhere stepping out of the normal ceremonial 'duties' to question, for instance, "the insane agro-chemical approaches to farming, which are a disaster in many ways, cause huge damage and contribute enormously to emissions", or when he said that "if small farms disappear it will rip the heart of the British countryside." He not only often talks of destructive agriculture and fisheries' subsidies, the need to encourage non-chemical farming, but has also set up a charity for regenerative agriculture.

As a Prince, he walked the talk. Often calculating and presenting his ecological case, he had also restricted the consumption of non-vegetarian food, ostensibly to play his part in reducing emissions from livestock farming. He had reduced the intake of dairy products too. And as *The Guardian* (October 11, 2021) reported, before COP26, Prince Charles had divulged that the Aston Martin car he drove was running on a bio-ethanol mix that uses "surplus



English white wine and whey from the cheese process." Simply put, he was clearly trying to convey a larger message to the public — to try and reduce their ecological footprint and thereby play a role in saving the environment.

From climate change to genetic engineering, from air pollution to plastic menace, and from organic farming to private space exploration, he has created a space to discuss and deliberate on the contentious issues the world is faced with. Call him eccentric or even a romanticist, the fact remains that he is very well read. It's not easy to challenge the dominant narrative, that too when it is backed by big money, unless of course one has a deep understanding of the subject itself. Therefore, I feel how he handles his reign will depend on how he perceives his new

role — and more importantly how he decides he should be remembered as.

This reminds me of another monarch who is very fondly remembered. Thailand's King Bhumibol Adulyadej reigned for 70 years after he ascended the throne in 1946. As a student, I was enthralled by his humane approach of spending time with the people to understand their development needs. As a King, he didn't have to do it. But his interest in people's welfare and economic prosperity eventually led him to develop the 'sufficiency economy' philosophy. At the time of the Asian financial crisis in 1997, in a televised address he had said: "People are crazy about becoming a tiger. Being a tiger is not important. The important thing for us is to have a sufficient economy. A sufficient economy means to have enough

to support ourselves." These words have relevance for India.

Nevertheless, the 'sufficiency economy' philosophy, which means putting sustainability at the centre of the development pathway, is now being practised in 23,000 villages across the country. Instead of focusing on exports, the concept relies on building self-sufficiency whereby the effort should be to first have enough for the people. More interestingly, following up the numerous royal projects that he began, including his work on soil regeneration and germplasm collections, won him the first UN Human Development Award in 2006. The UN had also appreciated the 'sufficiency economy' philosophy that King Bhumibol had come up with.

Branding him as the world's first and

only "Development King", the then UN Secretary General Kofi Annan had said: "Your Majesty has reached out to the poorest and the most vulnerable people of Thailand, regardless of their status, ethnicity or religion, listened to their problems, and empowered them to take their lives in their own hands."

In many ways, King Charles too shares a legacy that can catapult him to the centre stage. The world is in need of some sane voices that can shift the focus to sustainability. Besides environment, surely he needs to focus on the economic downturn that has led to worsening inequality. Not getting into any political conflict, I am sure the new King can easily carve out a new role for the monarchy — to provide hope in the times of growing disenchantment.

PROGRESSIVE: Charles has often talked about destructive agriculture and the need to encourage non-chemical farming. REUTERS

Need to enhance availability of safe blood



MAJ GEN ATUL KOTWAL (RETD)
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, NATIONAL HEALTH SYSTEMS RESOURCE CENTRE, UNION HEALTH MINISTRY

We are losing patients daily due to unavailability or shortage of blood. Blood transfusion is not limited to cases such as trauma, surgeries, post-partum haemorrhages or anaemia; it has expanded to cover patients being treated for cancer, inherited blood disorders or specific surgeries. Voluntary blood donation has been advocated at the national & international levels not only to address the shortfall, but also to phase out replacement donors.

SAFE blood saves lives. Blood cannot be manufactured outside the body and has a limited shelf life and thus, its supply must be constantly replenished. Voluntary blood donors are the cornerstone of a safe and adequate supply of blood and its components. Concerted efforts over the past few years by the government, non-governmental organisations and staff providing blood transfusion services have led to a progressive increase in voluntary blood donation in the country. However, due to the existing shortfall, there is a need for strategies to enhance safe blood availability by focusing more on voluntary blood donors.

Several reports have attested to a shortage of blood across healthcare facilities in India. We are losing patients every day due to unavailability/shortage of blood, including maternal deaths due to excessive loss of blood. Blood transfusion is not limited to cases such as trauma, surgeries, post-partum haemorrhages or anaemia, but with the country's changing health needs and evolved facilities, this has expanded to cover patients being treated for cancer, inherited blood disorders or specific surgeries and similar interventions. Voluntary blood donation has been advocated both at the national and international levels not only to address the shortfall, but also to phase out replacement donors over a period. This will also reduce the financial burden of patients while arranging replacement donors, which has become the responsibility of the patient over a period of time.



