

Editorial



Trading up

World Bank's growth prognosis for India moots some policy shifts

In its latest India Development Update, the World Bank has raised its 2024-25 GDP growth forecast for the economy to 7%, from 6.6% estimated earlier this year. The projection is now in sync with predictions from the International Monetary Fund and Asian Development Bank, but a tad lower than the 7.2% uptick projected by the RBI and Fitch Ratings. Earlier growth hopes for India were slightly modest, partly due to its strong 8.2% growth last year, and prospects of the global economy staying weak due to restrictive monetary policies and persistent geopolitical tensions. The World Bank estimates global growth to be the same as last year's 2.6% pace, way below pre-pandemic levels. Despite this subdued external environment and the dissipation of post-COVID-19 rebound effects, the Bank's economists now expect India's growth to remain strong this year at 7%. However, external risks could cloud this, including pressures on supply chains and commodity prices, and a resurgence of inflation that could compel central banks to hold interest rates 'higher for longer'.

The Bank expects private consumption to rise 5.7% and the farm sector to grow 4.1% this year, from last year's anaemic trends. A recovery in farms could offset a slight moderation in industrial growth, and revive weak rural demand and help bolster private investment in the medium term, with GDP growth expected to hover in the 6.5%-6.7% range in coming years. On India's imperative to generate non-farm jobs, the Bank acknowledged ideas such as the Production Linked Incentive schemes to support private manufacturing investments, and the new Employment-Linked Incentives. But these may not be able to generate the scale of activity India needs to engage its young workforce. The Bank has emphasised the need for a rethink on India's approach to a critical growth engine — trade. India's global trade share does not match its economy's size, and it is yet to capitalise on the opportunity presented by China's withdrawal from labour-intensive production or the much-vaunted 'China plus one' global reset. A concern is a decline in export-related jobs over the past decade, flagged by the Bank, coinciding with a shift towards capital and skill-intensive exports. While trade facilitation steps and the pursuit of free trade agreements are commendable, some like the one with EFTA have limited potential, it noted. Progress has been hampered by new barriers to goods, services and investments, and it has called for a new strategic trade plan that reduces tariffs, non-tariff barriers as well as FDI curbs, and a rethink of the reluctance towards multilateral plurilateral pacts such as the RCEP. Policymakers must heed this prescription in earnest, and urgently.

Death for rape

Homes and workplaces must first be made safe for women

The cry for the death penalty after every heinous sexual crime, and governments yielding to it by issuing ordinances or passing Bills, have become fairly commonplace. The criminal laws were amended in 2013 after the brutal rape of a woman in Delhi; subsequently, States including Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Haryana, Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra and Arunachal Pradesh have sought amendments for enhanced punishment for sexual assault. On Tuesday, the West Bengal Assembly unanimously passed The Aparajita Women and Child (West Bengal Criminal Laws Amendment) Bill, 2024, by a voice vote, following the rape and murder of a doctor at a government hospital in Kolkata on August 9 and a persistent clamour for justice. The Bill introduces the death penalty or life-long imprisonment for rape by amending the relevant sections in the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, the new penal code. In fact, death has been sought to be prescribed for five offences — rape; rape by police officer or public servant; rape causing death or sending victim to persistent vegetative state; gang rape, and being a repeat offender. It also amends the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita to provide for special courts for such offences in a time-bound manner, and the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act, 2012, to provide for death in cases of penetrative sexual assault and its aggravated form. The President's assent will be required for the State amendments.

There is little evidence that awarding the death penalty is a deterrent against sexual offences, but the call for more stringent laws after such crimes often evokes an official response. By stating that "rape is a curse against humanity and social reforms are required to prevent such crimes," Chief Minister Manu Manojan himself put a question mark on the need for a Bill that leans on legal sanction rather than seeking a change in societal mindsets. The Justice J.S. Verma Committee had said it was not inclined to recommend the death penalty for rape even for the rarest of rare cases, arguing that "...seeking of [the] death penalty would be a regressive step in the field of sentencing and reformation". However, death penalty was introduced subsequently for rape of girls under 12 and gangrape of those under 18; but women are far from feeling safer. It is also a tragedy that the cruel death in Bengal has become a political slugfest between the Centre and the State. The onus is on every government to ensure that laws are implemented effectively, and the police work without bias to prevent and punish sexual assault. Justice will be better served if barriers to women's advancement are removed by first making workplaces and homes safe for them.

Sub-classification verdict through Ambedkar's ideals

The Supreme Court of India judgment, on August 1, 2024, in *The State of Punjab and Ors. vs Davinder Singh and Ors.*, on the sub-classification of reservations, embodies the life of social jurisprudence. It is a noteworthy development in Indian jurisprudence, especially in social justice. The judgment provides social jurisprudence using constitutional methods and ensures that social justice reaches the most neglected and deprived sections (which include a majority of Dalit castes) among Dalits. The idea of sub-classification also aligns with B.R. Ambedkar's principles of fraternity and Maitri, emphasising the need for cooperation and mutual respect among Scheduled Castes (SCs). However, the overreaching exercise of the judgment, reflected in the comments on the *varna* system and creamy layer, is uncalled for.

Social Justice and B.R. Ambedkar's struggle
B.R. Ambedkar struggled all his life to ensure social and civil justice for the most oppressed sections. He also sought to secure separate cultural rights for former untouchables. Yet, these were often met with inadequate responses and resistance from the prevailing Hindu caste order. While reflecting on the Indian social structure, Ambedkar highlights how every *jati* occupies a distinct position on the social ladder. It draws attention to the nuances of internal divisions within the caste order. A newspaper of his times reported Ambedkar's response to "the welcome addresses by three scheduled castes' organisations after the resolutions were disposed of at the Scheduled Castes' Conference, held at Cawnpore on January 31, 1944... He (Ambedkar) urged that they (Scheduled Castes) must realise their responsibility to wipe out internal divisions among the Scheduled Castes when they demanded of other's removal of Untouchability".

His contribution to social justice goes beyond theoretical exercise. His practical measures to dismantle the caste hierarchy have been remarkable. He led movements such as the Mahad Satyagraha and the Kalam temple entry movement, that highlighted the ritual discrimination faced by Dalits. Despite such efforts, Brahminical forces often undermined his quest for a just society. Yet, amid such challenges, Ambedkar's perseverance in fighting for justice in a hierarchical society illustrates his deep commitment.

In a media interview, Shahu Patole, who wrote a book on Dalit food in Marathwada, observed that different *jatis* experience varying degrees of discrimination. While talking about his experiences in the village, he says that "Mang was considered the lowest, above them were the Mahars. Mang and Mahars were deemed untouchable by Chamars, and the rest of the villages did not touch these communities". This affirms the existence of graded inequality, which Ambedkar also asserted in his sociological treatise.

These suggest the need for a more nuanced



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The top court's judgment takes into account the different sociological realities of every *jati* with the aim of addressing the disparity within Scheduled Castes

approach to social justice, which the Court's sub-classification judgment seeks to address — at least partly. This judgment can be interpreted through Ambedkar's social justice ideals. It underlines the existence of different lived realities of numerous *jatis* that experience levels of deprivation and discrimination. Thus, the judgment aims to mitigate the inequality within the SC community by addressing such heterogeneity. This is precisely where the judgment demonstrates the idea of social jurisprudence to the core because it takes into account the different sociological realities of every *jati*.

Criticism from within

Even though it has still to be implemented in various States, the sub-classification decision has drawn criticism from some Dalit communities, especially from leading segments of Dalits who feel their political leverage might diminish. This fear results from the assumption that the sub-classification judgment might fragment the Dalit constituency and weaken the collective Dalit movement. Sadly, this argument also assumes that there is a single Dalit movement. In contrast, many sociological accounts show that there have always been different shades of Dalit politics, as reflected in the many Dalit movements.

However, this argument by the leading segments among Dalits discounts the underlying Ambedkarite consciousness of various shades of Dalit politics. In this context, 30 years of the Madiga Dandora movement are misrepresented as being detached from the sphere of an Ambedkarite consciousness. Even the movements and mobilisations of the Mang caste in Maharashtra have Ambedkar's picture alongside that of Lokshahir Annabhau Sathe among other leaders. This symbolises how every caste's issue may be different when they deal with other castes but are unified in the larger Ambedkarite idea of social justice.

The Bharat bandh called for by specific Dalit organisations in North India was a misstep that could affect the collective identity and mobilisation of Dalit castes. While the sub-classification debate in North India faces criticism, the situation is a bit different in South India. There, the discussion about sub-classification among Dalits has largely been resolved, with most Dalit organisations supporting the demand for sub-categorisation among SCs.

The criticism from North Indian Dalit organisations — they argue that the judgment might create divisions within the Dalit movement — reflects a misunderstanding of the existing social structures among Dalits. Supporting the sub-classification movement and embracing its potential benefits for enhancing social justice politics at the *jati* level would be a mature approach. More importantly, sub-classification could strengthen the collective identity of SCs, furthering the Ambedkarisation process by including those on the margins. It would also

align with the principles of equitable representation articulated by leaders such as Manyavar Kanishram, who advocated *Jisk Jitni Sankhya Bhari Uski Utmi Hissedari*, an idea of representation based on numerical strength.

Reflection of a long struggle, realities

The leading segments among SCs must avoid demeaning the relentless struggles of the marginalised communities, such as the Valmiki and Musahars in North India, and the Madigas and Arunthathiyars in the South. This is because the judgment is not an imposition from above but a reflection of years of grass-root activism and demands for sub-categorisation. It is a testament to the ongoing struggle for justice led by organisations such as the Madiga Reservation Porata Samithi (MRPS), conferences of the Mang community in Maharashtra, and the Valmiki movements in North India.

There is much concern about its execution. Though history also tells us about the success of the sub-classification model in Punjab and Haryana before the Chinniah judgment in 2004, which is an example of how such measures can work in practice. Despite criticism from some quarters, it is essential to recognise that the judgment is grounded in a historical struggle for equitable representation and justice.

The judges' affirmation was essential because it established that the SC category is not homogeneous but consists of distinct *jatis* with varying needs and challenges. The trajectories of *jatis* go beyond the idea of caste essentialism, and their behaviours are also in response to other *jatis*. On the other hand, recognition of the sociological fact that the SC community represents a union of *jatis* within their structures is a significant step towards addressing the nuanced needs of each group. The assumption that the SC is one homogeneous group fails in the face of prohibitions on inter-marriage even within the community. These are hard sociological facts that one must not deny.

Finally, while challenges remain about accepting this judgment, it is essential to recognise its potential to enhance social justice to the core and promote equitable representation of all Dalit castes. Embracing this judgment with the spirit of fraternity, as Ambedkar envisioned, will be crucial in achieving a more just and inclusive society that ultimately leads to the democratisation of the reservation system. While upholding Dalit civilisation and addressing the creamy layer issue with due seriousness, the collective Ambedkarite movement must also prevent political parties from exploiting this judgment for their gains.

In addition, the movement should broaden its focus beyond traditional reservation policies. Key initiatives should include advocating the extension of reservation policies to the private sector and pursuing land redistribution. These steps are crucial for advancing representation and securing material benefits for all Dalit communities.

Gap between allocations for health, outcomes in States

The realisation of the full potential of the allocations in the Union Budget for the health sector hinges on many State-level parameters. Many of these allocations are for Centrally Sponsored Schemes (CSS), wherein the States not only share a substantial part of the cost but are also responsible for their implementation. The fiscal space and operational frameworks at the State-level have a strong bearing on the efficacy of the Budget allocations on such schemes.

Currently, two major CSS initiatives are being pursued by the central government to strengthen physical health infrastructure in States: the Pradhan Mantri Ayushman Bharat Health Infrastructure Mission (PM-ABHIM), and Human Resources for Health and Medical Education (HRHME). The first is aimed at building health and wellness centres (AB-HWCs), developing block-level public health units (BPHUs), and having integrated district public health laboratories (IDPHLs) and critical care hospital blocks (CCHBs) in each district. The goal is to improve India's preparedness for future emergencies such as pandemics. The second initiative strives to scale up medical personnel by establishing new medical, nursing and paramedical colleges and also increasing seats in colleges. Another important aspect is to also strengthen and upgrade district hospitals and attach them to newly established medical colleges at the district level.

Low fund utilisation

Estimates of central expenditure on these initiatives in the last three Budgets indicate a lacklustre performance in fund absorption. In PM-ABHIM, the ratio of 'Actual' expenditures to 'Budget Estimate' of the CSS component was only around 29% in 2022-23. In 2023-24, the 'Revised Estimate' was about 50% of the Budget Estimate, but is expected to be lower in the 'Actuals'. In HRHME too, the utilisation of funds was only

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Fiscal space and good operational frameworks at the State-level could make a difference to the efficacy of the Budget allocations for health schemes

around a quarter of the Budget estimates in both 2022-23 and 2023-24. Interestingly, perhaps due to low utilisation, the Budget allocations for both PM-ABHIM and HRHME have been slashed in the full Budget when compared to the interim Budget.

There could be several factors behind the low utilisation of funds under PM-ABHIM. First, in the AB-HWC component, around 60% of the resource envelope was to be sourced from the health grants recommended by the 15th Finance Commission, as in the scheme's operational guidelines. A recent study by the National Institute of Public Finance and Policy indicates that only around 45% of the 15th Finance Commission health grants were utilised in the period 2021-22 to 2023-24. Discussions with State government officials indicate that the complex execution structure of these grants has posed hurdles in its utilisation. Second, in the component of IDPHLs, States were required to integrate public health laboratories under different vertical programmes to avoid duplication. This entailed extensive reorganisation of the existing implementing structure at the State-level, requiring significant planning, streamlining and coordinated efforts. Third, nearly all components, including the BPHUs and CCHBs, involve construction, where fund absorption is often delayed by rigid procedures. Overlap of funding from multiple sources for certain scheme components with similar activities has created an additional layer of complexity.

Faculty shortage

Under the HRHME, even if allocations for physical infrastructure were better utilised, filling the sanctioned teaching faculty positions could have been challenging. According to a study by the Centre for Social and Economic Progress (CSEP), there is a shortage of over 40% in teaching faculty positions in II of the 18 newly

created All India Institutes of Medical Sciences in the country. It is even more alarming in State government medical colleges in Empowered Action Group States. As in a CSEP study, in Uttar Pradesh, where 17 government medical colleges were set up between 2019-21, 30% of the teaching faculty positions were vacant in 2022. The shortage of specialists could affect the task of setting up medical colleges or upgrading district hospitals to medical colleges. The challenge also extends to CCHBs under the PM-ABHIM whose guidelines on staffing norms include specialists. As in rural health statistics 2021-22, more than a third of the sanctioned positions of specialists in urban CHCs and two-thirds in rural CHCs were vacant in March 2022.

Fiscal space in States

Notably, State governments will have to bear the recurring costs in maintaining the physical infrastructure built under the PM-ABHIM and HRHME, thus necessitating additional financial commitment. The Union government's support for human resources is only for the duration of the PM-ABHIM scheme, i.e., till 2025-26. The ability of States to plan and support recurring expenses beyond this period is vital for the productivity of the incurred capital expenditure. States need to create the fiscal space required to support these initiatives in addition to contributing to other CSS and their own State health schemes.

In sum, transforming capital expenditure allocations into effective health outcomes depends on several critical factors: the fiscal capacity of States to meet additional recurring expenditures; addressing underlying structural causes of human resource shortages, and improving public financial management practices for executing schemes and grants. These elements will be crucial in ensuring that the budgetary allocations for capital expenditures are productive.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Setting the record straight

We wish to point out an egregious misrepresentation of our forebear in the article, "From Bharati to Karunanidhi" (Opinion page, September 4). The term "mercenary", which

has been used to describe the actions of our grandfather, A.V. Meiyappan, in relation to the acquisition of Bharatiyar's songs, is not only factually incorrect but also an affront to his memory and the values that he embodied. For the

record, the Bharatiyar songs were acquired by A.V. Meiyappan in 1947 from a Marwadi merchant in North Madras for the film *Naam Inrover* ("We Two") for a sum of ₹10,000. Subsequently, when the then Chief Minister, Omandur P.

Ramaswamy Reddiyar, requested our grandfather to consider the significance of these works, A.V. Meiyappan, out of his own volition, and with a deep sense of responsibility, generously donated these invaluable assets to the

government. The word "mercenary" distorts the truth and maligns the legacy of a man whose contributions to Indian cinema and society are beyond reproach. It has caused significant hurt to the entire AVM family. The

legacy of A.V. Meiyappan deserves nothing less than respect. Shanmugan Meiyappan, Chennai. Letters emailed to letters@thehindu.co.in must carry the full postal address and the full name.

SCIENCE

Did animals develop complex brains to deal with challenging habitats?

Traditionally, complex behaviour has been linked to brain size and the brain-to-body size ratio. But researchers have unearthed new insights. Analysing the brains of lizard species in Puerto Rico, a new study has spotted a link between diverse habitats and brain complexity

Monika Mondal

“Most people are scared of them. Why would you want to look at something that’s scary and has a creepy crawl?” Levi Storks, assistant professor at the University of Detroit, asked with a chuckle. Yet that’s exactly what got him interested in lizards when he was a child. He would catch them, pet them, and spend hours observing them.

Now, as an evolutionary biologist, Dr. Storks studies reptiles like lizards in a bid to bridge a research gap: we don’t have a complete picture of how brains and the behaviour of these animals are linked.

Traditionally, complex behaviour has been linked to brain size and the brain-to-body size ratio. But researchers have unearthed new insights that complicate this picture. Analysing the brains of closely related lizard species from the lush green biodiversity of Puerto Rico, for example, Dr. Storks and his team found signs of a relationship between diverse habitats and brain complexity.

In a paper published recently in the journal *Biology Letters*, the researchers wrote, “Cognitive demands are likely higher in more complex habitats, as an animal must coordinate movement along a larger number of potential paths.”

Similar lizards, different habitats

Lizards are a broad group of reptiles that includes a large variety of species with diverse characteristics. Anoles are a specific type of lizard known for their distinctive features, including an ability to change skin colour, the presence of a dewlap (a throat fan), and adhesive toe pads to climb vertical surfaces. Anoles are particularly common in the Americas, especially in tropical and subtropical regions.

Puerto Rico is an island in the Caribbean sea. Its forests are a mosaic of diverse ecosystems, including tropical rainforests like the El Yunque (montane cloud forests) meeting dry forests. The island is home to unique flora and fauna, including endangered species, and is very biodiverse.

It was summer both times – in 2019 and 2021 – when Dr. Storks went to Puerto Rico to collect specimens with his team. “There were lizards literally everywhere,” he remembers. “That’s one of the reasons why people study anoles here,” in their rich natural environment.

The team collected 64 anoles belonging to six species but to the same ecomorph class. That is, though these anoles belonged to different species, they essayed the same ecological roles and thus shared many physical traits. Genetic data also revealed these species shared a common ancestor 20-30 million years ago – not a long time in evolutionary history.

The relationship between anoles is important. Among members of other unrelated species, it’s hard to know which caused led to which effect when studying brains and behaviours. But the “anoles are very close in terms of a lot of things. This means when comparing their brains, there’s a lot of stuff that is similar except the habitat part. And so we can be very certain the habitat is doing something,” Dr. Storks said.

The team had collected anoles of the



A green anole trying to intimidate its reflection. RON ARDIS (CC BY-SA 2.0)

following species: *Anolis evermanni*, *Anolis stratulus*, *Anolis cristatellus*, *Anolis gundlachi*, *Anolis krugi*, and *Anolis pulchellus*.

From a 2014 study conducted by other researchers, the team had data about how complex the anoles’ habitat was. Those scientists followed more than 80 anoles of six species for at least 20 minutes and recorded (in drawings) how their movements responded to features in their surroundings. They paid attention to how many options an anole had and which ones it preferred. For example, they observed the number of branches an anole could access, the barriers in the way, and the distance to travel.

Based on the anoles’ habitats and behaviours, the team divided the six species into three groups: ‘grass bush’, ‘trunk ground’, and ‘trunk crown’.

Dr. Storks said a lizard that lives on a tree trunk is kind of navigating a country road. It can just go up and down, side to side. But the lizards that live up in the tree crown must navigate small branches as well, a challenge more like winding through a city. They need to figure out how best to negotiate a network of options to get to their destination.

In this way, different habitats impose different levels of complexity.

Neurons in complex habitats

After the team airlifted the lizards from Puerto Rico to their laboratories in the University of Detroit, team members dissected their brains to analyse differences in their neurological anatomies.

