THE ASIAN AGE

2 DECEMBER 2024

SC halting Sambhal survey sets a welcome precedent

t's time the charade of surveys a section of Hindutva peddlers is using to undermine the citizen's fundamental right to freedom of religion, which are otherwise guaranteed by Articles 25 and 26 of the Constitution, is halted with immediate effect. And honouring the order of the Supreme Court last week asking the advocate commissioner to keep aside his findings of his survey of a Mughal era mosque in Sambhal in Uttar Pradesh in a sealed envelope pius its directive to the district court there not to go ahead with the proceedings should be the first step in this direction.

in the presence of a place of worship existing on the list of the religious character of a place of worship of the dispersion of the religious character of a place of worship of the dispersion and more destruction of the religious character of a place of worship existing on the 18th day of August, 19th, 3 had come up to the street of th

Slowdown due to global effects

The Indian economy or the gross domestic product (GDP) has posted the lowest growth rate in nearly the last two years at 5.4 per cent in the quatere ending on September 30, pulled down by manufacturing, mining and quarrying, utilities and construction. The economic growth in the year-ago period was 8.1 per cent.

The growth slowed down in manufacturing to 2.2 per cent as compared to 4.3 per cent in Q2 FY24, mining and quarrying contracted by 0.1 per cent as against 11.1 per cent growth witnessed in the year-ago period, utilities grew 3.3 per cent is a-avis 10.5 per cent, and construction activity increased 7.7 per cent as against 13.6 per cent. The slowdown in a primary sector like mining and the entire secondary sectors which encompasses industrial activity reflects a spillover effect of the world. For example, domestic steel production remained stagnant while steel consumption has increased.

the goods solved an example, or excess production remained stagnant while steel consumption has increased.

While steel consumption has increased.

The steel consumption has increased.

The steel consumption consumption expenditure, whose growth declined to 44 per cent compared to 14 per cent in the year-ago quarter. The growth in retaxes also declined to 7.9 per cent as against 13.1 per cent in QFFY34, which would severely affect the ability of the government to bankroll is measures to support the economy. The government should, therefore, take steps to protect the local companies by invoking anti-dumping measures. Government data on GIP also has a reason to cheer. Private final consumption expenditure, which has been the primary growth engine of the Indian economy till a few years ago, bounced back to six per cent compared to 2.6 per cent in the second quarter of the last fiscal. While it is good, one needs to check granular data to understand the source of this growth — the super-rich or debt — in the wake of muted wage growth for several years.

THE ASIAN AGE



Ties with Dhaka: Domestic politics & diplomacy clash



against Islamist forces, New Delhi kept backing her un-questioningly, despite her rising authoritarianism. Endorsing of close allies, while disregarding their domestic politics, has a long history.

domestic politics, has a long history. The United States often held its nose to back despica-ble authoritarian govern-ments for geopolitical advan-tage. One US President justi-fied it on the grounds that the ruler was, after all, "our son of a bitch". The US has as a consequence suffered occa-sionally. The 1979 ouster of the Shah of Iran by Islamist forces led by Ayatollah Khomeini, then exiled in France, is a prime example.

increase isled of y-y-y-disclaim. Kenness, is a period comple. It upended the period comple. It upended the "twin pillars" American policy, using Iran and Saudi Arabia to stabilise the Gulf, after the British exit in 1971. The US is still wrestling to restore that. Perhaps the Indian government got blindsided by Its domestic majoritarian blass, limited the period of the period composition of the period composition of the period composition of supporting secularism in the neighbourhood while ignoring it at home was missed. The US had been warning Bangladesh about maring Bangladesh about programs and the period composition of the period missed. The US had been warning Bangladesh about democratic regression, sanc-tioning its elite police unit in 2021 and a former Army chief in 2024. India saw it as unnecessary meddling in a nation that it felt was on the right track.

ight track. Sheikh Hasina ruled for 20 Sheikh Hasina ruled for 20 of the past 28 years, including being in power continuously since 2009. During 2000-18, Bangladesh became a model of economic growth. The population in extreme poverty fell by two-thirks. Many indices topped india's, including per capita at market prices. Sheikh Hasina

Jamaste-islami, which op-posed the nation's indepen-dence and collaborated with the Pakistani military. It was banned after indepen-dence in 1971, when Sheikh Mujibur Rahman formed the first government. The citi-zenship of its leader Ghulam Azam was encolled unt be Azam was cancelled and he fled abroad. After the assas-sination of Mujib in 1975, the sination of Mujib in 1975, the Jamaat resumed activities. The Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) of Begum Kha-leda Zia, widow of an assas-sinated former Army chief and President, aligned with the Jamaat.

the Jamast.

This combination is now back in the reckoning with the interin government led by Md Yunus unshackling the BNP and Jamast lesders. Immediately after Shekh Hasina's self-excile in India, her party Awami Lasque's senior members and cadres senior members and cadres with nearly 1,000 dying. A three-member international Crimes Tribunal is now prosecuting those allegady those allegady. prosecuting those allegedly involved in killings of pro-testers, especially students testers, especially students. Amongst those arrested are 11 ministers, one judge and a senior bureaucrat. Decem-ber 17 is the new deadline for

senior bureaucrat. December 17 is the new deadline for the tribunal's award, which has issued warrants for Sheikh Hasina and 45 ofthers on October 17. In fact, the tribunal explained the delay as making the verdlet compatible with the extradition treaty between India and Bangladesh. An extradition treaty between India and Bangladesh. An extradition required may become a new Chimon Wishana Das Brahmachart, formerly belonging to Islccon, on a sedition charge reflects popular anti-India sentiment, now metamorphosing into anti-Hinduism. The Indian government to protect minorities sits poorly alongside siogans in Maharnakhru electioneering of "Katengay to Batengay". Prime Minister Narendra Modi correctly

pro-West Nobel laureate is unable to control the increasing communal polarisation, the situation under a likely BNP-Jamaat

modified it without condemning it. More Hindu priests have been arrested subsequently. Bangladesh has an enterest of the property of the prope September 2023, Sheikh Has-ina signed three MoUs on agricultural research, digital payments and cultural ex-changes. Thus, the Indian strategy to help Hasina's rule was to bolster Bangla-desh economically and in-

desh economically and in-crease connectivity, power and military links. Internationally, Bangla-desh is arguing that its gov-ernment protects Hindus. Their permanent represen-tative in Geneva, speaking at

the 17th session of the UN Forum on Minority Issues, and: "The entire society of Bangladesh came forward to protect its minorities following our long tradition with the session of the session of the session of the interim government of Bangladesh". However, following the death of a Muslim lawyer in protests when ball was denied to Chimnoy by a Chitagong court, 31 Hindus have been named as usspects.

protests when any was demosed court; all His was been named as suspects where the protest of the interest of t

plicit in the Hasina-created mess. A student leader from the profests reflects the dangerous polarisation, saying that Iskon is an extremist organisation working with India to "plot against tue". With the youth having turned against the ousted Awami League regime, India too faces their wrath. This writer has long maintained that foreign and domestic policies cannot be in separate silos. Their conflict last affected India's relations with the Maldives. Radyard Kpling wrote that "Bast is East, and West is West, and never the total shall meet".

So far, the BJP has managed to keep diplomacy and domestic politics distinct. It seems the "twain" has again overlapped in Bangladesh, in Banglades

overlapped in Bangladesh, another South Asian nation.

On Patna high court judge's comment that a widow has "no need to put on make-up", the Supreme Court said that the remark "is not commensurate with the sensitivi-ty and neutrality expected from a court of law". Interestingly, the apex court made this observation on September 25, which is a day before the birth anniversary of Iswar Chandra Vidvasagar who got the Hindu Widow Remarriage Act decreed in 1856. Vidyasagar's statue was destroyed by a saffron attired group on May 14, 2019, in Kolkata, but the man who bowed his head neither to high ranking British offi-cials' colonial mindset nor to inhumane rituals is still showing us the light.

Sujit De

LOANS TO ADANI

WITH MANY reputed rating agencies downgrading the ratings of almost all the Adam Group companies to negative post the indictment of the groups founder, Gautam Adam, by the District Country of the property of the group by public and perturb sector banks to the tune of billions of rupees. One really wonders whether the banks banks to the fune of billions of rupees.

One really wonders whether the banks have strictly adhered to the lending norms prescribed by RBI. It is time all the lenders sat together to assess the-bealth of such assets and arrive at strict follow-up measures. They should monitor the end use of all disbursals.

Tharclus S. Fernando
Chennai

TOO MANY GAMES

THE RECENT Assembly election results in Jharkhand throw up some questions for the BIPled NDA. Why did the arrest of CM Hemant Soren backfire, turning tribal support towards the Opposition? How does the NDA regain its traditional votes that have drifted to JMM and Congress? Along with this, what new strategies would the NDA be adopting to redress local issues effectively, so that it would not err again in future elections? These are questions that the leadership of the NDA needs to address carefully Baarti Begusarai, Bihar Begusarai, Bihar Begusarai, Bihar

₹500 for the best letter of the week goes to Sujit De (Nov. 30). Email:

Bhopinder



As Trump readies to target Beijing, Delhi seems least assertive in Quad merica's President-elect Donald Trump, who will return to the White House on January 20, 2025, has fired the first salvo squasetting that he will impose sweeping new tariffs as part of his first executive order. If Mexico and Canada (both his pet peeves) have been called out for a proposed 25 per cent import to an earlied out for a proposed 25 per cent import to an enditional 10 per cent thereon is ostensibly reserved for China. Earlier, on his campaign trail, Mr Trump had threat-ened tariffs in excess of 60 per cent for all Chinese imports. While these threats are still in the realm of Mr Trump's usual rhetoric and one can never be sure of what exactive will happen given the inevitable and spiralling inflationary impact for American citizens, that Mr Trump's unjust for American citizens, that Mr Trump's unjust for American citizens, that Mr Trump's in the content of the content

any vital infrastructure in the US", Mr Trump has all but promised to take on China decisively.

Beyond tariffs, it is the strategic counter-balancing framework of the Quad grouping (US, Japan, Australia and India) that has emerged as the most significant framework to take on Chinese belligerence and expansionism. Revived in Mr Trump's first term and nutruned in Mr Biden's subsequent term, the Quad even offers the militaristic possibilities to pool in the resources of "four leading marritime democracies" to checkmate the Dragon, as it seeks to pool in the resources of "four leading marritime democracies" to checkmate the Dragon, as it seeks to reterave territorial contours in a wary neighbour-hood. All four Quad nations have had vital interests threatened by the Chinese, but it is only India which has drawn blood on its IAC, in the summer of 2020. Troutically, mids has also been the least aggressive in treatment of the control of the con

usurps the REZs (Exclusive Economic Zones) of the Philippines, Taiwan, Vietnam, Brunei, Indonesia and Malaysia. However, none of these countries have the wherewithal to stand up for themselves — necessitating more substantial powers or alliances like the Quad into the equation. The Philippines banks on the Mutual Defence Treaty with the US to safeguard against any possible Chinese aggression while the Taiwanese have been assured of direct US support in case of a Chinese invasion.

Given that the challenges are not just military but also in areas like trade, commerce, geopolities, etchnology, infrastructure investments, etc., only a collaborative effort can effectively take on the Chinese juggernaut. The Japanese have increased their collaboration with the US, and emerged as the formost enabler of the security architecture to counter Chines. Prom upgrading the US military presence and command structure on Japanese soil to collaboration on developing advanced weaponry. Japan has led the localised aggression within the Quad.

Australia to hos prepped up like never before by committing an unprecedented \$350 billion plan to counter Chinese expansionism. From nuclear-powered submarines, frigates and drones, investing \$12 billion in missile manufacture is the sharpest uptick in military preparedness and spending. The elephant in the room of Australian imagination and fears is singularly China.

Even diplomatically, the language from Camberra has been fiery, with Australia's Prime Minister Anthony Albanese calling Beijing's conduct "unactoptable". The fear of Chinese intrusion (even a possible invasion) into Australia's backyard forced the typically pacefirst Australian political class to invest substantially into addressing the specific Chinese threat. Perhaps not satisfied with the pace of Quad developments, Camberra signed a trilateral and parables with the pace of Quad developments, Camberra signed a trilateral and parables to the control of the control of

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Urgent Action Needed to Protect Elephants

The death of Deegadanthu 1, a majestic tusker from Kala Wewa, is a tragic reminder of the deep failures in Sri Lanka's wildlife conservation efforts. Electrocuted by an unauthorised power line, Deegadanthu's death symbolises not only the loss of an animal but also the erosion of the country's natural heritage. As elephants in Sri Lanka continue to fall victim to illegal electric fences, Hakka patas, gunshots and train accidents, the authorities remain alarmingly silent. The current state of affairs, where such majestic creatures are left unprotected, is a national disgrace and this is sue demands urgent action. The Wildlife Department's failure to protect these iconic animals, despite the immense cultural and economic valid they bring to the country, has led to a sharp decline in their population. With the elephant deaths continuing at an alarming rate,

population. With the elephant deaths continuing at an alarming rate, it is time for the government to take full responsibility. Deegadanthu 1's death, while deeply saddening, is not an isolated incident. The tuskers of Sri Lanka, such as Kawantissa and Mahasen, now face similar threats from unauthorised electric fences, speeding trains, and poor conservation policies. The government must urgently intervene to protect these endangered animals before they are lost forever. In contrast to Sri Lanka's inadequate protection measures, countries like Kenya provide 24-hour security to protect their endangered species, including elephants like Ahmed, a famous tusker who lived from the 1900s to the 1970s. Ahmed's life was safeguarded through continuous, government-led protection, with security teams ensuring his safety from poaching and other threats. Why, then, can Sri Lanka not provide similar protection to its own elephants? The Sri Lankar Government must ask itself why it is unable to offer 24/7 security for elephants like Kawantissa and Mahasen, whose lives are constantly at risk, much like Ahmed's in Kenya. The fact that other countries can afford such protection highlights a stark contrast to Sri Lanka's lack of urgency in wildlife conservation

The failure of the Wildlife Department to prevent these tragic deaths is a reflection of a much deeper issue. The department indifference to the urgency of wildlife protection is not just an oversight; it is a systemic failure that must be addressed. immediately. The Wildlife Director-General must be held accountable for this neglect and step down from the position. It is clear that the current leadership is unable to handle the responsibility of safeguarding Sri Lanka's natural heritage. A new, competent person sateguarum shi Larina's haurar nertrage. A new, competent person must be appointed to take charge of the department, someone who can implement strict wildlife conservation policies and ensure that the country's elephants are given the protection they deserve. The time for mourning is long past. Sri Lanka must take action to prevent the deaths of more elephants. Measures such as

strengthening legal frameworks to penalise the illegal use of electric fences, introducing a licensing system for their installation and enforcing the Sri Lanka Electricity Act are long overdue. The government must also establish wildlife conservation zones and raise awareness in rural communities about the dangers of illegal fencing, promoting safer alternatives like solar-powered fences.

These steps would not only protect Sri Lanka's elephants but also ensure the safety of rural communities and preserve the country's biodiversity.

The death of Deeghadanthu 1 and the on-going threats to elephants like Kewantissa and Mahasen demand a re-evaluation of the way Sri Lanka approaches wildlife conservation. Elephants are not just animals; they are symbols of Sri Lanka's cultural and religious identity. Their protection should be as integral to the nation's heritage as the preservation of ancient temples or mantion's heritage as the preservation of ancient temples or monuments. The government must recognise that wildlife conservation and cultural heritage are deeply intertwined and should be treated as one. Without urgent action, Sri Lanka will lose its

elephants and with them, a significant part of its identity.
We call on the President to intervene immediately and ensure that
the Wildlife Department is restructured to prioritise the protection of
Sri Lanka's endangered species. The loss of another iconic elephant must not be allowed to happen. The government must act now, not just to protect the elephants but to ensure that future generations will have the chance to witness these majestic creatures. Let us not wait until it is too late, before these elephants become nothing more than a memory.



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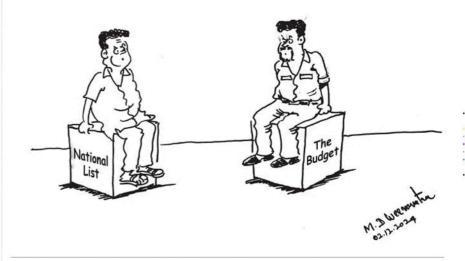
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BHARAT MATTERS FOR INDIAN OCEAN ISLANDS

Foreign policy of Gorbachev, defined by the tenets of "perestroika" and "glasnost"

BY DR SRIMAL FERNANDO

"Jai Hind" signifies Victory to Hindustan. "When friends come calling, our hearts light up. We are delighted to have you in our midst, "as stated by Rajiv Gandhi, the then Prime Minister of India, who warmly welcomed Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev during a momentous visit in 1986. The diplomatic visit of Soviet leade Mikhail Gorbachev to India, while Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi was in office greatly strengthened the ties between India and the Soviet Union. This culminated in the nt of the Delhi Declaration, a pivotal global document that advocated for the total elimination of nuclear arsenals by the century's end and underscored the necessity of addressing issues through peaceful means. He made two official visits to India during his administration, the first in 1986 and the second in 1988. As the la leader of the Soviet Union, Mikhail Gorbauchev policies of glasnost (openness) and perestroika (restructuring) shared in a new era of political and social change in the Soviet Union The primary aim of perestroika was to revitalise the Soviet economy and boost its efficiency. Gorbachev carried out reforms that focused on marketoriented strategies. Throughout his tenure, he enacted several reforms that profoundly influenced both domestic and international policy. In terms of foreign policy, Gorbachev's strategy was characterised by an openness to collaboration and communication collaboration and communication with other nations. The doctrine of foreign policy established by Gorbachev, referred to as "New Thinking," signified a change towards a more collaborative and peaceful interaction with the West. Gorbachev's initiatives had a considerable effect on considerable effect on international relations and were instrumental in bringing about the end of the Cold War. Throughout his tenure. Gorbachev endeavoured to enhance diplomatic relations with Western nations, notably the United States and various European countries. Gorbachev's leadership also played a crucial role in the peaceful dissolution of the Soviet

Union in 1991. A significant

accomplishment of Gorbachev

was his involvement in the negotiation of arms contro agreements with the United States, which resulted in a considerable decrease in nuclear arsenals and a reduction in hostilities between the two superpowers. Gorbachev's leadership also played a crucial role in the peaceful dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991. The Nobel Peace Prize conferred upor Mikhail Gorbachev was a merited tribute to his efforts in advancing peace and diplomatic relations on a global scale. The support Mikhail Gorbachev extended to nonaligned movements, along endeavors to fortify connec ents, along with his between countries in the Global South, was perceived as a significant stride toward achieving a more just and balanced international order. Overall, Gorbachev's legacy with the Seychelles, Mauritius, the Maldives, Sri Lanka and Reuinior can be summarized as one of promoting peace, cooperation, and mutual understanding. Gorbachev's foreign policy notably influenced the dynamics of the Indian Ocean Islands. Gorbachev understood this and endeavoured to foster closer relationships with these countries to promote Sobjectives in the region.
Throughout Gorbachev's leadership, various forms of assistance were rendered particularly in infrastructure and education, with a focus on enhancing trade relations between the two countries. This initiative was instrumental in fostering poodwill between the Soviet eadership and the Indian Ocean islands, setting the stage for future collaborative efforts. The legacy of Gorbachev as a reformer and peacemaker is still acknowledged and examined by historians and political analysts across the world Gorhachev's

vision on Sri Lanka

Mikhail Gorbachev stands as a significant historical figure, recognised for his pivotal contributions to transformative changes within the Soviet Union, which ultimately culminated in its dissolution. His legacy is characterised by his commitme to reforming the Soviet system and advocating for increased nmitment openness and democratic principles. While the implications

of Gorbachev's legacy may seem distant to many countries worldwide, his influence remains evident in various forms, including in Sri Lanka. Sri Lanka was among the nations that reaped benefits from Gorbachev's more liberal foreign policy approach. A significant aspect of the collaboration between the Soviet Union and Sri Lanka during Gorbachev's administration was focused on economic development. The Soviet Union extended technical assistance and investments to Sri Lanka in sectors such as infrastructure. agriculture and industry. This support contributed to the enhancement of Sri Lanka's economy and the elevation of living standards for its citizens Beyond economic aid, Gorbache aimed to fortify cultural connections between the Soviet Union and Sri Lanka, Cultural exchanges and educational initiatives were initiated between the two nations, fostering a deeper understanding and appreciation of each other's cultural heritage. Gorbachev's impact on Soviet diplomatic relations with Sri Lanka is regarded as a favourable one Gorbachev's contributions to diplomatic relations with Sri Lanka exemplify the critical importance of cultivating strong ties with other countries, emphasising mutual espect and collaborative efforts

Gorbachev' and The Maldives This modification in Soviet

foreign policy resulted in notable ramifications for nations located far from Moscow, including smaller island states such as the Maldives. Gorbachev's initiatives of transparency and reform created new avenues for diplomatic interaction with nations that had previously been beyond the reach of Soviet influence. A significant aspect of Gorbachev's legacy on Soviet-Maldivian relations was the enhancement of cultural exchanges and the provision of educational opportunities. The endeavours of Gorbachev to encourage communication and partnership in international matters were instrumental in creating a more interconnected global landscape, allowing even minor nations like the Maldives to participate in shaping global dynamics

The Seychelles, Mauritius and Reunion

Gorbachev's legacy in international diplomacy extends beyond major powers to include smaller nations such as Seychelles and Mauritius. His initiatives aimed at enhancing relations with these countries significantly bolstered the Soviet Union's influence in the region while fostering economic growth. The Soviet Union's support for Mauritius encompassed various sectors, including education, healthcare, and infrastructure, which contributed to the nati economic advancement and improved living standards for its citizens. Gorbachev's commitment to diplomacy and global collaboration established a foundation for ongoing engagement, marking his contributions to Soviet relations with Seychelles and Mauritius as a noteworthy aspect of international cooperation and understanding.

Visionary leadership

A crucial component of Gorbachev's legacy is his New Political Thinking. The Indian Ocean Islands, as small island nations in a strategically significant region, can look to Gorbachev's example of bold and visionary leadership, as well as his commitment to addressing complex challenges through peaceful means. By remembering Gorbachev as an exemplary leader, the Indian Ocean Islands can take pride in his legacy of socialist democratic reforms and innovative

About the author. Dr. Srimal Fernando received his PhD in International Affairs. He was the recipient of the prestigious O.P. Jindal Doctoral Fellowship and SAU Scholarship under the SAARC umbrella. As a Lecturer, he focuses on the comparative politics of Small Island Develo States (SIDs). Dr. Fernando is a specialist in International Relations and an adviser on New Regional Diplomacy. He has received accolades such as the 2018/2019 'Best Journalist of the Year' in South Africa, (GCA) Media Award for 2016 and the Indian Council of World Affairs (ICWA) 'Politics, Economics and Connectivity: In Search of the South Asian Union'.

