



www.dailypioneer.com

facebook.com/dailypioneer | @TheDailyPioneer | instagram.com/dailypioneer/

PAPER WITH PASSION

The long and short of it

Rahul Gandhi shortens his Nyay Yatra route as political dynamics change in western UP

Rahul Gandhi, the scion of the Nehru-Gandhi family, has cut short his Nyay Yatra route in response to the shifting political dynamics in western Uttar Pradesh. The decision to modify his itinerary reflects the nuanced strategy in a rapidly evolving electoral landscape ahead of the general elections. Rahul had launched the Nyay Yatra to reach out to people and highlight the Congress' commitment to social justice, harmony and welfare initiatives. The yatra, spanning several districts, was intended to mobilise support and galvanise party workers for the Lok Sabha elections. Being one of the most populous States, UP was crucial to this yatra. However, RLD leader Jayant Choudhary has thrown a spanner in the works, which has altered the political situation in western UP and prompted Rahul to rethink his approach. The originally planned Bharat Jodo Nyay Yatra in Uttar Pradesh, set from February 16 to February 26 before moving to Rajasthan, has been truncated to avoid the State's western region. The move was



necessitated following indications of a potential alliance between the Rashtriya Lok Dal and the BJP ahead of the Lok Sabha elections. RLD chief Jayant Choudhary has seemingly decided to join the BJP-led National Democratic Alliance for the 2024 elections even though there has been no formal announcement to this effect. The UP leg of the yatra will now conclude on February 21, bypassing western UP and transiting into Madhya Pradesh. While the official explanation attributes this change to the UP Board exam schedule, the underlying reason lies in the unexpected alignment shift of the RLD, a constituent of the INDIA bloc, with the BJP. However, it's worth noting that

Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav is expected to join the Nyay Yatra in Rae Bareilly district on February 20 and participate in a road show.

For Rahul and the Congress, navigating the complexities of the political scenario in western UP requires a nuanced understanding of local dynamics, grassroots mobilisation efforts and targeted outreach initiatives. While the decision to modify the Nyay Yatra route may represent a tactical adjustment, the broader strategic objectives of the campaign remain unchanged – to mobilise support and energise party cadres. In the run-up to the elections, political parties across the spectrum are intensifying their efforts to woo voters. From high-profile rallies and public addresses to grassroots outreach programmes and social media campaigns, leaders are leaving no stone unturned in their quest for electoral success. The Nyay Yatra was part of this strategy by the grand old party. But as they say, 'politics is the art of the impossible'. As Rahul and other leaders navigate the complex terrain of electoral politics, they must remain attuned to the pulse of the electorate and responsive to shifting political dynamics. The ability to adapt, innovate and connect with voters on issues that matter most to them will ultimately determine the outcome of the elections and shape the future trajectory of Indian politics.

PICTALK



Devotees light lamps on the occasion of 'Ganesh Jayanti' at Latashil Ganesh Mandir, in Guwahati

PTI

The profound power of love

From igniting passion to fostering companionship, love is the driving force behind our deepest desires and aspirations

What could be more important than love? Nothing like love to make life that much more meaningful and worthwhile. It imbues it with that extra and special meaning. Things become that much more precious because you have this person in your life. And because she/he is there, life is truly worth living and you want things to be as close to perfect as possible. Even when one is a positive thinker with a positive outlook on things, love makes it infinitely more so. Love is truly a many splendoured thing. It changes everything. Like every time there is a world shaking or life changing invention. This is akin to that. It makes the world go around. When you hear music you think of the other person. You think of how it would be without her and how lucky you are that she is there. How beautiful that she is there. It works the same way in other art forms. Cinema becomes compelling because of the love story or sometimes the love triangle, a novel creates empathy and becomes a page turner because you want to know



what happens to the love interest, a painting – the nubile nude lying there languorously might be your lover. Opera of course has it as its life blood. It makes the rainbows more intense and the clouds more ethereal – fleecy white clouds scattered at random, the sky more azure blue. A fundamental human need is not to be alone. Which is why solitary confinement is such a feared punishment. And love provides the most special companionship of all. You get up in the morning and you know the other person is there in your life. To complete it. To make the sunsets and the dawns more beautiful. You live not just for yourself but also for another human being who is not your par-

ent and in a different way. Everything you do you think of its implication for the other person too. Your perspective changes as does your thinking and way of relating. The downside is the devastation that follows when one leaves the other which both thought could never happen, not so long ago. Or even the parting for a little while. You miss the other one so much. It's hard to breathe though you may have been perfectly happy before. Half the love songs are about the longing for love. The longing for the loved one when she is not there. No bigger muse than separation for poems and creativity. Falling in love fundamentally changes your life and is a coup de foudre when it is at



NIDHI DALMIA

first sight. "Would you believe in a love at first sight? Yes, I'm certain that it happens all the time. What would you do if I turned off the light, I can't tell you, But I know it's mine..." as the Beatles sang. Love, the essence of life's beauty, infuses existence with profound significance. It elevates moments, rendering them precious with the presence of a cherished companion. Love, akin to a revolutionary invention, alters perspectives, making every aspect of life vibrant. It intertwines with art, music, and literature, enriching them with its essence. Love fulfills the innate human need for companionship, making each sunrise more meaningful. Yet, its departure brings profound sorrow, amplifying the ache of absence. Nonetheless, love's impact is undeniable, transforming lives with its enchanting magic, whether through enduring bonds or fleeting encounters. Love, indeed, remains life's most extraordinary treasure. (The writer is an author and entrepreneur; views are personal)

Tamil politics: The rise of Thalapathy Vijay

Thalapathy Vijay, a prominent actor, has ventured into politics with the formation of a party. Can he make a difference in Tamil politics?



KALYANI SHANKAR

Thalapathy Vijay, a prominent Tamil actor, has ventured into politics with the formation of his party, Thamizhaga Vetri Kazhagam. Can he make a difference in Tamil politics?