The way the brain processes information depends on many factors,



Across the six species, the study found that except in the cerebellum, the number of neurons increased with habitat complexity in the telencephalon and the rest of the brain. Anoles living in more complex habitats had a higher density of neurons

including neuron number, neural plasticity, signal processing speed, synapse density, and diversity of cell types. But of late researchers have preferred analysing the neuron density because it seems to be a good indicator of a brain’s processing capacity.

The team investigated the neuron number in three regions of the anoles’ brains: the telencephalon, the cerebellum, and the rest of the brain.

Each of these parts contributes to the brain’s complex functions, from basic survival to complex thought processes. In particular, the telencephalon is involved in sensory integration and higher cognition; the cerebellum is responsible for motor coordination and learning; and the rest handles sensory inputs and motor output.

Across the six species, the study found that except in the cerebellum, the number of neurons increased with habitat complexity in the telencephalon and the rest of the brain. The anoles living in the more complex habitats, including in the tree canopy, were found to have a higher density of neurons than the anoles living on tree trunks and among grasses and shrubs.

The findings suggest that differences in neuroanatomy among Puerto Rican anoles, which have similar social structures, diets, and sensory systems, could be the result of differences in their habitats.

Similar studies in other vertebrates like Aegean wall lizards, three-spined sticklebacks, and zebrafish have also found individuals living in more complex habitats performed better at spatial learning tasks. Other studies have reported similar findings at the level of neuroanatomy and cognition.

Brain’s role in evolution

Some 320 million years ago, reptiles, mammals, and birds had a common ancestor. Over the course of evolution, that common ancestor developed into organisms that looked, behaved, and functioned spectacularly differently from each other.

“We have all these animals that derive from one kind of brain. It’s crazy to think that now we have all these animals that have a very similar brain, but also slightly different,” Dr. Storks says. “It’s a really powerful organ that is constantly changing.”

Many studies discuss brains, specifically the human brain, but not much research has been conducted to find out how brains have evolved over time or how differently brains function in various species.

“Those differences are really interesting, especially when you’re thinking about evolution,” Dr. Storks said. (Monika Mondal is a freelance science and environment journalist. a.monikamondal@gmail.com)



Lee Ha-yeon, a recognised kimchi master, and her apprentices prepare kimchi at the Kimchi Culture Institute in Namyangju, South Korea, on August 21. REUTERS

Climate change threatens South Korea’s beloved kimchi

Reuters

South Korea’s famous kimchi is falling victim to climate change, with scientists, farmers, and manufacturers saying the quality and quantity of the napa cabbage that is pickled to make the ubiquitous dish is suffering due to rising temperatures.

Napa cabbage thrives in cooler climates and is usually planted in mountainous regions where temperatures during the key growing summer season once rarely rose above 25 Celsius.

Studies show that warmer weather brought about by climate change is now threatening these crops, so much so that South Korea might not be able to grow napa cabbage one day due to the intensifying heat.

“We hope these predictions don’t come to pass,” plant pathologist and virologist Lee Young-gyu said.

“Cabbage likes to grow in cool climates and adapts to a very narrow band of temperatures,” Lee said. “The optimal temperatures are between 18 and 21 Celsius.”

In the fields and in kitchens – both commercial and domestic – farmers and kimchi makers are already feeling the change.

Spicy, fermented kimchi is made from other vegetables such as radish, cucumber, and green onion, but the most popular dish remains cabbage-based.

South Korea might soon see the day when it will be unable to grow napa cabbage due to the growing heat. The vegetable prefers lower temperatures in a narrow range

Describing the effect of higher temperatures on the vegetable, Lee Ha-yeon, who holds the designation of Kimchi Master from the Agriculture Ministry, said the heart of the cabbage “goes bad, and the root becomes mushy.”

“If this continues, then in the summer time we might have to give up cabbage kimchi,” said Lee, whose title reflects her contribution to food culture.

Data from the government statistics agency shows the area of highland cabbage farmed last year was less than half of what it was 20 years ago: 3,995 ha compared to 8,796 ha.

According to the Rural Development Administration, a state farming think tank, climate change scenarios project the farmed area to shrink dramatically in the next 25 years to just 44 ha, with no cabbage grown in the highlands by 2090.

Researchers cite higher temperatures, unpredictable heavy rains, and pests that become more difficult to control in the warmer and longer summers as the cause of the crop shrinkage.

A fungal infection that wilts the plant has also been particularly troublesome for farmers because it only becomes apparent very close to harvest.

Climate change adds to the challenges facing South Korea’s kimchi industry, which is already battling lower-priced imports from China, which are mostly served in restaurants.

New customs data showed kimchi imports through the end of July were up 6.9% at \$98.5 million this year, almost all of it from China and the highest ever for the period.

So far, the government has relied on climate-controlled storage to prevent price spikes and shortages. Scientists are also racing to develop crop varieties that can grow in warmer climates and that are more resilient to large fluctuations in rainfall and infections.

THE SCIENCE QUIZ

All answers begin with the letter ‘X’

Yasudevan Mukunth

QUESTION 1

What is the term for a transplantation procedure in which cells or organs are transferred between individuals belonging to different species? If the procedure concludes with, say, a human body hosting some cells from a pig, the human is said to be a chimera.

QUESTION 2

In November 1895, a German scientist discovered a previously unknown form of radiation and called it _____. He named it so to denote its unknown and then-mysterious character. Fill in the blank.

QUESTION 3

CM K

If you have one of these, you’re biologically female if you also have Swyer syndrome. If you have two of these, you’re biologically male if you also have de la Chapelle syndrome. You can also have two of these if you have Klinefelter syndrome. To what am I referring?

QUESTION 4

Plants are called _____ if they have evolved adaptations to survive in conditions with little liquid water. These plants are found in deserts, rainforests (where the weather can also be extremely wet), and near the poles (where water is often frozen). Fill in the blank.

QUESTION 5

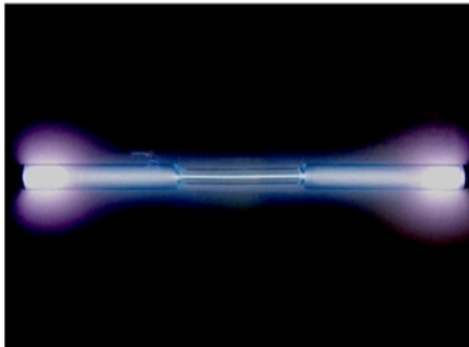
This entity belongs to a system invented by the French philosopher René Descartes in the 17th century. It’s

typically denoted by a horizontal line connected to another, vertical line at a vertex often labelled ‘O’. This system is used to represent objects with two degrees of freedom. Name the entity.

Answers to September 3 quiz:

- Country that switched traffic direction on “Dagen H” – **Ans: Sweden**
- Asian country that had bidirectional traffic until 1946 – **Ans: China**
- Former British colony with right-handed traffic today – **Ans: Myanmar**
- Spaces where traffic is required to be right-handed – **Ans: Water bodies**
- Overseas UK territory where traffic is right-handed – **Ans: British Indian Ocean Territory**

Visual: **Okinawa**
First contact: Anmol Agrawal | Seema Das | K.N. Viswanathan | Ragind Roy



Visual: This gas usually keeps to itself and doesn’t react, yet it was also the first of its kind to form a compound. It’s been used to pump lasers, as an anaesthetic, and in arc lamps. Here the gas is shown glowing inside a discharge tube. Name it. **ALCHEMIST-HP**

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From crisis to cascade of hope

The Cauvery river now presents a picture of calmness, much to the relief of Karnataka and Tamil Nadu.

In early July, both States were on the brink of a water crisis. However, since the second half of July, nature brought a dramatic change in the situation with rains, bringing copious inflow to the river. The situation turned positive with regard to the realisation of water by Tamil Nadu – from deficit to ‘over surplus’. In a matter of 15 days, Tamil Nadu received its entire share – even marginally higher – for July and August, as mandated in the Cauvery Water Disputes Tribunal (CWDT)’s final award of 2007, which was modified by the Supreme Court in February 2018. The spell of surplus flows continued in the subsequent weeks.

As of September 2, the lower riparian State received about 181 tmc ft since June 1, the inaugural date of any water year, whereas the stipulated quantum for the entire year – up to May 2025 – is 177.25 tmc ft. The Tribunal and the Court have fixed Tamil Nadu’s share for July at 31.24 tmc ft; for August – 45.95 tmc ft and for September – 36.76 tmc ft. The southwest monsoon is crucial for both States, as it represents the wettest period for Karnataka and yields the highest quantum of (123.14 tmc ft) of water for Tamil Nadu. So, barring the initial five or six weeks, the 2024-25 water year has not been problematic for the two principal riparian States.

Implementation mechanism

The current year is in stark contrast to the corresponding period (June-September 2) of last year when the aggregate realisation by Tamil Nadu was a mere 33.2 tmc ft. A close perusal of the data of 30 years (1994-95 to 2023-24) reveals that on 11 occasions, the realisation during June-September was less than 100 tmc ft, as against the stipulated 123.14 tmc ft. This means that at



T. Ramakrishnan

In an intense water conflict such as the Cauvery, the version of the affected parties, in times of crisis, cannot be expected to be impartial

least once in three years, there is distress. This is where the final award’s implementation mechanism – Cauvery Water Management Authority (CWMA) – and the Supreme Court assume importance, of course, apart from the spirit of accommodation.

The efficacy of the CWMA and its assisting body Cauvery Water Regulation Committee (CWRC), as institutional arrangements, was put to test during 2023-24. Unlike its predecessor, the Cauvery River Authority, which was a high-profile setup with the Prime Minister as the chairperson and Chief Ministers of all the basin States as Members, the CWMA is headed by a full-time official with government officers of all the States and various departments of the Union government. Many of their decisions last year were not to the liking of the two States, but given the constraints, the performance of the CWMA and CWRC can be considered satisfactory.

Needless to say, there is enormous scope for improvement on their part. First, there should be greater transparency in their functioning. Both the Authority and the Committee will have to make public, as quickly as possible, all their decisions in writing. In an intense water conflict such as the Cauvery, the version of the affected parties, in times of crisis, cannot be expected to be impartial. Even otherwise, dissemination of authentic information is vital in an inter-State water dispute. If the authority is constrained by a shortage of manpower, in carrying out its functions effectively, the Union Ministry of Jal Shakti should intervene and solve the problem.

Moreover, the Authority should enlarge its composition from being a body of only officials to one of multi-disciplinary and a mix of officials and non-officials, who could be drawn from farmers, environmentalists, and independent water experts. The Union government could follow the example of the Chennai

Metropolitan Water Supply and Sewerage Board Act. The law provides for six non-official directors on the Board of the water agency, which includes persons to represent the interests of the public, industrial, and commercial establishments.

As for the composition of the CWMA, the implementation mechanism that the Tribunal had in mind is only recommendatory and there is no bar on the Union government to fine-tune it. The presence of a non-official environmentalist can push the government to take the problem of environmental degradation of the much-venerated river more seriously in view of the challenges being caused by climate change.

Water shortage

The ‘feel good factor’ prevalent now can not be used to look at the problem of Bengaluru’s drinking water shortage, which assumed a serious proportion earlier this year. The Supreme Court, in its 2018 judgment, made a special allocation of 4.75 tmc ft to the city while the Karnataka government has been pressing for implementing the ₹ 9,000-crore Mekedatu Balancing Reservoir-cum-Drinking Water Project. At present, the Mekedatu project is before the Central Water Commission.

Given the trust deficit between the two States (which explains the reason behind Tamil Nadu’s opposition to the project), the idea of the participation of a third party – say, the Union government – can be explored to execute not only the Mekedatu project but also any other project, including hydro-electric across the Cauvery, upstream of the Mettur reservoir. After all, attempts made since the late 1990s in this regard failed. There is no harm in making yet another earnest attempt as the intention is to optimally utilise the precious water resource which, if untapped, will go to waste, as is happening now.

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Flip-flops in sand policy

A.P. has repeatedly changed its policies, leading to substantial revenue losses

STATE OF PLAY

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ANDHRA PRADESH

Andhra Pradesh has witnessed many flip-flops in sand policies over the past decade. The current government issued GO 43 in July 2024, which withdrew the existing sand policies – namely, the New Sand Mining Policy 2019 and the Upgraded Sand Policy 2021 – and replaced them with an Interim Mechanism for Sand Supply until the formulation of the Sand Policy 2024 for the State. With this free sand policy came to existence again.

From a novel experiment of entrusting the job of sand supply to Self Help Groups (SHGs) to free sand, auctioning sand reaches, and back to free sand supply. The successive governments have formulated policies that match their requirements. Both ruling and Opposition parties have gone beyond mudslinging, initiating probes into the sand policies of their predecessors as soon as they assumed power. A political narrative is built that the previous government indulged in large-scale corruption and illegal sand mining.

In the process, the sand, a precious natural resource, is plundered and the State’s coffers hardly fill with the supply of sand. The YSRCP, TDP, and NDA governments have undervalued the possible revenues through the sale of sand.

Neither of these governments has provided actual estimates of annual sand availability, its total value, or potential revenue for the State.

In 2023, then Mines Minister Peddireddy Ramchandra Reddy claimed that his government made around ₹3,000 crore from sand auctions over

four years. In contrast, the NDA government, in a white paper, stated that withdrawing the free sand policy and illegal sand mining resulted in a loss of ₹6,940 crore, with unpaid dues from sand contractors amounting to ₹1,167 crore, totalling losses of ₹8,107 crore. In another paper on State finances, the government said that the loss was ₹7,000 crore due to illegal sand mining.

It is pertinent to mention that the auction of sand used to fetch ₹4,000 crore to ₹5,000 crore a year before the swift change in sand policies became a trend. Over the past eight to 10 years, the Andhra Pradesh government suffered a loss of not less than ₹4,000 crore. And, it would continue to suffer much more.

If the growth in Gross State Domestic Product (GSDP) (13.5% from 2014-19 and 10.5% from 2019-24) were taken into consideration, revenue from an auction of sand should fetch not less than ₹9,400 crore (at GSDP growth of 13.5%) and ₹8,200 crore (at GSDP growth of 10.5%) per year.

The government also argues that the Compound Annual Growth Rate (CAGR) of revenue from mineral wealth was growing at 24% during 2014-19, and fell to seven per cent during 2019-24. Mineral revenue would have gone up to ₹7,239 crores by 2024 if the 24% CAGR continued. Going by the same analogy, revenue from the auc-

tion of sand should be no less than ₹13,600 crore per annum. So, the revenue through the auction of sand reaches should be around ₹41,000 crore to ₹47,000 crore if GSDP is considered, and ₹68,000 crore if the CAGR of 24% is applied, in the next five years. In addition, the government would also get a GST and Seigniorage Fee on the sand sold. But, as said earlier, successive governments have undervalued the precious natural resource, sand, for reasons best known to them.

Farmers’ leader Annamolu Gandhi, Waterman of India Rajendra Singh, and others filed a Public Interest Litigation in the National Green Tribunal highlighting how sand mining was being carried out illegally near the then CM N. Chandrababu Naidu’s residence and also important government offices in Amravati in 2019. The NGT slapped a fine of ₹100 crore on the State government and the case is still pending.

When Mr. Naidu came to power in 2014, he had hoped in SHGs in villages that would oversee the excavation and sale of sand mining under a programme *Pedarikam Puti Gulu* (victory over poverty). As the initiative failed to meet expectations, some months later, Mr. Naidu changed the policy and introduced a tendering system for the sale of sand. It resulted in litigation in the Hyderabad High Court in 2015. The legal heat made the TDP government do another flip flop and he declared his government would sell sand free of cost to consumers. This was in March 2016. The YSRCP government scrapped the free sand policy and introduced a new sand policy in 2019. The NDA government recently scrapped the YSRCP government’s sand policies and reintroduced the free sand policy.

Did expansion before the pandemic prove costly for SpiceJet?

While IndiGo had the wherewithal to tide over the pandemic, SpiceJet couldn’t bounce back

DATA POINT

Jasmin Nihalani
Vignesh Radhakrishnan

The never-ending financial troubles of the cash-strapped SpiceJet airline were once again on display when passengers flying from Dubai to India were barred from checking in due to the airline’s unpaid dues. Following this, the Directorate General of Civil Aviation placed SpiceJet under ‘enhanced surveillance’. Earlier that month, they audited the airline and found ‘certain deficiencies’. These new challenges arose while the airline was already dealing with payment and provident fund dues to employees and legal disputes as lessors were not paid. Pilots and cabin crew were last paid salaries for June and 150 cabin crew were sent on unpaid leave, *The Hindu* had reported.

Data shows that a series of steps taken to expand the airline in the years leading up to the pandemic – driven by the sudden collapse of Jet Airways and the desire to capture a larger share of the growing market – may have proven to be costly.

Unlike the market leader IndiGo, who had been increasing the size of its fleet and crew steadily over time and expanded further before the pandemic, SpiceJet’s leap was sudden.

Between FY18 and FY20, IndiGo increased its fleet size from 159 to 262 aircraft, with SpiceJet improving from 60 to 114 (Chart 1). Both also went on a hiring spree during the period. Pilots employed by IndiGo and SpiceJet increased from about 2,350 to 4,000 and about 675 to 1,170, respectively, in the period. Cabin crew of IndiGo and SpiceJet increased from about 4,600 to 6,500 and 1,200 to 2,300, respectively (Chart 2).

The move did pay off briefly, with SpiceJet surpassing Air India in market share, becoming the se-

cond-largest airline by the end of 2019, taking over from Jet Airways. IndiGo was also placing similar bets, to make the most of the Jet Airways exit and a growing market, enhancing its market share even further (Chart 3).

However, the pandemic hit and passenger flights came to a grinding halt during the first COVID-19 wave. During the successive waves, the strictness of the lockdown was eased in steps, with flyers trickling in small numbers. During these months, airlines continued to incur the cost of aircraft rentals, maintenance costs, airport hangar charges, and salaries paid to employees. Both the airlines had to endure such expenses, and IndiGo’s bill was much higher given more planes and a bigger crew.

Table 4 shows select expenses of IndiGo and SpiceJet in ₹ crores. During the pandemic years – FY21 and FY22 – IndiGo paid over ₹20,950 crore on rentals, airport charges, maintenance costs, and employee benefits. For SpiceJet, the figure was around ₹5,880 crores.

With barely any income and huge recurring expenses, the carriers incurred massive losses, with IndiGo’s losses being way higher than SpiceJet’s. Chart 5 shows the profit/loss recorded after tax in ₹ crores. IndiGo recorded a combined loss of over ₹12,000 crore during the pandemic years.

SpiceJet saw its losses widen further during the pandemic years (₹2,720 crores loss in FY21 and 22). As IndiGo had a bigger market share before the Covid downturn hit and was in better financial shape, it managed to bounce back, while SpiceJet’s could not. After the pandemic blues were off, SpiceJet plumbed newer depths every quarter. Air India got privatised and with Vistara getting merged with Tata’s carrier, a vacuum was created in the market, which IndiGo has comfortably filled. Its market share crossed 60% this year, while SpiceJet’s fell below 5%.

SpiceJet’s hard landing

The data for the charts and tables were sourced from the Directorate General of Civil Aviation and financial reports of SpiceJet and IndiGo



Chart 1: The chart shows the fleet size of SpiceJet and IndiGo over time

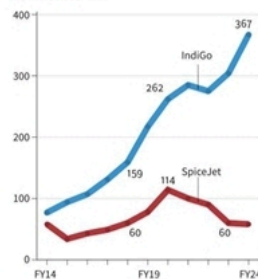


Chart 2: The chart shows the strength of pilots and cabin crew in IndiGo and SpiceJet

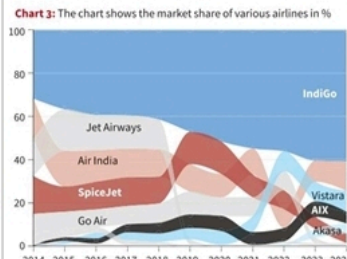
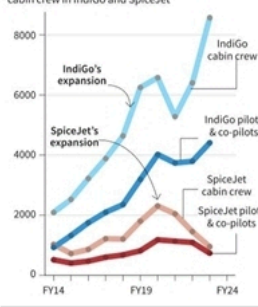
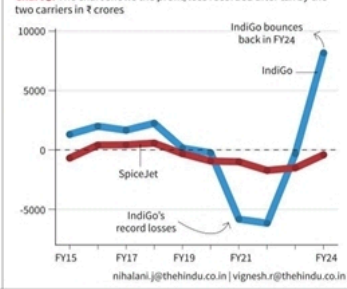


Table 4: The table shows select expenses of IndiGo and SpiceJet in ₹ crores

	FY24	FY23	FY22	FY21	FY20
SPICEJET					
Fuel	2,383	4,772	2,946	1,529	4,616
Lease rental	638	376	592	248	363
Airport charges	700	810	759	647	1,145
Maintenance costs	874	1,167	1,110	1,122	2,172
Employee benefits	771	844	727	676	1,526
INDIGO					
Fuel	23,905	23,646	9,695	3,831	12,454
Lease rental	1,075	326	312	280	497
Airport charges	4,624	3,647	2,287	1,613	2,912
Maintenance costs	9,932	8,045	6,090	4,191	5,867
Employee benefits	5,838	4,325	3,152	3,026	4,395

Chart 5: The chart shows the profit/loss recorded after tax by the two carriers in ₹ crores



FROM THE ARCHIVES

The Hindu

FIFTY YEARS AGO SEPTEMBER 5, 1974

Bhutan against appointment of new Indian Advisers

Calcutta, Sept. 4: In its efforts progressively to assert its independence, Bhutan is understood to have told India that it will not encourage the appointment of any new administrative Advisers from India. The Bhutanese Government is not asking Delhi to withdraw the Advisers now at work, but it wishes to have no replacement when the various Indian Advisers finish their assigned terms. In some cases, their departure is being speeded up.