STRATEGY: A nationally coordinated blood transfusion service should be developed, based on voluntary non-remunerated blood donations. PTI

A first-of-its-kind national-level cross-sectional study has revealed India's estimated demand, supply, and utilisation of whole blood and blood products. It was found that the supply against demand is 92.6% for whole blood, 91.7% for red cells, 86% for plasma, 77.5% for platelets and 92.1% for cryoprecipitate. The study attributes the supply-demand gap to factors such as low voluntary blood donation and injudicious demand (JJ Mammen, et al., 2022). This inference points to the need to further improve awareness, to motivate voluntary donors as well as to avoid irrational clinical use of blood and blood products.

Regular blood donation drives are already being held on notable occasions across different platforms, including facilities, corporate offices, civil societies, NGOs, academic institutions, and more. Realising the need to increase awareness and timely access to safe blood transfusion, the Government of India has proposed to organise a mega blood donation drive on September 17 with the involvement of all ministries of the Union and state governments, non-government and community-based organisations, and the youth of the country.

Even though concerns of 'wastage' because of this mega campaign are being raised by some activists, this is a sincere initiative to raise awareness that blood is needed every day and to encourage more people to donate

blood throughout the year. The initiative is also designed to encourage voluntary blood donors to register themselves with the Union Ministry of Health & Family Welfare (MoHFW) and donate blood in identified blood banks or donation camps. Moreover, one lakh units of blood in a day spread across the country can be easily and gainfully utilised as the country already reports a shortfall of approximately 40 lakh units per annum.

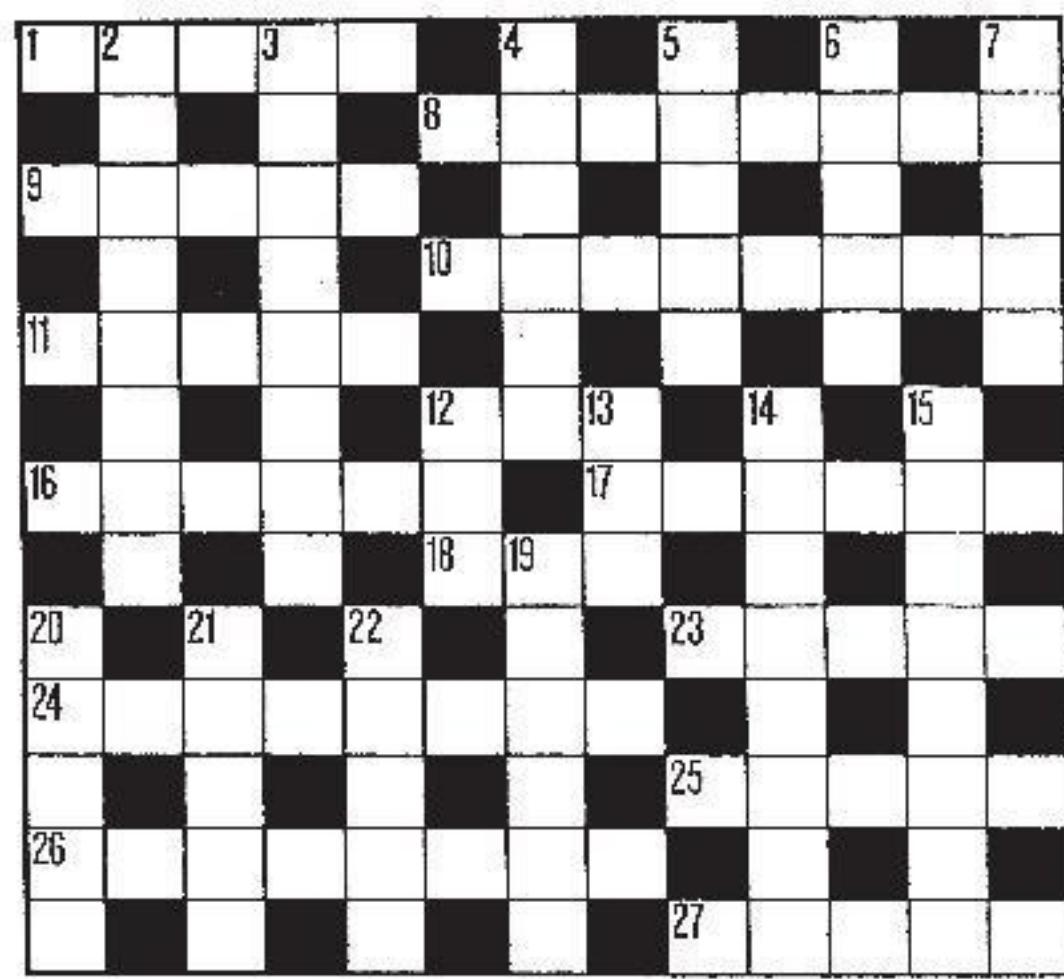
The campaign would not only focus on blood collection but also ensure its accessibility and availability at the point of demand. This would be achieved by strengthening the systems and ensuring uniform high quality, logistics, cold chain management, common inventory and appropriate regulatory framework. With the MoHFW recently releasing revised Indian Public Health Standards (IPHS 2022) for healthcare facilities, blood banks and storage facilities are also being strengthened to complement the government's efforts towards universal access to safe blood transfusion.

