# Fixing frequencies first

Policymakers must make sure that the 5G economic payoff will outweigh the high cost

inance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman's Budget an-nouncement that the Government proposes to conduct the "remained assembly proposes to conduct the "required spectrum auctions" in 2022 to facilitate the roll-out of 5G mobile phone services in fiscal 2022-23 has understandably triggered speculation including about the feasibility of the timeline. The Government's keenness to expedite the roll-out was framed by Ms. Sitharaman as being propelled by an appreciation of the latest generation telecommunication technology's ability to serve as an enabler of eco-nomic growth and job creation. Commenting on the Budget announcement, Communications Minister Ash-wini Vaishnaw said TRAI was expected to submit its recommendations on the spectrum to be set aside for 5G by March, adding that the auction for the airwaves would be held soon after. While last week's flurry of announcements have raised the possibility that the next auction of telecom spectrum may be held within the next few months, there is little clarity on the approach the Government plans to take with regard to the crucial issues surrounding the introduction of 5G services. Fo-remost are questions around the particular frequencies the regulator is likely to recommend, the Government's plans on pricing the spectrum, and most crucially, the very viability of the new technology, both for the tele-com companies and the economy as a whole. With the financially stressed private telecom service provider industry now reduced to a near duopoly, as Vodafone Idea continues to bleed losses and subscribers and even plans to convert some of its outstanding interest dues to the DoT into an equity stake that will make the Union government the largest shareholder, the sector's appe-tite for the highly capital intensive 5G technology is un-likely to be substantial at the moment.

That 5G represents an exponential leap in technology is beyond doubt. However, most countries that have commercialised 5G so far largely find the technology still predominantly deployed as an upgraded replace-ment for 4G in terms of end use, with the industrial and public utility applications envisaged still at least a few years away. Also, for the new technology to work at its optimum potential the Government would need to not only offer the key operational frequencies including the below 1 GHz, the C-Band frequencies around 3.5 GHz, and the higher 26 GHz but also crucially enable the transport or backhaul of signals between the base stations and telecom operator's core network by offering no- to low-cost E-Band airwayes. With the COVID-19 pandemic having shown up the existing mobile net-works' inadequacies in terms of reach, especially in enabling the delivery of education to remote and rural students, it may make the most sense to delay the introduction of 5G until policymakers are sure its economic payoff will outweigh the high cost.

# Death of a terrorist

Geopolitical and sectarian faultlines in Iraq and Syria enhance the threat from the IS

The death of Abu Ibrahim al-Hashimi al-Qurayshi, the leader of the Islamic State (IS), has come at a time when the terrorist outfit has been trying to revive its fortunes in Iraq and Syria, its core region. A few weeks earlier, IS militants had carried out an ambitious attack – their largest since the death of Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, IS founder, in 2019 – on a prison in north-eastern Syria's Hasakah, to free thousands of jihadists. But it was a failure as American soldiers joined the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), a Kurdish militia, to push back the militants. Qurayshi blew himself up along with his family, like his predecessor did three years ago, when U.S. special forces approached his hideout in Idlib, the province controlled by ijhadists linked with al Qaeda. When he became the IS chief, the entity had transformed itself from a 'Caliphate', with control over some key cities in Iraq and Syria, into an underground insurgency with global branches. Under Ourayshi, the Is continued to operate like a loose confederation of au-tonomous networks. Its Afghan and West African branches expanded operations, while in Iraq and Syria, it staged occasional attacks - a reminder that it is only

It is aged occasional actices – a Tellimeter that it is only the physical Caliphate that has been destroyed. It is more than a coincidence that both Baghdadi and Qurayshi were hiding in Syria's Idlib. The Syrian government's efforts to recapture the territory have not been successful as there is strong regional opposition, espe-cially from Turkey which fears another refugee influx. The province is controlled by Hayat Tahrir al-Sham, a globally designated terrorist outfit that was formerly known as Jabhat al-Nusra, the Syrian branch of al Qae-da. Idlib is now run by Abu Mohammad al-Joulani, the al Qaeda militant who was sent to Syria by Baghdadi in 2013, in the early stages of the civil war, to open a branch of his outfit. If a lasting solution to the jihadist control of Idlib is not found, the future Baghdadis and Qurayshis would also take refuge in this region. Another important lesson the IS's recent attacks provides is that the Syrian Kurds remain a key ally in the fight against the IS, as the Hasakah incident has shown. The U.S. should not throw them at the mercy of Turkey – like the Trump administration once did – once the IS threat is minimised. They should be incorporated into a larger regional counter-terror strategy. Lastly, the IS has learned how to survive these occasional setbacks. It has lost its Caliphate and its top commanders but there are thousands of foot soldiers spread across Iraq and Syria, waiting to strike. The still open wounds of the civil war in Syria and the lingering sectarian sentiments in Iraq have let them survive so far. As long as these geopolitical and sectarian faultlines remain in Iraq and Syria, the

# The interpretative answer to the hijab row

The courts will be called upon to protect an essential religious practice



SANJAY HEGDE

number of Muslim girl stu-

Anumber of Muslim girl students in my home town of Udupi, Karmataka, have been refused entry into their colege. The administration objects to them covering their heads with a high. The girls invoke the protection of the Indian Constitution, whose preceptor Dr. R.R. Ambedkar once wrote, "the world owes much to rebels who would dare to argue in the face of the pontiff and insist that he is not infallible". Udupi has a proud tradition of having rebels who have challenged established norms that have not stood the test of reason. In the 16th century, priests at the Krishna temple in Udupi prevented a lower caste devotee, Kanakadasa, from entering it. He refused to go away and began composing and singing kirtans from the courtyard outside, while waiting to secure a sight of the delity, between a ferr many days, the priest did not relent but a miracle intervened. The idol of the delity which until then faced eastwards, miraculously turned eastwards, miraculously turned 180 degrees to face west, and then broke open a rear wall to create a window through which Kanakada-sa could have his darshan. Even to day all devotees have their first sight of the lord through Kanaka-

### A focal point

Thus, it was only historically apt Thus, it was only historically apt that one of the first great religious cases interpreted by the new Supreme Court, under the new Constitution, came from Udupi. In the Commissioner, Hindu Religious Endowments, Madras vs Sri Lakshmindra Thirtha Swamiar of Sri Shirur Mutt case, or Shirur Mutt, of 1954, the Court ruled, "....what constitutes the essential part of a religion is primarily to be ascer-tained with reference to the doctained with reference to the doc-trines of that religion itself." Ever thereafter, the judgment in Shirur Mutt has remained the focal point of constitutional discussion on re-ligious freedoms. The "essential religious practices" test appeased religious practices" test appeased traditionalists by 'assuring them that the Court would be sympathietic to their respective religious faiths. It also supported statesponsored reform by leaving one agency of the state – the judiciary – with the power to determine and pronounce upon (perhaps, transform) religious practice and belief'.

'Religious practice'
Since it was first propounded, the
"essential religious practice" test
has been problematic. How it is
been problematic How it is
continued to determine what an 'essential practice' is' Should it is
call for evidence' Should judge
pursue these questions on the basis of their own research'? Juny on research' 2 Juny
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Land of the stab of la case, bemoaned, "... compul-sions nonetheless have led the court to don a theological mantle. The enquiry has moved from deciding what is essentially religious to what is an essential religious practice. Donning such a role is not an easy task when the Court is called upon to decide whether a practice does nor does not form an essential part of a religious be-lief. Scriptures and customs merge with bewildering complexity into superstition and dogma. Separatthe grain from the chaff in ing the grain from the chair in-volves a complex adjudicatory function. Decisions of the Court have attempted to bring in a mea-sure of objectivity by holding that the Court has been called upon to decide on the basis of the trenets of the religion itself. But even that is not a consistent norm."



no doubt that an observant Muslim woman might insist that the
following verses from the Koran
mandate her to keep her head cowered. Chapter 33, Verse 59 says "
O Prophet In Join your wise,
your daughters, and the wives of
true believers that they should
cast their outer garments over
their persons (when abroad). That is
most convenient, that they may
be distinguished and not be harassed." Chapter 24, verse 31 is
more explicit in decreeing, "And
say to the believing women that
they should lower their gaze...;
that they should not display their
beauty and ornaments except
what (must ordinaryly appear thereof; that they should draw their
khimär ... and not display their
beauty except to their husband's
thimis ... and not display their
beauty except to their husband's
sons, their brothers or their brothers' sons, or their sisters' sons, or
their women... ers' sons, or their sisters' sons, or their women....

### A possible fallout

stions of uniforms never troubled my five years of college in Udupi in the early 1980s. There was no requirement of uniforms. Subsequent administrators, in the 1990s, may have decreed uniforms fashion-conscious teenagers. To-day, there is no one uniform code which is mandated throughout the State. Individual colleges do de-

rent controversy may well be a State administrative order decreeing uniforms for all college stu dents throughout the State of Kar nataka. That to my mind would be a killjoy response of an administra-tion that prioritises uniformity ov-

er diversity.

In the absence of a statutory uniform code, a court may well ask whether a head covering mandated by some religions, when worn in addition to the uniform, volates any legal tenet. Would the same standards that banish a female hijab apply to a turban worn by a male sikh student? Can government colleges deny education to students who are seen to be violating a uniform code? Is the hijab or even a full covering in any manner volative of the process of imparting education? Can a government college deducation to female education deny education to those it deems improperly dressed? Should implementation of a dress code be prioritised over imparting education to all that seek it? These and other like questions will probably soon engage the attention of a constitutional court. That court may do well to heed Justice R.F. Narier diversity.

In the absence of a statutory undo well to beed Justice R.F. Nari man's dictum in the Sabarimala re-view which says, "... After all, in view which says, "... After all, in India's tryst with destiny, we have chosen to be wedded to the rule of law as laid down by the Constitu-tion of India. Let every person re member that the "holy book" is the Constitution of India,..."

### Competing rights

The interpretative answer to the hijab row, from the "holy book", might lie in another case from Udupi district. Three years after Shirur Math, in 1957, the Supreme Snrum Main, in 1951, the Supremanan Deva-ru vs State of Mysore, had to exa-mine whether the exclusion of a person from entering into a tem-ple for worship is a matter of reli-gion according to Hindu ceremo-nial law. The Court held "... that the right of a denomination to

wholly exclude members of the public from worshipping in the temple, though comprised in Art. 26(b), must yield to the overriding remple, flungli comprised mixturely, flungli comprised mixturely, flungli comprised with the right declared by Art. 22(3/6) in favour either public to enter into temple for worship. But where the right claimed is not one of general and total exclusion of the public from worship in the temple at all times but of exclusion from certain religious services, they being limited by the rules of the foundation to the members of the denomination, then the question is not whether Art. 25(2/6) overrides that right so as to extinguish it, but whether Art. 25(2/6) overrides that right so as to extinguish it, but whether it is possible so to regulate the rights of the persons protected by Art. 25(2/6) as to give effect to both the rights? Wenkadraumana Devaru points to the Court's endeavour to harmonise competing rights in a way that both were given effect to. In the hijab case, the courts will be called upon to protect an essential religious practice, in a manner consistent with imparting education in an orderly fashion.

It is not the domain of this article to prophesy the ultimate outcome of the ensuing legal battle. The protesting girls may, however, take heart from another Kanakadasa-like episode from the late 1970s. Jon Higgins, an American scholar of music, was so proficient in Carnatic music that he was called Higgins Bhagvathar. When is the was called Higgins Bhagvathar. When is the second of the southern than the was called Higgins Bhagvathar. When is the second of the second of the visited the Udupi Shirt Krishna was called Hedupi Shirt Krishn

called Higgins Bhagvathar. When he visited the Udupi Shri Krishna temple, he was denied entry be-cause of his white skin. He stood at the gate and sang in chaste Kanna da the Vyasatirtha composition 'Krishna nee begane baro'. He was permitted entry immediately, pos sibly to avert another interver from the deity. The moral I take from this episode is that unthink-ing enforcers of any kind of dogma will have to ultimately yield to a harmonious faith in a "holy book".

Sanjay Hegde is a Senior Advocate designated by the Supreme Court of India

# Weighing in on a health data retention plan

A privacy-centric process is needed to determine what data to retain and for how long

RISHAB BAILEY, HARLEEN KAUR, BRINDA LASHKARI & AMEYA ASHOK NAIK

In a welcome development, the National Health Authority (NHA) – the body responsible for administering the Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission (ABDM) – has initiated a consultation process on the retention of health data by health-care providers in In-dia (https://bit.ly/3uK9buH). The consultation paper asks for feed-back on what data is to be re-tained, and for how long.

back on what data is to be re-tained, and for how long.

A simple classification system, as suggested in the consultation paper, exposes individuals to harms arising from over-collection and retention of unnecessary da-ta. At the same time, this kind of one-size-fits-all system can also lead to under-retention of data that is genuinely required for re-search or public policy needs. In-stead, we should seek to classify data based on its use. In this sys-tem, health data not required for an identified purpose would be anonymised, or deleted.

The need for such a policy
Whether the state should mandate
a retention period at all is an open
question. Currently, service providers can compete on how they
handle the data of individuals or
health records; in theory, each of
us can choose a provider whose
data policies we are comfortable
with. Given the landscape of

health-care access in India, includ-ing through informal providers, many patients may not think about this factor in practice. Non-etheless, the decision to take choice out of the individual's hands should not be taken lightly. The Supreme Court of India has clarified that privacy is a funda-mental right, and any interference into the right must pass a four-part test: legality, legitimate aim; pro-portionality, and appropriate safe-

portionality, and appropriate safe-guards. The mandatory retention of health data is one such form of interference with the right to

In this context, the question of In this context, the question of legality becomes a question about the legal standing and authority of the NHA. For instance, the consultation paper asks whether the health data retention policy should be made applicable only to health-care providers who are particularly and the providers who are providers who are providers who are providers who are particularly and the providers who are providers who are providers who are particularly and the should be made applicable only to health-care providers who are par-ticipating in the ABDM ecosystem, or to all health-care providers in general. We believe the answer can only be the former; since the NHA is not a sector-wide regulator, it has no legal basis for formulating guidelines for health-care provid-ers in general.

Balancing benefits and risks The aim of data retention is de-scribed in terms of benefits to the individual and the public at large. Individuals benefit through grea-ter convenience and choice, create dthrough portability of health re-cords. The broader public benefits

through research and innovation driven by the availability of more and better data to analyse

While these are important be-nefits, they do have to be weighed against the risks. Globally, legal systems consider health data par-ticularly sensitive, and recognise that improper disclosure of this data can expose a person to a range of significant harms. These could include harms that would be

range of significant harms. These could include harms that would be very difficult to make whole, so it is not enough to have penalties for such breaches; every effort must be made to minimise the extent of data collected, and to hold it only for the amount of time needed so as to reduce the likelihood of any breach in the first place.

In particular, privacy risks should make us very hesitant about retaining an individual's entire health or medical record on the grounds that they might be useful for research someday. As per Indian law, if an individual's rights are to be curtailed due to anticipated benefits, such benefits cannot be potential or speculatory: they must be clearly defined and identifiable. ry: they must be and identifiable

This is the difference between saying that data on patients with heart conditions will help us better understand cardiac health – a vague explanation – and being able to identify a specific study which will include data from that strict. It small first be rought. which will include data from that patient. It would further mean de-monstrating that the study re-quires personally identifiable in-formation, rather than just an anonymous record — the latter flowing from the principle of pro-portionality, which requires choosing the least intrusive option available.