These Advisers work as part of the Indian Government and the Bhutanese Government Administration. In charge of the Bhutanese Government is the Indian Political Officer at Thimpu, who, like a Resident Minister, advises the King on foreign and basic elements of modern Police laws into Bhutan.

At present, there are senior Indian Advisers attached to the Bhutanese Ministries of Finance Development, and Trade, among others. Bhutan is treaty-bound to be guided by India in foreign affairs. There is also a Resident Indian Military Officer at Thimpu, the Bhutanese capital, with the rank of Brigadier.

The Indian Air Force establishment is at Paro. Some Indian Army officers have also been seconded to the Bhutanese forces.

Bhutan has opened up its communications with India on the occasion of the coronation of the new King. Since then it has gone back into its isolation after its initial attempts to open its doors during the coronation. It is not clear whether the bar is from the Indian side or the Bhutanese.

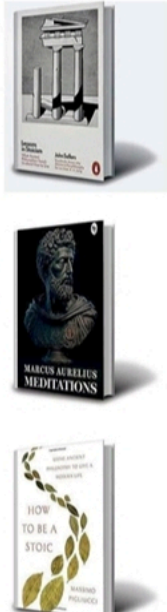
A HUNDRED YEARS AGO SEPTEMBER 5, 1924

Exodus of coolies.

Dibrugarh, Sept. 4: About 700 tea garden and other coolies arrived here recently demanding repatriation to Madras. They complained that they had been sucked by recruits and wanted to be sent back home at Government expense. The Madras Government enquires as regards 200 applications. The rest were refused. About 250 returned to work.

At Silsabar there is a similar unrest among the garden coolies. About 400 coolies recruited from Madras Presidency proceeded to Jorhat and requested repatriation.

BIBLIOGRAPHY



In a time of turmoil and crisis, the stoic roadmap to a meaningful life

Several books on Stoicism, old and new, offer timeless wisdom on how to navigate life's challenges, cope with chaos and wrest happiness from adversity. By introducing this ancient philosophy, these books explain why it remains relevant for modern society

Soma Basu

The world is in turmoil. We muddled through a pandemic, and continue to witness climate disruptions, rising inequalities, racial injustices, economic slowdowns, wars and uprising. The fear of loss and the greed for more keep lives on edge in a world where one crisis follows another.

The need for clarity and resilience to deal with hardships is felt like never before. In this scenario, can art of living strategies offered by Stoics help?

After Alexander the Great's conquests and death upended the Greek world, Hellenistic philosopher Zeno of Citium, propounded the development of logical living with reason as its decisive principle, where there is no space for exhibiting the pain one suffers.

Though Zeno's original writings are lost, his sayings are preserved by later writers and *Rebublic* is cited as the most famous work that outlined his vision of an ideal Stoic society. For example, Mr. Spock in the original Star Trek is a perfect example of a stoic person who tried to never demonstrate his feelings.

Bandwidth of emotions

The philosophy is not just about 'unfeeling'. Between Prime Minister Modi's 'stoic silence' over ethnic violence in Manipur and wrestler Vinesh Phogat's 'stoic attitude' in proving herself whether on the mat or standing up against alleged sexual harassment, there is, for instance, a bandwidth of emotions that help us to understand universal truths about people and what makes them thrive in any

situation.

There's a hard path at any given moment in our lives that could benefit us as we either push through a current difficulty to build our character, or mull in the moment waiting for the experiences we live in to disappear, writes William Mulligan, founder of YouTube and Instagram account, Stoic Teachings, in his first book *The Everyday Stoic: Simple Rules For A Good Life* (2024).

"We all have our own philosophy. Maybe it's about how we treat people and allow others to treat us and how much negativity we let into ourselves," he says, explaining the Stoicism doctrine based on how to accept things that cannot be changed and not to brood over things beyond our control.

Truths we have lost sight of

In a world full of darkness, books on Stoicism make for a transformative reading experience, equipping readers with insights into a more productive perspective of life. For beginners, reading the big three Roman philosophers – Marcus Aurelius, Epictetus and Seneca – is a good way to cover the basics.

With *The Enchiridion*, Epictetus helps us to dive into human desires and calm rationality in order to cultivate a resilient mindset. It is an essential guide to enlightenment and emotional well-being. The free-minded writings of Seneca in his *Letters to Lucilius* discuss ethical theory and practical advice and how both are distinct and yet interdependent. He regards his philosophy as a balm for the wounds of life and suggests uprooting destructive passions.

While *Marcus' Meditations* is a personal collection of his reflections on applying stoic philosophy to his life and is one of the most widely-read classics on self-improvement, Donald Robertson uses anecdotes from Marcus' life in his book *How to Think like a Roman Emperor* (2019). Robertson's *Stoicism and the Art of Happiness* (2013) showcases how stoic philosophy is a form of self-help today.

In the context of people trying coping mechanisms to understand their place in the world and emerging strong, Vinesh Phogat is an example of a real Stoic. Academic philosopher John Sellars who is the chair of the Modern Stoicism organisation, has penned a good introduction, *Lessons in Stoicism: What Ancient Philosophers Teach Us About How to Live* (2020), that underlines the comeback of Stoicism as a fashionable buzzword.

History as inspiration

Stoic philosophy started in 300 BC with Zeno of Citium and continued for 500 years until the fall of Rome; it evolved during the two crises and has had numerous revivals since, including Neo-stoicism in the Renaissance era and modern Stoicism in the 21st century.

A popular modern book on Stoicism is *The Daily Stoic* (2016) by Ryan Holiday and Stephen Hanselman, which draws on historical icons and contemporary heroes to demonstrate the power of owing our convictions and acting accordingly in an era of dishonesty. "Your values, your character and your deeds determine your success and legacy," Ryan writes, pointing out that the path to greatness is not

possible without goodness.

To make the 2000-year-old philosophy a framework to modern life, another good read is Victor Frankl's 1946 book, *Man's Search for Meaning* where he chronicles his experiences as a prisoner during World War II. He observes its impact on fellow inmates at a Nazi concentration camp; there were some who were able to connect to a purpose in life in such bleak times through completion of tasks, caring for another person or finding meaning in suffering with dignity.

In *A Guide to the Good Life: The Ancient Art of Stoic Joy* (2009), William Irvine tells readers how to become thoughtful observers of their own life and identify the sources of distress, minimise worry, and let go of the past. Author and professor of Philosophy in City College of New York, Massimo Pigliucci's book *How to be a Stoic: using Ancient Philosophy to Live a Modern Life* (2017), reminds readers to look to history for inspiration and be surprised by its power.

In *How Should We Live?* (2015), cultural historian Roman Krznaric explores twelve topics including love, family, and empathy; work, time, and money to reveal how people have missed a chance to learn from the ancient Greeks. It is replete with ideas from the past and sheds light on the decisions we make in our daily lives.

As Gregory Hays, a classics scholar says, Stoicism, after all, is about being in control of one's thoughts and emotions. It is a recognition that human societies and relations are varied and complex and the path toward a better world goes through each of us.

THE DAILY QUIZ

September 5 is celebrated as Teachers' Day in India. In honour of educators, here is a quiz about fictional and literary teachers who have changed lives for the better

K. Abhinaya

QUESTION 1

Known for her incredible wit and stern demeanour, this teacher played a very important role in the life of the protagonist and his two friends. She was the head of a well-lived house in the school and taught a very difficult subject at a magical school. Identify the teacher.

QUESTION 2

Hilary Swank plays a teacher who transforms the life of at-risk school children at a school in LA in this movie. The movie is based on a book compiled out of the diary entries of the students. Name the movie.

QUESTION 3

From the 21-day hack to build habits

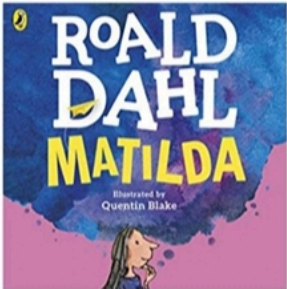
to acronyms to speeches, this teacher quickly becomes the lifeline of students trying to navigate their way through the gruelling IT coaching regime in this popular series. Name the series and the teacher.

QUESTION 4

This recent sitcom follows the lives of teachers at an underfunded public school in Philadelphia. The creator of the show also plays the role of an optimistic second-grade teacher. Identify the creator of the show.

QUESTION 5

An unlikely ally turned teacher; Beijing; snake stance; and fire cupping are all key elements of this movie. It follows the relationship between a troubled 12-year-old kid and his teacher. Identify the movie and name the teacher in the movie.



Visual question:

Name the teacher who identifies Matilda's talent and attempts to help her develop and hone her intelligence.

Questions and Answers to the previous day's daily quiz: 1. The upcoming movie *Emergency* is about this and Kangana Ranaut will play the role of this politician. Ans: The film is based on the Indian Emergency from 1975. Ms. Ranaut will play the role of Indira Gandhi.

2. This 2019 Hindi-language political film is based on the 2014 book by Sanjaya Baru about this politician. Ans: The *Accidental Prime Minister*. Dr. Manmohan Singh
3. This Marathi-language biopic based on Nitin Gadkari was released in 2023. This man played the role of Gadkari. Ans: Gadkari; Rahul Chopra
4. Main Atal Hoon is a 2024 biographical film on Atal Bihari Vajpayee who was played by this actor. Ans: Pankaj Tripathi

5. This 1993 biographical drama film, written by noted playwright Vijay Tendulkar, was based on this politician. Ans: Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel
6. This 1997 Tamil-language epic political drama was directed by Mani Ratnam. Ans: *Iruvar*
Visual: Identify this film from the poster. Ans: *Yatra*; based on Telugu politician Y.S. Rajasekhara Reddy
Early birds: Ishai K.N. Viswanathan/ Vaishnavi Chaudhary/ Dodo Jayaditya/ Vaishnavi Sharma



FROM THE ARCHIVES

Know your English

K. Subrahmanian

"Hello. Care to join me for dinner?"
"I have been grazing through packet after packet of chips all day, so..."
"You mean you've been eating chips all day long?"
"Yes, I've been grazing through..."
"How can you graze? Are you a cow?"
"Well, no..."
"Animals like cows, sheep and goats graze. People like you and me eat."
"You're right. You see I have been eating all day. But I've also been grazing."
"What are you talking about?"
"You see 'grazing' means 'eating continuously throughout the day'."
"Eating throughout the day? But how can a person eat throughout the day?"
"Why can't a person eat throughout the day? All that he/she has to do is eat small quantities of something right through the day."
"You mean the person eats something after his breakfast, lunch and dinner?"
"No, no. You see when you are grazing, you don't usually have your regular meal. Because if you do, then it is very difficult for you to eat something after that."
"I see. So instead of a heavy breakfast, a 'grazer' will have three or four mini-breakfasts before lunch."
"Exactly. And there will be no lunches or dinners either. Only small quantities of something to prevent the stomach from complaining."
"So like a cow, a 'grazer' chews all day."
"Yes. And that's why it's called 'grazing'."
"Would you like to have a small quantity of ice cream?"
"Certainly not! I'd like to have lashings of ice cream!"
"Lashings of ice cream?"
"Yes."
"Doesn't 'lashing' mean beating somebody with a whip?"
"Yes, one of the meanings is that."
"How do I beat you with ice cream?"
"You've got it all wrong. You see, I didn't say 'lashing'; but 'lashings'. In informal English, 'lashings' means a large quantity of something."
"So you want a large quantity?"
"Yes, I want lashings of ice cream."
"But I thought you were grazing."
"Never mind that. Are you giving me my ice cream?"
"Yes. But not lashings of it. You see I have only a small quantity."
"Give it."
"Here you are."
"Can you tell me the meaning of a sentence?"
"What sentence?"
"This is the sentence. 'Mr. Arjun Singh also said that if any references in the statement gave this interpretation directly or indirectly, the same are withdrawn.' The sentence is in the resolution adopted by the Congress Working Committee. What does the sentence mean?"
"I suppose he meant it to mean that he wasn't meant to mean what the party thought he meant it to mean."
"All's well that means well. It is evident that the resolution was drafted by leaders with bleary eyes and tired minds." Published in *The Hindu* on April 6, 1993.

Word of the day

Parry: impede the movement of (an opponent or a ball); avoid or try to avoid fulfilling, answering, or performing (duties, questions, or issues)

Synonyms: block, deflect, skirt, hedge, elude, dodge, duck, evade, circumvent, fudge, sidestep

Usage: She cleverly parried the reporter's questions.

Pronunciation: bit.ly/parrypro

International Phonetic Alphabet: /ˈpærɪ/

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

Stifling innovation

GST notices on academic institutions must be revoked

K Vaitheeswaran

Press reports indicate that premier institutions such as IIT Delhi, Anna University, Punjab University, Sastra University and few others have received show cause notices from the Directorate General of GST Intelligence (DGGI). It is reported that the Education Ministry is not too happy with the notices issued seeking GST on Research Grants.

According to DGGI, universities and institutions should pay GST on the research grants that they received from government, quasi-government bodies, funds, industry, donors and philanthropists. Despite the Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs' instructions that DGGI should not issue notices which involve interpretation of law without the clearance from the Board, the salvo of notices has caused significant stress amongst the academia.

Levy of GST is on supply of goods or services for consideration. Further, the activity must be in the course or furtherance of business. When a research grant is given by government, corporate philanthropy or philanthropists or international agencies, or Alumni of any institution/university, it is for the purpose of carrying out research that ultimately benefit the society. The university or the institution that receives the grants does not supply any goods or services to the donor. An institution or university carries out research and is not carrying on business. When 'consideration' is missing and when 'supply of goods or services' is also missing, there can be no GST.

NO 'CONSIDERATION'

In so far as universities are concerned, when they receive a research grant there is no corresponding requirement to supply goods or services to the person giving the grant. Similarly, the person giving the grant does not procure any goods or services from the University. Thus, the grant received does not constitute 'consideration'.

Grants given for open ended research does not tantamount to consideration as it is a receipt in the nature of grant *simpliciter* without a *quid pro quo* of supply of goods or services. Research grants are used for funding research projects, buying equipment, payment of stipend, etc. The donor does not have any



TAXING TIMES. Nixing research ownership rights over the research findings.

Institutions account these grants as funds in their balance sheet and it is not taken as income. There are conditions with reference to utilization and reporting. There could be some rare cases where the research could result in an outcome such as new technology or patent. Even assuming that as per the terms of the grants future IPR would be owned jointly, at best it is a joint ownership of IPR and there is no existence of IPR at the time of grant. If the IPR is exploited and there is some degree of licencing which results in royalty then that royalty would be liable to GST.

In a GST case, the Bombay High Court in the case of Bai Mamubai Trust Vs. Suchitra has held that enforceable reciprocal obligations are essential to a supply and that the supply doctrine does not contemplate or encompass a wrongful unilateral act or any resulting payment of damages.

The grant by its very nature is meant for covering the expenditure incurred in carrying out research and the report or the benefit of the research is for public at large and not for the person making the payment. Even if the research or the benefit of the research exclusively belongs to the University, there is no change with reference to the legal concept of grant not being consideration. When the payment does not have the character of consideration and there are no reciprocal obligations, it cannot be said that there is a supply for the purpose of levy of GST.

Academic institutions play a significant role in fostering research and innovation. They depend upon various donors who provide research grants and imposing GST on such grants would throttle innovation and research. It is hoped that the exercise is nipped at the bud through appropriate Circulars or Directions.

The writer is an advocate and tax consultant



PARTHAPRATIM PAL
PARTHA RAY

Recently the World Trade Organization (WTO) released two important documents — (i) World Trade Statistics 2023; and (ii) World Tariff Profile 2024.

While both contain detailed and apparently boring data tables and refrain from presenting any analysis, sifting through these documents are a number of interesting trends in the current global trade scenario emerge.

RECENT TRENDS

Traditionally, the first document, World Trade Statistics 2023 highlights trends in global merchandise trade and trade in services on an annual basis. According to this, merchandise trade and trade in commercial services are showing a different trend for the year 2023! Specifically, the following trends are worth noting:

* In volume terms, global merchandise trade declined by 1.2 per cent in 2023. The decline is sharper in terms of value, which contracted by 5 per cent in 2023. Apart from lower volumes, declining commodity prices, and exchange rate fluctuations could have led to this decline.

* On the other hand, in 2023, trade in commercial services grew by 9 per cent in value terms, led mostly by travel, computer services, research and development and business services. Higher global risk emanating from geopolitical tensions, supply chain disruptions and climate change related uncertainties led to high growth of the insurance services sector, which grew at 18 per cent in 2023.

* Overall, the combined value of international trade in goods and services has declined by 2 per cent in 2023. The possible reasons behind this unusual slowdown of trade could be attributed to increasing geopolitical tensions and their impact on the shipping routes, growing protectionism across the world, a rise of unilateral policy measures taken by various countries and an incipient trend of fragmentation of international trade among various trade blocs.

It is also possible that high inflation coupled with some contractionary economic policy measures in some developed countries contributed to the decline in merchandise trade.

WHERE DOES INDIA STAND?

Interestingly, in both merchandise trade and trade in services, India has improved its position in 2023. In merchandise exports, India was ranked 18th in 2023 with a market share of 1.8 per cent. In 2023, India's exports have declined to



Some disquieting trends in global trade

TRADE MATTERS. The WTO data reveal that the world is moving away from free trade and towards trade independence and self-sufficiency

\$432 billion but India has managed to become the 17th largest exporter in the world. In commercial services exports, India's rank moved from 8th in 2022 to 7th in 2023, with a marginal increase in its market share.

In 2023, India is ranked 2nd in ICT services exports in 2023 with exports growing at 13 per cent. Apart from the ICT services exports, India also features among the top 10 exporters of the following services subsectors: Other commercial services (4th), Other business services (4th), Personal, cultural and recreational services (5th), Construction services (7th), Financial services (9th) and Insurance and pension services (10th).

The second report, World Tariff Profile 2024 provides comprehensive information about tariff and non-tariff measures (NTM) used by the WTO Member countries in 2023.

There are four main types of NTMs as per WTO: (i) trade remedial measures, such as, anti-dumping duties and countervailing duties; (ii) safeguard measures used by countries to

temporarily restrict imports when there is an import surge; (iii) product standards, such as, the Sanitary and Phytosanitary Standards, used to protect human, animal, or plant life and health from specific risks; and (iv) technical barriers to trade (TBT). The report published data for the first two types of NTMs but not on SPS and TBT. This report shows that India has been one of the most prolific users of Non-Tariff Measures (NTMs) in international trade. Specifically, for the calendar year, 2023, 186 anti-dumping investigations were conducted by the WTO member countries, and on 86 occasions anti-dumping measures were implemented.

The top three countries which implemented maximum anti-dumping measures against other exporting countries in 2023 were: the US (14 measures), India (14 measures) and European Union (5 measures). India was also at the receiving end of anti-dumping measures imposed in 2023.

Countervailing measures are imposed against subsidised exports which do not fulfil certain WTO legal requirements. In 2023, a total of 11 countervailing measures were imposed by WTO member countries.

Among these, India imposed three measures, and five were imposed by the US. India was also at the receiving end of these countervailing duties as three out of the total 11 were imposed against Indian exports. India has also been a

user of the WTO safeguard provisions in 2023. Out of the total six times such safeguard measures were used, India used it two times.