Tamil superstar Thalapathy Vijay launched his political party, Thamizhaga Vetri Kazhagam, last week. He declared that his party will only contest the 2026 Assembly polls in Tamil Nadu, not the 2024 Lok Sabha polls. The question is whether he will succeed.

After the launch of his party, Vijay said, "I have one more film I have signed, and I will finish it and ultimately involve myself in politics. I have been preparing myself for my political journey for a long time. I will devote myself to the people of Tamil Nadu. This is the only way I can give back to my people." This is a typical argument that many politicians use to present themselves as genuine dogooders.

Successful actor-turned-politicians in Tamil Nadu included M.G. Ramachandran, J. Jayalalithaa, M. Karunanidhi, C.N. Annadurai, and Captain Vijayakanth. Shivaji Ganesan, Sarathkumar, Napoleon, and S.S. Rajendran was unsuccessful.

MGR had a strong base in the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) and got the party votes till he launched AIADMK in 1972. Jayalalithaa, on the other hand, was known for her anti-DMK stance and gained popularity on that platform.

Kamal Haasan founded his political party, Makkal Needhi Maiam, in 2018. Unfortunately, his party won no seats in the 2019 and 2021 elections. On the other hand, Vijaykannth showed promise at the start of his political career in 2005 but could not sustain it. He passed away recently. Thalapathy (General) Vijay is a well-known actor from the Udayar community and a Christian. He is rumoured to earn around 150 crores per film and faces little competition from famous actors like Ajith. Rajnikant has declined his political entry after three decades of speculation. Kamal Hassan's party has not picked up.



Vijay plans to run for the position of chief minister in the 2026 Assembly elections. He has sufficient time to gain the public's trust as an alternative to the ruling DMK and AIADMK. His primary opponent in the generational shift is Udayanidhi, a minister and the son of the current chief minister, M.K. Stalin.

Vijay's political party plans to adopt a political philosophy incorporating the ideas of three significant figures. While B.R. Ambedkar advocated for Dalits' rights, Periyar was a well-known social reformer. Kamaraj was an advocate for the backward class. Notably, Vijay has decided not to use the term "Dravida" in his party's name. Vijay aims to win voters' support from different political parties, including the ruling DMK and the primary opposition AIADMK. The others in the race are Naam Tamilar Katchi (NTK), Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), PMK, Makkal Needhi Maiam, and VCK. He must lure voters from all these parties to win the election.

In the past, Vijay's political support included the India Against Corruption movement in 2011. He also backed the pro-jallikattu protests in



VIJAY PLANS TO RUN FOR THE POST OF CHIEF MINISTER IN THE 2026 ASSEMBLY ELECTIONS. HE HAS SUFFICIENT TIME TO GAIN THE PUBLIC'S TRUST AS AN ALTERNATIVE TO THE RULING DMK AND AIADMK

2017. He met with the families of the victims of the Thoothukudi incident in 2018. On the other hand, despite public expectations for decades, Rajinikanth is now out of the picture.

Vijay has an advantage in Tamil Nadu, a state obsessed with films. He is young, a crowd-puller, and his timing is right. Additionally, his Tamil identity gives him an edge over Rajinikanth, whose Marathi roots and BJP/RSS ties have sparked controversy in the Dravidian-dominated state. Vijay's success hinges on his communication skills and how he defines his party's ideology. He must effectively contrast it with the Dravidian doctrine of DMK and AIADMK parties and adopt an aggressive posture.

Vijay must declare which political party he is contesting against. Is it the DMK, AIADMK, or is it the? As a newcomer, his best bet is to oppose the ruling government, the DMK. This strategy worked for J. Jayalalithaa, who positioned herself against the DMK and its leader, Karunanidhi. This ultimately led to her success as a politician.

Can Vijay win over rival par-

ties and overcome DMK's anti-incumbency sentiment? DMK and AIADMK have a 50-year history of alternating power with a strong 30% vote base. DMK prioritizes infrastructure, while AIADMK focuses on populist schemes. Vijay's party will impact other players regardless of the election result.

To ensure his success in the 2026 election, Vijay needs to focus on setting up booth committees. Since DMK and AIADMK already have a solid voter base, he needs to motivate his rural supporters to become actual voters.

There's a rumour that his party is getting support from the BJP in exchange for help in 2026. He needs to address it. It's premature to predict what the future holds for Vijay. His success will depend on whether he can build a solid fan base like MGR or N.T. Rama Rao, who both had good political advisers - something Vijay currently lacks. He is yet to build his party. Although the road ahead will be challenging, Vijay can overcome obstacles through hard work and dedication.

(The writer is a popular columnist; views are personal)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

BETTER WEATHER AHEAD

Sir — Year 2023 was the hottest year ever. At the same time, due to the monsoon this year, the rainfall was also much less than the average. In Maharashtra, this had a special effect. Many districts in Maharashtra could not reach the average rainfall. Maharashtra has the highest number of dams in the country. But most of the dams could not be filled. So this year in summer its effect is being felt in many places. Water shortage has started in many villages. This year, the effect of El Nino will be felt till June. It is predicted that it will end after that.

Recently, two world organisations have predicted that El Nino, which affects the weather and rainfall around the world, has started to weaken. By August, La Nina conditions may develop. Indian meteorologists have predicted that this year's rainfall will be better than last year's. This news was recently read that most of India depends on monsoon. 70 per cent of India's annual rainfall comes from the southwest monsoon. Its share of the GDP is about 14 per cent. This year it is raining well and this present is pleasing. Also, it is pleasant in terms of the overall economy. It is no problem now to hope that farmers and common people will enjoy this and spend their lives happily.