In fact, standards for anonymisation are still developing. In a world of big data, the research community is still to arrive at consensus on what constitutes adequate anonymisation, or what might be considered best practices or methods for achieving it. We are not yet able to rule out the possibility of anonymised data still bening linked back to specific individuals. In other words, even anonymisation may not be the least intrusive solution to safeguarding patients' rights in all scenarios. sensus on what constitutes adeq

Possible safeguards
Ultimately, the test for retaining data should be that a clear and specific case has been identified for such retention, following a rigorous process run by suitable authorities. A second safeguard would be to anonymise data that is being retained for research pur-

poses – again, unless a specific case is made for keeping personal-ly identifiable information. If neither of these is true, the data should be deleted.

An alternate basis for retaining data can be the express and in-formed consent of the individual in question. However, there are li-mits to how consent can apply in the context of health care in India; in general, health care is a field in general, health care is a field where patients rely on the exper-tise and advice of doctors, making the idea of informed consent com plicated. Further, if consent is made necessary for accessing state-provided services, many pe-ople may agree simply because they lack any other way to access

that care. Finally, health-care service providers – and everyone else – will have to comply with the data pro-tection law, once it is adopted by Parliament. The current Bill alrea-Parliament. The current Bill alrea-dy requires purpose limitation for collecting, processing, sharing, or retaining data; a use-based classifi-cation process would thus bring the ABDM ecosystem actors in compliance with this law as well.

Rishab Bailey is a lawyer and technology policy researcher based in New Delhi. Harleen Kaur is a regulatory affairs and public policy lunger practising in a Delhi-based law firm. Brinda Lashkari is a Policy Associate at elsowremments Foundation, Bengaluru. Ameya Ashok Naik is Head of Policy and Advocacy at Governments Foundation. Bensaluru

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.

Lata Mangeshkar Mangeshkar transcended four generations in her lifetime and her voice remains eternal. Every fan of hers would have loved to see her touch 100. In a way she led a full life and let us cherish the lovely moments she gave to this country. That she could rise to impossible heights in the world of music in those days when sound technology was at its technology was at its nascent stage by dint of her hard work and sheer discipline sends a message to budding singers. D. NAGARJUNA, Hyderabad

■ Sadly, the greatest ever singing legend of the country – who was quoted to have 

said that "a singer must bring soul to the song" – is no more but the soul which she had deeply imbued to keep alive every one of her immortal songs certainly lives on. Her incredible, endless variety and genres of songs resonated pleasingly beyond different boundaries, languages and cultures. As a unique musical genius, she represented the very spirit of India – a true symbol of unity in our vast diversity.

■ Lata Mangeshkar is a rare gem bestowed with abundant knowledge of music which helped her to perform any intricate composition with elan and grace. The doyen of Hindustani classical music,

Ustad Bade Ghulam Ali Khan. once remarked that her singing was never out of tune. Her achievements and awards sat lightly on her shoulders. Perhaps her best and ever spoken about songs were those sung under the baton of Madan Mohan. BALAKRISHNAN NARAYANAN

- Lataji's vast contributions to the field of music will always remain irreplaceable and unforgettable. She will keep inspiring us. SOUMYA SHREEMAYEE, Bargarh, Odisha
- It was the Nightingale of India who made the western audience aware of the richness of Indian music. She was probably the last to sing in the slow-paced old style. It
- is said that she could not One remembers the Ilaivaraja evergreen hit song that Lataii sang with S.P. Balasubrahmanyam in the Tamil film Satya: 'Valai osai kala kala vena' A.V. NARAYANAN, Tiruchi, Tamil Nadu
- I am anguished beyond words. 'Meri Awaaz Hi Pehchaan Hain Gar Yaad Rahe' is just one of the soul-stirring songs of Lataji HIDAYATHULLA KHAN, Bengaluru
- The Nightingale has flown away to eternity. Lataji stoo head and shoulders above a the other talent in the musical firmament. Generations to come will scarce believe that such a

:::

heavenly voice could AYYASSERI RAVEENDRANATH. Aranmula, Kerala

- One can only think of 'Achha To Hum Chalte Hain'. 'Sayo Nara', Lata A.A.H.K. GHORI , Chennai
- It is a huge loss to the entire music world and many of us will miss her captivating voice. Lata Mangeshkar was able to sing with ease any difficult note in
- "After silence that which "After silence that which comes nearest to expressing the inexpressible is music," said Aldous Huxley. Lataji

has exemplified this truth in her musical journey KELATH GOPAKUMAR MENON Mukkattukara, Thrissur, Kerala

Lataji's role in enriching Indian music is immense She was a rare gem. May India's youngsters take note of her stellar contributions and her music and celebrate her Indianness.

■ Personally, I have to record my gratitude to Lataji for removing the prejudice I was induced to harbour against the wonderful language of Hindi. The magic wand was her mellifluous voice. M.R. ANAND, Vrindavan, Unter Pradesh





OPED 7 MONDAY, FEBRUARY 7, 2022

# India's 'return' to Central Asia

While the gains from engaging Central Asia may be minimal, non-engagement could be costly



HAPPYMON JACOB

The inaugural India-Central Asia The inaugural India-Central Asia Summit, the India-Central Asia Dialogue, and the Regional Security Dialogue, and the Regional Security Dialogue on Alghanistan in New Delhi - all held over the past four months - collectively indicate a renewed enthusiasm in New Delhi to engage the Central Asian region. India has limited economic and other stakes in the region, primarily due to lack of physical access. And yet, the region appears to have gaimed a great deal of significance in India's strategic thinking over the years, particularly in the recent past. India's mission Central Asia today reflects, and is responsive to, the new geopolitical, if not the geo-economic, realities in the region. More so, India's renewed engagement of Central Asia is in the right direction for the simple reason that while the gains from an engagement of Central Asia may be minimal, the disadvantages of non-engagement could be costly in the longer run.

Great power dynamics Summit, the India-Central Asia Dia

Great power dynamics
One of the factors driving this engagement and shaping it is the great power dynamics there. The decline of American presence and power in the broader region (due primarily to the U.S. withdrawal from Afghanis tan) has led to a reassertion by China and Russia seeking to fill the powe vacuum. While China dominates the geo-economic landscape, Russia is the dominant politico-military pow er in the region. But in the end, geo economics might gain more traction economics might gain more traction.

A somewhat anxious Moscow considers India to be a useful partner in the region: it helps it to not only with back New Dehi, which is moving towards the U.S., but also to subtly checkmate the rising Chinese influence in its backyard.

For the U.S., while growing India-Russia relations is not a welcome development, it recognises the utility of Moscow-New Delhi relations in Central Asia to offset Beijing's ever-growing influence there.

As for China, India's engagement of the region and the growing



warmth in India-Russia relations are not a cause for concern yet, but they could be eventually. For New Delhi, it's about breaking out of a continental nutcracker situation it finds itself in. In the wake of the U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan, New Delhi faces a major dilemma in the wider region, not just in the pre-existing theatres like the Line of Control and the Line of Actual Control. There are growing and legitimate concerns within the Indian strategic community that India in the region might get further hemmed in due to the combined efforts by China, Pakistan and Tailban-led Afghanistan. If so, it must ensure that there istan. If so, it must ensure that there is no China-led strategic gang up with Pakistan and the Taliban against In-Pakistan and the Taliban against In-dia in the region, which, if it be-comes a reality, would severely damage Indian interests.

### Focus on Afghanistan

ndia's engagement of Central Asia would also help it to consolidate its post-American Afghan policy. U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan has landed India in a major dilemma - it has very limited space to engage Tali-ban 2.0 despite the current relationship whose future depends on a number of variables. During the Ha-mid Karzai and Ashraf Ghani governmid Karzai and Ashraf Ghani govern-ments, given their proximity to India and the presence of the U.S. forces in Afghanistan, India was able to en-gage Kabul without too much hard-ship, despite Pakistani resistance. Now that the Taliban have returned to Kabul, New Dellis is forced to de-vise new ways of engaging Afghanis-tan. That's where the Central Asian Republics (CARS) and Russia could be helpful. For instance, given its lo-

edly explored the possibility of joint Indo-Russian defence production in some of the existing Soviet-era de-fence facilities in the CARs to meet local and Indian demands. The nonpaper also reportedly discusses po-tential trilateral defence exercises tential trilateral defence exercises among India, Russia and the CARs. In any case, joint defence production by India and Russia has been on the rise and the CARs could play a key role in it. This growing India-Russia partnership also explains India's non-critical stance on the developments in Ukraine and Kazakhstan.

Challenges
That said, India's 'return' to Central
Asia is not going to be easy. For one,
China, which shares a land border
with the region, is already a major investor there. China is the region's
most important economic partner, a
reality that worries Russia and sharpens India's relative irrelevance in
the region.

An even bigger challenge for India
may be Iran. India's best shot at
reaching the CARs is by using a hybrid model - via sea to Chabahar and
then by road/rail through Iran (and
Afghanistan) to the CARs. So, for
New Delhi, the ongoing re-negotiations on the Joint Comprehensive
Plan of Action (or the Iran nuclear
deal) are of crucial importance. If
there is a deal, it would bring Tehran
back into the Western fold and away
from China (and Russia), which will
be favourable to India. While Iran
getting close to the West is not preferred by Russia (hur trefferred by Ingetting close to the West is not pre ferred by Russia (but preferred by In dia), if and when it becomes a reality India would be able to use it to its ad vantage and join Russia in engaging the CARs. India's ongoing outreach to Iran and the now-postponed visit of the Iranian foreign minister to New Delhi help repair some of the damage done to the relationship over

the years.

But finally, perhaps most impor-tantly, will India walk the talk on its commitments to Central Asia? Does it have the political will, material capability and diplomatic where-withal to stay the course in the region?

Happymon Jacob is Associate Professor, Centre for International Politics, Organization and Disarmament, School of International Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi

# A new form of untouchability

India lacks a robust politico-legal framework to address the open calls to economically boycott Muslims



ANSHUL TRIVED

Recently, a video, purportedly showing vil-

Recently, a video, purportedly showing villagers from Surguja district of Chhattisgarh taking an oath to implement an economic boycott of Muslims, went viral on social media. This was not a spontaneous reaction of the villagers to a brawl in the village but allegedly orchestrated by a Hindutva outfit.

The Vishva Hindu Parishad (VHP) is known to distribute pamphlest calling for the economic boycott of those it labels "anti-national, anti-Hindu, love jinadists" - all convenient epithets to convey a communal message. These acts are not merely 'expressions of hate'; they can be characterised as the emergence of a new form of untouchability guided by the political imperatives of Hindutva rather than the religious dictates of Hinduism. A progressive re-articulation of the concept of untouchability or a re-reading of the anti-discrimination legislation is required to end this abomination.

The hierarchical caste-based Hindu social order was governed by the ideology of purity and pollution. The primary function of the ideology was to maintain ritual hierarchy. Untouchability was a mechanism through which power was exercised over the Dalits and the hierarchy reinforced. One of the most common forms of untouchability was the imposition of social and economic boycott of Dalits firthey dared to transgress social norms or exercise their rights. In Ambed-kar's opinion, the method of boycott was

norms or exercise their rights. In Ambed-kar's opinion, the method of boycott was more effective than even open violence. Col-lective discrimination, marginalisation and disempowerment was justified as the right of the individual to choose freely in a market the individual to choose freely in a market place. He argued that the boycott was effec-tive for two reasons - one, the Dalits consti-tuted a minority within the village; and two, they were economically weaker and hence, dependent on the 'upper' castes. Therefore, it was of paramount importance to outlaw this 'tyranny of the majority' for their uplift.

### Limits of anti-boycott laws

Limits of anti-boycott laws During the freedom struggle, the struggle to eradicate untouchability gained momen-tum. This struggle found its highest expres-sion in the fundamental rights enshrined in the Constitution under Articles 14, 15 and 17. However, although untouchability was abolished, its definition remained vague. Even during the Constituent Assembly de-bates, it was argued that the scope of un-

touchability should be restricted to practice touchability should be restricted to practices related to religion and caste, lest it be left open to unwarranted tinkering; however, the Assembly voted against such a circum-scribed definition. Therefore, the limits of untouchability under Article 17 have been contested. While the conservatives restrict it to caste-based discrimination, the progres sives argue that it includes other forms of un touchability as well. However, there is a con sensus that only those acts which are motivated by the ideology of purity and pol-lution are considered within the ambit of un-touchability. These include social and eco-

touchability. These include social and economic boyootts.

In India, mere provision of rights has prowed to be insufficient to prevent marginalisation owing to the practice of untouchability and hence, the legislature and the judiciary have had to make and interpret special laws to that effect. Two laws which explicitly make social and economic boyootts punishable are The Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atroctites) Act, 1989, and Maharashtra Protection of People from Social Boyoott (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2016. However, the scope of both is restricted to criminalising caste-based discrimination and boyootts.

An ineffective approach
The tethering of anti-boycott or untouchability laws to the tenets of purity and pollution
and restricting their scope to caste-centric
boycotts makes them ineffective to counter boycotts makes them inenective to counter the calls of economic boycott of Muslims. Hindutva is using pre-constitutional meth-ods to disempower a community. It is not driven by the motive of maintaining ritual hierarchy but by the political imperatives of exclusion. Its ultimate objective is to ethni-cise the Hindu identity. Such public calls for boycotts are means of constructing such an identity. The act of collectively resolving to

identity. The act of collectively resolving to boycott Muslims reinforces their othering and re-emphasies the VIIP's idea of 'Hinduness'; reconstituting Hinduism, based on caste hierarchy, into a unified, ethnic whole, where the figure of the Dalit is replaced by the Muslim as the significant other.

These grave new developments need to be taken into cognisance and an urgent politico-legal response to such public calls for Muslim exonomic boycott is required as they militate against the principle of fraternity enshrined in the Constitution. This can be done by a progressive redefinition of untouchability or by expanding the scope of the anti-boycott laws to include discrimination against religious communities.

The Man Brinder.

FROM THE ARCHIVES

FIFTY YEARS AGO FEBRUARY 7, 1972

Differences on river waters continue

made in the inter-State river water talks bet-ween Tamil Nadu and Kerala officials, Mr. Ramunni Menon, Kerala Water and Power

ween Tamil Nadu and Kerala officials, Mr. Ramunni Menon, Kerala Water and Power Secretary, told pressmen at the conclusion of the two-day talks here to-day. He said the technical details pertaining to the discussion were being worked out by the Chief Engineers of the two States. He, however, declined to elaborate staint ghat it was decided that the officials should report to their respective Governments. The trend of the discussions, it is gathered, has not shown any appreciable narrowing of the differences between the two sides. The Tamil Nadu team was headed by Mr. Sivasubramaniam, former PW.D. Secretary, and the Kerala team by Mr. V. Ramachandran, Chairman, Kerala Electricity Board. The talls mainly related to follow-up action on the inter-State agreement reached in May 1969 for supply of Siruvani waters for drinking purposes in Coimbatore and on the accord of October 1965 in respect of the hydro-electric schemes of the two States in the Chaliyar basin.

A HUNDRED YEARS AGO FEBRUARY 7, 1922

Mahatma Gandhi writes in "Young India": The Punjab Government could not do even a simple act of penitence gracefully. They

were advised that the Judge who convicted

Lalaji and his companions did not know the law. They had therefore to release them. In-stead of all being released together they

Lalaii's rearrest

Trivandrum, Feb. 1: Some progress

# STATE OF PLAY

# Where guests demand permanency

Low salaries and lack of job security have caused unrest among guest lecturers in Karnataka

Academic activities in government

Academic activities in government degree colleges in Karnataka have been badly his for over 50 days, with guest faculty going on strike demanding that they be absorbed into regular service.