WHY NTMs?

There are a few possible reasons for India's usage of NTMs. First, India can legitimately have an active and interventionist trade policy regime that uses tariffs and NTMs to optimise its trade flows according to domestic requirements.

Second, India has a broad and diversified industrial base, so the demand for trade policy measures can be on the higher side.

Third, China's economic slowdown and demand compression have led to an aggressive export push by Chinese firms. To protect domestic producers from these artificially cheap Chinese exports, many countries, including India, use different trade policy measures, including NTMs. Overall, these data are perhaps in sync with the hypothesis that globally, countries are focusing more on economic independence and self-sufficiency. This current policy ideology seems markedly different from the principles of comparative advantage, free trade, and global cooperation on which the globalization stood.

Has a time come for the engraving of the epitaph of free trade? Let us watch.

Pal is a Professor of Economics at the IIM Calcutta, and Ray is Director, NBM&P. Views expressed are personal

thehindubusinessline.

TWENTY YEARS AGO TODAY.

September 5, 2004

We will soon gain mastery over inflation: PM

A day after the release of official data showing inflation at a three-and-a-half year high of 8.17 per cent for the week-end August 21, the Prime Minister, Dr Manmohan Singh, admitted that the price situation was a "matter of concern". Addressing a press conference, Dr Singh attributed the rising inflation levels to a combination of steep jump in global oil prices, concerns arising from late arrival of monsoon, and "avoidable disruption" such as the truckers strike.

Rising input costs drive FMCG, food firms up the wall

Amidst talk of severe pressure on margins, the FMCG and food companies have a new worry. This time it is the combined onslaught of steep rise in input costs of key raw materials, coupled with the 2 per cent cess levied in this year's Budget and the recent truckers' strike. And to top it all, there is the continuing worry over increasing global oil prices.

RBI proposes 'cluster approach' on SSI credit

With a view to enhance credit to the SSI sector, the Reserve Bank of India has asked banks to adopt a "cluster-based" approach to cater to the diverse needs of small and medium industries.

Railways' shift away from futuristic projects is a concern

Sudhanshu Mani

Until recently, Indian Railways (IR) was adept at hyping its progress, especially by comparing the current government's decade with the previous one. Now IR mainly makes news for knee-jerk reactions to accidents, cancellations, and defensive measures.

The policy shift from manufacturing only air-conditioned coaches to mostly non-air-conditioned ones was abrupt, leaving the AC manufacturers high and dry. The final blow to the plan for 150 passenger train pairs by private train operations came with the decision to re-evaluate and delay the public-private partnership. Additionally, the empowerment of divisions to undertake Gati Shakti projects was reassigned to the Construction wing, even as Railways' freight modal share has actually declined instead of the avowed increase. Meanwhile, IR proudly claims to be the world's only

fully-electrified "green" railway, while ignoring 5,000 surplus diesel locos and the irony that its increase in freight loading relies on record coal transportation, the most polluting fuel.

IR's response to recent accidents has been inadequate. After media uproar, it hastily advertised vacancies for safety staff and impulsively decided to equip 10,000 locos with Kavach, although full benefits would flow only when the ground equipment is installed.

The Railways also announced peripheral measures like installing cameras with AI technology instead of using this technology for real-time alerts, formulation of unified rules and training that would specify precautions in case of failure of automatic signals for drivers, station masters, guards, pointsmen, etc.

Another pressing matter is the growing perception that IR is retreating from the goals and reforms it set years ago. A glaring example of this is the aluminium train sets. Aluminium



VANDE BHARAT. Elite project?

trains have been in the news ever since Integral Coach Factory (ICF) issued a tender for 20 train sets in 2017 — named Train 20 — with a view to deliver them in 2020. In 2018, however, the project was shelved. The issue resurfaced when IR issued a tender for 100 aluminium train sets, a bold move. Why aluminium? To improve energy efficiency of a train and even cost savings, it is imperative to reduce its weight by switching to a lighter material like aluminium.

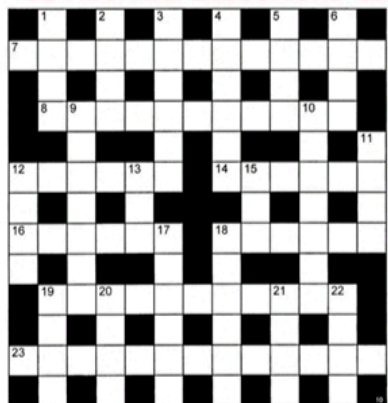
The tender showed the government's resolve for a quantum leap in railway technology. But this

euphoria was short-lived and IR recently announced that it had abandoned this tender because of high cost and lack of know-how and competition in India, after failed negotiations with the lowest bidder, Alstom.

The expected offer prices differed by mere 3 per cent in the ₹30,000-crore project. After facing a backlash for pushing the 'elitist' Vande Bharat trains while neglecting the needs of ordinary travellers, the Ministry seems to have lost the appetite for pursuing meaningful projects. The current environment, with its unprecedented railway investments, is highly conducive to large-scale technology acquisition and assimilation in facilities by the private sector. But if IR decides to walk away from futuristic projects, it would be a colossal step backward.

The writer is leader of Train 18/Vande Bharat project and Independent Rail Consultant

BL TWO-WAY CROSSWORD 2519



EASY

ACROSS

07. Office papers storage unit (6,7)
08. Give proof of (11)
12. Domesticated llama (6)
14. Turn like a wheel (6)
16. Trumpet of daffodil (6)
18. Small, light boats (6)
19. Chiefly (11)
23. Small-wheeled powered bikes (5-8)

DOWN

01. To attend, have care of (4)
02. Unshaken, resolute (4)
03. Table of business for meeting (6)
04. Thing of consequence (6)
05. Travel document, passport
06. A pool, lake (4)
09. Title of sovereignty (7)
10. Liable to cry (7)

11. Muddle, confusion (5)

12. Bow (mus, it) (4)
13. Tin (3)
15. Tree (3)
17. Approach and address (6)
18. Soda-water dispenser (6)
19. Swimming-bath (4)
20. Metal club (4)
21. Old strangled instrument (4)
22. Enclosed area by house etc (4)

NOT SO EASY

ACROSS

07. It holds office papers going one by one to government ministers (6,7)
08. Show how modern state can be developed (11)
12. Silky cloth cap maybe in the style of its surroundings (6)
14. Turn, or return, to the Gallery (6)
16. No 12 Down could form a ring round the sun (6)
18. Light boats one might kiss off, nothing being lost (6)
19. In the main, 'pp' is rendered in lyrical fashion (11)
23. Powered two-wheelers provide escort to Moors perhaps (5-8)

DOWN

01. Look after direction of the will (4)
02. A stable business (4)
03. What's to be discussed is information a District Attorney holds (6)
04. Something amiss that may be of importance (6)
05. Passport endorsement is necessary to enter Virginia (4)
06. It is no more than a lake (4)
09. Penguin that measured 48 by 72 inches (7)
10. Rule fat out for the lachrymose (7)
11. Where servicemen eat a disagreeable mixture (4)

12. Violinist takes his bow in a popular concert (4)
13. Is able to give one a drinking-mug (3)
14. Quercus is all right if it has a heart (3)
17. Approach and threaten one company in change of cast (6)
18. No ship can supply it with aerated-water in (6)
19. Put all resources together for a lido (4)
20. Give up Japanese seaweed as a possible source of it (4)
21. It took some pluck to use it as a waterproof seal (4)
22. Beam on mast measures thirty-six inches (4)

SOLUTION: BL TWO-WAY CROSSWORD 2518

ACROSS 1. Dissimulate 7. Revolve 9. Vial 11. Nadir 12. Ponder 14. Prospective 18. Martin 20. Malar 22. Kink 23. Outlast 24. Remunerated

DOWN 2. Invader 3. Meet 4. Tried 5. Prank 6. Clary 8. Lordship 10. Contempt 13. Pew 15. Village 16. Smoke 17. Broth 19. Rinse 21. Hope

Slow start

Incentives for vehicle scrappage need to be better

The vehicle scrappage policy, or the Voluntary Vehicle Modernisation Program (VVMPP), has been a slow starter. After having been first proposed by the Road Transport and Highways Minister Nitin Gadkari in August 2015, the VVMPP was launched last week. Automakers have agreed to provide discounts on purchase of a new vehicle against a scrapped one, with the concessions ranging from 1.25-3 per cent of the ex-showroom price for commercial vehicles (CVs) and 1.5 per cent of the ex-showroom price or ₹20,000, whichever is less, for passenger vehicles.

While the implementation is a good beginning, there is scope for improvement. In the nine years since it was mooted, the policy has seen three iterations. The original proposal put out in May 2016 said that vehicles (predominantly trucks) bought prior to March 31, 2005 (i.e., those older than 10 years then), or those below BS IV emission standards, would be eligible for scrappage incentives. This was diluted in 2018 by increasing the age of the vehicle to 20 years. The implementation date — set to 2020 then — didn't see light of day until the subject came up again in Budget 2021, where instead of age, vehicle fitness was replaced as the key criteria for mandatory scrapping.

Cut to 2024, formalisation of the scrapping infrastructure is gaining ground. Data from Parivahan Sewa of the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways shows that 117 registered scrapping facilities which follow technologically advanced and environmentally safe processes as mandated by the government are now available, with 63 of them being operational across 17 States and UTs. About 45,000 applications for scrapping private vehicles have been received against which 35,000 have been scrapped as on date. With automated fitness tests becoming mandatory from October 1, 2024, onwards for CVs and PVs crossing a certain age, the launch of the VVMPP hasn't come a day too soon. Vehicles which fail the test become eligible for scrapping. However, more clarity is needed on the status of the existing fitness testing infrastructure.

For a policy that is predominantly voluntary, the carrots could've been better. There was mention of excise duty (later GST) concessions on the new vehicle bought in exchange, in the earlier versions of the policy. The latest one is silent on this aspect. Automakers too may have done too little. The 2021 scheme spoke of a 5 per cent discount by OEMs which has now been cut sharply, with caveats that it would be applicable only on select models, and for one or two years. The scheme can look at higher concessions for EVs. But lack of proper infrastructure for scrapping of EV batteries could do more harm than good to the environment. Getting old vehicles off the road now is a good start. But for the long-term, the government should adopt a more integrated approach towards meeting the broader goal of reducing vehicular emissions, rather than a piecemeal one.

POCKET

RAVIXANTH



Tracking the pace of credit growth

YO-YOING. Growth was excessive during 2002-03 to 2013-14, cooled thereafter, only to pick up in the 2 years ending 2023-24



C RANGARAJAN
B SAMBAMURTHY

Bank credit, along with other important variables like fiscal policy, industrial policy, investment and technology adoption, has implications for the real economy. Credit growth, though not sufficient, is a necessary condition for economic growth. But the pace and nature of credit growth when excessive and exuberant invariably ends up in credit losses and may even threaten financial stability. If the pace is suboptimal, it may end up in forgone real economy growth. Finding the right pace and content of credit growth is essential for sustained and consistent real economy growth.

In fact, the relationship between credit and growth is the same as between money and growth. First, there is an accommodative role. As the economy grows, it needs more money or credit. People who only emphasise the accommodative role talk about the analogy that as a man grows, he needs pants of bigger size. But by wearing pants of bigger size, he cannot grow.

But many reject the pure accommodative hypothesis. On the other hand, they argue that it can play also a stimulative role. But credit or money beyond a level can harm the economy. Against this background, bank credit growth over the last two decades is analysed.

Exuberance phase of credit growth: 2002-03 - 2007-08 (Table 1): The magnitude of exuberance can be gauged from the fact that the ratio of credit growth to nominal GDP growth reached as high as 2.2. A ratio of more than one may spell trouble with a lag.

Bank credit grew by ₹16 lakh crore, from ₹6 lakh crore in FY 2003 to ₹22 lakh crore in FY 2008. This was an increase of 266 per cent during this 5-year period as compared to an increase of ₹2.5 lakh crore, representing an increase of 81 per cent during the earlier 5-year period ending 2002. This was an all-time high for several decades.

Credit growth was more than double and even triple of real economy growth and far exceeded even nominal growth.

Major sectoral increases—infrastructure: Two sectors need special mention. Infrastructure finance, inherently risky, shot up from ₹20,000 crore to over ₹2 lakh crore (900 per cent increase) and personal loans led by housing finance shot up from ₹63,000 crore to over ₹5 lakh crore (700 per cent) while the aggregate credit increased only by 265 per cent during

Nominal GDP & gross NPA

(All figures in %)

Year	Credit growth	Gross capital formation	GDP real	GDP nominal	Gross NPA	Inflation CPI
2002-03	26.9	26.8	4.0	7.7	8.8	4.0
2003-04	18.4	29.0	8.2	12.0	7.2	3.5
2004-05	31.6	35.2	7.5	14.1	5.1	3.8
2005-06	31.8	36.4	9.5	14.0	3.3	4.4
2006-07	28.5	36.0	9.7	17.1	2.5	6.7
2007-08	23.0	39.1	9.3	15.1	2.2	7.9
2008-09	17.8	38.9	6.7	12.6	2.2	8.0
2009-10	17.1	39.8	8.4	15.5	2.4	12.4
2010-11	21.3	39	8.9	19.9	2.2	10.4
2011-12	16.8	38.7	6.7	14.4	2.8	8.4
2012-13	14	33.8	4.5	13.8	3.2	10.2
2013-14	14.2	33.8	6.3	13.0	3.8	9.5
2014-15	9.3	33.5	7.8	11.0	4.3	5.8
2015-16	9.1	32.1	8.1	10.5	7.5	4.9
2016-17	5.2	32	7.1	11.8	9.3	4.5
2017-18	10.2	33.9	6.5	11.0	11.2	3.6
2018-19	13.4	33.6	6	10.6	9.1	3.4
2019-20	6.1	36.4	3.9	6.4	8.2	4.8
2020-21	5.5	30.4	-4.2	-0.14	7.3	6.2
2021-22	9.7	27.9	8	18.4	5.8	5.5
2022-23	15.3	31.4	6.6	16.1	3.9	6.7
2023-24	15.0	34.0*	7.6	10.2	2.9	5.4

Source: RBI data based on Indian Economy *Est

this 5-year period ending FY 2008.

Initially, monetary policy was accommodative. Inflation which was low initially, started inching up from 2006-07 onwards. Subsequently, during 2006-07, RBI had tightened monetary policy by enhancing risk weights and provision requirements, in order to rein in credit growth from 30s to 20s. But it took a couple of years for these measures to deliver some results.

The period also witnessed high gross capital formation, surpassing 39 per cent. Real GDP growth was very high, recording around 9.5 per cent for three years in a row starting 2005-06. Gross NPAs, which were high at 8.8 per cent in 2002-03, were on the decline reaching a low of 2.2 per cent.

Excessive credit growth: 2008-09 - 2013-14 (Table 2): Though credit growth was less than the earlier period in relative terms, its ratio to nominal GDP continued to be above one indicating credit excesses. In absolute terms credit grew by ₹34 lakh crore to ₹60 lakh crore during this period against ₹16 lakh crore during the previous

Finding the right pace and content of credit growth is essential for sustained and consistent real economy growth

period. But the growth rate was only 130 per cent against 265 per cent during the previous period.

Sectoral credit flows: Credit expansion was evenly distributed across all three sectors — agriculture, industry and personal loans. All these three sectors witnessed around 100 per cent increase in line with overall credit expansion. Industry credit doubled from ₹10 lakh crore to ₹20 lakh crore, personal loans from ₹5.5 lakh crore to ₹10 lakh crore, agriculture from ₹3.3 lakh crore to ₹7 lakh crore.

Infrastructure finance — push by public sector banks: However, infrastructure credit grew much faster by a huge 240 per cent from ₹2.5 lakh crore in 2008-09 to ₹8.5 lakh crore in 2013-14. Infrastructure finance grew by a whopping 38 per cent in just one year — that is, during 2010-11. Power sector accounted for a high of 50 per cent. Inflation shot up to as high as 12.4 per cent by 2009-10. Even though gross NPAs look comfortable at 3.8 per cent, restructured advances were as high as 7 per cent, taking the impaired advances to as high as 10.8 per cent. A new phase of slowdown of credit growth began in 2011-12.

Credit growth lower than nominal GDP growth: 2014-15 - 2021-22 (Table 3): In a reversal of the earlier trend, the ratio of credit growth to nominal GDP was less than one, indicating a cooling of

credit growth. This was the slowest growth rate in decades. The deceleration of credit growth which started during 2011 continued during the most of this period. During the 5-year period ending 2015-20 (excluding Covid affected years), credit grew by ₹38 lakh crore to ₹103 lakh crore, representing a growth rate of only 60 per cent when compared to previous two five-year periods' growth rates of 265 per cent and 111 per cent, respectively. This period was marked by intense supervisory action by way of AQR (Asset Quality Review), Prompt Corrective Action (PCA) on over 12 banks and recognition of several big ticket NPAs and their resolution. All these measures impeded credit growth, mostly of public sector banks.

Sectoral credit flows — 2015-22: While the overall credit grew by only 84 per cent over the 7-year period, the personal loans segment grew by a whopping 200 per cent from ₹12 lakh crore in 2014-15 to as high as ₹36 lakh crore. This sector surpassed the industrial sector, which grew by a mere 23 per cent from ₹26 lakh crore to ₹32 lakh crore. Thanks to regulatory forbearance and the government's ECLG scheme, MSME sector credit more than doubled from ₹4.7 lakh crore to ₹10 lakh crore. Infrastructure finance continued to grow, but at a slower pace, registering a growth of 33 per cent from ₹9 lakh crore to ₹12 lakh crore. Gross NPAs spiked as high as 11.8 per cent by 2017-18, as regulatory forbearances were withdrawn. Exuberance had shifted from corporate lending to the personal loan segment.

Resumption of credit growth: 2022-23 and 2023-24 (Table 4): After almost 11 years of deceleration, credit growth had picked up during these two years with an annual growth rate of around 15 per cent (Table 4). Outstanding credit grew from ₹143 lakh crore in 2022-23 to ₹164 lakh crore during 2023-24. At again, credit to nominal GDP growth at around 1.5 indicates probable credit excess.

Sectoral flow: The personal loans segment continued its high growth rate, recording an increase of nearly 51 per cent from ₹35 lakh crore in FY 2022 to ₹53 lakh crore in FY 2024. Infra sector grew by a mere 8 per cent from ₹12 lakh crore to ₹13 lakh crore, and industrial sector grew only 11 per cent from ₹32 lakh crore to ₹36 lakh crore. Outstanding personal loans, at ₹53 lakh crore, far exceed industrial sector loans of ₹36 lakh crore. The growth of personal loans may be unsustainable.

To be concluded

Rangarajan is former Chairman of the Economic Advisory Council to the Prime Minister and former Governor, Reserve Bank of India; and Sambamurthy is formerly Director and CEO, IDBI

Rising incomes driving inflows into financial assets?

This is unlikely the case. Rather, it's excess money in the system, thanks to the RBI, that's finding its way into financial markets

TCA Srinivasa Raghavan

A few days ago a deputy governor of the Reserve Bank of India made an interesting observation that household incomes in India were rising. He said while explaining why net financial savings were increasing. It was a throwaway remark, made casually, to explain why more money was flowing into the stocks and bonds markets. I do wonder, however, if it would stand up to serious scrutiny. Not the rising flow into financial assets. That's not in doubt.

But rising incomes? Really? A country's incomes rise if employment and/or productive work increases; or if wages rise; or if both happen.

All the data, however flawed and incomplete their conceptual basis and collection may be, suggest that employment is not increasing, at least not at a rate that would be consistent with a huge increase in incomes from salaries. I don't know how it works in the government sector but in the private sector salaries are either stagnant or rising at a snail's pace.

Work, or self-employment, is doubtless increasing but we don't know how much of it is sufficiently productive to leave net savings. I doubt it's very much because net savings are defined as what's left after you have paid all your bills and debt.

Au contraire, if these incomes are rising as fast as the deputy governor thinks, there may be a case for making the recipients pay more tax. It can't be both — rising incomes and low tax rates for such a large cohort.

A DIFFERENT TAKE

I have a different explanation for the increase in inflow into financial assets. It's simply that there is now more money in the system — you can check the numbers — some of it is finding its way into the financial markets.

In June 2004 total money supply was ₹20.7 lakh crore. In June 2014 it was ₹98 lakh crore. And in June 2024, ₹257 lakh crore. I rest my case. Thus, it's not rising incomes but the RBI that is the enabler. Or so what, you might ask. A growing economy needs more money.