Shantaram Wagh | Pune

FRACTURED MANDATE IN PAKISTAN

Sir — The mandate given by the Pakistani people in the recent general elections, along with the country's economic difficulties, appears to be derailing the Pakistan Army's intentions. The plan devised by Pakistan's ruling establishment may keep former Prime Minister Imran Khan's followers out of power, who impacted the mandate from within the jail. Still, the entire world has seen Pakistanis' dedication to a healthy democracy. The question is whether Imran can get out of jail soon. Several cases have been withdrawn. Despite political instability, military impediments, internet and social media bans, and legal manoeuvring, the independent candi-

Navy veterans return home



The release of eight Navy veterans from Qatar marks a significant achievement for India, following extensive diplomatic efforts and legal manoeuvres. After enduring 18 months of uncertainty and legal battles, the veterans are finally returning home, with seven already reunited with their families and the eighth expected to follow suit shortly. This outcome underscores the importance of sustained diplomatic engagement and legal advocacy in resolving complex international disputes. India's proactive approach included expressing deep concern over the ini-

tial death sentence imposed by Qatar's Court of First Instance and promptly exploring all available legal avenues to support the veterans. Diplomatic channels were actively utilized, with high-level meetings held, including discussions with Qatar's Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani during the COP28 summit in Dubai. Additionally, securing consular access to the imprisoned individuals was a crucial step in ensuring their well-being and legal representation.

The decision by Qatar's Court of Appeal to commute the death sentence to jail terms was a pivotal moment in the resolution process, signalling a positive development towards the veterans' eventual release. India expressed gratitude to the Amir of Qatar for his role in facilitating their return home. This successful outcome underscores the importance of persistent advocacy and collaboration in protecting the interests of individuals facing legal challenges in foreign jurisdictions.

Amarjeet Kumar | Hazaribagh

dates sponsored by Imran Khan's party, Tehreek-e-Insaf, are at the forefront.

It is difficult to predict how many independent candidates who won with the PTI's support will stick to their positions and for how long. This is also the opportunity to demonstrate their loyalty. This is why Nawaz Sharif is advocating for democracy and urging all parties to work together. He also mentions valuing the achievements of independents. Undoubtedly, sustained military engagement in Pakistan, as well as a steady deterioration in democratic ideals, have weakened Pakistani democracy.

Abhijit Roy | Jamshedpur

ASHWIN SHINES AGAIN

Sir — The legendary off-spinner from Tamil Nadu, Ravichandran Ashwin did a lot of hard work and reached a stage as a striking force. Generally, spinners mature with age and Ashwin displayed his variety

in bowling to a great measure and foxed the English batsmen in trouble straight-away.

His knack for getting left-hand batsmen wickets is unique and he has maximum scalps of lefties in test cricket. His wicket of Stokes at Hyderabad was a gem of a delivery. Despite a lion-hearted show with both the bat and ball, he received inadequate recognition for his manifold achievements. Ashwin's mesmerizing spells with the ball have at times camouflaged his superb work with the bat. It is a tribute to Ashwin's skill and application to various aspects of the game that he has lasted so long despite tough competition. Now he is on the verge of completing yet another milestone of 500 test wickets in his long and illustrious career as an all-rounder.

Jayanthy Subramniam | Mumbai

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com



FIRST COLUMN

A SILENT REVOLUTION IN TODAY'S WORKPLACE

Quiet quitting is a new phenomenon in the professional realm



SAKSHI SETHI

Today, many of us often stress the importance of leisure but that isn't to downplay the value of earned success and being fully present in the professional world. The workplace is changing due to employees' demands for more freedom and responsibility and a better work-life balance. As a result, many of us have witnessed a surge in concepts like "Bare Minimum Mondays," "Quiet Quitting," "Lazy Girl Jobs", and "The Great Resignation." Nonetheless, these developments have sparked extensive discussion about the ethical implications for the workplace.

Several factors such as lack of trust, lack of consistency, lack of feeling valued, lack of feeling neglected and not being communicated create a sense of disconnection and frustration among employees resulting in a sense of numbness and discontentment in career and eventually seep into personal lives, just as burnout.

The term Quiet Quitting or intense dissatisfaction has taken the world by storm, due to the impact of the pandemic, with many workers beginning to reconsider their priorities and boundaries in the workplace. In the early 2020s, driven largely by social media, the term 'quiet quitting' emerged as a much-publicized trend in the United States and elsewhere.

The term refers to a situation where employees disengage from their jobs or the organization without openly expressing their dissatisfaction or resignation. Instead, they become emotionally detached and disinterested, which leads to reduced productivity, decreased morale



and ultimately a decision to leave the company quietly. It is not always a coordinated or planned move conducted by a group of workers to express their displeasure with the organization's policy rather a subtle form of withdrawal, often overlooked but with significant implications for organizations and individuals alike. There are multifaceted root causes of quitting. Some feel a lack of recognition and reward is the cause, while some blame poor management.

Nowadays, the occurrence has amassed a sizable following on social media and is now seen as a movement. Studies and research have shown that around 59% of workers worldwide are 'quite quitting' estimated to be costing the global economy \$8.8 trillion. Employers must build relationships with their employees so that they can be treated fairly. Being valued at work can prevent employees from experiencing burnout and various health issues arising from being unhappy at their jobs. Employees need to see a clear path to advancement, they may lose motivation and engagement.

Remember every worker, every employee working in the organization has a different circumstance within their workplace. Quiet quitting can lead a few to decreased productivity and creativity and at the same time can also impact mental health, causing stress and dissatisfaction. Addressing these factors requires fostering a workplace culture built on trust, consistency, appreciation, a sense of belonging and effective communication. Only when these psychological needs are met, employees will be more likely to engage with their work, thereby reducing the risk of quitting and turnover. When an employee feels motivated, happy, challenged and optimistic, will they be much more likely to expend additional efforts, work a little harder, stay a little longer and above all carry a positive attitude. People do matter. Don't let them quit.