With only a little over 5.100 permanent teaching staff in 430 colleges, the Department of Collegiate Education (DCE) has had a tough task at hand. There are no lecturers to teach many core subjects in hundreds of colleges, even as the State government has announced implementation of the new National Education Policy, advocating multi-disciplinary studies. The colleges are dependent on the 14,567 guest lecturers who have been recruited over the years. Meanwhile, universities to which the degree colleges are affiliated have announced their timetable for semester exams. The students are worried that the syllabus will not be completed on time.

Guest lecturers have been working for an honorarium; 43,000 for those with 1166 creservise dought for semistrations.

for an honorarium: ₹13,000 for the with UGC-prescribed qualifications and ₹11,000 for those without. They are recruited for that academic year with no promise of job security. They have often complained about erratic payment of salaries.

The lecturers began their protest on December 10, 2021, demanding that the government absorb them ir to government service. They held a dharna at Belagavi, where the Karnataka Legislature was meeting for the winter session in December. They continued to boycott classes when the government constituted a team of officers to recommend measures to

resolve the issue. On January 14, the Higher Educa-On January 14, the Higher Educa-tion Minister announced a hike in honorarium. The two slabs were ex-panded to four slabs varying from 226,000 to 322,000. Those who have more than five years of experience besides the UGC qualification will get the highest amount. However, an in-crease in honorarium was accompa-nied by an increase in working hours. The lecturers, who were recruited

ÇM (

earlier for eight hours of duty a weel were told to work for 15 hours. This also meant that at least half of them

were told to work for 15 hours. This also meant that at least half of them would lose their jobs due to no workload. The association of guest lecturers felt that the move was aimed at dividing the unity of lecturers.

Meanwhile, the government decided to recruit more guest faculty while considering their State-level ranking in work experience, and educational qualifications. According to the DCE, more than 60,000 people applied, of which 10,636 got polse. From February 1, the lecturers selected through this process started reporting for duty. However, this may only be a reprieve as the issue of jobs security remains unaddressed. The guest faculty can lose their jobs whenever permanent faculty are recruited or deputed to their post. And so they have urged the government to absorb them to fill up the vacancies in various government departments. In the Education Department alone, more than 7,000 non-teaching posts are vacant.

The government has often said absorption of temporary employees in regular service is impossible, given the Supreme Court judgment in State of Karnataka v. Umadevi and Others (2006). When the guest lecturers were appointed earlier, there was no

(2006). When the guest lecturers were appointed earlier, there was no cedure. They now want to be orbed into permanent service just like doctors who have completed cer-

tain years of service.

At the heart of the problem is the failure of successive governments to fill up teaching posts even as they opened new colleges. Guest lecturers have always been as an ad-hoc opened new colleges. Guest lecturers have always been seen as an ad-hoc arrangement. The last recruitment of permanent teachers was done in 2017 and before that, in 2009. At 124 lecturers is on. However, the number is insufficient given the vacancies. Guest lecturers are seen as a financially less burdensome option. However, this alternative has proved too costly on other counts.

DATA POINT

In India's current vision for a re in india's current vision for a re-gional security architecture, Russia appears prominent. President Vladi-mir Putin's meeting with Prime Mi-nister Narendra Modi and the earlier

meeting between Russian National

Security Adviser General Nikolai Pa-trushev and Mr. Modi are indications

of the growing relationship. A curso-ry glance at the various issues being

discussed between the two sides also

indicates a new joint thinking on re-gional security. Of course, New Delhi

expects the U.S. to understand that in the wake of the latter's withdrawal

from the region leaving India in the lurch, New Delhi has no choice but to

lurch, New Delhi has no choice but to work with the Russians.

By courting Russia – its traditional partner, also close to China and getting closer to Pakistan – to help it reestablish its presence in the Central Asian region, India is seeking to work with one of the region's strongest powers and also potentially create a rift between China and Russia, to the extent possible. The two countries recently exchanged a 'non-paper' on how to increase their joint engagement in Central Asia. Both India and the CARS use Russian defence equipment, and the non-paper has report-



| pillars of justice — police,                            | Spend per inmate (₹, 2019-20)             |      |         |        | 35,907 | 37,100   | 16,286                              | 34,507   | 29,384           |  |
|---|---|------|---------|--------|--------|----------|-------------------------------------|--|------------------|--|
| prison and judiciary — in<br>the five poll-bound States | Per capita spend on judiciary (₹ 2017-18) |      |         |        | 444    | 180      | 203                                 | 81   | 158              |  |
|   |   |      |         |        |        |          |                                     |  |                  |  |
| Indicator   |   | Goa  | Manipur | Punjal | U.P.   | Uttaraki | and                                 | HUMAN  |                  |  |
| Constables, vacancy (%, Jan. 2020)                      |   | 4.4  | 9.3     | 6.8    | 23.5   | 2.9      |                                     | RESOURCES  |                  |  |
| Police officers, vacancy (%, Jan. 2020)                 |   | 30.6 | 30.7    | 18.9   | 40.4   | 8.6      |                                     | The table lists the sha<br>of posts that are vacar<br>in the justice delivery<br>system among the five |                  |  |
| Prison officers, vacancy (%, Dec. 2019)                 |   | 14.8 | 44.8    | 41.2   | 43.1   | 75.3     |                                     |  |                  |  |
| Medical officers, vacancy (%, Dec. 2019)                |   | 83.3 | 22.2    | -34.3  | 24.2   | 100      |                                     |  |                  |  |
| High Court judge vacancy (                              | %, 2018-19)                               | 25.8 | 35      | 39.1   | 37.7   | 25       | States, U.P. sco<br>lowest in three |  |                  |  |
| Sub. Court judge vacancy (                              | %, 2018-19)                               | 18   | 27.3    | 19.2   | 38.5   | 21.1     |                                     |  | lifee indicators |  |

Spend on police per person (₹, 2017-18) 3,174

| DIVERSITY  | Indicator                                 | Goa  | Manipur | Punjab | U.P. | Uttarakhand |
|--|---|------|---------|--------|------|-------------|
| The table lists  | Share of women in police (%, Jan. 2020)   | 10.6 | 9.1     | 8.5    | 9.6  | 12,2        |
|  | Share of women in officers (%, Jan. 2020) | 13.4 | 8.1     | 5.8    | 3.8  | 18.4        |
|  | Women in prison staff (%, Dec. 2019)      | 1.6  | 12.8    | 6.8    | 6    | 3.3         |
| system among   | Women High Court judges (%, Aug. 2020)    | 13.4 | 0       | 18.2   | 5.1  | 0           |
| the five States  | Women Sub. Court judges (%, Nov. 2019)    | 72   | 30.8    | 40.9   | 25.2 | 37.3        |
|  | •   |      |         |        |      |             |
| INFOASTDICTIBE   The table lists the five States' infrastructure canacity to deliver justice |   |      |         |        |      |             |

| INFRASTRUCTURE   The table lists the five States' infrastructure capacity to deliver justice |          |         |        |          |             |  |  |
|--|----------|---------|--------|----------|-------------|--|--|
| Indicator  | Goa      | Manipur | Punjab | U.P.     | Uttarakhand |  |  |
| Population served per police station (rural) (Jan. 2020)                                     | 21,750   | 39,481  | 70,134 | 1,73,736 | 72,176      |  |  |
| Population served per police station (urban) (Jan. 2020)                                     | 1,38,500 | 57,588  | 94,727 | 1,02,312 | 76,440      |  |  |
| Area served per police station (rural) (sq. km, Jan. 2020)                                   | 147      | 410     | 188    | 235      | 516         |  |  |
| Area served per police station (urban) (sq. km, Jan. 2020)                                   | 96       | 11      | 20     | 15       | 18          |  |  |
| Prison occupancy (%, Dec. 2019)  | 83       | 69      | 103    | 168      | 159         |  |  |
| Courthall shortfall (%, 2018-19, Jan. 2020)  | 7        | 31      | 15.2   | 28.8     | 22.1        |  |  |

| WORKLOAD                            | Indicator   | Goa | Manipur | Punjab | U.P.  | Uttarakhand |
|-------------------------------------|---|-----|---------|--------|-------|-------------|
| The table lists the                 | Population served per civil police (Jan. 2020)    | 263 | 202     | 462    | 1,094 | 696         |
| workload of the<br>justice delivery | Inmates per officer (Dec. 2019)                   | 25  | 24      | 201    | 268   | 331         |
| system in the five                  | Average Sub. Court pendency (years,<br>June 2020) | 2.6 | 2.5     | 1.5    | 6.2   | 2.8         |

In 12 of the 23 justice-related indicators, Uttar Prades scored the lowest among all the poll-bound States analysed. It did not score the highest on any indicator Manipur scored the highest in eight indicators out of 23, followed by Goa in seven, Uttarakhand in five of them and Punjab in three of them

were released separately and some at mid-night. But that was by no means the most graceless part of the performance. Lalaji was rearrested immediately after his discharge. By this action the Punjab Government have By this action the Punjab Government have shown themselves more vindictive than penitient. The release they could not help nor could they help their pettiness. They did not want Lalaji to be free for a single moment and therefore they rearrested him. Although an undertrial prisoner, his people including his son are not allowed to see him. They knew that Lalaji would not escape justice if they served on him a summons. But such a natural and courteous step was too simple for the Punjab Government. I congratulate Lalaji on his rearrest and sympathies with Pandit Santanam, Mulik Lallahan and Dr. Gopichand for their premature discharge.





In percent, is the return on investment given by IPO-bound national insurer trife Insurance Corporation (LIC) in 2020, according to a LLC) in 2020, according to a Crisil report. LIC is also the world's largest when it comes to the home-market share, with one cf 4.1% of the total gross written premium as of 2020. While for LIC, the market share has been steadily declining—from 100% in the pre-2000 er at 07.18% in 2016 and further down in 2020, for SBI Life, which is the second-largest in the country, the same was only 5% in 2016 and 8% in 2020. PTI THE NEWS 34%

A profitable venture

Plugging leakage
In crore, the number of ration cards cancelled by States and Union Territories from 2014 to 2021, according to a reply in the Rajay Sabha. As per the list, Uttar Pradesh has cancelled 1.7 crore bogus ration cards, followed by Maharashtra (41.65 lakh), West Bengal (41.09 lakh), Madhya Pradesh (23.53 lakh), Rajasthan (22.66 lakh) and Karnataka (21.54 lakh). The operational responsibilities of the public distribution system, which include identification of eligible beneficiaries, rest with the States. PTI

70-year rule

In years is the reign of Queen Elizabeth II as she became on Sunday the first British monarch to reign for seven decades. Queen Elizabeth II decades. Queen Elizabeth II acceded to the throne aged 25 on February 6, 1952, following the death of her father King George VI. In a message addressed to the public signed "Your servant, Elizabeth R", the Queen said late Saturday she wished "to express my thanks to you all for your support". She said she wanted to renew a pladnes be nave on her 21st. renew a pledge she gave on her 21st birthday "that my life will always be devoted to your service". AGENCIE

Wave of military coups

Wave of military coups
The number of
military power gabs
I military power gabs
I west Africa since
1946. West Africa's
nother in Guine and the following year,
and then Burkins Faso last month. Just
a week later, gumen tried to
overthrow the president of
cuinea-Bissa in a machine-gun attack.
It's a pattern becoming all too common
again in West Africa wherein mutinous
soldiers detain a president, then seize
control of the state broadcaster to
announce their victory. AP

Cases surge in Russia 180 0 77 CoVID-19 Infections by Russia on Sunday, the highest single-day rise ever and a tenfold spike from a month ago. Although the number of infections has increased dramatically in recent weeks, daily deaths are holding steady or marginally declining, 661 deaths were recorded over the past 24 hours, compared with 796 on Jan. 6. The Government is considering loosening Government is considering loosening restrictions, despite the infections. AF

COMPILED BY THE HINDU DATA TEAM

+

# The tumbling of Meta platforms' shares

What was the trigger for the sheer drop in shares? Is the Metaverse not profitable?

# THE GIST

■ The shares of Meta Platforms crashed by as much as 25% on Thursday, wiping out over \$200 billion from the company's market value. This was triggered after Meta released its quarterly earnings statement last veek informing investors that Facebook lost half a million active users during the fourth quarter.

Meta earns most of its revenues through advertising and the fall in the number of active users of a contract of a

Investors have also been uncertain about the future of Meta as the company tries to reinvent itself. In fact, it was only last year that Facebook renamed that Facebook renamed itself as Meta Platforms to highlight its new immersive virtual experience through the metaverse. However, the success of the the success of the company's new pivot is far from certain and is expected to take years to come into fruition and will cost billions

Apple's new privacy policy

The story so far: The shares of Meta Platforms, the parent company of social media giant Facebook, crashed by as much as 25% on Thursday, wiping out over \$200 billion from the company's market value. The crash came after Meta on Wednesday announced its earnings results for the fourth quarter of 2021 which did not impress investors. The 25% crash in Meta shares is its biggest fall since its debut in 2012.

Why do shares move up or down? The price of a share generally reflects the expectations of investors regarding the future cash flow that they can earn from the share. This is the reason why shares of even share. This is the reason why shares of even loss-making companies can appreciate significantly if investors expect these companies to earn significant profits in the future. At the same time, established companies earning billions in profits for their shareholders can still see their stock prices tank if investor expectations regarding the future earnings of these companies begin to sour. Since expectations

This is the first time that Facebook has witnessed a drop in its active user base, leading analysts to believe that its long growth story may be over.

about the future earnings of a share can change within a matter of just a few seconds or less, share prices are prone to sudden jumps or falls, as in the case of Meta's stock last week.

Why exactly are investors concerned about Meta's future earnings? Meta's quarterly earnings statement last week informed investors that Facebook lost week informed investors that Facebook lost half a million active users during the fourth quarter. This is the first time that Facebook has witnessed a drop in its active user base, leading analysist to believe that its long growth story may be over. Meta CEO Mart Zuckerberg, who lost around \$250 billion of his personal wealth due to the crash, noted that the company's rival Tilkrok was a growing threat to its business. There have also been concerns around the demography of Facebook users as younger users prefer other competing platforms over Facebook. Meta earns most of its revenues through advertising and the fall in the number of active users of Facebook is seen as a huge



red flag. It should be noted that Meta reported an overall increase in active users, thanks to the popularity of its other platforms such as Instagram and WhatsApp. But analysts believe that it will be much harder for Meta to monetise its user base through these new platforms.

Another area of concern for investors has

Another area of concern for investors abeen the sustainability of Meta's advertising revenues. Of late, changes to Apple's privacy policy have given iPhone users the choice to opt out of being tracked by sites like Facebook. This has made it harder for Facebook. This has made it harder for Facebook to learn more about what its users do online and make money using this information by showing them targeted ads for which advertisers want to pay. It is expected that Meta will lose about \$10 billion in revenue in 2022 due to Apple's new

privacy policy.

Investors have also been uncertain about the future of Meta as the company tries to

reinvent itself. In fact, it was only last year that Facebook renamed itself as Meta Platforms to highlight its change in focus, from offering users the traditional social media experience to offering them a new immersive virtual experience through the metaverse. However, the success of the company's new pivot is far from certain and is expected to take years to come into fruition and vill cost billions of dollars. The shaky confidence of investors, some say, was reflected in Meta's stock price even before Thursday's crash. Meta's shares have fallen by almost 40% since the peak that they hit in September last year.