True, but if you read the magisterial work by Carmen Reinhart and Kenneth

more recently) reflecting a combination of rising internal accruals and subdued capacity creation."

So which is the dominant factor? Rising "internal accruals" meaning higher profits or "subdued capacity creation"? If they are making more money (probably by reducing their wage bills) why aren't they creating more capacity? Because, my dear Watson, incomes can't rise if fresh investment doesn't happen. Indeed, if incomes don't rise, demand doesn't either, and there's no point in adding more capacity. In fact, in such a prolonged situation of depressed demand real incomes can actually decline because nominal incomes rise very slowly.

This is what's happening in India now. If not, the BJP would not have suffered such a setback in the last general election.

The entire financial assets market, many analysts worry, is functioning on hope over experience. I agree. History shows that experience always triumphs. The RBI should be mindful of this, and not start believing that incomes are rising quickly enough to leave a lot of surplus for sticking into financial assets.



ON THE RISE. Financial savings

Rogoff who analyse 800 years of financial crises, this has been known to happen for at least 800 years. More money in the system has inevitably led to more money into the financial markets, which boom. Then they crash.

The deputy governor also said "...physical savings have also risen in the post-pandemic years to over 12 per cent of GDP and could rise further...". He further said, "the private corporate sector has drastically reduced its net borrowings from the rest of the economy (from close to 9 per cent of GDP in 2007-08 to under 1 per cent

✉ **LETTERS TO EDITOR** Send your letters by email to bletter@thehindu.co.in or by post to "Letters to the Editor", The Hindu Business Line, Kasturi Buildings, 859-860, Anna Sala, Chennai 600002.

Addressing hunger

This refers to 'Hunger-free world by 2030: A mirage' (September 4). Having enough food to keep our bellies full and bodies running is a fundamental right, not a privilege. Although hunger is an incredibly personal issue, its impact inhibits productivity, slows economic growth, and places unnecessary burdens on health and education systems. Also, as seen in famine situations, many fatalities associated with hunger aren't due to hunger itself, but also due to malnutrition. While hunger is not caused by food shortage alone, the combination of natural, social, and political forces add to it. In order to achieve zero

hunger by 2030, urgent coordinated action and policy solutions are imperative to address entrenched inequalities, transform food systems, invest in sustainable agricultural practices, and reduce and mitigate the impact of conflict and the pandemic on global nutrition and food security.

N Sadhasiva Reddy

Bengaluru

Credit-deposit gap

This is with reference to PSBs need to win back depositors' (September 4). Banks' deposit growth in FY24 was well below the rise in credit, forcing them to meet the funding gap through higher-cost certificates

of deposit (CDs). The interest rate offered by public sector banks isn't attractive, hence their deposit growth rate is falling. Smaller private banks, on the other hand, offer flexibility and higher FD rates. India's big banks may continue to face the deposit crunch if the government and the RBI insist on lower lending rates. Banks should be allowed the freedom to determine the deposit and credit rates to play effectively in the market.

P Sundara Pandian

Viduthangur, TN

Anti-ramp Bill

This is with reference to "West Bengal Assembly passes historic"

anti-ramp Bill seeking capital punishment" (September 4). This is a step in the right direction, as the crimes against women have continued unabated even after the stringent provision of life imprisonment stipulated by the Nirbhaya Act 2013. However, what needs to be noted is that it is not just the existence of the most stringent laws that would bring about the real change, but it is a change in the mindset of the men and patriarchal attitude of the society, which treats women as property of man, that would bring the desired transformation.

Kosaraju Chandramouli

Hyderabad

Boosting insurance

The report 'Grievances in the life insurance sector are about the product itself: IRDAI member' (September 4), has not a case a day too soon. The fact that the IRDAI member is aware and alerted of the flawed products coupled with 'mis-selling, at a glaring level', it should lead to concerted efforts aimed at streamlining product portfolios and process of sales, for the industry to deliver on its mandate. Health and life insurance can gain a lot by increasing awareness along with better calibration of products.

Jose Abraham

Valkur, Kerala

The Tribune

ESTABLISHED IN 1881

India's export hurdles

Need to wrest the initiative from rivals

THE World Bank's (WB) latest India Development Update has some good news to offer: The Indian economy continues to grow at a healthy pace despite challenging global conditions. The WB has upwardly revised the growth forecast for the country's economy to 7 per cent from the earlier projection of 6.6 per cent in the current financial year. The not-so-good news is that India is losing out to competitors like Vietnam and Bangladesh among low-cost manufacturing export hubs. As per the WB, India needs to diversify its export basket and leverage global value chains to reach its \$1-trillion merchandise exports goal by 2030.

The report's unwritten message for India is that there is no room for complacency on the trade front. It is obvious that the 'Make in India' push is not really translating into a 'Make for the world' success story. And what won't be music to the Modi government's ears is the fact that the nation's share in the global exports of apparel, leather, textiles and footwear has declined from 4.4 per cent in 2013 to 3.5 per cent in 2022. The corresponding share of Bangladesh touched 5.1 per cent in 2022, while that of Vietnam reached 5.9 per cent. No less worrisome is India's increasing trade deficit (the difference between imports and exports) with China. Amid the military stalemate in eastern Ladakh, Beijing is upstaging Delhi with its no-holds-barred economic muscle-flexing. From umbrellas to musical items and toys, there is no stopping the influx of Chinese goods into India.

Political and economic instability in Bangladesh has given India an opportunity to regain lost ground. The key is to reduce production costs and improve productivity without compromising on quality. Considering India's reluctance to be part of mega trade blocs, a greater emphasis on bilateral Free Trade Agreements with Western and Gulf nations is the best bet to counter the Vietnamese-Chinese challenge.

A desperate step

Bengal Bill mandates death penalty for rapists

IN a dramatic response to the public outcry following the recent rape and murder of a young doctor in Kolkata, the West Bengal Assembly has passed the Aparajita Anti-Rape Bill, which mandates the death penalty for rapists if the victim dies or is left in a vegetative state. The swift passage of this Bill comes amid protests from the public, demanding justice and accountability from the Mamata Banerjee-led government. The Bill seeks to reassure citizens of the state's commitment to protecting women.

However, it has sparked a debate about whether such measures are merely a politically motivated reaction to silence the growing unrest. Party leaders continue to face a public backlash. Comments comparing protesting doctors to 'butchers' have only intensified public ire, further alienating the government from those it seeks to placate. Also, the fact that the new Bill is in conflict with the Centre's Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, which does not prescribe capital punishment for rape, creates a legal conundrum. Andhra Pradesh and Maharashtra have struggled to secure the presidential assent on similar Bills. Plus, even as the death penalty has not proved effective as a deterrent, the irreversible nature of such a punishment raises human rights concerns.

The passing of the Aparajita Bill is a desperate move by the TMC government, aiming to restore public faith and regain control over the narrative. Whether this legislation will bring the desired change or simply add to the long list of unimplemented laws remains to be seen. As the Bill awaits approval by the Governor and President, the broader question of its efficacy and ethical implications looms large. The state would do well to focus on improving the investigative and judicial processes, ensuring a swift and fair trial and addressing the systemic issues that lead to such heinous crimes.

ON THIS DAY...100 YEARS AGO

The Tribune.

LAHORE, FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 5, 1924

Unity of parties

IT is a matter for sincere congratulations that two of the most forceful personalities (Mahatma Gandhi and Annie Besant) in India are now agreed as to what we for our part have always regarded as the fundamental condition of effective political advance in India, namely, the unity of all political parties, not in the sense of the elimination of all differences among them, but of their readiness to subordinate such differences to the paramount need for united action with a view to the attainment of the common goal. Of one of the two, it cannot, indeed, be said that he has ever been under a delusion in this matter. The success of non-cooperation with the bureaucracy, he has said again and again, depends upon the fullest cooperation among the people themselves. Unhappily, in actual practice, he as well as his immediate lieutenants, not to speak of the rank and file of the great party of which he has now for four years been the recognised head, have laid the bulk of their emphasis upon cooperation among several political parties. So far as the last is concerned, they, like other political parties, have occasionally talked of the need for unity, but it has always or generally been upon their own terms, that is to say, on a basis on which no unity is possible among men of conviction and of self-respect. In fairness to Gandhi himself, it must be added that unlike most others of all parties, he has also publicly joined it upon his party to put its opponents at ease, an injunction, it must be sorrowfully admitted, which some of his followers have honoured more in the breach than in the observance.

Old wine in a new biotech bottle

Biotechnology for Economy, Environment & Employment Policy silent on timelines, investments

DINESH C SHARMA
SCIENCE COMMENTATOR

CLIMATE change, energy transition, waste management, sustainability, agricultural productivity, the need for new health tools and much more. India can not only address these pressing challenges through the application of biotechnology but can do so while generating jobs and contributing to the national economy. This is what the Biotechnology for Economy, Environment and Employment (BioE3) Policy released by the government on August 31 would have us believe. The only caveat is that the policy is silent on the timeframe, the quantum of investment and human resources required, the possible number or types of jobs that will be generated and the pathway to achieve the goal.

The 'vision' of the policy is to "set Bharat at the forefront of the future that is more sustainable and responsive to global challenges by accelerating and harnessing biomanufacturing solutions that encompass diverse bioeconomic activities while safeguarding environmental and climate impacts." The 'goal' of the policy is to "fast-track innovation-to-technology" by weaving together fragmented activities under the umbrella of biomanufacturing and to incentivise "concrete options to build a sustainable future". The overall objective is to present a framework to ensure the adoption of cutting-edge technologies and accelerate the development and production of bio-based high-value products.

While presenting the policy, Department of Biotechnology (DBT) Secretary Rajesh Gokhale declared that the goal was the 'industrialisation of biology' and



CHALLENGE: Regulation is critical as biomanufacturing is all about genetically modified organisms. STOCK

making India a global leader in this field. If one cuts the fluff, all that the policy document indicates is the government's intent to promote biotechnology-based industry and the use of new tools like digitalisation, artificial intelligence and machine learning. If that is so, there is nothing new here because the last policy document the DBT released in 2021 — National Biotechnology Development Strategy (2021-25) — said precisely the same thing but it was backed with timelines, financial targets and clear pathways.

The goal set in 2021 by the DBT was to develop a biotechnology-led 'knowledge and innovation-driven bioeconomy' and make India a 'global biomanufacturing hub' by 2025. This was to be achieved by building a skilled workforce and enabling infrastructure for industry like bio-foundries, and incentives to the industry for developing and producing affordable products. The thrust areas identified in 2021 were climate change, food security, green energy, waste management, etc. The list has been repeated in the 2024 document, but the DBT has cleverly made no mention of previous policies and strategies to avoid questions being asked about missed goals. The only follow-up action since 2021 is a new scheme to promote

Before embarking upon building a large-scale biotech industry, it would be prudent to develop a robust, autonomous and statutory regulatory system.

bio-foundries announced in the 2024-25 Budget.

In the past four decades, biotechnology has demonstrated its potential in applications ranging from new vaccines and novel crop varieties to environmental cleanup using microbes. Indian policymakers recognised its potential early on, establishing a dedicated government department for its promotion in 1986. The DBT, in its formative years, focused on building research and education capabilities, which has made India a significant player in this field.

However, the biotech-based industry was slow to pick up due to reasons such as a lack of venture capital and an enabling environment. Whatever industry developed was not a result of the DBT's programmes. The poster

boy of the Indian biotech industry, Biocon, predates the formation of the DBT, and other pioneers like Shantha Biotech and Bharat Biotech took root with the help of risk financing by another government body, the Technology Development Board.

In the 2000s, the governments of Karnataka and then undivided Andhra Pradesh rolled out their policies that gave incentives to the biotech industry. The success of the Genome Valley and the ICP Knowledge Park in Hyderabad are shining examples of a state-sponsored growth of the software industry and the IT Revolution. Decisive government action are more important than policy pronouncements.

Public policies are supposed to be guiding documents for responsible governance. They can be forward-looking and aspirational but should have clearly laid out objectives, well-defined timeframes and an understanding of challenges. The DBT, which adhered to this time-tested template in the past, decided to deviate from it while preparing the new policy. Being a scientific department, the least it could have done was to make the policy logical, evidence-based and rational. For a policy with 'economy' and 'employment' in its title and as prime focus, it is vague, ambiguous and full of rhetoric.

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

Biotechnology is the key to solving many of the world's most pressing problems — Bill Gates

Soldier, teacher rolled into one

USHIA BANDE

I cannot tell for sure when Sam uncle became a part of my family, because he had been there for as long as I can remember, an epitome of integrity, sincerity, discipline and patriotism — values that all parents would like their children to imbibe. He had the most unobtrusive way of entering a storytelling session with us children's curious query: 'And Sam uncle?'

One evening, my younger brother came home in tears with a bruised knee. As my mother comforted him, father's commanding voice called out from the next room, 'Send him here.' The child limped off. 'What happened?' dad asked. He added, 'You fell, got hurt and came home crying, didn't you?'

After a pause, patting his back, father exclaimed, 'Arre, beta. Soldiers face bullets! And do you think they come home crying?' The little one looked mystified and asked, 'And Sam uncle? Did he face bullets too?' Dad replied, 'Yes, he was badly wounded on the Arakan front. But did he flinch? No way?'

'And you?'

'Yes, I was also at the Arakan front,' he said. 'Now run out to play. Games will make you healthy, strong and tall.'

'Like Sam uncle,' my brother said and ran out. This was our first lesson about the importance of outdoor activities. Sam uncle's magic had worked wonders. From then on, our Arakan adventure stories started. Sam uncle became an invincible hero in our eyes, a symbol of courage, leadership and man management — the loving appellation 'Sam Bahadur' speaking volumes about the affection of his soldiers.

Father was a master storyteller, with a treasure trove of war experiences, adventures and tales of Indian war heroes. His stories were vivid and engaging; he coloured our imagination and conveyed valuable lessons without being preachy. His stories and Sam uncle's influence have had a profound impact on our lives, as the two soldiers were our exemplary teachers, each in his own way.

Decades rolled by. The 'Sam uncle' of our imagination assumed a personality in 2023, with the movie *Sam Bahadur* that we watched with moist eyes, filled with pride and nostalgia. We felt proud of the Army; remembering the good old days and cherishing the memories of those storytelling sessions, we silently thanked Sam uncle and father for those meaningful childhood days.

And then came the moment of vindication when my niece sent a video of her daughter dressed as Sam Bahadur — with the cap and moustache and the baton, giving a solo performance in the school programme. Sam uncle's legacy continues to inspire the third generation — a testament to the power of storytelling and the footprints great men leave on the sands of time.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Govt shouldn't misuse its power

Appros of the editorial 'Brakes on bulldozer', the Supreme Court's proposal to lay down guidelines to be implemented across the country to ensure that the houses of those accused of a crime are not razed illegally is welcome. It is imperative to make sure that all demolitions stay within the legal ambit. The powers that be must not misuse their authority in a rush to punish those perceived guilty of certain offences. They are supposed to uphold the law, not break it. State governments don't need to take such heavy-handed measures to ensure strict enforcement of the law.

RAMESH GUPTA, NARWANA

Rein in mob justice

Refer to the editorial 'Vigilante justice', the past few years have seen a sharp rise in the incidents of cow vigilantism. These self-proclaimed custodians of the animal considered sacred in Hinduism don't hesitate to take matters into their hands at the drop of a hat. They don't think twice before thrashing or even lynching a person on the mere suspicion of cow smuggling. If the government fails to rein in this menace on priority, it can set a dangerous precedent. Today, if such goons can break the law on the pretext of protecting cows, tomorrow members of other communities may carry out lynchings on some other flimsy ground.

YUVRAJ, ZIRAKPUR

Crack down on vigilante groups

With reference to the editorial 'Vigilante justice', incidents of cow vigilantism are reported from different parts of the country from time to time. But the menace has grown particularly serious in northern states. The failure of the state governments concerned to crack down on the perpetrators is telling. Such inaction has only emboldened these anti-social elements further. These self-styled protectors of the cow go around terrorising common people safe in the knowledge that they will be treated with kid gloves. It is time for the authorities to crack the whip to restore a sense of law and order.

ANTHONY HENRIQUES, MUMBAI

Need a change in mindset

Refer to the report 'Bengal passes Bill for death to rape convicts', the horrific Kolkata rape-murder has struck fear in the minds of women across

the country especially those who do night shifts. The surge in crimes against women reflects poorly on our society. The government can bring in a hundred different laws to rein in such crimes. But the most question is: when will the kind of men committing sexual violence understand the importance of consent and respecting others' dignity? It is a shame that candlelight marches, protests and reforms have failed to rouse people. Change begins at home. Families must instil good values in their children at an early age if they want to make a difference.

AKSHITA WADHWA, JAMMU CITY

No country for women

Appros of 'Bengal passes Bill for death to rape convicts', the passage of the Bill, which comes in the wake of massive protests sparked by the Kolkata horror, is a step in the right direction. But will it change the status quo? Did the nation not draw any lesson from the gruesome 2012 Nirbhaya case? The need of the hour is to enforce the existing laws strictly rather than bring in fresh legislation that barely offers anything new. Successive governments have failed to address the issue of women's safety. And hence, there has been no let-up in incidents of sexual violence against the fairer sex. If anything, such cases have only gone long way towards making India more safe for girls and women.

KIRTI WADHAWAN, KANPUR

Don't deny justice

President Droupadi Murmu's call to end the 'culture of adjournments' in our judiciary is significant, particularly in the context of the delay in justice delivery in the 1984 anti-Sikh riots case. Around four decades since the carnage, countless victims and their families still await justice. The move to frame charges against Jagdish Tytler offers a glimmer of hope. But the long-delayed order should not be seen as a victory. Justice still eludes the victims. The Congress party's reluctance to act against riot-tainted leaders is deeply disturbing. Justice must not be held hostage to political calculations. The judiciary has a unique opportunity to reaffirm that no amount of power or privilege can shield wrongdoers. It is high time that justice was served.

GURDEEP SINGH, BY MAIL

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@tribuneindia.com

Chinese handshake costing Pak dear in Balochistan



LT GEN SANJIV LANGER (RETD)
FORMER DEPUTY CHIEF,
INTEGRATED DEFENCE STAFF

RECENT attacks on multiple targets in Pakistan's Balochistan province mark an escalation in hostilities. The attacks were a consequence of festering problems and the damage to Balochistan's socio-cultural and economic fabric. A major reason for the attacks was the CPEC (China-Pakistan Economic Corridor) desire to run an ambitious communications corridor from Xinjiang to Gwadar through Balochistan, a move not supported by residents of the province.

A close ally of China for decades, Pakistan has sought to use the Chinese largesse to address many of its problems. While their India-centred agenda has several convergences, Pakistan hoped that China would align with it against India. A review of the period since 1947 reveals that while China's diplomatic and military support to Pakistan may have been overly nuanced on occasions, its covert facilitation and huge military supplies are central to Pakistan's operational capability and vital for Pakistan's missile, nuclear

and submarine development. Unfortunately, strategic relations between unequals demand concessions from the less strong partner. From the act of ceding the Shaks-gam valley of Kashmir to China in 1963, based on a specious boundary settlement, to the hosting of the CPEC and virtually surrendering control of northern Gilgit, the list of Pakistan's strategic giveaways to China is long.

Enabling the Chinese to reach the high waters of the Arabian Sea through the Khunjerab Pass on the Karakoram mountains up to the port of Gwadar has been one of the major giveaways. This mega plan promises to transform Pakistan with a goal of 2.3 million jobs, 2.25 per cent additional growth and an enormous upgrade of road, rail, industrial and electrical facilities. For China, its 12,000 km oil transportation journey from the Gulf gets reduced to 2,306 km, with a saving of about \$2 billion a year (according to present estimates). It also negates China's Malacca dilemma and furthers its ambition to have a base in the Arabian Sea. The heart of the CPEC projects lies in Balochistan, a province that has never been integrated and remains restive. For the Balochs, their identity, autonomy, human rights abuse by the Pakistani state and the extraction of economic gains without returns remain major troubling issues.

Historically, Pakistan has chosen alliances mostly based on



RESTIVE PROVINCE: Over 50 people were killed in terror attacks in Balochistan last week. REUTERS

security and development-related priorities. The country's engagement with the US has given it a slew of advantages. Pakistan's centrality to the conflicts in Afghanistan, coupled with its own convoluted priorities, however, left it more divided, scared and economically deprived. Its flawed vision of using covert entities to get leverage in Afghanistan and seek strategic depth has unravelled. Consequently, insecurity prevails in the region, including Afghanistan. In its pursuit of powerful allies like the US and China, Pakistan has neglected to integrate the western provinces and their people.