Additionally, more than 51% of the blood banks in the country have component separation facilities attached to them. While whole blood has a shelf life of up to 35 days, fresh frozen plasma, separated from whole blood within six hours and rapidly frozen and maintained at a temperature of -30°C, has a shelf life of up to one year. Moreover, the blood banks will draw the number of units only as per their capacity and the rest of the volunteers will be enrolled in the database for future requirement.

The fundamental strategy to ensure timely access to safe and sufficient supply of blood and blood products is to develop a nationally coordinated blood transfusion service based on voluntary non-remunerated blood donations. This service would be governed by quality management in all its aspects, with sufficient and continuous funding, and be fully integrated into the national health system. Leveraging information technology, Aarogya Setu and e-Raktkosh will help in creating a live database of motivated voluntary donors available on an-as-required basis. The states/UTs need to ensure that this mega drive is effectively utilised for information, education and behavioural change communication on a large scale during contact with the volunteers.

With the recent initiatives of the government in the health sector — Ayushman Bharat, health grants under the 15th Finance Commission, Emergency Covid Response Package (ECRP-2) funds and the ongoing National Health Mission — India has embarked on a journey towards a resilient and strengthened health system with a holistic approach. Thus, attention to each and every component, such as ensuring the availability of quality blood and blood products and streamlining the systems they rely on, will guarantee building on the recent progress. This, in turn, will help in strengthening the healthcare system as a whole and achieve universal and timely access to safe blood transfusion. After all, every drop counts!

QUICK CROSSWORD



YESTERDAY'S SOLUTION

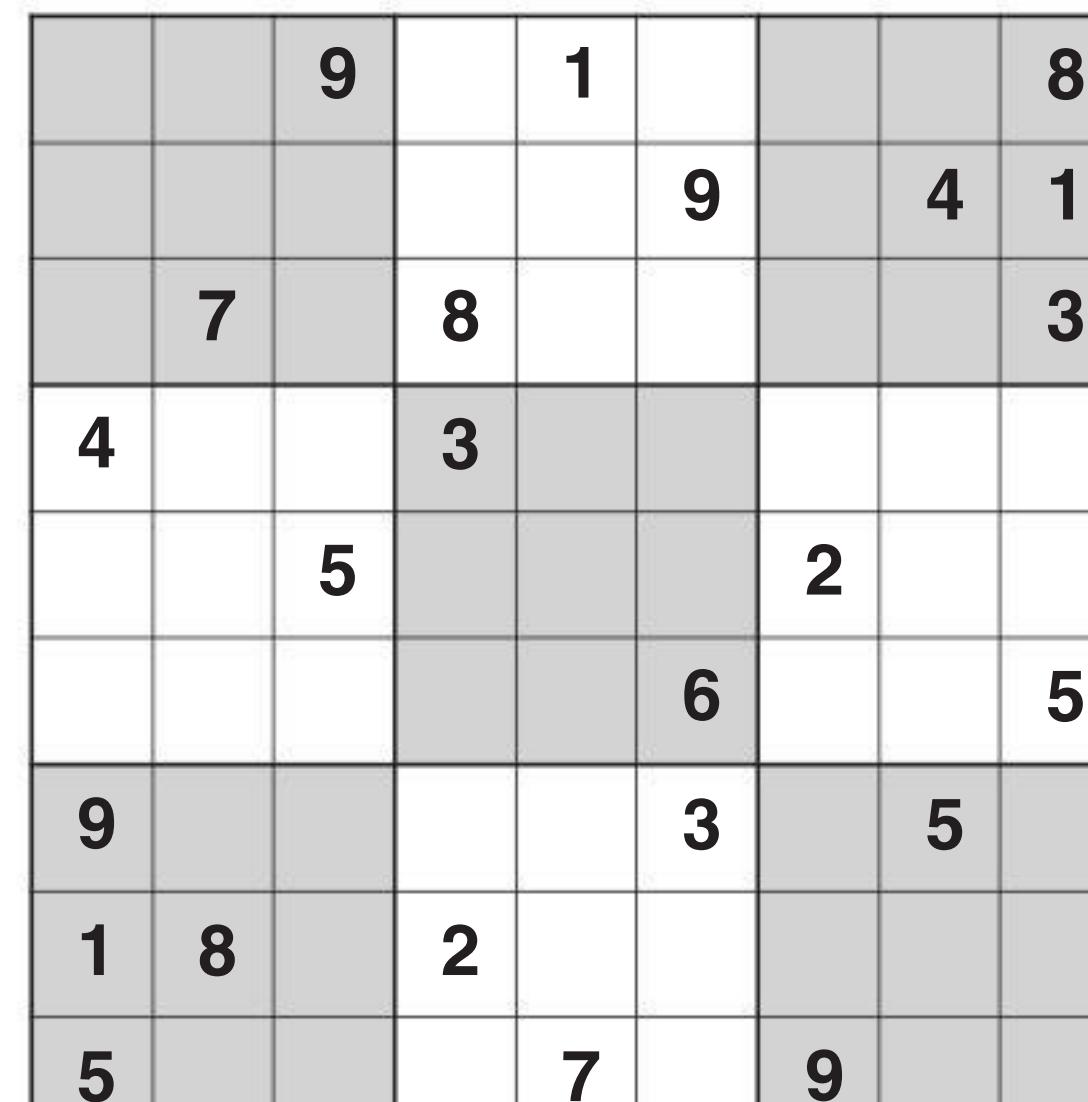
Across: 1 Poles apart, 6 Camp, 10 Crave, 11 Adulation, 12 Disputed, 13 Teeth, 15 Asinine, 17 Pioneer, 19 Cryptic, 21 Festoon, 22 Defer, 24 Scruples, 27 Evocative, 28 Evade, 29 Site, 30 In prospect.