NEW DELHI | MONDAY, 2 DECEMBER 2024

Sharp slowdown

Solutions will need to go beyond interest rate cuts

Solutions will need to go Deyond interest rate cuts

he gross domestic product (GDP) data, released by the National Statistics
Office (NSO) last week, has surprised analysts. While most anticipated
the slowdown in demand to reflect in the GDP data, no one expected the
economy to expand just 54 per cent in the second quarter — a sevenquarter low. Economists at the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) are likely to be particularly disappointed, having projected a 7 per cent growth rate for the quarter
in the Grots ber monetary policy review. With the economy growing only 6 per cent
in the first half of the financial year, the RBI needs to revise its full-year growth
projection of 7.2 per cent. During the second quarter, growth was constrained by
the manufacturing sector, which expanded 2.2 per cent, year—on-year, compared
to 7 per cent in the first quarter. Activity also slowed in the construction sector
while the mining sector registered a contraction during the quarter. The agricultural to 7 per cent in the inst quarter. Activity also slowed in the construction sector while the mining sector registered a contraction during the quarter. The agricultural sector, meanwhile, grew 3.5 per cent compared to 1.7 per cent in the same period last year.

sector, meanwhile, grew 3.5 per cent compared to 1.7 per cent in the same period last year.

A growth rate lower than expected has increased complications for policy managers and raised several questions. It is worth noting that this is the last GDP number before the presentation of the next Union Budget. Although the NSO will leclase the first advance estimate for this financial year in early January, the inclusion of additional information in these estimates would be limited. Economic performance in the first half of the year poses at least two big policy challenges. Fiscal management is the first challenge, Notably, nominal growth in the first half of the year was 8.9 per cent. The Budget projections for the year are based on anominal growth assumption of 10.5 per cent. If the trend continues in the second half, the fiscal deficit in absolute terms will need to be contained at a lower level to meet the target of 4.9 per cent of GDP. This would mean lower government expenditure, assuming that revenue targets hold. According to the latest data, as of October, receipts of the Union government were at 8.37 per cent of the Budget Estimates. The comparable level last financial year was 8.6 per cent. On expenditure, while there is time to make adjustments, a slower pace of capital expenditure should worry policy managers. In the first seven months of the financial year, the government spent only 42 per cent of the allocation, which partly explains the slower growth.

government spent only 42 per cent of the allocation, which partly expiains the slower growth.

The second policy challenge is to revive the pace of economic activity in a schedule of the second policy challenge is to revive the pace of economic activity in a expanditure will help accelerate growth. The assumption may materialise to an extent in the second half of the year. However, the question is how long the Indian economy can depend on higher government capex for growth. Given the fiscal constraints, it would be difficult to push up capex consistently. The allocation is worth 34 per cent of GDP this financial year. To sustain higher growth, other drivers, particularly private investment, will need to pick up. From a medium-term perspective, external uncertainties will make things difficult. The victory of Donald Trump in the United States presidential election has increased complications. In terms of policy, pressure on the RBI's Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) to reduce the policy interest rate will only rise. The MPC would do well to stay the course in its meeting later this week. A knee "jerk reaction can complicate matters, particularly given the latest inflation reading of 6.2 per cent. In any case, solutions to the slowdown will need to go well beyond token policy-rate reductions.

Unintended consequence

The poor face the brunt of pollution control

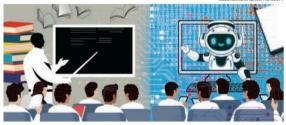
s civic authorities in the Delhi-National Capital Region (Delhi-NCR)

The poor face the brunt of pollution control

s civic authorities in the Delhi-National Capital Region (Delhi-NCR) imposed the highest level of the Graded Response Action Plan (GRAP) when air quality slipped into the "severe" category, thousands of other things, GRAP 4 proscribes construction activities. Though the decision ostensibly reflects concern for public health, its ad hoc imposition without notice not only stall sconstruction projects and pushes up costs but leaves thousands of workers, the bulk of them migrants and daily-wage workers, without a livelihood for an indefinite period. The unintended consequences of this well-intentioned but poorly thought through veto was amply demonstrated last week when hundreds of construction workers protested outside the Delhi lieutenant governor's office, demanding compensation for their enforced idleness as a result of GRAP 4. This protest, organised by the Building Workers Union, an affiliate of the left-oriented All India Central Council of Trade Unions, underlines how public policies often overlock the concerns of vulnerable sections. Construction workers are the most vocal (and better-organised) section of disadvantaged people to be impacted by GRAP 4 bans. Less noticed are the bans on the impromptu fires, which warm hundreds of guards around upscale condominiums and fiscillities as the nights turn colder and bans on coal stoves used by poorer households. The inony of the increasingly draconian restrictions recommended by the Commission for Air Quality Management (CAAM) is that they do not appreciably improve all quality. Despite GRAP 4, the needle on air quality has moved from "severe" to "very poor" and, on occasion, "poor". These changes are deemed "improvements" but insufficiently optimum to justify removing GRAP controls. The commission of padry-subtible burning, once deemed the key cause of winter air pollution, have notably diminished, thanks to actions, though belated, by state governments. In this respect, two other issues are emerging to this seemingl

Time for AI in education

...like when printing emerged



ALIT RALAKRISHNAN

eachers: Al is coming for your job!" says one news headline. "Will Al XIII meaningless jobs in universities?" asks another headline. "Students use Al to cheat in university exam," says a third. Every day, nowadays, headlines like these are thrown at us, not just by online newspapers but by journals from some of the most reputed educational institutions in the world. How to make sense of all that is being said about the role Al, artificial intelligence, is going to play in the world of school, college, and postgraduate education?

If you reflect for a while, what is being said is that the field of education is on it way to a revolutionary makeover and my worry as a person strongly anchored in the Indian middle-class belief that a good education steps in the most important drivey of progress as well as economic well-being, is this: Are we as a country doing the right

we as a country doing the right thing with AI in our schools, col-

tning with Ai in our schools, col-leges, Indian Institutes of Management (IIMs), Indian Institutes of Technology, and medical colleges? Till now, one has lived calmly in the belief that AI, like other technology innovations of the recent past such as computers and the internet, functions as a useful tool to assist the current education system we live with. But what is facing us now is that the time ed methods of human learning and teaching, our tutions of schools and colleges and universities, systems of exams and tests may have to be fundamentally changed, thanks to AL

camentary changes, thanks to A. My personal view as a person who spends four-five hours a day on python programming, testing many of the emerging algorithms for my entertainment (for me, the equivalent of what most of my friends do, watching cricket matches on TV or mobile phones), so far has been that a lot of the headlines about Al are watching cricket matches on TV or mobile phones), so far has been that a lot of the headlines about Al are hype and astonishing news such as Microsoft paying \$14 billion for a stake in OpenAI (the company behind ChatGPT) was merely an attempt to get technology that would help them beat Google in search (that business which guishes billions of dollars in revenue), but now

outions of dollars in revenue), but now I am starting to worry that there is more at stake in AI technology than just market share and revenue, particularly in crucial areas like education.

particularly in crucial areas like education.

Inyself use ChatGPT many times a day for things that occasionally befuddle me, for example my question: "How many minutes does an adult man have to walk in the evening to keep good health?"And ChatGPT's answer. "An adult man should aim for 30 to 60 minutes of brisk walking in the evening to maintain good health. Walking at a pace that raises your heart rate but still allows conversation is ideal for cardiovascular health, weight management, and stress rellef." That comforted me because it confirmed what I had been doing based on my doctor's recommendation was on the right track. If I had asked a similar question to a search engine, it would have given me an unending set of links to

websites, which I would then have to open, read, and absorb. Human-conversation mode, I guess, is one key reason we all run to ChatGPT and similar AI tools often.

Then there are questions I don't even know who to ask, for example: "Please tell me why there are so to ask, for example: "Please tell me why there are so many unoccupied high-rise buildings in Bombays" ChatGPT's answer: "Unoccupied high-rise buildings in Bombay result from high property prices, regulatory delays, unsold inventory, developer bankruptics, and limited affordability for middle-class buyers amidst urban challenges." Such an answer helps me understand the basic underlying issues.

Such an answer helps me understand the basic underlying issues.

Today, the worry the world over is that students, at school or college, can use ChatGPP or tools like that on their mobile phones to beat any type of exam questions, be they essays to be written, or multiple-choice questions, or computer programming puzzles posed. As a result of this, carrying mobile phones into exam rooms has been prohibited by law for practically all levels of exam in India, be it the exams of the Central Board of Secondary Education or IIM entrance tests. But all this is making me wonder whether a more fundamental change is needed in the way we "teach" and "examine" in schools and colleges. The current system is that students sit passively in classes for many hours each day and go do active accordance work. Ilse reading and writing at home ("homework"). There have been suggestions from many quarters (among others from Sal Khan, the founder chief executive officer of the California-based Khan. Acadeny in his recent book Braw New Words) that this be "lipped", that is to say, students should do what used to be homework in class and watch recorded lectures on their own time in class and watch recorded lectures on their own time

in class and watch recorded lectures on their own time at home.

Ashok Goel, a distinguished professor of computer science at the Georgia Institute of Technology, developed "Jill Watson", an Al-based virtual teaching assistant designed to answer student queries in online courses. This innovation, it is believed, has significantly enhanced the scalability and effectiveness of online education, particularly within Georgia Tech's "Online Master of Science in Computer Science" programme.

programme.
Is today a moment like 1448, when the Gutenberg was invented, when knowledge and learning are available to all through affordable books until earlier times, when book copies had to be hand-written by human scribes?

The author (ajith@rediffmail.com) is devoting his life to

Two markets in one: Not seen earlier

ver the past two months, in four separate columns, I have highlighted the significant slowdown in the Indian economy, which is w clearly reflected in the stock prices of major secnow clearly reflected in the stock prices of major sectors such as passenger cars, consumer goods, banks, financial services, and infrastructure. The two key market indices, the Nifty and Sensex, peaked on September 27 and have since shown little momentum. A sharp two-day rally, a day before and after the Maharashtra election results, was seen as a lucky break for foreign institutional investors (Fils) to resume their selling. While each such wave of selling will be countered by some buying, the buillshi fervout is missing. The traditional year-end rally is due, especially because the past two months were dismal. But there is a more intriguing aspect of the market, hidden behind the Nifty moves.

the market, hidden behind the Nifty moves.

Between September 27 and November 29, the Nifty was down 8 per cent. However, amazingly enough, both the Nifty and BSE smallcap indices were down only 3 per cent and the Nifty microcap dropped a mere 2 per cent. This is unusual. In a bull market, smaller companies typically outperform their larger counterparts. But in a downturn, smaller companies usually bear the brunt of the losses. This time, that's not the case. What exolain

downturn, smaller companies usauly bear the brunt of the losses. This
time, that's not the case. What explains this anomaly?
Investors are optimistic about smaller companies for
a reason. The heroes of India's growth of the past for
years have been smaller, efficient companies in green
energy, electrical equipment, defence, health care
services (hospitals and diagnostics), a varlety of manufacturing sectors, infrastructure (including railways,
consumer technologies, and retail financial services
(including wealth management). New sunrise sectors
such as electronics manufacturing services (EMS),
recycling, smart metering, and data centres are dominated by small companies.

These hot sectors are not represented in the
indices in any manner except partly through one
company, Larsen & Toubro, which has been a surprisingly tepla performer. The Nifty and Sensex consist of big banks (table but handly growing), consumer companies (not growing), software companies
(average growth in single digits), and commodity

companies, some of which are from the public sector. All these sectors are struggling against the headwinds of sluggish demand.

Bank credit is not growing because companies are still focused on deleveraging their balance sheets, while higher interest cost is squeezing the net interest margins of banks. Meanwhile, the stock markets are more than willing to fund any reasonably promising growth story, making equity capital far more attractive than bank credit. Consumer companies are grappling with weak demand, driven by stagnant income growth among the middle class and below. Software companies get growth boosters mainly with distruptive cycles such as docom, back office automation, or banking software and finance operations.

lay with disruptive cycles such as odd-ce automation, or banking software and finance operations.

The last significant cycle was driv-en by the adoption of technology to manage the challenges posed by pan-demic restrictions on companies, employees, and consumers. It remains uncertain whether the cur-rent Al boom will benefit or disrupt Indian software companies. Note that the five-year compound annual growth rate (CAGR) in profit of Tata Consultancy Services was just 8 per cent. The only bright spot in the Nifty and Sensex is pharmaceutical com-panies, although the fastest-growing le these indices in the services of the serv

and sensex is pharmaceutical com-panies, although the fastest-growing ones are outside these indices.

This tells us why index stocks are not a very excli-ing place for investors. They comprise businesses that are easier to understand and their market liquidity is high; foreign portfolios are full of them. But they paic in comparison to smaller companies, which today come from an array of sectors mentioned above. They form the second and far more dynamic market, which is eclipsed by the headlines made by Nifty behemoths. For example, a small engineering company based in Indore, with a market cap of just 44,000 crore, exports 65 per cent of its output and has notched up a 54 per cent CAGR growth rate in net profit over the past five years. A pharmaceutical company which avoided the beaten track of rushing into Western markets and concentrated on South America has recorded a CAGR in profit of 42 per cent over 10 years. India's bigged listed EMS company has recorded a CAGR in profit of 39 per cent in 10 years. Its market-cap is pushing

den in plain sight. Will these companies keep growing. Often, it is economic policies of a government that

Often, it is economic policies of a government that the coporate growth. The policy of the past four years has been massive government capital spending on infrastructure, defence, railways, etc. and support to local manufacturing through production-inhed incentives. These initiatives have had a tremendous effect on small companies. Even a tiny fraction of the \$EI trillion direct government spending or spending encouraged by government policies coming the way of some small companies can propel their businesses into a whole new trajectory. This is exactly what has happened to companies in green energy, electric transformers, smart meetering, water management, railway equipment, etc.

smart metering, water management, railway equipment, etc. However, many other top-performing smaller businesses have nothing to do with government policies. They come from sunrise sectors such as hospitals. EMS, drug research and drug manufacturing, consumer technology, outsourced business services, financial services, market infrastructure companies, and even some older traditional businesses like light neplacening and automotive components. The top-entiesering and automotive components. The top-entiesering and automotive components. and even some other daminous unsuressess the right engineering and automotive components. The top-performing companies in these sectors have a tailwind but are also run by focused and driven managers, hungry for growth.

There is an interesting corollary to all this. By a

curious set of coincidences, most of the non-promoter shareholding of these small companies is with retail shareholding of these small companies is with retail investors, some of wimon have been plainly lucky to be at the right place and time. A small number of young, smart investors too have done their homework and are diligient enough to catch the trend. Only a few of these stocks are in the portfolios of mutual funds. The boom has bypassed big institutional investors, who stayed focused on India's sluggish consumer economy and software stocks. This probably explains the "why" when the Nifty falls on FII selling these days, and the smallcap and microcap indices do not drop much. It is a phenomenon never seen before, along with many other wonders of the Indian stock markets that we are witnessing since the pandemic.

Angela Merkel explains



BOOK REVIEW

ELISABETH ZEROFSKY

ever explain, never complain, "is a maxim supposed by the British royal family. As Angela Merkel writes in her exhaustive yet surprisingly fast-paced autobiography. Freedom, it also became a phrase that she would repeat to her beful for the five and a supposed to her beful with the supposed to her beful with also became a phrase that she would repeat to herself during her 16 years as

repeat to herself during her 16 years as German chancellor, from 2006 suntil she stepped down in December 2021. Readers of Preedom might be surprised that Merkel brings up this English dictum not in a discussion of the consequences of a fraught policy decision, though there are many in this 709-page book, but in response to the bullying micro-aggressions of the Russian president Vladimir V Putin, who

Labrador to a press-filled meeting with Merkel, even after his staff was told that the chancellor had a phobia of dogs. "Stay calm, focus on the photographers, it won't be for long." she recalls telling herself.

WOIL LEGAL RANGE LEGAL REPRINTS AND THE MEDICAL REPRINTS AND THE WAY MERKED STATE AND THE MEDICAL REPRINTS AND THE MEDICA

Despite her favourite motto, Freedom does offer something like an explanation of the countless decisions that Merkel of the counties accessions that we'rear made in response to the series of crises that hit Germany during her long stay in office. Yet, in the three years since, Germany's reliance on increasingly authoritarian countries—Russia for energy, China as a trading partner—and, in a different but, especially now, worrisome sense, on the United States for defence, has left the nation in a vulnerable position.

Germans have begun to re-examine Germans have begun to re-examine the Merkel era with a much more critical eye, and the formerly quiet chancellor has felt compelled to speak—re-emerg-ing, after a long period of relative silence, in the pages of Freedom with the help of Beate Baumann, her co-author. For the English edition of Freedom, Merkel, ever the consensus builder, has also employed no fewer than eight translators, who somehow manage not to get in one another's way as they present the German leader's innermost thoughts and feelings.

German leader's innermost thoughts and feelings. Merkel would have every reason to hope for a victory lap. Despite finishing her tenure in the middle of a pandemic, she left Germany with a recovering GDP and a sense that she had weathered a turbulent era with relative fortitude. Her political ascent was also anything but inevitable, and in Freedom she rightfully emphasises the many difficulties she encountered as a woman from East Germany. For two decades, she led the Germany. For two decades, she led the centre-right Christian Democratic Union (CDU), which was traditionally dominated by men from the West.

On the other hand, it's also true that Merkel's origins were partly responsible for her astounding political success. She represented, and became, a kind of bigtent figure to many Germans, encapsulating so much of the experience of living in a fractured country. Born in

IRRATIONAL CHOICE DEBASHIS BASU

1954 in West Germany to a Protestant pastor who decided to take a position at a church in what had become East

Germany, Merkel devotes a long section of her book to the rapid and unexpected events that followed November 1989. The fall of the Berlin Wall presented her, at 35, with a powille. with a new life. "I expected many

ANGELA MERKEL FREEDOM

expected many hings," she constitute gift of freedom before I reached retirement age." She became a deputy spokeswoman for the German government in 1990 and ascended quickly through a series of ministerial postings. Along the way she felled many of her male rivals and even some allies. In 1999, after adonation scandal, she published a legendary letter

in the Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung that helped force her former mentor, the CDU chancellor Helmut Kohl, who reunited Germany, to step down. The move cleared her path to party leadership in 2000 and earned her a reputation as a brilliant but brutal political seasents. She became chancellor political assassin. She became ch hen her coalition won a majority in 2005.
The controversy that Merkel credits most for motivating her to write a

FREEDOM: Memoirs Pages: 709

allow open passage into Germany for refugees fleeing mainly from Syria (Germany would register 1.1. million arrivals that year). Merkel reflects with special anguish or the famous phrase she uttered: "We ca do this!" She is bewildered that this wa misconstrued to mean that Germany would welcome all the world's refugees. "If, at that time, someone had told me that 'We can do this'—those four

memoir is what she calls the "caesura in my chancellorship"—

her decision in September 2015 to

commonpace would be used to reproach me for weeks, months and years to come," Merkel writes, "I would have looked at them in disbellef and said: I beg your pardon?"

In regional elections earlier this year, the political fallout from further migrant

the political failout from further migrant crises and Germany's fragile economy lifted the fortunes of the far right, especially in the country's former East. Still, in Freedom, Merkel reaffirms her liberal ideal that moderation is a "precondition for the successof democratic parties." She also conveys an unsuccessor a commitment to the. democratic parties. "She also conveys ar unwavering commitment to the convictions by which she governed: the universality and involability of individual human dignity, and the boon of an open, interconnected world, built on shared prosperity. She may very well be offet in borger in the converse of the converse that the converse of the converse of the converse of the converse that the converse of the converse of the converse of the converse that the converse of the converse of the converse of the converse that the converse of the convers be right in her convictions; and yet bei right might come as small solace to the millions of Germans facing the future with a deep sense of distress and not looking, as she writes toward the end, for "joy in our hearts" and "lightness of spirit."

The reviewer is a contributing writer for The Times Magazine and has reported extensively on European and American politics. ©2024 The New York Times News Service

THE IDEAS PAGE

WHAT THE OTHERS SAY

"MPs were right to allow for further detailed scrutiny... to ensure the terminally ill adults (end of life) bill addresses both ethical concerns and practical safeguards effectively. The desire to alleviate suffering is deeply compelling."

— THEGUARDIAN

When court undermines itself The Gilgamesh

By failing to uphold an earlier SC ruling on Places of Worship Act, judiciary has paved the way for deepening divisions between communities



DUSHYANT DAVE

THE PLACES OF Worship Act, which was enacted by Parliament in 1991, protects and se-cures the fundamental values of the Constitution. The law imposes two unwaver-Constitution. The law imposes two unwaver-ing and mandatory norms: Abar is imposed by Section 3 on the conversion of a place of worship of any religious denomination. The law preserves the religious character of every place of worship as it existed on August 15, 1947. Towards achieving this purpose, it pro-vides for the abatement of suits and legal pro-sections with the control to the control of suits and legal pro-

vides for the abatement of suits and legal pro-ceedings with respect to the conversion of the religious character of any place of wor-ship existing on August 15, 1947. Coupled with this, the Act imposes a bar on the insti-tution of fresh suits or legal proceedings. "The law addresses tisted to the state as much as to every citizen of the nation. Its norms bind those who gowen the affairs of the country at every level. The state has, by enacting the law, enforced a constitutional commitment and operationalised its consti-tutional obligations to uphold the equality of all religions and secularism, which is a part of the basic features of the Constitution. Historical wrongs cannot be remedied by the the basic features of the Constitution. Historical wrongs cannot be remedied by the people taking the law into their hands. In preserving the character of public places of worship, Parliament has mandated in no un-certain terms that history and its wrongs shall not be used as instruments to oppress the present and the future. This is the law, laid out by five judges of the Supreme Court in the Ram Janmabhoomi temple case. The Sungreme Court set aside the follow-

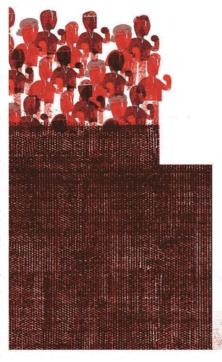
Ram Janmabhoomi temple case. The Supreme Court set aside the follow-ing finding by Justice Sharma of the Allahabad High Court: "Places of Worship (Special Provisions) At, 1991 does not debar those cases where declaration is sought for a period prior to the Act came into force or for enforce-ment of right which was recognised before coming into force of the Act." The apex court declared that "the above conclusion of Justice DV Sharma is directly contract to the wesi-

declared that "the above conclusion of Justice DV Sharma is directly contrary to the provisions of Section 4(2)."

To my mind, there is a clear and categorical declaration of law by the Supreme Court concerning the 1991 Act.

The Court held that "Parliament determined that independence from colonial rule furnishes a constitutional basis for healing the injustices of the past by providing the confidence to every religious community that their places of worship be preserved and that their character will not be altered. It went on their places of worship be preserved and that their places of worship be preserved and that their character will not be altered." It went on to assert: "This court cannot see." their character winn local arecta. I view to to assert: "This court cannot entertain claims that stem from the action of Mughal rulers against Hindu places of worship in a court of law today. For any person who seeks solace or recourse against the actions of any num-ber of ancient rulers, the law is not the an-weer." The Court, apologetically, held, "On 6.12.1992 the structure of the mosque was brought down and the mosque was de-stroyed. The destruction of the mosque took place in breach of the order of status quo and the assurance given to this court. The destruc-tion of the mosque and the obliteration of the

tion of the mosque and the obliteration of the Islamic structure was an egregious violation of the rule of law." Yet, a series of suits and appeals are being filed and entertained with impunity by courts across India, including the Supreme Court, concerning various mosques across the coun-try — from Varanasi to Mathura to Sambhal



and even the dargah in Ajmer.