A complex and twisted issue that has fomented resentment among Afghans, Pathans and Balochs is the Punjabi centralism and exceptionalism. Further, Pakistan has always preferred to use military force to

deal with resistance movements instead of focusing on reconciliation. This has caused the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) and the Baloch movements to converge in resisting the Pakistani approach.

In February 2022, then Pakistani Interior Minister Sheikh Rasheed Ahmad officially acknowledged this reality. Later, in November 2022, ill-fated talks with the TTP collapsed. Five main Baloch nationalist groups have seldom been approached for reconciliation. The brutal killing of Akbar Bugti, a Baloch leader, in 2006 by the Pakistani army marked a definitive break for the Balochs. For Pakistan, pursuing powerful and demanding foreign powers while letting deep internal fractures widen is hardly strategic wisdom.

At 11,317, the year 2009 saw the highest number of fatalities

because of internal conflict in Pakistan. The number plummeted to 365 in 2019 due to military measures and its focus on Afghanistan. However, since the beginning of 2020, there has been a clear upswing in violence and death toll, with the number (1,502) peaking to a six-year high in 2023. In the current year, the toll stands at 1,240. In 2023, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan accounted for 90 per cent of all the fatalities and 84 per cent of all attacks in Pakistan. Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan saw a surge of 54 per cent and 63 per cent, respectively, over 2021. In the current year, so far, 92 per cent of all fatalities in Pakistan have taken place in these two regions.

Operationally, it is evident that the Baloch groups have benefited from the shared knowledge, tactics and combat orientation of the TTP. Both Baloch nationalists and the TTP have been aggressively focusing on difficult targets like the army, police, coast guard, high-ranking officials as well as Chinese nationals and assets. They have also claimed responsibility for the downing of a GOC XII Corps helicopter in August 2022, a crash that killed all those on board. The areas around Quetta have been wisely left to the TTP. Both have benefited from the International Security Assistance Force/NATO equipment, left behind by the NATO forces when they

withdrew from Afghanistan in 2021. The advantage of secure bases in Afghanistan is immense and makes difficult the pursuit of strategic depth by the Pakistani establishment.

The recent attacks on the death anniversary of Akbar Bugti carried a distinct message—from brutal assaults on security and police personnel to an infrastructure strike in Baloch and ethnic targeting of civilians. They underscore their ability to attack Punjab at will and strike at the vital Baloch commercial connectivity.

The Pakistan security establishment in the region is headed by a three-star officer. The force component is assessed by its nine infantry battalions, six police wings and several civil armed forces units. The Pakistan Maritime Security Agency operates in ports and coastal areas. It reportedly also has secretariat from Pakistan and China. There are always large numbers of Chinese nationals and workers in the project areas.

These attacks present a compelling challenge to the security establishment. While intelligence and operational imperatives are significant, they will be impacted by the popular local support, secure bases and the will-o'-the-wisp tactics of the Baloch quest against earlier state governments, as well as corruption and backdoor appointments in the government machinery. It is not a corollary that the people desire continuous Governor's rule, regardless of how effective it may have been in the past. Given the current political scenario, there is a high possibility of a coalition government being formed.

The fact that candidates opposed to the Centre were elected in the parliamentary elections demonstrates the fairness of the electoral process. Given the positions of major parties, there is a possibility of the 2019 narrative making a comeback. However, the people are likely to focus more on issues of basic amenities and governance rather than 'strategic' concerns.

Confidence in the political process, as well as in eventual governance, will also depend on how much power the Chief Minister ultimately has. Local governance also needs a degree of autonomy to effectively address the region's unique challenges and function as an effective grievance redressal model. The holding of elections is a significant step forward and offers a substantial opportunity to normalise the situation in the UT.

By pushing the Chinese agenda in an insecure environment, Pakistan seeks to use fire to quieten a firestorm.

Assembly polls ignite J&K's hopes for restoration of statehood



DANISH YOUSOF
RESEARCH ASSISTANT, CENTRE FOR LAND WARFARE STUDIES

THE three-phase Assembly elections in Jammu and Kashmir (J&K), starting on September 18, are historic, being the first after the state became a Union Territory (UT).

The last Assembly elections were held in 2014 under entirely different political circumstances. As a UT, J&K has undergone significant changes since August 5, 2019. The Reorganisation Act, 2019, implemented following these changes, has resulted in new constituencies, based on the recommendations of the Delimitation Commission.

The UT is abuzz with political activity. Participants include traditional regional parties, some separatist organisations, and even individuals charged under the Unlawful Activities Prevention Act (UAPA).

Jamat-e-Islami Jammu Kashmir, banned under Section 3(1) of UAPA, has fielded candidates in Kulgam, Pulwama and other areas of South Kashmir. Sugra Barkati, daughter of jailed

separatist leader Sarjan Barkati who was the face of the 2016 protests in South Kashmir, had last week filed nomination on his behalf, which was rejected. Barkati may now contest from the Ganderbal Assembly seat in Central Kashmir. The brother of Afzal Guru, a convict in the Parliament attack case, may also contest.

Engineer Rashid brought noticeable changes to the politics of the Valley. There was already a strong sentiment in his favour, but it remains uncertain whether a similar sentiment will be seagained. If Rashid is released from jail, he might create an impact that could benefit his Awami Ittehad Party candidates. However, without him, the main contest seems to be between the Congress National Conference (NC) alliance and the BJP with the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) following behind.

In this year's parliamentary election, the Congress-NC alliance secured over 41 per cent of the votes, while the BJP received 24 per cent and the PDP 8 per cent. Whether the same pattern will be observed in the Assembly elections remains uncertain. In the parliamentary elections, people in Jammu had voted for the BJP in support of Prime Minister Narendra Modi. However, dissatisfaction was seen among party workers when they protested against the first list of candidates. The



BATTLE OF THE BALLOT: The elections should see a considerable increase in the voter turnout as factors that previously discouraged participation, such as boycotts and threats, are now largely absent. PTI

BJP had to withdraw the list and release a new one.

As political parties prepare for the elections, their manifestos continue to echo familiar promises. The NC has once again included autonomy as one of its key promises. However, despite an absolute majority in the past, the party could not fulfil this promise, even after passing a resolution in the Assembly in 2000.

Similarly, the PDP has also promised to pursue the restoration of J&K to its 'original status' and to establish full connectivity across the Line of Control for trade and social exchange. Both the NC and PDP have called for resuming talks with Pakistan.

The manifestos of the NC and the PDP are almost similar. However, Mehbooba Mufti

After years of Central rule, there is a strong desire among people to elect a government that can represent their voices.

has added the "resolution of the Kashmir issue" to the PDP's manifesto promises. What this means and how she intends to achieve it remains unclear though. Engineer Rashid's party has promised to prioritise "land security" and address the "issue of prisoners in various jails across the country".

In the Kashmir valley too, the BJP faces major challenges. While its ally Sajjad Lone of the People's Conference performed well in the parliamentary elections, others did not achieve success. Traditional regional parties like the NC and Congress are expected to have an advantage, and the PDP may also see gains. There is, however, some residual dissatisfaction with the PDP due to its earlier campaign against

the BJP in 2014, and then its subsequent coalition with the same party. The NC appears to be the party that has made the most gains in the last four to five years.

There had been a consistent demand for the restoration of statehood before the elections. There is a widespread perception that unless the Central Government restores statehood, the next government may find it hard to address the aspirations of the people. Nevertheless, the formation of a local government will be a crucial first step toward raising voices and passing resolutions in the Assembly that could eventually lead to meaningful change. This election is seen as a dash between pre-2019 and post-2019 politics. Despite this, many across J&K, regardless of their identity, want statehood to be restored. Therefore, there is interest in parties, alliances or ideologies that promise a quick restoration of statehood.

The elections are expected to see a considerable increase in the voter turnout. Factors that previously discouraged participation, such as boycotts and threats from terror groups, are now largely absent. People are not likely to vote based on what is offered in party manifestos but rather to restore democracy in the region. After years of direct rule from New Delhi, there is a strong desire among the people to elect a government that can represent their voices.

Some narratives at the national level had suggested that Governor's rule was beneficial and welcomed by the people. While it is true that there were widespread resentment against earlier state governments, as well as corruption and backdoor appointments in the government machinery, it is not a corollary that the people desire continuous Governor's rule, regardless of how effective it may have been in the past. Given the current political scenario, there is a high possibility of a coalition government being formed.

The fact that candidates opposed to the Centre were elected in the parliamentary elections demonstrates the fairness of the electoral process. Given the positions of major parties, there is a possibility of the 2019 narrative making a comeback. However, the people are likely to focus more on issues of basic amenities and governance rather than 'strategic' concerns.

Confidence in the political process, as well as in eventual governance, will also depend on how much power the Chief Minister ultimately has. Local governance also needs a degree of autonomy to effectively address the region's unique challenges and function as an effective grievance redressal model. The holding of elections is a significant step forward and offers a substantial opportunity to normalise the situation in the UT.

QUICK CROSSWORD

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ACROSS

1 Compromise under pressure (9)

8 Distinctive period of time (5)

9 Succeeded (4,3)

10 Trade by exchange (6)

11 To proceed (6)

12 Goodbye (2,6)

15 Terrible (8)

18 Loll (6)

20 Wretchedness (6)

21 Young tree (7)

22 A large crowd (5)

23 Dashing courage (9)

DOWN

2 In agreement (2,3)

3 Grasping (6)

4 Rabble (8)

5 Discussion (6)

7 A helping of food (7)

7 Of inferior quality (5-4)

11 Brand (9)

13 Means of checking attendance (4,4)

14 Thoughtful (7)

16 Throughout the course of (6)

17 Morose (6)

19 Person or thing doomed (5)

Yesterday's solution

Across: 1 Default, 4 Batch, 7 Tire, 8 Crackpot, 10 Hoity-toity, 12 Beagle, 13 Abrupt, 15 Omniscient, 18 Fire away, 19 Miss, 20 Texas, 21 Mastery.

Down: 1 Ditch, 2 Farical, 3 Torpor, 4 Back-to-back, 5 Type, 6 Hot spot, 9 By all means, 11 Sure-fire, 12 Benefit, 14 Disarm, 16 Tasty, 17 Crux.

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YESTERDAY'S SOLUTION

1 7 2 4 9 3 8 6 5

9 6 8 7 5 1 2 4 3

4 5 3 6 2 8 9 7 1

6 8 7 9 1 4 3 5 2

2 3 9 8 6 5 7 1 4

5 1 4 3 7 2 6 8 9

7 4 5 2 8 9 1 3 6

3 9 6 1 4 7 5 2 8

8 2 1 5 3 6 4 9 7

CALENDAR

SEPTEMBER 5, 2024, THURSDAY

■ Shaka Samvat 1946

■ Bhadrpad Shaka 14

■ Bhadrpad Parvatisht 21

■ Hajar 1446

■ Shukla Paksha Tithi 2, up to 12.22 pm

■ Shubh Yoga up to 9.08 pm

■ Uttaraahini Nakshatra up to 6.15 am

■ Moon in Cancer sign

FORECAST

SUNSET: 18:02 HRS

SUNRISE: 06:02 HRS

FRIDAY

CITY

MAX

MIN

Chandigarh

34

24

New Delhi

35

26

Amritsar

33

24

Bathinda

34

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Jalandhar

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Ludhiana

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Bhiwani

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Hisar

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Sirsa

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Dharamsala

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Manali

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Shimla

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Shrinagar

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Jammu

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Kargil

Leh

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12

Dehradun

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Mussoorie

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17

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EXPLAINED INFRA

SATELLITE-BASED HIGHWAY TOLL COLLECTION: HOW WILL IT WORK?

DHEERAJ MISHRA
NEW DELHI, SEPTEMBER 4

THE MINISTRY of Road Transport & Highways (MoRTH) has developed a Geographic Information System (GIS)-based software for real-time monitoring of wait times at highway toll plazas, which it says will allow commuters to check congestion at the level of specific lanes to ensure smoother traffic flows.

The new software, which has been developed by Indian Highways Management Company Ltd (IHMC), a company promoted by the National Highways Authority of India (NHAI), will be tried out first at 100 toll plazas, which have been identified on the basis of congestion feedback received on 1033, the toll-free National Highway Helpline number.

How monitoring will work

The software will provide the name and location of the toll plaza, along with the live status of queue lengths in metres, wait times, and vehicle speeds.

The software will also generate comparative traffic condition analyses on an hourly, daily, weekly, and monthly basis.

Satellite-based tolling

The ministry is also working on a Global Navigation Satellite System (GNSS)-based tolling system, which is ex-

pected to replace the current FASTag toll collection system and provide a long-term solution for congestion at toll booths.

It will also provide distance-based tolling, so that users can pay only for the stretch they have travelled on a National Highway. According to IHMC, the GNSS-based electronic toll collection will be implemented alongside the existing FASTag ecosystem, and both models will initially operate simultaneously.

As a GNSS vehicle passes through the gate, the toll charger will receive pings (distance and time stamps) through on-board units in the vehicle. The payment mechanism will be similar to the existing FASTag ecosystem, but will involve automatic debits, and will do away with the need for boom barriers at toll plazas.

Convenience for users

The satellite toll collection system is expected to make passage through toll plazas faster and smoother. Currently, the process of reading the FASTag bar code and raising the boom can take up to a minute. The delay causes long queues, and sometimes triggers arguments and fights.

FASTag, which was launched in 2015 and has been mandatory at National Highway toll plazas since February 2021, uses Radio Frequency Identification (RFID) technology. As of March 2024, more than 98% of user fee payments at toll plazas are done through FASTag, MoRTH data say.

EVERYDAY HISTORY

WHY INDIA CELEBRATES TEACHERS' DAY ON SEPTEMBER 5

INDIA CELEBRATES Teachers' Day annually on September 5, the birth anniversary of former President Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan (1888-1975). Here is why.

Philosopher of Hinduism

One of India's most recognised and influential thinkers of the 20th century, Radhakrishnan's life and work was dedicated to defining, defending, and disseminating the Hindu religion. He is seen in philosophy circles as a bridge-builder between India and the West, and credited for his role in shaping the West's understanding of Hinduism.

Radhakrishnan was among the foremost proponents of the non-dualist Advaita Vedanta tradition in the 20th century, and re-interpreted Adi Shankara's philosophy for modern times. In doing so, he defended Hinduism against what he said was "uninformed Western criticism".

Respected teacher

By the 1920s, Radhakrishnan had established himself as one of India's most respected academics. He held the prestigious King George V Chair at the Calcutta University from 1921 to 1932, was the second vice-chancellor of Andhra University from 1931 to 1936, and the fourth vice-chancellor of Banaras Hindu University from 1939 to 1948. He also held the Spalding Chair of Eastern



September 5 is the birth anniversary of S Radhakrishnan. Archive

Religion and Ethics at University of Oxford from 1936 to 1952. Radhakrishnan was knighted in 1931. Radhakrishnan was also a brilliant teacher, who developed deep personal bonds with students. He thought highly of the profession of teaching, and is recorded as having said several times that "teachers should be the best minds in the country".

He became the first Vice President (1952-62), and the second President of India (1962-67). In 1962, after he became president, some old students expressed their wish to celebrate his birthday. Radhakrishnan refused a personal celebration, and instead requested his students to honour teachers across the country on his birth anniversary.

Thus began the tradition of celebrating Teachers' Day on September 5. ENS

AJOY SINHA KARPURAM
NEW DELHI, SEPTEMBER 4

AS STREET protests against the rape and murder of a young doctor in Kolkata's R C Kar Medical College and Hospital continued to roll West Bengal, the state Assembly on Tuesday unanimously passed a Bill providing for mandatory death penalty in cases of rape where the victim dies or is left in a permanent vegetative state.

The Aparajita Woman and Child (West Bengal Criminal Laws Amendment) Bill, 2024 (Aparajita Bill) also introduces death as the maximum punishment in all cases of rape, and changes the way in which cases of rape are to be investigated and tried — by a Special Task Force and Special Courts in every district respectively.

To effect these changes, the Bill amends provisions of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2023 (BNS), the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita Sanhita, 2023 (BNS), and the Protection of Children Against Sexual Offences Act, 2012 (PCSO) in the state.

Before West Bengal, the Andhra Pradesh and Maharashtra Assemblies had passed laws prescribing the death penalty for rape by amending the criminal laws in force at the time. Neither Bill has received the mandatory assent of the President yet.

Earlier, the Madhya Pradesh and Arunachal Pradesh Assemblies had, in 2017 and 2018 respectively, introduced the death penalty for the rape or gangrape of "a woman up to twelve years of age" (Sections 376AA and 376DA of the Indian Penal Code, 1860).

West Bengal: Aparajita Bill

The West Bengal Bill begins by specifying that "Imprisonment for life" in Section 4(b) of the BNS "includes simple imprisonment for life or rigorous imprisonment for life". Rigorous imprisonment involves hard labour during the sentence.

SECTION 64 OF BNS: This section ("Punishment for rape") provides for both the floor punishment for the crime and for punishment in cases where aggravating circumstances are present, such as rape by a public servant, a member of the armed forces, during communal violence, etc. In both situations, the maximum punishment is "imprisonment for life".

The Aparajita Bill amends Section 64 to add the words "or with death" at the end of the description of the punishments.

SECTION 66: This provision in the "prin-

WHY PRESIDENT'S ASSENT IS CRUCIAL

CONCURRENT LIST in Seventh Schedule of the Constitution lists subjects on which both the Centre and states can pass laws.

CRIMINAL LAW and Criminal Procedure are Entries 1 and 2 in the Concurrent List.

THE THREE BILLS, Aparajita, Disha, and Shakti, amend criminal laws in a way that makes them inconsistent or "repugnant" to the original law

enacted by Parliament.

STATE AMENDMENTS to central laws (such as BNS, BNS and PCSO) dealing with subjects in the Concurrent List that are repugnant to the original law require the President's assent to come into force (Article 254 of the Constitution)

WITHOUT ASSENT, laws passed by states "to the extent of the repugnancy" will be void.

strict timelines. The amendment Bill introduces Section 29C to the BNS, under which the state government shall create a special Aparajita Task Force in every district to investigate cases of rape. All persons, including government officers, will be obligated to assist the task force "without any delay", failing which they can be imprisoned for six months.

The Bill also reduces the time provided under BNS Section 193 to complete the investigation into the relevant BNS and PCSO offences from two months to 21 days (which can be extended by another 15 days if necessary).

The Bill introduces Sections 29A and 29B to the BNS to establish Special Courts in every district "for the purpose of expeditious completion of inquiry or trial" in rape cases, and to appoint a Special Public Prosecutor respectively.

The Bill also amends BNS Section 346, reducing the time given to complete the trial after the chargesheet is filed from two months to 30 days.

The Bill will now be presented to the Governor of West Bengal who will send it to President Droupadi Murmu, who will then decide whether to give her assent and allow the Bill to come into force.

ACID ATTACKS: The Bill removes the lighter punishments for acid attacks (prison terms less than life and fine), leaving "rigorous imprisonment for life" as the only punishment (Section 124).

DEATH IN PCSO ACT: The Bill amends the PCSO Act to introduce the death penalty for penetrative sexual assault (Section 4), where the highest punishment currently is life imprisonment.

TASK FORCES, SPECIAL COURTS: The Aparajita Bill provides for special institutions with the express purpose of investigating, hearing, and deciding rape cases on

strict timelines.

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Andhra Pradesh: Disha Bills

In November 2019, a 26-year-old veterinary doctor was gang raped and murdered in Shamshabad, Hyderabad. Four persons who were arrested were shot dead by police in an encounter on December 6 of that year. Then Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister Y S Jagan Mohan Reddy promised to bring legislation to ensure stronger punishments and speedy disposal of cases of crimes against women.

DEATH PENALTY: The Bill introduced the death penalty in "heinous" acid attacks where "adequate conclusive evidence is there and the circumstances warrant exemplary punishment".

PCSO ACT: Like Aparajita, Shakti too, amended the PCSO Act to introduce the death penalty as a punishment for penetrative sexual assault (Section 4).

Presidential assent for the Shakti Bill too, is pending. Leaders and workers of the NCP (Sharad Pawar) protested in Mumbai on Tuesday demanding assent to the Bill.

Genome mapping of Chandipura virus: findings

BRENDAN DABHI

AHMEDABAD, SEPTEMBER 4

THE GUJARAT Biotechnology Research Centre (GBRC) in Gandhinagar has published the only fully mapped genome of the Chandipura vesiculovirus (CHPV) — the viral infection that caused at least a third of the encephalitis or brain swelling cases in Gujarat during the outbreak in July-August.

