

The Indian EXPRESS

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RAMNATH GOENKA

BECAUSE THE TRUTH INVOLVES US ALL

An Af-Pak warning

Terror attacks in Turbat, Dasu, Gwadar are of Pakistan's own making. It needs a radical reorientation of policy



SHARAT SABHARWAL

NO FREE PASS

SC's message in censure of Patanjali is welcome: There cannot be any compromise on regulatory protocols

THE SUPREME COURT'S strong admonition to Baba Ramdev and Patanjali Ayurved — the company the yoga guru has founded and is the face of — was much needed. Patanjali's products have, for long, made deceptive claims and the company has faced few consequences for its irresponsible campaigns against the allopathic system. Such campaigning has, on several occasions, even defied the highest court of the land. On November 21, 2023, for instance, the SC asked Patanjali to stop misleading advertisements against the modern system of medicine. The very next day, Ramdev and the company's managing director Balkrishna held a press conference in which they claimed that Patanjali had permanent cures against glaucoma, blood pressure, arthritis, asthma and diabetes. The company also continued to issue ads claiming its products are "more effective than chemical-based synthetic medicines of allopathy". Ramdev and Balkrishna have apologised and said the publicity was part of the "routine course" by the company's media department. On Tuesday, the SC rightly came down on this disclaimer. The bench hearing the Indian Medical Association's (IMA) two-year-old case against Patanjali described the firm's response as "lip service".

The growing incidence of lifestyle diseases has made interventions that emphasise dietary management, "toxin removal", "herbal therapies" and yoga popular. In the last two decades, successive governments have also taken steps to promote such healing systems. The Narendra Modi government has championed yoga, equipped Jan Aushadi stores with ayurvedic medicines, and merged the regulation of unani, ayurvedic, homoeopathy, yoga and sidha systems into a single ministry, AYUSH. Undoubtedly, these systems have a role in healthcare. But in a country where quackery and anti-science attitudes are rampant, there cannot be any compromise on regulatory protocols and evidence-based policy. During the pandemic, Ramdev sought to exploit mass anxiety by making wildly inaccurate claims about Patanjali. On most occasions, he got away with mildly worded government censure. In August 2022, the IMA went to the apex court in response to a Patanjali advertisement that said, "Save yourself and the country from the misconceptions spread by the pharma and medical industry." During hearings in this case, the SC has on more than one occasion come down heavily on Patanjali. In February, it also came down hard on the AYUSH ministry. "How can Patanjali claim to completely cure blood pressure, diabetes, arthritis, asthma and obesity?... The entire country is being taken for a ride. You shut your eyes," the bench said.

An AYUSH ministry press release of December 17, 2021, speaks of close to 1,500 misleading advertisements from makers of such therapies between August 2018 and July 2021. However, there is very little about the action taken against such violators in the public domain. The SC's latest reprimand is a message to the government that its initiatives on Ayurveda must go beyond promoting the healing system. It must ensure that regulatory protocols are implemented stringently.

NO STRANGER TO terrorism, both as a perpetrator and victim, Pakistan has been jolted by three high-profile terror attacks recently within seven days. The Majeed Brigade of the Balochistan Liberation Army has taken responsibility for two attacks in Balochistan. One, that targeted the Turbat naval air base, which reportedly deploys Chinese drones and two, the Port Authority Complex of the Gwadar port, operated and expanded by the Chinese. The third attack in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa killed five Chinese engineers involved in the construction of the Dasu Hydropower Project on the Indus river under the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). Nine Chinese nationals working on the same project were killed in a similar attack in 2021.

Chinese personnel and interests have borne the brunt of periodic terror attacks in Pakistan in spite of the constitution of a special force to protect them. With a number of Chinese personnel in Pakistan in connection with the CPEC projects, this is a serious issue for the Chinese and is a matter of discussion between the two sides. While displaying equanimity publicly, the Chinese are reported to have leaned heavily on the Pakistanis behind the scenes to counter this threat effectively.

With the CPEC, China is more deeply invested in Pakistan than ever before. The Xinjiang-Gwadar linkage is too valuable for them to walk away from. An exit route for the Chinese to the Arabian Sea and the wider Indian Ocean, it bypasses the maritime choke points in the east. Therefore, while calling for a thorough investigation into the killing of their personnel, the Chinese have said that any attempt to undermine China-Pakistan cooperation would not succeed and China will continue to support Pakistan's economic and social development.

However, the fraught security situation is one of the major factors that have slowed the progress of the CPEC projects, including the expansion of the Gwadar port. The other factors are the low absorption capacity of the Pakistani economy, administrative bottlenecks and controversies among Pakistani stakeholders on various projects.

Pakistan reflexively blames India for the terror on its soil to hide the reality of its own flawed policies over the years that are responsible for its terror quandary. These include the alienation of its ethnic minorities, particularly in Balochistan and the tribal belt; encouragement to religious extremism and sectarianism; use of terror as an instrument of state policy; and an injudicious approach towards its neighbours. Pakistan has had a festering border management problem with Iran, with both sides accusing each other of harbouring terrorists. Its heavy investment in the Afghan Taliban to gain strategic depth in Afghanistan has not paid the desired dividends.

The Taliban regime in Kabul rejects the Durand Line and has failed to curb the violent activities of the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) from Afghan soil despite persistent Pakistani demands. There has been a sharp uptick in TTP attacks in Pakistan since the Taliban takeover in Kabul. Islamic State — Khorasan Province (ISIS-K) has claimed some deadly attacks both in Pakistan and Afghanistan. Pakistan has had flare-ups with Iran and Afghanistan in recent months.

Pakistan has followed exploitative policies in Balochistan since its inception. China has become complicit in these policies over the years through its projects that have brought little benefit or employment opportunities to the local people. The Saindak Copper-Gold Project run by the Chinese and construction activities in relation to the Gwadar port are some examples. This has caused resentment against them amongst the local populace.

caused resentment against them amongst the local populace. China's activities in the strategically located Balochistan, particularly the potential projection of its naval power from Gwadar and other Pakistani ports, sitting close to the Strait of Hormuz, have been a matter of concern for countries of the region and beyond. Not surprisingly, the then Interior Minister of Pakistan Rehman Malik had said in 2012 that 14 organisations were operating in Balochistan, and both "friends" and "foes" of Pakistan were equally involved in financing and encouraging them.

Responding to the recent attacks, the Pakistani establishment has vowed to crush the resurgence of terrorism. This hackneyed response essentially signals the doubling down on the use of force — a failed strategy in the past. What is needed is a radical shift in Pakistan's internal and external orientation, which is nowhere on the horizon. Flashes of wisdom and pragmatism in the discourse of the Pakistani establishment have remained just that. The new Foreign Minister, Ishaq Dar, who is close to Nawaz Sharif, has said that the policy of suspension of trade with India since August 2019 will now be reviewed. Only time will tell if it results in anything positive. However, should Pakistan take a constructive approach, we must respond positively. In the meantime, we should take all the necessary steps to protect ourselves from the rising wave of terror in our neighbourhood. That it will not remain confined to the Af-Pak region is evident from the reported involvement of ISIS-K in the terror attacks in Kerman (Iran) in January this year and Moscow recently.

The writer is a former high commissioner to Pakistan and author of India's Pakistan Conundrum: Managing a Complex Relationship

A MOUNTING TOLL

Killing of aid workers, attack on embassy underline the high costs of Netanyahu government's maximalist position

CONTRARY TO THE aphorism, not all is fair in war. In the immediate aftermath of the brutal October 7 attacks by Hamas, Israel had the sympathy of a broad swathe of the international community. The besieged Benjamin Netanyahu government — the ruling alliance was in tatters, and there were widespread protests against laws seen as curtailing an independent judiciary — also got a lease of life as Israelis were united in outrage and grief. Now, nearly six months into Israel's retaliation, the government is increasingly seen as using that grief as a pretext to act with impunity. Just over the last week, three incidents show why the Netanyahu government is facing more protests at home while being chided by its friends abroad.

On Monday, an Israel Defence Force drone killed seven aid workers even though their convoy was reportedly coordinating movements with it and the vehicles bore a logo that made it clear they were aid workers. On the same day, Israel bombed the Iranian embassy compound in Damascus, killing two Revolutionary Guard generals. The attack drew a response from Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, who promised revenge. Israel's action has significantly increased the chances of the conflict becoming more widespread. One of Gaza's largest hospitals, Al Shifa, is all but rubble. These attacks on diplomatic missions, aid workers and civilians have prompted reactions from the US and Europe. US President Joe Biden said he was "outraged and heartbroken" and accused Israel of not doing enough to protect aid workers. Canada and the UK too have expressed condemnation.