What lies ahead?

What hes allead?

No one knows for sure what lies ahead for the company. Meta invested over \$10 billion in developing the metaverse last year and only time will tell whether this investment is

As the company adjusts this investment as an expense against its current revenues, its profits are likely to be adversely affected in the short-term and weigh on the price of its

It should also be noted that the It should also be noted that the technology business with its low barriers to entry has traditionally witnessed a lot of churn with giant companies which once seemed to enjoy a strong monopoly getting uprooted by new, more agile entrants. Facebook, for instance, came to be the

most popular social networking site by killing Orkut which was once very popular

kalling Orkut which was once very popular among internet users. Google's complete obliteration of Yahoo! from the search engine business is another example of creative destruction that is widespread in the technology market. Gyrations in the price of Meta shares will likely reflect all these uncertainties in the coming days.

EXPLAINER

of dollars.

# Redrawing the electoral map of the Union Territory of J&K

How have the constituencies of Jammu and Kashmir been reframed? What has been the response from local leaders?

PEERZADA ASHIO

The story so far: The three-member J&K delimitation commission, headed by retired Supreme Court (SC) judge Justice Ranjana Prakash Desai, has submitted its interim report to its five associate members, which included three Members of Parliament (MP) of the National Conference (NC) and two MPs of

This paves way for the winding up of the exercise and likely announcement of elections in J&K, directly ruled by the Centre since the BJP withdrew from the coalition Government with the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) in 2018.

# What is the role of the delimitation

commission?
The delimitation commission is an

independent body constituted under Article 82 after the Parliament enacted a Delimitation Act after every census. Interestingly, the J&K delimitation commission has not been clear to the associate members about the census report that was made as a base to carve out new constituencies in the Union Territory (11).

CM C



How many seats have been added? The Commission has, as per the mandate granted under the J&K Reorganisation Act, 2019, added seven assembly constituencies to J&K, increasing its strength from 87 to 90. The interim strength from 87 to 90. The interim report proposes an increase of six seats for the Jammu province, taking the number of constituencies to 43, and an increase of one seat in the Kashmir province, taking the seat strength to 47, almost bringing the two regions at par with each other. In Kashmir, Kupwara district has been granted an additional seat and in the Jammu region Kathua district gets one additional seat, Samba gets one, Doda gets one, Roda gets one, Roda gets one, Roda gets one for the Stathua district gets one additional seat, Samba fixes one of the Stathua gets one additional gets one for the Stathua gets one and Udhampur gets

one. Of six seats, three assembly

one. Of six seats, three assembly segments are from the Muslim-majority Chenab Valley and Pir Panjal valley, while three are in the Hindu Jammu-Samba-Kathua belt. The Commission has also proposed to reserve seven seats for Scheduled Castes (SCs) Hindus that mainly populate the Samba-Kathua-Jammu-Udhampur belt and nine seats for Scheduled Tribes (STs) which will help Guijar and Bakerwals, mostly nors Kashmiri speaking Muslims inhabiting the Rajouri-Poonch belt in the Jammu province.

Prior to the Centre's move to end J&K's special constitutional position on August 5, 2019, the erstwhile State had an 87-member assembly, with 37

constituencies in the Jammu region and 46 in the Kashmir division and four in Ladakh . Besides, 24 seats are reserved and vacant for Pakistan occupied Kashmir (PoK).

# Have the constituencies been

reconfigured? The Commission has suggested redrawing of boundaries of most of the Assembly segments in J&K. It has named and reconfigured 28 new constituencies

Assembly segments in Jack. It has hanned and reconfigured 28 new constituencies and deleted 19 assembly segments. The Commission has also proposed reframing of Lok Sabha constituencies, with Jack having five parliamentary constituencies, which included three seats from Kashmir and two from Jammu. It has proposed a Lok Sabha seat, disjointed geographically, by merging three districts of south Kashmir and two districts of Rajouri and Ponoch in the Pir Panjal valley, it will be named Anantnag Rajouri seat, which will comprise a significant population of the non-Kashmir speaking Schedule Tribe assembly segments.

What has been the response from regional actors?
This seat sharing was criticised by

# regional parties in Kashmir, including the NC and the PDP, on the grounds that the Kashmir province has more population at 68.88 lakhs against 53.50 lakhs in the Jammu province. However, the commission argued that it has taken into

available and not just the population size According to the NC, who se MPs first boycotted and later joined the delimitation exercise, none of the

account the topography, means of communication and convenience

suggestions made to the commission had been respected. It has maintained that the J&K Reorganisation Act, 2019 was the J&K Reorganisation Act, 2019 was "palpably unconstitutional" and has already challenged the J&K Reorganisation Act in the Supreme Court. The parry relevanted that the delimitation be carried out after 2026, as ordered by the Supreme court, after the relevant figures of the census were published. It also questioned the formula applied in case of J&K by the commission. CPI(M) leader Mohamad Yousuf Tarigami termed the Commission's report "an arbitrary overhaul, with no regard for even the terrain, let alone the population that tends to be a basic parameter for redrawing the boundaries of assembly and parliamentary segments.

# THE GIST

■ The three-member J&K ■ The three-member J&K delimitation commission has submitted its interim report to its five associate members, which included three MPs of the National Conference and two MPs of the BJP.

The Commission has added seven assembly constituencies to J&K. The interim report proposes an increase of six seats for the Jammu province and of one seat in the Kashmir province, almost bringing the two regions at par with each other.

■ The Commission has The Commission has suggested redrawing of boundaries of most of the Assembly segments in J&K. It has reconfigured 28 new constituencies and deleted 19 assembly segments.



# **Understanding Artificial Neural Networks**

Through ANNs and the backpropagation method, artificial intelligence has become more powerful

# THE GIST

The concept behind an Arthical Neural Network is to define inputs and outputs, feed pieces of inputs to computer outputs, feed pieces of inputs to computer neurons and make inferences or calculations, then forward those results to another layer of computer programs and so on, until a result is obtained. As part of this neural network, a difference between intended output and input is computed at difference is used to tune the parameters to each program. This method is called backpropagation and is an essential component to the Neural Network.

It was also observed that instead of CPUs, Graphic Processing Units (GPU) which are good at performing massive parallel tasks can be used for setting up ANNs.

A few free ANN frameworks are TensorFlow, Keras, PyTorch and Theano. These can be used for both normal Machine Learning tasks like classification or clustering and for Deep Learning/ANN tasks.

Does the term "neuron" ring a bell in your mind? It is the building block of the brain and it inspired computer scientists from the 1950s—how to make a computer perform tasks like a brain does? It is not a simple problem and the clue to its complexity is in the brain structure. We need billions of artificial neurons if we were to build an artificial artificial neurons if we were to build any artificial pillions of neurons is now possible. The concept behind an Artificial Neural Network is to define inputs and outputs, feed pieces of inputs to computer programs that function like neurons and make inferences or calculations, then forward those results to another layer of computer programs and so on, until a result is obtained. As part of this neural network, a feedback or difference between intended output and the input is computed at intended output and the input is computed at each layer and this difference is used to tune the parameters to each program. This method is called backpropagation and it is an essential component to the Neural Network.

# The popularity of ANNs

The popularity of ANNS

A few more technical phrases will clear up our understanding of this space. Data Science, used interchangeably with Machine Learning, is the computer technology that uses data to detect patterns. Hand-written digit recognition is a good example of machine learning, However, in order for the computer to do this task, large amounts of sample data need to be manually labelled as examples of images of digits. Manual sampling at this scale is not going to be enough. Can there be a technology that can avoid human involvement to label data but can automatically detect patterns in sample data and tune its parameters to an algorithm so that the algorithm is ready to perform automatic tasks? The Artificial Neural Networks (ANN) mentioned above with its backpropagation does exactly this. This is why

ANNs have become hugely popular in the past decade. This approach of using neural networks of many layers to automatically detect patterns and parameters is called Deep Learning.

A couple of key developments in the past two decades helped ANNs mature. Cloud computing provided enromous computing resources that are needed for ANNs to "work through" massive volumes of data. Along with this, it was observed that instead of the CPU in a computer, Graphic

Cloud computing provided enormo computing resources that are needed for ANNs to "work through" massive volumes of data

Processing Unit (GPU) which is good at performing massive parallel tasks can be used for setting up ANNs. In the last two decades, the software for neural networks matured and backpropagation techniques became robust. Combining these concepts, if thousands of GPUs are available that can take up chunks of data and can execute programs on those chunks, then ANNs can be made available for a variety of tasks. Many commercial and free software have become available which use GPUs and Cloud and offer readily available ANNs. A few popular free neural network frameworks are TensorFlow, Keras, PyTorch and Theano.

Pree neural networks
TensorFlow was developed by Google. It uses a
specific hardware that is optimised to work with
GPU and divides the neural network operations
and the corresponding data into units called
Tensors. It has an architecture that sets up neural
network and uses it on our input data to make it
"flow" from one state to another and gives
options to choose and operate states that are
relevant to us. Keras is a software that can be used

on top of TensorFlow so that software developers can interact with just the relevant parameters instead of lower-level details that need to be provided to TensorFlow. Popular implementations of TensorFlow are Google's search algorithm RankBrain and Twitter's tweet ranking. nking. The ANN frameworks or software mentioned

The NN frameworks or software mentioned above can be used for both normal Machine Learning tasks like classification or clustering and for Deep Learning/ANN tasks. Are there tasks that cannot be done with good accuracy by normal Machine Learning and hence need Deep Learning? The answer is yes. Automatic Image Recognition of rich images (instead of only simple hand-written digits) and Speech Recognition are two popular uses of Deep Learning. Convolution Neural Network (CNN), a special type of ANN, is good at Image Recognition. It connects a neuron in a layer to all neurons in the next layer but uses optimisation techniques to weed out unwanted optimisation techniques to weed out unwanted signals from neurons. For Speech Recognition, Recurrent Neural Network (RNN) is used because it is good at handling inputs of variable length like

It is good at handling inputs of variable length like speech.

Deep Learning has progressed to the next level and instead of only working on input data and detections, it can now actually generate creative output like music or paintings. A special type of ANN called Generative Adversarial Network achieves this.

Deep Learning made news in 2016 when an ANN-based product called AlphaGo defeated a player in a game of "Go".

ANNs are present in many smartphone applications that we use, like voice to type, Siri and Alexa.

If you want to play with neural networks, you can hop on to one of the free frameworks and build a software program. The Cambrian explosion of artificial intelligence is here!

S. Varahasimkal nice a serior employee at a software product MNC in Chennai

There is something remarkably common between these two musical legends, M.S. Subbulakshmi and Lata Mangeshkar. What is that?

### THE DAILY QUIZ

# Here is a quiz on the life and career of Lata Mangeshkar, the legendary singer who passed away on Sunday,

1 Lata Mangeshkar's family has roots in a village in Goa. What is the name of that village?

**2** Who was the composer that mentored a young Lata Mangeshkar and whom she called her godfather?

4 Ae mere watan ke logon... is one of Lata Mangeshkar's most loved songs. But it is not a film song. Who wrote this patriotic song?

Lata Mangeshkar is not the female playback singer with the highest number of National Awards. How many did she win? And who is the female playback singer with the highest number of National Awards?



Answers to the February 4 edition of the daily quiz: 1. Serendipity (from Serendib), 2. Sri Jayawardenepura Kott 3. Mahinda and Sanghamitra, 4. The Muslim and Tamil minorities, 5. It is run by Muttiah Muralitharan's family, 6. Sri Pada, 7. Cinnamon, 8. Assassination of Solomon Bandaranaike, the fourth PM of Sri Lanka



### KNOW YOUR ENGLISH

# Listen and learn

Let your hair down and learn some new phrases!

S. UPENDRAN

S. UPENDRAN

What is the difference between 'listen' and 'hear?' (Alypriya Sabui, Hoogly)

Hearing is an unconscious act. As you are reading this, you may hear the sound of the fan in the room, or the sound of traffic. You may not be paying attention to the sound of the fan, but it comes and strikes your earsthere is nothing you can do to block the sound. As a result, you register or 'hear' the sound. As a result, you register or 'hear' the sound. As a result, you register or 'hear' the sound. As a result, you register or 'hear' the sound. As a result, you register or 'hear' the sound. As a result, you register or 'hear' the sound, it may or may not have any meaning. 'Listening', on the other hand, is an intentional or a conscious act. When you listen to someone, you pay attention to what they are saying, and try to make sense of it. In school, our teachers frequently pleaded with us to 'listen' to what they were saying. They did not want us to 'hear', but 'listen', 'This didn't always happen, of course. When we were day-dreaming in class, we merely heard the teacher's voice; we were not listening to her.

I heard a strange noise in the middle of the night.

night.
Would you stop reading the paper and listen to what I'm saying?
What is the meaning and origin of 'let one's hair down? (Kajirakash, Koch))
When you tell someone to let his hair down, what you are requesting him to do is relax. You would like him to enjoy himself, in the given situation, he doesn't have to be careful and behave politely. The idiom, which has been part of the English language for several hundred years, is mostly used in informal contexts.

I need to go to a place where I don't know anyone. Only then, will I be able to let my

I need to go to a place where I don't know anyone. Only then, will I be able to let my hair down.

Our boss will be accompanying us on the trip. No question of letting our hair down, I'm diraid.

When it was first used, the idiom applied mostly to the members of the gentler sex. In the past, it was fashionable among women, especially those belonging to the upper class, to grow their hair long. Before they stepped out of their house, these women spent a lot of their time putting their hair up. Using an asyntment of pins and feathers they came up with elaborate hairdos. The only time these ladies actually let their hair down was in the privacy of their home —and that too mostly before retiring to bed. This was the only time when the ladies could be themselves. In the past, this act of letting the hair down was called 'dishevelling.' Nowadays, the word 'dishevel' has a very different meaning! Sit Okay to say, 'We went treking despite of the rain?' (SV Kunthala, Nellore)
No, it is not. Although the two words, 'despite' and 'in spite' have more or less the same meaning, 'despite' is never followed by 'Or. It is always 'despite something'.

The children went swimming despite the heavy downpour.

heavy downpour.

Despite her illness, Deepa always has a smile on her face.
'In spite', on the other hand, is always fol-

lowed by 'of'.

The children went swimming in spite of the

heavy downpour.
In spite of her illness, Deepa always has a smile on her face.