Chief Justices S A Bobde and D Y Chandrachud presided over benches, with other learned judges, that undermined the Court's previous rulings and cleared the ground for dangerous situations. Likely taking a cue from such interventions, judges at the district and high courts are intervening at the instance of litigatins who themselves are prohibited under the law from filing such suits. Far from furthering it, these judges may well be striking the death knell of secularism. Gwen this, one wonders iff it is possible for a court to be in contempt of itself, especially when it is quick to had up others for contempt of its orders. Significantly, these suits, and the courts allowing them in defiance of the law, resonate with the politics of those in power. All of this at what cost?

The divide between the majority and minority communities has been widening in recent years. Peace and harmony are being compromised on a daily basis in the name of 'love jinda,' "land jihad," "vote jihad," buildozer "justice" and mob lynching. Four innocent lives were lost at Sambbla, arraguably because of the judiciarly's actions—or tack thereof. BJP governments appear all to cready to implement questionable orders of the Court with unusual promptness, while orders that help ordinary citizens may take months and years. Perhaps the judicial leaders need to be reminded of the words of great Indians during Constituent Assembly debates.

Peace and harmony are being compromised on a daily basis in the name of 'love jihad', 'land jihad', 'vote jihad', bulldozer 'justice' and mob lynching. Four innocent lives were lost at Sambhal, arguably because of the judiciary's actions - or lack thereof. BJP governments appear all too ready to implement questionable orders of the Court with unusual promptness, while orders that help ordinary citizens may take months and years. Perhaps the judicial leaders need to be reminded of the words of great Indians during Constituent Assembly debates.



on May 25, 1995, Sardar Fater Said, While submitting the Minority Report: "... it is for us who happen to be in a majority to think about what the minorities feel, and how we in their position would feel if we were treated in the

position would feel if we were treated in the manner in which they are treated."

B R Ambedkar, fearing that some mem-bers were prepared to go to war, said on December 17, 1946: "It will be a war on Muslims. If there is anybody who has in his mind the project of solving the Hindu-Muslim problem by war, in order that Muslims will be subjugated and made to sur-render to the Constitution that might be pre-pared without their consent, this country would be involved in nemetally compressing. pared without their consent, this country would be involved in perpetually conquering them. "Again on November 4, 1949, he warned that "It is for the majority to realise its duty not to discriminate against minorities. Whether the minorities will continue or will vanish must depend upon this habit of the majority. The moment the majority loss the habit of discriminating against the minority, the minorities can have no ground to exist. They will vanish."

India needs to develop, socially, economically and politically for the betterment of its people. It does not need violence. Peace alone can lead to prosperity. The sooner those at the helm of the nation — in the legislature, exec-utive and judiciary — realise their duties, the utive and judiciary — realise better it is for We, the People

The writer is a senior advocate practising before the Supreme Court of India

solution

Message on Ancient Sumerian tablets for Corporate India: Conflicting forces can be made to generate a positive sum outcome



THE OLDEST SURVIVING tablets of written text are from the Sumerian civilisation. They date back 4,200 years and tell the story of King Gilgamesh of Unuk. Gilgamesh was a tyrant who brutalised his subjects. The pendevent unhappy and appealed to the pantheen of Sumerian detites. In response, the gods created an exact double of Gilgamesh called Farkidu with comparable power and authority. The result was the creation of a "narrowcoridor" in which both cheeked and balanced each other into cooperating eather than competing. Unuk returned to peace. The "Gilgamesh solution" is to create a space in which conflictual forces can work together to generate a positive sum out-

gether to generate a positive sum out-me. I learnt of this solution from Nobel

space in which conflictual forces can work
together to generate a positive sum outcome. Hearnt of this solution from Nobel
Laureates Daron Acemoglu and James A
Robinson. They wrote about it in their book
Why Nations Fail in the context of the relationship between an autocratic state and sociectly decided to apply it to a contemporary
corporate dilemma.

The key factors for business success in
the 21st century are fundamentally no different than those that brought wealth and
power to the American nobber barons of the
late 19th century. Andrew Carnegie, John D
Rockefeller, and Cornelius Vanderbilt made
their fortunes by focusing on cost control,
quality, operational excellence, innovation
and leadership. These factors remain the
necessary ingredients for success. But they
are not sufficient. One additional factor has
come into play — ESG. Businesses will not
succeed if their operations despoil the environment (E), they are insensitive to social
needs(S) and/or they are unethical in governance (G). ESG was not a consideration for
the robber barons. Most international companies today would lose their license to opecrate if they ignored it.

ESG reflects the paradigmatic shift that
has taken place since Milton Friedman pronounced that the "business of businessis exclusively business". Corporate boards and
CEOs now have to navigate the cross currents of stakeholder (societal) interests built
around sustainability, social responsibility
and ethical governance, shareholder expectations for dividends and return on equity,
and management aspirations regarding career, recognition and wealth creation. The
Gigamesh solution offers a conceptual compass to steer through these currents.

Have been an independent, non-executive grant and the conceptual compass to steer through these currents.

Have been an independent position, enerior content and the conceptual compass to steer through these currents.

the past decades. My experience covers mul-tiple domains including FMCG, aviation, engineering, auto, media and hospitality. One gineering, auto, meeta ain nospitatily. One thread runs through the companies. They are determined to integrate ESC into their corporate norms. This effort is not to "do good" or "feel good". They expend it because it is good business. They know the failure to integrate would hurt corporate reputation, erode share prices, raise capital costs and de-ter invectors and talent. rose by 70 per cent, that of Shell by 15 per cent while BP's declined by 15 per cent. The

newest-aussand-ze, Exotan satura prise to research australia process of the proce

The point is that such compliance asures do not alter the reality on ground.

The point is that such compliance measures do not after the neality on ground. They detract from more productive efforts and skew the playing field in favour of larger corporates that have the resources to comply. Regulators should adopt the principle of "trust and verify". If nothing este this would help create institutions that facilitate convergence.

Two, squeezed between the demands and expectations of society, shareholders, and the regulator, there is a "narrow crition" in which divergent interests can be balanced. The effort should be to find this corridor and move into it. This requires not just the institutions that check the in-nate human tendency to seek more power but also a process is the presumption of co-equality and continual "interaction". process is the presumption and continual "interaction"

and continual "interaction".

Corporates face a hard truth. There is no trade off between profits and principles. Whilst they cannot afford principles without profits, they do not deserve profits without principles. The "Gilgamesh solution" helps crack this conundrum.

The writer is chairman and Distinguished Fellow, Centre for Social and Economic Progress



We don't breathe the same air

Pollution does not affect everyone equally — it's time we address this

NANDITESH NILAY

IDON'T THINK we can solve our environmental problem in a hurry. Every politician can promise jobs, money in schemes, national prestige, global power, and great infrastructure. But it will take quite a while before a politician will get up on stage and say vote for me because this is my plan to clean your air and rivers, beautify parks for your children to play in and your parents to walk in, and ensure that the sky above you is blue. Because, let's be honest, we wouldn't believe that neta.

This is because, in the market society we live in, we are used to buying our way to better things. We know this works: Pay a higher fee, get a better school; pay more, get a hospital with an air-conditioned waiting room and a shorter queue; pay for ling room and a shorter queue; pay for

ing room and a shorter queue; pay for Vande Bharat, escape the three-tier sleeper

Vande Bharat, escape the three-tier sleeper coach with unclean toilets at either end.
So, we will seal our apartments from the outside world with double-plated glass windows. Buy an air purifier for each room; switch on the one in the car. Get the government to announce a work-from-home system and let our children study from home. Ban construction, lock away old cars, but Elde or unclear a child Affer all we have buy EVs, or order a cab. After all, we have the pandemic model, so we can create our

non-polluting bubbles and live inside them. But, just like the virus, the air has a sneakly habit of entering through cracks in our windows, through the pores of the masks we wear. If we aren't able to fly sawy to Goa or Bangalore, picking our destina-tion on the basis of its AQI, we will need to live with this. And we will use our credit cards to find a solution

live with this. And we will use our credit cards to find a solution.

There's one little problem.
Unlike in the case of Covid, there is no vaccine to inoculate us against poor AQI. Even our Rs 25-crore apartments in Gurgaon, unless we seal them up like an ICU, will let the air in. Of course, those who work for us will commute to our homes, and cough and fall ill, unless we agree to let them live with us in these sealed chambers. The poor suffer more. Pollution is not the great leveller many think it is. We blame everyone for this mess except ourselves—

great reveier many mink it is. We bitme everyone for this mess except ourselves – usually those who are lower down in the social and economic pyramid than us. We blame the farmers. Of course, stub-ble burning pollutes the air. But year after year, we hear the same arguments and name-calling rather than a concerted na-tional series eight to unpert them in end. tional action plan to support them in end-ing this practice. Construction churns out

dust so we say ban it, not knowing that in an economy like ours, this means hardship for the millions of daily-wage workers who make their living at these sites. Burning of garbage, two-wheelers and coal-fired chul-hos are all behind the toxic air and are all in-dispensable elements of daily life for many. We don't think twice before welcoming work from home and shudy from bome ice. We don't think twice before welcoming work from home, and study from home, eignorant of what this means for the majority who don't have reliable wif at home, whose children will fall behind on the learning curve, who may lose their job if they don't show up at their employer's door.

What is the way forward? We need a national plan that touches each of us and that requires each of us to make a sacrifice.

The poor and the marginalised need to be incentivised with material resources, not incentivised with material resources, not punished. This is exactly what we argue at every COP, when the developed nations lecture us, saying "don't do this, don't do that". And just as we argue, with reason and moral power, that the Global South should not be made to pay for the greed of the North and told to arrest its own develop-ment plans, we need to do the same here. We cannot have an action plan that does not take into account the inequality in our

society — as if a person with an SUV and central air conditioning makes the "same sacrifice" as their driver or domestic help. As if everyone has the same history and the same access to resources — the same ablity to withdraw into a bubble.

The Clobal South is our local neighbour-hood: It is the farmer, the daily-wage worker, the child in a government school, the first-generation college student, the young person looking for a job and the domestic help cycling to our apartment complexes each day. It is those who can't afford inhalers and masks, and all those who work to make our lives better. They may not breathe the filtered air, they don't have the many masks that we can buy off any shelf. The only thing they have is the same right to life, right to dignity, right to equality as per the Constitution. This calls for a governance of compassion and a governance of ethics. As we celebrate the 75th year of the Constitution, all we can do is take a deep breath and hope for change.

The writer is the author of Being Good, Aaiye, Insaan Banen and Ethikos. He teaches and trains courses on ethics, values and behaviour

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

STAND TOGETHER

THIS REFERS TO the article, 'Don't let old India kill the new' (IE, November 30). The controversies surrounding the Sambhal and Ajmer Sharff mosques demand urgent attention. The timing of these disputes is particularly sensitive, as it coincides with the 32hd anniversary of the Babir Masjid demolition. The recurring disputes over places of worship risk reopening old wounds and disruptings occila harmory. Let this anniversary serve as a call to strengthen our resolve for unity and inclusivity.

Sanjay Chopra, Mohali controversies surrounding the Sambhal

GIVE PEACE A CHANCE

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, "No win-nersin Pak" (IE, November 29), Things are falling apart in Pakistan again, A "do-or-die" protest by jailed ex-PM Imran Khan's party has been quelled brutally by the Shehbaz Shanif government. The by the Shehbax Sharif government. The political turmoil triggered by Kharis ar-rest in May last year has worsened. The ruling PML-N, in cahoots with the mili-tary establishment, has left no stone un-turned to keep Khan out of power. Their credibility has been hit by allegations of stealing the February mandate. The gov-ernment must realise that repression won't solve the nation's problems. Khokan Das, Kolkan.

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'No win-ners in Pak' (IE, November 29). Despite the crackdown, PTI possesses enormous street power and Imran Khan's calls from jail for protests have set the parties to jail for protests have set the parties to-wards ashowdown. This is happening at a time when Pakistan is struggling to sta-bilise an economy battered by hyperin-flation, a falling currency, and depleting reserves. The government's "might is right" approach will push Pakistan deeper into anarchy and unrest. It must realise that this no-holds-barred repres-sion will not solve the beleaguered na-ticed realistical and economic problems. tion's political and economic problems. Sankar Paul, Nadio

THE OLD PLAYBOOK

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'Chost in the machine' (IE, November 29). The Congress is once again relying on its old playbook of blaming the EVM for its elec-toral defeats. Instead of adopting new physics and a dopting new strategies and crafting a compelling narrathe, the party has confined itself to criticising the BJP, particularly PM Mod. I mow, it should recognise that such an approach is unlikely to yield success. To regain relevance, the Congress must work to match the BJP, both in strategy and execution. An inspiring vision that resonates with the aspirations of the peoties the new of the hour. onates with the aspirations of the peo-ple is the need of the hour.

Vijai Pant, Hempur

THE INDIAN EXPRESS, MONDAY, DECEMBER 2, 2024

THE EDITORIAL PAGE

WORDLY WISE

WHEN YOU HAVE EXHAUSTED ALL POSSIBILITIES, REMEMBER THIS: YOU HAVEN'T.

- THOMAS EDISON

The Indian EXPRESS

RAMNATH GOENKA

BECAUSE THE TRUTH INVOLVES US ALL

HIT AND MISS

Cash transfer schemes may contribute to election wins. That's not the end of the story

ROM LAKSHMIR BHANDAR in West Bengal and Ladli Behna in Madhya Pradesh to Maiya Samman in Jharkhand and Ladki Bahin Yojana in Maharashtra — all these women-targeted schemes, providing Rs 1,000 to Rs 1,500 per month to eligible beneficiaries, appear to have paid political dividends by helping re-elect ruling parties in their respective states. According to Axis Bank, 14 states now have income transfer schemes that cover roughly a fifth of india's adult female population, income transfer schemes that cover roughly a littl of india's adult temale population, with an annualised spend of Rs 2 lakh crore. Fiscal purists may baulat a such transfers — even seen as a precursor to the Universal Basic Income outlined in the 2016-17 Economic Survey — but they may have eased the pain of inflation for those worst affected in these times. Nor can one underestimate the positive impact of an assured monthly payout or reducing insecurity and promoting independence in decision-making — according to some readings of the final tallies, women voters have signaled as much in the recent Maharashtra and Jharkhand Assembly polls.

That said, these schemes aren't without drawbacks. To start with, their effect on boosting incomes and consumption demand may not be as much as one would assume.

ing incomes and consumption demand may not be a much as one would assume. Anecdotal evidence suggests that many Ladid Bahin beneficiaries in Maharashira havere-sponded to the Rs 1,500/month cash transfer by choosing to work less days/hours and us-ing more of that freed-up time at home. The scheme may have not added to, as much as substituted for, income that would have been earned from tilling the fields and harvest-ing produce. On the other hand, the reduced supply of labour has pushed up production costs for farmers and small business owners, eating into their earnings and spending power costs to ratmers and small obsiness owners, sating into their earnings and spending power. The multiplier effect of government transfers, in terms of putting more money into the hands of households and stimulating private consumption expenditure, therefore, may be quite limited. These payments should ideally be pegged at levels offering a modicum of protection against inflation, without undermining or crowding-out incentives to work. No less serious a concern relates to cash transfers emerging as an alternative to building

No less senous a concern relates to cash transfers emerging as an aitemative to building staket capacity. Technology — beit, Adahaar-seeded bank accounts or point-of-sale machines — makes it possible today to transfer cash directly and make available free foodgrain to tar-geted beneficiaries at population scale sans much leakage. Governments, too, find it more sepedient to deliver these than investing in public education, healthcare, irrigation or agri-cultural research and extension that take time to yield results. When voters also turn increasingly transactional and short-termist—seeing for themselves the deteriorating stan-dards of government schools and hospitals and, therefore, not believing in the state's ability to do good beyond the immediate — that's when the culture of freebies ("rewdi") becomes entrenched in the system. The cost of it is not just fiscal. India badly needs government policy aligned with long-term national, not near-term electoral, interests

A TIME TO REBUILD

Failure to create trust in minorities could erode credibility of Muhammad Yunus-led government in Bangladesh

N THE FIRST week of August, after a student-led movement forced the then Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina to step down, micro-finance pioneer Muhammad Yunus had described the moment as the country's "Second Muhammad Yunus had described the moment as the country's "Second Liberation". But if the uprising kindled hopes of reviving democracy in Bangladesh, it also exposed the country's communal fissures and faultlines. In the three months since he took charge of Bangladesh's interim government, Yunus has spoken of "national unity" and visited Hindu temples several times. But his gestures do not appear reassuring in the face of the continuing attacks on homes, businesses, and places of worship of minority communities. Bangladesh's interim government, in fact, seems to have aggravated the dismited by cracking down on people who have taken to the streets to ask for safety against quiet by cracking down on people who have taken to the streets to ask for safety against looting and arson. Last week, the police arrested a former member of ISKON, who has been at the feverfront of protess demanding swift trial in cases involving persecution of minorities and compensation and rehabilitation of the victims. The protestors have claimed that two more monks have been taken into police custody, but the Bangladesh government hasn't confirmed these arrests. Its failure to own up to the crisis invites quesinto about the Yunus-led government's sincerity in rebuilding the trust between com-munities which is necessary to bring about the reconciliation Bangladesh urgently needs All communities participated in Bangladesh's Liberation Movement against Pakistan

and its vision for an inclusive society is well-documented. Yet almost every moment of and its vision for an inclusive society is well-documented. Yet almost every moment of crisis in the country has been accompanied by an increase in the discrimination faced by minorities. Religious nationalism, conspicuous during the long periods of military rule in Dhaka, heightened the insecurities of Bangladesh's Hindus and Christians. When demo-racy returned in the 1990s, these communities became collateral victims in the strug-gles between the Awami League and the Bangladesh Nationalist Party. Though the League professed secularism, religious extremism increased under Sheikh Hasina's watch, espe-cially in the past 10 years, Instead of attempting to strengthen the social fabric and address-ing the underlying causes behind the discord, Hasina responded with increased author-tarianism, which only deepened the divides. Accordingtor a proport bythe Bandadesh branch of the Berlin-based Human Riehts erroun

itarianism, which only deepened the divides. According to a report by the Bangladesh branch of the Berlin-based Human Rights group. Transparency International, minorities have been targeted in more than 2,000 incidents of violence since Sheikh Hasina fled the country. Last week, the Bangladesh High Court said that it expected the country's government to "maintain law and order and protect the lives and property of people". The Yunus government must pay urgent heed to these words. Failure to do so will erode the international goodwill it had gained after replacing the Hasina regime.

FREEZE FRAME

E P UNNY



A push for growth

Global environment is likely to remain uncertain. It is critical for government to strengthen domestic demand

INDIA HAS BEEN enjoying high economic growth even in the midst of global turmoil. After a strong growth of 8.2 pc enet in 2023-24, followed by 6.7 per cent in the midst of 2024-25. OF growth has decelerated to 5.4 per cent in the second quarter. While growth was expected to moderate, as was indicated by some of the high frequency macro-economic indicators and muted corporate performance, the quantum of deceleration turmed out much sharper than anticipated. The important question to answer now is whether this is a temporary brake or should we brace for alower Golf growth rate going forward. The sectoral break-up shows that growth has been pulled down mainly because of poor industrial sector performance, specifically mining, manufacturing and electricity segments. Industrial sector growth has decelerated to 3.5 per cent in the previous one. On the other hand, with a good than'flarvers, the recovery of the agriculture sector continued, while the services sector also maintained its broad momentum.

The expenditure-wise break up of the GDF

broad momentum.

The expenditure-wise break up of the GDP data showed moderation in consumption, investment and exports. Private consumption growth moderated to 6 per cent, but remains relatively healthy compared to the 4 per cent growth recorded in 2023-24. High frequency economic indicators like FMCG sales volume, two-wheeler sales have been signalling improvement in rural consumption, supported by healthy agriculture production. However, urban consumption seems to be moderating after the sharp jump seen post Good inflation is having a bearing on overall consumption spending. Slackness in the urban job market, specifically related to the IT sector, is also resulting in poor growth in household income. Moreous the consumer spending. Investment in the economy was being strongly supported by the government sector. However, government capex contracted sharply in the first quarter due to election re-

Let's now come to the critical issue of what to expect going forward. After the sharp drop seen in the second quarter, we expect GDP growth to pick up in the second half of the year. Consumption growth is likely to see some improvement in the coming quarters supported by healthy growth in agriculture production and rural demand. A likely moderation in food inflation in the coming months would be another factor supportive of consumption. However, we need to be wary of global developments and the risk of imported inflation. lated restrictions and has been slow to recover. Centre's capex has fallen by 15 per cent in the first half of this year, while the consolidated capex by state governments has fallen by 11 per cent during this period. Investments by najor central public sector enterprises als

major central public sector enterprises also contracted by 11 per cent in the first half, though there has been some improvement in the second quarter. Coming to the external sector, growth in exports of goods and services has also mod-erated. Monthly trade data shows that while merchandise exports have been relatively muted in the midst of low global economic growth, services sector exports have sustained their healths werenth momentum.

growth, services sector exports have susuamed their healthy growth momentum. Let's now come to the critical issue of what to expect going forward. After the sharp drop seen in the second quarter, we expect CDP growth to pick up in the second half of the year. Consumption growth is filely to see some improvement in the coming quarters when the second half of the healthy errowth in agriculture. some improvement in the coming quarters supported by healthy growth in agriculture production and rural demand. A likely mod-eration in food inflation in the coming eration in food inflation in the coming months would be another factor supportive of consumption. However, we need to be wary of global developments and the risk of imported inflation. The developments in the job market and growth in household incomes would be a critical factor influencing consumption growth.

Government capex that had been weak in the first half is likely to pick up strongly in the second half. In the first half, the central and state governments (consolidated have

the second half. In the first half, the central and state governments (consolidated) have only reached 37 per cent and 28 per cent respectively of their budgeted capex for the year. Hence, we can expect a strong pick up in the second half of the year. Even for private investment, there are some positive signals coming from the order book of capital goods and road development companies. The order book of a representative sample of capital goods companies increased by 24 per cent in 2023-24 as against a growth of 4.5 per cent in the preceding floor years. In the first six months of this year, the order book of

this representative sample has further increased by around 10 per cent. Similarly, we find that for a representative sample of road development companies, the order book has picked up by a sharp 20 per cent in the first six months of this financial year. This could be an indication of a likely pick up in capex in other sectors too in the subsequent quarters. However, the challenge of occess capacity in China and consequent flooding of other mankets like India will remain a deterrent for capacity expansion in the country.