While the Netanyahu government has called the attack on aid workers a "grave mistake", the prime minister also said, "these things happen in war". Thus far, he has maintained his maximalist position — in the face of 33,000 Palestinian deaths, over a million refugees, an "imminent famine" and calls from Israel's closest allies for a cessation of hostilities. Over the weekend, thousands of Israelis took to the streets demanding his removal from office for the failure to bring back hostages. Israel must be mindful of the sentiment articulated by Indian External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar, and echoed by many of its well-wishers: "Countries may be justified in their own minds in responding (to an attack), but... every response must take into account something called international humanitarian law." With the theatre of conflict expanding and political support at home declining, it is becoming increasingly clear that the Netanyahu government's actions are also harming Israel's national interest.



ADITYA PURI

LISTEN TO THE PEOPLE

Intellectual elites must introspect on why their words fail to make a mark

I ENJOYED READING the interaction with Harvard professor Michael Sandel moderated by Anant Goenka and Aakash Joshi (IE, March 14). I agree with Sandel's well-articulated views but I am not sure whether these editorial pages are imbued with Sandel's political philosophy.

Clearly, the debate needs greater awareness and intensity.

Let's start with the lament of some intellectuals on these pages suggesting that people who win elections are ignoring them and their views. Could it be that the philosophical discussions these people are having reside in the clouds? In other words, is this intellectualism disconnected from reality?

Philosophy, especially political, belongs to the street in cities and villages where citizens gather and debate issues relevant to the common good leading to a just (not utopian) society.

The correct question is not whether the people who are winning elections are listening to intellectuals but whether, as Sandel said, are the intellectuals listening to the "people"?

There is a backlash against elites in many democratic countries, including India. We need to ask why. Is it because these so-called elites have failed to offer a compelling alternative? Or, is it that their prescriptions have failed and they now want to play the role of a scarecrow running down good alternatives and performers? Maybe, it is also because elites look down on cultural and religious sources of populist appeal.

Politics which is only about economics and ignores equitable sustainable growth and cultural and religious issues will fail

DEAR EDITOR, I DISAGREE
A column in which readers tell us why, when they differ with the editorial positions or news coverage of 'The Indian Express'

over time. The populist backlash is the result of governing elites embracing a flawed conception of politics, economy and governance. Presuming that a version of market-driven finance, trade flow of capital, people and secular politics was the only way forward and ignoring the failure of this to reduce inequality, create employment, or protect the environment.

This was a model that should have been challenged as not meeting the public good, but was not, as it suited the enlightened self-interest of the governing elite.

Over the years, global crises have hurt people at the bottom of the pyramid the most. This could and should have led to a rethink of the model but, instead of an overhaul, we fixed the puncture while leaving the edifice intact. For example, in the wake of the financial crisis of 2008, we had a bailout of banks (which bailed out the rich), creating tremendous anger among the Left and the Right, as the poor were left adrift.

As Sandel said, a politics that does not address deep cultural and spiritual sources and the need for a balanced society as forces that move people leads to anger, frustration, resentment and also affects hopes and aspirations.

This is what leads to the success of nationalist right-wing politics which is filling the moral void created by a hollow public discourse that does not address grievances, hopes, identity, and national pride.

During the Independence movement, when Jawaharlal Nehru was a central figure in the 1950s, there was a feeling in countries around the world that to avoid communal conflict and violence, we needed governing principles that were entirely secular.

Secularism is a version of liberalism that insists that citizens leave their moral and spiritual convictions at home when they enter the public space. This was a concept that was never followed from the start or we would not be talking of the Uniform Civil Code 70+ years since independence. I agree with Sandel that this was a big mistake.

Basically, it is not possible to decide questions of justice, law, rights, duties, and freedoms, and common good without reference to important conceptions and beliefs. People want public life to be about the larger picture of meaning, belonging, national identity. India's democracy is a source of national pride across all sections of society and continues to be so.

So what happens now?

A lot depends on whether the opposition parties can find the leadership to articulate an alternative governing vision that takes into account the importance of national identity, pride, public expression and have a broad agreement on cultural, social and economic issues.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi has been able to do so. To address and articulate his vision factoring in national pride, identity, purpose, meaning, social and religious causes, as well as, progress on these issues.

The world acknowledges this is India's decade because of changes in geo-economics and politics. The secular shift in telecom, technology, mobility, social media and demographics favours India; so do the stars. Let's catch the wave.

The writer, former CEO and Managing Director of HDFC Bank, is senior advisor to Carlyle's Asia private equity team

VIVE LE FRANKENPASTRY

Crookie, cruffin or cronut — the croissant has endured as an iconic food due to its versatility

ON ONE OF his many visits to Paris, the novelist Charles Dickens, like so many before and after him, fell victim to the considerable charms of the croissant. Speaking of "the dainty croissant on the boudoir table", he contrasted the French pastry's delicate, buttery appeal with the "dismal monotony" of English bread. One wonders what he would have made of its decidedly more robust 21st century descendant, the "crookie" (a croissant stuffed and topped with cookie dough and baked till the chocolate melts). Would he have denounced it as an abomination or seen the appeal of crossing the flaky texture of the croissant with the chewy, chocolatey all-American cookie?

Not that anyone needs the imagined verdict of the long-dead Victorian writer. The masses have spoken: The crookie, like the cronut (croissant stuffed with flavoured cream and shaped like a doughnut) and the cruffin (a muffin-croissant hybrid) before it, has become a runaway hit, inspiring takes across the world since its debut in Paris's Maison Louvard in October 2022 and becoming social media's most viral baking craze this March. Often described as "frankenpastry" — perhaps unfairly — what creations like the crookie, cronut and cruffin underline is that the most enduring foods are also the most versatile.

After all, even the classic crescent-shaped French croissant is only an iteration of the similarly-shaped Viennese pastry called the kipfel. It got its recognisable layers and air pockets only when the French patissiers switched the heavier dough used by Viennese bakers with puff pastry. Would the croissant have achieved its iconic status and worldwide fame if it had stayed true to the recipe? Dickens knew what he liked — as do the millions around the world who enjoy a fresh, hot croissant, with or without cookie dough.



APRIL 4, 1984, FORTY YEARS AGO

FIRST INDIAN IN SPACE

INDIA REACHED OUT for new frontiers of knowledge as Sqn Ldr Rakesh Sharma, with two fellow Soviet cosmonauts, soared into space aboard T-11 for a historic rendezvous with the orbiting laboratory Salyut 7. The Soviet spacecraft was hurled into an elliptical orbit by a towering booster rocket which flashed into life at 6:38pm IST. The liftoff was an awesome spectacle as the rocket streaked into a clear sky.

was shot dead by terrorists in Chandigarh and 10 others were killed as mob and police clashed in Amritsar during the funeral procession of BJP leader Harbans Lal Khanna. Punjab and Chandigarh observed near total bandh. Two persons posing as students came to his house and opened fire when Tiwari came down to meet them.

AFSPA IN PUNJAB

IN A SIGNIFICANT move against terrorism, the Punjab government vested sweeping powers in police and paramilitary forces in the state under the Armed Forces (Punjab and Chandigarh) Special Powers Act, 1983,

for a period of three months. The decision came in the wake of mounting terrorist activities and mob violence in Punjab. This is the second time that the state administration evoked the special act to curb violence.

PM ON SPACE FLIGHT

PRIME MINISTER INDIRA Gandhi said that with the launching of the first Indian in space, Indo-Soviet friendship had acquired a "new dimension". "It is a proud occasion for us", Mrs Gandhi said. She expressed hope that the first Indian cosmonaut would symbolise the message of peace, which was Mahatma Gandhi's and Jawaharlal Nehru's legacy to India.