(The writer is an educator, views are personal)

GST needs ADR for dispute resolution



AS MITTAL

The Alternative Dispute Resolution mechanism provides a way to resolve disputes between taxpayers and the Government without having to go through formal litigation



The Goods and Services Tax (GST) was introduced to rationalize the indirect tax system in India, thereby creating a common national market for goods and services. This "one nation-one tax" initiative aimed at price rationalisation, promotes ease of doing business and economic growth. The success of this reform is evident from the fact that the number of GST filers has increased by 32% from 10.6 million in April 2018 to 14 million in April 2023, and record revenue collection of ₹1,87,035 crore in April 2023, the highest ever, and ₹1,72,129 crore in January 2024, the second-highest since GST rollout. However, to further strengthen this reform, a time-bound and robust dispute resolution mechanism needs to be put in place in the GST.

Delay in setting up of Appellate Tribunals: It has been noticed that even after six and half years of the GST law coming into effect on July 1st, 2017, still the formation of GST Appellate Tribunals is awaited, which is a significant gap in the GST administration. This absence of a tribunal has forced businesses to approach high courts, which is usually a long and expensive process, and it also adds pressure on already overburdened high courts. According to various estimates, over one lakh appeals involving more than Rupees one lakh crore are expected to approach the GST Appeals Tribunals once they become functional. Although the government notified the creation of GST Appellate Tribunals on October 25, 2023, they are yet to become operational. The tribunal will help to efficiently dispose of disputes, and keep litigation in less time, and at a lower cost. From the taxpayer's point of view, even for completely justified tax positions, they have no option but to wait for a remedy. Moreover, the delay in the formation of the Tribunal is leading to an increase in interest burden, delay in genuine refunds, pre-deposit of taxes leading to cash flow challenges, and repetitive show cause notice to cascade disputes. Thus, the immediate formation of GST Appellate Tribunals and expeditious resolution of disputes is the need of the hour.



THE 'VIVAD SE VISHWAS SCHEME 2020' FOR INCOME TAXPAYERS WAS EXPECTED TO RESOLVE A SIGNIFICANT PART OF DIRECT TAX LITIGATIONS WORTH ABOUT ₹4.8 LAKH CRORE BY REMITTING AND WAIVING INTEREST AND PENALTY FOR PENDING DISPUTES

Disputes on an interpretation of the law, unsatisfactory advance ruling mechanism, and revenue-centric approach by tax authorities have led to an increase in litigation. Under GST, disputes arise from differences in tax paid by the assessee and the computation of tax liability by authorities. Such tax disputes can arise due to various reasons during assessment, audit, and/or scrutiny of records/accounts. For example, the rate of tax, a claim of tax exemption, the claim of an input tax credit, incorrect determination of the place of supply, the nature of supply (composite or mixed supply), classification of goods and services, etc. While GST is touted to remedy the proliferation of tax disputes and simplify tax administration, early experiences point to the contrary.

Revenue-centric approach dented the confidence of taxpayers: The dispute resolution schemes formulated with the revenue-centric approach, have certain limitations. For example, the 'Sabka Vishwas (Legacy Dispute Resolution) Scheme 2019' resolved around 49,534 Pre-GST and GST cases, involving an amount of ₹24,970 crores, thousands of appeals are still pending, leading to lakhs of rupees being locked. The backlog of around 38,000 Pre-GST, VAT dispute settlement cases in Punjab alone is a matter of concern and the OTS offered in November 2023, to settle these cases, valid until March 31, 2024, is not sufficient.

The 'Vivad Se Vishwas Scheme 2020' for Income taxpayers was expected to resolve a significant part of direct tax litigations worth about ₹4.8 lakh crore by remitting and waiving interest and penalty for pending disputes. The fact that the scheme ended on December 31, 2023, is disappointing, and the announcement of a one-time dis-

puted direct tax demands settlement of up to ₹25,000 and in total of ₹3500 crore in the interim budget is inadequate.

It is high time that a robust one-time GST Amnesty Scheme is introduced to assist bona fide taxpayers who may have committed inadvertent errors during the initial phase of GST. The GST being one of the largest tax reforms, had its gestational issues, and taxpayers and authorities struggled to understand the complexity of the law, aligning internal systems and training personnel. These issues resulted in numerous inadvertent slips, which are now under departmental audits/scrutiny, leading to a flurry of tax demands, interest and penalties. The government needs to take immediate action to address these concerns and ensure that the taxpayers are not burdened with unnecessary litigations and penalties.

Effectiveness missing in earlier efforts: The Authority of Advance Ruling (AAR) was established to provide certainty in tax positions in advance, and to reduce litigation. AAR and the Appellate Authority of Advance Ruling (AAAR) are established under the respective State GST Acts. However, it is important to note that the rulings given by the AAR or AAAR may not be accepted by authorities in other states. Additionally, the AAR does not have the power to deal with every aspect of the GST law, such as issues related to 'place of supply', which has been a cause of doubt for many.

It is worth noting that the rulings of the AAR or AAAR are only binding on the applicant who has sought the advance ruling and on the concerned/jurisdictional officer in respect of the applicant. Nevertheless, divergent rulings in different states on the same matters have led to increased litigation.

Therefore, the government and the GST Council should establish a central authority for AAR, which could address the issues related to 'place of supply' and resolve conflicting views of State-level AAR. The revenue-centric approach of the AAR has negatively impacted the confidence of taxpayers. Even in situations where a reasonable interpretation is evident, the ruling has been unfavourable to the taxpayer. Hence, it is essential to restore confidence in AAR, to serve the object and purpose of this progressive move.