Overall CDP growth for this year is likely to be lower at around 6.5 per cent. While this growth number is still healthy, it is concerning as India moves lower from 7-8 per cent growth number is still healthy, it is concerning as India moves lower from 7-8 per cent growth number is still healthy, it is concerning to the lower at around 6.5 per cent. While this growth number is still healthy, it is concerning as India moves lower from 7-8 per cent growth recorded in the last two years, it is also time to introspect as to what is required to push up India's potential CDP growth. In the last few years, the government focused on investment and that boded well for economic recovery post the pandemic. However, there is a need to now give a boost to consumption and more importantly widen the consumption and more indicated to the proposition of the proposition o

The writer is Chief Economist, CareEdge Ratings

Hugs, Sidhu Paaji

But do tell the full story behind your wife's cancer recovery

KAUSHIK DAS GUPTA

Perhaps Sidhu deserves the benefit of the doubt. Even though he has a record of shooting his mouth off, the person in the videos online is, after all, the companion and caregiver of a patient who was battling a life-threatening disease a few weeks back. There is something much more elemental than relief or a show of triumphalism when people let the world know how they put difficult times behind them.

That was unfair, not just to the physicians and medical community who helped tide the Sidhus through the worst, but also to decades of painstaking research that has ensured in many cases, therapy outpaces the growth of cancer cells in the bodies of patients. A growing number of metastatic cases are being cured, a reversal of fortunes that seemed unthinkable even a decade ago. Chemotherapy, drugs, and radiation drive cancer narratives — increasingly that of survivors like Naejot Kaur. Oncologists are trying their best to be minimally intrusive and using the harman immune system, instead, to fight off malignancy.

Perhaps Sidhu deserves the benefit of the doubt. Even though he has a record of shooting his mouth off, the person in the videos is, after all, the companion and caregiver of a patient who was battling a life-threatening disease a few weeks back. There is something much more elemental than relief or a show of triumphalism when people let the world know how they put difficult times behind them. Behind Sidhu's social media posts and press conference, also lies the innately human urge to save others from suffering — and as a politician, he possibly feels even more compelled to be a do-gooder. The problem is that in a social-media universe, where lines between the prescriptions of the specialist and the citizen doctor are blurred, this impulse can do more harm than good. Especially in the Indian cancer ecosystem, which teems with myths and missonceptions. Desperate patients and their families often succuments. 4 Google search throws up "Key Points" of the "Diet Plan" he had re-

vealed amidst the exhilaration and relief of his "Nona" being "cancer free". Videos sur-face in which Sidhu declares that he scanned lace in which Salmudecures that he scannes that he scannes the internet to devise the method to "fall can-cer" by stopping carbohydrates. Neem and hald, well within the reach of the poor, are antidotes, he says. The fundamental medical caveat, that every cancer patient is different and requires individualised treatment plans, is not even a footnote in these stories. Sidhu has since clarified that Navjot Xkur's recovery was driven by a team of doctors who

is not even a footnote in these stories. Sidthu has since clarified that Navjec Kaur's recovery was driven by a team of doctors, who he holds' in the highest esteren'! The diet chart was only a "facilitator". And, even before his statement on the lifestyle changes Navjot Kaur made during recovery, he had said that his wife had received most of her treatment a government Rajendra Medical College in Patiala.

Should we then let the matter rest?
Hugs again Sidhu pogii. We wish you and Naylor Kaur manny more healthy years. But do amplify the message that a team of oncologists at a government hospital in a Tier 3 city was behind her cancer recovery. As a politician — and a cricket commentator — you know that ultimately what matters most is howy ou say something and with what force. Especially, when you are trying to build a narrative for good. That would be in the spirit of sharing in which you had put the videos. Perhaps, one day. Navjor Kaur will tell her story, For the time being, can we, at least, expecta message that a sole recourse to 'natural remedies' like neem and haktic and ead to missed chances for timely medical intervention in patients with the life-threatening disease?

kaushik,dasgupta@expressindia.com



DECEMBER 2, 1984, FORTY YEARS AGO

RAJIV'S POLL CAMPAIGN

RAIIV GANDHI LAUNCHED the Congress-NAJIV AANDHI LAUNCHED the Congress-election campaign with a whirtwin dour of several UP towns and a virulent attack on the opposition, which he said was backing afores trying to break the nation. Making a dramatic entry in a blue and grey IAF helicopter, the 40-year-old Prime Minister had the crowds listen-ing to him in keen silence.

OPTIMISM ON INDIA-US THE FOUR-MEMBER American Senate delegation expressed optimism about the future of Indo-American relations at the end of their two-day visit. The Senators said: "We leave with a renewed sense of friendship between our two nations and people and look forward to returning to this impressive country."

ZIA'S REFERENDUM

CHIEF MARTIAL LAW Administrator General Zia-ul-Haq, surprised his political detractors by announcing a nationwide referendum on December 19 to seek people's approval to continue as president of Pakistan for another five December 19 to seek people tinue as president of Pakistan for another five years. General Zia, who seized power seven years ago in a military coup, said that people will be asked to give their verdict on whether they approved his regime's policies and Islamisation drive since 1977.

ASSASSIN TESTIFIES

ASTONATS INCH, THE surviving assassin of Indira Gandhi, said be was motivated by Beant Singh to kill Indira Gandhi after Operation Blue Star in the Golden Temple, special investigat-ing agency sources said. In a statement before the additional chief metropolitan magistrate. Satwant said that first Beant Singh fired shots at Indira Gandhi from his revolver. After 30 sec onds, he opened fire at her with his sten gun.

#ExpressExplained

If there are questions of current or contemporary relevance that you would like explained, please write to explained@indianexpress.com

Prior sanction: what SC said on ED cases against public officials

CITING AS precedent a recent ruling by the Supreme Court, former Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal and Congress MP P Chidambaram moved the Delhi High Court, seeking a stay on their respective trials. While Chidambaram's trial in the Aire-d-Maxis case was stayed on November 20, the HC is still bearing Kejriwal's plea regarding the excise policy scam.

Dolley scam.

The SC ruling being cited here came on November 6, mandating for the first time that the Enforcement Directorate (ED) obtain prior sanction to prosecute public servants on money laundering charges.

What is the prior sanction provision? Section 197 of the Code of Criminal

Procedure, 1973, (CrPC) bars courts from tak-ing cognisance of offences alleged to have been committed by a judge, a magistrate, or a public servant who was "acting or purport-ing to act in the discharge of his official duty' le committing the alleged offence, u less prior or "previous" sanction has been given by the government. An identical requirement is found under Section 218 of the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita, 2022 (Buss)

the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksua Samma, 2023 (BNSS).
This provision is meant to shield public servants from unnecessary prosecution. However, the explanation to the provision clarifies that "no sanction shall be required when public servants are accused of certain crimes against women (such as rape, sexual harassment, stalking, and voyeurism), and other serious crimes such as human trafficking.
Several previous rulings on the provision have held that the provision does not extend

only to those acts or omissions which are done by public servants while discharging their official duties.

For instance, in Devinder Singh v. State of Punjab (2016), the SC held that "protection of sanction is an assurance to an honest and

or sanction is an assurance to an honest and January 20 sincere officer to perform his duty honestly and to the best of his ability to further public duty. However, authority cannot be camouflaged to commit crime."

What does the recent SC verdict say? On November 6, the SC held that Section 197(1) of the CrPC will apply to alleged of-fences under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) too. A Bench com-prising Justices A S Oka and Augustine

George Masih delivered the verdict in a case involving IAS officers Bibhu Prasad Acharya and Adityanath Das, both of whom are facing money laundering charges. The case also im-plicates former Andhra Pradesh Chief inister Jagan Mohan Reddy.

In a 18-page decision, the SC upheld an January 2019 order by the Telangana HC

January 2019 order by the Telangana HC
Which set saide the trial court's
order taking cognisance of the
case. The challenge was on the
ground that both of them were
public servants and, therefore,
it was necessary to obtain prior sanction under Section 197(1) of the CPC before they
could be prosecuted.
The SC noted that although there is no
specific provision in the PMIA that states
prior sanction is not required, it did not find
"amy provision therein which is inconsistent
with the provisions of Section 197(1) of

PMLA which makes the provisions of the CrPC applicable to all proceedings under the PMLA, unless they are inconsistent with the The SC also recorded that the accused

were public servants, and that there was a connection between their duties and alleged criminal acts, thus satisfying both conditions for requirement of prior sanction under CrPC section 197(1).

What can be the impact of the prior sanction requirement?
While complaints and the investigation under PMLA will hold, cognisance of chargesheets accusing public servants of money laundering purportedly while indischarge of their duty by the trial court can go away.

In effect, this can mean that an accused

court, can argue during an appeal that the of-fences alleged were in discharge of their duty and that the trial took place without obtaining prior sanction from the government, I this argument is accepted, it can result in the court setting aside the conviction.

In P K Pradhan v. State of Sikkim (2001) In PR Pradhan v. State of Sikkim (2001), the SC held that the argument that prior sanction under Section 197 was not obtained can be raised by the accused at any time during a trial, or even after conviction. However, the accused public servant must establish that his alleged act was in the course of the performance of his official duty.

As the SC held in the Biblu Prasad Acharya judgement, "there is no embargo on considering the plea of absence of sanction, after cognizance is taken by the Special Court of the offences punishable under Section 4 of the PMLA."

EXPLAINED SCIENCE

FROM HOW FAR CAN A STORM AFFECT AIRCRAFT? NEW STUDY ANSWERS

RATTLED NERVES and spilled drinks are the most common outcomes of a choppy flight, but intense air turbulence can also cause bodily harm. And while one well-known cause of air turbulence is thundestroms, it's poorly understord how far from a tempest shaky conditions are likely to persist.

To answer that question, researchers.

recently analysed millions of measure-ments of air turbulence collected by commercial aircraft.

The team found that a height of a jarring flight extended more than 55 miles away from a thunderstorm, which is roughly three times the storm-avoidance distance currently recommended by the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) of the US

These findings, published in November in The Bulletin of the American Meteorological Society, could inform new guidelines for storm avoidance, the re-

generations as a searchers suggest. Pilots and dispatch crews on the ground have long kept an eye trained on the weather. "The links between meteorology and aviation go way, way back," said Stacey Hitchcock, an atmospheric scientist at the University of Oklahoma in Namen.

Thunderstorms are of particular con cern to pilots. "You get really rapid changes in vertical and horizontal motion over short distances," Hitchcock said. Those chaotic motions — which can also be caused by jet stream winds and air moving around obstacles like mountains

moving around obstacles like mountains can cause aircraft to go up and down, creating the turnulusus sensation that's all too familiar to many figers. In the past, daredevil pilots played a key role in revealing how aircraft experi-ence turbulence near thunderstorms: A fleet of five P-61 C Black Widow aircraft repeatedly flew through thunderstorms above Florida and Othio in the 1940s. Today, however, scientists have access to troves of air turbulence data. "Almost all commercial aircraft now are collect-ing some form of turbulence data." Said Todd Jane, an atmospheric scientist at the

ing some form of turbulence data," said Todd Lane, an atmospheric scientist at the University of Melbourne in Australia who was involved in the new research. Hitchcock and her collaborators



Thunderstorms are of particular concern to pilots, Wikimedia Commo

analysed roughly 200 million such measurements made over United States airspace from 2009 to 2017.

Next, the team mined archival radar data to calculate the locations of thunderstorms. By comparing the positions of airplanes and thunderstorms in three-dimensional space, the researchers determined how the relative risk of experiencing light, moderate and seven turbulence changed based on the distance from a thunderstorm.

The sphere of influence of a thunderstorm extended to significant distances, he researchers showed. You can even

ed. "You can ever go as far as 50, 60, 70 kilometers from a storm and still have double the risk of tur-

Current FAA guidelines for storm

Current FAA guidelines for storm avoidance dictate that pilots maintain a horizontal distance of at least 20 miles from a thunderstorm. But giving storms a wider berth would mean more rerouting of aircraft, which is no small feat in crowded airspace, said Mohamed Foudad, a turbulence researcher at the University of Reading in England who was not involved in the research. 'It will be complicated to put more restrictions on these guidelines.'

Another possibility is that captains

Another possibility is that captains could opt to turn on the seat belt sign earen planes are farther from thun-ns. Hitchesel torms, Hitchcock said.



Dargah Sharif of Ajmer

EXPLAINED HISTORY

A petition in court has sought a survey of the shrine of Khwaja Moinuddin Chishti in Ajmer, based on claims that it was constructed after demolishing 'Hindu and Jain' temples. What is the history of the centuries-old dargah, and of the revered Sufi saint who rests there?

ARJUN SENGUPTA & HAMZA KHAN

A COURT in Ajmer last Wednesday admitted a petition requesting a survey of the Ajmer Sharif Dargah, the shrine of the revered Sufi saint Khwaja Moinuddin Chishti (also spelt 'Muinuddin', 'Muiniiddin', or 'Mu'in al-din'). The petition claims that the dargah was con-structed "after demolishing Hindu and Jain temples" that stood at the site

The town and the dargah

Ajmer, the referred to a Ajaymeru, was once the capital of the Chauhans, a Raiput clan that rulled parts of present-day Rajashan, Haryana, Delhi, and Uttar Pradesh from the seventh to the 12th centuries CE. Ajaydeva is credited with constructing the city in the mid-12th century.

The town was sacked by the Afghan in-

from the seventh to the 12th centuries CE. Ajaydeva is credited with constructing the city in the mid-12th century. The town was sacked by the Afghan in-vader Muhammad of Ghor after he defeated Prithviraj III (popularly known as Prithviraj Chauhan) in the Second Battle of Tarain in 1192. The Ghurid army killed, looted, and "destroyed the pillars and foundations of the idol temples" in Ajaymeru, Har Bilas Sarda, er-based jurist, wrote in Ajmer. orical and Descriptive (1911). Sarda's book is the primary source material cited in the

is the primary source material cited in the petition filed before the court. Subsequently, the city fell into a state of disrepair for almost 400 years, until it saw a revival during the reign of the Mughal emperor Akbar (1556-1605). "In the middle of the fifteenth century AD, it is said that tigers used to roam where the tomb of Khwaja Munindidin Chishit stands," Sarda wrote. The mausoleum itself was built some time in the second half of the 15th century. According to tradition, Sarda wrote, the cellar in which the Khwaja was interred houses "the image of Mahadeva in a temple, on which sandal used to be placed every day by a Brahman family still maintained by the Dargah gharyout (bell striker). Dargah gharyali (bell striker)". His account, however, does not say that

a temple was destroyed to build the dargah. Robert Hamilton Irvine in Some Account

of the General and Medical Topography of Ajmeer (1841) wrote about a story he had heard from one of Ajmer's "most learned

heard from one of Ajmer's "most tearned khaddims" (attendants).

"At one place...there was an ancient shrine sacred to Mahadeva, the lingam of which was hidden by leaves and rubbish. To this wood the Khwaja had retired to contemplate [for] forty days; and every day he hung up his small musstay of water on a branch of a tree overhanging the lingam. The water constantly dropped on this. At length Mahadeva became highly pleased. [and]



Devotees offer prayers at Ajmer Sharif Dargah. People from all faiths and all walks of life come to pay their respects to the Khwaja. PTA/File

spoke out of the stone commending his

virtue, "Irvine wrote.
Historian P M Currie, who cited Irvine's work in The Shrine and Cult of Mu'in al-din Chishti Ajmer (1989), mentioned a different version of this legend, in which the lingam lies undermeath the Khwaja's tomb.

Journey from Sistan to Ajmer

These legends narrated by Ajmer Shari's khadims serve to explain why people from all faiths and all walks of life come to pay their respects to the Khwaja. Speaking about the legend of Moinuddin's encounter with Lord Shwa, Irvine wrote: "From this tradition...the Hindus equally venerate the Khwaja with the Mahomedans".

One can find such stories about many Sufi rines across India. Sufism, the mystical aspect of Islam, emerged between the seventh and 10th centuries as a counterweight to the orthodoxy of the clergy, and the increasing

orthodoxy of the clergy, and the increasing worldliness of the ummah.

Sufi traditions — especially those of the Chishti order of Sufism to which Moinuddin and later Sufi masters such as Qurbuddin Bakhtiyar Kaki, Hazzar Nizamuddin Auliya, and Nasiruddin Mahmud Chiragh Dehlawi, all of Delhi, belonged — drew heavily from pre-existing local practices, which were seen as heretical in orthodox Islam. The Chishti saints in India preached a message of toler-

ance and inclusivity.

Khwaja Moinuddin Chishti of Ajmer exemplified this heterodoxy. He "watched ascetics perform yoga... He realised how much he had in common with the wandering mystics of the land who, like him, were unafraid to express their utter devotion to their creator as the ultimate means of achieving spiritual perfection," historian Mehru Jaffer wrote in The Book of Muinuddin Chishti (2008).

(2008).

Born in 1141 in Sistan, a province in Persia (Iran), Moinuddin was orphaned at the age of 14. He was set on his spiritual journey after a chance encounter with a wandering mystic named Ibrahim Qandozi, who is said to have advised him to seek out the truth that lay beyond loneliness, death, and destruction (Jaffer). By the time he turned 20, Moinuddin ed widely, and had studied theology, grammar, philosophy, ethics, and reli-gion in the seminaries of Bukhara and

Samarkand.

In Herath (in present-day Afghanistan),
Moinuddin met Khwaja Usman Harooni, a
Sufi master of the Chishti order, in whom he
found a mentor and spiritual teacher, and
was initiated into the Chishti silsillo (chain of
spiritual descent).

Moinuddin accepted Qutbuddin

Moinuddin accepted Qutbuddin Bakhtiyar Kaki as his first follower, with whom he journeyed to Multan, where he

idied Sanskrit and talked to Hindu schol tudied Sanskit and talked to Filinduschol-rs. He then went to Lahore, then to Delhi, nd finally reached Ajmer in 1191. He met his wife, Bibi Ummatullah, in

Ajmer, and decided to stay in the city. "The odest home of Bibi and Muinuddin made of mud soon became a refuge for all those without roof, shelter or food, and for those seeking solace and peace. His generosity and amazing acts of selflessness earned Muinuddin the title of Gharib Nawaz, or friend of the poor," Jaffer wrote

Development of the shrine

Moinuddin died in 1236, "On the death of the Khwaja, his remains were interred in the cell in which he lived, but no masonry tomb was built over them. In fact he appears to have been forgotten in Ajmer," Sarda

A pucca mausoleum for the pir was first A pucca mausoreum to the pir was inst constructed in the 1460s by the Khalji rulers of Malwa (not to be confused with the Khalji sultans of Delhi). Sultan Mahmud Khan Khalji and his son Ghiyasuddin built the Buland Darwaza, the dargah's massive

The architecture of this gateway has beer cited in the petition, Quoting Sarda, the peti-tion says that "this gate is supported on ei-ther side by three-storied chatrees of carvec the side by three-storied charrers of carved stone, the spoils of some Hindubuilding. The materials and the style of these charrers plainly betray their Hindu origin... It is also stated that these charrers and the gate...formed part of an old Jain temple, which was demolished.

The current white marble dome of the Aljmer Dargah was built in 1532, during the reign of the Mughal emperor Humayun, according to an inscription on the northern wall of the building.

But the real expansion in Ajmer took place during the reign of Akbar, who was a great devotee of a later Chishti saint, Salim Chishti of Fater Purpose.

Chishti of Fatehpur Sikri.

"By 1579 Akbar had come on pilgrimage to the dargah of Mu'in al-Din Chishti in Ajmer fourteen times... The construction of religious structures was encouraged by the new status that Akbar's interest in the Chishti sect conferred upon the city; this was enhanced by

imperial decree," historian Catherine B Asher imperial decree, "historian Catherine B Asher wrote in her seminal work Architecture of Mughal India (1992). In the early 1570s, Akbar had a mosque — now referred to as the Akbari Masjid — built to the west of the shrine's southern en-

trance.
Further construction took place during
the raigns of emperors Jahangir (1605-27) Further construction took place using the reigns of emperors Jahangir (1605-27) and Shah Jahan (1628-58). In 1616, Jahangir had a "gold railing with lattice work" built around the tomb of the saint.

Who is 'Chill Guy', and what his popularity says about online meme culture

POULOMI DEB

THE IMAGE of the "Chill Guy" has tak artic in MALE of the "Chill Guy" has taken so-cial media by storm in recent weeks. Brands and celebrities alike have clamoured to em-brace the latest viral meme: a human-like dog in a sweater, jeans and sneakers, with arms tucked in his pockets and a bemused smirk. Chill Guy could be any-where – a field full of flowers or superimposed onto some-one's face. The BIPX's Argount

EXPLAINED CULTURE or superimposed onto some-one's face, The BJP's X account

recently posted a version, with Prime Minister Modi's face on the cartoon, The accompanying text described him as a "chill guy who defies all odds and delivers landvictories in Harvana & Maharashtra" Notwithstanding the new-found popu-larity, Chill Guy has been around for a while. American artist Philip Banks posted the illustration on Xin October last year, saying,
"My new character, his whole deal is he's a
chill guy that lowkey doesn't give a f"k".
On Instagram Reels, Chill Guy is often
paired with American singer-songwriter
Gia Margaret's soft piano song #fniok Wood.
In an interview, Margaret said she was
burning Hinoki incense while recording it,
a scent "known to reduce
stress, tiredness and stimulate
the brain."

American artist Philip Banks posted the il-

What explains Chill Guy's

appeal? nside of being online all the time is the relentless exposure to an unend-ing stream of thoughts and images. Chill Guy's nonchalance, for one, resonates with chronically online people who battle the somewhat ironic pressure to seem de-tached amidst the stream of information

coming their way.

The laidback Chill Guy also presents a marked contrast to other recent social media trends originating in the US.

For example, Singer Charli XCX's "Brat" phenomenon speaks of women being "confident, independent or hedonistic" (as the Collins Dictionary defines "brat"). Similarly, "sigma males" project assertiveness and discipline. Chill Guy is not trying to project an ing — he's just chill. This also lends hi

thing — he's just chill. This also lends him well to several meme templates and sce-narios, with his impassive expression a blank canvas for everyone to blend their brands of humour

In some corners of Instagram, he's seen as a representative of men's desire to relax from positions of "responsibility", in others, he's messed up an important work task and

with it. ie iterations of Chill Guy even find



The 'Chill Guy' character was created by artist Philip Banks, X/@Xdata

him in situations that joke about engaging in "toxic" relationships or substance abuse, ultimately remaining unbothered. Others come with nier-tranging advice about your mental health. He is, thus, a vessel for both endless optimism and a severe lack of faith, appealing to a range of people on the Internet. Animations of him talking have also surfaced. Throughout it all, his impas-sive expression never changes.

What has happened to Chill Guy and his creator since the meme erupted?
This November, just as Chill Guy was gaining momentum, a cryptocurrency to-ken named "ChillGuy" was released. Since November 15, its value has shot up to over \$500 million, though it has reportedly since \$500 million, though it has reportedly declined to \$489 million as of Nove 30, according to crypto tracker website CoinMarketCap. The website also reported that "ChillGuy" outperformed other that "ChillGuy" outperformed other "meme coins" such as Dogecoin (DOGE) and Shiba

Inu (SHIB). Philip Banks issued a statement clarify

ing that he had obtained copyright on his illustration and would be taking legal action against "unauthorised merchandise and sh'tcoins." In another post on Instagram, he decried all crypto-related activities using the image.