CHANDIGARH CLASHES

PROF V N Tiwari, a member of Rajiya Sabha,



OUR VIEW



A rate-structure review of GST is clearly in order

Its revenue buoyancy should close the chapter of a shortfall cess and prompt reforms aimed at GST simplification. For this tax to fulfil its basic promise, start by reducing rate slabs

India's latest goods and services tax (GST) revenue figures indicate that the regime's initial phase of inadequate mop-ups is over. Overall GST revenue in 2023-24 hit a record ₹20.2 trillion, up 11.7%. Last fiscal year's monthly average GST mop-up was ₹1.68 trillion, up from ₹1.5 trillion the year before. It seems we can finally close the long chapter of shortfall-compensation for states after the mid-2017 switchover to GST from multiple central and state taxes that got subsumed by this uniform levy across the country. The government's five-year deal with states to plug their gaps in case they fell short of a projected GST-revenue incline ended in mid-2022, but the pay-out for this was so large that a cess imposed on top of GST for some goods had to be extended till March 2026 just to pay off the debt taken to fully compensate states. Now that our GST intake—which is split by the Centre and states—is finally showing a steady upward trend, perhaps that loan can be foreclosed and the cess dropped ahead of time. As cesses add to taxation complexity, it would mark a small win for the idea of a "good and simple tax," as GST was meant to be. Sustainable relief from a revenue crunch also makes space for GST reforms to simplify how it is levied in India. This is what the GST Council must turn its attention to at the earliest.

Let's recall why GST adoption was hailed as a critical reform. Its uniformity, which made India 'one market' for the ease of business, was one aspect. Its fostering of specialization along value chains was another. As a tax applied only to value addition by a taxpayer (with input-tax credits available), GST was designed to prevent tax bills bloated by one levy upon another. This not only moderates commercial costs, it favours

value chains determined by skills more than taxation policy, as having more profit-oriented business units as links in a supply chain does not result in costlier final output. This prospect of enhanced economic efficiency went along with a promise of rate clarity and stability. An ideal GST regime would levy a single rate on every good and service, forming a system that can be held stable for the foreseeable future, closing the scope for confusion, rate inversions, tax-relief lobbying and rate-related squabbles. Unfortunately, not only has GST compliance caused much hardship, our rate slabs have splintered and shifted so often that today's structure is riddled with complexity. We have too many rates, and with many items that look arbitrarily slotted into one slab or another.

A single-rate GST was rejected right at the start on the argument that it would be acutely regressive, with the rich paying too little and the poor too much as a slice of their incomes. But then, indirect taxes are always regressive, regardless of rate variation, and it's the job of progressive direct taxes to lend taxation fairness. Clearly, it's more about varying rates to squeeze items that can be charged more on the pretext of rich people using them (or their use needing to be deterred). Since multiple rates underpin today's GST-intake calculus, we can start simplifying it by adopting a clear three-slab regime. Most items should be taxed at a central rate that meets our revenue target, with two exceptional slabs for a tiny bunch of obvious items that need to be either relieved or overtaxed: a low-rate merit slab and a high-rate demerit bracket. All other deviations should be axed. This way, GST will get a chance to fulfil its conceptual promise of clarity, tax-policy stability and economic efficiency.

GUEST VIEW

Could reg-tech address the compliance woes of banks?

ANUPAM SONAL



is former chief general manager, Reserve Bank of India.

The compliance function in banks is the nerve-centre that performs a vital role in preserving organizational resilience and stability. Equate it to our cardiovascular system. Just as a weak heart can debilitate the body, even result in a sudden demise, so can inept and deficient compliance take a toll on a bank's health, with serious implications for the entity as well as the financial sector. The case of Paytm Payments Bank is one such poignant reminder of this effect.

Robust compliance within banks is not only a must, it should cover nearly all aspects of operations. It is both multifaceted and increasingly demanding. Regulatory expectations of banks went up sharply after the 2008 Global Financial Crisis, the lessons of which inspired reforms spanning the entire spectrum of prudential guidelines, covering both idiosyncratic and systemic risks, with many new variables placed under watch, such as the liquidity coverage ratio, net stable funding ratio, non-risk-based backstop facility or leverage ratio, and too-big-to-fail

criteria. The focus on governance, conduct, risk management and supervisory scrutiny has intensified in response to evolving financial dynamics and the disruptive impact of fintech on banking, payments and digital channels. The 'assurance' function, encompassing risk management, compliance and internal audit/inspection, has gained in importance at banks.

For proper compliance, banks should (i) embrace regulatory technology (reg-tech) to streamline processes and improve compliance efficiency, (ii) foster collaboration on reg-tech and compliance models, and (iii) prioritize capacity building, education and awareness. The compliance function must adapt swiftly and in sync with changes in the financial sector to align itself with technological advancements.

Reg-tech addresses regulatory, compliance and supervisory aspects and a three-way interface for these is crucial for effective outcomes. Initiatives like regulatory sandboxes, innovation hubs and platforms such as CRILC (India) have aided reg-tech adoption globally. However, most banks must overhaul their reg-tech systems to make a meaningful switch to enterprise-wide compliance automation. These mechanisms need an end-to-end mapping of regulatory

guidelines, while ensuring real-time communication and smooth information flow across all verticals and departments. Embedded within it should be functions like Know-Your-Customer and Anti-Money Laundering (KYC/AML) checks and due diligence, monitoring processes, deficiency- and violation detection, timely alerts and prompt risk addressal.

Artificial intelligence (AI), machine learning (ML) and natural language processing (NLP), as well as cloud services and blockchain technologies, can play a pivotal role in preserving data quality through effective management and analytics. Smart systems can be integrated to efficiently compile, document and encode information and processes, while allowing user-friendly access for verifications, thereby ensuring accurate and timely regulatory reporting, as also robust internal oversight. Algorithms can set compliance goals, monitor results and adjust processes based on emerging data patterns. Reg-tech enabled

cross-functional interaction and coordination can enhance the efficacy of the bank's assurance function.

Reg-tech adoption must accompany safeguards against associated operational risks, such as privacy breaches, cyber vulnerabilities, data manipulation, frauds and scams.

Reliable mitigation tools exist in this context as well.

Notably, reg-tech does not eliminate but instead reinforces the necessity for strong human oversight. Transitions to end-to-end digitized compliance and grievance redressal do not mean that machines can be blamed for failures.

As increasing regulatory density and technological complexity can raise compliance costs to prohibitive levels, the advantages of a collaborative reg-tech approach cannot be overemphasized, especially as it neither poses conflicts-of-interest nor causes competitive discomfort. On the contrary, collaboration on reg-tech and access to open-source compliance platforms, apps, API systems and best-practice repositories will help

spread know-how across the sector and save research costs and efforts, especially for smaller banks, while also creating a pool of tech tools. Consistency and uniformity in compliance models and practices across the industry would ease supervisory burdens and bolster the regulator's confidence in banks' compliance standards. A stronger culture of rule-adherence also reduces potential damages from supervisory and enforcement actions.

Yet, the desired outcomes will remain elusive without a concerted effort to prioritize capacity building, training and education as a key component of a bank's compliance culture. This is especially crucial for the technical and front-line staff and for risk managers. Relentless supervisory action by the regulators against banks for compliance, conduct and KYC/AML failures would suggest an unfinished agenda on this front.

Well trained and aware staff in a robust digitized compliance ecosystem, backed by the application of well-defined principles of accountability, would fortify compliance and organizational resilience, ensuring the safety of customers. This, in turn, will enhance the trust placed by customers and the regulator in these financial entities.

These are the author's personal views.

MY VIEW | ECO SQUARE

Solving India's water crisis calls for a well-integrated action plan

A people-centric and science-based approach could ensure we don't run short of this vital resource



LEENA SRIVASTAVA is an independent expert on climate change and clean energy.

The headlines in recent days have been about severe and debilitating water shortages in several states of the country—particularly in the south. All eyes have been on Bengaluru—which is India's Silicon Valley, the country's most technically savvy, most innovative and third richest city. It is also a city that spotlights the disconnect between the corporate sector's famed strategic management capabilities (unfortunately over-shadowed by its short-sightedness in not engaging with sustainability governance) and government orthodoxy.

That Bengaluru has been struggling to manage its water resources well is long-established. Images of the 'frothing' lakes of Bengaluru—with instances of toxic fumes catching fire—have horrified us earlier. While a large part of the blame goes to local authorities for allowing untreated sewage to flow into its water bodies, industry stood a silent witness to the resource degradation of the 'garden city,' resulting from the enormous population pressure created by prosperity.