What is CHPV?

Apart from encephalitis, CHPV is known to cause fever, headache, convulsions, coma, and even death, usually within days of the symptoms showing up.

CHPV most severely affects children below the age of 15. It can be transmitted by sandflies, ticks, and the *Aedes aegypti* mosquito which is also the vector for dengue and chikungunya. Sandflies were responsible for this year's outbreak.

With no specific treatment, CHPV has mortality rates of as high as 75%, as seen during India's worst ever outbreak in 2003 which killed 322 children in Andhra Pradesh and Gujarat. This year's outbreak has a case fatality rate of about 45% (as per data from August 16).

What is genome mapping?

Why is it important? Genome mapping refers to the process of determining the location of genes on an organism's chromosomes. In the case of a deadly virus like CHPV, mapping can provide clues about its origin, and significant mutations, among other things.

Importantly, the genetic sequence of a virus — especially of one in circulation — is important to help researchers develop testing kits, vaccines, and therapeutics.

What did researchers at the GBRC find?

■ The virus has not evolved much since

the 2003-04 outbreak, as well as the more recent 2012 outbreak.

When compared to the 2003-04 sample, there were four significant mutations in the glycoprotein gene — the most important of the five types of proteins that make the structure of the virus, responsible for binding to human cell receptors and eliciting an immune response.

There was only one significant mutation in the glycoprotein G from 2012. For comparison, new variants and sub-variants of Covid-19 detected every few months would have 20 or 30 mutations compared to their predecessor.

According to the researchers, this suggests "that the virus has not been under selection pressure to escape immunity", possibly because a significant proportion of the population did not develop antibodies against CHPV, unlike the fast-spreading Covid-19 which has infected a majority of the

global population. CHPV also does not yet have a vaccine and antivirals developed due to it, unlike Covid-19.

■ **Ct Value Threshold** (or Ct value) for the samples tested was high. In an RT-PCR test, the Ct value is the number of times the genetic material of the sample has to be amplified in order to detect the pathogen. A high Ct value implies that the viral load — the amount of virus in the sample — is quite low. "The Ct value of most of the patients was high. This means that the viral load was very less. But even this was enough to cause severe symptoms," the researchers said.

■ **On tracing the genome sequence** on the 27-strain family tree of the virus, they the strain to be related to ones isolated during the outbreak in Gujarat. The virus was different from strains isolated in Europe or Africa. "This means that the virus that infected patients in this outbreak was the one circulating in India and was not imported from other countries," a health department official said.

EXPLAINED HEALTH

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RIL to approve bonus issue today: five things that investors should know

GEORGE MATHEW
MUMBAI, SEPTEMBER 4

SHAREHOLDERS of Reliance Industries Ltd (RIL), India's largest listed company in terms of market capitalisation (Rs 20.53 lakh crore), will soon get bonus shares for the first time in the last 41 years.

The bonus issue, which comes after a flat financial performance in the April-June 2024 quarter and a sluggish show by RIL in a buoyant market, is expected to boost liquidity in the stock, making it more affordable to investors.

Here's what to know about RIL's bonus issue, to be approved by its board on Thursday.

Liquidity will increase

On August 29, RIL informed the stock exchanges that the company's board will meet on September 5 to announce a bonus issue for existing shareholders in the ratio of one-for-one — that is, one free share for each share held by them.

EXPLAINED YOUR MONEY

"This (bonus issue) should result in an increase in equity capital by Rs 6,770 crore and reduction in the reserve by a similar amount," an analyst with ICI Securities said.

Another analyst with a leading brokerage said: "When a bonus is given, it shows that the promoter has a positive view on the company. It will indirectly improve liquidity — and buying is expected, especially from the retail side. In the case of bonuses, retail investors have a tendency to buy stocks as prices come down."

RIL's share prices will decline

The price of RIL shares, which has remained flat since the beginning of this year, will decline after the allotment of the bonus shares as the number of shares increases. Given that the bonus issue is in the ratio of one-for-one, the share price might come down by 50% of the pre-bonus price. However, the share price can gradually increase after the bonus issue, depending on the company's performance.



Mukesh Ambani, Chairman of Reliance Industries Ltd. Archive

"Technically, bonus has no value. Besides improving the liquidity in the stock and the stock market, the bonus will have no impact. For example, if the face value of a stock is Rs 100, and one more share is given in addition, the price will adjust to Rs 50 per stock," said the analyst quoted above.

Since the value of the holding remains the same after the bonus issue, investors

will gain only if the company registers better financial performance in the coming quarters.

It has nothing to do with the company's financials

After the bonus issue, the stock price will look low, and will, therefore, be more attractive.

"The bonus issue has nothing to do with the improvement of the company's financials. It is just an accounting treatment, wherein the number of shares will increase and the price will become half," another analyst with a leading investment firm said.

"Since the number of shares are increasing, it will make investors feel good. Bonus is a way of giving more confidence to shareholders. Just because of the bonus, the price to earnings (PE) ratio will not be halved, it will remain the same," the analyst said.

Valuation is high; stock has underperformed

The RIL bonus issue did not make any waves in the market. RIL shares, which were

quoted at Rs 3,006.50 on August 28 had risen by just 0.77% to Rs 3,029.80 on September 4. One reason for this could be that markets had already discounted the bonus sop before it was announced, as investors expect some big announcement at the RIL annual general meeting (AGM) every year. While the market didn't expect the bonus issue this year, they were expecting an indication about the listing of Jio and retail business, which did not happen.

RIL has a tradition of giving bonuses in the market since January 2024. While the Sensex has gained over 15% in the last eight months, RIL, which closed at Rs 3,020.65 on January 3, 2024, has not gained.

"The general view of the stock is positive but the price and valuation is a bit at the higher side," the analyst with the investment firm quoted above said.

RIL has a tradition of giving bonuses every few years. Since they have a lot of businesses, there is a chance that they will have to go for capital expenditure in these businesses. "This bonus can be considered as a precursor to that plan," the analyst said.

RIL posted a 5.45% decline in its net profit at Rs 15,138 crore during the quarter ended June 2024 as against Rs 16,011 crore during the same period a year ago following the weak performance of the order-to-cash (O2C) business, and higher depreciation.

On a sequential basis, net profit declined by 20.12% from Rs 18,951 crore in the March 2024 quarter.

Promoters will get half of the bonus

RIL's 34,933 lakh-strong shareholders will get free shares if the board approves the issue on September 5. The promoters, Mukesh Ambani and family, who hold 50.33% stake in the company, will also be eligible for the bonus issue. As public shareholders own 327.90 crore shares, they will get an equal number of shares in the proposed issue.

RIL had last announced a bonus issue in 2017 in the ratio of 1:1. An investor who put Rs 1,000 (100 shares at the Rs-10 IPO price) in the Reliance IPO in 1977 would be holding 560 shares (including the proposed bonus issues) worth Rs 16.90 lakh now.

THE IDEAS PAGE

A living Constitution museum

It offers the opportunity for us to retrace our history, reimagine our journeys, and dream of a better future



C RAJ KUMAR

ON NOVEMBER 26, 1949, the Constituent Assembly of India adopted the Constitution of India. It came into effect on January 26, 1950, which we celebrate as Republic Day. This year, we are celebrating the 75th anniversary of adopting the Constitution. In 2015, the Government of India declared November 26 — hitherto known as National Law Day — as Constitution Day.

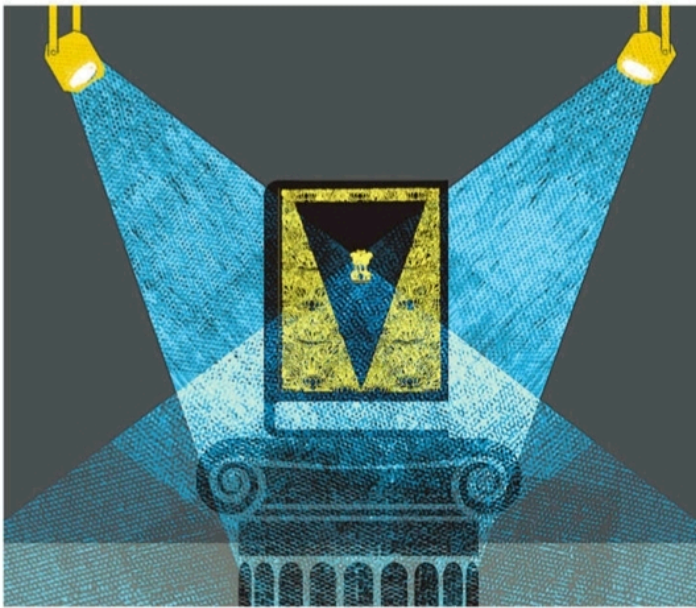
The Constituent Assembly met for the first time in New Delhi on December 9, 1946, and its last session was held on January 24, 1950. Its members had embarked on the Herculean task of drafting the Constitution at a time of major social, economic and political upheaval in the country. The provisions of the Constitution reflect a far-sighted vision on the part of the members as they were conscious of the extraordinary task ahead of them. They fully appreciated that the Constitution was not just a legal document outlining various legal rights and freedoms — they also wanted it to usher in a social revolution.

Granville Austin, the author of *The Indian Constitution: Cornerstone of a Nation*, observed, "The theme of social revolution runs throughout the proceedings and documents of the Assembly. It provided the basis for the decisions to adopt parliamentary government and direct elections, the Fundamental Rights and the Directive Principles of State Policy, and even many aspects of the Executive, Legislative, and Judicial provisions of the Constitution."

The 75-year journey of the Constitution of India, including its continuous interpretation by the courts and the various amendments by Parliament, makes it among the world's most dynamic and evolving constitutions. It is indeed the right time to establish the Constitution Museum as an ever-lasting legacy that celebrates the vision and far-sightedness of its founders.

Such a museum ought to have five primary objectives. One, building the legacy of the Constitution as an institution. It should not only capture its history but also the evolution of the rights and freedoms enabled by the institutions established by the Constitution. By showcasing these milestones, the museum can inspire future generations to understand and appreciate their rights and responsibilities as citizens. It would also serve as a reminder of the ongoing journey of Indian democracy toward justice and equality for all.

Two, the museum would democratise the understanding of the Constitution and the access to it. The Constitution's history, evolution, important provisions, and interpretation by the courts and the amendments need to be part of a larger understanding of the people of India. This democratisation of access to the knowledge in and about the document and appreciation of the principles and values that shaped it are critical for promoting responsible and enlightened citizenship. Thomas Jefferson, the principal author of the American Declaration of Independence and the third president of the US, famously observed in 1817, "An enlightened citizenry is indispensable for the proper functioning of a republic. Self-government is not possible unless the citizens are educated sufficiently to enable them to exercise oversight. It is therefore imperative that the nation see to it that a suitable edu-



C R Sasikumar

cation be provided for all its citizens."

Three, it should promote civic education in order to empower the citizenry. The history of the Constitution and its making is important as it can serve as an inspiration for institution-building and nation-building. The idea of a Constitution Museum is about creating opportunities for generations of people to participate in the understanding of a constitutional history and the evolution of rights and freedoms. Civic education must be imparted to all individuals across all walks of life so that they may work towards becoming effective participants in Indian democracy. Knowledge and understanding of the Constitution is the first step towards empowering the citizenry. When the rights and freedoms of ordinary individuals are threatened, the Constitution protects those rights and provides remedies for those seeking justice and redressal. It not only recognises rights and freedoms and the normative framework that outlines the values of constitutionalism, but it also provides the methods, mechanisms, procedures and processes for enforcing rights and seeking remedies for access to justice.

Four, the museum should celebrate and pay tribute to the framers of the Constitution and the nation's unsung heroes. It would provide information about the extraordinary history, accomplishments and vision of the members of the Assembly. It is rather unfortunate that so little is known about the majority of the members of the Constituent Assembly, including the 15 exceptional women — Ammu Swaminathan, Annie Mascarene, Begum Aizaz Rasul, Dakshayani Velayudhan, Durgabai Deshmukh, Hansa Jivraj Mehta, Kamla Chaudhry, Leela Roy, Malati Chaudhary, Poornima Banerjee, Rajkumari Amrit Kaur, Renuka Ray, Sarojini

The Constitution's history, evolution, important provisions, and interpretation by the courts and the amendments need to be part of a larger understanding of the people of India. This democratisation of access to the knowledge in and about the document and appreciation of the principles and values that shaped it are critical for promoting responsible and enlightened citizenship.

Naidu, Sucheta Kriplani and Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit. Likewise, the contributions of Sir Bengali Narsingh Rao, the Constitutional Advisor to the Assembly, in the making of the Constitution are unparalleled and deserve recognition and celebration. In his concluding speech in the Constituent Assembly on November 25, 1949, B.R. Ambedkar observed, "The credit that is given to me does not really belong to me. It belongs partly to Sir B.N. Rau, the Constitutional Advisor to the Constituent Assembly, who prepared a rough draft of the Constitution for the consideration of the Drafting Committee."

Five, a museum would help contribute to wider conversations about the Constitution and Indian democracy. It would lead to the development of a vibrant public discourse that is not only intellectually engaging but also contributes to the strengthening of democratic politics in India. As Orhan Pamuk has observed, "Real museums are places where time is transformed into space." The Constitution Museum must connect the past and the present with the future. Providing an opportunity for young people to engage and interact with the Constitution and its values would be the best way to protect our rights and freedoms and safeguard the future of the nation.

The 75th anniversary of adopting the Constitution of India offers the opportunity for us to retrace our history, reimagine our journeys, and tell our stories to dream of a better future through the establishment of a Constitution Museum.

The writer is the founding Vice Chancellor of O.P.J.S. Global University (JGU) and the Dean of Jindal Global Law School, JGU is establishing India's first Constitution Museum on its campus in Sonapat, Haryana

WHAT THE OTHERS SAY

"Any fiscal slippages would have serious implications for inflation and monetary policy. The other determinant of near-term inflation is timely disbursement of multilateral and bilateral loans. In the given circumstances, the 'victory statement' against inflation by the prime minister is a little premature." — **DAWN, PAKISTAN**

Thank you, teachers

This Teachers' Day, we must remember the profound contributions of our gurus towards nation-building, well-being of students



DHARMENDRA PRADHAN

THE GURU-SHISHYA relationship has been one of the defining features of Bharat's quest for knowledge and excellence for ages. Such is the sublime greatness of this tradition that even our gods — Lord Ram and Lord Krishna — sought knowledge and training under the guidance of their gurus, Maharishi Vasishtha and Maharishi Sandipani, respectively, in Treta Yuga and Dwapara Yuga. Teachers are thus sacrosanct.

Teachers, from ancient times, established a deep and abiding tradition of hand-holding, mentoring, and inspiring students in their pursuit of knowledge. Throughout India's rich history, teachers have occupied a central and revered position. The great educators of our past understood the transformative potential of education. Swami Vivekananda once said, "Education is the manifestation of the perfection already in man." This belief emphasises the idea that teachers do not merely impart knowledge; they awaken the latent greatness within each student, steering them towards self-realisation and enlightenment.

The impact of a teacher is immeasurable. In fact, she may not be aware of the subtle and profound influence she exercises on her students' lives. As one scholar aptly puts it, "A teacher affects eternity; she can never tell where her influence stops." Teachers shape not only the minds but also the hearts and souls of our students, instilling values, ethics, and a sense of purpose that endures long after their formal learning years.

Today, as we celebrate Teachers' Day on the birth anniversary of Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan, we are reminded of the profound contributions of our teachers towards nation-building. Radhakrishnan, a philosopher, scholar, and statesman, deeply believed that "teachers should be the best minds in the country". No one can possibly disagree with him. His dedication to education and his belief in the power of teachers to shape society are ideals that continue to inspire us today.

We stand at the precipice of a transformative era in education, driven by the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020. This policy recognises teachers as "transformers", emphasising their crucial role in shaping children's futures as well as the nation. It introduces profound changes in teaching, learning, and educational administration. The emphasis of the NEP on flexible learning, interdisciplinary knowledge, multilingualism, technology, and inclusivity heralds a new chapter in the learning ecosystem. Today, teachers are called upon to focus on the holistic development of students ensuring their social, emotional, physical, and cognitive well-being. For teachers, this is an onerous responsibility.

In the rapidly evolving landscape of the 21st century, the role of teachers has indeed become very crucial. We need educators who can steer us away from so-

cial prejudices and stereotypes and lead us onto a path driven by new technology, progressive ideas and constitutional values. The National Education Policy recognises this need, placing a strong emphasis on teachers' training and development. Capacity building for teachers at all levels is a key focus area of the government. An integrated teacher-training programme NISHTHA at all levels for the teachers in school education and the Malaviya Mission Teacher Training Programme at higher education level have been initiated to improve the capacity of our teachers. As we strive to build an aspirational India, we must also focus on nurturing aspirational teachers who are equipped with the skills and knowledge to prepare students for the challenges of the future and build global citizens.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi, through his "Pariksha Pe Charcha" programme, exemplifies the essence of a true educator. Like a teacher, he engages with the students, offering valuable insights on managing stress and navigating life's complexities. "Pariksha Pe Charcha" is a movement championed by Prime Minister Modi to unite students, parents, teachers, and the broader community, creating an environment where every child's unique individuality is celebrated, nurtured, and allowed to flourish.

While competition in educational pursuits is necessary, an overemphasis on it is counter-productive. Teachers can well guide their students to follow the tenets of healthy competition and avoid any kind of temptations and allurements. It is the responsibility of teachers to instill in students not just academic excellence but also strength of character, ethics, perseverance, passion, and motivation. These qualities are the anchors that help students navigate not just exams, but the broader challenges of life.

In today's world, where commercialisation often threatens the purity of education, we must be cognisant of the inherent strength of the *guru-shishya parampara*. This ancient tradition of mutual trust and respect between teacher and student has evolved over time, but its essence remains the same even today. New educational practices can and should blend with these timeless values to create a harmonious and effective learning environment.

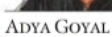
As the saying goes, "No printed word nor spoken tale can teach young minds what they should be. Not all the books on all the shelves, but what the teachers are themselves." Teachers, through their own lives and examples, teach us the most valuable lessons that go beyond the classroom and shape who we are as individuals. The task of realising the vision of a Viksit Bharat greatly hinges on the shoulders of our teachers.

On this Teachers' Day, I extend my heartfelt thanks and profound gratitude to all teachers who have touched my life, knowingly or unknowingly. Your influence is immeasurable, and your impact eternal. May we continue to honour and support the teachers who are the true guardians of our future. Happy Teachers' Day!

The writer is Minister of Education, Government of India. Views expressed are personal

It's on women. Again

Introduction of pink seats by an airline normalises men's misbehaviour



ADYA GOYAL

ON A BRITISH Airways flight from London to Delhi in 2021, I had the misfortune of being seated next to two White British men from an oil rig project in Vizag. In the beginning, questions were reasonable: "Where are you from? What do you do? Where do you study?" After the flight took off, and food and drinks were served — I had my customary apple juice, the men, wine and whiskey — the questions and the situation got worse. As the men got progressively more drunk, courtesy questions were replaced by "Do you have a boyfriend?", "Are your parents forcing you to get married?" and "Don't they do that in India?" I kept getting elbowed "by mistake". At some point, the alcohol wore them down and they fell asleep. An airhostess hurried towards me and apologised profusely for the men's rowdy behaviour, citing complaints by other passengers around. I was moved to an alternate seat and comforted with free chocolate and snacks.

This is only one instance of the kinds of harassment women face on a regular basis, whether during travel, at the workplace, on the street or even in one's own home. This is why when IndiGo rolled out its new feature that allows women to sit where other women are seated (indicated

in pink) during web check-in, I lauded the airline for its initiative.

But after reflecting more deeply, I realised it was not so black-and-white. This move, as espoused by the airline itself, is in line with the company's #GirlPower campaign. IndiGo has one of the highest percentages of female pilots across the world and boasts of an over 44 per cent workforce that is female. From the outside, the airline is an ally, a champion of women's empowerment. But at the end of the day, it is a profit-maximising enterprise. And, its profit-maximising motive is most evident in this move, which has been launched under the guise of "celebrating" women. It exemplifies the notion of what professor Catherine Rotenberg termed "neoliberal feminism".

In a 2014 article, Rotenberg analysed former Meta COO Sheryl Sandberg's book *Lean In* and made a case for a new kind of feminism that individualises empowerment. "Neoliberal feminism is predominantly concerned with instating a feminist subject who epitomises self-responsibility and who no longer demands anything from the state or the government, or even from men as a group." It is the idea that the problem of gender inequality is not structural but individual, and that every woman

now can have it all — if only they want it. The onus is thus on women, as the "weaker" sex, to emancipate themselves.