Banks said he was fine with brands using the image, with credit. Banks has also tagged brands such as Adidas to demand that they properly credit him for using the image in their content.

The artist has also been the target of harassment rewaline on X that his privated-ressument rewaline and X that his privated-ressument rewaline on X that his privated-ressument rewaline rewal

rassment, revealing on X that his pri tails had been leaked online.

He is currently crowdfunding to make Chill Guy plush toys and partnering with brands such as Sprite London to make reels based on the character. Banks is al imenting with variations on the Chill Guy

LONGER VERSION ON





PERVASIVE GROWTH

Vice-president Jagdeep Dhankha

India is a country that is on the rise - when you look at the sea, when you look at the land, when you look at the sky, and when you look at space

Misplaced creativity

In order to push boundaries to stand out, brands often send confusing messages

HE UNRELENTING BACKLASH against Jaguar's rebranding exercise raises a relevant question: Why do some of the most iconic companies make mistakes in their brand communication that chip away at their reputation? The reasons can be many — taking the audience for granted, failure of adequate research, a temporary creativity block, etc. But the biggest reason is that in their urge to do something different, companies forget to figure out who their audience is and what they want. In Jaguar's case, it's all this and more. The company recently refreshed its logo and brand presence, doing away with the iconic leaping big cat in favour of curvy typography and new credos: "Copy nothing. Delete ordinary."

Affirst glance, there is nothing wrong in all these for a brand which is seeking to reinvent and reimagine itself as an all-electric vehicle maker, Jaguar has said the advertisement marks the "reveal of a completely reimagined brand" and that the next stage in the transformation will be revealed on December 2. The company has also said it needed to re-establish the brand at a completely different price point and hence wanted to move away from HE UNRELENTING BACKLASH against Jaguar's rebranding exer-

December 2. The company has also said it needed to re-establish the brand at a completely different price point and hence wanted to move away from traditional automotive stereotypes. But one fails to understand how featuring catwalk models with asymmetrical haircuts and brightly coloured, haute couture dothing walking around a Mars-like landscape bathed in bright pink will attract younger and richer customers.

The controversy is the latest example of a brand pursuing an apparently "woke" agenda to appease and hopefully attract socially conscious, younger audiences. But at what cost? In recent years there has been a super-charging of brands jumping on the social responsibility bandwagon and creating polarising ads that alienate loyal customers as they aggressively market messages of diversity and empowerment. It's given rise to the popular refrain of "Go Woke, Go Broke" — a powerful consumer backlash where fed-up customers boycott a brand to send a clear message of their dissatisfaction. Brands need not always hijack sociopolitical causes and realign their values to appease younger audiences and risk losing their core demographic. More importantly, Jaguar's rebranding sends confusing messages to the younger audiences as well.

ing their core demographic. More importantly, laguar's rebranding sends confusing messages to the younger audiences as well. laguarwould do well to recognise that it's a botched-up job and withdraw before it's too late. Many other illustrious peers have done precisely that. Apple, for example, withdraw its "Crush" campaign for its iPad Pro 2024 which depicted musical instruments and creative tools being crushed by a hydraulic press, unwelling the sleek gadget in the end. The ad hit a raw nerve almost immediately, as it was interpreted as crushing creativity. Sometimes good intentions have gone horribly wrong. For example, one Pepsi ad featured Kendall Jenner ending a heavily policed demonstration by handingan officer a can of Pensi. While Pensi was triving to "project a global message of officer a can of Pensi. While Pensi was triving to "project a global message of tured Kendall Jenner ending a heavily policed demonstration by handing an officer a can of Pepsi. While Pepsi was trying to "project a global message of unity, peace, and understanding", the brand was accused of trivialising protests — in this case, the Black Lives Matter movement. The video was removed 24 hours later, Grabbing the attention of consumers is becoming increasingly difficult, so brands want to push boundaries to stand out. But companies like Jaguar must draw a line here. Done right, you can tap into the extigest. Done wrong, you might be seen as an outdated relic. The bottom line is this: Creating controversial ads can be a fine line between an ad that each speak lateling and one that considers want beautiful to be bin of sharps. gets people talking and one that consigns your brand to the bin of shame.

There are bigger threats to whales than windmills

PRESIDENT-ELECTDONALD Trump has used saving whales, of all things, as a reason he has promised to shut down all US offshore wind energy projects when he takes office. He claims windmills make noise, "causing them to die in numbers never seen before" and its "divinig them crazy". He lamented the fate of whales just days before the election on the Joe Rogan show.

I shouldn't take too much nuance to acknowledge the potential for harm from the wind industry while also dismissing the absurd idea that whales will beneft in any way from replacing wind energy with more fossi fluel extraction. Fossil fuels are not only dirtier but their extraction and transport create far more underwater noise. But with Trump's election, some power companies are already pulling back on plans. TotalEnergies said this week that it had halted a project to build enough off-store windmills to supply energy to 3 million people. Still, it will be difficult for Trump to keep his pledge to kill all offshore wind development on "Day One". Experts say expanding offshore wind aligns with Trump's economic and energy-independence goals.

Scientists have a ranse of views on the potential harm of wind energy produc-

Experts say expanding outsines with a diagns with I trump section and neighborhood and the control of the potential harm of wind energy production, Johnshelm of the control of scientific American that the practice isn't what's killing whales, and others have asserted there is no evidence that wind power is tied to the creatures' deaths. Others have advocated that the US adopt noise mitigation

the creatures' deaths. Others have advocated that the US adopt noise mitigation measures, which are mandatory in Europe. I heard that view at a recent meeting of the Acoustical Society of America. There, Michael Stocker, an expert in bioacoustics, talked about the impact of offshore wind on whale deaths.

Stocker, founder of the California-based group Ocean Conservation Research, said he was asked to investigate a string of whale deaths off the coast of New Jersey in late 20½ and early 20½.3 The deaths coincided with 11 surveys using sound waves to map the sea floor in preparation for wind farm construction. Most of the dead whales showed signs of injury from ship strikes, but he wondered whether the noise from so many concurrent surveys contributed by

Un. Most of the dead whales showed signs of injury from ship strikes, but he wondered whether the noise of most many the signs of injury from ship strikes, but he wondered whether the noise of the sold compromising the animals' vigilance.

He's not convinced we know enough about the effects of constructing the massive farms to be sure they're safe. The surveying is just the beginning, he said, followed by months of much louder pile driving.

But the surveys and even the pile driving associated with wind turbines are faint compared with the seismic surveys used to prospect for offshore oil. These surveys involve blasting the oceans with air guns to map deep beneath the sea floor, and the sound carries for hundreds of miles.

Wind farm surveys and construction "are a teeny, weeny little impact compared to the absolutely monstrous, heliacious impact of seismic air guns", said David Haskell, an evolutionary biologist who wrote about underwater noise in his book Sounds Wild and Broken. "We're creating an acoustic hell for many marine creatures shipping is the most relentless source of underwater noise, and about half of shipping is devoted to moving fossil fuels, Haskell said.

Noise has an impact on all kinds of marine creatures and can even kill some small organisms, said Carlos Duarte, a biologist at King Abdullah University of Science titled" The soundscape of the Anthropocene ocean. "Ships create booming underwater noise because their propellers cause exitation — the implosion of bubbles. That can be reduced by a factor of 10, he said, by switching to electric ships. It would be a mistake to react to Trump's misguided concern with overconfident assertions that offshore wind power is automatically harmless to marine life. The crucial point is that it can be made reasonably safe, while there's no safe way to implement a "di'll, labay, di'll." strategy and continue to power the world with massive amounts of fossil fuel.

If we really care about whales, even wind power should be subject to continued study and noise

study and noise mitigation.

TERMS OF TRADE

INDIA'S ABSENCE FROM SUCH A MARKET WOULD DISADVANTAGE BOTH ITS CONSUMERS AND FIRMS

Rethinking RCEP

An independent

upon joining the

RCEP, the Indian economy could gain up to \$60 billion by 2030

HE WORLD BANK'S India
Development Update,
released in September, recommended that the country
revisit its commitments to
plurilateral trade deals, especially the
Regional Comprehensive Economic
Partnership (RECP) The RCEP, the negotiations of which saw India play a pivotal
releight from the commencement of tations of which savi in dia playa pievol to legist from the commencement of talks in 2013, is a free-trade agreement (PTA) between the 10 ASEAN (Association of South Bast Asian Nations) countries and the advanced economies of South Korea, Japan, China, Australia, and New Zealand. The reasons cited by Indian stakeholders for not joining the partnership were trade imbalances, especially with China, and concerns about safeguarding domestic industries. It has been empirically established that open trade flows contribute to the competitiveness of any economy with freer economies tending to be richer.

competitiveness of any economy with freer economies tending to be richer. Despite sustained economic growth surpassing global headwinds, the share of trade in goods and services in India's GDP has been falling over the years. Moreover, the exports are dominated by the services sector and high-skilled manufacturing. Such sectors, though significant in absolute numbers, do not employ a large section of the population. This has become more prominent as the direct employment from exports fell from a peak of 9.5% of total domestic employment in 2012 to 6.5% in 2020. Despite accounting for 40% of formal manufacturing jobs, India's labour-intensive industries such as textile and apparel accounted for roughly 20% of manufacturing gross value added (CVA) compared to the 70% share of the capital-intensive sector. Even in the traditional stronghold of service sector exports, India serves only 4.3% of the global demand. These numbers highlight the huge potential for the country



to diversify and upgrade its export capabilities. With the unpredictable trade atmosphere and rise of protectionism in the Western world, the RCEP would have provided a fertile ground for diversification away from the traditional markets and opportunities for productivity growth and innovation.

The opponents of the trade deal point to the bilateral FTAs that have been artified by India with 13 out of 15 RCEP countries over the years. However, multiple bilateral greements is a businesse environments as businesse environments as businesses must opport for the property of the property

agreements lead to complex businesse environments as businesses must navigate numerous rules and regulations instead of a streamlined system. Add to this infrastructure and legistics limitations, technological and skill gaps, and policy uncertainty, and it's a recipe for a decrease in India's participation in the global value chains over the years. India's exposure to the RCEP supply chain would be further exacerbated by the "cumulation rule". According to this, to qualify for the tax breaks in the RCEP market, a firm must prove that at least 40% of its product components are manufactured in an RCEP country. As a result, an Indian product not part of the RCEP would fail to qualify for similar tax breaks.

The biggersticking point in the debate has been the outsized presence of China and its opaque practices contributing to

an unfair trade balance across the partan unfair trade balance across the part-nership. It has been argued that entering the RCF would be detrimental to India's already burgeoning trade deficit of \$85 billion with China. If a higher trade deficit is considered a deterrent to free trade, then it should also be noted that the trade deficit with ASEAN countries has risen from \$9 billion in 2016 to \$43 billion in 2022. Incidentally, among the RCF Poun-tries, India has one of the oldest FTAs with ASEAN China was also

the ASEAN. China was also claimed to be the biggest beneficiary of free trade in the RCEP. Trade deficits of study found that South Korea and Japan with China increased substan-

to e indian y could by to ion of the RCEP. However, such a course in the countries are goods through complex regulatory requirements and inaccessible distribution channels a mong others. These measures show that it is possible to safeguard consumer interests without losing out on free trade prospects. Additionally, concerns were raised around the Indian micro, small, and medium enterprises 'ability to survive the onslaught of Chinese traded goods. However, such an approach is too simplistic in the wider scheme. Chinese exports have, over the years, shifted away from low-skill manufactured output towards high-tech products such as

solar cells and electric vehicles. Similarly, the growing electronics industry witnessed imports of electronic parts to the tune of \$12 billion in 2023-24, more than half of total imports.

However, this shift in the Chinese however, this shift in the Chinese share in the export of textile, leather, apparel, and footwear products has failen consistently. However, as the World Bank report notes, the biggest beneficiaries of his gap have been Bangladesh, Vietnam, Poland, Germany, and France. Acommon market would provide India with an opportunity to capitalise on this trend and leverage the vast industrial land-scape to improve capacity. An independent study found that upon joining the RCEP, the Indian economy could gain up to \$60 billion by 2030, second only to China's \$80 billion gain.

In a world that is dependent on supply chains, India's absence from a market of such gargantuan proportions would disadvantage both its consumers and firms. Besides losing out on cheaper imports, India's absence from a market of such gargantuan proportions would disadvantage both its consumers and firms. Besides losing out on cheaper imports, India's reposition of the such as Ipan and Australla. However, the economic opportunities that surface with this greement are harder to ignore, despite these concerns in a changing world order. Exposure to global trends is thus necessary for conomic agents to be come globally competitive. Turning our back on KCEP of openmes' in evene and sir well was provided and so is seen to global trends is thus necessary of openmes' in evene globally competitive. Turning our back on KCEP of openmes' in evene and servine was the six of the servine globally competitive. Turning our back on KCEP of openmes' in evene and seven servine globally competitive. Turning our back on KCEP of openmes' in evene and seven servine seven as it was not servine and seven as a servine globally competitive. Turning our back on KCEP of openmes' in evene and seven servine globally competitive.

sure to global trends is thus necessary for economic agents to become globally competitive. Turning our back on RCEP or "openness" in general does not sit well with our ambitions to scale the ranks of the trillion-dollar-plus economies.

Co-authored with **Pradeep Puri** and **Shrey Tiwari**, respectively ior fellow and researcher, Institute for Competitiveness

Q2 GDP numbers have positive takeaways

hospitality, and communication segments grew by 6% over 4.5% last

seen this quarter



MADAN SABNAVIS

THE GDP NUMBERS for O2FY25 came as a major surprise as no forecaster pre-dicted a figure close to 5.4%. But there

as a major surprise as no forecaster predicted a figure close to 5.4%. But there are several positives when one looks closer. Sector-wise analysis shows that four of the eight did better than last year while one recorded high growth on a high base, though numerically lower.

First, agricultural growth was higher at 3.5%, Q2 includes September, which is when the kharif harvest starts. Given that area sown has been higher across most crops, output can be expected to be better this season. Thus, higher growth can be expected in Q3, when the crop is harvested. Add to this the high reservoir levels, and this means that the rabi crop can be expected to be better this season. Thus, higher growth the proposition of the season of the high reservoir levels, and this means that the rabi crop can be expected to be very good in the absence of anyweather shocks in March-April. Hence, the rural story can only get better in H2, which is positive for consumption. This bodes well for fertilisers and other inputs on the supply side and two-wheelers, tractors, electronics, and consumer goods on the demand side.

Second, the services sector has posted higher growth rates this quarter. The trade, transport, hospitality, and communication segments grew by 6% over 4.5% last year. This is indicative of the spending seen this quarter, which will only accelerate in the com-

6% over 4.5% last year. This is indicative of the spending seen this quarter, which will only accelerate in the coming months. There has been a major push in the "experience spending" by households this season, which will manifest in continued expansion. The Q2 numbers do not capture the festive spending, which has shown enhanced sales both in physical outlets as well as

e-commerce sites.

The finance and real estate sector grew by 6.7% compared to 6.2% last year. It should be remembered that this was also the period of slower growth in bank deposits as savers migrated to capital markets, keeping growth subdued. This had been reversed subsequently, and higher growth can be expected in H2. Further, the economy is now in the conventional busy season, where demand for credit picks up. This can be seen in the rather stable growth in credit to large industry as of October. Therefore, higher growth in this segment may be expected in Q2.

The third component, public administration, personal services, and defence—recorded the highest growth rate of 9.2% across the sector over 7.7% last year. A significant component here is government expenditure, which was subdued in November. In fact, government spending was slow in the first few months. This means that the tempo of growth will be maintained as the different departments work to meet expenditure targets.

Therefore, the picture on two major The trade, transport,

expenditure targets.

Therefore, the picture on two major segments — agriculture and services — is positive, with little apprehension.

Then where has the problem been? The

value added from construction was lower at 7.7%, which is impressive as it follows 13.6% growth from last year. Prospects here are linked with both road construction (in the government's purview) as well as housing, which witnessed a luli in September but has since picked up during the festive season. This means that the underperformer has been industry, which includes mining, manufacturing, and electricity, growth was 0.1% and electricity, growth was 0.1% and electricity, growth was 0.1% and electricity. Here, the base effects were stark, at 11.5% and 11.1% respectively. While these segvalue added from construction was

Based on the buoyancy seen in services and a

around 7.5% growth in H2 cannot be ruled out

possible rebound in industry to an extent,

11.5% and 11.1% respectively. While these seg-ments did pull down over-all growth in industry and GDP, the statistical base effect did play a role. These statistical effects are important insofar as future growth rates of segments in industry and expresses and he influenced year. This is indicative nulcative ruture growth rates of segments in industry and services can be influenced by them, as the overall economic growth was high at 8.296 last year. In fact, electricity consumption was high to Consumption was high to Consumption.

high at 8.2% last year. In fact, electricity consumption was high in Q2 until mid-August due to extreme heat conditions in several states, pushing up demand, which does not get captured. Further, mining typically slows down during monsoon. It can be expected that production would get better in H2.

This leaves manufacturing, which has been the major under-performing sector. It has a weight of 17-18% in gross value added (GVA). Here, the per-

formance has been K-shaped, with some sectors doing well and others lagging. This is revealed in the profit and loss accounts of companies for Q2. This has been the single most important factor for pulling down growth, as profitability has been low at the aggregate level. Sectors such as steel, refinery, hemicals, etc. have recorded lower growth in profits, which has affected value addition. The government too has done some subsidy front-loading this quarter, as can be seen in the monthly budgetary accounts. This has created a negative wedge between GVA and GDP growth.

accounts. This has created a negative wedge between GVA and GDP growth. Therefore, while the Q2 numbers are a negative surprise, the internals reveal stable growth in several segments. Consumption growth at 9,6% in nominal GDP growth, which is a positive sign. Based on farm prospects as well as the government's aim to meet budgetary outlays, H2 growth would be higher. The risk factor would be corporates, also facing rising input cost Besides, the base effects of high growth of 8.6% and 7.8% in H2FY24 will also affect the future growth numbers. Based affect the future growth numbers. Based on the buoyancy seen in services in par-ticular and a possible rebound in industicular and a possible rebound in indus-try to an extent, growth of around 7,5% in H2 cannot be ruled out. This can make the overall growth average around 6.6-6.8%, which, though lower than earlier projections of above 7%, would provide a base for stronger growth in FY26.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Trump's tariff threats

President-elect Donald Trump's recent warning to the BRICS nations has raised significant global economic concerns. He has threatened to impose a 100% tariff on these nations if they attempt to undermine the US dollar in international trade. The protential consequences of this move potential consequences of this move are profound. A 100% tariff would effectively double the cost of imported goods from BRICS nations,

making them significantly more expensive for American consumers and businesses. This could lead to inflationary pressures, disrupted global supply chains, and strained international trade relations. BRICS nations might also accelerate efforts to establish alternative currencies for trade, necessitating substantial coordination and investment in financial systems. The global economic community is watching economic community is watching closely, anticipating the broader

implications for trade dynamics and economic stability. —Amarjeet Kumar, Hazaribagh

Collective climate control

Apropos of "Towards a resilient Asia" (FE, November 30), the recently-concluded COP29 is a stark reminder of the fact that developed nations are elusive in fulfiling their commitment towards global climate control. Though they assured \$1.3 billion by 2035, it seems dubious. The onus thus

lies on Asian countries to stabilise the climate fund by generating their part in their own markets. Indifferent countries like the US have lost their interest on climate control. Both China and India must take the lead in climate control as the Asian majors and they could coordinate with other countries in the continent for major changes to the Asian mission. —NR Nagarajan, Sivakasi

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LETTERS

Very disturbing court orders

STRANGE ARE THE WAYS OF OPPOSITION PARTIES

WHY is it that the politicians are losing balance
in the country and crossing all
limits of decency while making
public statements? In November,
the Trinamool Congress leader
(TMC) and West Bengal minister
Akhil Giri made questionable remarks against the President of India Droupadi Murmu. The TMC
leader faced strong criticism from
BJP and even from his own party
after he made comments about after he made comments about President Murmu's appearance. Not only the minister, the West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee also had to apologise for this.

After the major blow suffered by Congress-led Maha Vikas Aghadi in Maharashtra, the op-position, particularly the Con-gress, has come up with the 'Ba-

hana' (alibi) that EVMs had failed. They did not stop there. One of the Congress leaders Bhai Jagtap commented, "EC is a dog sitting outside the PMs house."

outside the PMs house."

The Congress high command which waves a copy of the Constitution saying that they only can protect it did not apologise, nor did it pull up the leader who made such a comment. One of their spokespersons on TV said one should not take it literally and one should not take it literally and went on to question the surge in poll percentage after the time for polling was over. This despite the ECIs explanation a day earlier on why the percentage figures differ. What's more, till Sunday Congess did not file any complaint with the ECI.

The Congress had no complaints about EVMs when it won

the Karnataka elections. EVMs worked perfectly when they won the Telangana and recent Jharkhand elections. They also worked very well when the Con-gress won in Himachal Pradesh and Priyanka Gandhi Vadra got and Priyanka Gandhi Vadra got a record victory in Wayanad but the same EVMs have become vil-lains in Haryana and Maharashtra polls. In April 2024, when the op-position raised the issue of mal-functioning of EVMs, the ECI in a written affidavit to the Supreme functioning of EVMs, the ECI in a written affidavit to the Supreme Court said that no mismatch had been detected ever between the votes counted in the Electronic Voting Machines and the Voter Verifiable Paper Audit Trail slips (VVPATs), It said that it matched the EVM votes with more than 4 crore VVPAT slips and no instance of mismatch was found.

Still, the opposition is not willing to accept their failures. Let us look at the political sce-nario in the two Telugu states. There is a lot of buzz in the BRS in Telangana and YSRCP in Andhi Pradesh that Jamili elections (Or praction one election) would hap-pen soon, and that they are going to be back in power anytime now. Who told them that elections will Who told them that elections will take place now? Are they fooling themselves or trying to fool the voters? There is no doubt, the BIP wants to get the bill on One Nation One Election' passed in the winter session of the Parliament. That does not mean that the elections would be held immediately. There is a long process before it can be implemented.

Moreover, if 'one nation one election' becomes a reality, it

would be for 2029 elections. It is hard to believe that these political parties which swear to protect the Constitution do not know this reality. Apparently, they are trying to mislead their party rank and file and the people of the country. But they should understand that the parties and the leaders cannot mislead the voters. They are much more intelligent and informed than political parties. The

are much more intelligent and in-formed than political parties. The YSRCP and the BRS seem to be working in tandem. The YSRCP chief is even planning to go on district tours saying they are sure to be back in power very soon. It's high time these leaders came out of dream hand and worked for the welfare of the people. They should first learn to respect peo-ple's werdict by attending the As-sembly sessions.

INDIA's real Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth Islumped to a seven-quarter low of 5.4 per cent in July-Sptember, falling much lower than the consensus estimates of 6.5 per cent. A "sluggish growth" in manufacturing and mining, along with continued slow pace of government expenditure and weak private consumption weighed on the economic growth, shows data released by the National Statistical Office (NSO). The government should take cognisance of the causes and take up remedial measures at the earliest.