Ironically, for Bengaluru, scanty rainfall has resulted in its water bodies going dry. If, on the other hand, the region had experienced heavy rainfall, then there could have been a repeat of the 'frothing' problem. The city urgently needs a comprehensive water and waste management strategy to address quantity and quality issues. It is already suffering from a reputational challenge that could

scathe businesses along with the city.

A couple of days ago, a leading national newspaper headlined its story as "...a water crisis that software cannot resolve." But this statement gives an easy pass to the information technology (IT) sector and is grossly misleading. In 2019, the World Economic Forum identified an urgent need to deploy real-time sensor technology for high-resolution monitoring of the quantity and quality of water bodies (complete with automated geo-tags and time-stamps), along with machine learning models to predict impacts and outcomes of rainfall and waste-water flows, and then use this information for policy and strategy development in a holistic manner. India's IT capital has a role to play.

In general, India is an inherently water-stressed country, hosting 18% of the world's population with only 4% of its water resources. 70% of its surface water is unfit for consumption and over 40 million litres of waste-water flows into its rivers and water bodies daily. Our water resources and their quality must be addressed for adequacy and accessibility. The government's own first census of water bodies, commendable as that is, documents the rather pitiful state of water bodies in India—in terms of location, state of fullness and beneficiary population. More than 97% of our water bodies are in rural areas, with reservoirs making up a mere 12%. According to a member of the Central Water Commission, we need to "acknowledge the fact that India's water reservoirs are dying" (*The Wire Science*, 2 February 2021).

With regard to the role of IT mentioned above, India's water-body census has not yet covered issues of available capacity (after accounting for siltation and ageing issues), adequacy, accessibility, vulnerability to rainfall patterns, or water quality. It merely seeks to assure communities on the groundwater situation they are likely to face, given that nearly 60% of irrigated agriculture and 85% of drinking water supplies are dependent on groundwater. A scarcity of

necessary information, unfortunately, means that robust planning for this life-saving resource is impossible.

A 2013 World Bank report estimated the health costs relating to water pollution to be about ₹47,000-61,000 crore. These costs today are likely to be much higher. Compare this with the 2024-25 budget estimate of the ministry of Jal Shakti of ₹98,418.79 crore, of which only ₹21,028.11 crore goes to the department of water resources, river development and Ganga rejuvenation. Also compare it with the estimated outlay of ₹278,000 crore for the ministry of road transport and highways, aimed at development activities that will only increase our resource challenge. Clearly, much needs to be done.

On the positive side, water interventions, unlike in energy, are largely focused on people's participation and demand management. The government has several laudable schemes for stemming groundwater depletion and initiatives under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS). The questions that arise from some of these schemes relate to their outcome efficacy and issues of equity, fairness and justice: are common citizens engaged by such schemes being compensated adequately for their labour while alleviating governments of their responsibility?

India's water vulnerability is only set to rise in the coming decades, given our still-rising population, rapidly growing economic activity and climate change. The water shortages we face today have been exacerbated by the El Niño conditions experienced last year. In the coming years, we will increasingly feel the harsh effects of climate change, amplified in some years by the cyclical El Niño effect that results in subcontinental dryness. The looming water crisis of 2024 is another wake-up call to adopt science-based approaches to natural resource management, re-prioritize public investments and address our sustainability challenges in an integrated manner.

10 YEARS AGO



JUST A THOUGHT

We contend that for a nation to try to tax itself into prosperity is like a man standing in a bucket and trying to lift himself up by the handle.

WINSTON CHURCHILL



THEIR VIEW

MINT CURATOR

Daniel Kahneman was the king of happiness as a field of study

What drives emotional well-being would seem beyond the reach of objective analysis but he did establish a dominion over it



ATANU BISWAS
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Every year, the World Happiness Report ranks countries in terms of happiness by calculating their happiness scores. The six key variables that make up this index are GDP per capita, social support, healthy life expectancy, freedom, generosity and lack of corruption. These are mostly calculated on the basis of individual self-assessments. In contrast, looking back at the legacy of Daniel Kahneman (1934-2024), a 2002 winner of the Nobel Prize in Economics who fused Psychology and Economics, it's noteworthy that, starting in the 1990s, a significant part of his work concentrated on the assessment of "objective happiness" through "moments" of life.

These efforts bear a strong connection with his and Amos Tversky's paradigm-shifting research from the 1970s that pioneered Behavioural Economics. Perhaps following that idea, Kahneman provided a whole new meaning of 'happiness,' which is multifaceted and neither separate nor time-neutral. According to Kahneman, if a person wins a lottery twice in a row, for example, the winner's total utility will be higher if the first win is \$1,000 and the second is \$1 million, rather than if the sequence is reversed.

Moments: What about them? According to a popular estimate, each of these little time-spans of psychological presence (as in 'present tense') might last up to three seconds. This would mean that at least about 500 million moments occur in a life span of 70 years. Kahneman created a moment-based conception of objective happiness, an aspect of well-being, sometime in 1999-2000.

He posited that measurements of moments must be made in accordance with logical principles in order to generate a useful estimate of experienced utility. Populations with different life conditions can have their well-being compared using the cumulative distribution of 'moment' utilities. On a 6-point scale, for instance, we may evaluate the proportion of time that the rich and poor spend at a utility level below 4.

Crucially, unlike other measures of well-being, Kahneman's moment-based objective happiness does not include any retrospection at all; rather, it only depends on instant introspection.

In a 2006 paper published in the *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, Daniel Kahneman and economist Alan B. Krueger (1960-2019) examined whether or not a subjective survey can accurately gauge someone's level of well-being. "[S]ubjective well-being measures features of individuals' perceptions of their experiences, not their utility as economists typically conceive of it," they wrote. They suggested the U-index, a kind of misery index that quantifies the proportion of time spent in an unpleasant state and has the advantage of not requiring a cardinal understanding of people's feelings.



But what's the relationship between money and happiness? Kahneman and his co-authors examined the veracity of the widely held notion that affluence is positively correlated with happiness in a 2006 paper published in *Science*. They found a weak relationship between income and global life satisfaction or experienced happiness. "People with above-average income are relatively satisfied with their lives but are barely happier than others in moment-to-moment experience, tend to be more tense, and do not spend more time in particularly enjoyable activities," they stated. In their view, the role of attention helps explain why many people pursue high incomes, as their predictions of happiness increase on account of a 'focusing illusion', and why the long-term effects of income gains become relatively small as attention eventually shifts to less novel aspects of daily life.

Nevertheless, Kahneman's research on happiness took a more objective shape when, in a 2010 paper with Angus Deaton, who would go on to win the Nobel Prize for Economics in 2015, Kahneman discovered a monetary "happiness plateau." Kahneman and Deaton reported that—in the American context, of course—a measure of emotional well-being (or happiness) increased but then flattened somewhere between an income of \$60,000 and \$90,000 a year (\$75,000 being the median).

How influential was this study? Inspired by this paper's findings, Dan Price, CEO of the Seattle-based company Gravity Payments, established a \$70,000 minimum wage for all its 120 workers in 2015, almost doubling the starting salary. What's

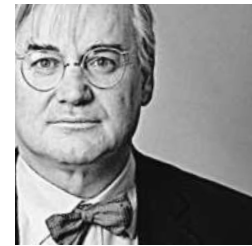
more, Price cut his own salary from \$1.1 million to \$70,000 in order to pay for this move. Price's 2020 book *Worth It* has a description of this Robin Hood-type corporate endeavour.

However, in contrast to Kahneman and Deaton's 2010 findings, Matt Killingsworth of the University of Pennsylvania found a linear relationship between happiness and (log) income in a 2021 study that used experience sampling. Subsequently, in 2023, Kahneman, Killingsworth and Barbara Mellers published an adversarial collaboration (perhaps Kahneman's last published paper) to resolve this dilemma. Re-analyses of the data showed that happiness rises with household income up to \$100,000, after which it "abruptly" levels out in situations of extreme unhappiness. Further, happiness increases at an accelerated rate beyond \$100,000 for the 30% happiest people. According to this study, Kahneman and Deaton may have arrived at the right conclusion if they had expressed their findings in terms of unhappiness as opposed to happiness, as their measurements were unable to discriminate among degrees of happiness because of a ceiling effect. Think about it.

Over the last three decades of his incredible career, spent at Princeton University, Kahneman, the King of Happiness, undoubtedly delivered an objective appraisal of happiness by integrating psychology and economics. His contribution to happiness research can be assessed coherently. Happiness, however, will remain elusive. And it's possible that unhappiness is also something worth looking into.