Giving women, in this case, the choice of sitting next to other women, illustrates this fact. Most IndiGo seats are already paid ones, unless you choose to get assigned a seat at random. As yet, there is no additional charge for women to avail the feature of being able to see where other women are seated. But the option of choice in itself may push more women to pay to pick their seats away from men. This feature then, can be an even greater incentive for them to pay their way out of an uncomfortable experience of manspreading and being forced to close oneself for fear of unwanted touching. Under the guise of handing women power, the airline is essentially normalising the behaviour of men and saying that if women want to escape this, they have an option to do so. Safety is your right, of course, but only as long as you can shell out the money! The fact of having to pay for a seat with the implicit idea that we can now buy safety shifts the burden of responsibility on women — yet again individualising what is, in essence, a systemic issue.

Unless the misbehaviour and entitle-

ment of men on flights, and public spaces in general, is addressed, token "feminist" measures such as this one will only continue to place the blame on women. The inherent masculinisation of public spaces often makes them inhospitable for women. From public transport to roads, parks and even leisure spaces like restaurants and dhabas, most public spaces are geared for men, and hence, exclusionary. Something as simple as moving to the side in an elevator to make space for other people does not naturally occur to men. The infrastructure is intentionally invasive and imposing where women are meant to feel uncomfortable.

The idea of neoliberal feminism does not take into account these societal barriers that women face in accessing public spaces. IndiGo's policy has further advanced the narrative of "men will be men" and hence, women must adjust. In this case, women must adjust by choosing to be cloistered with other women to feel safe in a closed environment. So that next time, in case of any untoward incident, the response is, "Oh! But she should have chosen to sit next to a woman."

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

LAW & ORDER ISSUE

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, "Justice delayed" (IE, September 4). It seems the idea of "bulldozer justice" started in UP and somewhat contributed to bringing CM Yogi back into power. It seems to be now emulated by other states as well. However, this retributive way of justice and its blatant use also coked a snook at the legal system. That the judiciary had now stepped in, is welcome, but if the ruling parties feel that it lends them a tough image and fetches them electoral dividends, they would still be averse to doing away with it, irrespective of the apex court's observations. Ironically, it is also a telling commentary on our tardy process of law.

Vijai Pant, Hapur

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, "Justice delayed" (IE, September 4). The bulldozer has been all over the place, riding roughshod over laws, rules and procedures — especially in BJP-ruled states. Such rare "efficiency" of the authorities is a vengeful ploy to punish those from certain communities. The Supreme Court has proposed to lay down guidelines to ensure that such demolitions stay within the legal ambit. The removal of encroachments ought to be a year-round activity. A pick-and-choose policy will only embolden violators from the majority.

Kholan Das, Kolkata

TOO LITTLE, TOO LATE

THIS REFERS TO the report, "Bengal Bill on rape: Death, woman officer-led probe" (IE, September 4). This is too little, too late from the Bengal CM. The bill comes after numerous incidents of sexual violence and protest. The bill is a reactive political move. Further, it has not received the president's assent yet. It may meet the same fate as the Maharashtra Shakti Bill or the Andhra Disha Bill. What we need are basic societal changes to shift our attitudes towards sexual violence.

Suvarna Nair, Kolkata

IN OUR INTEREST

THIS REFERS TO the article, "Friends with benefits" (IE, September 4). India's fruitful relationship with the littoral states of the South China Sea is crucial from a strategic point of view. These countries counter the passage of the Strait of Malacca, through which Chinese naval paraphernalia passes to the Indian Ocean. The visit of the Malaysian PM and the Vietnamese PM recently, followed by PM Narendra Modi's visit to Brunei and Singapore highlights the importance of these countries as allies. Besides, India's efforts to keep these states from the ambit of China's Belt and Road initiative are crucial to the nation's expansion. India would ultimately pose a threat to India.

Devendra Awasthi, Lucknow

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The IndianEXPRESS

FOUNDED BY
RAMNATH GOENKA

BECAUSE THE TRUTH INVOLVES US ALL

AN UPWARD TICK

World Bank raises India's growth forecast, but points to challenges on the export front. They need to be addressed

THE WORLD BANK has raised its forecast for the Indian economy in its latest update, pegging growth at 7 per cent this year, up from its earlier expectation of 6.6 per cent. While the revised estimate comes only days after government data showed that the economy grew at 6.7 per cent in the first quarter, lower than the RBI's estimate of 7.1 per cent, the Bank's estimate is in line with assessments by other agencies. In the July update of the World Economic Outlook, the International Monetary Fund had also revised upwards its assessment to 7 per cent. The Asian Development Bank has projected growth at 7 per cent, while the RBI has pegged growth to be marginally higher at 7.2 per cent. Projections by most other analysts are broadly in this range.

The Bank now expects private consumption to pick up as rural incomes bounce back — consumption grew at 7.4 per cent in the first quarter after growing at 4 per cent last year. A good monsoon after last year's El Nino induced deficient rainfall season and the heat-wave should help spur farm output, and as a consequence lift rural incomes and demand. However, it expects a slight deceleration in investment growth, reflecting slower growth of government capital expenditure. But there is reason to be optimistic about the country's medium-term prospects. The Bank expects growth to average 6.7 per cent over 2025-27, while the IMF expects growth to be around 6.5 per cent over the next few years.

The report's analysis of India's exports makes for a sobering reading. It highlights that the country has not been able to take advantage of the export space being vacated by China in low-skill manufacturing, with others like Bangladesh and Vietnam being the "primary beneficiaries of China's shrinking market share". Both countries have a larger share in exports of apparel, leather, textiles, and footwear. Others that have benefited from China's loss in global exports are Poland, Germany and France. Part of the problem can be traced to high tariff and non-tariff barriers — as per the World Trade Organisation, India's average tariff (most favoured nation) has risen over the past decade, and is higher than most of its competitors. Then there is the issue of employment. As exports of both manufacturing and services become more skill intensive, the report estimates that both direct and indirect employment related to exports has fallen. In the recent Union budget, the finance minister had brought down tariffs on several items. However, more needs to be done. The steps towards protectionism need to be reversed, tariff and non-tariff barriers need to be reduced. Alongside, the government should work towards entering into more free trade agreements, and seek deeper integration with global value chains.

IN HER NAME

West Bengal's anti-rape law is a knee-jerk reaction to public outrage. Dismantling cultures of misogyny needs harder work

N EARLY A MONTH after the rape and murder of a trainee doctor in Kolkata's RG Kar Medical College and Hospital, the Aparajita Woman and Child (West Bengal Criminal Laws and Amendment) Bill 2024 was passed unanimously by the West Bengal Assembly. The proposed legislation includes death penalty for the convicted perpetrator in instances when the assault kills or leaves the victim in a vegetative state, and death or life imprisonment without parole for other categories of rape convicts. It mandates that probes be completed within 21 days from the date of the FIR and trials within 30 days and that women officers lead these investigations. CM Mamata Banerjee has claimed that the Bill tries to "plug the loopholes that exist in the central legislation". But it also throws open larger questions on accountability, and a political expediency that does not recognise or embrace the hard work of challenging patriarchy across social and political institutions.

While the involvement of female officers in the investigation and the emphasis on protecting the privacy and dignity of the survivor during the trial process are laudable, stricter laws have rarely made up for cultures of misogyny. Between 2018 and 2022, conviction rates for rape remained around 28 per cent, according to NCRB data. For most survivors, even getting to the trial means overcoming a system that is rarely sensitive or sympathetic. There are other institutional challenges to due process, including but not limited to investigative and judicial quality and capacity. Studies show that the death penalty offers little deterrence to heinous crimes. Following the 2012 Delhi gang rape, the Justice JS Verma-led Committee had suggested many changes, including the sensitisation of the police force, widening the ambit of what constitutes rape, and a reimagining of the idea of masculinity consolidated by families, societies and the state. It had argued that "it would be a regressive step to introduce death penalty for rape even where such punishment is restricted to the rarest of rare cases."

Ahead of the 2024 Lok Sabha elections, political parties across the spectrum had spoken of the centrality of "nari shakti" to their vision of India. Yet, there remains an inherent lack of understanding of what women want and need: Not political playbooks that counter outrage with populist solutions but safe spaces at home and outside; not whataboutery about issues of women's safety but public infrastructures that do not invisibilise or hem them in; not a lack of accountability but equal opportunities. Stricter punishment and harder laws are quick-fix solutions. Peeling off layers of patriarchy in everyday governance is the much harder but far more crucial task.

WHO'S A CLEVER DOG?

Their intelligence, including ability to store object names in long-term memory, has to do with their relationship to humans

WHO HAS A tail that never stops wagging, ears that perk up at the mention of a walk or chicken, and a brain that can remember the names of toys, years after those toys got lost and/or chewed up and thrown out? As those who have spent any time with one would attest, the good boys and girls of the world — dogs and puppies, as they are known on the internet — are also very clever boys and girls. As study at the Eotvos Lorand University in Hungary has found that dogs can store up to a dozen object names in their long-term memory, correctly identifying toys that they have not seen in two years.

For scientists, this is an important finding which could lead to a greater understanding of the parts of the brain connected to the mechanics and evolution of language, given the connection between long-term memory and linguistic skills. The fact that dogs are capable of such feats of memory — on top of their incredible emotional intelligence and ability to "read" humans — also opens up greater possibilities for their deployment as service and emotional support animals, as well as in search and rescue operations.

Dogs, of course, are not unique in their startling displays of intelligence — other species, like squirrels, octopi, rats and crows, too have demonstrated problem-solving skills and the ability to retrieve information from their long-term memory. What makes canine intelligence special, however, is that it seems to have developed as a response to the close, millennia-long relationship between dogs and humans. In other words, it is because of domestication that puppies, even when they're mere weeks old, are better at understanding humans and using that knowledge to infer information about the environment, like where the treats are hidden. So humans can, perhaps, claim some credit for the intelligence of their furry companions. But dogs' seemingly unending store of love and loyalty? That's entirely down to their own selves.



PRATAP BHANU MEHTA

ON OCTOBER 20 1936, Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan delivered the inaugural lecture as the newly elected Spaulding Professor of Eastern Religion and Ethics at the University of Oxford. The lecture entitled "The World's Unborn Soul" seems as much a tract for our times as it did for his. The world Radhakrishnan describes is a world of feverish energy, chaotic activity, and immense creativity. But it is also confronting an abyss: Morally confused, wracked with uncertainty, and no sense of where all the political chips were going to fall.

The biggest disquiet stems from the fact that, as an empirical matter, the world is a single community of fate. He writes "For the first time in the history of our planet its inhabitants have become one whole, each and every part of which is affected by the fortunes of every other. Science and technology, without aiming at this result, have achieved the unity. Economic and political phenomena are increasingly imposing on us the obligation to treat the world as a unit. Currencies are linked, commerce is international, political fortunes are interdependent." Yet the forms of the political organisation we inhabit, the consciousness we embody in our daily lives, the identities we give allegiance to, are still structured in ways that make us oblivious to this obvious fact.

As he writes, "the sense that mankind must become a community is still a casual whim, a vague aspiration, not generally accepted as a conscious ideal or an urgent practical necessity moving us to feel the dignity of a common citizenship and the call of a common duty. Attempts to bring about human unity through mechanical means, through political adjustments, have proved abortive." The misalignment between what determines our fate and how we think of our identities was a recipe for disaster.

The second theme running through the lecture was the exhaustion of existing ideologies and outlooks on life. The lecture is Hegelian in its sensibility: Human beings will strive for meaning. Each civilisation represents an achievement of sorts in this journey. In the context of the West, Greeks were the font of a creative worldly empiricism; Romans a font for secular law. Christianity brought an incandescent sense of transcendence and inner

Old faiths have dissolved, what has taken their place is more precarious — S Radhakrishnan speaks to our time

We look to the state for justice. But, ultimately, the state is a power that devours everything. As he writes, "The state which is the most powerful organisation is least hampered by inner scruples or outer checks. Man in the community is at least half civilised, but the state is still primitive, essentially a huge beast of prey. We have no strong public opinion, or effective international law to restrain the predatory state." The most dangerous pathology is nationalism. Identification with nations is old, but in the modern world it colonises all spaces, becomes the ultimate source of meaning.

depth, but also bigotry and religious fanaticism; the Renaissance restored a sense of free creativity. The spirit of free inquiry unleashed by the Enlightenment paves the way for democracy; the modern aspiration for the dignity of the individual also transforms into movements for economic justice. This history is eloquently told, even though it is a selective history, necessitated by the confines of a lecture. These sensibilities also run parallel to various projects of domination. All of these movements have made the modern world, and all of these gains have to be maintained.

But while old faiths have dissolved, what is put in their place is far more precarious, and in some cases more dangerous. Our sense of self is more fragile. We increasingly turn to therapy for self-maintenance. As he writes, "The long-starved powers of the soul reassert their claims and shift the foundations of our mind. The weak, the wounded, and the overstrained souls turn to psychoanalysis which deals with the problems of the soul, under the guise of rationality and with the prestige of science." But the political manifestations of the crisis are more dangerous. The first, more of a mixed bag, is the growing power of the state.

We look to the state for justice. But, ultimately, the state is a power that devours everything. As he writes, "The state which is the most powerful organisation is least hampered by inner scruples or outer checks. Man in the community is at least half civilised, but the state is still primitive, essentially a huge beast of prey. We have no strong public opinion, or effective international law to restrain the predatory state." The most dangerous pathology is nationalism. Identification with nations is old, but in the modern world it colonises all spaces, becomes the ultimate source of meaning. He writes, "Nations have become mysterious symbols to whose protection we rally as savages to fiefdoms." So, the paradox of the modern age: The rational emancipated individual unable to understand the deep irrational sources of his own disquiet, the age of individual liberation underwriting the power of a predatory state, the age that dispensed with religion lifts it with an even more narcissistic, domineering and racialised religion: Nationalism.

So where do we turn? There are two hints of a direction. The first is openness. He writes, "The great periods of human history are marked by a widespread access of spiritual vitality derived from the fusion of national cultures with foreign influences. If we take Judaism, we find that Abraham came from Mesopotamia and Joseph and Moses from Egypt. Later, Judaism shows the influence of Hellenism. Asia Minor and Egypt exercised considerable influence over the Greek development. The creative genius of the medieval world came from Palestine." And in a swipe against Euro-centrism he writes, "Now that we have the whole world for our cultural base, the process of recovery and training in classics cannot cease with listening to the voices of Isaiah and Paul, Socrates and Cicero." That would be an academic error, a failure of perspective. There are others also who have participated in the supreme adventure of the ages, the prophets of Egypt, the sages of China, and the seers of India, who are guide-posts disclosing to us the course of the trail. "The whole world is our cultural base. A remarkable phrase to write.

The second hint is this. The core problem is that we confuse the Self with the Ego, and it is the Ego that details all ideals. The only meaning of "spirituality" is the extinguishing of the Ego. But the route to this is an engagement with the Self, not another ideology. As he writes, "The soul that has found itself is no longer conscious of itself in its isolation. Those who are anxious to live in peace with their own species and all life will not find it possible to gloat over the massacres of large numbers of men simply because they do not belong to their race or country. Our normal attitudes to other races and nations are no more than artificial masks, habits of thought and feeling, sedulously cultivated by long practice in dissimulation."

As we honour Radhakrishnan on Teachers' Day, we might as well wish him, not in the spirit of a nationalistic paeon to this or that tradition, but to an open world trying to discover its yet unborn soul.

The writer is a contributing editor, The Indian Express

DON'T DISCONNECT

Overemphasis on rest can slow down the work of the nation



VASUNDHARA SHANKER

WITH THE ONSET of the pandemic, the global workforce was thrust into a new work environment: Working from the comfort of their homes. This shift made the transition back to full-time office work a significant challenge for many.

The Indian Express recently wrote an editorial in favour of the Right to Disconnect law passed in Australia ("Right to disconnect", August 30). While the concept of all supporting organisations has gained significant traction worldwide, culminating in legislative measures in several countries globally, it's a phenomenon which could potentially curb growth, especially in a competitive economy such as India's. The "Right to Disconnect" advocates for an employee's right to "disconnect from work-related communications outside of official working hours", which can dull the edge that drives breakthrough achievements in economies where innovation and rapid progress are critical.

Hustle culture, with its ethos of constant striving, hard work, and the relentless pursuit of success, has been both celebrated and criticised in equal measure, perhaps because of its mislabeled meaning. Hustle culture is a natural extension of human ambition, a reflection of our intrinsic drive for growth and achievement. Critics have oftentimes labelled hustle culture as a concept that could be potentially detrimental to one's mental health, putting forth the argument as stated by the author that "A bit of rest and diversion not only makes workers more productive and creative,

DEAR EDITOR,
I DISAGREE

A fortnightly column in which we invite readers to tell us why, when they differ with the editorial positions or news coverage of 'The Indian Express'

but also more motivated."

While this statement is appealing at first glance, it oversimplifies the complex dynamics of work, productivity, growth and motivation. Experiments like those in Iceland are often touted as proof that reduced work hours leads to happier, more productive workers; a closer examination would definitely reveal significant flaws in the argument especially when there is a broader application of such findings to diverse economic contexts, such as the young Indian workforce and economic structure.

Countries like Iceland are unique, with a high concentration of public-sector jobs that are less dependent on strict productivity metrics, and cannot be compared to India, with its growing youth population and private sector industries which thrive and sustain on high performance. To focus overwhelmingly on leisure can sometimes overlook the fact that work can be a profound source of satisfaction and well-being and be deeply rewarding.

It is equally crucial to acknowledge that humans are not merely seeking leisure and relaxation; they are driven by purpose, direction, and accomplishment, which gives them long-lasting happiness. Excess focus on leisure slows down medium-performing workers while high-performing professionals will almost always be on the top of the ladder.

The reality is that many of the world's most significant advancements and innovations have come from environments where intense focus and long hours were the norm. In India,

the right to profession envisaged as a fundamental right enshrined in the Constitution, underscores the importance of work in an individual's life, akin to their right to equality and life. This fundamental right not only allows individuals to choose their vocation, but also reflects the broader societal value placed on hard work, ambition, and the pursuit of excellence. In this context, the concept of a "right to disconnect" might seem at odds with the cultural ethos that celebrates continuous striving and professional growth. A reduction in work hours could lead to a slower pace of development and a diminished capacity to respond to market demands — a mammoth risk the Indian economy cannot afford to take.

The idea of disconnecting from work is perhaps counterintuitive in a country where work is not just a means to an end but a source of identity, pride, and purpose. In the long run, this approach could lead to a decline in national prosperity, as reduced work hours might diminish the capacity for sustained economic development, widening the chasm of divide between developed and fast developing nations.

Instead of advocating for "the rest of the world to catch up," a more nuanced approach is needed — one that recognises the importance of hard work, ambition, and sustained productivity, while also ensuring a healthy and motivated workforce.

The writer is managing partner of Veram Legal, founder of Code Gavel and Jamnawaz

SEPTEMBER 5, 1984, FORTY YEARS AGO

NO ROOM TO MOVE

A SUPREME COURT judge has been forced to stay in a Delhi guest house for the past few months following the disincorporation of a former minister's family to vacate the bungalow allotted to the judge as official residence. After his transfer from the Jammu and Kashmir High Court, Justice Khalid has made the two ground floor rooms of Kerala House his home.

A P ASSEMBLY

THE ANDHRA PRADESH Legislative Assembly is being convened on September 11 to test the claim advanced by Chief Minister N Bhaskara

Rao of the majority support in the 294-member House. "It is people's victory in saving democracy," the deposed Andhra Pradesh chief minister, N T Rama Rao, said about the convening of the Assembly.

HIGH PRIESTS' DEMANDS

THE WITHDRAWAL OF the Army from the Golden Temple and a halt to "kar seva" by Santa Singh are among the three conditions set out by the five head priests to cancel the proposed march to the Temple on October 1. The priests also demanded restoration of the authority of the SGPC as the third condition. "If these terms were accepted, peace could

return to Punjab", they asserted. They said that their decision to take out the march was not political.

RENT CONTROL

THE ECONOMIC ADMINISTRATION reforms commission (EARC) headed by I K Jha says that the tenant is "overprotected" by the rent control legislation as it stands in the country. In its 11th report on rent control, the EARC says that a law to protect the weak can become an instrument of exploitation in the hands of the strong. Rent control in actual operation tends often to protect the "haves" against the "have nots".