CK Ramani (Preprisi

India's growth rate decelerates

A local court order on a plea to conduct survey in the shrine of Khawaja Garib Nawaz in Ajmer, claiming that it was previously a temple, is a very disturbing court order. The pettion field by Hindu Sena President Vishnu Gupta is nothing but to gain cheap publicity, by referring a book of Har Bilas Sarda and his own "research" of two years that there was a Shva temple where the dargah. The court ordering a survey is nothing but opening a Pandora box. Smaller Courts are ordering surveys of Masjids like Gyan Wapi mosque, Shahi lama Masjid in Sambhal and now in Ajmes Dargah. These types of issues will have destabilising effect on the country. Governments should follow the Places of Worship Act 1991.

Zakir Hussain, Kazipet

C K Ramani, Chennai

Bangla Hindus face persecution

INDIA has been telling Pakistan to protect minorities since Independence, but to no avail. And since 1971, the same rhetoric was repeated with Bangladesh and again the result is negative. The present dispensation in Bangladesh under the pro-USA Prime Minister Moham-and Yunus would do nothing to stop attacks on Hindus and their religious places in that country. It is hoped things might change after Donald Trump takes over as the 47th President of the USA in January 2025; until then nothing is going to change where persecution of Hindus in Bangladesh is concerned.

Govarithana Myneedu, Vijayawada

THE rising attacks on religious minorities and their places of worship in Bangladesh are alarming. The Yunus-led government seems to be doing pretty little to control the spreading of harted. India should take initiative to persuade Bangladesh government not to be a mute spectator to the worsening law and order situation there. Though it's not India's policy to intervene in the neighbor's internal matters, it is high time for it to find ways to protect the interests of minorities there. Also, the comments of Shaikh Hasina, who fled her country and took refuge in India, against the Bangla government would not do any good.

Dr DVG Sankara Rao, Vizianagaram

Dr DVG Sankara Rao, Vizianagaram

IT is surprising that the people of Bangladesh are continuing protests in a violent way to demand ban on ISKCON even after their court dismissed the petition to do so. Don't they have the practice of respecting their judiciary? If the law has no power there, what is the use of calling that area a country? How long should Hindus be persecuted there with police connivance? Maybe it is better for India to inwade Bangladesh and create a separate country for Hindus there as it did in 1971 for opponents of Pakistan.

M Chandrasekhar, Kadapa

Gukesh Vs Ding: A battle of wits

Gukesh Vs Ding: A Dature of Wite and THE Ongoing WCC (FIDE 2024) is showcasing a gripping battle between Indian GM D Gukesh and Ding Liren of China, as they are redefining the art of the game. Both players have demonstrated a blend of caution and brilliance with each accumulating 2.5 points to far Played in a best-of-14 format, the first to reach 7.5 points claims victory. Though a win still feels distant halfway through, both players are displaying remarkable resilience, making this contest a fascinating and unpredictable spectacle.

P V Prakash, Mumbai

Cong must prove charges before EC

Collig must prove charges become LC.

Ect has called upon Congress for a personal hearing on its complaints. It is a good chance for Congress to question ECI on adding 76 lakh voters after 5 pm, not taking proper action on PM for his operarising speeches, EVM tampering, unprecedented increase of voters after Lok Sabha elections. It is felt that EVMs were helping BJP to show more than the votes cast in its favour, and this is so even where Congress had won viz. Karnataka, Wayanad. The explanations by ECI notwithstanding, LN.D.LA bloc must insist on paper voting for all upcoming elections.

thehansreader@gmail.com

睓 BENGALURU ONLINE

Orange alert Issued for seven districts in K'taka

BENGALURU: Cyclone Fengal; forming along the Tamil Nadu coast, has impacted Karnataka, prompting the India Meteorological Department (IMD) to issue an orange alert for seven districts in the southern interior region. The districts of Chikkamagaluru, Hassan, Kodagu, Mandya, Mysuru, Shivamogga, and Chamarajanagar are under an orange alert for heavy rainfall on Monday. A yellow alert has also been issued for Bengaluru Urban, Bengaluru Rural, Kolar, Ramanagara, Dakshina Kannada, and Uldun districts.

galuru Rural, Kolar, Kamanagan Udupi districts. According to IMD Regional Director C.S. Patil, heavy ainfall is expected in Mysuru, Chamara-According to ISBL Regional Director U.S. Faith, nearly to very heavy rainfall is expected in Mysuru, Chamara-janagar, Shivamogga, Chikkamagaluru, Hassan, Kodagu, and Mandya. Moderate rainfall is likely in Bengaluru, Kolar, Chikkaballapur, and Ramanagara, while light rain is forecast for parts of north interior Karnataka.

Read more at https://epaper.thehansindia.com

'HEARTBREAKINGLY DEVASTATING' US Reportedly Plans to Approve \$680 Million in Arms to Israel

OS1 nours airer a case-fire between the Israeli government and Leba-nese group Herbollah took effect, the Financial Times revealed that "U.S. Presi-dent Joe Biden has provi-sionally approved a Se80 million weapons sale to Is-rael," which has also spent the past nearly 14 months decimating the Hamas-gov-erned Gaza Strip. Citing unnamed people familiar with the matter, the British newspaper reported that "U.S. officials recently briefed Congress on the plan to provide thousands of additional joint direct at-tack munition kits to Israel.

n kits to Israel known as JDAMS, as well as hundreds of small-diameter

The Biden administra-tion's decision to advance the sale was subsequently confirmed by Reuters, which reported that "the package has been in the works for several months. It was first brought to the congressional committees in September then submit-ted for review in October." Human rights advocates critical of Israel's assaults on Lebanon and Gaza – which has led to a genocide case at the International Court of Justice and International Biden administraof Justice and Intern Criminal Court (ICC) ar rest warrants for Israel rest warrants for Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and former De-fense Minister Yoav Gallant - responded with alarm to the new reporting, "If these reports are true, it's heartbreakingly devastat-ing news," said Amnesty International USA. "These

International USA. "These are the weapons that our research has shown were used to wipe out entire families, without any discernable military objective."

Amnesty highlighted a trio of resolutions from Sen. Bernie Sanders (1-VL) that would have halted some arms sales to Israel. Although they failed to pass the Senate last week, the group was among several that noted over the course of three votes, 17, 18, and that noted over the course of three votes, 17, 18, and 19 senators supported halt-ing weapons sales, "send-ing a clear signal that U.S. policy must change." "Yet, the Biden admin-

"Yet, the Biden admin-istration seems to be ready and willing to keep piling more and more, despite Gaza descending into what President Biden just yes-terday described as 'hell,' Amnesty added Wednes-day." Sending more weap-ons that have been used to maim and kill with im-punity doesn't just put in jeopardy Palestinian lives and the elusive cease-fire the president is seeking, but also President Biden's own legacy."

legacy."
The Institute for Middle The Institute for Middle East Understanding Policy Project declared Wednes-day that "President Biden is spending the final days of his presidency going against the will of most



According to western assessments, around 1,15,000 to 1,60,000 Russian troops have died, 90% of the personnel it had at the beginning of the war. While another 5,00,000 have been injured. To offset these losses, Russia has been recruiting 20,000 new soldiers a month. Recruiting soldiers into the army has never been that easy in Russia even during peacetime. Relying on the North Korean military offers another solution, but North Korean troops have no combat experience

no combitations (L.S. law, and international law." "The weap-ons included in this package have been used by Israel in numerous apparent war crimes," the organization noted. "On July 13, 2024, Israel attacked a so-called 'safe zone' in al-Mawasi, in which internally displaced Palestinians were sheltering, killing at least 90 people and injuring hundreds more. A CNN investigation found that Israel carried out found that Israel carried out this attack with at least one

John Ramming Chappell, an adviser on legal and pol-

experience
icy issues at the Center for
Civilians in Conflict, similarly stressed that "these are
the very same weapons that
for months Israeli forces
have used to kill Palestinian
civilians and violate international humanitarian law."
"Continuing arms transfers
risks making the United
States and US officials
complicit in war crimes,"
he said. "These arms sales
are unlawful as a matter of are unlawful as a matter of both U.S. and international law. They are immoral. The congressional committees of jurisdiction can and must place a hold on the sales."

Sarah Leah Whitson, ex-

Sarah Leah Whitson, executive director of Democracy for the Arab World Now, pointed out that 'aiding and abetting war crimes and crimes against humanity is itself a crime for which U.S. officials may (and should) face prosecution at the ICC."

Neither the U.S. nor Israel is a state party to the Rome Statute of the ICC, though Palestine is. Both the Biden administration and President-elect Donald Trump's pick for national security adviser have attacked the warrants for Israeli leaders.

raeli leaders. In a speech to Israelis on In a speech to Israelis on Tuesday, Netanyahu said that one of the reasons for the cease-fire in Lebanon "is to give our forces a breather and replenish stocks. And I say it openly, it is no secret that there have been big delays in weapons and munitions deliveries. These delays will be resolved soon. We will receive supplies of advanced weaponry that will keep our soldiers safe and give us more strike force to complete our mission."

According to the Finan-

According to the Finan-cial Times: U.S. officials have denied there is any explicit link between the cease-fire deal and approval for the latest weapons de-livery. While the cease-fire deal includes a so-called side letter from the U.S. to Israel, setting out Washington's support for a cer-tain freedom of Israeli ac-tion, people familiar with the text said it included no

the text said it included no guarantees of weapon sales.
U.S. officials also deny that there have been deliberate delays to weapons shipments of 2,000 pound bombs, which Biden paused earlier this year over concerns about their use in densely populated areas of Gaza.

tza. The Times of Israelreport The Times of Israelreport-ed that Biden's State Depart-ment declined to confirm the advancement of the package but said that U.S. support for Israel in the face of Iran-backed threats is

support for israei in the face of Iran-backed threats is "unwavering" and all weapon transfers are carried out in line with federal law.

"We have made clear has a moral obligation and strategic imperative to protect civilians, investigate allegations of any wrongdoing, and ensure accountability for any abuses or violations of international human rights law or international human rights law or international human rights law or international human fights law or international humanitarian law," the State Department said. As of Wednesday, officials in Gaza said the death toll had hit at least 44,282 Palestinians with another 104,880 people with another 104,880 people

INDIA'S WORKFORCE TRANSFORMATION

A Rising Tide of Female Participation

As more women join India's workforce, the country stands on the brink of a transformative eco-nomic shift that embodies nomic shift that embodies the spirit of inclusivity and opportunity. As women step into roles across sectors—be it technology, healthcare, education, or manufacturing—they bring fresh ideas, skills, and dedication that fuel economic growth and enhance workplace dynamics.

Between 2017-18 and 2023-24, India recorded a remarkable increase in the Female Labor Force Participation Rate (LFPR) and Work Participation Rate (LFPR) and Work Participation Rate (UFR) for women, coupled with a drop in the female unemployment rate. This shift speaks not only to economic progress but also to India's drive toward creating an equitable, vibrant labor market where women play market where women play a leading role in shaping the nation's future.

nations future. Female work participa-tion rate (WPR) has nearly doubled, reflecting a power-ful wave of women entering various sectors of the work-force. This shift aligns with a similar upward trend in the female labor force partici-pation rate (LFPR), show-

casing the growing number of women actively seeking and securing employment. Additionally, a notable de-cline in the female unemployment rate signals an increase in job availability, with women capitalizing on these opportunities, reflect-ing both enhanced employ-ment access and growing job satisfaction among

What's driving the change?

The transformation in female workforce participation is fuelled by several significant factors, including educational advancements, structural shifts in India's economy, and improved measurement in labour data. One of the most nontable drivers is educational advancement, which has created a U-shaped trend in the female labour force participation rate (LFPR). As women pursue education, their participation in the workforce reflects this U-shaped curve. Women with workforce reflects this U-shaped curve. Women with lower levels of education often enter the workforce out of necessity, filling roles in informal or lower-wage sectors. At the opposite end, women with advanced degrees secure professional careers, resulting in higher

LFPR at both low and high ends of educational attainment. This curve reveals a dip in workforce participation at the mid-level education (secondary level) but a rise as women achieve higher qualifications. The pattern underscores the importance of advanced education in empowering women to enter meaningful careers, often with better financial stability and job satisfaction.

Investing in higher edu-cation for women, therecation for women, there-fore, emerges as a strategic approach to unlocking the full potential of the female workforce. By promoting educational attainment, soeducational attainment, so-ciety can ensure that more women not only enter the workforce but also thrive in roles that fully utilize their skills and capabilities. Structural shifts in In-dia's economy also play a significant role in enhanc-ing female participation. As the economy has expanded, growth sectors like services, technology, and manufacturing have created new opportunities beyond traditional agriculture. These sectors are particularly appealing to women and offer diverse job roles that were previously limited, broadening the landscape for female employment.

India's growth
The economic contributions of women not only add depth to India's labour force but also help diversify force but also help diversify perspectives in various in-dustries, stimulating fresh ideas and approaches. This shift is more than just num-bers; it signifies a strength-ening economy that is bet-ter equipped to face global competition and adapt to changing economic trends. As more women find em-ployment opportunities, the nation witnesses a steady

Female Labor Force Metrics (2017-18 vs. 2023-24) Work Participation Rate (WPR) (%) 22% 40.3% Labor Force Participation Rate (LFPR) (%) 23.3%

march towards gender equality. Women's increasing financial independence creates a ripple effect that uplit's families and communities, bringing about meaningful social change. When women contribute financially to their households, families are often able to invest more in education, access better healthcare, and explore new opportunities. This empowerment is transformative. Financially independent women are more likely to make decisions that benefit their children's futures, and communities futures, and communities gain when women have the resources and influence to create lasting positive im-pacts. The shift towards a more equitable workforce enriches the social fabric, setting a foundation for in-

Unemployment Rate (%)

setting a foundation for in-clusive growth.

With India's population growth expected to slow in the coming years, women's participation in the work-force will be vital to meet-ing the country's future la-bor demands. Encouraging

more women to enter the workforce is essential for sustaining Indias economic momentum. As the demand for skilled labor rises and the working-age population shrinks, a gender-balanced workforce will be crucial to maintaining productivity and addressing future economic challenges. By integrating more women into the labor market, India can ensure a steady supply of skilled professionals to support its diverse industries, from technology to healthcare and beyond. This approach not only prepares India for demographic shifts but also reinforces the country's economic foundamore women to enter the country's economic founda-tion, enabling it to thrive in a competitive global land-

5.6%

a competitive global land-scape.

As India's women con-tinue to rise, so too does the nation, driven by the energy, ambition, and talent of its people. This is more than an economic shift—it's the dawn of a new era of empowerment and oppor-tunity for all. ms.



THEIR VIEW

Steering clear of Trumponomics would serve other countries well

 $The \ US \ president-elect's \ policy \ plans \ will \ hurt \ more \ than \ help \ the \ US \ and \ policy makers \ elsewhere \ must \ recognize \ the \ risks$



on Health and Sustainable Development, a former chairman of Goldman Sachs Asset Management and a former UK treasury minister

iven Donald Trump's nominees for key cabinet positions so far, it appears that the US president-elect is determined at least to try to deliver on many of his campaign promises. If so, the current news

deliver on many of his campaign promises. If so, the current news crocke may have come as a welcome surprise to those who have grown tired of elected leaders making promises they have no intention of keeping. But as longtime student and practitioner of the dismal science (economics). I see no reason to believe that l'rump's policies will do what he and his supporters think they will do. For example, aggressively enforcing a country's immigration laws might well be a good idea. But aggressively pursuing illegal immigrants who are already in the country is another matter, and if it is done in a way that discourages immigrants more broadly, the United States could lose one of the key advantages that it has over many off its advanced-economy peers. With demographic trends putting downward pressure on the populations of Europe, Japan and many other countries, the US must be careful to not join them. Additional workers who can preserve the size of the labour force need to be found somewhere.

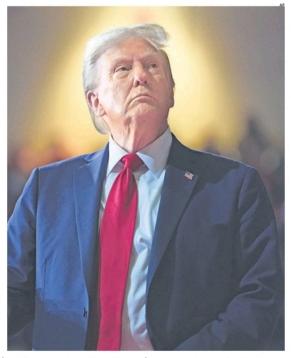
can preserve the size of the labour force need to be found somewhere.

Or consider Trump's two other major campaign promises: Significant tax cuts and new 10-20% tariffs on imports from the rest of the world, with the rate rising to 60% for goods from China. While it is easy to find economists who will disagree with each other on just about any economic-policy question, tariffs might be the one big exception. Few economists think they are a good idea, mainly because there is zero evidence that they can help reduce a country's trade deficit. Worse, all the additional costs and other negative consequences that they produce are well known.

Martin Wolf of the Financial Times demonstrates this clearly in a recent commentary. A country's balance of payments, he explains, is an accounting identity (an equation that must always balance out. Thus, any deficit on trade (which typically dominates the current-account balance) must be matched by a surplus of capital inflows. That is how the overall balance is balanced.

While the Us could use tariffs to reduce its imports from country 8, it will have to import more from countries B and C, unless it reduces the consumption, investment or government expenditure that drive its idemand for those imports in the first place. In fact, this is exactly what happened after the US imposed tariffs on

expenditure that drives its demand for those imports in the first place. In fact, this is exactly what happened after the US imposed tariffs on imports from China during Trump's previous term. The US continued to import the same goods, but from other countries, many of which increased their own imports from China. If Trump goes should and slaps punitive tariffs on those countries too [and he recently suggested h



VIEWS

would impose a 25% tariff on Mexico and Canada, though as punishment for letting immigrants and drugs slip into the USI, the same pattern would repeat itself.

There is no way around it: If the US truly wants to reduce its aggregate imports, it will have to

to reduce its aggregate imports, it will have to reduce overall domestic demand; or more pr cisely, it will have to raise domestic savings r

cisely, it will have to raise domestic savings relative to its investment needs, which in turn would mean receiving less net capital from abroad. Now consider Trump's promises to cut taxes and hand out various other goodies for those who helped elect him. Such measures, if all else remains constant, will boost domestic demand; and if they are applied together with tariffs, they will increase the cost of living. The inflation that sourced so many voters on Joe Biden's administration has eased, but Trump's agenda could send prices soaring again. And that is before accounting for retallation by other countries, most of which would introduce their own tariffs to hurt US exporters (as China and others did previously when they targeted US agriculture).

and others did previously when they targeted Us agriculture). What can other countries' leaders learn from America's bizare experiment? With Trump's unorthodox approach to politics now very much in vogue, we can expect to see more mini-Thur initiatives popping up around the world. But

insofar as they are Trumpian, they too will fail to achieve their intended purposes. Since all other countries have the same balance-of-payments identity as the US, those with large trade surpluses necessarily export more capital relative to their current domestic investment needs.

Faced with Trump's return, wise foreign leaders would start thinking about how to tackle their countries own long-standing domestic economic challenges. Those with excess savings, for example, ought to consider how to boost investment at home or reduce the domestic savings rate. Given their own current troubles, Germany and China both would be well served by such a strategy. Not only would it boost their economies and increase the appeal of their leaders; it also would reduce their exports of capital to the rest of the world, including the US.

Many other constructive policy changes could then follow. China, for example, could reform its

Many other constructive policy changes could then follow. China, for example, could reform its financial sector and allow its currency to acquire more of the features that have been so central to America's ability to attract capital from the rest of the world.

Future US leaders might then be less cavalier about dictating terms to others, not least because others would no longer be so dependent on the US and its currency.

MINT CURATOR

Saudi Arabia's popular culture is changing with liberalization

Riyadh's moves to open up the kingdom have had a positive impact





audi Arabia's unprecedented attempt to diversify from an oil economy to something more sustainable seems to be churning along nicely. The female labour participation rate has nearly dou-bied to 36% from 2016, the year Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman laid out his Vision 2030. Unemployment is at a record low. Last year, the number of domestic and foreign tourists exceeded 100 million for

foreign tourists exceeded 100 million for the first time. Headline statistics aside, what's Saudi Arabia really like? Curious, I did some sightseeing, taking advantage of a new route between Hong Kong and Riyadh. The two financial centres have been strengthening economic ties, cross-invest-ing and offering exchange-traded funds on each other's bourses. Cathay Pacific started a direct flight late last month. Before the trin my firend and I were fissing over our a direct light late last month. Before the trip, my friend and I were fusing over our outfits, worrying that we might get stopped on the street for not dressing conserva-tively enough. We were also a bit nervous about our road trip—after all, women were forbidden from driving until mid-2018. What we found was an open and friendly nation that velcomed visitors. We blended

What we found was an open and friendly nation that we clomed visitors. We blended in as well as any foreigners would in Abu Dhabi or Dubai, and we didn't spot the much-feared religious police. In Medina, we accidentally roamed into the courtyard of the Prophet's Mosque, not knowing it was for Muslims only. When a policeman asked us to leave, his tone was apologetic. Entertainment options have balloomed in a nation where the median age is 30. Perhaps because of the desert heart, nightlife is booming. From Riyadh's Boulevard City, a sprawl that includes an amusement park, outdoor cinemas and retail stores, to Jed-dah's Red Sea waterfront, people crowded the streets, singing, dancing and hanging out in cafes and hookah lounges well into the night. Female drivers are common!

out in cafes and hookah lounges well into the night. Female drivers are commonplace. And while most Saudi women still wear long flowing abayas as well as face coverings, fashionistas have lossed off their hijab and are wearing their abaya like a cloak. No one casts disapproving glances.
What about men? We took plenty of Uberrides and talked to Saudi drivers. One quipped that traffic in Rhyadh got worse after women began driving, A69-year-old in Jeddah said he was okay that two of his five adult children were unmarried. One 22-year-old said he was a huge fan of Emimin, who'll perform in Rhyadh soon. And people just assumed we were in the Kingdom for business.
Ancedotes saide, there's also statistical evidence that cultural and social reforms

are profoundly changing families and how they live and consume. The share of spending on restaurants, hotels, recreation and culture has increased from about 12% in 2017 to nearly 20% this year, according to Capital Economics. Home ownership among Saudi citizens has increased to 64% of the consumers of the common standing the common standing the common standing the grown ment shared payments for mortgages and taxed landowners who left plots undeveloped. Mortgage lending now accounts for nearly a quarter of banks 'total outstanding credit. As testament to the buzzing economy, rents are growing at a brisk lifts, amid sustained inflows of expartiate workers and large redevelopment plans in Riyadh and Jeddah.

As part of Vision 2030, Riyadh aims to lower the Saudi unemployment rate and increase small businesses' contribution to the economy. It's making progress on both fronts, while a cultural opening is giving young Saudis incentives to work. The prince is falling short on some of his metrics, and the nation's human rights record remains a serious concern. Women who post online about gender inequality can suffer decades-long jail settences. The

record remains a serious concern. Women who post online about gender inequality can suffer decades-long jail sentences. The 2022 Personal Status Law requires women to obtain a male guardian's permission to marry. This perhaps explains why Saudi Arabia is not getting as much foreign capital as Riyadh desires. In 2023, Norway's largest pension fund K.P. Dakcilsted some of Saudi's telecom and real estate companies. citing "human rights abuses,"

of Saudi's telecom and real estate compa-nies, citing "human rights abuses."