Take Adam Smith's advice on low-priced clean-tech: Buy it

The US should not bar Chinese imports on flaky dumping charges



DAVID FICKLING
is a Bloomberg Opinion columnist covering climate change and energy.



Will the US repeat its steel-sector error with Chinese clean-tech?

Bad economic ideas don't die. Instead they just return a decade later to haunt another generation. That seems to be the situation with China's steel industry. US Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen plans to cite the example of steel over-capacity on a trip to China as justification for what looks like a pending crack-down on imports of Chinese clean-tech products. "In the past, in industries like steel and aluminium, Chinese government support led to substantial overinvestment and excess capacity," she said in a speech. "Now, we see excess capacity building in 'new' industries like solar, EVs and lithium-ion batteries."

That example harks back to a panic from 2016. "China's steel industry is actively and deliberately flooding the international market," United Steelworkers, a US union, said then. Its [mill output] growth was "far faster than domestic and international demand would dictate." This theory led to anti-dumping tariffs on some steel products as high as 256.44% under President Barack Obama in 2015, before President Donald Trump followed up three years later with 25% tariffs on all Chinese steel products.

None of it was true. China wasn't seeking to make more steel than long-run demand would dictate. It wasn't responsible for weak prices in the US and tariffs didn't halt a job decline in US metals manufacturing. It's bad enough that misguided steel protectionism has served only to raise costs and reduce competitiveness for the rest of the US economy. Worse still is the way the same failed policy is now being dragged out in support of far more damaging barriers on clean-tech, slowing our ability to fight climate change.

Look at steel production. Chinese mills did increase capacity in the second half of the 2000s, more than doubling potential output to 1.06 billion tonnes from 489 million tonnes between 2006 and 2010, before rising to a peak 1.22 billion tonnes in 2014. With construction and factory demand lagging, capacity utilization fell to 67% in 2015, well below the 75% or more seen as consistent with sustainable profits.

Note that China's steel output did not peak then. Instead, a boom in construction and manufacturing raised demand by 249 million tonnes over the subsequent five years. Contrary to the perception of a crisis around 2015, China wasn't over-supplied. It pretty much had the right number of mills to satisfy projected needs. Capacity utilization since 2018 has consistently been at healthy levels north of 80%.

You could make quite as strong an argument that the US and Europe, whose utilization has frequently been well below 75%, have overcapacity. The better argument, though, is to accept that there are often dislocations between industrial capacity and demand, and that this need not be evidence of malign geopolitical intent.

Perhaps, though, China was flooding the US market to escape the consequences of its bad investment decisions? Wrong again. As a share of total production, China has always been a rather small-scale exporter. It only seems so weighty because it produces more than half of the world's steel, so any shortfall between capacity and output seems hulk-sized. At the height of the over-capacity panic in 2015, exports to North America came to just 4.4 million tonnes, about 8% of the 55.5 million tonnes total.

The best explanation for weak US prices was simply that US steel consumption had peaked and was in decline, as the country moved to a post-industrial, service-oriented phase of its development. No amount of protectionism has been able to change the fact that US steel output now is about 80% of its level in 2008.

Chinese steelmakers, furthermore, have not only grown into the capacity that they built, but made money doing it. That's a sign that there never was a long-term excess of supply over demand. When your rival is making sustainable profits, accusing it of overcapacity is just another way of complaining that their better productivity is taking away your market share.

There's one big difference when it comes to clean technology. Unlike steel, electric vehicles, solar panels and lithium-ion batteries really are easily traded on a global scale, and the scale and technological accomplishments of Chinese companies make them formidable competitors. That doesn't mean that they have been beneficiaries of unfair advantages, though, as we [in the US] have argued.

Instead, what is being built in China is not overcapacity, but merely the basic capacity the world needs if it's to build the low-emissions economy needed to get the planet to net-zero emissions.

If China is producing tools to avert global warming more cheaply than we can do ourselves, we should follow the advice of Adam Smith: "Buy it." **©BLOOMBERG**

MY VIEW | BEHAVIOUR BY BRAIN

Daniel Kahneman: The man who changed many a life

BIJU DOMINIC



is chief evangelist, Fractal Analytics, and chairman, FinalMile Consulting.

To most, professor Daniel Kahneman (1934-2024) is best known for his path-breaking explorations of how people's decisions deviate from perfect rationality and the Nobel Prize he won for that work. For me, Professor Kahneman is someone who changed the course of my life.

In the 1990s, I was an advertising professional. While being part of the ad industry, I knew that much of what we were doing to understand and influence human behaviour was not really working. So, I questioned a lot what I was doing in my daily job. Deep within, I had a passion to understand human behaviour better. So anything new about human behaviour caught my attention.

I remember reading an article in *Business Standard* in 2002. It was about the man who had won that year's Nobel Prize in Economics and a brief explanation of his theory. Even before finishing the article, I was ecstatic. I knew I had found the theoretical foundation of human behaviour that I was desperately searching for. Until then, I had

an inkling that understanding human brain processes could be the key to understanding behaviour. But I had dismissed it as just another random thought of an average intellectual. But Kahneman's Nobel Prize changed it all.

What was most interesting for me about Kahneman's work was not the framework of Prospect Theory, nor the nuances of loss aversion. I was delighted to hear about the world of heuristics, the short-cuts that the brain takes while taking a decision. It greatly strengthened my fledgling thought that understanding various processes in the brain will surely give me new insights into human behaviour. From then on, my quest to acquire as much knowledge about the human brain as possible increased by leaps and bounds.

The thought of starting a firm based on this new understanding of human behaviour popped up in my head in 2006. But I had to convince some of my very talented friends to join me in this new venture. This was few years before the UK or US governments had started their behavioural insights teams. Books like *Nudge* (by Richard Thaler and Cass Sunstein) were not yet published. So the only lifeline I had to convince my friends to join me in this new journey of human

behaviour management was Kahneman's Nobel Prize. And then, in 2007, I co-founded FinalMile Consulting, a firm dedicated to applying the principles of Behavioural Economics to solve real-life human behaviour problems. The confidence to start my entrepreneurial journey, thus, was derived from the inspiration I got from the uniqueness of Kahneman's ideas.

In the initial years of FinalMile, it was almost impossible to convey even to the most educated what this new theory of human behaviour was. So, in every presentation that I and my colleagues made, one slide was constant. It had a photograph of Kahneman receiving the Nobel Prize. That slide was the most convincing proof we could offer that the theory we were presenting was worth listening to.

We knew that the world of mental short-cuts offered a view of human behaviour that was quite different from that of the rational man theory which held influence until then. We really believed that this new knowledge

would help develop more effective solutions for human-behaviour-related problems. But the truth is that we knew very little about the world of heuristics and biases. To support all the discussions and debates we held in our office on the new world of heuristics, books were the only guides we had. That is when

His trove of ideas inspired a career switch aimed at solving real-world problems of behaviour

books like *Choices: Values and Frames*, *Heuristics and Biases: The Psychology of Intuitive Judgement* that Kahneman co-authored became our constant companions. To be honest, these academic books were not nearly as simple to read and understand as his later book, *Thinking, Fast and Slow*. But we had no other option back then.

Ekalavya, the character from the Mahabharata, had carved out a statue of his guru Dronacharya from the mud the teacher had walked upon. Ekalavya became a great archer, overhearing Dronacharya's instructions and practising in front of that statue. Similarly, my team and I derived lot of confidence by having Kahneman's photograph in our presentations. We acquired much

knowledge reading various books and articles he had written and listening intently to recordings of every talk he gave. What Dronacharya was for Ekalavya, Professor Kahneman was for us.

I never had an opportunity to meet Professor Kahneman in person. But I know that Professor Richard Thaler and some journalists had informed him of how my team had taken learnings and inspiration from him to develop innovative solutions for several human-behaviour problems around the world. But he remained pessimistic about one's ability to tackle such problems. His pessimism emanated from his deep understanding of the human brain's complexities. For example, he knew that getting people to accept short-term costs in their daily lives in order to mitigate higher but uncertain losses in the future is exceptionally hard. So the professor saw no path to success in solving the planet's climate-change problem.

Had it not been for the presence of certain people in our lives, we would not be what we are today. I have no doubt, if I had not known Daniel Kahneman and his work, I would not be where I am today.

So, in his memory, I would like to offer my *pranam* to Professor Daniel Kahneman, my behaviour guru.