The Way Forward: The Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) mechanism provides a way to resolve disputes between taxpayers and the government without having to go through formal litigation. While Advance Rulings can be a form of ADR, the limitations of The Authority of Advance Ruling may result in reducing unnecessary litigation. Additionally, the introduction of the Settlement Commission aims to quickly collect taxes that are unpaid and also offers delinquents a one-time opportunity to come clean, which can substantially reduce the time and cost involved in unproductive litigation. The concept of centralized audit/ investigation should be introduced. Moving forward, once GST Appellate Tribunals become operational, will help to seamless flow of input tax credit for businesses with minimum blockages, efficiently dispose of disputes, reduce litigation time, and lower costs, further strengthening the country's revenue reform and economic growth.

(The author is Vice-Chairman of Sonalika Group, Vice-Chairman of the Punjab Economic Policy and Planning Board, and Chairman of ASSOCHAM Northern Region Development Council; Views expressed are personal)

Symphony and connection beyond frequencies

This year's theme, 'Radio: A century informing, entertaining and educating,' serves as a strong reminder of radio's prowess in shaping culture and connectivity

In the symphony of technological advancements, amidst fleeting platforms, radio stands as a steadfast beacon, heralding its second century as a revered medium. February 13th, a date enshrined as World Radio Day (WRD) by UNESCO in 2011 and ratified by the UN General Assembly in 2012, annually celebrates this enduring force. This year's theme, "Radio: A century informing, entertaining, and educating," encapsulates its timeless significance. Globally acknowledged, WRD pays homage to radio's multifaceted prowess in technology, science, communication, and the artistry of audio programming. It embodies a century of unwavering service,



RAJDEEP PATHAK

steadfastness, and cultural resonance in an ever-evolving landscape.

Radio's origins trace back to the 1800s, whose power, position and influence are on the surge. Amidst the vast landscape of media, the enduring appeal of radio lies in its ability to transcend time and technological shifts. Its unique blend of immediacy, accessibility, and the power to connect communities has allowed

it to weather the storms of innovation, emerging as a beacon of constancy. Since its inception, radio has undergone a remarkable evolution from the discovery of electromagnetic waves to the sophistication of Digital Audio Broadcasting (DAB). Beginning with Hans Christian Oersted's observation of magnetic fields around electric currents in 1820, subsequent milestones include Michael Faraday's confirmation of electromagnetic induction in 1830 and James Clerk Maxwell's theoretical predictions in 1864. Heinrich Hertz's practical demonstration of electromagnetic waves in the late 1880s validated Maxwell's theories. Guglielmo Marconi's pioneering transmissions culminated in the

first transatlantic signal in 1901, revolutionizing communication. Reginald Fessenden's 1906 breakthrough enabled long-distance voice and music transmission, heralding commercial broadcasts. Lee De Forest's 1907 Audion signal detector and Edwin Armstrong's 1918 superheterodyne circuit advanced radio technology. Armstrong's 1933 FM discovery pledged clearer signals, offering a significant improvement over existing AM technology.

The inception of radio as a communication medium, dates back to December 24, 1906, when a crew on a ship in the Atlantic Ocean experienced a groundbreaking moment. Instead of the familiar Morse code clicks, they

heard a human voice and music transmitted wirelessly by the inventor Reginald Fessenden. This marked the birth of sending sound through radio waves, opening up a new era of possibilities. Despite initial setbacks, including the withholding of FM technology by (Radio Corporation of America) RCA's David Sarnoff in favour of television development, radio's popularity soared. Entertainment broadcasting commenced around 1910, with the establishment of the first commercial radio stations such as KDKA (by Westinghouse) in 1920 and WWJ in the same year. The period between the late 1920s and the early 1950s is regarded as the Golden Age of Radio, characterized by a

diverse array of programming that captivated millions of listeners nationwide (USA). From its colonial origins to modern-day significance, India's radio journey is a timeless allure. Post-independence, All India Radio's rise marked a pivotal shift, shaping national identity through iconic programs like 'Binaca Geetmala' and 'Vividh Bharati'. Private FM stations expanded its reach, making radio a ubiquitous presence from rural to urban centers, serving as a vital lifeline and cultural touchstone. Amid technological advancements, radio's essence of informing, entertaining, and connecting endures, reminding us of the power of simplicity and human connection. It stands as a beacon of tradition, inno-

vation, and unity in India's diverse landscape. Furthermore, radio holds a unique power in shaping collective memories. Take, for instance, the iconic program "Binaca Geetmala." Merely pondering the year when a particular song graced the airwaves triggers a cascade of memories linked to that song, accompanied by the mellifluous narration of the esteemed broadcaster, Ameen Sayani. These reminiscences transport us to moments of joy and nostalgia, evoking the social ambiance of yesteryears. Beyond its technological and scientific aspects, radio holds a unique position as a conduit for cultural exchange, fostering dialogue, and amplifying diverse voices.

The theme for World Radio Day, "Radio: A century informing, entertaining, and educating," celebrates a timeless legacy, where the ethereal resonance of voices has woven an intricate tapestry of cultural embrace for a century. Radio stands as a steadfast companion, offering not just timely information and entertainment, but also serving as a beacon of education and unity, transcending barriers. Within its sanctuary of sound, negativity finds no haven; instead, the airwaves flourish with warmth and positivity, nurturing weary souls seeking solace in the harmonious embrace of human fellowship.

(The writer is programme executive, Gandhi Smriti and Darshan Samiti; views are personal)



EDITORIAL

Prospering under the Sun

The recent launch of, and emphasis on the 'Pradhan Mantri Suryodaya Yojana' (PMSY) marks a significant milestone in India's renewable energy journey, specifically in the realm of rooftop solar (RTS) panels. With the aim to provide 10 million low and middle-income households with RTS panels, this initiative signals a progressive step forward in India's commitment to sustainable energy practices. Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, in her Budget Speech, reiterated the government's pledge, highlighting the benefits for beneficiaries, including free electricity up to 300 units per month and the opportunity to sell surplus solar energy, potentially resulting in substantial annual savings. The program's structure, which entails an increase in the Central government subsidy from 40 per cent to 60 per cent, with the remaining share financed by private developers affiliated with public sector units of the Power Ministry, exhibits a collaborative approach to fostering renewable energy adoption.