Last year, net foreign direct investment accounted for only 12% of GDP, well below Vision 2030 55% target. In addition, for-eigners are still mostly visiting Saudi Ara-bia for the Islamic pilgrimages of Haji and Umrah, even though the country is build-ing ambitious ski slopes in the desert and lavish resorts by the Red Sea that cater to non-religious tourists. The government is aiming for the sector to account for 10% of non-oil GDP.

Foreign fund managers have likened on-on GDP.

Foreign fund managers have likened

Foreign fund managers have likened Saudi Arabis's 2016 opening to China's I, I don't think that's fair, because Saudi Arabis is already a developed country by way of infrastructure. Its roads are good and malls are full of American chain stores—nothing like the 1980s China I knew. But if we look at the speed of cultural change, the parallel is eerily accurate.

MY VIEW | GENERAL DISEQUILIBRIUM

Welcome Elon Musk, shadow president-elect of the US

RAIRISHI SINGHAL



list and author

eading members of the US political and economic establishment are either ecstatic or nervous about Donald Trump's second term, depending on their respective world-views. Many imponderables cloud the horizon, given some of the unknown quantities in the Trump cabinet or the difficulty in predicting the gap between pre-poll rhetoric and actual policy roll-out.

One such X-factor (pun unintended) is Elon Musk. The businessman has been a Elon Musk. The businessman has been a vocal Trump's policy universe. There is intense speculation over Musk's new role, as well as attempts to understand the man, his psyche and its likely impact on the incoming administration. There are multiple ways to skin this, just like the proverbial cat. The first persona is one with an official role. Officially, he has been designated as co-head of the department of government efficiency (DOGE), a new ministry designed totrim federal flab. Musk will share responsibilities with Vivek Ramaswamy, whose sur-

vival instincts, after his failed presidency bid, drove him into Trump's arms. A fog blankets DOGE's exact role; in a co-authored article for Wall Street Journal, Musk and Ramaswamy wrote: "The two of us will advise DOGE at every step to pursue three major kinds of reform: regulatory rescissions, administrative reductions and cost savings." His second identity revolves around his actual vocation tech entrepreneurship with large investments spread across social media, space, artificial intelligence and electric vehicles. This part of Musk's character has given rise to guesswork on whether he will be able to maintain a distance between his government role and his businesses, or his government role and his businesses, or he will use one to further the other.

he will use one to further the other.

For example, he looks inches away from closing two crucial deals with the Indian government before officially moving into his new role. In the first instance, the Indian telecom ministry announced in October a willingness to allocate broadband spectrum to Musik's satellite service, Starflink, without it having to participate in an auction, the resource-allocation process followed for terrestrial operators (such as Jio and Airtel). The Indian government's "willingness' is expected to be converted into a licence if Starlink adheres to the Indian government's

security concerns over satellite telephony and data residency. With Musk now firmly ensconced within the new regime, it will be interesting to see the give-and-take between the Inclian government and Elon Musk. A second deal was consummated on 19 November, a few days after Donald Trump's election victory. Musk's SpaceX transported and successfully inserted into goosynchronous transfer orbit an Inclian communications satellite. GSATN-2. While the launch marks a While the launch marks a departure from India's as het amandindigenous satellite launch programme, it seems to have been necessitated by GSATN-2 being heavier than what Indian launch vehicles can bear; but it is the choice of SpaceX at this juncture that raises eyebrows.

What might rise are the hackles of Musk's cabinet colleagues over the businessman's China exposure. Electric arrmanufacturer Teskis Shanghai plant has an annual capacity of 950,000 vehicles, two-fifths of the company's total capacity of over 2.35 milself-reliant and indigenous as he takes on a new role in the government

lion. As China hawks within the inbound administration sharpen their talons, the fate of Tesla's China expansion plans looks uncertain and will test Musk's balancing skills. Meanwhile, Tesla's now-on-now-off plans for India could get a relook.

But Musk seems to be doing much more than busying himself with DGE or his quotidian business interests. And this twhat this inner Nobody can predict what part of his inner self will show up

is inner inists Noah Smith and Erik Torenberg, who jointly anchor the podeast Econ 102, Elon Musk should be called the shadow president of the US.

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never be US president because he was not born stateside; hence, shadow president. The word 'shadow' has interesting Jungian associations. According to the Dictionary of Psychology from the American Psychological Association, the shadow is an archetype within Carl Jung's analytical framework of psychology that represents the darker, unconscious side of the human psyche, "which may comprise anything (e.g. a trait, desire or emotion, whether positive or negative) that is unacceptable to an individual's conscious ego and as such remains unexpressed and hidden in the unconscious or darker side can lead to unpredictable behaviour, combined with what looks like Trump's own whimsical approach, it presents

behaviour; combined with what looks like Trump's own whinesical approach, it presents a risk. The Economist has it down pai: "He could also fall before he even starts, because of the combustibility of the Trump-Musk combination... The fusion of Silicon Valley libertarianism and techno-utopianism with the MAGA nationalism of Mr Trump's world is inherently volatile. 'It will be interesting to see what dominates whether political power catalyses Music's inner desires or whether he eventually comes to personify Trump's shadow, projecting the president-elect's repressed ideas, desires and instincts.



OUR VIEW



India's slowdown awaits a well-crafted response

The second-quarter loss of economic pace has underlying trends that risk reinforcing its key causes. Indian policy must support private investment, employment and consumption

oll managers in the BJP must be heaving a sigh of relief: the under whelming gross domestic product (GDP) data for the July-September 2024 quarter has been released well after the Maharashtra assembly polls were done and dusted. Logging disappointing year-on-year growth of 5.4%, the GDP data print for the second quarter of 2024-25 is not only much below consensus estimates from leading economists and analysts, but also offers a contrast from the economic narrative presented by top bureaucrats and economic administrators. While there is no saying if it would have affected the poll outcome in Maha-rashtra, where a BJP-led coalition won handsomely, news of a slowdown often has a way of acquiring contagion characteristics, countering feel-good messaging or negating the income effects of political handouts. Bad news always travels faster, and, given the eroding credibility of the political class, people are more inclined to lay great store by negative developments than accept news of progress at face value. The GDP

print confirms some major apprehensions.
The immediate anxiety stems from a slow-down on the demand side: both consumption and investment demand growth were listless this quarter, confirming suspicions of a struc-tural decline. While private final consumption expenditure has grown 6% year-on-year, it masks the fact that in absolute terms the quarter is below both the third and fourth quarters of 2023-24. Seasonality apart, consumption data over the past 12 quarters has remained largely between quarters. This raises concerns of whether the economy stares at a major struc tural weakness. With private consumption

accounting for close to 60% of GDP, any slump here is a worry. The other saviour that had kept GDP ticking along all these quarters—gross fixed capital formation—has also lost pace, with state governments joining the private sector's reluctance to carry the capex baton. Slowing consumption and investment is mirrored on the supply side. Manufacturing inertia (2.2% growth this quarter) and a slump in net tax collections (2.7%) also reflect slower growth.

Beyond these signs of uneven expansion, what should really be worrying authorities are the second-round effects that can loop back and further depress growth. The stasis in manufac-turing, which has also shown signs of being range-bound, is sure to impact unemployment which is rising in urban conurbations and could which is rising in urban conurbations and could further dampen both consumption and overall economic growth. For now, cash transfers by states and the Centre have managed to somewhat narrow the income gap and keep the consumption meter ticking, albeit at a slower pace. But handouts are not sustainable over the long term. The budget for 2025-26, just 60 days away, presents the Centre with an opportunity to undertake some policy shifts. The govern-ment must not lose faith in capital expenditure, while ensuring that the policy environment becomes more conducive for private sector investment. It is also vital for the Centre to re-engineer its production-linked incentive scheme to stimulate higher labour absorption. But before that is the Reserve Bank of India's monetary policy committee (MPC) meeting of 4-6 December. While the rate-setting panel's members are indeed caught in a cleft stick, what would be truly path-breaking is for the MPC to publicly acknowledge India's slowdown and act accordingly.

MY VIEW I THE INTERSECTION

Social movements need to lead India's fight against air pollution

We must generate the social capital required for people to act collectively towards a common cause



centre for research and education in public

ubilic attention is like the smog itself. It materializes as winter sets in, envelops the discourse for a few months and begins to dissipate early in the new year. Once out of sight, it is out of mind. At times like this, when the pollution in New Delhi and its surrounding region is at its most intense, there is a clamour for judicial diktats, draconian regulations and strong enforcement. By the end of January, most people move on to other issues. A relatively small number of environmental activists fight on, but the rest of society is no longer too concerned. Until Diwali, when a debate over bauning firecrackers triggers the next Sisyphean cycle.

cerned. Until Diwai, when a decoate over banning firecrackers triggers the next Sisyphean cycle. It's not just Delhi. Every Indian city has its own big bad pollution story that follows a similar pattern. I do not think we ask ourselves why we are unable to arrest the deterioration in our living environment. It does not help that ideologues point fingers at things like neoliberal capitalism, development models or this-or-that pollical party and its corruption. Holding these usual suspects' responsible gives us the mental comfort of having found the bad guys so that we can punish them, and more importantly rest the investigation. But if we pursue the case to its end, we will find that both the pollution and our failure to control it is due to a lack of social capital. As I have repeatedly

pointed out in these columns, 'we' do not have a sense of 'us.' In fact, it is debatable if the 'we' that I refer to in the lines above exists at all. Pollution is what economists call a

Pollution is what economists call a negative externality. Its extent is a negative externality. Its extent is a overriding the common interest. To extell the stackle the smog, it is necessary to arrive at a new balance between self-shness and public-mindedness. Tackling negative externalities is a cooperation problem. Hongula numbers of people have to work together to prioritize the problem, identify solutions and—this is the most important bit—accept the inevitable trade—offs that ensue. Solving the cooperation problem gets harder as the city gets more populous. It also becomes more complex when the population is more diverse. The scale, structure and dynamics of sol-city make India's cooperation problems every make India's cooperation problems every make India's cooperation problems.

the population is more diverse. The scale, structure and dynamics of society make India's cooperation problems hard and unprecedented, if not unique. Unfortunately, we do not have functioning social mechanisms to engender greater cooperation. That's because building such mechanisms itself is a cooperation problem. This is the place we must start. We need to build social capital around our civic communities. People must trust each other across community boundaries. Without such generalised trust, it is impossible to get the minimum cooperation necessary to combat problems like the smog. Democratic politics is destroying. Democratic politics is destroying social capital. Its dominant logic is one of differentiation. It thrives on othering. One party divides on religion, another on caste and yet another on caste and yet another on class. It is unrealistic to expect them to try and bridge the very divides that they rely on for their success. Yet, unless these divides are bridged, the smog will get worse. The Judiciary or executive are cut of the same cloth as the population and cannot just wave a wand if society does not believe in its magic.

The answer lies in social movements

its magic.
The answer lies in social movements that bond people into communities.

Climate is a superordinate threat th affects everyone. It can be the stimu for us to focus on rebuilding Indian society around pluralism, tolerance society aroung pitransin, toerance and a common national identity. History tells us that India achieved its greatest triumphs on the back of social movements. Environmental activism must move away from its technocratic preoccupation with big forums like CoP-29 and global climate goals, and instead think about how Indians can be made to think as Indians,

Translating global commitments Fransating gooal commitments needs society to make painful adjust-ments; some industries must shut down, some occupations will have to disappear, some people must move, some people must pay and so on. If we cannot do this for an immediate, palpa be and deadly hazard like the smog, what chance do we have of meeting on met, zero commitment? When is the net-zero commitment? Where is the social capital for it? Therefore, the message is 'if you care about environ

social capital for It. Therefore, the message is Tyou care about environmental goals, participate in a social movement that builds community. Obviously, it is not going to be easy. It will take years and decades. So will many global climate goals. Donors, social entrepreneurs and activists are prepared to invest patient capital to pursue technocratic approaches. Where they do consider social approaches, they are narrowly focused on specific climate goal-related outcomes. It is unlikely that any climate policy or solution will succeed unless there is a parallel initiative to create broad-based social capital. Like what they say about trees, the best time to start a movement to build social capital was 20 years ago. The second best time to snow.

is now.

There are a number of things the state can do about the smog. Closing factories, preventing stubble burning, controlling vehicular traffic and regulating construction debris are sensible practical measures that can work. They will be effective and sustainable only if there is adequate social capital.

10 Dears abo



TEDUCET A TRUE

We should keep on going along the path of globalization. Globalization is good... when trade stops, war comes.

JACK MA

MY VIEW | MODERN TIMES

A right that women don't have is the right to mediocrity

MANU JOSEPH



n a few weeks, when Donald Trump takes over as US President once again, people will wonder if things might have been different had his opponent been someone other than Kamala Harris. By which, they also mean someone with a better game, who was not so ordinary. There is an implication in this view that one has to be exceptional to become America's leader or reach the top of other fields. Yet, they would struggle to list what is exceptional about Trump. A way of the world is that it punishes the ordinariness of women and is more understanding of the mediocrity of successful men. A right that women do not have it he right to mediocrity. I call it a right because it is what most

women do not have is the right to medioc-rity. I call it a right because it is what most people are, by definition, and people have the right to be themselves.

There was a Trump before Trump, and her name was Sarah Palin, a former governor of Alaska who was a vice-presidential nomi-nee when John McCain ran for president. She once said that she could see Russia from her house in Alaska. She said things an aver-

age person would. While Trump was rewarded for that quality of discourse, she did not survive the torrent of ridicule. The word 'mediocrity' has come to mean something demeaning, but it is intended to describe something between excellence and terrible—the common output of an average person. Ideally, a characteristic of most peo-ple, their ordinariness, should not be held against them. And it is often not held against make leaders. If matching their ordinariness against uten. And its often to first against makes them endearing to others. But when female leaders slip up, or are just dour or mediocre in other ways, they face much

medicore in other ways, they face much more severe scruting. When feminists speak of what the world does not grant or allow women, they often speak of how exceptional women are not given opportunities. In my view, this is not true. It is hard for the world to suppress exceptional women because it is in the self-interest of society to let them thrive. In any case, exceptional people are rare, and they constitute a tiny proportion of women, too. The real bias against women is in how the world perceives the ordinariness of ordinary men. All around us are ordinary men in leadership positions getting away with being ordinary.

The movement to set things right for women had no choice but to glorify success and brilliance. As a result, it is easier today for aman to be unambitious, to choose an ordinary, quiet and healthy life, while it is complex for a woman to overtly synthat she wants to a chieve nothing. Even Barbie had to become more than an alluring girifriend and get dressed in career uniforms and other ambiguous clothesof success. Mediority is not only about the

content and the content and the content and the content and the capacity of one simid, it is also about the ordinariness of aspiration. Most people do not aspire to anything extraordinary, and it is easier for men to be that way, or even say that they want to be that way. In the film Barbie, a character tells the CEO of Barbie's maker Mattel that it should create an ordinary Barbie who just wants to be a mom. But the film is nervous to state what it is eems keen to asy: that women have a right to be ordinary. There is a stigma attached to medicarily and even to whishing for an ordinary life. The very bias against women is routed through

allegations of their ordinariness; so their champions feel they should never speak of that. As a result, no one speaks of the actual place where the bias is cruel, where a woman has no defence because what she is accused of may be true, even if it is an unfair charge because a man in her position would get away with it.

It just women ged far the speak of the speak o

It's not just Harris. Women are judged far more harshly than men for not being exceptional

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tional
store the prerequisite for
successful. Being exceptional
is not the prerequisite for
success that the world pretends it is. The educational
system, self-help books and
motivational talks all suggest that people must prepare to be exceptional to
succeed. But people sucsucced because of ordinary
reasons like social netso ordinary that they are likeable, fun and
belong to a tribe. While there are advantages
to being ordinary, there are drawbacks too.
Ordinary people are sometimes caught out
ofdepth. That happens all the time to men in
power, but they survive unscathed com-

pared to women in the same position. At first glance, it may appear that Indian female politicians are an exception. Isn't it true that the Indian public forgives their failings? Some women have held real power for many years and still do.

I grew up in Tamil Nadu, where J. Jayala-lithaa defeated powerful men and held onto power for long. That could happen, I believe, because her gender was not a factor in her political appeal. Women knew that they were voting for a woman, but men had to deify her, as someone more than Just a woman, to grant her power over them.

As a politician, she was enormously popularat one point. But when the aura began to fade and her popularity began to slip, when she was faced with corruption charges and could not stave of ther political and versaries, she fell faster and harder than men because studenly she was revealed as a mortal

suddenly she was revealed as a mortal woman, and questions of her mediocrity in

woman, and questions of her mediocrity in ethics had a greater consequence.

The bias against ordinary women exists only in roles that were traditionally held by men. For instance, the captain of a female football team will not be particularly viiffled for her ordinariness. Nor a housewife for her ordinariness within the boundaries of what is expected of her in this role.

Imran's street politics hardens battlelines in Pak



AKISTAN socio-political crisis as a protest by former Prime Minister Imran Khan's support-ers, who came out in thou-sands and marched towards

sands and marched towards Islamabad's D-Chowk, turned violent last week. The protesters demanded the release of the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) leader and other party functionaries. Rallies, sit-ins and protests have been ins and protests have been a signature move for the cricketer-turned-politician. cricketer-turned-politician, who is incarcerated in Rawalpindi's Adiala Jail and is embroiled in over 150 cases. Imran had issued a 'final' call to his supporters for a protest on November 24; this time, the faces behind the protests were Bushra Bibi, Imran's wife who till one Imran's wife, who, till now, had abstained from public appearance, and Ali Amin Gandapur, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minis Khyber ter and a close aide of Imran. The protesters faced a severe crackdown by the security forces. There have been conflict-ing reports on the number of people dead and arrested as a result, but the fact remains that it was the use

remains that it was the use of brute force that resulted in the protesters' retreat. Imran enjoys immense popularity and support within Pakistan and has demonstrated great resilience by not opting to go into exile, which has been a customary conduit for former political (and military) leaders in Pakistan. Imran's mass appeal has Imran's mass appeal has been driven by his unwaver been driven by his unwaver-ing claim and position to stand for Pakistan against the corrupt dynastic politics and his blatant challenge to the all-powerful Pakistan military, which has been held responsible for most of the economic and political woes of Pakistan.

This is ironical since Imran's tenure as Prime Minister from August 2018 to April 2022 was marked by to April 2022 was marked by glaring misjudgments, witch-hunting of opponents, lack of governance, faulty decisions/projections, eco-nomic downfall and miscon-strued foreign policy choic-es. Imran was the military is favourite at one point and its favourite at one point and its choice for the 2018 General Election, when he enjoyed the full patronage of the mil-itary towin the elections and trounce Nawaz Sharif. In 2018, Imran was projected as a clean and corruption-free leader, driven by a welfare



T: Imran Khan's wife Bushra Bibi (centre) at a Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf rall nense popularity and has shown great resilience by not going into exile. ясите:

give up soon and his next call for a protest might not be far away. But whether

he will be able to

gamer the same

support is

a moot point.

istan's growth and its image on the global stage. Eventu-ally, his strains with the deep

ally, his strains with the deep state resulted in his scan-dalous exit from the Prime Minister's office in 2022. After his exit, he has kept the momentum of his sup-port base going, even when he was not allowed to con-test the 2024 elections and his party was denied the election symbol. His sup-port base has expanded port base has expanded from the urban middle class to all levels of society

complete inability to man Pakistan's complex Imran is unlikely to

political, economic and security challenges.

The current crisis is primarily a fight between Imran and the Army chief, Gen Asim Munir. They have a well-known history of hostility. The controversial and much-debated 2024 elections brought the Sharifs in power and they currently. power and they currently enjoy the trust and support of the military establish-ment. The weak civilian regime in Pakistan, which lacks credibility, has intention of asserting i

and will prioritise its own survival in power. Critical constitutional changes have en made with the passing of the recent 26th Amend ment Act, with the intention ment Act, with the intention to manage the functioning of the Judicial system and ensure Imran's political isolation. Gen Munir, the most powerful man in the country, has got an extension and he will continue to serve till 2027, if not beyond.

The protests have resulted in the resignations of the top brass of the PTI and the faultines within the party are

bmss of the PTI and the fault-lines within the party are expected to deepen. Prustra-tions within the party will grow, given the arrests of PTI workers. Imran might seem to have limited options left after his call for the Novem-ber 24 march. But given his obsession with street politics, he is unlikely to give up soon and his next call for a protest might not be far away. But might not be far away. But whether he will be able to

whether he will be able to steer the same support after the experience of the latest protests remains a question. Imran's release seems unlikely anytime soon, unless there is an agree-ment between him and the establishment. While his allegations against the polit-ical and military either may ical and military elite may have succeeded in triggering the sentiments of the masses, they are unlikely to trigger a major change in the power dynamics or bring him any respite from the legal cases

trengthened its control on ne state institutions where Imran, in the recent past enjoyed fractional support. The current crisis once again presents an old game with different actors Pakistan. The ac with different actors in Pakistan. The actors change, intensity varies, tactics differ, but the bottomline remains unaltered — a military-run state with sufficient program and sufficient power manages crush any rebellion opposition questioning its

egitimacy and power.

Pakistan is experiencing a nulti-dimensional crisis: omy is struggling to from the combined outs of fiscal deficit, high the requirements of the structural restructuring set up by the International Monetary Fund; a series of terror attacks by the Tehrike-Taliban Pakistan targeting eTaliban Pakistan targeting security personnel; relent-less opposition by the oppressed Baloch and Pash-tuns in Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa even as their voices have been suppressed by the use of brute tactics, including forced disappearances.

forced disappearances.

A nuclear state with a multifold crisis does raise serious concerns regarding not only how Pakistan will shape up in the coming years but also throws up larger regional implications.

Multi-pronged strategy can make children safer online



SHARAD S CHAUHAN

NEW Australian social media plat social media paid-forms to verify users' age and restrict access for those under 16. The aim is to safeguard chil-drenbydelaying their entry into social media, a move supported by proponents who argue that it ould reduce harm and lessen parental burdens.

However, critics view this as a However, critics viewthis as a 'patchwork' approach, saying policing by guardians is more effective than government-imposed rules as they are bet-ter positioned to manage their children's online presence. Further, the law fails to tack-le the fundamental issue of ensuring that social media companies properly remove

companies properly remove harmful content. Also, con-cerns about enforcement arise as the law leaves age verifica as the law leaves age verifica-tion methods open-ended, potentially relying on govern-ment documents or technolo-gies like facial scanning or behavioural tracking, which raise privacy issues. The Covid-19 pandemic led

to an increased screen time among children, leading to

behavioural and health issues and delinquency, as highlighted by various studies. UNESCO's 2023 report calls for a global school ban on smartphones, citing research that shows their mere presence can disrupt learning and that chidren take up to 20 minutes to regain focus after engaging with non-academic content. The US Surgeon General's 2023 advisory warns that social media can harm adolescent brain development, affecting

brain development, affecting emotional regulation a mpulse control. It propos varning labels on platforr similar to those for cigarett of social media fosters a form of digital addiction. As in drug problems, effective regulation should focus on supply-side vidual behaviour (demand

vidual behaviour (demand-side) is challenging.