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PAPER WITH PASSION

Air turbulence

Vistara faces flight disruptions due to crew shortage; DGCA demands daily updates

Flight operations of Tata Group's Vistara Airlines, which has earned a reputation for its premium services and reliability in the Indian aviation sector, have of late been marred by cancellations and delays. Vistara, a joint venture between Tata Sons and Singapore Airlines, has attributed the disruptions to a shortage of flight crew. Passengers have been left stranded and inconvenienced, with some facing difficulties in rebooking their travel plans at short notice. Vistara's troubles come at a time when the aviation sector is recovering from the impact of the pandemic, with domestic travel demand showing signs of revival. The airline industry has been navigating a delicate balance between scaling up operations to meet growing demand while managing operational constraints and ensuring passenger safety. In response to the crew shortage crisis, Vistara has assured passengers that it is working diligently to address the issue and minimise disruptions to flight services. The airline is actively recruiting and training additional crew members to augment its workforce and improve operational resilience. For passengers affected by flight cancellations and delays, Vistara has offered options for rebooking or refunding tickets, along with assistance in making alternative travel arrangements. The airline has reiterated its commitment to prioritising customer satisfaction and minimising inconvenience caused by the disruptions.



The Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) has stepped in, demanding daily reports from the airlines regarding the status of flight operations, crew availability and measures taken to mitigate the impact of disruptions on passengers. The crew shortage issue highlights the challenges faced by airlines in managing their workforce in the midst of evolving dynamics of the aviation industry, particularly in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. Domestic flights have been reporting disruptions, including layoffs, furloughs and changes in travel demand patterns, much to the consternation of passengers. The incident underscores the importance of effective workforce management and contingency planning for airlines to ensure smooth and uninterrupted flight operations. As the aviation industry strives to rebound from the challenges posed by the pandemic, maintaining a robust and adequately trained workforce is critical to meeting the evolving needs of passengers and sustaining growth. This is what DGCA must be concerned about and has taken up on priority. As Vistara endeavours to overcome the crew shortage crisis and restore normalcy to its flight operations, the incident serves as a reminder of the complex and dynamic nature of the aviation industry. Effective collaboration among airlines, regulators and stakeholders is essential to address challenges promptly and ensure the seamless functioning of the aviation ecosystem.

PICTALK



Devotees at BAPS Hindu Mandir, in Abu Dhabi

The escalating perils of global terrorism

The recent ISIS-K attack outside Moscow has elicited widespread condemnation and intensified global anxieties surrounding terrorism



SUDHIR HINDWAN

The recent ISIS-K (Khorasan) claimed attack outside Moscow, resulting in over 130 deaths and more than 100 injuries, warrants strong condemnation. Khorasan, a splinter unit of ISIS with roots in Iran, Turkmenistan, and Afghanistan, highlights four critical lessons. Firstly, politics, as observed by Thomas Hobbes in 'Leviathan,' remains deeply intertwined with human nature, with greed and fear driving conflicts. Despite global changes, power struggles persist, leading to conflicts like World War I and II. The post-World War II era witnessed the emergence of non-state actors, exacerbated by the Cold War and subsequent conflicts.

Secondly, intervening in internal conflicts, such as Russia's support for Assad against ISIS, can breed enmity and fuel terrorism. Thirdly, while international terror groups may appear subdued, they can resurge with renewed vigour, forming clandestine links in Central Asian Republics. Lastly, any retaliation against ISIS should involve cooperation with neighbouring countries to prevent spillover effects. This attack is reminiscent of past incidents in Russia, such as the 2002 Moscow theatre hostage crisis and the 2004 Caucasus hostage tragedy. The recent attack underscores vulnerabilities in Russia's security apparatus, with terrorists exploiting the ability to choose the time and place of their attacks for maximum media impact.

The global criticism of the attack reflects widespread concern over combating international terrorism. The US, despite geopolitical tensions, has shown commitment to addressing terror threats worldwide. However, trust deficits between major powers hinder cooperation efforts. While Ukraine denies involvement, the Federal Security Agency (FSB) is apprehensive about Ukrainian links to the attack, potentially complicating the ongoing conflict. China's expanding influence in Central Asia further complicates regional dynamics. Central Asian Republics (CAR) face increasing terrorism threats, with non-state actors exploiting cultural ties for nefarious purposes.



es. This underscores the need for multilayered security cooperation and technological innovation to combat terrorism effectively. Despite efforts by intelligence and security agencies, challenges remain in dealing with terrorists driven by religious misinterpretations. The influx of refugees from neighbouring countries adds complexity to the security landscape. Efforts to combat terrorism through collaboration, such as the Samarkand meeting, offer hope for regional stability. However, economic disparities and inconsistent Government policies contribute to vulnerabilities in the region. The presence of international Islamist terrorist organisations like Hizb Ut-Tahrir poses significant security challenges. Despite anti-terrorist drives, Central Asian states have attempted to export terrorism to conflict zones like Iraq, Afghanistan, and Syria. The recent influx of illegal migrants and increased terrorist activities have compelled China and Russia to seek cooperation in tackling transnational terrorism. Rise of fundamentalism in Central Asia poses an international reality, fueled by disgruntled groups and external influences. Central Asia's strategic importance and rich resources



MODERN TERRORISTS ARE HIGHLY ORGANISED AND PROFESSIONAL, NECESSITATING A SHIFT TOWARDS MORE VIGILANT AND ASSERTIVE INTELLIGENCE, POLICE AND PARAMILITARY NETWORKS

make it crucial for global security. The US has recognised CAR's strategic significance for regional stability. Efforts to improve economic prowess and security capabilities in Russia and CAR require coordinated action and cooperation. Economic transformation hinges on fighting inflation and developing robust anti-terrorism mechanisms. It's crucial to recognise that the issues of law and order differ from those of terrorism, despite often being conflated. Policymakers must understand the diverse security threats facing nations today and adapt strategic policies accordingly. Modern terrorists are highly organised and professional, necessitating a shift towards more vigilant and assertive intelligence, police, and paramilitary networks. Many recommendations from various committees may not align with current realities, especially considering India's struggles with terrorism, nationalism, and insurgency. It's outdated to attribute terrorism solely to societal conditions or structural adjustments. Instead, a thorough analysis of the psychological factors driving terrorism can offer deeper insights and guide effective counterterrorism strategies. Understanding the financial links between terrorism,

organised crime, arms dealers, drug traffickers, and smugglers is crucial. Special forces should be deployed to counter terrorist activities in regions where violence is endemic. Collaborative efforts among nations are essential to develop strategic mechanisms for combating international terrorism, with the United States and India playing pivotal roles. Addressing the multifaceted challenges posed by terrorism demands a nuanced approach that differentiates between law and order issues and acts of terrorism. Policymakers must acknowledge the evolving nature of security threats and adapt strategic policies accordingly. Vigilant and assertive intelligence, police, and paramilitary networks are vital in countering the sophisticated tactics employed by modern terrorists. Understanding the financial networks that sustain terrorism is equally crucial for effective counterterrorism efforts. As terrorism continues to pose a global threat, collaborative efforts among nations are essential. In this endeavour, the US and India can play pivotal roles, leveraging their resources and expertise in the fight against terrorism.

(The writer is recipient of the Bharat Gaurav Award, is a Professor and strategic affairs expert; views are personal)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

RBI's role and challenges



Propos news article "PM: Growth should be RBI top most priority next decade" published on April 02, this is my response. The Reserve Bank of India (RBI), established in 1935, has been instrumental in guiding India's economic trajectory through various transitions. From steering the country towards a market-oriented economy to embracing digitalization, the RBI has demonstrated adaptability in the face of numerous challenges. Despite setbacks like the 2008 financial meltdown and the implementation of demonetization, the RBI has implemented measures such as the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code to address

issues like bad loans, showcasing its resilience and proactive approach to crisis management. It is crucial to address evolving macroeconomic and regulatory challenges. Specifically, enhancing banking regulation and supervision and improving oversight mechanisms is imperative, especially in light of recent episodes involving financial institutions like YES Bank and Infrastructure Leasing & Financial Services Ltd. Transparency in dealing with regulated entities, such as Paytm Payments Bank, also remains a significant concern. Looking ahead, empowering the RBI with necessary legal changes for effective banking regulation and respecting its institutional position will be vital. Additionally, maintaining low fiscal deficits is essential to prevent potential fiscal dominance of monetary policy, thus ensuring the RBI can effectively fulfil its mandate of maintaining price stability and fostering economic growth.