Undoubtedly, the PMSY initiative is not just a commendable endeavour but also an essential one. Despite significant progress in boosting solar energy capacity over the past decade, India has fallen short of its renewable energy targets, particularly in the solar energy sector. While the target was set at 175 GW of renewable energy by 2022, India only managed to achieve a solar energy capacity of 121 GW, with solar capacity accounting for 62 GW. Despite this shortfall, the sector's growth at a Compounded Annual Growth Rate (CAGR) of around 60 per cent underscores India's emergence as a global player in solar energy.

However, the same cannot be said for the rooftop solar segment, which constitutes a mere fraction of the overall solar power installed capacity. Reports indicate that rooftop solar accounted for only 11.08 GW of the total installed capacity of 73.31 GW by the end of 2023. This glaring gap underscores the untapped potential of India's rooftop solar resources. Recognising this, the PMSY holds promise in harnessing this potential, with the Council on Energy, Environment, and Water (CEEW) estimating that over 25 crore households in India have the capacity to deploy 637 GW of solar energy on rooftops. Therefore, the significance of incorporating households into India's solar energy trajectory cannot be overstated.

Despite its potential, the path ahead for India's rooftop solar sector is not without challenges. Strengthening the supply chain of rooftop solar components through domestic interventions, fostering collaboration between private entities, distribution companies (discoms), and other stakeholders, and addressing regulatory hurdles are among the challenges that need to be overcome. Additionally, ensuring affordability and accessibility for low and middle-income households will be crucial in ensuring the success and scalability of the PMSY initiative.

To sum up, the launch of the Pradhan Mantri Suryodaya Yojana represents a pivotal moment in India's renewable energy journey, particularly in the rooftop solar segment. By addressing the pressing need to harness India's rooftop solar potential, the initiative not only contributes to the country's energy security but also fosters sustainable development and economic growth. However, concerted efforts from policymakers, industry stakeholders, and civil society will be required to overcome the challenges and realise the full potential of rooftop solar in India.



GITA GOPINATH

For better or worse, humans are not known for walking away from the next stage of scientific and technological progress

Powers and perils of AI

Adam Smith's thinking and philosophy can help humans navigate the troubled waters of artificial intelligence

Nowadays, it's almost impossible to talk about economics without invoking Adam Smith. Smith grappled with how to advance well-being and prosperity at a time of great change. The Industrial Revolution was ushering in new technologies that would revolutionise the nature of work, create winners and losers, and potentially transform society.

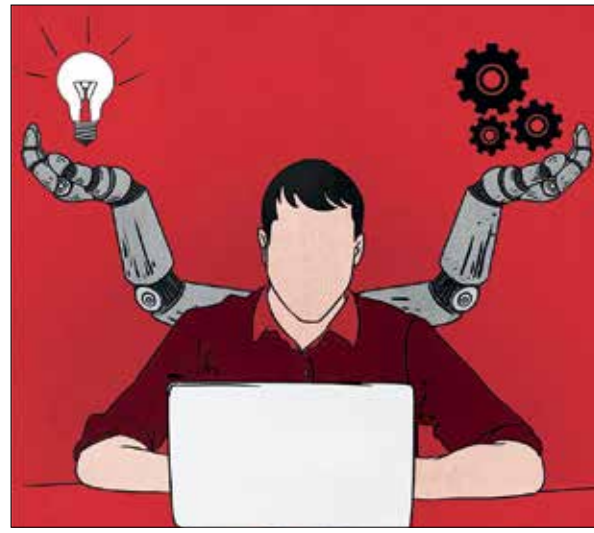
Today, we find ourselves at a similar inflection point, where a new technology, generative artificial intelligence (AI), could change our lives in spectacular—and possibly existential—ways. Given the parallels between Adam Smith's time and ours, I would like to propose a thought experiment: If he were alive today, how would Adam Smith have responded to the emergence of this new "artificial hand"?

Beyond the invisible hand

To explore this question, I would like to start with his most famous work, *The Wealth of Nations*. A seminal idea of this work is that the wealth of a nation is determined by the living standards of its people, and that those standards can be raised by lifting productivity. This idea is especially relevant today because global productivity growth has been slowing for more than a decade. AI could certainly help reverse this trend. AI could raise productivity by automating certain cognitive tasks while giving rise to new higher-productivity tasks for humans to perform.

Goldman Sachs has forecast that AI could increase global output by 7 per cent, or roughly USD 7 trillion, over a decade. While it is far from certain that such sizeable gains will be realised, it is probably safe to say that when it comes to maximising efficiency, Adam Smith would be wary of stifling the artificial hand of AI.

Aside from the gains in productivity, AI could shake up the labour market in unprecedented ways. Recently, we have seen the loss of "middle-skill" jobs due to automation, resulting in large clusters of high-paying and low-paying jobs at either pole of labour markets. The literature shows that AI could affect



There is a need to balance support for innovation with regulatory oversight

occupations and industries differently than previous waves of automation. Recent empirical studies suggest AI could reduce job-market polarisation, by putting downward pressure on wages of high-paying jobs. Some studies suggest that AI adoption could flatten the hierarchical structures of firms.

So, what will be the net impact on the job market? It is by no means guaranteed that AI will benefit humans, or that the gains of the winners will be sufficient to compensate the losers. It is quite possible that AI might simply replace human jobs without creating new, more productive work for humans to move into, as the economist Daron Acemoglu has noted.

Thus, despite AI's potential, we need to consider the broad negative effect it could have on employment—and the social upheaval that could cause. Given that the well-being of the individual and the plight of the common worker underpinned much of Adam Smith's thinking, this would surely have troubled him.