"One advantage of talking to yourself is that you know at least somebody's listening." -Franklin P Jones upendrankye@gmail.com

For feedback and suggestions for letters@thehindu.co.in with the subject 'Text & Context'

## WORDLY WISE

I WOULD LIKE TO CONTINUE SINGING TILL MY VOICE GIVES UP ON ME. SINGING IS ALL THAT I KNOW. — Lata Mangeshkar

# The Indian **EXPRESS**

RAMNATH GOENKA

BECAUSE THE TRUTH INVOLVES US ALL

# INDIA'S SONG

Lata Mangeshkar gave the nation a song for every mood, moment, journey. The stillness after her will be broken by her songs

HE VERY HEART of India throbs in your voice," music composer Naushad once wrote to Lata Mangeshkar. Much of India's population has not lived in a world that did not have her in it. The artist whose voice has been the sound of an-tion ever since it gained independence, especially of its women, who ex-pressed themselves in her voice even when they could not find their row, hearthed her last in Mumbai on Sunday. With Mangeshkar's passing, India is struck silent, so essential has she been to how it imagines itself through music and song. If there is succour in this moment, it is to be derived from the formidable and multi-hued oeuvre that she leaves behind. It isn't often that musical virtuosity falls in place with lyricism, spirituality, in-tegrity, expression — and soars. Be it the defant "Pyaar kiya toh dama kya" in Mughal-e-Azam (1960) or the watershed

be it ure dentain. You're waterstand to the content of the content had aft upinting origins is form the indical mill indicate, "and reformating ("mill robot)", and mageshizar defined the gold standard of playback singing. Female vocalists in the country aspired to sing like her. In recent times, there was "Dilhoom hoom kare" from Kalpana Lajmi's Rudauli (1993), in which Mangeshikar sang of unbearable pain, and upbeat numbers that lifted newer films such as Hum Aupke Hain Koun (1994) and Dilwide Dulthaniya Le Jayenge (1995) off the ground. Through a universe of film songs in a number of languages and a large and varied repertoire of non-film pieces, Mangeshkar gave India not just a song for every mood, moment and journey, she also gave its people a feeling of shared cultural pride they had not known in quite the same way before. India had the Taji Mahal and Lata Mangeshkar, these were the wonders, and only one of them could sing. It isn't often that India and Pakistan, the two peoples and governments, are completely agreed on anything, but there has never been any difference or doubt on Mangeshikar. The tributes that are flowing in from across the borders — from Pakistan and Bangladesh — are emotional and exquisite.

At a 1974 concert held at Royal Albert Hall in London, the late actor Nargis Dutt was asked to invite Lata Mangeshikar to the stage. "Yun samqiliye, jaise kisi dangil yu mandir mein jaa-

yen, toh wahaan pahunch kar saribaadat ke liye khud-bakhud jhuk jaata hai, aur aankhon se bescale transcoperation and an advantage of the scale properties of the scale properties and the scale properties and the scale properties and the scale properties of the scale properties and the scale properties of the scale properties and the scale properties of the scale properties and the scale properties are scale properties and the scale properties and the scale properties and the scale properties are scale properties are scale properties and the scale properties are scale properties are scale properties and the scale properties are scale proper

# THE MISSING GREEN

Failures to honour environment commitments point to institutional deficits. Government must apply correctives

OR DECADES, ENVIRONMENTALISTS in the country have been alleging that a large number of infrastructure projects are implemented without mandatory due dilige-nce and green clearance procedures are often riddled with irregularities. Their crit-icisms have sharpened in the past 15 years because successive governments have clists nake san penetin in the past is years of secules successive governments nave diluted ecological safeguards — the public hearing requirement in the Environmental Impact Assessment notification, for instance — under the ruse of streamlining the clearance procedures. Two years ago, an Environmental Performance Index of Vale University ranked India 168 amongst 220 countries. Now an investigation by this newspaper has revealed that six mega initiatives cleared between 2004 and 2020 — the Mopa International Airport in Goa, the Dibang Hydel project in Arunachal, Kulda Coal Mine in Odisha and Tamnar Thermal Project.

Dibang Hydel project in Arunachal, Kulda Coal Mine in Odisha and Tamnar Thermal Project in Chhattisgarh, the Subansini Hydel Project on the Assam Arunachal border—have failed to liftlill their green commitments. The omissions are particularly glaring because experts had questioned the environmental sustainability of these projects since their inception. At the heart of what has sone wrong is the absence of an effective mechanism to ensure environmental compliance. As the newspaper's investigation revealed, the Ministry of Environment and Forests has less than 80 officials to conduct field visits. The state polation control boards and environmental tribunals are almost always short-staffed. Instead of strengthening the monitoring mechanism, governments at the Centre and States have been relying on procedures such as post-facto clearances and trying to goad project developers into compliance by giving them incentives — subsidies, for instance — despite Supreme Court strictures. In 2020, for instance, a two-judge bench of the Court called out the practice of allowing project developers to report a violation retrospectively as "a derogation of the fundamental principle of environmental jurisprudence". "Allowing for an ex-yost facto dearance would essentially condone the operation of industrial actividerogation of the fundamental principle of environmental junsprudence. Autowing for an ex-post fact oclearance would essentially condone the operation of industrial activi-ties without the grant of an environmental clearance (EC). In the absence of an EC, there would be no conditions to safeguard the environment," the court pointed out. As India strives to grow into a \$5-trillion economy— the budget presented by the fi-nance minister last week, for instance, talks of rapid infrastructural development—its pol-

icymakers will need to ensure that such prosperity doesn't come at the cost of the environ-ment. This is especially imperative because sites of developmental projects are often located in ecologically Figiel zones. Corridors between coal mines and thermal plants — such as the one between Kulda and Tamnar — are known to be rife with pollutants that harm people's health, contaminate water bodies, and impair farm productivity. Obviating such hazards requires strong checks and balances. But environmental experts have often complained that short-shrift is given to the autonomy of institutions mandated to protect the environ-ment in the country. The government must summon the will to apply correctives.

# FREEZE FRAME

**EPUNNY** 



# Our inner voice

Lata Mangeshkar represented us collectively. She also represented each one of us in our singularity

It is difficult to gauge how

he said that there is no dearth of extraordinary

musical talent, but the historical conditions that produce the need for a Lata Mangeshkar will probably never come again. The lyrics

significant she will be for future generations. It has to

she sang will probably bear a greater burden of their

the ones that Rafi or Kishore

got. For someone who sang in any every emotional register, it is hard to imagine a single song as a send-off: But try 'Phaili hui hain sapanon ki bahein' from

House No 44. It will be hard to come by a better

dreams. The incomparable

combination of lilting innocence, and soaring

gift she gave us.

gendered values, than, say

Pratap Bhanu Mehta

IT IS A measure of Lata Mangeshkar's achievement that all tributes and any adjectives seem like a gross understatement. It is that of to imagine any comparable artiste, in the annals of any country, who so saturated the cultural, entonional and affective life of their nation. This is not just a statistical achievement. The tensor fitousands of songs recorded in 18 languages, the total dominachievement his consistency, the ability to define a whole genre of music, the inmovations of tonality, pitch and modulation, would alone be formidable. But their impact cannot be measured in technical terms. A great artiste might give pitch perfect expression to variety of emotions. Lata Mangeshkar went further: Her songs became the totality of our emotions to the point where it was impossible to think of an affective life outside of her songs.

Lata Mangeshkar went further: Her songs became the totality of our emotions tot the point where it was impossible to think of an affective life outside of her songs.

But a new maltion needed a new grammar across the whole gamut of our lives; It needed new cultural forms that could unite rather than divide a country just emerging from Partition. It is often said that Hindi cinema was that cultural form. But in retrospect that seems to be a bit of mischaracterisation. If

Partition. It is often said that Hindi cinema was that cultural form. But in retrospect that seems to be a bit of mischaracterisation. If Hindi cinema acquired a distinct identitys as genre it was largely because of playback singing. In retrospect, it is remarkable much of that cinema is utterly faogle town much of that cinema is utterly forgettable. What is not forgettable is the music. The misc became our public poerty and our public melody, it became our private therapy and consolation; it seemed to offer an utterance for every emotion and occasion: From legisht to betrayal, from beightto betrayal, from joy to sadness, from height-ened spirits to the depths of despair. One can ened spints to the depths of despair. One can get too sophisticated about this, but it is hard to imagine an Indian, above a certain age, whose articulation of their inner life is not in the words of a Bollywood lyric. And the voice will invariably be Lata Mangeshlars's. It is in this context that Lata Mangeshlars's playback is inging achieved its unique status. Much can be written about the tone and pitch

of her voice over the years. But what is indis-putable is the fact that only she could give ex-pression to literally every situation or emo-tional register. It is not just the melody, but that precision about words and emotions in

tional register. It is not just the melody, but that precision about words and emotions in her singing, that made her an ideal carrier of the totality of our lives. Someone once said, in a profound remark, that the greatness of playback singing in Bollywood's halcyondays, was that no actor really needed to act. The entire affective burden of movies was carried by the songs: In fact the songs were the script, if there was such a thing.

But the success of this genre required three things. It required a genre of singing that exuded a sincertiny with poetry that Lata Mangeshlar had in full measure. The singing would not overwhelm the meaning of the lyric, it would give it perfect expression. But most of all what it required was the creation of singers who could become everyone. The singer had to be an eutral enough medium so that they could appear to be every actor's voice. But in a much more difficult act, the singer had to be and end of trust that they also became every listener's voice and the gammar of their emotion. It is, Ithink, for they also became every listener's voice and the gammars of their emotion. Its, I think, for this reason, more than anything else, that Bollywood playback singing was dominated by a few singers. For every time you heard a voice you also wanted it to be familiar so that you could think of it as your own. Much has been said about how Lata Mangeshkar managed to define the pitch and to have a superior which will be the proposed to the proposed proposed to many other eigeters. But this worn misses the point: Could such a playback role have been performed by any other voice, one in

been performed by any other voice, one in which everyone, as an individual, could find

Windlest Joseph Mills (Mills) and the state of the state

sang will probably bear a greater burden of their gendered values, than, say, the ones that Rafior Kishore got. (Just listen to that trance-like duet with Hemant Kumar, "Topula o'um dil mein poar ment"; the line "Tumhare charmon kaphod hum main" will now make you wince). For someone who sang in any every emotional register, it is hard to lineagine a single song as a send-off: But try, "Photilitui hain supmon is biobiet," it is hard to lineagine a single song as a send-off: But try, "Photilitui hain supmon is biobiet" from House Ao 4t. Will be hard to come by a better combination of litting innocence, and soaring dreams. The incomparable gift she gave us. If Lata Mangeshkar became representative of India, it was because the lyrics she sang, and the forms in which she expressed them, contained all of India in them; All of fix

them, contained all of India in them; All of its languages, cultural registers, even its con languages, cultural registers, even its con-flicts. Itwas not benchmarking India to a sin-gle measure; it was rather connecting its su-perabundance. She could give voice to collective emotions and mark the turning points in its collective life, as in "Aye mere watan ke logo," the song that made Nehru and a whole nation break down. But what made her the ideal representative of the new nation was not that she represented us col-lectively. In that she could represent each lectively, but that she could represent each one of us in our singularity: In every role we

one of us in our singularity: In every role we can imagine.

Much has been made of the fact that he rimage was in part propelled by the ideal of the ascetic performer. She made the world of at acceptable to a conservative India, by projecting an ascetic femininity onto it, taking Bollywood out of a courtly grammar of genreentation. But at the end of the day the focus on her persona, her personal asceticism, bumility are beside the point. For it is the mark of her greatness that her music transcrude every division and identity that was nian to net greaters that the rinds to dain-scended every division and identity that was imposed on it. The most dedicated group of fans she has is in Pakistan, where identifica-tion with her is more vivid than in India. She had no equal and will never have one.

The writer is contributing editor. The Indian Express

# WHEN SHE SPEAKS UP

There's a link between assertiveness of minority women and attacks like Bulli Bai

SHILPA PHADKE

JANUARY 2022: BULLI Bai deals, where Muslim women, particularly those who have been visible and articulate, were being auc-tioned, appeared on GitHub. A similar tool called Sulli Deals had appeared on GitHub in

called sull beak had appeared on citrum. A similar too called sull beak had appeared on Gifthubin July 2021. While hearing petitions challenging the constitutional validity of the farm laws, the then Chief Justice of the Supplement of Noise, the Why Loiter movement, Pinjia Tod. to name only some, have pushed back against restrictions on women's mobility. The book Why Loiter? Women and Risk Mulmbid Street that I co-wrote with Sameera Khan and Shilpa Ranade suggested loitering as a way for women to gain unconditional access to public space as citizens. Once a niche, even radical idea, loitering has now entered the feminist vocabulary of access to public space.

olic space. In the anti-CAA protests, women occu In the anti-CAA protests, women occu-pied public space as citizers defending citi-zenship rights. The country saw many lead-erless, peaceful protests, like the one at Shaheen Bagh, several helimed by Muslim women. Eighty-two-year-old Bilkis Banobe-came an icon of the movement. At Jamia Millia Islamia in December 2019, two stu-

While almost every woman has a story of street sexual harassment, many also have stories of online harassi stalking, and, in the case of the more visible and articulate ones, rape and death threats. In the Bulli Bai case too most of those targeted have been articulate and visible on social media. At the same time, there has been growing violence against Muslims and in December 2021, at a religious conclave, there were repeated calls to kill Indian Muslims.

dents, Ayesha Renna and Ladeeda Farzana,

dents, Ayesha Renna and Ladeeda Farzana, stood between the cops and one of their male friends who was being assaulted. The image of Renna's raised index finger became symbolic of the resistance.

Only months before passing the Citizenship (Amendment) Act 2019, the government had passed the Muslim Women (Protection of Rights on Marriage) Act, 2019, which criminalises instant triple talaq, setting m Muslim women ax victimes of Muslim which criminalises instant triple talaq, set-ting up Mussim women as victims of Mussim men and reminding one of postcolonial scholar Gayatri Chakcavorty Spivak's com-ment in regard to White men saving Brown women from Brown men. In August 2019, the government abrogated Article 370, re-voking the special status of Jammu and Kashmit. Several ministers were reported as commenting on the possibility of buying land in Kashmir and marrying fair Kashmir women, Muslim women are simultaneously clients of state larvesse and the expirised

women, Muslim women are simultaneously clients of state largesse and the exoticised other to be claimed. While a part of the anti-CAA protests was already taking place online, the pandemic virtually took away access to the streets for these protests. Relevantly, just as streets are seen as dangerous to women in the main-stream marrative, so also women are asked to be careful online. While almost every woman has a story of street sexual harass-ment, many also have stories of online harassment, stalking, and, in the case of the more visible and articulate ones, rape and death threats. In the Bulli Bai case, too, most of those targeted have been articulate and visible on social media. At the same time,

there has been growing violence against Muslims and in December 2021, at a religious conclave, there were repeated calls to kill Indian Muslims.

All women are targeted online and Muslims have become increasingly unsafe in the country, Muslim women are marginisted and discriminated against both as alised and discriminated against both as Muslims and aswomen. They are seen asvic-tims of their religion, community and men; as clients under the dubious protection of the state, but also simultaneously as pawns in the demonstration of Hindutva power and masculinity, who might be assaulted in or-der to show Muslim men their place, as seen, for instance, in the sexual volence against Muslim women in 2002 in Gujarat. The visibility of Muslim women in pub-lic as articulate, fierce and brave, fundamen-tally shifts comething about how they must

tally shifts something about how they must be perceived. If they can be out on the streets sleeping under the open sky for three months, then clearly they cannot be only the

months, then clearly they cannot be only the relentlessly oppressed and slienced victims. It is this claim to citizenship, to free speech, that has created no little discomfort.

Bulli Bai and Sulli Deals must be located within these larger events of the growing visibility of Muslim women and a growing atmosphere of intolerance to diversity and tolrance of hate speech and acts towards Muslims. They are a way of silencing both women and Muslims, demonstrating that neither is safe in contemporary India.