Down: 1 Pick, 2 Liability, 3 Steep, 4 Prattle, 5 Round-up, 7 Aside, 8 Punch-drunk, 9 Captious, 14 Fancy dress, 16 Interval, 18 Exonerate, 20 Cushion, 21 Forbear, 23 Flout, 25 Press, 26 Zest.

ACROSS

- 1 Form of passive demonstration (3-2)
- 8 And so forth (2,6)
- 9 Actively in existence (5)
- 10 Painting, sculpture, music etc. (4,4)
- 11 Hidden store (5)
- 12 An evergreen conifer (3)
- 16 City of the waltz (6)
- 17 Natural (6)
- 18 Play on words (3)
- 23 Ungracefully tall and thin (5)
- 24 As a favour, without obligation (2,6)
- 25 Underneath (5)
- 26 Wild guess (4,4)
- 27 Festive social occasion (5)
- DOWN**
- 2 Unbecoming (5,3)
- 3 Stern, rigid control (4,4)
- 4 Discord (6)
- 5 Hemmed in (5)
- 6 A lustrous gem (5)
- 7 Sufficient reason (5)
- 12 Bark shrilly (3)
- 13 Victory (3)
- 14 Privately (2,6)
- 15 Place under surveillance (5,3)
- 19 Concord (6)
- 20 Answer (5)
- 21 Great pain (5)
- 22 Severe (5)

SU DO KU



HARD

CALENDAR

SEPTEMBER 17, 2022, SATURDAY

■ Vikrami Samvat	2079
■ Shaka Samvat	1944
■ Bhadrapad Shaka	26
■ Ashwin Parvishite	1
■ Hijri	1444
■ Krishna Paksha Tithi 7, up to 2:15 pm	
■ Siddhi Yoga	
■ Rohini Nakshatra up to 12:21 pm	
■ Moon enters Gemini sign 1:44 pm	

YESTERDAY'S SOLUTION

3	9	1	5	6	4	8	2	7
8	2	4	7	9	1	6	3	5
5	7	6	2	3	8	4	9	1
1	3	5	6	8	2	7	4	9
2	4	9	1	7	3	5	6	8
6	8	7	9	4	5	3	1	2
4	5	2	8	1	6	9	7	3
9	6	8	3	2	7	1	5	4
7	1	3	4	5	9	2	8	6

FORECAST

SUNSET: SATURDAY 18:25 HRS
SUNRISE: SUNDAY 06:08 HRS

CITY	MAX	MIN
Chandigarh	33	24
New Delhi	32	24
Amritsar	34	24
Bathinda	36	22
Jalandhar	33	24
Ludhiana	33	23
Bhiwani	36	26
Hisar	35	24
Sirsa	36	24
Dharamsala	29	17
Manali	24	11
Shimla	21	14
Srinagar	29	15
Jammu	33	22
Kargil	27	11
Leh	23	07
Dehradun	29	21
Mussoorie	20	15

TEMPERATURE IN °C