In 2022, India reported 32 per cent increase in cyber-crime against children with 1,823 cases, including cyber pornography (1,171 cases) and cyberstalking (158). Offline crimes against children also sawa worrying increase, with vorrying increase, with over 1,62,000 cases reported, up by nearly nine per cent from the previous year. This highlights a broader, concernhighlights a broader, concern-ing trend of rising crime against children that is not solely tied to the Internet. The overall surge in both online and offline crimes calls for a comprehensive approach to child protection across all environments. Similarly, in



HARMFUL: In 2022, India reported 32 per cent increase in cybercrime against children, istoci

Imposing social media curbs along

the lines of Australia

can face major

challenges in India

due to the country's

large population and technological

diversity.

shows that some children engaging in illegal activities underscoring the need for both preventive and educa-

tional measures.

The dilemma centres on whether to ban social media for children or impose stricter regulations on platforms.

An alternative to a ban on platforms involves implementing robust age verification for content moderation, which could be enforced at which could be enforced at tion for content moderation, which could be enforced at specific barriers to restrict access to harmful content. Restricting children's Inter-net access entirely may seem like a protective measure, but it is impractical in today's dig-ital age. Instead, the focus should be on promoting safe ital age. Instead, the focus should be on promoting safe online practices, digital litera

responsible Internet use that would let children access gen eral features while saving them from harmful content offering a more targeted and

feasible solution.

Astrong parallel exists in the case of a rise in cybercrime across all sectors, involving adults and businesses. Banning specific websites is a short-term fix that overlooks the broader issues, such as digital literacy, cybersecurity awareliteracy, cybersecurity aware ness and effective online monitoring. A comprehensive solu-tion is necessary to target its

toring. A comprehensive solu-tion is necessary to target its rootcauses, not just limit access to the Internet. Implementing such a ban for those under 16 in India will face major challenges due to the country's large population and technological diversity, mak-ing enforcement difficult.

Thenagers could bypass such bans using VPNs, false creden-tials, proxy websites or lesser-known platforms.

In the Indian context, the 2020 report from the Singapore-based DQ Institute serves as a crucial resource for enhancing child online safety, with its sur-vey covering 63 per cent of the global population. This think tank has established standards for digital intelligence to ensure for digital intelligence to ensure safety empowement and well being. Its Child Online Safety Index (COSI) evaluates digital safety across six key areas: cyber risk, disciplined digital use, digital competency, guid-ance and education, social infrastructure and connectivity

India ranks highly in severa categories, securing the second place in tackling cyber risk third in disciplined digital use first in digital competency and second in guidance and educasecond in guidance and educa-tion. India also tops the mank-ings for its children's ability to cope with cyberbullying, high-lighting their resilience in han-dling online threats.

While India lags in connectiv-ity, its strong performance in managing other risks and

managing cyber risks and online safety education provides a window of opportunity to enhance its COSI as connec to bans. India's children el in online safety educa n, scoring 68/100 — 30 pe excel in online safety educa-tion, scoring 68/100 — 30 per cent higher than the global average of 52/100. Interestingly, lower-income countries tend to score better in online safety education (55/100

nations (51/100 on average) nations (51/100 on average), emphasising the crucial role of education in helping children navigate online dangers. How-ever, the data is biased towards public schools, so India must focus on improving online safe-ty education in government schools and rurul areas. Despite efforts to limit chil-

duen's screentime, modern life offers fewer opportunities for real-world experiences. Play-grounds are rare, academic pressures high and social structures more impersonal due to nuclear families. This trend leaves children valuing their devices for connection. Limiting technology alone worn restore the outdoor play and socialisation earlier genedren's screentime, modern life and socialisation earlier gener ations enjoyed, unless broader

societal issues are addressed A three-pronged strategy can enhance children's online proenhance children's online pro-tection. First, tech companies should prioritise child safety in their platform designs. Second, their collaboration with schools and government-backed cyber-bullying prevention pro-grammes is vital. Lastly, par-eris must actively monitor and ents must actively monitor and reduce their children's exposure to cyber risks. The police must also fulfil their duty by must also fulfil their duty by promptly addressing cyber-crime cases involving children, ensuring accountability and justice in the digital realm. In an increasingly techno-logical world, society must ensure safe spaces for chil-dren to graw, learn and thrive.

dren to grow, learn and thrive, both online and offline.

СПУ

Bathinda

Jalandhar

Hisar Sirsa

FORECAST

26 25

17:22 HRS 07:03 HRS

12

14

10

- Repair clumsily (5) Held back for future use (2,7) Small child (3) To a great extent (4) In a manner of speaking

- A self-evident truth (5) In favour of (3) Lie back in sunshine (4) Exit (6) Short pause for rest (8) Prominent (2,3,4)

- | 10 To a great extent (4) | 2.2 In a manner of speaking (2,2,4) | 4 Lawsuit (6) | 15 Quite lacking (6) | 17 Country of central Europe (8) | 18 Gather as harvest (4) | 21 Confess (3) | 22 Stop the proceedings (4.1,4) | 19 Small-minded (5) | 25 Momentous (7) | 23 A forest tree (3) | 23 A forest tree (3) |

Across: 1 Play safe, 5 Aged, 9 Chafe, 10 Leaning, 11 On a knif edge, 13 Ration, 14 As well, 17 Disputatious, 20 Go ahead, Evade, 22 Like, 23 Recovery.

Down: 1 Pace, 2 Against, 3 Speak volumes, 4 Fillip, 6 Grind, Doggedly, 8 Take a shine to, 12 Prodigal, 15 Emulate, 16 Day dle, 18 Slack, 19 Deny.

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SATURDAY'S SOLUTION

5	4	7	1	8	2	6	3	9
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7	9	8	5	2	1	3	4	6
4	7	1	8	5	3	9	6	2
8	5	6	2	1	9	4	7	3
9	2	3	7	6	4	5	1	8

	CALE	ND	AR	
Ī	DECEMBER 2,	2024,	MONDAY	
	Shaka Samvat			

- hukla Paksha Tithi 1, up to 12.44 pm
- Dhriti Yoga up to 4.01 pm Jyeshtha Nakshatra up to 3.46 pm Moon enters Sagitarius sign 3.46 pr
- Kargil

The Tribune

ESTABLISHED IN 1881

GDP hits a low

Manufacturing slump dents growth

NDIA's economic growth in the second quarter of FY25 has decelerated to a disappointing 5.4%, the lowest in seven quarters. This figure, significantly below last year's 8.1% for the same period, underscores the mounting pressures on the country's economic resilience. The manufacturing sector, tradi tionally a growth driver, is at the heart of this slowdown, grappling with declining output and subdued demand. The decline in Gross Value Added (GVA) in manufacturing to 2.2% from 14.3% a year ago highlights the sector's vulnerability to inflation and weak consumer spending. While the Chief Economic Adviser has downplayed concerns, brushing off this dip as a "one-off", there is need to remain cautious. Private final consumption and gross fixed capital formation together shaved off 1.5 percent-

fixed capital formation together shaved off 1.5 percent-age points from the overall growth, signalling waning confidence in household and business spending. On the brighter side, the services sector expanded by 7.1% and the agriculture sector grew by 3.5%, driven by improved rural demand. However, these gains were not sufficient to offset the drag from manufacturing and exports, which slowed to 2.8%, reflecting global uncer-tainties and weaker petroleum exports.

The government's underwhelming capital expendi-The government's underwhelming capital expendi-ture—just 37% of the budgeted target for the first half— adds another layer of concern. Public spending is critical to kickstarting private investments, particularly when high borrowing costs stille corporate growth. As India faces the dual challenge of sustaining growth while man-aging inflation, a robust fiscal push is imperative. With-out increased public investment and strategic support for manufacturing, the risk of falling below the projected 6.5% annual GLIP growth because were The proposite of the 6.5% annual GDP growth looms large. The upooming fis-cal policy decisions will thus be crucial in steering the economy back on a stable growth trajectory.

AIDS burden

States such as Haryana must get their act together

CHIEVING the global goal of ending the AIDS pandemic as a public health threat by 2030 requires a significant contribution from India, one of the worst-affected countries outside Africa. It is worrisome that the total number of HIV patients in India reached 16.89 lakh in 2023-24, an increase of 7.3% over the previous year. In Haryana's case, the count of such patients under treatment has more than doubled in the past five years. States such as Punjab and Himachal Pradesh have also recorded an appreciable rise in the caseload from 2019-20 to 2023-24, while Chandi-

gath has witnessed a welcome decline.

It is apparent that the majority of the HIV-infected people are readily coming forward for treatment and the stigma associated with AIDS is becoming a thing of the stigma associated with AIDs is becoming a thing of the past. India has done well to reduce AIDS-related deaths by around 80% since 2010. This is attributed to greater collaboration between the authorities and the community that has bolstered the 'test and treat' pro-gramme of the National AIDS Control Organisation. The availability of free lifelong treatment is a big plus. Annual new HIV cases have seen a 44% drop in more than a decade, but the absolute numbers remain on the higher side. Haryana and other underperforming states must not their act foresther.

must get their act together.

Spreading awareness about HIV/AIDS holds the key to the success of preventive measures. Sustained interventions are needed to protect vulnerable groups such as sex workers, migrants, drug addicts, long-distance as sex workers, magrants, and sadacts, long-distance drivers and transgender people. Community-led organ-isations are in the best position to reach at-risk popula-tions. There should be no dearth of resources at their disposal, while red tape must not be allowed to impede their efforts. World AIDS Day, observed on December 1, underlines the integral link between combating this pandemic and ensuring universal health coverage as well as the right to health. Equitable healthcare access can help in reducing India's HIV burden.

ON THIS DAY...100 YEARS AGO

The Tribune.

LAHORE, TUESDAY, DECEMBER 2, 1924

Governor's reply to Mr Das

Governor's reply to Mr Das

AT last, the Governor of Bengal has seen fit to give a direct
and categorical reply to Mr CR Das. The occasion was not illchosen. St Andrew's Dinner in Calcutta cannot, of course, be
compared with the Lord Mayor's Banquet in London, but in
the one case, as in the other, the occasion has again and again
been availed of by the chief guests for making pronouncements of considerable interest and importance to the public.
Lord Lytton's speech, though it enunciated no new policy,
was no bad addition to the list. The theme of the speech was
the most burning of all Indian topics at the present time, and the most burning of all Indian topics at the present time, and the man whose views on this subject His Excellency took it the man whose views on this subject his Excellency took it upon himself to controvert is the accredited leader of the most powerful political party in India today. When, however, we turn from the importance of the subject and the occasion to the nature of the speech, we are bound to confess to a feeling of disappointment. The most plausible part of the speech is that in which His Excellency attempts to answer the allegation of Mr Das that the government, while accepting his diagnosis of the situation, refused to apply his remedy; and it is unhapply also the least convincing part of the speech. "The reason why I do not accept Mr Das' remedy: said His Excellency, true to the parable in the Bible, quoted by him in an earlier part of the speech, of the husbandman among whose good crops the enemy sowed tares during the night, "because he is not my gardener, and has no responsibility for the consequences of his advice".

Empower military with strategic heft

It is imperative to look beyond the Cabinet Committee on Security paradigm



MANISH TEWARI

ment that has gone unnoticed unnoticed and uncommented upon is the involvement of military commanders in trying to ostensibly resolve the 54-month-old standoff at the Line of Actual Control (LAC) that forms the de facto border between India and Chinas. Beginning June 6, 2020, Indian and Chines military commanders held talks in the Chushul-Moldo region following the violent confrontation on May 5, 2020, between Indian and Chines meet troops in Pangong Too. is the involve

ese troops in Pangong Tso. The second round of talks etween Lt Gen Harinder Singh between Li Gen Harinder Singh and Maj Gen Liu Lin, Commander of the South Xinjiang Military District, were held on June 22, 2020, in the walse of the unfortunate Galwan conflagration. Since then, 19 more rounds of talks have been held till February 19, 2024. The 22nd round has still not been scheduled. This was rephans after a long.

still not been scheduled.

This was perhaps after a long time that the military was so overtly involved as a concurrent track in efforts to resolve the question of Chinese transions into Indian ter gressions into Indian territory or our perception of the LAC. Of course, there have been flag meetings on India's borders with the frontier forces or mili-taries of the neighbouring countries. Over the past 54 months, the Ministry of Exter-pal Affairs has been issuing nal Affairs has been issuing readouts on a regular basis after each round of talks.

Is this a good or a bad thing? If one looks towards the past for guidance or even at the practice that is followed in other coun-



TOP BRASS: CDS Gen Anii Chauhan (third from right) and other officers at Parliament House on the opening day of he winter session on November 25. There is a need to institutionalise the military's role in politico-strategic affairs. A

itary has been intrinsically embedded in politico-military strategic diplon

strategic diplomacy.

The military representatives of India and Pakistan met in Karachi from July 18 to 27, 1949, under the auspices of the truce aub-committee of the United Nations Commission for the establishment of the ceasefire line in Jammu and Kashmir.

The Indian delegation consisted of L4 Gen SM Shrinagesh, Maj Gen K8 Thimaya and Brig SHFJ Manefishaw, while the Pakistani side was represented by Maj Gen WI Cawthorn, Maj Gen Nazir Ahmad and Brig M Sher Khan. Bureaucrats and Foreign Office functionaries Sher Khan. Bureaucrats and Foreign Office functionaries were only observers. HM Patel and V Sahay C from the Indian side and M Ayub and AA Khan from Pakistan made up the quorum of the civilian component.

On December 11, 1972, senior military commanders of India

military commanders of India and Pakistan met at Suchetgarh to sign and exchange maps delineating the 800-km Line of Control in J&K, extending from the Chhamb sector to the Parta-pur sector, in accordance with Paragraph 4 (II) of the Simla Agreement dated July 2, 1972.

Unlike in India, the military is embedded in the politico-military hierarchy of democracies around the world.

This agreement was a sequel to the understanding reached between the Army Chiefs of India and Pakistan at their sec-India and Pakistan at their sec-ond meeting in Lahore on December 7, 1972, where Pak-istan conceded to India's claim that Thako Chak formed a part of the International Border and that it should withdraw its troops from there. The maps were exchanged between Li Gen PS Bhazat on pehalf of India and Li Bhagat on behalf of India and Lt Gen Abdul Hamid Khan repre senting Pakistan.

It is noteworthy that there was a summit-level meeting between Prime Ministers Indira Gandhi and Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, followed by a meeting between then Chief of the Army Staff Gen Manek-shaw and his Pakistani counterpart Gen Tikka Khan before the operational-level exchange of maps between Lt Generals Bha-gat and Hamid Khan.

maps between LA Generals Bha-gat and Hamid Khan.

After that, the role of the mili-tary in the politico-strategic-diplomatic arena was either recessed or took a back seat till the time it briefly seemed to have emerged in May 2006 to ostensibly oppose the demilitari-sation of Siachen.

India's former Foreign Sec-retary Shyam Saran records in his book, How India Sees the World: Kautilya to the 21st Century: When the CCS meet-ing was held on the eve of the defence secretary-level talks, [Mr] Narayanan launched into a bitter offensive against the proposal, saying that Pakistan could not betrusted, that there would be political and public opposition to any such initia-tive and that India's military. opposition to any such initia-tive and that India's military position in the northern sector vis-à-vis both Pakistan and China would be compromised. [Gen] JJ Singh, who had hap-pily gone along with the proosal in its earlier iterations, owdecided to join Narayanan

The reference is to then Army Chief Gen JJ Singh, who ostensibly along with former National ecurity Adviser MK Narayanan Security Adviser MK Namyanan had opposed the proposal to turn the Siachen glacier into a mountain of peace in the most produstance to the India-Pakistan relationship after the ceaseffar agreed upon by then Prime Minister Vajpayee on November 26, 2003, in the aftermath of Operation Parakram that ended on October 16, 2002. Unlike in India, the military is

tion Parakram that ended on October 16, 2002. Unlike in India, the military is embedded in the politico-military hierarchy of democracies around the world. Though under very strict civilian control, the six US theatre commanders report directly to the American President through the Charlman of the Joint Chief of Staff in the US is the Principal Military Adviser to the President, he has no executive authority to comno executive authority to command combatant units. This enmeshes various streams of the

enmeshes various streams of the military into the political decision-making process on critical questions of national security.

In China, the theatre commanders report directly to the Central Military Commission that is head-ed by the Chinese President and the General Secretary of the Chinese Communist Party thus institutionalising their role in the strategic decision-making process. Similarly, in the Russian system, the Chief of the General Staff does not exercise direct Staff does not exercise direct operational control over Russian forces; the superintendence is sted in the Pr vested in the President in terms of Articles 4 and 13 of the Federal Law on Defence. It is, therefore, imperative that beyond the CCS (Cabinet Com-

mittee on Security) paradigm, the role of the military in the national security decision-making frame work is also formalised, given that India has a Chief of Defence Staff and is moving towards theatre commands, though the only func tional and integrated theatre com-mand as yet is the Andaman and Nicobar Command.

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THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

A piece of spaghetti or a military unit can only be led from the front end. - George S Patton

The patent story of runaway boys

SATISH KUMAR SHARMA

THE 12-year-old boy who claimed to have escaped from his kidnappers thought he had a foolproof stomy. But the police knew that it was the patent tale of most runaway teenagers who return home after encountering the reality of the world.

I was serving as a Deputy Commissioner of Police in Vadodam city in September 1995. We had barely solved the sensational kidneysing for any of the six-panel of some of com-

tional kidnapping for ransom of the six-year-old son of a car-

dam city in September 1998. We had barely solved the sensational kidnapping for ransom of the six-year-old son of a cardiologist when the above incident was reported.

The victim had gone to school on a bicycle but had not returned home from after the classes ended. In the late afternoon, the Vadodara police control room received information that the boy had been found at Karjan rail-way station — 40 km south of Vadodara. He had approached a constable on duty at the railway platform for help. He told the cop that four masked men had kidnapped him and boarded a train, but when it halted at Karjan, he had dodged them and escaped.

On being brought back to Vadodara, the boy gave us the details: after school, he was cycling back home when the masked men pulled him into an autorickshaw and put a hand-kerchief smelling of some chemical over his mouth, after which he passed out. When he regained consciousness, he was on a train. We knew the rest of the story. He said he ould not identify his kidnappers because they were ewaring masks.

But there were two holes in his story — his bike had been found parked at the cycle stand of the railway station and the constable from Karjan said the boy had not come to him running but had approached him calmly.

My officers were sure that the story was false but could not get the boy to tell the truth. So, I called his father, an employee of the state electricity board, and told him totry to find out what had actually happened.

what had actually happened. The next day, the father came to my office with the boy. First, met me alone and said the son was repeating the story. He

he met me alone and said the son was repeating the story. He said he, too, felt that the boy was lying but was helpless. So, I sent him out and called the boy in.

I told him, "I have not told your father as yet but we have caught your kidnappers. But they are saying that they were not wearing masks. If you identify them from among similar-looking men, we will arrest them and give you a certificate of bravery. But if you cannot, we will arrest your father for filing a false complaint." The boy was completely puzzled. Realising that things had gone too far, he spilled the beans and started pleading to spare his father. He said he had run away because his parents did not allow him to watch TV and pressured him to study. But once the train started moving, he panicked and got down at the next station. He had made up the story to escape punishment. up the story to escape punishment.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR Boost grassroots-level politics

Boost grassroots-level politics Refer to Priyanka consolidates Gandhi fiel' (The Great Gome), Priyanka Gandhi spresence inthe Lok Sabha will certainly bolster the morade of the Congress. She is quite articulate and is able to strike a spontaneous rapport with the masses. But Congress leaders must not depend only on the Gandhis for creating a strong mass base for the party. Instead of criticising PM Modi, they should learn from his grassroots-level politics. Many veteran Congress leaders left the party as they fett sidelined. RahulGandhi has evolvedhis own vision and philosophy as top leader, yet he own vision and philosophy as a top leader, yet he needs to close the yawning gap between party workers and its elitist high command.

RAJ BAHADUR YADAV, FATEHABAD

Congress must introspect

Congress must introspect With reference to Priyanka consolidates Gandhi fief; the writer has mised a pertinent question: Why are the Gandhis so special and cannot be challenged? The answer is that the Congress has not introspected even after losing the Lok Sabha elections thrice. Bis rout did not stop here as the grand old party has tasted defeat after defeat in the state elections as well, including the recent losses in Haryana and Maharashira. The party has failed to prepare a second-rung leadership, and is unable to come out of the shadow of the Gandhis. The Congress should give a chance ship, and is unable to come out of the shadow of the Gandhis. The Congress should give a chance to leaders who can bring out the party from the deep morass. Blaming EVMs for defeats will keep lowering its position in the eyes of the public. It is time to act and learn from past mistakes.

RAYINDER KUMAR JAIN, LUDHANA

Prioritise electorate over legacy

Apropos of 'Priyanka consolidates Gandhi fief'; the party's inability to introspect continues to empower its adversaries. Priyanka Gandhi's consolidation within the family fieldom underscores this stagnation. While her charisma might energise some, it does little to challenge the perception of a dynastic stronghold pulling strings behind a symbolic leadership. The Gandhis refusal to embrace accountability erodes the party's credibility and fragments opposition unity. For the Congress to regain relevance, it must democratise leadership and prioritise the electionate over legacy. The nation demands leaders, not figureheads.

SAHIB-PREET SINGH, MOHALI underscores this stagnation. While her charis

Need stern action for cybercrime

Need stern action for cybercrime Refer to Beyond bans's smartphones are prov-ing catastrophic for everyone. No doubt these have made our lives easy, but we are paying, heavily for this convenience. Children have access to all types of content on social media, which has resulted in issues such as anxiety, depression and bullying. Australia has taken the bold step of banning social media access for children under 16. Doing the same in India is a Herculean task, but we need a concrete solu-Herculean task, but we need a concrete solu-tion to this problem. Collaborative efforts by parents, educational institutions, the govern ment and the service providers is the need of the hour. At the same time, the government must take strict action against the perpetrators

BIR DEVINDER SINGH BEDL SANGRUR

Online content should be filtered

Apropos of 'Beyond bans'; an outright ban on social media is not a viable approach for any country. It is true that social media has a profound effect on the impressionable minds of children. However, it should not be overlooked that it has been a boon for both academicians and students during the Covid-19 pandemic. and students during the Covid-19 pandemic. The government should emphasise the need for vigilant cyber security mediators-cum-experts for social media content. It should be filtered efficiently before live-streaming on various platforms. Through collaborative efforts, we can curb the menace of unwanted content that inadvertently appears on online platforms and causes harm to young minds. RUPINDER KAUR, AMBALA CANTI

Curb communal violence

With reference to 'Targeting mosques'; it is surprising that civil courts across India have ordered an archaeological survey of mosques Such an order violates the Places of Worship (Special Provisions)Act, 1991. What is the logic of offinding the nature of a religious place when a change of its character is prohibited under the law of the land? The question of suits being barred under the 1991 Act is pending before the apex court for more than four years. Its prompt decision is the need of the hour to stem the menace of increasing cases of communal violence across the country.

MD SHARMA, SHIMLA Such an order violates the Places of Worship

Letters to the Editor, typed in double space, should not exceed the 200-word limit. These should be cogently written and can be sent by e-mail to: Letters@tribunemail.com