Phadke is the co-author of Why Loiter? Women and Risk on Mumbai Streets

# FEBRUARY 7, 1982, FORTY YEARS AGO

# PM's CONCERN

PRIME MINISTER INDIRA Gandhi expressed serious concern over the country's prospects of foreign economic aid and said: "We are going to face increasing difficulties." Mrs Gandhi, who was addressing a press conference in Ahmedabad at the end of her two-day visit to Gujarat. made this remark when she was asked about the World Bank decision to cut aid to this country. Asked if she saw in the World Bank decision an indication of the USe commic offensive against this country, she said: "It is for you to judge." The prime minister is understood to have taken a gim view of the economic struation facing the country. PRIME MINISTER INDIRA Gandhi expre-

# Antulay Trust

ARNI ULAY I RUOSI

THE INDIRA PARIBHA Praishthan would continue to function as before, the chairman of the trust A R Antulay said in Bombay on Saturday. The former Maharashtra chief minister told newsmenafter a four-hour meeting of the trustees that reports saying some of the trustees had resigned were baseless. Antulay who presided over the meeting held amid speculation about its future, denied that he had now offened from the trust as that he had ever offered to quit the trust as its chairman.

UNGA ON ISRAEL THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY adopted a resolu-

tion on Friday calling on all UN members to tion on Friday calling on all UN members to stop aid, trade and diplomatic few with Israel to punish if or annewing the occupied Syrian Colan Heights. The vode was 86-21 with 24 abstentions. The resolution climaxed a six-day emergency special session on the December 14 Israel annexation. The Security Council called the session after the United States vetered a council resolution to penalise Israel for its action. A council resolution would have been binding on all 157 UN members. The Assembly resolution amounted to no more than a recommendaamounted to no more than a recommenda-tion. Israel condemned the resolution and said it was part of a UN attempt "to under-mine the very existence of Israel."

# The Ideas Page

# WHAT THE OTHERS SAY

"Patent waivers — backed by the US, but still opposed by the UK and EU — and technology transfer should begin now. Poorer countries can wait no longer."

—THE GUARDIAN

# Lata ji

She became the female voice of a newly independent country. Through it all, and till the end, she also remained her own person



MRINAL PANDE

"Like art, revolutions come from combining what exists into what has never exist before"

LATA WAS ONE of the three daughters born to a well-known performer in Marathi the-atre, Dinanath Mangeshkar. Her father recognised her talent early on, and began training her when she was only five. Her training her when she was only five. Her younger and very talented sister Asha Bhosle told the Dogin pote Pdama Sachdev later how their lives changed when their faher passed away suddenly. The delest, late did, was only 13. The family first went to stay with their mother's family in Thalner village in Dhule, then moved to Mumbait to asmall house in Nana Chowk. Lata ji's initial years in the Mumbai film industry of the early '40s were full of struggle, Music directors used to the loud and somewhat shrill and nasal voloces of singing stars from cour-

eary 4 as were tun or strugge. Must clare-tors used to the loud and somewhat shrill and nanaal voices of singing stars from course the structure of the structure of the structure of the frail teenager a chance for playback singing. They found her voice too thirt. A person less in need of money may have argued and told them that screen voices needed to be more natural and fluid in the age of the new recording technology. But Lata's overwhelming need was to earn enough for her family of three siblings and a wildowed mother. So she played Elsi-boolittle to their Professor Higgins for a while Flexibility is something young father-less children learn early on in life. Lata did too. But like a true singer, even as a shadpet of the composer's demands, she less children learn early on in life. Lata did too. But life a true singer, even as she adapted to the composers' demands, she kept alive her classically trained real voice and soon rose to be the patron saint of the new" female voice of independent India. With her first hit song" Aoyega aanevular", from Mahal, she was no longer the awkward in-between singer. Even the great Bade Chulam Ail Khan sahib is reported to have said of her that ever since he heard her sing in Raga Yaman, he forgot his own rendering, and that the girl just never goes off-key (flob e is ladik für Yaman honol gayal. Kambakth kahib besuri hi nahim hoti!"). Another great composer of film music, Naushad, wrote abut her. Watch the vioce leap up like a ball of fire ("Shola sa lapuk janye hat, awaaz tan dekhol").

In the "50s, Lata Mangeshkar was an undisputed star singing for all renowas and undisputed star singing for all renowas and

composers: Shankar-Jaikishan, Naushad, SD Burman, Laxmikant-Pyarelal, Hemant SD Burman, Laxmikant-Pyarelal, Hemant Kumar and Madan Mohan. She sang some of the biggest hits for Madhubala in Mughal-e-Azam, including the timeless, "Mohey pumghat pe Nandlal...". Her long and distin-guished career is not a tragic tale of contin-ning to shoulder the burden of someone else's idea of how a woman should sing. She was a genuinely many-voiced singer who considered it an asset to be able to sing for Madhubala. Lave Beshow a memory. a Madhubala, a Jaya Bachchan and even a Preity Zinta. Hers was a voice of a simple but grand inheritance from Marathi theatre,



also a realisation of the paternal dreams and aspirations she had imbibed as a young girl. She was a rock to her family till the end.

She was a rock to her family till the end. Still it would be wrong to pin her down to a single identity, of a grand dowager queen of music, all white sarees, and an iso-lation of fervent religiosity and medita-tional silences. Three, as an individual, Lata ji remained fiercely protective of her private life. But she was very much her own per son. She did not follow the usual pattern of marriage, children and the possibility of a life long contention with a male who felt his masculinity threatened by an emiment wife. She chose, instead, to sing as and when and masculinity threatened by an eminent wife. She chose, instead, to sing as and when and how she wished, and maintain her personal leationships with various men and women she cared for. She had little interest in the-atrics. Her love for all things, from diamond jewellery to devotional music, was not a put-on act. Those aesthetics came naturally to her like to so many of our great musi-cians. But one admires her for, even as she musiced her music righthy demanding that pursued her music, rightly demanding that musicians be paid royalties, not be sent off musicians be paid royalities, not be sent off with a one-time payment. If this created some disaffection between her and a few big ticket male singers, so be it. Her innate understanding of her self worth remained subtle and capacious till the very end. Another loveable part of Lata Mangeshkar's life was her deep and geniule love for cricket. In the cricket establishment she found the action-man dimensional contractions and the contractions of the contraction of the contractions of the contraction of the contraction of the contraction of the contraction of the contractions of the contraction of

sion perhaps of a father she had lost early in her life. Stories about her romantic dedication to one such legend were also rife

Her long and distinguished career is not a tragic tale of continuing to shoulder the burden of someone else's idea of how a woman should sing. She was a genuinely manyvoiced singer who considered it an asset to be able to sing for a Madhubala, a Java Bachchan and even a Preity Zinta. Hers was a voice of a simple but grand inheritance from Marathi theatre, also a realisation of the paternal dreams and aspirations she had imbibed as a young girl.

She was a rock to her family

over the years. But she chose not to marry for reasons we will never know. The truth or otherwise remained between them. She never cared to discuss it publicly and none never cared to discuss it publicly and none of the columnists and society reporters dared ask her about it. She did make clear that she did not wish to be reborn. Ever. And that her favourite poet was Meera Bai who sang, "Mai mai, kaise jiyun re (Oh my mother how can I survive)". "One should gracefully accept sorrow like happiness", she said in one of her last interviews to a Marshi she with the survive of t Mumbai daily.

site said in the to the task interviews of Mumbai daily. Mumbai daily Mumbai daily

conviction that the best country is the one that one is born in.

Professionally and personally, the marvel-lous weight of the pleasure her singing gives embarrases a phyerbolic tributes. Certainly, obituaries will call her hel last of a kind', the STUS TARSHAME in Hind film music or "the greatest female singer in the Bollywood inmament". For once, they will not be soppy cliches, for once they will ring true.

The writer is former chairperson,

# Plugging power reforms

Central, state governments need to be flexible to ensure success of the revamped power distribution scheme



ANN JOSEY AND Sreekumar Nhalur

LAUNCHED IN JULY 2021, the Revamped Distribution Sector Reform Scheme (RDSS) is the latest of many central government grant-based programmes towards electricity distribution network investments. Others include urban loss reduction schemes such as the Accelerated Power Development Programme and rural con

Development Programme and rural con-nections and network expansion focussed schemes such as SAUBHAGYA. These have played a significant role in increasing access and improving performance. RDSS's outlay of Rs 3 lakh crore for five years can enable financially-strained electric-ity distribution companies tog est similar sup-port. Half of the outlay is for better feeder and

port. Half of the outlay is for better feeder and transformer metering and np- paid smart consumer metering. The remaining half, 60 per cent of which will be funded by central government grants, will be spent on power loss reduction and strengthening networks. But RDSS has inherited several designissues from its predecessors. These include complex processes and conditions for fund disbursal. Only 60 per cent of the total Rs 2.5 lakh crore grants allocated in past schemes were disbursed. Lack of public review and regulatory oversight in states is another iswere disbursed. Lack of public review and regulatory oversight in states is another issue. The prescriptive approach of the scheme design impedes effective implementation. For example, RDSS emphasises loss reduction investments over systems strengthening. RDSS emphasises loss reduction investments over systems strengthening. RDSS emphasises which, in turn, is affected by inadequate investment in system strengthening, RDSS stipulates universal pre-paid metering but post-paid options may be suitable in many contexts. Similarly supersted measures in RDSS such Similarly suggested measures in RDSS such as privatisation and franchisee adoption

as privatisation and franchises adoption should be critically examined. As required, states are submitting action plans detailing their contexts, commitments and interests. Despite the challenges, there are opportunities for discorns under RDSS. It is important to strengthen rural networks to meet growing demand. In the past decade, 49 crop poor households have been electrified and more than RS 50,000 crore has been invested in rural networks. However been invested in rural networks. However actual investments have been much less than actual investments have been much less than planned. Moreover, connections given torural homes were for 250 or 500 watts, assuming few lights, fan and TV. This does not account for use of appliances such as refrigerators and mixers. Transformer and sub-station capacities were designed to meet this minimal demand. Increased supply hours, appliance usage and the needs of rural enterprises will need more network investment that the contract of t ment. Without this, the risk of power outages is high. The RDSS system's strengthening plans can focus on this challenge.

About 25 per cent of electricity sales is to highly subsidised, agricultural consumers who also receive erratic, poor quality supply. Under the national KUSUM scheme, day-time, low-cost supply can be provided to a large number of farmers by installing megawatt scale solar plants, which supply eight bours of anolity nower-directly to dedmegawatt scale solar plants, which supply eight hours of quality power directly to dedicated agricultural feeders. This would adverse farmers' demand for reliable supply and almost habe the discom's cost and subsidy requirements. For this towork, separate feeders for agricultural consumers are needed. RDSS prioritises investments and grants towards dedicated agricultural feeders to accelerate feeder solarisation. States must leverable in consumers are under the provided entitle and the state of age this grant support to provide reliable supply and reduce subsidy requirements.

Third is the need for "automatic" meter-ing of distribution feeders. Despite efforts, uning of distribution feeders. Despite efforts, unretered consumers and non-functional meters at the consumer and feeder level persist. Without functioning meters, accutate energy accounting and loss monitoring is a challenge often, discome under-estimate losses by over-estimating unmetered consumption in a bid to demonstrate loss reduction. For greater veracity, all feeders must be equipped with meters capable of communicating readings without manual intervention. States should leverage RDSS's emphasis on automatic meter admig for this.

should leverage RDSS's emphasis on auto-natio meter rading for this.

So far, the experience with smart meter-ing and pre-paid metering has been limited.
RDSS prescribes a phase-wise roll-out of con-sumer smart meters, starting with commer-cial and industrial consumers and urban ar-eas. Such an approach provides states with an opportunity to understand implementa-tion issues, adopt suitable strategies for me-tering and evolve frameworks for assessing benefits vis-a-vis the costs. This is possible of fiscoms, the state regulator and consumers benefits vis-a-vis the costs. This is possible if discoms, the state regulator and consumers play anactive role indesigning the roll-out to suit state realities, address implementation issues and assess benefits. In their action plans, states should emphasise the need for this fleebility and allow the discoms to make an informed choice between pre-paid and post-paid metering. To realise benefits, the state regulator must stipulate a framework to evaluate cost reduction and performance improvement due to smart meters and ornoimprovement due to smart meters and pro

improvement due to smart meters and pro-tect consumers from undue tariff impacts due to such investments. Next, the network can be prepared for charging electric vehicles. Discoms can avail 60 per cent of grants under RDSS for network investments reguired to address the demand of charging infrastructure for electric vehi-cles. This can accelerate a shift away from petrol and diesel fuels.

To leverage various opportunities, states must emphasise the need for flexibility in primustemphasise the need for flexibility in printing in meaning meaning meaning meaning by state-level commitments towards accelerated but deliberate implementation. Central government agencies should also be flexible in the monitoring, tracking and fund disbursal mechanisms. Without these efforts, despite its potential, RDSS will likely be important but limited in its impact, like its predecessors.

The writers are with Prayas (Energy Group

# Branding faith

Statue of Equality discourse points to perils of making spirituality fashionable

VAMSEE JULURI

"WE ARE SURE even Ramanujacharya will be horrified," began a post on a small western working-class Hinduhumaninghis group's so-cial media feed. It is one thing to build a beau-tid statue to honour a revered Garu. It may even be acceptable in aculture that values richness in worship to put a lot of gold into it. But does it make sense to call it a "Statue of Equality."

This is a question that might well have oc-This is a question that might well have oc-curred to people as they watched Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurate a giant statue of Ramanujcharya in Hyderabad on February 5. On the one hand, it seems com-passionate that the visionary driving the proj-ect, the respected Chinna Jeeyar Swamiji, has chosen to celebrate Ramanuja's chief contri-butiona sa divocay for equality but at the same time, as we read in the website for the statu about how Ramanujacharya heralded socia about how Ramanujacharya heralded social equality because "malesid not learn in front of the females so as to keep the knowledge secret" and how the "church controlled monarchs" and how 'tongues were cruf "and 'ears were filled with molten lead," we are left wondering what exactly Hindu religious leaders are hoping to achieve with their spectacular social change simulation daydress.

Now, politicians can be given to hyperbole, and moust part before the most political poli

and gurus to tales of magic and miracles to in-spire love and faith. But what seems to be happening with modern Hindu religious organi-sations is a more fundamental confusion of purpose. And like all confusions, it stems from a disconnect with social and economic realities

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of class, and protestations notwithstanding, perhaps, caste privilege too. A giant gold statue can be declared as the solution to global income inequality. A gallery featuring Nelson Mandela, Martin Luther King, and Abraham Lincoln besides Ramanujashanya can be set up to hait them all as great "reformers". Why not Martin Luther, then? Or other "reformers"

closer home?
Reality seems to be in as short a supply as platitudinous secular ideals are in a glut. There seem to be two different threads in the experience of what is called Hinduism today. One is the practice of traditional rituals such as yigines, pujes, ved pouraropuna; and so on, passed on from one generation to another. The other is the discourse around the meaning of Hinduism, a communicative, modern predilection, that manifests in forms as diverse elling mythology books and the culture of volunteerism among new-age Hindu

utie of volunteersm among new-age rinnou spiritual movements is often called "Hindu nationalism," sey at another dimension, which intersects with each of these in different ways. There are traditionalists who support the no-tion of scarcel lands and oppose their transfor-mation into mass tourism sites by the govern-ment, as well as more reformist or civic

nationalists who are represented in the prime minister's "toilets not temples" slogan, perhaps. Arguably, all of this is Hinduism as it is today, at the crossroads not only of various political forces but also of intergenerational changes and choices. It is in this context that the NGO-ification of Hinduism becomes an interesting problem. In the past few years, I have seen brochused and websites from organisations ranging from traditional Hindu lineages to the moderan more international ones increasing yeasing any discussion of the guru's teachings, philosophy, or "inner" world of Hinduism in any form, for the outward demonstration of NGO-buse senders.

form, for the outward demonstration of NGO-type service.