Amarjeet Kumar | Hazaribagh

merits. They were scolding people in the name of Ayurveda. Like law-abiding citizens, the Supreme Court also wondered and pulled up the Centre, asking why the Ministry of AYUSH "chose to keep its eyes shut when Patanjali was going to town saying there were no remedies for COVID in allopathy." Ramdev was promoting his concoction CORONIL for the treatment of COVID when India was entering the most lethal COVID wave which killed thousands. People expected that the SC would give exemplary punishment to Patanjali in its next hearing on 10 April, instructing both Ramdev and Balkrishna to be present.

Bidyut Kumar Chatterjee | Faridabad

CANCER AMONG WOMEN

Madam — Propos news article "Taboos fuel breast cancer silence" published on April 01, this is my response. For years breast cancer has been a major health issue among Indian women. It accounts for 14 per cent of all cancers among our women. Statistically, one in every 28 women in

India is at risk of developing breast cancer in her lifetime. And, unfortunately, in our country, the number of breast cancer cases reported each year is rising at higher rates than ever. Numerous studies have shown that regular screening of women with no symptoms of breast cancer has lowered the number of women who die from the disease. Increased body weight and weight gain as an adult, are linked with a higher risk of breast cancer after menopause. The American Cancer Society recommends women stay at a healthy weight throughout their life and avoid excess weight gain by balancing their food intake with physical activities. Diet plays a very small but measurable role in breast cancer prevention. However, women who adhere to a healthy diet should still take other preventive measures, such as having regular mammogram tests.

Ranganathan Sivakumar | Chennai

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

Synergy between man and machine

Ambient Computing brings many positive workplace outcomes, from reducing operational costs to human creativity and innovation in production



ANIL SETHI

Industry 4.0 is enabling new concepts and technologies that make factories smarter. It begs the question: how do we create stronger synergies between humans and machines to improve production efficiencies, while progressing the creative cognition of human potential? This question gained traction after the global pandemic. The industry started to emphasise socio-technical considerations to enable new use cases around asset management, workplace well-being and process control, requiring ambient computing at the manufacturing edge.



autonomous mobile robots, to mitigate disruptions at the manufacturing edge. The fusion of AI into the manufacturing edge also helps drive continuous improvement and introduces innovation of new products and services.

Working with People, Assets and Processes: Ambient computing let organizations focus on growth and innovation by bringing agility to the manufacturing edge where people, assets and processes are working together in unison to deliver required yield and throughputs.

Cybersecurity and Industry 4.0: Industry 4.0 essentially has three components: How machinery communicates in a production process, how info a system, and how information is shared throughout the manufacturing lifecycle. Learn how your cybersecurity needs to account for all three.

Ambient computing can be applied to the following: Assets monitor themselves and schedule maintenance based on wear and tear. A smart meter system (water, air, gas, electricity and steam) manages the production environment to reduce waste and drive efficiencies by automatically adjusting its end devices such as thermostats and valves.

Automated guided vehicles and mobile robots self-manage routes and tasks based on product, people and environment. Production and assembly floor environments monitor themselves to ensure safety and security of people, products and assets. Smart devices such as notebooks, phones, tablets, wearables and stand-alone devices collaborate with people on risks, issues, continuous improvement and production optimization.

By transforming the manufacturing floor to be automated and self-sustainable, ambient computing can reduce operational costs, improve product quality and time-to-market and empower employees to work smarter.

With access to real-time information, organizations can improve how they handle market and ecosystem disruptions with better and faster collaboration between humans and systems.

Adopting Ambient Computing: It requires seven core elements to fully embrace ambient computing, fostering data availability and enhancing collaboration across people, applications, assets, and devices:

1. Edge computing for real-time decision-making and collaboration.
2. Data-as-a-service to meet evolving needs.
3. Digital twins for predictive insights.
4. Cognitive automation for continuous learning.
5. Connectivity to facilitate constant communication.
6. Quality of experience (QoE) to cater to diverse needs.
7. Trusting systems to perform reliably.

Ambient computing represents a transformative concept that is propelling Industry 4.0 towards the realisation of smarter factories. (The writer is cofounder Raising superstars; views are personal)

KATCHATHEEVU CONTROVERSY

Madam — Propos news article "Katchatheevu takes centre stage in TN" published on April 02, this is my response. It is indeed hilarious to note how the powers demanding "farsightedness" enough to predict 400 plus seats in their favour (even before the first vote is cast) by gauging the "national mood," blatantly resemble a bunch of drowning lot clutching at a straw! So despite India and Sri Lanka being bound under the Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties 1969 revolving around the Katchatheevu island; how ridiculously can it be brought into the discourse by making a mockery of mutually accepted international agreements framed around half a century ago?

Instead of making a mountain out of a molehill, amidst the waters of Palk Strait, located outside the maritime boundary of India; would the "nationalists" act "kind" enough to enlighten the country about the latest status of Chinese occupation in Ladakh following the fatal assault upon Indian soldiers in Galwan! Why doesn't the self-declared "patriotic" brigade concentrate its time energy and resources to protect the North-West boundary of the nation to ensure that Pathankot Gurdaspur Uri Pulwama does not get repeated on Indian soil in future? Last but not the least. Would the current powers care to applaud the stalwarts of Congress for ensuring the inclusion of Jammu & Kashmir Goa Daman Diu Sikkim into the Indian fold, though the said regions were not part of the national territory at the stroke of independence?

Kajal Chatterjee | Kolkata

SC REPRIMANDS PATANJALI

Madam — Propos news article "Patanjali advertisements: SC comes down hard on Ramdev, Acharya Balkrishna for 'absolute defiance'" published on April 02, this is my response. If the product that Yoga Guru Ramdev and Patanjali's MD Balkrishna are making is about as good and authentic as they say it is, then they didn't have to apologise and could have won the case on its

The Statesman

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Standing firm

Territorial disputes are a recurring theme in the swirling currents of geopolitical strife. The latest chapter in this saga unfolds in the remote reaches of the Himalayas, where India and China once again find themselves at odds over the renaming of places in Arunachal Pradesh.

At the heart of the matter lies the question of sovereignty. For India, Arunachal Pradesh is not just a piece of land on a map; it is an integral part of the nation's identity. The rejection of China's renaming attempt is therefore not merely a diplomatic gesture; it is a resounding reaffirmation of India's sovereignty over its territory.

This standoff between India and China over Arunachal Pradesh is not an isolated incident but a symptom of deeper-rooted tensions. The border clash in 2020, which resulted in the loss of lives on both sides, serves as a grim reminder of the fragility of peace in the region.

Perils of silence

In a world increasingly governed by the rapid dissemination of information through digital channels, the recent ordeal surrounding the health of the Princess of Wales, serves as a stark reminder of the perils of silence in the face of speculation.

Yet, even as the truth was laid bare, the insidious tendrils of conspiracy continued to linger, casting doubt and suspicion where none should exist. From unfounded claims of artificial intelligence-generated speeches to absurd accusations linking the illness to unrelated events, the resilience of misinformation in the face of truth is a sobering reminder of the challenges inherent in combating falsehoods in the digital age.

China's democracy

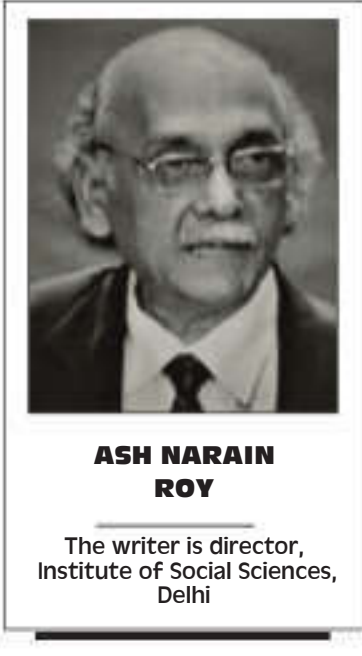
A crisis in democracy need not be a crisis of democracy. The only way to remedy democracy's imperfections is to have more democracy, not less. The West's cynicism about the Chinese model is understandable. One of the greatest challenges to democracy comes from a catastrophic failure of the marketplace of ideas.