Today, the market for the components to develop AI tools is highly concentrated. A single company has a dominant position in the market for silicon chips best suited for AI applications, for example. Many AI models require massive computing power and huge amounts of data—the lifeblood through which these models hone their "intelligence".

While Smith would have been impressed by the emergence of such a powerful technology in a globalised economy, he might also have realised that the invisible hand alone may not be enough to ensure broad benefits to society.

New approach to regulation

Which brings me to a point I would like to emphasise—we urgently need sound, smart regulations that ensure AI is harnessed for the benefit of society. One of the challenges is the extent to which humans may come to depend on the judgement of AI systems. They rely on existing data, and hence may replicate the embedded bias in that data. Some models have shown a tendency to confidently defend false information—a phenomenon known as AI "hallucination". When it comes to AI, we need more than new rules: we need to recognise that this might be an entirely new game. And that will require an entirely new approach to public policy.

New legislation proposed by the EU is an encouraging start. The EU's Artificial Intelligence Act classifies AI by risk levels. The highest-risk systems would be banned. This would include government systems that rank people based on social compliance, known as "social scoring."

Beyond regulating AI systems directly, we must be prepared to address the broader effects of AI on our economies and societies. Given the threat of

widespread job losses, it is critical for governments to develop nimble social safety nets to help those whose jobs are displaced.

Making the right adjustments to the education system will be crucial. We need to prepare the next generation of workers to operate these new technologies and provide current employees with ongoing training opportunities.

Clearly, we need international coordination on regulation, because AI operates across borders.

Redefining human

All that said, to truly consider the implications of AI from Adam Smith's perspective, we need to go back to his first major work, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*. Smith explored what enables us to behave morally. In his view, it is our ability to experience "sympathy": we can imagine each other's joy and pain, and as a result, we temper our "passions" and learn to be civil towards others. It's what allows us to build and sustain a rules-based society. But what happens when you add artificial intelligence into the mix?

What is remarkable about the latest wave of generative AI technology is its ability to comb vast amounts of knowledge and distill it into a convincing set of messages. It is unclear whether AI will evolve to the point where it could be called truly sentient. But if it can already replicate human speech, it may be difficult to know the difference. The glue that binds the concept of society conceived by Smith—sympathetic human beings interacting in the spirit of compromise—begins to disintegrate.

This has deeply disturbed scholars such as Yuval Harari. Through its mastery of language, Harari argues, AI could form close relationships with people, using "fake intimacy" to influence our opinions and worldviews.

It's telling that even the pioneers of AI technology are wary of the existential risks it poses. Just last week (last week of May 2023), more than 350 AI industry leaders signed a statement calling for global priority to be placed on mitigating the risk of "extinction" from AI.

So much of Adam Smith's

work is based on the idea of information being effectively transmitted through society. But AI can significantly damage the integrity of that information and the fundamental benefits that it confers to society.

Smith would no doubt be troubled by the possibility of "hallucinating" software spreading fake news and deepening divides in society. Thus, there is a good chance he would have supported rules that protect consumer privacy, and limit misinformation in the age of AI.

To conclude, I would like to stress that this debate is ongoing, and I do not claim to have all the answers. I have pointed out a few of the issues surrounding AI, and how we can use Adam Smith's thinking and philosophy as a guide to help us navigate the path ahead.

AI could be as disruptive as the Industrial Revolution was in Adam Smith's time. We will need to carefully balance support for innovation with regulatory oversight. Because of AI's unique ability to mimic human thinking, we will need to develop a unique set of rules and policies to make sure it benefits society. And those rules will need to be global.

It is a challenge that will require us to break out of our own echo chambers and consider the broad interest of humanity. Harnessing AI for the good of humanity will require an interdisciplinary approach.

Writing on the cusp of the Industrial Revolution, Smith could hardly have foreseen the world we live in today, some 300 years after his birth. Now, we may once again be on the brink of technological transformations we cannot foresee. For better or worse, humans are not known for walking away from the next stage of scientific and technological progress. Usually, we simply muddle through. This time, as we confront the power and perils of the artificial hand, we need to summon every ounce of our empathy and ingenuity—the very things that make human intelligence so special.

DTE
The writer is the First Deputy Managing Director, International Monetary Fund or IMF. Views expressed are personal

Copyrighted legacy?

Mahatma Gandhi's works have been available freely thanks to his copyright philosophy, but not those of Martin Luther King Jr



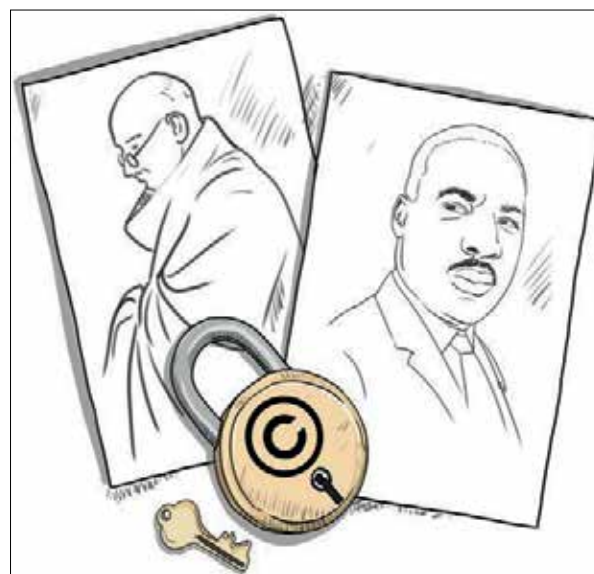
LATHA JISHNU

It is a pity that American public seldom sees more than snippets of one of the most significant speeches in its history — Martin Luther King's 'I have a dream'

January is a bleak month in Delhi. At least for some of us. There is the damp, grey and foggy weather, for one, and for another, the memory of the cold-blooded assassination of a revered figure that hangs over the city. It is a memory that still haunts the nation, increasingly faintly, perhaps, as it pulses to a new beat. The Republic Day celebrations that overshadow all else in this month are held not far from where Mahatma Gandhi was shot dead by a right-wing Hindu fanatic on January 30, 1948, for trying to heal the bleeding wounds of a nation torn apart. That was less than six months after he had brought independence to India.