One spiritual tradition, despite the highly sophisticated philosophical depths of its founder, represents itself now with glossy pho-tos of schools, toilets, computers, medical camps and so n. I did not find even a token quote from the guru in their recent publication. Now, there is clearly nothing to criticise in the performance of service as a spiritually full-lifting raticity. But where the is: sue becomes

filling activity. But where the issue becomes more complicated is when it comes to the more complicated is when it comes to the question of what, finally, is the purpose of whatever is called Hinduism. If everybody? religion" (for lack of a better word) ends up looking like United Nations slogars about empowerment and social justice, what remains of the vast ocean of expenience, restivity, at rand thought that are not the business of NGOs or UN type organisations to support?

Why blame others for the vanishing of these sich traditions; if these was the reconstructed.

these rich traditions if these are not recognised and nurtured by Hindus who otherwise seem

capable of building very large organisations (and statues)? There is, I think, also an issue of class privilege playing out in these two dimensions of

Hinduism, with the "multiplex" or "OTT"
Hindus (to borrow some phrases from recent
debates on cinema) taking to the performance
of service (coupled with some private medi-tation and stress-busting perhaps) with little
interest in the old-fashioned rituals and miracles of the common people, and the latter

cles of the common people, and the latter thronging the ancient temples with complete devotion to the deity and the specific traditions and customs followed in his or her (the deity's) sacred dwelling. For the people, the "statue" is of a divinity. For the colonised urban upper classes, the statue represents, perhaps a concept, a moderni deal, a figure enstrined as "real" in "history". One group will seek miracles, and the other will seek (what it thinks) are facts. Will these two streams accommodate each other? Or will one, by sheer force of privilege, negate the experiences of the masses, seeking to con-

stantly "reform" them? The discourse around the "Statue of The discourse around the "Statue of Equality offers poignant case study. Two different worlds are being sought to be recast as the same, when both could stay in their place for the good of all. Aguru or sampradays's message should not be of lippantly changed from what it was to whatever the miseducated elites think the secular cosmopolis deems fashionable. We should listen to the people, and their bloth.' They obey the gods, not the desires of social status and recognition.

The writer is professor of media studies, University of San Francisco

# LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### DIGITAL ISSUES

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, "The digi tal rupee" (IE, February 4). FM's Budget tal rupee" (IE, February 4), EMS Budget statement that RBI will sixe digital rupees confirms the suggestion by GoB, subple-level inter-ministerial committee. In 2017, it advised the RBI to introduce its own central bank digital currency (CBDC), A CBDC is not just another digital payment option. Its effects for the banking systema ent of clear (If there is a partial shift away from bank deposits of CBDCs, what are the implications for the role of banks in credit creation? What will be the implication for monetary pol-icy? Such questions must be answered.

# Sanjay Chopra, Mohali THE REAL DRAG

THIS REFERS TO the article, "The inequality drag" (IE, Feb 4). For two successive years, the Centre provided almost 70 per cent of the population free grains to ticle over hunger and distress. The insistence to put money in the pockets of the poor to generate demand to invigorate the to generate demand to invigorate rine economy or to strengthen schemes like MGNREGA is a throwback to the politi-cal economy of socialism that has failed everywhere. China became rich only af-ter embracing market economy. If drag to our economy is ideological. HN Bhagwat, Chiplum

# CLIMATE AND INDIA

THIS REFERS TO the article, 'The Climate Cost of Al', (IE, February 3). The examples of Amazon, Microsoft,

Alphabet announcing "net-zero poli-cies" are less suited for the Indian sce-nario where the main factors of clinario where the main factors of climate degradation are powerty, population, urbanisation, rising use of power, intensification of agriculture etc. India has been an early initiator of hange in market regulations when SEBI, in 2012, adopted sustainability reporting and the Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) related disclosures as part of the Business Responsibility Report(BRR) for the 700 listed entities became mandator, In 2021, the BRR was substituted by Business Responsibility and Substituted Su In 2021, the BRR was substituted by Business Responsibility and Sustainability Report (BRSR) enabling market participants to letting and as-sess sustainability-related risks and opportunities. BRSR will soon become amadatory for top 1,000 listed entities. India also has the National Action Plan on Climate Change:

### THE RIGHT MASK

THIS REFERS TO the article. "Why I wear amask" (IE, February 3). The writer's arguments are based on a strong belief that masks are highly effective in preventing Covid-19. While it is true that several public health officials recommend masking, a Randomised Controlled Trial study conducted in Demmark had found study conducted in Denmark had found no significant reduction in Covid-19 transmission due to masking. Many ex-perts have also warned that cloth masks have no impact on viral spread. Varun Das via e-mail

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# 2 IDEA EXCHANGE NEWSMAKERS IN THE NEWSROOM

# PUSHKAR SINGH DHAMI, CHIEF MINISTER, UTTARAKHAND

# 6 People say I didn't get enough time... I'm the last driver who has to take the vehicle to the station

Pushkar Singh Dhami discusses the BJP's chances in the coming Assembly elections, divisions in the party, the dharm sansad in Haridwar and dealing with challenges unique to a hill state. This session was moderated by Harikishan Sharma, Assistant Editor, The Indian Express

Harikishan Sharma: Uttarakhand ha Harikshan Sharma: Uttarakhand h elected four Vidhan Sabhas from 2000 and, in every election, it has changed the government in power. How will you buck this trend?

How will you buck this trend?
Earlier there was another trend too —
ever since the state was formed, whoever
formed the government in the state, didint win in Parliament elections and viceversa. Whether it was in 2004 or 2009,
this was the trend but it changed once
Narendra Modi became Prime Minister of
the country. There was a Congress government in Uttarakhand in 2014 and all
the five lock Sathus seats were won by the the five Lok Sabha seats were won by the BJP. In 2019, it won the five seats again. BJP. In 2019, it won the five seats again. Since Modify became the PM, the entire country's trend changed too. If you see, earlier, we never used to form the government in Assam, but now we have formed it twice. We never used to form a government in Hanyana, we have done it twice. In UP, we could not form a government since 1991 but we did that in 2017 and will be doing it again in 2022, according to all opinion polis. We are confident we will form a government in Uttarakhand and that too with a huge majority. that too with a huge majority.

Liz Mathew, Uttarakhand's BJP unit is famous or infamous for internal divisons. How do you see this and how will you overcome it? What are you doing to keep the party together?

Our party is united and there are no differences. Maybe there are some small differences. May be united and the following to keep the party together?

ferences but we are united and fighting the elections together. We have announced elections together. We have announced our candidates, the tickets have been given, our booth-level (candidates) and panna pramukh have been announced. Our work has started. We have always given due respect to everyone. We are all working together. Our party will form a government and with a huge margin.

Liz Mathew: The older, senior leaders in the party are unhappy that they are not getting due respect. How will you handle this in ticket distribution

handle this in ticket distribution and campaigning?
There's nothing like that, we have given respect to all senior leaders. Did someone tell you that they haven't been given respect? Give me one name and I will tell you how much the party has paid respect to them.

Liz Mathew: You and the previous CM Trivendra Singh Rawat had to repeal

Liz Mathew. You and the previous CM Trivendra Singh Rawat had to repeal the Char Dham Devasthanam Board due to the VHPs demand. You have to deal with more hardliners in your support base in Uttarakhand, when compared to other states. Ahead of the elections, have you had any discussions with the VHP?

That issue was not related to politics. The opposition to the Char Dham Devasthanam Board was not from one section of the society; there was opposition from terth purolitis, people from the panda samaj. Rawals, priests from that area. We had formed a committee under the chairmanship of our senior leader than the committee under the chairmanship of our senior leader than the committee of the mantir mandal, which also gave its report. Then we took a decision to repeal the board. There's no

question of politics there. Other people there. Other people work for votes, we didn't work for votes. We respected everyone's sentiments and based our decision on the committee report.

Liz Mathew: What do you have to say on statements by hardliners such as Yati

Liz Mathew: Former CM Trivendra Singh Rawat is siding with the dissenters and even withdrew his nomination. What do you have to say

on it?

There's no issue of unhappiness. He was the CM for four years and is a senior leader. There's no question of unhappiness.

Liz Mathew: But why did he withdraw his nomination? He himself said that he will work and

campaign to help the party win the state. He will go to every area. Our party is big and there's no unhappiness.

epaper<mark>.in<mark>dia</mark>nex<mark>or</mark>ess.com</mark>

DEA XCHANGE PUSHKAR SINGH DHAMI s Uttarakhand goes to the polls on February 14, Pushkar Singh Dhami, who took over as chief minister just seven months ago, has his task cut out. The state's youngest CM takes on the Congress led by veteran Harish Rawat, Will he be able to lead the BIP to victory in a state known to vote the incumbent out?

5,000 wotes, but in 2017, the vote margin reduced to around 2,700. Will your constituency be a challenge for you this time?

There's no challenge. Every election is different. They were difficult elections for me but the people helped me win and blessed me. This time, the people have asked me to four the state and have said they will take care of the We have already made

Khanduri lost theirs. In 2012, you won

Khatima with a margin of more than 5,000 votes, but in 2017, the vote

Gairsain the summer

capital. It is our priority.

Gairsain is at the centre of

our sentiment. It's at the

heart of the state and of the

Uttarakhand movement

and have said they will take care of the poll in my constituency. Hence, I am not even thinking about my constituency. It was only on their advice that I filed my nomination from there.

Harikishan Sharma: Do you think the protests over farm laws will affect the polls in your constituency, which has many farmers and Sikhs?

I ama farmer myself. All the people of Udhamsingh Nagar are happy that I became the CM. All of them will work to form a government because they feel their brother or son has reached this place.

the Army. Congress, AAP and your party are all making a lot of promises but Congress has given tickets to only

Haridwar and then the taking of action were both done after

considering political gains and losses.
The law is equal for everyone and everything followed the course of law.
There's no controversy.

raneesh Mishra: Will you accept that ere was delay in taking action? As and when we received information

Devyani Onial: Employment is a big issue for the The dharm sansad at Haridwar was not an official entire country but entire country but specially in Uttarakhand where traditionally people have migrated in search of work, leaving event. When action was taken, they thought it was taken by the government, when it wasn't, people behind 'ghost' villages. What thought the government hadn't done anything

measures are you taking to generate employment? First, we ar

employment?
First, we are working to encourage self-help groups so that along with themselves, they can provide employment to others as well. We are also thinking of simplifying and expanding the ongoing Homestay vo-jana. We are encouraging tourism, we have started bringing down prices of heliservices; we have lowered the VAT on Aviation Tuthles Fuel form 20 ne creat Aviation Turbine Fuel from 20 per cent to two per cent. We are also talking of to two per cent. we are also canning or opening wellness centres in Kumaon mandal, Garhwal Mandal Vikas Nigam, and such places. To curb migration and provide work to people where they live, we started an idea series called Bodhisattva, where we invited people from NITI Asyo, scientists, advisors to the Government of India, educationists from the state environmentalists and so. ciologists. We are creating a road map for

nplovment rate of Uttarakhand unemployment rate of Uttarakhand is higher than the national average. In the last year, we saw that even when the average national unemployment rate dropped a little, it increased in Uttarakhand. It seems that the work the government is doing is not periolating down to the grassroots. We had started the work but then there was a lockdown. Therefore, a lot of work that was supposed to happen didn't happen. But the work will definitely be done and we have a long-term vision.

and we have a long-term vision

Vandita Mishra: On the dharm sansad issue, you talked about the law taking its own course. But there's also the question of moral and political responsibility, You are the CM of the state, don't you think you should have said something on such talk that vittates the atmosphere and makes it

vitiates the atmosphere and makes it difficult for people to live together?

It was not an official event nor had they asked us anything. Neither did we sponsor the event nor did we invite them. When action was taken, they thought it was taken by the government and when action was not taken, people thought the government had not done anything. There was no role of the government. When the matter came before the law, the law followed its course.

Vandita Mishra: You didn't think there was a need to make a political statement?

It's not an issue related to us, so why would we give a statement?

Aakash Joshi: Since the formation of Uttarakhand, there has been an accusation that there's more focus on the Terai region, the plain regions, while the state was created for the hills. If you win, will Gairsain be made the capital?
We have already made Gairsain the

summer capital and it is our priority. Gairsain is the centre of our sentiment. It's at the heart of the state and the Uttarakhand movement. The people have connections to Gairsain. We will develop

it in the form of a capital.

Aalash Joshi: Your popularity has been quite high in the opinion polls. But there's a complaint from the ground level that you have not been given enough time. Do you have any regrets that you didn't get enough time thefore the elections?

People are saying I got less time and even I say that. The people of Uttarakhand know that I used my

that I used my strength and energy (to work for the state). Keeping that in mind, the people will give us the next five years.

Aakash Joshi: The way Hinduism was ractised in Uttarakhand is

Uttarakhand is different from other states. There is a complaint that since animal slaughter was made illegal in temples, there are a few people who are doing it clandestinely and people in local politics are taking advantage of that. Do you think it was right to pass legislation on an issue which is conquerted from one of Satirb Do you connected to people's faith? Do you think these older traditions (of

trimk mese older traditions (of animal slaughter) were wrong and the law had to interfere in them? Some things don't change because of a law — people have to understand. People are slowly incorporating good practices and older traditions are slowly ending. People are moving forward from the practices of those times.

Harikishan Sharma: You said you Harikashan Sharma: You Said you have been given less time; you have completed only 208 days since your term began in July. There seems to be a trend that the sitting CMs lose their seats — your two predecessors, Congress's Harish Rawat and BJP's BC

three former Army men and your party has given a ticket to only one—Ganesh Joshi.

Iam the son of a soldier. There are also other people, including Ganesh Joshi, who are from Army families. I am proud that I am a soldier's son and my party he given me the opportunity to work in the role of a CM. Our party always respects soldiers, while other parties just pretend to do so. A Congress leader used to say that (recently de-that).

that (recently de-ceased Chief of Defence staff) General (Bipin) How will development take Rawat is a galli ko gunda (street gang-ster). When it comes to votes, they are posting big photo-graphs of him now. Another party used to ask soldiers for accounts of the surgical strike and incite ri-ots. The people of Uttarakhand are well aware, very national-istic and proud. They know what people

place or tourists come to

the state if there are no

roads? Our state is centred

around tourism, pilgrimage

and power. But going

forward, we will take care of

our ecology and economy

Avaneesh Mishra: Be it BC Khanduri or TPS Rawat, whenever ex-servicemen have entered politics, they have made a mark. Don't you think if more servicemen get tickets, it would send a positive message among the public?

among the public?

In our party, we chose candidates from the names that emerged from the workers. We definitely chose those people on a priority basis.

Avaneesh Mishra: Congress and AAP are promising several things in their campaigns but the BJP's campaign is centred around what it has done, rather than saying what it will do in

the future.
The people of Uttarakhand know that it's only the BJP that has done work and will continue to do so. The other parties

are not able to fulfill their promises in other states, how will they fulfill them in Uttarakhand? They raise issues of price Uttarakhand? They raise issues of price rise and unemployment but in states where they are in government — Punjah. Chhattisgarh. Maharashtra and Rajasthan — they have not been able to solve these issues. Then how will they be able to solve them in Uttarakhand? They were here for 10 years ur priority.

movement believe in us and Modiji and we only talk about the things that we can deliver. People have seen Modi's performance in the Jast for wears. Modi's performance in the last five years

Avaneesh Mishra: Many people who wanted to contest on a BJP ticket are planning to fight independently. Do you see that as your loss?