Most East Asian and Southeast Asian countries chose to become economically fit for democracy. India provided a contrasting model. It chose to become economically fit through democracy.

Vice Foreign Minister Le Yucheng adopted an aggressive stance by claiming that China's whole-process people's democracy is not the kind that "wakes up at the time of voting and goes back to dormant afterwards."

China's State Council came out with a 30-page White Paper, entitled, "China: Democracy That Works. It redefined democracy with a promise to "hunt down tigers, swat flies and chase foxes".



ASH NARAIN ROY The writer is director, Institute of Social Sciences, Delhi

The State Council said that China had no intention to "duplicate western models of democracy" but to "create its own." Beijing took the line that it is not for "a few self-appointed judges like QUAD, Five Eyes and the G7 to decide which country is democratic and which is not."

To counter Biden's Summit for Democracy, Beijing hosted an international forum on democracy and invited academics, think tank representatives and media personnel from 120 countries to participate in it.

The third Beijing international forum on democracy was organised on 20 March 2024. Through these forums, China is seeking to counter what it calls US democracy 'monism'.

China is not disowning democracy. It is embracing what Daniel A. Bell in his book China's New Confucianism, calls "a new variant of Confucianism" that offers a compelling alternative to Western liberalism.

What Deng Xiao Ping had coined as "socialism with Chinese characteristics" has now been re-branded as the "whole-process people's democracy". It is a major element of Xi Jinping's Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era.

What is 'whole-process democracy'?

President Xi, while making an inspection visit to a civic centre in Hongqiao sub-district in Shanghai on 2 November 2019, said that China was "taking the path of socialist political development with Chinese characteristics and people's democracy is whole process."

According to Prof Lin Jianhus of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, whole-process democracy has four key features.

First, the term is manifested in the CPC's governance practices and is applied through a combination of democratic elections, consultations and decision-making. China claims that it covers all aspects of the democratic process.

Second, it ensures that the people's wishes are widely represented and recognises their fundamental interests in all respects.

Third, it integrates process-oriented, procedural democracy with substantive democracy, direct democracy with indirect democracy and people's democracy with the will of the state.

Fourth, whole-process democracy presents a path of socialist political progress with Chinese characteristics in line with China's national conditions.

He claims that whole-process democracy has made the people the 'masters' of the country. He also maintains that China has a system of multi party cooperation.

The CPC and eight other political parties uphold the principles of long-term coexistence through forums, talks and other forms of consultation.

The Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference serves as an important institution of multi-party cooperation under the leadership of CPC.

Few western scholars would rank China as a democracy. They argue that China follows a model where the state advances as the people retreat.

As Jacob Dreyer, a writer who has lived in Shanghai for over a decade, maintains, "the collection of peoples we call China is not really a society of citizens in the sense that emerged from the American and French revolutions."

However, John Keane, professor of politics at the University of Sydney, is of the view that the Chinese governance model "contains democratic qualities that should not be dismissed." There is a very strong sense in the political system that "power ultimately rests in the hands of the people."

Like America's Freedom House and Sweden's V-Dem Institute, which rate civil liberties across the world, China organised a global survey in 23 countries last year about its 'whole-process democracy'.

The respondents agreed, claims the survey, that each country should choose democracy and a modernisation model that suits its own conditions.

The survey endorsed the view that democracy should focus on solving people's practical problems. The respondents also believe that Chinese democracy is conducive to promoting state and global governance.

A crisis in democracy need not be a crisis of democracy. The only way to remedy democracy's imperfections is to have more democracy, not less.

The West's cynicism about the Chinese model is understandable. One of the greatest challenges to democracy comes from a catastrophic failure of the marketplace of ideas.

But what about the rise of elected autocrats in the democratic world? Hasn't the media in many democracies become scrappy truth-tellers? Doesn't democracy require binding values and ideals and shared convictions? Today, democracy across the world looks alive and dead at the same time. Physician, heal thyself!

A MEMBER OF THE ANN ASIA NEWS NETWORK

Enhancing the national image through cultural diplomacy

In the ongoing efforts to bolster the nation's soft power and amplify Viet Nam's presence and reputation globally, Associate Professor Dr. Bùi Hoài Sơn, a Permanent Member of the Cultural and Educational Committee of the National Assembly, emphasises the need for the diplomatic sector to vigorously enhance the promotion of Viet Nam's culture through diplomacy in the years ahead.

Cultural diplomacy holds significant importance for a nation's politics on various fronts. Firstly, in the broader spectrum of human existence and international relations, culture serves as a vital conduit. It operates as a form of soft power, exerting a profound and enduring influence across generations.

While countries navigate the currents of globalisation, preserving their unique cultural identities becomes paramount. This preservation not only fosters national pride but also facilitates the achievement of national development goals by fostering mutual understanding and respect.

Cultural diplomacy is integral to Viet Nam's foreign policy framework, standing alongside political and economic diplomacy as one of its three pillars. The adaptability and flexibility of cultural diplomacy enable it to effectively complement these pillars, forming a comprehensive foreign policy strategy.

Việt Nam News

Particularly in today's era of deep and comprehensive integration, global appreciation of Viet Nam's culture, people and policies is essential for enhancing the nation's international standing and image. Therefore, cultural diplomacy plays a crucial role in advancing Viet Nam's political objectives on the world stage.

Indeed, cultural diplomacy has played a pivotal role in Viet Nam's political landscape, contributing significantly to the nation's modernisation, cultural preservation, and integration of international influences. Activities such as international cultural exchanges, hosting cultural events abroad, and organising Viet Nam Days overseas have been actively pursued and highly valued by both the Party and the state.

These endeavours have not only promoted Viet Nam's image but also elevated its standing on the global stage.

The growing interest and understanding of Viet Nam from countries worldwide serve as a testament to the effectiveness of cultural diplomacy efforts. Recognising its importance, the organisation and implementation of cultural diplomacy strategies have become a focal point of concern raised by National Assembly delegates.

Minister of Foreign Affairs Bùi Thanh Sơn emphasised the importance of cultural diplomacy activities in enhancing the promotion of the country's image and its people to the world. What significance does this hold? How do you assess the cultural promotion efforts of the country in recent years?

Cultural diplomacy serves as a crucial instrument for fostering mutual understanding and strengthening political relations with other nations, thereby contributing to global peace, stability and elevating Viet Nam's international standing. Minister Bùi Thanh Sơn's acknowledgement underscores the profound significance of such endeavours.

In recent years, Viet Nam has made commendable strides in cultural promotion, spreading soft power, instilling confidence in Vietnamese culture and its people and establishing brands for Vietnamese cultural and artistic products. These efforts have been instrumental in supporting the country's socio-economic development and enhancing its global reputation.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR editor@thestatesman.com

Sense of unease

SIR, Apropos the two letters with opposing viewpoints in today's edition, "Let's introspect" and "Busybody," while it was appropriate for the MEA to summon senior diplomats from the German and American embassies to lodge protests for making official

statements condemning the arrest of Delhi Chief Minister, Arvind Kejriwal, the fact that such statements are coming from various Western capitals right since Barack Obama's 2015 visit to India, when he chastised India's attitude towards its minorities, should still be regarded as a cause for concern.



MEA SUMMONS TOP US DIPLOMAT

It is possible that Kejriwal may indeed be guilty of the accusations levelled against him. But that can only be determined by a court of law and by no other party. However, one cannot escape the malaise that has set in India right since the advent to power of the Bharatiya Janata Party in 2014. This general uneasiness is bound to increase after the probable election of our prime minister for a third term.

If India blatantly keeps disregarding the plight of its opposi-

RUPEE'S FALL

SIR, The rupee continues to reach new lows against the dollar. Those who predicted the dollar would be worth 35 rupees if the BJP came to power are completely silent as the dollar touches the high of 83.43. It is hard to understand how the currency of a nation could fall if it is showing a staggering GDP growth of 8.4 per cent. It is of little comfort if other Asian currencies are doing worse. China is growing at 4 per cent and even that figure is challenged by many economists.

The PM himself had once said that the falling rupee reflected the falling prestige of the Indian nation. This was mere rhetoric and many were taken in by it. The government is selling dollars to keep the rates stable. This is a short sighted measure and could create more problems later.

Yours, etc., Anthony Henriques, Mumbai, 27 March.

regarding the increasingly undemocratic practices of the world's largest democracy.

Yours, etc., Animesh Rai, Noida, 30 March.