Searching for Gandhi's last speeches as he embarked on his final fast in Birla House (now Gandhi Smriti) to end the communal bloodletting in the capital, I was able to quickly find what I wanted on the internet. But this column is not about the sage advice he gave his violence-prone countrymen 76 years ago; it is about the ease with which one is able to lay one's hands on his writings and speeches if only we wanted to understand our freedom struggle, Partition-related history and ourselves.

The focus here is on the copyright law and its impact on the works of two great men in different countries and of different generations: Gandhi and US civil rights campaigner Martin Luther King



Visionary leaders such as Gandhi and King belong to the ages and so do their works

Jr, who fought for the rights of African Americans. There were strong links between the two. King was deeply influenced by Gandhi's non-violent struggle against forces of oppression and hate, calling him the guiding light of his technique of social change. Sadly, the other similarity is tragic. The Black rights leader was also assassinated, five years after he made the momentous "I have a dream" speech during the March on Washington in 1963. There is a January link here, too, as the US commemorates January 15, his birthday, as Martin Luther King Jr Day.

There is, however, a sharp divergence in the way the two iconic leaders dealt with copy-

right. Gandhi, being a lawyer, had a clear understanding of the abstractions of the copyright law, but he applied a contextual frame to this understanding to arrive at a practical solution to how it affected his works as a writer and publisher. It is a subject that has been rarely highlighted, much less researched. The exception is Shyamkrishna Balganes of the Columbia Law School, who has written an absorbing research paper on this rather recondite aspect titled *Gandhi and Copyright Pragmatism*. The development of Gandhi's views on copyright, says Balganes, shows that he anticipated several of today's critical debates on copyright

concerns and developed what he describes as "copyright pragmatism."

Gandhi's initial stand on copyrighting his works was a firm rejection. In 1926, Gandhi began publishing instalments of his autobiography, titled *The Story of My Experiments with Truth*, in two journals that he edited: *Navjivan* and *Young India*. Gandhi's autobiography was hugely popular with readers, and he allowed other newspapers to reproduce the chapters without his permission. "Writings in the journals which I have the privilege of editing must be common property. Copyright is not a natural thing. It is a modern institution, perhaps desirable to a certain extent. But I have no wish to inflate the circulation of *Young India* or *Navjivan* by forbidding newspapers to copy the chapters of the autobiography."

Gradually, though, Gandhi was forced to acknowledge the value of copyright, starting with the time when the US publisher of his autobiography, Macmillan, demanded that he assign all rights in the work to the publisher. In order to do so, Gandhi had to first assert and claim them under copyright law, which was against his principles. But he yielded because "I felt that there might be no harm in my getting money for the copyright and using it for the charkha propaganda or the uplift of the suppressed classes." Eventually, Gandhi

bequeathed the copyright in his works, comprising thousands of articles and several books of which the autobiography is a bestseller, to a trust that he had helped establish, the Navjivan Trust. In 2009, some 60 years after the death of Gandhi, the works came into the public domain despite a strong campaign by Gandhi scholars that Navjivan should retain it. Their argument was that once such works came into the public domain, commercial entities would profiteer from them and not maintain their purity.

In the case of King, public access has not mattered so far in a copyright battle that has turned ugly. His epochal *I have a dream* speech is not in the public domain as the copyright continues to be with his estate, which enforces it strictly and seeks extortionate fees for licensing it. King took out a copyright on the speech in 1963, and under US law, what was then a 56-year copyright has been turned into a 95-year run. This is a pity, because it means the American public seldom sees more than snippets of one of the most significant speeches in its history. Experts point out that this has undermined the fair use doctrine because even those users that might have a plausible right under this rule have either dropped their plans or been forced to pay stiff licence fees to the King Estate or the commercial entity with which they have tied up. **DTE**
Views expressed are personal

Dear Editor

TESTING WATERS

The defence of the UCC laws passed by the Uttarakhand government in the article 'Much awaited autonomy' is flawed and goes against the grain of what most others feel. Everybody is entitled to their own opinion but the entire provisions of the bill are the long term objectives of the RSS. Firstly how can it be called a Uniform Civil Code when the tribal population has been kept out of its ambit. Any registration involves much trouble in India and one can imagine the attitude of those in charge of doing the paperwork when couples walk in for registration. This concern for children born out of wedlock is nothing but an excuse. More children born to married couples need attention than to children born out of wedlock which may not even exceed double figures. Those in charge of the nation are using UCC in Uttarakhand as testing waters to gauge the reactions of the people in order to make it applicable to the entire nation.

— ANTHONY HENRIQUES, MUMBAI via email

millenniumpost.in

Log on to write letters to the editor or send them to letter2editor.mp@gmail.com. You can also send your comments to The Editor, Millennium Post, Pratap Bhawan, 5 Bahadur Shah Zafar Marg, New Delhi 110 002

TWEET OF THE DAY

How can our country progress when the farmers are attacked with tear gas shells for fighting for their basic rights? I strongly condemn the brutal assault on our farmers by the BJP. The Central Govt's failure to support farmers and labourers, coupled with futile PR stunts, exposes the illusion of 'Viksit Bharat'. Instead of suppressing their protest, BJP must focus on humbling their inflated egos, power-hungry ambitions, and inadequate governance that has harmed our nation. Remember, it's these farmers who sustain us all, including the high and mighty. Let's stand in solidarity with our farmers against the government's brutality.



MAMATA BANERJEE
@MamataOfficial