When you are in line to become a candidate and then you don't get a ticket, you feel a little bad. But we have spoken a call of them. They up we gold they don't be a little bad. But we have spoken to the spoken was a little from the spoken who was to be a little from the spoken who was the spoken to be a little from the spoken who was the spoken to be a little from the spoken was the spoken to be a little from the spoken the spoken to be a little from the spoken to be a little fro to all of them. They are our old workers, they won't go anywhere and will stay with the party.

Liz Mathew: Usually, the contest in Uttarakhand has been between Congress and the BJP. This time there's a lot of buzz around AAP. In how many constituencies do you think there will be a fight between BJP and AAP? How do you look at the emergence of AAP?

BJP and AAP? How do you look at the emergence of AAP?
We won't have a fight with anyone, the election will be one-sided. Our slo-gan this time is "Ab is barr, 60 paar." Now your survey is showing 45-50, but till the election day we will reach 60. The blessings of the people of Uttarakhand are with us and with Modiji.

Harikishan Sharma: Going into the elections, what do you think will work in your favour and what will go

against you?

We have people's blessings and they know we have fulfilled our promises. These are the factors that will favour us. The six months or so that the people of Uttarakhand, my leadership, PM Modi, the party's national chairman and the high command gave me. I have tried to give my 100 per cent. I have devoted every moment to it. There are no factors against us. Everyone is saying that I got less time, so I am requesting for more time so that I can work more.

Shubhajit Roy: It seems that you are projecting the work that you have done in the last six-seven months while you've not highlighted the work of the previous two chief ministers from your party.

I talk about the six months because I

Italk about the six months because! was working more and taking more decisions. People before me have also done good work. The vehicle has started moying, only the driver has changed. I am the last driver who has to take it to the startion and, hence, I can talk more about the time! I have driven the vehicle.

Shubhajit Roy: There's a lot of support among people for you. do you give this credit to? To the

doyou give this credit to? To the three previous CMs, Modi, Amit Shah or to Yati Narsinghanand?

Definitely, it is Modiji. Any yoll that happens today cannot happen without himbecause of the work he has done for the poor, the common man and people at the lowest rung of society. The work Modiji has done for aviation, call road, giving free COVID-19 vaccines, or bringing in Ayushman Bharat Yojana, Swachi Bharat, Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana, Ujiwala Yojana, and several other schemes, noon eelse has That's why! I want to give credit only to Modiji. to give credit only to Modiji.

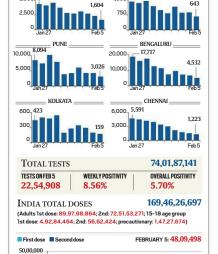
Devyani Onial: Do you think so many Devyani Onial: Do you think so many big infrastructure projects — widening of highways, the Char Dham corridor — in an ecologically fragile state such as Uttarakhand may have short-term benefits but can do harm in the long run? Roads are necessary to travel from one part of the hills to another. Howwill development take place or to unists come to the tata if there are no novide! A the will oil.

state if there are no roads? How will pil-grims come? Our state is centred around gmis conie? our state's termice around tourism, pilgrimage and power. But going forward, we will take care of our ecology and our economy. We also have to move towards atma nirbharata (self-reliance). We have done a lot of homework on this. 14.53%

### TRACKING INDIA'S COVID CURVE **DASHBOARD, AS ON FEB 5** Active cases Deaths 12,25,011 865 1.07.474 ekly CFR: 0.37% | Overall CFR: 1.28% | Total deaths: 5.01.979 NEW CASES, DAILY 2,34,281 1,61,386 3,50,000 1.75.000 SURGE IN THE STATES ON FERRI JARY 2 Active cases 33538 3.53.152 39.77% 1,09,236 13.09% Maharashtra 11394 1.33.655 10.27% Tamil Nadu 7524 1,38,878 11.05%

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# CASES IN THE CITIES, LAST 10 DAYS





LAST 10 DAYS (daily)

# EXPLAINED CULTURE The Lata phenomenon

What made Lata Mangeshkar, who died on Sunday, the soundtrack for generations in the subcontinent? Exploring the musician through her songs, her commitment to perfection, and the women she gave voice to



Then PM Jawaharlal Nehru with Lata Mangeshkar in Mumbai in May 1960. Express Archive

WHEN Anewly-independent India, still com-ing to terms with the bloodbath of the Partition, heard Lata Mangeshkar sing Yun hi muskuruye ja, aansu piye ja... uthaye ja unke sitam from the Nargis Dutt-Raj Kapoor-Dilip Kumar-starrer Andaz (1949), it seemed like a salve for broken hearts. When the song reached the other side of the border, the Naushad composition had the same effect after all, the separation pangs were the same on either side. The song turned a 20-year-old Mangeshkar, a newcomer from Kolhapur, into a superstar and the gold standard of genius.

### Undisputed queen

"Kambakhat, galti se bhi besuri nahi hoti," Ustad Bade Ghulam Ali had once said of her Indeed, so pervasive was Mangeshkar's in fluence that generations have grown up lis tening to her, singing her songs, and, in the case of women musicians, aspiring to be

case of women in unanomental like her.

If Hindi films have been the life of India's masses, the soundrack to their lives has been its music. The audience formed an emotional connection with the singers; you were either a Rafi believer or a Kishore Kumar acolyte. But when it came to Mangesilkar, she was a memorane man would sing every the state of the singer systems. the undisputed queen, who could sing every-thing from bhajans such as Allah tero naam (Hum Dono, 1961, composed by Jaidev and penned by Sahir Ludhianvi) to love songs

penneo by Santr Luchannyi to love songs such as Ye zindagi usi ki hid (Anarkali, 1953) or nostalgic numbers such as Mere saaya saath hoga (Mera Saaya, 1966).

Through several decades, Lata Mangeshkar sang for the righteous and chaste Indian woman on-screen, while her sister Asha Bhosle sang numbers that called for sensuality. Mangeshkar had such charisma that filmmakers and composers recharism that filmmalers and composers aliased very early on that having her in a project signalled credibility and impeccable standards. Much before a ITim was shot, the composer, hyricits and singers were signed on for the project. This meant that several films that did badly at the box office had outstanding music helmed by Mangeshkar, that reached listener through radio, a ubiquitous mode of entertainment in those early days become of the project of after Independence. In fact, it was radio that try and made her synonymous with Hindi

Turin, 2006 Lake Placid, 1932, 1980



Singing for various heroines

Mangeshkar nevertook talent for granted She would spend time on her rehearsals practise her diction and ensure immaculate renditions. Once, when superstar Dilip Kumar told her to improve her diction, she asked 4 family friend, an imam, to come and teach her family friend, an imam, to come and teach her to read and write Unfu. She sang in a range of Indian languages – from Bengali to Marathi — her mother tongue – to Punjabi. Iff those in Punjab sang alongside her mendition of Baba Bulleh Shath's Heer, those in Maharashtra swayed to the tune of her Saumer rangrachi and her Najeyo nawas a staple at every Durga pulg function in West Bengal. She was a unifying factor, who brought the nation together as a repository of its culture, entertainment and, of course, music.

As films moment unest on promulair tropes

and, of course, music.

As films mowed to less formulaic tropes,
Bollywood, too, underwent changes.
Directors mowed towask authenticity intersentation, and, here Mangeshkar was a
huge success, setting standards in plabards
singing. She sang the way her heroines
spoke, moving away from the thick, nasal
agwaki popularised by Noor Jehan or
Shamshad Begum, that had, till then been
he standard. She could sing for a nentire
range of characters — from a poetry-loving
ullage girl in a prison (Mora gora ng layi le,
Bandini, 1963), to a witty and defiant courtean in Abbar's Sheesh Mahal (Purarkintoh tesan in Akbar's Sheesh Mahal (Pyaarkiya toh darna kya, Mughal-e-Azam, 1960), to a

voman savouring the rains as she shares an woman savouring the rains as she shares an umbrella with he man she lowes (*Fywar Inyu* upra *Inyu*, *Shri* 420, 1955) to an emotional mother trying to fend for her children by ploughing the field (*Duniya mein hum anye* hoing to the share tridla; 1957) to a young woman who has just broken away from the shadles of a dastorphobic relationship (*Aqi* phir jeene ki tamanna hai, *Cuide*, 1965) to a young singer who's lost her unbron child (*Tere mere milan ki*, *Abhimaan*, 1973). And who can forset *Kawi Fraden's*, Serminal Awe who can forset *Kawi Fraden's*, Serminal Awe ho can forget Kavi Pradeep's seminal Ay

Liefe meter mulai at, Annimadin, 19-3; And who can longet Kaul Fackeep's seminal Aye mere wutum ke logo, in the wake of the Sinolidan war of 19-62, that reduced then prime minister Javaharial Nehmu to teas and has made to the sinolidan war of 19-62, that reduced in the motion for nearly five decades?

One of the lesser-known facts about Mangeshkari stats the transformed the way Indian music concerts were perceived in the West. Her first performance outside of India was at London's prestigous Royal Albert Hall in 1974. Until then, film music concerts were song-and-dance affairs held in community and the state of the state

### Committed to perfection

Even when technology brought in changes, demanding less and less finesse on changes, demanding less and less ninesse on part of playback singers, fixing flaws in pitch and sur on the console instead, Mangeshkar remained steadfast in her commitment to perfection. Until the 1990s, when Mangeshkar sang more regularly, performances resembled live-stage performances, preceded by extensive rehearsals. They were communal affairs, with 100-piece orchestras divided into string, wind and rhythm sections divided into string, wind and rhythm sections, coming together in mammoth studios to record one song. If one didn't nail it the first time, the process had to be repeated all over again. But the arrival of auto-tuners changed the game and that used to rankle with her. If she taught the musicians how to approach music with clarity and focus, for listeners, she was an institution in herself. In her death, India has lost one of her most succeed musicians have also tend but had to the control of the strong the strong the strong the strong the strong the strong that the strong the strong that the strong the strong that the strong the strong the strong that the strong the strong that the strong the strong that the strong that the strong that the strong that the strong the strong that the stron

ered musicians, but she has left behind an immaculate oeuvre that will continue to give listeners joy, comfort and courage for

### SHE LENT HER VOICE TO ...



DUNIYA MEIN HUM AAYE HAIN Mother India (1957): As Nargis is shown ploughing the field to support her family, one hears the struggle in Mangeshkar's voice

# AAJ PHIR JEENE KI TAMANNA HAI

Guide (1965): Mangeshkar sang for Waheeda Rehman who played Rosie, a woman who finds freedom from a loveless marriage

PYAAR KIYA TOH DARNA KYA



Mughal-e-Azam (1960): Mangeshkar sang this defiant number for Madhubala who played a feisty courtesan dancing in Akbar's court

### CHAITE CHAITE

Pakeezah (1972): Picturised on Meena Kumari, who plays the courtesan waiting for the who fell in love with her ghungroo-laden feet



Amar Prem (1972); Sharmila Tagore erself, but what she has is purity

### YAARA SEELI SEELI

Lekin (1990): Mangeshkar sang this for Dimple Kapadia, who plays a restless ghost in search for salvation. The octave shifts by Mangeshkar made it into one of her finest hours.

### MAAYE NI MAAYE



# The ecological cost of creating artificial snow for Winter Olympics

WARMING GAMES VENUES

## SHASHANKNAIR

THE COST of the 2022 Winter Olympics in Bejjing has been a snow-making operation by China that has highlighted the poor eco-logical conditions of the area, and massive amounts of water that have gone into the ef-fort. A report released by Sport Ecology Group at Loughborough University and Save Our Winters has looked into the dangers of artifi-cial snow on athletes' bodies and the amoun of water used up to produce the snow.

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How is artificial snow created?

Snowinjected with water to harden it, and then treated with chemicals to keep it injoint is a form of artificial snow recommended for winter competitions. High volumes of water and energy are required to create slopes of artificial snow that are competition-ready.

For the Beijing Games, machines from an Italian company, TechnoAlpin, have been creating artificial snow since November 2021. These pump out ice particles and a thin mist of water vapour, which are launched up to 60 m in the air where they combine to become snow and fall to the ground. TechnoAlpin has been using 290 snow cannons in Beijing, according to *The Sunday Times*.

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Is this the way in all Winter Games?
For the 2014 Sochi Olympics, Russia used 80% artificial snow. That rose to 90% for the Pyongyang Games. The 2010 Vancouver Games had to use helicopters to fly in snow.

The Beijing region is known to be low on water and thin on ice, thanks to an over-reliance on groundwater coupled with the melting of glaciers since the 1950s, According to a Greenpeace study in 2018, China's gla-ciers had melted by 82% and one-fifth of the ice cover had been lost since the 1950s. These Games are estimated to require around 49 million gallons of water to be con-

verted into snow. For perspective, that moveter would fill 74 Olympic-sized pools.

# Where does so much water come from? According to a New York Times report, Beijing diverted water from Baihebao reser-

### By midcentury, many prior Winter Games local warm to ever host the Olympics again. CHANCES THAT DAILY MIN TEMP IN FEB IS 0°C OR BELOW. 2041-70 Lillehammer, 1994 Sochi 2014 Pyeongchang, 2018 Nagano, 1998 Garmisch-Parten Vancouver, 2010 Cortinad'Ampezzo, 1956 Oslo, 1952 St Mortiz, 1928, 1948 Sapporo, 1972 Calgary, 1988 Salt Lake City, 2002 Sarajevo, 1984 Grenoble, 1968 Squaw Valley, 1960 Albertville, 1992

Beijing, 2022 Source: Current ■NOT RELIABLE ■ HIGHER RISK ■ RELIABLE Note: Charts represent a high emissions future (RCP 8.5) Graphic: The New York Times

# voir to the Guishui river, which is usually dry during the winters. Earlier, water from Baihebaowould be directed to households in Beijing. Even before the Cames' preparations began, Beijing was facing a water crisis and had to connect a series of waterways that transported trillions of gallons of water from the south of the country to the north. Official is no Tamejaliou have turned off tens of thousands of acres worth of irrigation more the water of the country to the country to

water to create artificial snow. Farmers have been resettled in high-rise apartments

What is the environmental cost? Another major problem in the region is Another major problem in the region is that is average precipitation over the last four decades periodically is below 8 mm. That combined with dry weather means water gets lost to evaporation and winds during the ice-making process. Therefore, water is being pumped into the soil, which will harden and create a surface where artificial snowwill. not melt. An experiment by researchers in Switzerland found that at least 35% of the wa-

ter used to make artificial snow was lost. The Chinese have said that they would

limit the impact of snow-making by reusing this snow to boost groundwater reserves. "We've collected surface water for snow-making, and we don't need tota pany underground water. It has no impact on the erronnent,' Lidenlong, facility manager arthroninent, and the sound the same properties. An International Olympic Committee All International Olympic Committee evaluation report said mountains in Beijing had "minimal annual snowfall" and the country's hostine was completely dependent on

try's hosting was completely dependent on the production of artificial snow.

# What is the future of such attempts?

What is the future of such attempts?

The Loughborough University report states that by 2050, only 10 of the 20 venues that have hosted the Winter Olympics since 1924 will be able to produce an amount of snow that is capable of holding an international-level competition like the Winter Olympics. The survival of the Winter Games is based on the production of artificial sno

LONGER VERSION ON: