

Maoist setback

Security forces deliver major blows to the Maoists, but must avoid repression

the Maoists, but must avoid repression
with its Maoist cadres having been
killed in anti-Naxalite operations led
by security forces in 2024, the year so
far has been one of major setbacks to the longstanding, left-wing extremist movement in India.
After suffering major casualites in ambushes in
April 2021 and April 2023, paramilitary and police forces are coordinating better and firming up
a no-holds-barred approach towards the militants. This has resulted in the Maoists experieng
blow after blow in what is perhaps their only
remaining bastion – south Chhattisgarh – even
though they retain a presence in other forested
districts in Jharkhand, Bihar, Odisha and Maharashtra. The success in taking on the Maoists is alrashtra. The success in taking on the Maoists is al

though they retain a presence in other forested districts in plankhand, Bihar, Odisha and Maharashtra. The success in taking on the Maoists is also a consequence of the weakening base of support for the insurgents as intelligence is a vital component of the operations. This should not come as any surprise. Notwithstanding grievances against the Indian state among ribals in one of India's most forested and under-developed regions, there were always going to be fewer takers for the idea of a "portracted" war as espoused by the Maoists. The insurgency and the counter-operations have taken a huge toll on the tribal population, bringing in more fatigue for them. That most of the dead among the Maoist caders are tribal youth points to the tragedy that has befallen one of India's poorest States.

The no-holds barred approach of what the Chhattigsarl government calls "Operation Prahar" might have succeeded in eliminating scores of Maoist cadres, effected surrenders and arrests, but it has also targeted peaceful activists fighting for tribal rights. Civil society organisations have coincided with repression against activists and tribals. Chalttigsarl how the Union Home Ministry must be mindful of these grievances as such actions could also increase disenchantment and play into the hands of the Maoists. That streams of the Maoist/Naxalite current have lasted for more than five decades shows that left extremism is still resilient in regions where governance by the Indian state is either absent or seen as detrimental to the marginalised sections. Yet, despirences of similar currents across the world show remains an anachronistic one. Far from reaching any of its lofty goals, the Indian Maoist movement as any brought misery for those whom the insurgents claim to fight for. The earlier they realise the futility of their ideology and work towards using spaces in the Indian democratic system to articulate concerns, the between ending crossfire between security forces and the Maoists.

Income inequality

More jobs and higher taxes can counter the effects of automation

the effects of automation

he ILO's World Employment and Social Outlook study (September) has definitively linked declining trends in labour's income share of total income within nations to technological advances — mainly automation and artificial intelligence. In an analysis of the past two decades, it mentions a 1.6% drop in the global labour income share between 2004-24. More ominously, almost 40% of this decline was in the pandemic years of 2019-22 — a drop that has not been recouped in the past couple of years. Labour income share is a measure widely used to assess income inequalities within economies. The 1.6% drop might seem insignificant, but it amounts to \$2.4 trillion in lost wages at constant purchasing power parity, in relation to what workers would have earned had the labour income share been stable since 2004. \$2.4 trillion lost globally is more than half of India's nominal GDP forecast for FY2023-24. The study also highlights the gendered aspect of this inequality. In 2024, almost a third of the world's young women (28.2%) are not in employment, education or training, it estimates, which is double that of young men (3.1%). This is alarming for developing nations with growing working age popularions, as it highlights challenges in job creation.

CSS_25) are not in employment, education or training, it estimates, which is double that of young men (33.196). This is alarming for developing nations with growing working age populations, as it highlights challenges in job creation. In fact, another ILO report on the status of employment in India estimates that 83% of its unemployed are youth. This coupled with the government's recent prescriptions to the private sector to invest in labour intensive employment points to a crisis in jobs growth and rising inequality, even as output and labour productivity rise. Several countries have been mooting the idea of a universal basic income (UBB), or a floor to stand on, as economists have called it. A referendum in Switzerland on UBI was defeated in 2016, while Democratic candidate and American tech investor Andrew Yang, in his aborted 2020 bit on the White House, mainstreamed a 'Freedom Dividend' of \$1,000 a month for every American adult. Congress leader Rahul Gandhi too made aproposal of \$12,000 a month for every family, during his 2019 election campaign, calling it a "final assault on poverty". Several industry reports point to high-paying job creation due to automation and Al, to counter the jobles growth theory. But again, this only highlights an acceleration in income-inequality trends. Indeed, with the apparent advantages of automation and Al being irreversible, perhaps a global goal towards a universal basic income could address Sustainable Development Goal 10, or reduced inequality within and among countries. It is perhaps time that developing nations such as India consider the reintroduction of an inheritance tax as a measure to redress wealth inequality.

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The Food Security Act has revamped the PDS

uring the discussion on the National Food Security Act (NFSA) 2013, there was nervousness about guaranteeing dod security through the Public Distribution System (PDS). The nervousness stemmed from the poor record of the PDS – according to National Sample Survey (NSS) data, in 2011-12, at the all-India level, leakages were at 41.7%.

14.7%. The main argument in favour of continuing with the PDS was that States that had undertaken PDS reforms had witnessed major improvements. Between 2004-5 and 2011-12, several early reforming States saw a dramatic reduction in leakages: Bihar (from 91% to 24%), Chhattisgarh (from 52% to 9%) and Odisha (from 76% to 25%). With the same package of PDS reforms being mandated by the NFSA 2013, there was hope that more States could improve.

The NSS's Household Consumption
Expenditure Survey (HCES) data for 2022-23 bears out this hypothesis. The HCES is the first large-scale nationally representative survey after the implementation of the NFSA 2013. It suggests that PDS leakages were down to 22% in 2022-23.

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Understanding the data and methodology PDS "leakages" refer to the proportion of PDS rice and wheat released by the Food Corporation of India (FC) that fails to reach consumers. Leakages are estimated by matching NSS data on household PDS purchases with "offlake" data reported in the Monthly Food Grain Bulletin of the Food Ministry.

During the reference period (August 2022 to July 2023), PDS ration card holders were getting NFSA grain (five kilograms per capita per month for "Priority" households and 35 kg per month for "Antyodaya" households). In addition, they got Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana (PMGKAY) grain till December 2022, when PMGRAY Covid-19 relief was discontinued. To arrive at the estimates presented here, offlake under NFSA including tide-over rations, Non-NFSA and PMGKAY is matched with HGES 2022-23 PDS purchase of (paid for and free) wheat and rice by households.

It is worth bearing in mind that these are estimates, the best possible with available data. Any mismatch between offlake and purchase is Understanding the data and methodole

Lagged offtake, July 2022 to June 2023

PDS leakages - All India estimates, 2022-23



As anticipated. implementation of Public Distribution System (PDS) reforms as mandated in the National Food Security

Act, has reduced

leakages

attributed to leakage, though there could be other reasons (transport losses, lags in supply and so on). For instance, the *Table* shows how lagging offake by a month (July-June) yields a lower leakage estimate (17.6%), than if we match the offtake with the NSS reference period (August-July) - 18.2%. Both, however, are underestimated.

underestimates.
Why underestimate? Some States run an
"expanded PDS", providing PDS grain to
non-NFSA beneficiaries using central
contributions (for example, tide-over rations and contributions (for example, tide-over rations and non-NFSA allocations) as well as State contributions (for example, local procurement). For example, Chhattisgarh's food security act, passed in 2012, made the PDS quasi-universal using local procurement. The all-India leakage estimates of 17.69-18.2% are underestimates, because they only take into account central contributions, and not State contributions.

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There are It drore non-NFS beneficiaries, of
whom at the most six core are supported
entirely through State contributions. If we add
the State's contribution for State-supported
non-NFSA beneficiaries to total offtake, the
all-india leakage estimate rises to 22%.

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Impact of NFSA on PDS coverage
One of the major PDS reforms included in the
NFSA 2013 was an expansion of PDS coverage that
was almed at reducing exclusion errors, but had
spillover effect on reducing leakages. In 2011-12,
before the NFSA, less than 50% of households
had ration cards, and the proportion of
households getting anything from the PDS was
around 40%. That was an improvement over
2004-05, when less than a quarter (24%) of
households were accessing the PDS.
The improvement between 2004-5 and 2011-12
was driven by reforms in States such as
Chhattisgarh and Odisha where the PDS coverage
increased substantially in this period. For
instance, in Chhattisgarh, there was a three-fold
increase (from 21% to 63%) in the proportion of
households using the PDS. According to HCES
data, in 2022-23, the proportion of households

data, in 2022-23, the proportion of households buying from the PDS has increased further to 70%. In large part, this is the result of the rollout of the NFSA.

of the NFSA.

In spite of the improvement in coverage, the Centre is falling short of the coverage mandated by the NFSA (50% of rural population and 75% of urban population), i.e., around 66%. Earlier work, based on administrative data, suggested that only 59% had access to the PDS as NFSA beneficiaries. Similarly, according to the HCES, out of the 70% who access the PDS, only 57%-67% have NFSA ration cards. The rest (roughly 10%) are non-NFSA beneficiaries.

PDS reforms undertaken by early reforming States such as Chhattisgarh and Odisha included a reduction in PDS prices, doorstep delivery of foodgrains, digitisation of records, deprivatising management of PDS outlets by handing them ower to panchayats, and self-help groups. These reforms were incorporated in the NFSA 2013 (Chapter V).

As mentioned earlier, by 2011-12, PDS leakage As mentioned earlier, by 2011-12, PDS leakag estimates in the early reforming States had already crashed. Since then, more States with high leakages have managed to reduce them. According to HCES 2022-23, it was 9% in Rajasthan. 21% in Jharkhand and 23% in Uttar

Pradesh (all one-time basket cases).

Many believe that the integration of Aadhaar, especially Aadhaar-based biometric authentication (ABBA), led to the improvements and submar-based blometric authentication (ABBA), led to the improvements in the PDS. Data from primary surveys, however, do not support this. Two surveys in 2017 in Jharkhand shed light on this issue. A study by Muralidharan, Niehaus and Sukhtankar found that leakages before the introduction of ABBA were already less than 20%. Drèze, Khera and Somanchi reported that the purchase-entitlement ratios (the proportion of entitlement that people actually purchased) in offline villages and ABBA villages were virtually the same — 94% and 93%, respectively. Both surveys found little evidence of ghost cards.

Somewhat puzzlingly, leakages in States where the PDS traditionally westerd between

ghost cards.

Somewhat puzzlingly, leakages in States where
the PDS traditionally worked better have not
experienced further improvements; in fact, in
some, estimated leakages have increased
(example, in Tamil Nadu from 12% in 2011-12 to
25% in 2022-23).

In perspective
The PDS is now a functional instrument of social
policy, guaranteeing a modicum of food security
to many. During the COVID-19 lockdowns, it
formed the backbone of relief efforts, along with
the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act.
However, the PDS remains an endangered
instrument of social policy, constantly subjected
to "innovations". These include cash transfer
experiments, door-step delivery to people's
homes (in Delhi), and imposing inappropriate
technologies (such as Aadhaar-based biometric
authentication).

Instead of expending energy on ill-conceived measures such as the ongoing eKYC drive for the PDS) that can easily derail the PDS, scarce government capacity should be channelled to expediting the delayed Census, that is leading to the exclusion of over 100 million people. Other demands such as the inclusion of more nutritious items such as pulses and edible oil remain

Africa can make India's 'critical mineral mission' shine

m n the Union Budget 2024-25, Union Financ Minister Nirmala Sitharaman announced t setting up of a Critical Mineral Mission. In August the Ministry of Mines organised a semit to discuss its objectives. Officials noted that efforts are being fast tracked in 'mission mode' towards three aims: expand domestic production, prioritise the recycling of critical minerals, and incentivise overseas acquisition asserts. the Union Budget 2024-25, Union Finan

production, priorities the recycing of critical minerals, and incentivise overseas acquisition of assets.

Work on these fronts is underway. The amendment made to the Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Act of 1957, resulted in the Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Amendment Bill, 2023 removing six minerals from the atomic list, thus allowing the private sector to explore these in India. To engage with mineral-rich countries overseas with a mandate to secure supply of critical minerals for the Indian economy, a joint venture of three public sector undertakings, Khanij Bidesh India Limited (KABIL), was founded in 2019. Its first major agreement for lithium exploration and mining was signed in January 2024 and provides access to five blocks owned by Camyen, in the Catamarca province in Argentina. Major and medium-scale mining companies in India are also seeking opportunities to ensure a steady feedstock of minerals. However, India's capacity for exploration and processing such minerals is nascent. It lacks mandacturing capacity of end-use components, and needs to upskill its labour force, which is crucial for battery manufacturing.

Situating Africa in India's supply chain

Situating Africa in India's supply chain For India's Critical Minerals Mission to succeed, New Delhi will have to find ways to leverage its existing partnerships with countries in Africa, a region that houses 30% of the world's known critical mineral reserves.

A familiar geography for Indian enterprise, New Delhi shares deep political, economic, and historic connections with the continent, with



<u>Veda</u> Vaidyanathan

Associate Fellow, Centre for Social and Economic Progress, New Delhi

India will have to collaborate

with countries in the continent which has a

significant amount of the world's known critical mineral reserves

wide commercial networks created by a three million strong diaspora. Described by External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar as the "land of the future", the recognition of Africa's importance in advancing global priorities is reflected in New Delhi introducing new diplomatic missions in

advancing global priorities is reflected in New Delhi introducing new diplomatic missions in Africa.

Collaborating on critical minerals will bring in a new dimension to the multifaceted energy partnerships between the regions. Of the total bilateral trade of \$98 billion in 2022-23, \$43 billion is attributed to the mining and mineral sectors. Similarly, a significant portion of the \$75 billion that India has already invested in Africa, is by public sector units for the acquisition of energy assets. India sources approximately 34 million tonnes of oil — accounting for 15% of its total demand – from Africa, alongside rising imports of natural gas, minerals, and mineral fuels. Further, as part of the International Solar Alliance, the Government of India has benchmarked \$2 billion for solar projects in Africa. Building resilient supply chains to Africa is being imagined at a time when African governments are employing an array of policy instruments to diversify away from a 'pit-to-port' model. Tanzania is developing a multi-metal processing facility, Zimbabwe and Namibia have banned the export of raw minerals to ensure

China factor
Increasing international attention, especially the
extent of control China exerts over the value
chain, poses economic and security risks for
India. With its early acquisition of assets,
development of processing and manufacturing
capabilities, Beijing enjoys enormous influence.

Chinese mining companies have a significant presence in cobalt mining in the Democratic Republic of Congo and recently signed a \$7 billion 'minerals-for-infrastructure' deal.

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Opportunities for collaboration
In this geopolitically fraught environment, where the African agency is looking to build viable alternative partnerships, there are some unique advantages that India could leverage.

Indian construction companies have completed several projects in 43 African countries, which include transmission lines in Tunisia, hospitals in Tanzania, and railway lines in Ghana. In the African critical minerals landscape, identifying strategic projects with host countries and building mining-adjacent infrastructure are key to development.

India has signed memoranda of understanding with Zambia and Zimbabwe for cooperation in geological mapping, mineral deposit modelling, and capacity building. To help build a critical mineral workforce, utilising mechanisms such as the Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation, which has trained 40,000 Africans in 10 years, would help drive positive energy partnerships.

There is an increasingly nuanced role of Indian technology start-ups across the mining value chain. From innovating tools that accelerate mining exploration and extraction while minimissing ecological impacts, to utilising technology for beneficiation of mineral ores, and providing reconnaissance services, there is a whole suite of services that private technology companies provide. Their expertise in niche areas of mining brings an element of value addition that African governments could explore. On African Minerals Development Center said, "the only way to transform lives is to add value". Therefore, India's Critical Mineral Mission should priorities responsible practices in a rea that threatens to be dominated by the geopolitics of a not-so-green energy transition.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

The report (Page 1, "Al key reason for labour income dip, says ILO study", September 5) is indeed shocking. Labour is a living factor of production. Technology at the expense of labour may enhance the output. But what use is the output. But what use is the output when people do not have jobs and purchasing power? Nations should have a judicious mix of labour and capital to achieve

'Bulldozer justice'
By flagging 'bulldozer justice', the Supreme Court of India has sent a clear and unequivocal message about its unwavering commitment to its constitutional mandate of safeguarding constitutionally euranteed constitutionally guaranteed rights of Indian citizens. Bulldozer justice, which

primarily targets those who are accused of crimes and from a certain minority community, was the brainchild of the Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath. It helped him build a political brand and an image of a tough-on-crime administrator in a State where the rule of law was seen as slack. It is jarring that it became a template of sorts, with other BJP

State governments adopting it. The policy of zero-tolerance toward buildozer justice and stringent punishment for those who peddle hate has assumed greater significance than ever. M. Jeyaram, Sholavandan, Tamil Nadu

The 'bulldozer system' of instant justice has no place in a civilised society. Such an egregious violation of

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the rule of law and the absence of due process are more in tune with justice meted out by the Taliban and others. Dr. Thomas Palocaren, Yellore, Tamil Nadu

Achievers who inspire
The Indian Paralympian
contingent has made us
proud with its medal count.
Differently-abled athletes
do not receive much
visibility, sponsorship and

praise. But the depth of their passion and efforts is mammoth, especially in our society where the infrastructure and support for the differently-abled are patchy or nonexistent. The coaches and support teams working with them should also be very proud. The younger generation should be very inspired by this special group of achievers. Soudamini Nayak, Soudamini Nayak, Ernakulam, Kerala

Breast feeding cuts chances of the child developing allergic disorders

As we observe Nutrition Week, organised in India every year in the first week of September, here's a look into rising food-related allergies among children. Specialists claim the incidence of adverse reactions is rising as a consequence of the widespread consumption of 'westernised foods'

Archana recently went through a rather nasty ordeal after eating a takeaway essent ordered from a restaurant. She had severe cramps for several hours. The symptoms were familiar to her. She has this reaction when she eats anything with eggs. However, this time, she specifically mentioned her allergy and asked for something that did not have eggs in it.

not have eggs in it. The 39-year-old said she has been allergic to eggs since her childhood. Her first memories are of a severe reaction after visiting a restaurant in her hometown, Coimbatore. "It was a vegetarian restaurant, and I had naan. It

vegetarian restaurant, and I had naan. It was the first time I was trying naan. When I returned home, I threw up, something that happens after eating anything that contains eggs." When her father confronted the restaurant later, he was told that naan was glazed with eggs. In her teens, the reaction changed. An accidental ingestion resulted in multiple visits to the toilet and severe stomach cramps that took several hours to subside. "I have always been careful. But recently, when I ordered tiramisu after confirming with the restaurant that it had no eggs, I had an allergic reaction," she said.

Westernisation of diet

Westernisation of diet
Ms. Archana's reaction to a food item is
not new or rare. Paediatricians cite
literature on food allergies in children.
They say children could suffer from egg,
seafood, and nut allergies. All the
paediatricians that this correspondent
spoke to believe that allergies are a result
of 'westernisation'. Paediatricians say
common allergies include those that manifest after consuming eggs, nuts and

naminest arier consuming eggs, nuss and seafood.

R. Asokan, consultant paediatrician at Surya Hospital, said, "I have not seen groundnut or other nut allergies (in my practice), but allergies to non-vegetarian food or even eggs, I have. Some people have a genetic predisposition. For some, it could be acquired: "Allergies could be persistent or random.

"I may see one or two cases of persistent allergies. Sometimes when we desensitise them, the patient will not show the usual allergic reaction for a while. Then we may reintroduce the food, and the person could be free of the allergy," he explained.

Dr. Asokan compares allergic reactions to policing. "It is enough to use police to

to policing. "It is enough to use police to control a crowd in a civilian area. For normal infection, we use the Immunoglobulin G molecule. Some immunogoouun o moiecule. Some individuals instead require Immunoglobulin E, the equivalent of an army. When they use that, a lot of damage occurs. That is what we refer to as an allergy," he said.

allergy," he said.

The body reacts differently to a food item it has been exposed to. "It reacts differently to an too them it has been exposed to. "It reacts differently to antigens like infection, bacteria, viruses, and protein molecules. We don't know why they use immunoglobulin E differently. It is probably genetically mediated. It is a choice the body makes," he remarked. So, is there truth to the statement that breast-fed bables are not as easily susceptible to allergies?

Among breastfed children, the protein intake is low, so the allergy potential is low, Dr. Asokan explained. "Cow's milk

THE SCIENCE QUIZ



Children could suffer from egg, seafood, and nut allergies. GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCKPHOTO

contains as much as 4% protein. Breast milk has only 1%. When the body digests milk, it is converted into chemicals such as amino acids and peptides. We do not absorb the peptides normally but digest them further to make amino acids; "the paediatrician said. Unlike adults, newborns absorb amino acids." When a behalt is avaiting norables into the system. newborns absorb amino acids. "When a baby is getting peptides into the system, it triggers the allergy potential. The formula in cow's milk increases the potential for allergy. If a baby is breastfed for the first six months, then the chances of allergy disorders such as eczema, atopic dermatitis, are low," he added.

Food intolerance

Food intolerance
Allergy specialists such as Suresh
Natarajan make a distinction between
food allergies and food intolerance.
"When there is a reaction every time a
child eats a food, that is an allergic
reaction. However in the case of food
intolerance, the reaction occurs
randomly, occasionally, and not every
time." Dr. Suresh is a paediatric allergy
specialist currently associated with Apollo
Children's Hospital, Chennai.
Usually the allergy runs in the family.
For example, in the grandparents, it may
show up as respiratory allergy symptoms
when they are in their 5th or 6th decade.
In the parents of children with allergies it
often manifests as respiratory symptoms

often manifests as respiratory symptoms in their 3rd or 4th decade itself. However,



The body reacts differently to antigens like infection, bacteria, viruses, and protein molecules. We don't know why mmunoglobulin E is used differently. It is probably genetically mediated. It is a choice the body makes

the child will develop allergy symptoms very early, even in their first decade of

very early, even in their first decade of life.

As a generation passes, the respiratory allergy could turn to food allergy in the child," he explained.

There has indeed been a rise in food allergies, he said. When people come to him with complaints of allergies he runs tests on them. "We do an allergy skin test. An allergen drop is applied to the skin, and a lancet is used to test the reaction. If within 10 minutes there is an allergy, they with have a weal. And if they react like that, we advise them to avoid that food, or the allergen responsible," Dr. Suresh said.

The skin test is the gold standard method to diagnose an allergy, he added. "It is a painless test done as an outpatient procedure in the allergist's clinic.

"There are also blood tests available, but they are often associated with false

positives," he said.

Diagnosis of allergies Sometimes children are diagnosed as having food allergies based on blood tests. They are advised to avoid the particular food item, but the problem persists in a majority of patients, he said. In such cases an allergist must be consulted, and a skin test will help in diagnosing the problem accurately.

Allergies could be mild or severe. Some children could develop rashes or even proceed to have anaphylaxis, a severe allergic reaction that could be life-threatening, he added. "The

allergic reaction that could be life-threatening, he added. "The proportion of anaphylaxis due to food allergy is increasing. The condition of such children should be confirmed, and parents should be trained to care for them," Dr. Suresh said. He added: "Since the presentation of an allergic reaction spans a spectrum, the main treatment for food allergies is avoidance." Unlike in the west, there is no data on allergies in India, he said. However, in his practice, he has seen the number of cases increase dramatically. "In every family there may be allergies, but unless it is disturbing, they won't come for care," he said. He said breast feeding is a protective factor. "Allergy is a disease of the west and as we become a developed country it is being seen more often," he said. (sujatha.r@thehindu.co.in)

Please send in your ansi

science@thehindu.co.in

Rajan Eye Care Hospital, "people may need +1 reading glasses. This power will gradually increase as they age: by about 45, you may need +1.5; by 50, you may need +2, and so on. This is a common and universal condition," he said.

So where do the eye drops come in? A press release from the manufacturer, ENTOD Pharmaceuticals, states: "The proprietary formula not only gets rid of reading glasses but also helps the patient lubricate their eyes as a side benefit. These eye drops utilise advanced dynamic buffer technology to swiftly adapt to tear PH, ensuring consistent efficacy and safety for extended use, keeping in mind that such drops will be used for years at a stretch."

Doctors however urge caution: pilocarpine, an ingredient in the eye drops, works by constricting the pupil, they say and can have multiple side

they say and can nave multiple sade effects.

"This is not a new drug - it has been used for decades for glaucoma," said S. Soundari, medical director, Dr. Agarwal's Eye Hospital in Chennai. "However, now, there are better drugs to treat glaucoma. Pilocarpine can have a number of side effects: it can cause headaches, blur the vision, hamper night vision since the pupil becomes smaller, over the course of many years, this can cause problems with pupil diation, which may be needed for instance, if the patient needs a cataract surgery. We also don't know how effective the drops will be for all categories of presbyopia patients. So caution must be exercised," Dr Soundari pointed out. (zubeda.hgithehindu.co.in)

(With inputs from ANI)

For feedback and suggestions

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Brazen' claims by drug maker trigger curiosity about an old eve condition

Zubeda Hamid

A pharmaceutical company's eye drops, developed to reduce dependency on reading glasses, have been mired in controversy ever since the company first said it had received approval from the Drug Controller General of India. A media report subsequently stated that claims about the approval and of the drops offering spectacular treatment for presbyopia were "unethical and false presentation of facts," and the company has been asked for an explanation. But through all of this, there has been renewed interest in presbyopia – what is it, and whom does it affect?

Presbyopia, states the Mayo Clinic's website, is the gradual loss of your eyes' ability to focus on nearby objects. It's a

ability to focus on nearby objects. It's a natural part of aging. Presbyopia usually becomes noticeable in your early to mid-40s and continues to worsen until

mid-40s and continues to worsen until around age 65. Why does presbyopia occur? When you are young, the lens in your eye (behind your iris) has the ability to change shape – which means it allows you to focus on things that are both far away and close by. As you get older, this flexibility or elasticity of the lens decreases, and it becomes more rigid and is no longer able to change shape to focus on close-up objects, making them seem out of focus. There is no way to stop this ageing process, but it can be corrected, as is usually done with reading glasses.

"By the age of about 40," says Mohan Rajan, chairman and medical director of

Presbyopia is the gradual loss of your eyes' ability to focus on nearby objects. It usually becomes noticeable in your early to mid-40s and continues to worsen until around age 65

stretch."

Discovering brain rewiring through neuroplasticity

Anjali Srivastava

____type of brain wave, commonly associated with deep relaxation and meditation, is thought to facilitate neuroplasticity and enhance learning and

Neuroplasticity can be influenced by various factors, including diet. Recent research suggests that a specific fatty acid, abundant in certain types of fish, is crucial for maintaining synaptic plasticity and cognitive

CM C

function. What is this fatty acid?

OUESTION 3

QUESTION 4
The ability of the brain to reorganise itself decreases with age, but it can be enhanced through certain activities. Learning a new language is one such activity. Engaging in bilingualism has been plasticity in which part of

The principle "neurons that fire together, wire together" describes a fundamental mechanism of neuroplasticity. This concept explains how the insultaneous activation of the principle of the pri simultaneous activation of neurons strengthens their connections and improves the efficiency of neural pathways. What is the term for this form of neuroplasticity that underpins learning and memory formation through repeated co-activation of



Visual question: In the image, you can see a highlighted part of the human brain, known for its crucial role in memory formation and learning. This brain region is essential for neuroplasticity, particularly in the context of long-term potentiation and the creation of new neural connections. Identify it.

Should digital platform owners be held liable for user-generated content?





ussia-born tech tycoon Pavel Durov, the founder of Telegram, was arrested in Paris on August 24. French authorities announced that Mr. Durov is under investigation for a litany of serious crimes, including enabling the distribution of child sexual abuse material on the app, facilitating drug trafficking, and refusing to cooperate with law enforcement. Should digital platform owners be held liable for user-generated content? Pranesh Prakash and Robit Kumar discuss the question in a conversation moderated by Aaratrika Bhaumik. Edited excerpts:

es Telegram's lax content moderation policy and purported reluctance to cooperate with law enforcement agencies justify the indictment of its founder?

Pranesh Prakash: It remains unclear the extent Pranesh Prakash: It remains unclear the extent to which Telegram's content moderation policies are lax or whether there was any genuine reluctance to cooperate with law enforcement agencies. In 2022, Germany reported that Telegram had compiled with a request to remove 64 channels that potentially breached German hate speech laws. In this particular case, beyond the list of charges, the specific facts and circumstances remain ambiguous. However, I will say that except in instances where there is personal complicity or direct involvement, the founder of a messaging platform should not incur any criminal liability for the acts of the platform's users.

Rohit Kumar: While it is understandable that Telegram aims to foster free speech, it is crucial to acknowledge the real-world harms associated with unregulated messaging platforms. Ideally, directors and founders should not be held personally liable. However, if there is clear evidence of direct complicity or knowledge, criminal liability may be imposed. Nonetheless, the threshold for such liability is generally set very high, necessitating substantial evidence.

From a policy standpoint, to what extent should social media intermediaries be held accountable for the content they host?

RK: A well-established principle is that of safe harbour, which stipulates that a platform should not be held liable for user-generated content as it merely acts as an intermediary. Privacy must also be preserved, meaning platforms should avoid excessive monitoring or interception of user communications. For instance, when there was dissemination of misinformation on WhatsApp during elections in India, the



platform limited the ability to simultaneously forward messages to multiple groups and reduced group sizes. Additionally, platforms should have compliance officers or designated should have compliance officers or designated representatives to cooperate with law enforcement, provided that due process is followed. Ensuring such measures and establishing clear procedural protocols should be a key focus for messaging platforms.

PP: In the case of fully end-to-end encrypted platforms, their ability to view reported messages and take action is inherently limited. Additionally, platforms that are designed to minimally record metadata or not record it at all face significant constraints in cooperating with law enforcement agencies regarding user data. Under EU (European Union) law, there is a clear prohibition against requiring platforms to monitor or spy on their users. When it comes to monitor or spy on their users. When it comes to private one-on-one and group chats and does not allow enforcement actions on these communications, it does permit scrutiny of content on public channels. PP: In the case of fully end-to-end encrypted

Could even liberal democracies increasingly push for stricter content moderation from these platforms? Does the passage of the Digital Services Act (DSA), 2024, the EU's latest attempt to regulate big-tech excesses, signal a broader shift in this direction?

PP: I don't believe it does. For instance, in PP1 I don't believe it does. For instance, in 2000, a French court ordered Yahoo! Inc. to block French users from accessing Nazi memorabilia auctions on its U.S.-based website – an instance of direct content regulation by a court in a liberal democracy. This demonstrates cour in a nortal enforcacy; in seminostation that content regulation is not a recent development. What has changed, however, is that many who once staunchly defended free speech now seem to prioritise the perceived harms of 'disinformation' over the need for freedom of expression. This shift represents



One potential consequence is that more messaging platforms might adopt end-to-end encryption and minimise metadata storage to avoid assisting law enforcement.

complicity in the over-regulation of free speech, which to an extent the DSA also embodies.

RK: The key difference between the past and present lies in the accelerated pace at which disinformation spreads. This is not merely a conflict between the desire to protect free speech and the need to manage disinformation; it transcends simple political narratives. As instances of misuse and real-world harm escalate, the argument for stricter oversight becomes more compelling. For instance, the decision of X to de-platform Donald Trump during the last U.S. presidential election was made by the platform itself. But should made by the platform itself. But should platforms have the power to determine who has a voice and who doesn't? We need greater procedural clarity on how these decisions are made, who makes them, where liability lies, and when government intervention is appropriate.

Could Telegram's laissez-faire approach to content moderation jeopardise its safe harbour protection under the Information Technology (IT) Act, 2000, in India?

Per. Trelegram does not comply with certain provisions of the 2023 IT Rules, which mandate specific terms of service for entities operating in India. In fact, only a handful of global companies adhere to these regulations, primarily those with a physical presence in India. A parallel comparison can also be drawn with the situation in France. One of the key charges levelled by French authorities against Telegram is that it provided cryptology services aimed at ensuring confidentiality without a license. This regulation, however, is outdated and applied inconsistently. For instance, anonymity networks like for have not come under scrutiny in France. A similar pattern of selective enforcement could potentially arise in India should the government decide to target Telegram under the IT Act.

RK: The Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology has announced that it is investigating Telegram over concerns that it is being used for illegal activities such as extortion and gambling. Additionally, some of the requirements under the 2023 IT Rules, such as submitting transparency reports and designating a compliance officer, are quite extensive. Although the Indian government has maintained that Telegram is compliant with these regulations, I agree with Pranesh that there is always a risk of selective prosecution.

Could the threat of personal liability push tech executives to reassess the risks of unregulated content?

Illustration of the Indian context, the threat of personal liability has been wielded multiple times. For example, the former IT Minister had issued warnings to X for non-compliance with the new IT Rules. Such high-profile arrests of senior executives inevitably provoke anxiety among social media companies, particularly if they occur in liberal democracies. Nonetheless, there is broad consensus among stakeholders in India that personal liability for regulatory violations should not be imposed. Instead, it may be more effective to impose higher penalties for repeated offences or consider banning persistently non-compliant entities. non-compliant entit

PP: It definitely will. However, it should also prompt countries to reconsider their approach. One potential consequence is that more messaging platforms might adopt end-to-end encryption and minimise metadata storage to avoid assisting law enforcement. So this kind of wilful blindness is likely to emerge more rapidly if founders face personal liability for user-generated content.

Do you think this is likely to be an isolated incident or become the norm?

PP: As moral panic over disinformation grows, we can expect to see more such arrests. However, in Durov's case, French prosecutors have cited specific crimes rather than speech-related offences. We will also witness increased censorship and more bans on apps like Telegram and WhatsApp. Telegram is already banned in over a dozen countries.

RK: Social media intermediaries will likely RK: Social media intermediaries will likely reassess their systems and procedures more carefully. This could lead to greater adoption of encryption, which platforms are already promoting as a marketing tactic. Additionally, major platforms may rush to negotiate safeguards with various governments to prevent misuse of power by both parties. This issue has evolved beyond merely free speech to encompass questions of sovereignty.



NOTEBOOK

Covering the IC-814 hijack

Instead of covering the dawn of a new millennium, journalists spent sleepless nights at Palam airport

Suhasini Haidar

The controversial Netflix series, 1999 for a new generation. Every journalist who covered the story at the time has their own personal narrative about the last week of the previous millennium when, instead of celebrating, India lurched through the harrowing ordeal of the IC-814 hijack, and the sadness and anger that followed the surrender of three dreaded terrorists at Kandahar.

My own story began six years before that, when I was a slow news day in August 1995, and the office bell was rung by a courier carrying a video tape from Srinagar. As I popped the tape into the machine, a wave of sickness hit me. That Image of a European man with curly hair in a

age of a European man with curly hair in a green kameez, with his severed head placed on his body, still flashes before me. green kameez, with his severed head placed on his body, still flashes before me Hans Ostro was among the six foreigners kidnapped by a group called Al-Faran, believed to be the Pakistan-backed Harkatul-Ansar, founded by Masood Azhar, who had been arrested in India in January 1994. They had been taken hostage at gunjonit in July 1995, when they had gone trekking in the Kashmir Valley, and the gunmen had demanded the release of Azhar in exchange for them. One hostage escaped, while the rest were never found. The kidnappers had carved the name of their group on Ostro's chest.

In 1994 too, the Harkat-ul-Ansar had kidnapped two sets of foreigners with the aim of exchanging them for Azhar. They had first kidnapped two British men, who they had been forced to release under public pressure. Their kidnapping later of four tourists had been thwarted by the police after a shoot-out. Omar Saeed sheikh (later known as the killer of journalist Daniel Pearl), who had travelled to India to free Azhar, was injured and arrested in the encounter. Why the Indian government did not join the dots to realise how important Azhar was to the Inter Ser

vices Intelligence-funded operations in Jammu and Kashmir despite these kidnappings and prepare better for a bigger hostage situation will remain a mystery.

On December 24, 1999, I was at the Airports Authority of India building at Palam airport, getting permissions for our crew to film on the tarmac on New Year's day, when the hijack took place. When an official told me about it, I thought it was a security drill. I realised something was wrong when senior officials rushed to the domestic terminal. Nothing had hit the dirwaves yet, and my news editors in the U.S. were hesitant to even take the story live until it was confirmed on camera. The mext few hours were agonising for the families. When the aircraft landed in Amritagh, the was hope that the crisis could be managed. But a hapless government was unable to ensure that it stayed in India, and there was never any public scrutiny of why our systems didn't move quicker. There were other questions that never got answered too, as the hijack unfolded, such as why the international community – the U.S., Budi Arabia, and the UAE—which had influence over Pakistan and the

There were other questions that never got answered too, as the hijack unfolded, such as why the international community – the U.S., the U.K., Saudi Arabia, and the UAE—which had influence over Pakistan and the Taliban, did not do more to end the crisis, or realise the fillip this attack would give terrorists globally. The 9/II attacks took place just two years later.

I did not sleep that night until the aircraft landed in Kandahar, or much of the next week, Journalists faced similar sleep-less nights through the four-day siege of Mumbai in 2008 and the three-day-long Pathankot attack in 2016. On December 31, 1999, I was on the tarmac, with dozens of journalists, when the External Affairs Minister escorted the three terrorists to Kandahar. We stayed there until he returned hours later with the freed hostages. While there was joy and relief for the families, there was jo shoreboding of what havoc those terrorists would wreak. Twenty-five years later, they are all free in Pakistan and have never been brought to justice for holding a nation hostage.

PICTURE OF THE WEEK Keeping head above water



Food packets being dropped by choppers of the Indian Air Force in Vijayawada, Andhra Pradesh. Vijayawada has been witnessing unprecedented rainfall since August 30 with 37 cm of rain on Sunday alone – its highest-ever in a day in decades. Drinking water and other essential items were also distributed to people by the IAF. G.N. RAO

FROM THE ARCHIVES



FIFTY YEARS AGO SEPTEMBER 6, 1974

Nepal asked to clarify stand on Sikkim

New Delhi, Sept. 5: The Government of India has, through diplomatic channels, sought elucidation from Nepal over reports about the Nepalese Government's views on the recent developments regarding Sikkim.

The Minister for External Affairs, Mr. Swaran Singh, to-day called in a representative of the Nepalese Embassy in New Delhi and had discussions with him on the matter.

In Kathmandu, the Indian Ambassador, Mr.

M. Rasgotra, called on the Foreign Secretary, Gen. Padma Bahadur Khetri, and lodged the second vehement protest in three days over the anti-Indian campaign in Nepal over the developments connected with Sikkim.

Mr. Rasgotra drew his attention to the damage done to Indian Embassy property and private Indian property and intimidation of Indians in Kathmandu.

The Envoy is believed to have stated that the Nepal Government may have to pay compensation for the loss suffered.

During his one-hour meeting with Gen. Khetri, Mr. Rasgotra is believed to have told him that there was official encouragement to the anti-Indian publicity through official media.

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A HUNDRED YEARS AGO SEPTEMBER 6, 1924

Business in the Central Legislature

Simla, Sept. 5: In the Legislative Assembly on

Simla, Sept. 5: In the Legislative Assembly on Monday, Sir Charles Innes will move for reference to the Select Committee of the Bill to provide for better regulation of cotton ginning and cotton pressing factories.

Sri Basil Blackett will move for consideration of the bill to consolidate, amend and extend the law relating to levy of duties of Customs on articles imported or exported by land from or to Territory outside British India.

CM C

Text&Context

THEMOHINDU

NEWS IN NUMBERS

Number of mpox vaccine doses that reached the Congo

in lakh. The first batch of mpox vaccines arrived in Congo's capital on Thursday, authorities said, three weeks after the World Health Organization declared mpox outbreaks in 12 African countries a global emergency. PTI

Number of Pakistanis imprisoned across 88

20,000 As pedata,

are concentrated mostly in the UAE and Saudi Arabia. Among those incarcerated, 68 nationals face the death penalty. PT

Number of cities from Haryana in the top 100 most polluted list

The State has a total of 24 cities.
Air quality data from January to June showed that every city in Haryana exceeded both India's National Ambient Air Quality Standards and the World Health Organization's standards. PTI

China's planned financial support to Africa for next 3 years

in \$ billion. More than half of that will be in credit, with \$11 billion "in various types of assistance" as well as \$10 billion through encouraging Chinese firms to invest, Xi Jinping said in the China-Africa forum. APP

Karnataka to avail loan to provide water to industrial areas

5,000 in ₹ crore. As per the Large and Medium Industries Minister M.B. Patil, many industrial areas lack infrastructure. COMPILED BY THE HINDU DATA TEA

Follow us 1 facebook.com/thehindu 2 twitter.com/the_hindu 1 instagram.com/the_hindu

What is vertical fiscal imbalance?

The role of the 16th Finance Commission should be to eliminate vertical fiscal imbalance in federal relations. What should it do when revenues are concentrated with the Union government, and the States are burdened with expenditure responsibilities?

ECONOMIC NOTES

he financial relationship between the Union government and the States in India is asymmetrical, as in many other countries with a federal constitutional framework. As the 15th Finance Commission noted, States incur 65% of the revenue expenditure but collect only 38% of the revenue receipts. In short, the ability of the States to incur expenditures is dependent on transfers from the Union government. Consequently, there is the problem of Vertical Fiscal Imbalance (VF) in Indian fiscal federalism where expenditure decentralisation overwhelms the revenue raising powers of the States.

Why should VFI be reduced?

titutionally, the financial duties of the Union government and the States are divided. On the revenue front, to maximise the efficiency of tax collection, the Personal Income Tax, the Corporation Tax and a part of indirect taxes are best

Tax and a part of indirect taxes are best collected by the Union government. But on the expenditure front, to maximise the efficiency of spending, publicly provided goods and services are best supplied by the tier of the government closest to its users. It is in this context that the extent of VFI merits attention. The 18th Finance Commission had noted that India has had a larger, and rising, vertical imbalance than most other federations. These imbalances were further magnified during periods of crises, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, which drove a large wedge between one's own revenues and expenditure responsibilities at the sub-national level. The problem of VFI falls under the

Estimation of VFI after devolution of taxes

Year	VFI after tax devolution (as a ratio)	of tax devolution to eliminate VFI (%)
2015-16	0.12	47.82
2016-17	0.13	48.24
2017-18	0.12	47.59
2018-19	0.11	47.38
2019-20	0.18	51.17
2020-21	0.28	56.87
2021-22	0.14	47.90
2022-23 (RE)	0.20	51.42
Average (excluding 2020-21		48.94



SOURCE: COMPUTED FROM UNION BUDGET DOCUMENTS, AND STATE FINANCES: A STUDY OF THE BUDGETS, RB

urview of the Finance Commission, purview of the Finance Commission, and it deals with broadly two questions. The first question is how to distribute the taxes collected by the Union government to the States as a whole. These transfers are made as a prescribed share of the Welt Proceeds" (Gross Tax Revenue of the Union less surcharges, cesses and costs of collection). The second question is how to distribute taxes across States. The matter of VEI arise as part of the first question.

of VFI arises as part of the first question. Apart from devolving taxes, the Finance Commissions also recommend grants to States in need of assistance under Article 275 of the Constitution. But these are generally for short periods and for specific purposes. There are also transfers to the States that fall outside the transters to the states that all outside the Finance Commission's ambit. For example, the Union government spends substantial amounts – under Article 282 of the Constitution – on subjects falling in the State and Concurrent lists through centrally sponsored schemes and central sector schemes. But such grants are tied transfers that include conditionalities. In sum, the devolution of taxes from the net proceeds is the only transfer to the States that is untied or unconditional.

Calculating VFI in India

Calculating VFI in India Here we try to estimate the VFI in India after the devolution of taxes to the States. We measure VFI at the level of "all States", and not separately for each State. For this, we use a globally accepted method. We first estimate a ratio where erator is the sum of the Own Revenue Receipts (ORR) and the tax devolution from the Union government for all States. The denominator is the Own for all States. The denominator is the Own Revenue Expenditure (ORE) for all States. If this ratio is less than 1, it implies that the sum of own revenue receipts and tax devolution of the States is inadequate to meet the ORE of the States. If we subtract this ratio from 1, we get the deficit in receipts. It is this deficit that we use as a proxy for VFI after devolution. We can then ask the simple question:

how much should tax devolution rise over and above that recommended by the past Finance Commissions to equalise the ratio to 17 Equating the ratio to 1 would eliminate VFI. In the attached table, we show that the average share of net proceeds devolved to the States between 2015-16 and 2022-23 should have been 48.9-4% to eliminate the VFI. But the shares of tax devolution recommended by the 14th and 18th Finance Commissions were only 42% and 41%, respectively, of the net proceeds.

Raising tax devolution
Many States have raised the demand that
the share of tax devolution from the net
proceeds must be fixed at 50% by the 16th
Finance Commission. They add force to
this demand by pointing to the exclusion
from the net proceeds of the substantial
amounts of cesses and surcharges, which
truncates the net proceeds within the

truncates tine net proceeds within the gross tax revenue.

Our analysis in this article lends empirical support to this demand. Here, we have assumed the present levels of expenditures of the States as a given. At the aggregate level, these actually incurred expenditures have not only conformed to but also underutilised the borrousing limits specified in the fiscal borrowing limits specified in the fiscal responsibility legalisations. Even then, we find that the share of net proceeds devolved to the States must rise to about 49% to eliminate VFI. Such an increase in devolution would place more untied resources in the hands of the States to resources in the hands of the States to spend on their citizens. It would also ensure that States' expenditures better respond to jurisdictional needs and priorities, and that the efficiency of expenditures is enhanced. Overall, it will be a move towards a healthy system of cooperative fiscal federalism. R. Mohan is former Indian Revenue Service officer. R. Ramakumar is Professor, Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Mumbai.

THE GIST

As the 15th Finance Commission noted, States incur 61% of the revenue expenditure but collect only 35% of the revenue receipts. In short, the ability of the States to incur expenditures is dependent or transfers from the Union government.

The problem of VFI falls under

demand that the share of tax devolution from the net proceeds must be fixed at 50% by the 16th Finance

Can Kerala access funds from the Loss and Damage Fund?

Is it easy for local communities at the sub-national level to access funds from international climate funds?

Neha Miriam Kurian Thankom Arun

The story so far: n the wake of the devastating n the wake of the devastating landslides that recently struck Kerala's Wayanad district, a crucial conversation has emerged around whether subnational entities can seek compensation through the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFOCC)'s Loss and Damage Flund (LDF). While this demand is justifiable, accessing climate funds is far more complex than it appears.

What is the Loss and Damage Fund?
The Loss and Damage Fund (LDF) was
established at the 2022 UNFCCC
Conference (COP27) in Egypt to provide
financial support to regions suffering both
economic and non-economic losses
caused by climate change. These include
extreme weather events and slow-onset
processes, such as rising sea levels. The
LDF is overseen by a Governing Board
that determines how the Fund's resources
are disbursed, with the World Bank
serving as the interim trustee. The Board

is currently developing mechanisms to is currently developing mechanisms to facilitate access to the Fund's resources, including direct access, small grants, and rapid disbursement options. Despite its intended purpose, concerns persist that climate funds are often too slow to be accessible immediately after a disaster, particularly for local communities at the sub-national level. It is anticipated that the LDF may face similar challenges.

what has been India's role?

What has been India's role?

India has suffered over \$56 billion in damages from weather-related disasters between 2019 and 2023. Despite this, India has prioritised mitigation activities over adaptation in its National Climate Action Policy and budgets. This focus has led to a subdued participation in Loss and Damage dialogues at COP meetings. With certain regions in India being highly vulnerable to climate change, active engagement in these dialogues could bring substantial benefits.

Within India, there is an urgent need for a clear legal and policy framework to streamline climate finance, particularly for adaptation and loss and damage, in line with the principles of locally led



adaptation, which are crucial for vulnerable communities. The introduction of a climate finance taxonomy in the Union Budget 2024 has raised expectations for increased international climate finance. However, without clear guidelines on accessing loss and damage funds within India, frontline communities will continue to be vulnerable. In international climate change negotiations, India should advocate for more decentralised methods of fund disbursement from the LDF, as opposed to the centralised systems used for other climate funds. adaptation, which are crucial for

What have been State interventions? Adaptation and loss and damage needs are more acutely felt at the ground level by State governments. For instance, in Kerala, it is the State government that bore most of the financial burden for disaster recovery. A notable example is the Rebuild Kerala Development Programme, launched in the aftermath of the August 2018 floods. This initiative was funded through loans from the World Bank and the KfW Development Bank, a German institution, illustrating the critical role of international climate finance in role of illternational cumate marker in post-disaster recovery. The program focused on reconstructing the State's infrastructure, including roads and bridges, all of which had been severely

infrastructure, including roads and bridges, all of which had been severely damaged by the floods.

However, the absence of a standardised method for conducting comprehensive assessments of disaster-related damages, particularly those from slow-onset events, means that significant loss and damage needs that could qualify for assistance from the LDF may go unassessed. This lack of a structured assessment process could impede India's ability to access the LDF in the future. The situation in Wayanad district underscores the broader challenges India faces in accessing and managing climate finance, particularly for loss and damage. By establishing a more explicit domestic policy framework that focuses on locally led adaptation and clearer guidelines for accessing loss and damage funds, India can better protect itself from the impacts of climate change.

Neha Miriam Kurian is with the Kerala Institute of Local Administration. Thankom Arun is with the University of Essex.

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THE GIST

The Loss and Damage Fund (LDF) was established at the 2022 UNFCCC Conference (COP27) in Egypt to provide financial support to regions suffering both economic and omic losses caused by climate change

India nas suffered over 506 billion in damages from weather-related disasters between 2019 and 2023. Despite this, India has prioritised mitigation activito over adaptation in its Natior Climate Action Policy and hudgets.

Adaptation and loss and damage needs are more acutely felt at the ground level by State governments.
Consequently, it is the State envernments that often bear most of the financial burden for disaster recovery efforts.

CM CM



OUR TAKE

No single way to fight inequality

It's important to ensure technology isn't made an excuse for policy failures to boost mass incomes

recently released ILO report says that globally, the share of labour incomes in total income declined by another 0.6 percentage point between 2019 and 2022 and has remained flat since. While the latest numbers are in remained hat since, while the latest numbers are in keeping with the long-term trend of falling labour income share, the report notes that the three-year period following the pandemic saw a decline which accounts for 40% of the overall decline between 2004 to 2024. In a number which has lent itself to some bit of sensationalism, the ILO estimates that had the labour income share remained stable between 2004 and 2024, workers would have earned an additional

\$2.4 trillion in purchasing power parity terms.

The report also flags the role of technology in shaping inequality, especially with the growing use of AI. While such technologies are known to lead to a rise in productivity, they can also lead to a reduction in labour income share, it says.

What does all this mean as far as policy wisdom is concerned? That labour income shares have been falling and technology might have played a role is not something we are being told for the first time. The fact that this trend has not reversed and is perhaps feeding into growth of reactionary politics across the world, especially in the advanced economies, is what needs a closer and urgent

examination. So, what is to be done?

The biggest lesson which needs to be learnt is that there cannot be a one-size-fits-all approach to fighting inequality or the role of technology in driving it. Many countries in the world are at a stage of demographic evolution where they would need technology to ease the pressure on the already falling share of working population. The more important share of working population. The more important question for them is not to control roll out of technology per se but who gets to control the surplus generated from its growing use. India might have a lesson or two to teach the world from its Digital Public Infrastructure push on this front.

To be sure, it is important to ensure that technology does not become the excuse for other policy failures to boost mass incomes. For example, India, the world's most populous country, has done

India, the world's most populous country, has done very well in high-technology exports but performs much below its potential in labour-intensive exports. These counter-intuitive facts remind us that the battle against inequality is best fought outside convenient echo-chambers.

Can't catch a cold from B'desh-Pakistan thaw

fter being left in the cold in the corridors of power in Bangladesh for several decades, Pakistan perceives a new opening in Dhaka following the ouster of the Sheikh Hasina government and the installation of a caretaker administration led by Muhammad Yunus. Key members of the interim government, such as student leader Nahid Islam, have spoken about the possibility of resolving the "issue of 1971" with Pakistan, while the Pakistani envoy has made a concerted outreach aimed at resetting relations. Under Hasina, the bilateral relationship hit an all-time

low as her government put on trial several leaders of the Bangladesh Jamaat-e-Islami on charges of war crimes during the 1971 war of liberation. This was part of her during the 1971 war of liberation. This was part of her agenda to punish those she believed had collaborated with Pakistan and worked against the emergence of an independent Bangladesh—an emotive issue in that country. The student-led movement that led to her downfall has also resulted in attempts to strip Hasina's Awami League party and her father, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, of their role in Bangladesh's liberation movement. The interest in reconciliation with Pakistan voiced by members of Bangladesh's interim government must be seen in this context.

government must be seen in this context. While it is the right of a sovereign Bangladesh to forge relations with any country and pursue its foreign policy interests, policymakers in New Delhi still have memories of Pakistan's role in using Bangladeshi soil for anti-India activities. India must ensure its role is not diminished in Dhaka, as any possible Dhaka-Islamabad-Beijing axis could have serious portents for Delhi. There is also a need to assure the interim government that the best interests of Bangladesh and India lie in closer economic, energy and physical connectivity, and that India will maintain a party-agnostic interest in Bangladesh's development.

Empower communities to fix forest governance

Tardy devolution of rights under FRA and issues undermining gram sabhas' capabilities to exercise these rights wherever recognised need to be addressed

the Forest Rights Act 2006
[FRA), by recognising the rights of forest dwelling communities to both access and manage their customary forests, offers a bottom-up sion of forest governance. Eighteen ars on, progress in recognising these gods to the state of the state Forest Rights Act 2006 right has no doubt been unrily. Only introcessing the Malarasthra, Odisha, and Chhattisgarh — have recognised such community forest resource rights (CFR8s) in several thousand villages each. Other states with a large potential for such rights have hardly begun. Even in the first three, many villages remain without these and many errors in the rights recognition process need to be corrected. Thus, CFRR recognition process need to be corrected. Thus, CFRR recognition process need to be CFRRs, the question of post-rights governance is pressing.

The recent push by the ministry of utbal affairs, including a series of orders relating to post-right issues and discussions on a funding programme for utbal particularly to post-right issues and discussions on a funding programme for utbal particularly to post-right issues of the new the major the first IOO-day initiatives of the new government, must be seen in this light. What then are the major issues confirming rights-holding GSF What measures are needed to a malorm the process of apper carrying CFRF tiles is no meaningful institutions of bottom-up

Forest governance?
For communities whose lives and livelihoods were marginalised by long-standing state policies aimed at extraction (for development) and exclusion (for conservation), correcting listorical wrongs—which the FRA sets out to do requires more than just restoring their rights. It requires a more fundamental reforms to the apparatus of forest governance. But the FRA's spirit, and every soofern, its letter, is waylial dy the wider kgislative and institutional frameworks. To name just a few, forest departments continue to impose their working plans for timber felling and plantations on forests assigned to GSs, oider a government monopoly on the trade of valuable nor-timber forest products (NTFP) remain on the books, and the procedures by which GSs can access state funds for forest conservation and regeneration remain unclear.

The orders issued over the past year or so are useful but incomplete. Their

The orders issued over the past year or sour use-ful but incomplete. Their primary focus jace expected of a bureaucray used to viewing communities with suspicion) has been setting out the productures to be followed by title-holding GSs and their CFR Management Committees for their internal functioning. Several structural barriers, however, remain unaddressed. Access to NTFP markets and to financial resources are perhaps the two most critical coses. The experience from Maharashtra, where strong grassroots mobilisation where strong grassroots mobilisation

where strong grassroots mobilisation and an enterprising bureaucracy have led to several positive policy changes,

provides valuable lessons.

Rehaps the most important learning is that allowing (Sato trade all commercial NTFs, which is their right anywey, elds better conomic returns, efficiency, and equity. Starting in the 1983; which is their right anywey, elds better common returns, efficiency, and equity. Starting in the 1980; many states passed lears material reliable in the control of the control of

chandra NTFP collectors, the execule two positions and powers in the namesale cooperation of the control of



themselves is a clear indication of the economic and democratic dividends of

themselves is a clear indication of the economic and democratic dividends of the innove.

Forest degradation, aside from environmental implications, pores a real manufacture of the interest of the interest

ANWAR IBRAHIM | PRIME MINISTER OF MALAYSIA

China is a great friend. But we will have to operate in our waters and

drilling for oil, in our territory

secure economic advantage, including

managed by India's forest bureaucray, including CaMPA, which has crossed \$50,000 corve. The top-down processes frought which the forest bureaucray implements its programmes, along with rough which the forest bureaucray implements its programmes, along with a pressure to utilise budgets for "visible" outputs, translates into an obsessive focus on large-scale tree plantations, which has limited environmental benefits as well as a lacibianter track record. Driven by buzzwords like Tree cover, and "carbon seguestration", these programmest find trouched local communities from any benefits, and sometimes the land itself, thereby violating their rights. If the wider environmental benefits of forests are important enough to receive such large funding, why should GSs that are managing their forests and Fils will help align restoration of forts with local ecology and Ivelibod needs. This will help align restoration of fors with local ecology and Ivelibod needs. Government should consider this issue and simplify the procedures for accesses the trees of their crusters for the esting the control of the state of their processing the second of the sec Government should consider this issue and simplify the procedures for accessing these furths. Meanwhile, transferring funds from the now-defunction Forest Management Committees would be a quick and useful supplement for CFR-tifted GSs. The key takeoway that we offer, citting Maharashtra's experience, isto move the locus of raform from the demand-side to the supply-side of CFR-management.

Gautum Arelath is policy analyst om Sharuchchandra Leleis distinguished fellow at the Ashaka Trust for Research in Ecolog and the Environment (ATREE). The views expressed are persona

UN must include Taiwan, resist China's ambitions

aiwan is an indispensable partner in global supply chains, producing more than 90% of the world's high-end semiconductors and a significant portion of the advanced chips that are driving the AI revolution. Moreover, half of the world's seaborne trade passes through the Talwan Strait, making it a key international waterway. Yet even though large parts of the world have enjoyed great prosperity thanks to the peace and stability that prevails across the strait. China continues to intensity its aggressive actions against Talwan.

In recent years, global leaders have used both bilateral and multilateral occusions to highlighit the importance of maintaining peace and stability across the Talwan. In recent years, global leaders have used both bilateral and multilateral occusions to highlighit the importance of reducing the second of the importance of the im



This case is insuffing to do with Talwah.
This case is illustrative of China's growing assertiveness in imposing its will on the international stage. And if left uncorrected.
Beijing's claims will not only alter the status quo across the Talwan Strait but also jeopardise peace and stability in the Indo-Pacific and threaten the rules-based international order.

quo across the Taiwan Strait but also jeopardise peace and stability in the Indo-Pacific and threaten the rules-based international order.

In recent months, several senior US officials have criticised China's distortion of Resolution 2758 to justify its spurious claim over Taiwan. Purthermore, on July 30, the Inter-Parliamentary Alliance on China demonstrated concrete support for Taiwan by passenging a model resolution on Resolution 2758. To maintain international peace and security as outlined in the UN Charter, the UN must encourage the control of the China Coast of the China Coast of the China's expansionsism will not stop at Taiwan. Recent regulations of stop at Taiwan. Recent regulations of the China Coast Guard are part of a broader grayzone tactic designed to reinforce its specious territorial claims and expand its influence. By introducing rules that justify the boarding and detaining of vessels and allow individuals to enter disputed martitime areas. Beljing aims to assert control over international waters and challenge global norms and claims. The UN and the international commanity must not only reaffirm their concerns about Beijing's coercive behavior but also work together to prevent its unlawful schemes.

History has shown that democratic resolve must be demonstrated ahead of time before it is too late. As the world's foremost forum for international cooperation, the UN system is ideally positioned to address regional security challenges and support of the China Coast is the China Coast and the China Coast

ment and building a more restinent goods community for current and future generations.

Over many decades, Taiwan has proven to be a responsible and reliable partner to those it has worked with. More recently, we have also made significant contributions to the UN's Sustainable Development Goals. Embracing Taiwan's meaningful participation in the UN's system would undoubtedly be the UN's best option for mitigating any potential regional crisis, maintaining peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait, and spuring global prosperity.

Looking ahead, Taiwan will continue to play its part. Working with like-minded countries to maintain healthy and resilient global supply chains — particularly in the semiconductor industry — Taiwan is determined to help power the world forward for many more decades to come. For a more secure and better world, the UN system needs to include Taiwan.

List Dishausis minister of forcins afforcing a floric comments.

Open-source imperative for India's public sector

Ganapathy

This May, Switzerland enacted the Federal Law on the Use of Electronic Means for the Fulliment of Gowernmental Tasks (EMBAG) to ensure greater transparency, security, and efficiency in government operations by promoting the use of open-source software (CSS, The dominant alternative too SS (which is released with voriations of licenses that may grant that grants users the rights to use, study, change, and distribute the software and its source code to anyone and for any purpose) is source code to anyone and for any purpose. It is source code to anyone and for any purpose is source code to anyone and for any purpose. It is source code to anyone and for any purpose is may grant that some anyone and for any purpose. It is source code to software developed by or for them unless precluded by third-party rights or socurity concerns. The Inclian government had started down this path years ago. In 295, it announced two policies —one for the adoption OSS in government and another for collaborative software development by opening up government source code. However, the mere use of OSS to create derivatives — which the Indian government has been profile at —Innits the potential of open source. Sharting back to the open-source coaystem and building engagement with the technology community are by to realising the angular profile and profile a

voter registration, and government-wide standards for IT adoption.

The Centre's attempts to create and share OSS date backs 2008, with the Bharatt Openting Systems Solution project. Gora localised and practical alternative to Microsoft Windows for experimence requirements. With the policy interventions in 2015. India gradually increased the use of OSS in government projects, established Open-Forge, a palatform for sharing results of Systems, and committed to making key solutions such as CoWIN open and available to other countries. Open-forge has had little community engagement for the last five years, and the extent of adoption of the platform within the government is unknown. When the use of Aurogo, Setu for Covid-19 contact tracing nised privacy concerns in 2020, a heric flury of activity saw a one-time, perfunctory release of code on Github and then no updates or engagement with the over

of activity saw a one-diren, perfunctory release of code on Github and then no updates or engagement with the over 400 issues and discussions initiated by popular the application continued to be updated and evolved over the next two years.

It is a subject to the continued to be updated and evolved over the next two years.

It is suited to making software open and collaborating with the community, lustitutions require dedicated capacity, resources and a mindest shift to meaningfully engage in open source. First, of the community of the community and the community of the continued of the continu

THEIR VIEW

VIEWS

Moderate business taxes are what India's economy needs



around individual income taxes being higher than corporate taxes in India has sparked many heated debates. As always with aplicated financial matters there is a need to analyze and contex tualize the data before making any

remarks.

In fiscal year 2022-23, India's
Income Tax Department data sho
that the gross total income (GT)
before loss set-offs and deduction
of individuals amounted to ₹62.4
trillion, while that of corporates
amounted to ₹33.3 trillion. Of the country's overall GTI of ₹107.2 trillion, as per the department's records, the balance ₹6.5 trillion is accounted for by groups that include Hindu undivided families (HUFs),

Hindu undivided families (HUFs), firms, associations of persons (AOPs) and bodies of individuals (BOD). While individuals accounted for 58.2% of overall GTI in 2022-23 for 21.1% of gross domestic product), corporates contributed 35.7% (33% of GDP). However, the aggregate tax paid by corporates in that fiscal year is higher—47.2 trillion versus (6.8 trillion for individuals. As a proportion of their income.

As a proportion of their income, orporates paid 18.7% of their GTI in taxes that year, compared to 10.9% of GTI paid by individuals. This data cia paid by individuals. This data clearly shows corporates are paying higher rates and a higher quantum of taxes than individuals in India. While reporting aggregate tax figures in the media, individual income taxes are often chibbed with

groups like AOPs, BOIs, HUFs, etc The clubbed numbers give the impression that individuals are

impression that individuals are paying more taxes than corporates, while the disaggregated data provides a clearer picture. Now consider the year earlier. In fiscal 2021-22, individuals earned a GTI of 45-43 rtillion, which was 19.9% of GDP, and shelled out aggregate tax 645.7 trillion. In comparison, corporates earned a total of 433.7 trillion, 22.4% of GDP, with a aggregate tax figure of 46.3 trillion. So corporates together paid 18.6% of their GTI in taxes, whereas individuals paid 10.5% of their added-up income.

As is to be expected, general direct

As is to be expected, general direct tax collections have risen from year to year, though the ratios outlined e have not changed much from

2020-21 to 2022-23. In 2020-21 as well, the scenario was similar, a year in which Incon



India's tax rates on corporates need to be globally competitive for the country to increase investment and employment that contribute to economic growth

individuals earned a total of ₹45.1 trillion, 19.2% of GDP, while paying aggregate taxes of ₹4.3 trillion.

aggregate taxes of 4.4 strillion. Corporates earned a total of 725.3 trillion, or 10.8% of GDP, with their taxes adding up to 44.6 trillion. So corporates paid, on average, 18.2% of their GTT in taxes, whereas indi-viduals paid 9.4%. In terms of what share of earnings have been paid, individuals have seen this proportion go up from 9.4% of their GTT in 2020-21 to 10.9% in 2022-23. Companies saw if vise from 18.2% of their total earnings in 2020-21 to 18.7% in 2022-23. In other 2020-21 to 18.7% in 2022-23. In other

2020-21 to 18.7% in 2022-23. In other words, corporates have been paying much higher rate all these years. It is interesting to note that the country's overall GTI in the department's database has increased from 74-4 trillion in 2020-21 to 107-2 trillion in 2020-21 to 107-2 trillion in 2020-23, at a compounded annual growth rate (CAGR) of 20%, rising from 31.7% of GDP to 36.3%. Aggregate tax has also increased from 52.7 trillion to 10.53 trillion in the same period—from 41.% of GDI to 5.2%. Taxes have grown at a significant CAGR of 25.8%, reflecting rising taxable income and better tax comtaxable income and better tax com-pliance, both of which augur well for

India's economic outlook.

Between 2020-21 and 2022-23, individual GTI has increased by a CAGR of 17.6% CAGR (from ₹45.1 tril-

lion to ₹62.4 trillion), while corporate GTI has increased by a CAGR of 23% (from ₹25.3 trillion to ₹38.3 trillion, Individual taxes grew by CAGR of 26%, while corporate taxes grew by 24.8%. A contributory factor has been a change in how corporate dividends are taxed. Since 2020-24, dividend income has been taxed in the hands of individuals (at their slab art), whereoes earlier this tax harden rate), whereas earlier this tax burden was placed on dividend distributing corporates, Collections from this are estimated at around ₹40,000 crore annually, Before 2020-21, this nun

annually, Betore 2020-21, this num-ber showed up as part of corporate tax collections. Now it is logged as taxes paid by shareholders. As a proportion of India's GDP, the share of taxes on corporates was 2.4% in 2023-24, 2.3% in 2022-23 and 1.50% in 2021-22. In comparison, the share of India'dual income

tax was 2.3% of GDP in 2023-24, 2.1% in 2022-23 and 1.8% in 2021-22. In the United States, the

and L8% in 2021-22.

In the United States, the share of corporate taxes in GDP was L77% in 2021, L84% in 2022, L66% in 2023 and is estimated to be L81% in 2024. However, share of individual income tax in GDP in the US was 9.72% in 2024, 10,95% in 2024, 17% in 2023, and is projected at 9.45% in 2024, individual tax collections are much higher in the US than the corporate tax mop-up, which clearly shows that as economies develop and people prosper, individuals contribute more by way of taxes to the national coffers than corporates do.

Corporates are entitles that accumulate investments from thousands of individuals and direct the money in ways that create multifold value. The value created by corporates is then distributed to individuals in several ways, one of the most significant being employee salaries, which

cant being employee salaries, which then form the base for income tax then form the base for income tax collections, Dividends are shared largely with individuals, which are again taxed. Globally competitive tax rates for corporates is the right strategy for India to increase investments and employment, both of which contribute to economic growth.

India's middle class is hurting because of inequitable taxes



he Indian middle class, long considered the b bone of the nation's ec omy, is increasingly be dened by a tax system that favours the wealthy.

Personal income taxes nov account for a larger share of govern-ment revenue than corporate taxes, marking only the third time this has happened in over three decades. From 35% during the United Pro-gressive Alliance (UPA) years, corporate taxe stody are only 26% of total tax revenue. This shift, along with high Goods and Services Tax (UST) rates and collections, is making the country's tax system more regressive. This raises concerns about increased income inequality, reduced conaccount for a larger share of govern country s tax system more regressive. This raises concerns about increased income inequality, reduced consumer spending power and a higher burden on low- and middle-income households. Without reforms, the tax system will continue to burden the middle class and, in the process, hurt India's economic development. This inversion of the tax burden is not accidental. It can be traced back to the corporate tax cuts may be a consumed to the corporate tax cuts to the corporate tax cuts to the corporate in the composition of the

growth. Over the last five
years, the revenue foregone stood close to 30
trillion. It is reasonable to
ask what we received in
return for this staggering
amount, which could have instead
been deployed for essential public
services like healthcare, education
and infrastructure.

and infrastructure. Unfortunately, the much touted benefits of the corporate tax relief did not materialize. Gross fixed capital formation (GFCP), a key indicator of investment, grew at an average rate of only 1.4% from 2019 to 205 23. Meanwhile, corporate profits with the corporate profit to-GDP ratio reaching 3.8% in 2022, the highest in 15 years. Worse, at 4.4%, private consumption growth in 2023-24 was the slowest rate in two decades, excluding the pandemic year of excluding the pandemic year of 2020-21. This stark contrast between booming corporate profits and slug-gish investment alongside weak con-sumption growth highlights a critical disconnect. The benefits of tax cuts have disproportionately accrued to corporations, while the broader economy, particularly the middle



class, has been left to bear the brunt of the government's financing needs. This trend is compounded by rising unemployment and persistent inflation, which have further strained middle-class households. Rising labour force participation, which the government highlights, comes at a time when agricultural employment has gone up—a classic sign of distress employment. Simultaneously, inflation has consistently exceeded the Reserve Bank of India's target range, howering around 6-7% annually since 2020. Persistent inflation has eroded the rupee's purchasing power and made it increasingly difficult for middle-class families to maintain their standard of fiving.

The opposition has been warning against the harm caused by the government's tax policies. Leader of the Opposition Rahul Gandhi recently accused the government of indulging in "tax terrorism," burdening the middle class and favouring its "corporate friends." The opposition's view is that with little income tax relief, a heavy GST burden and stagnant salaries, the middle class is

relief, a heavy GST burden and stag relief, a neavy GST burden and stag nant salaries, the middle class is hurting badly, and that this is not only an injustice, but will adversely impact India's prospects. The opposition's criticism finds support in concomic research. In a

support in economic research. In a 2015 research paper, economists at the International Monetary Fund

(IMF) found that increasing the wealth of the rich by 1% reduces GDP growth by 0.08 percentage points over five years, while increasing the wealth of the poor and middle class by 1% can boost GDP growth by up to 0.38 percentage points. This was a follow-up study to an earlier fMP paper that showed income inequality is bad for growth and its sustainability. Internationally, there is growing recognition that corporate tax cuts

Internationally, there is growing recognition that corporate tax cuts do not necessarily lead to increased investment or broader economic benefits. Countries like the United States and those in the European Union are increasingly closing tax loopholes and ensuring that corporations pay their fair share, recognizing that equitable tax policies are essential for reducing inequality and promoting sustainable development. In contrast, India's current approach seems increasingly out of step with these global trends,

approach seems increasingly on of step with these global trends, prioritizing the interests of a wealthy elite at the expense of the broader

elite at the expense of the broader citizenry. Reforming India's tax policy and administration is a critical need. We should be aiming for a more trans-parent, stable and progressive tax system that helps unlock the poten-tial of businesses and individuals to drive innovation, create jobs and contribute to economic growth. An overarching principle underlying our tax system should be that those with the greatest means contribute

our tax system should be that those with the greatest means contribute their fair share to the nation's development. This is not about targeting the rich, but to ensure India's low and middle income families play their part in prowering India's future. India's current tax policy is unsustainable. It is burting India's growth engine and concentrating wealth and power in the hands of some of the wealthiest people in the country. There are reforms that offer a clear and viable alternative, one that prioritizes fairness, equity and susprioritizes fairness, equity and sus tainable development. The choices made today will shape

the nation's trajectory for decades to come, and the path of fairness and equity is the one most likely to ensure lasting prosperity for all.

MY VIEW | THE LAST WORD

THE

mint

DEBATE

Wayanad holds lessons for us on foreseeable disasters

INDIRA RAJARAMAN



he monsoon has predictably brough he monsoon has predictably brought with it swellen rivers flooding the countryside and urban flooding on account of blocked stormwater drains. But the erushing landsides in Wayanad at the end of July were out of the ordinary. An extreme burst frainfall attributable toglobally-induced climate change was the cause, but the impact in terms of lives lost and villages erased was a result of weakening of the topography by predatory construction, mining and quarrying.

Way back in August 2011, a Western Ghats Ecology Expert Panel (WeEEP) chaired by

Wayback in August 2011, a Western Ghuss Ecology Expert Panel (WGEEP) chaired by Professor Madhav Gadgli submitted its com-prehensive report on the vulnerability of the Western Ghats to encroachment. The WGEEP classified the Western Ghats into three zones by degree of ecological sen-sitivity, based on criteria set out in a refereed academic paper in the journal Current 8ct-ence. The severest strictures on permissible economic activity were imposed on ecologi-cally sensitive zone one (ESZI). The assign-

ment of area under each zone was by taluk, the next level below the district in the administrative hierarchy. All three taluks of Wayanad district were in ESZ1. It follows from this taluk-wise geographi-

al assignment that the six We states (Goa, Gujarat, Karnataka, Kerala, Maharashtra and Tamil Nadu) were each treated separately, as the report explicitly says (page 88). That being the case, there was no need for all states to agree unanimously to the restrictive measures proposed. States could have been left free to opt in fully, or with modifications subject to negotiation with the Union ministry of environment. A final set of notifications could have set out the agreed parameters specific to each state, along with the monitoring mechanism. Following the WGEFF, another high-level working errors (ELWG) was amonited.

Following the WGEEP, another high-level working group (HLWG) was appointed, chaired by space scientist Krishnaswamy Kasturirangan. Its report in April 2013 had a single Ecologically Sensitive Area (ESA) zone covering an area of sout 60,00054; but flat of the WGEEP, by demarcating areas within tabuks rather than tabuks as a whole. Half of Wayanda flalis in their single ESA category. The HLWG recommendations are not notified either, although several draft notifications have been in circulation.

Cascading committees are a common protection in the Indian policy space. The subject of petroleum pricing holds the record, with several committees having been appointed over the years. Each committee might have had different membership, but the secretariat serving them was often the same. In one such case, the official charged with shock leads to the contraction of the committee of the contraction of the committee of the contraction of the committee of the contraction of the contraction of the committee of the contraction of the contracti with drafting the report comically bemoaned to me that he found it difficult to fer from the previous report since he was one who had written it.

Is it really necessary for the day to appoint another committee to another committee to modify the recommen-dations of a prior com-mittee? Not at all. Parlia-ment has 16 Lok Sabha departmental standing committees and eight in the Rajya Sabha, with membership drawn from all parties. One of the Rajya Sabha committees

QUICK READ Villages were erased and lives lost in a landslide, reminding us of the folly in ignoring the Gadgil panel's advice on stopping and quarrying in fragile zones

A cooperative continued and by the Union government and states to the protection and monitoring of ecologically sensitive areas is vital for us to reduce environmental risks.

These committees are well positioned to assess the report of an external panel in a non-partisan way. They have seriously declined in importance over the years because all governments, irrespective of party affiliation, find it easier to outsource the task of modifying apolitically difficult set of recommendations, thereby shifting responsibility to another set of or foreseasons.

of recommendations, thereby shifting responsibility to another set of professionals. In the WGEEP report, the activity restrictions in ESZI as listed in Table 6 of the report include construction, mining and quarrying. Since these activities are not presently restricted, it is possible today to obtain legal permanded and lives reminding us of ring the Gadgil carried out illegally to ring the Gadgil carried out illegally to ring the Gadgil carried out illegally to constopping ruction, mining payments. The final outcome in terms of the extent of illegal activity is a function of a number of forces, of which key elements are the probability of detection and the penalty imposed.

The mystery is why, neither in the Western

Ghats nor in the Himalayan states, there is no people's movement against this kind of predatory activity, legal or not, which risks their lives. Short-term job opportunities, in the absence of other alternatives, seem to prevail over the (still low but rising) risk of extinction. This is where the panchayat level of governance could have mapped out alter-

of governance could have mapped out alter-native medium-term avenues to jobs and livelihoods, and, at the very least, acted as watchdogs over illegal activity.

In Kerala, panchayats are well funded by the state government, but the influx of fund-ing from above has made them cut back on their own tax efforts (my joint paper, EPW, 12 August 2000), and essentially led to a surren-der of autonomy to the state government. The state push to develop tourism in Kerala (Cod's own country') has handed over seenic districts like Wayanad to the devil.

That is why a commitment between the

districts like Wayanad to the devil.
That is why a commitment between the
Union government and the state, on the protection and monitoring of ecologically sensitive areas within their respective jurisdictions, is so vital. Just as climate change mitigation can only be tackled internationally
between countries in a spirit of mutual cooperation, states in India have to be persuaded
to subordinate short-term interests to the
longer-run imperative of sustainability.





OUR VIEW



'Study in India' could be a reality if we work at it

Two Indian B-schools rank high on a global list of top management programmes. They are also the most attractively priced. Given academic freedom, India could be an education hub

ndian business schools have long had a good reputation among global recruiters, especially after India opened up its econ-omy in the early 1990s. On LinkedIn's 2024 list of the world's top MBA programmes released this week, the signature course offered by Indian School of Business (ISB), Hyderabad, ranks sixth. The top position is held by the MBA course of Stanford, followed by the offerings of Insead, Harvard, Wharton and MIT's Sloan, Indian Institute of Management, Ahmedabad (IIM-A), is ranked 19th on the list. This ranking is based on five parameters: job placement, the ability to advance, network strength, leadership potential and gender diversity. Of course, MBA holders may want to contest LinkedIn's chart, as B-school graduates professing loyalty to their *alma maters* would be inclined to, but the focus of our attention should be on what sets India's best business education apart, globally. A glance at tuition structures puts it in sharp relief: value for money. Admission to any of the eight two-year MBA courses at US universities that find place in the top 10 would need a student to set aside a budget of about \$160,000 or more. Insead, with campuses in France, Singapore, the US and UAE, is quite expensive too. In contrast, ISB's flagship one-year MBA can be done for less than a quarter of that sum. Studying at IIM-A is even more cost-effective

Strategy 101 classes outline two basic market approaches to be competitive: What's on offer approaches to be competitive: What's on offer should be either unique or priced the lowest. If it's both well-differentiated and low-priced, it would be a winner. Could India leverage this B-school lesson to turn itself into a hub for higher duration that stream of the control of the higher education that attracts students from ound the world? The idea has been around.

Also, dismissals of it. Two reasons are served up for why it's unrealistic. First, we have hardly enough seats for our own students, with a near stampede every year for admission to the few top institutions we have. And second, capacity expansion in the education sector has already led to a drastic drop in general quality. Surging demand has created legions of degree-printing shops across the country, with the result that India suffers the ills of information asymmetry in its job market, Like with second-hand cars that tend to sell cheaper than they should because buyers don't know how well they've been kept, degrees from institutes other than the best known are taken lightly by recruiters who can't be sure of their value. The latest *Eco-*nomic Survey notes that half our college graduates are found to be unemployable. This dismal state of affairs is a pressing concern, just as poor learning outcomes are at the school level, but that doesn't mean there is no case for optimism.

The National Education Policy 2020 opened up the sector for foreign universities to set up campuses in India. The aim is to diversify the field and boost competition. Unfortunately, the response so far has been underwhelming. This should push us to ponder a crucial aspect of educational excellence: academic freedom. While well-reputed institutions across various disciplines appear to have carved out space for themselves, the liberty available to Indian academia in general has been a matter of much controversy. The upshot is that another kind of information asymmetry may be taking hold, with would-be investors in university projects unsure of what to expect. But then again, all it takes is a clear policy commitment to freedom of academia to overcome that hitch, 'Study in India' could yet develop global appeal.

MY VIEW | FARM TRUTHS

Start with corporate taxation to reform India's direct tax regime

Corporate taxes must be made progressive for the sake of equity and also to step up job generation



irect tax reforms have been on irect tax reforms have been on the agenda for more than two decades. Unfortunately, much of the discussion has revolved around income-tax reforms and very little around corporate taxes. This is despite the fact that corporate taxes around the form or than lafe of India's total direct taxes until 2019-20, although their share is now less than half. Corporate

tor more than haid to find as total direct taxes until 2019-20, although their share is now less than half. Corporate taxes accounted for an average of almost two-thirds of total direct taxes accounted for an average of almost two-thirds of total direct taxes during the United Progressive Alliance (UPA) government's second term. Their share went below half under the National Democratic Alliance (NDA). In the last five years, corporate tax collections rose at 6.5% per annum, almost a third of the 12.2% growth annual in income-tax collections. The decline in growth rate of corporate taxes is not an aberration, but part of a longer trend, falling from 27.4% during the UPA-1 period to 13.4% in UPA-2 and further to 11% during MDA-1. The

the Grant Bright and the growth rate of the income-tax intake slipped from 2004-09 to 17.2% during NDA-2. The deceleration in corporate tax collections is largely a result of generous concessions that successive governments have doel out. The last major was in 2019, when massive tax ments have doled out. The last major move was in 2019, when massive tax relief was rolled out. As against the aver age statutory tax rate of 34.69%, a con-cessional rate of 22% for existing

domestic companies and 15% for newly

domestic companies and 15% for newly incorporated domestic companies was introduced. The immediate impact was a loss of revenue for the government, but the new levies also changed the nature of corporate taxation.

Since 2007, an annual statement has been made as part of the Union budget on revenue forgone due to various tax measures that provides the effective tax rate for companies by various levels of profit-before-tax. After the zero-profit category, the lowest one is of companies reporting profits in the range of 40-1 crore. This is the largest group of companies that part taxes. Firms with profits in the range of 41-10 crore, 410-50 crore, 430-100 sins the statutory tax rate of 34.6% in 2017-18, the effective tax rate for all companies was the statutory tax rate of 34.6% in 2017-18, the effective tax rate for all companies was 25.9%. In 2018-19, it declined marginally to 27.8%, the lowest effective tax rate was a feast progressive in lower brackets till the 4100-500 crore category. In 2018-19, the effective tax rate was a feast progressive in lower brackets till the 4100-500 crore category. In 2018-19, the effective tax rate for ill companies, at 26.3% in 2018-19, the week the tax rate for the 40-1 crore category was 26.6%,

QUICK READ

The share of corporate tax collections in our total direct tax mop-up has been falling even as businesses making more profits have had lower effective tax rates to pay. This is regressive.

We should ensure nicher firms bear a bigger tax burden as it's now clear that tax relief five years ago for businesses has not resulted in increased corporate investment and employment.

rising steadily to 28.3% for the ₹100-

rising steadily to 28.3% for the TiO0-500 crore category. The immediate consequence of the 2019 tax breaks was a sharp decline in the effective tax rate to 22.5% in 2019-20 from an average of 29% in the preceding years. It has remained at that level till at least 2021-22 for which data is available. The largest beneficiaries were the richest companies, for whom the effective tax rate declined from an average of 26% to 20%. But for the *O-1 category, it was only a marginal decline from an average of 26% to 25%. In fact, for 2021-22, the effective rate pattern is an inversion of 2018-19% the poorest companies have borne the highest effective tax rate, with the rate declining

an inversion of 2018-19's; the poorest companies have borne the highest effective tax rate, with the rate declining as firm goes up the profit brackets. Thus, the 2019 changes not only reduced effective tax rates, but also made the tax structure regressive. Tax incentives would have been justified had they led to job creation or more investment. Neither happened. Not only did the private sector reduce its employee costs as a proportion of sales; its profit share rose sharply. Corporations used the subsidy to deleverage themselves, lowering their intensities, lowering their intensities, lowering their intensities of the subsidy to deleverage themselves, lowering their intensities outgo. Private investment, meanwhile, Most of this is known. The Economic Survey too lamented the private sector's failure to generate investment or employment despite tax relief. But then, corporates are not to be blamed, as raising profits is their mandate. It is the state's duty to create an enabling environment for them to do this in a competitive setting state to collect taxes from them. At ax

competitive setting, But it is also for the state to collect taxes from them. A tax policy should not only be reasonable, just and progressive, but also efficient. Progressiveness is necessary from the equity point of view. Today's corporate tax regime is regressive and inefficient, penalizing the small and medium firms that are crucial for job generation. For meaningful direct-tax reforms, we must go beyond income tax. Fixing corporate taxation is just as important. competitive setting. But it is also for the

10 DEARS AGO



JUST A THOUGHT

A tax loophole is something that benefits the other guy. If it benefits you, it is tax reform.

RUSSELL B. LONG

THEIR VIEW

Don't use Durov's arrest as a pretext for faulty policies

VIVAN SHARAN



Iot has happened since Pavel Durov, the billionaire Russian-born Emirati businessman who founded the popular social media and messaging app Telegram, was arrested in France last week. Durov, who has four passports, including one from France, received support from voices across the ideological spectrum, from the far right to the progressive left. Russian media predictably labelled the arrest a Western conspiracy. Iran's Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei called for stricter laws to regulate cyberspace. Not to be left behind, India Isro-investigating Telegram for violations of local laws. ons of local laws

Telegram is a unique app. It is a halfway Telegram is a unique app. It is a halfway house between an encrypted messaging service like Signal and WhatsApp, and other social media platforms. Telegram groups can host up to 200,000 users, and the company claims there are no limits on the size of media uploads and messages exchanged via the service. These features make it useful for all manner of activities, ranging from con-

tent piracy to political canvassing. France's President Emmanuel Macron himself has been an early adopter and user of the app. While details on the nature of the French investigation are blurry, it appears Telegram did not cooperate with France's information requests linked to the circulation of child sexual abuse material and drug trafficking on the platform. Reports also suggest possible additional changes linked to money laundering and the use of encryption technology without requisite clearances under a rarely invoked and outmoded French law. The crux of the matter is that Duroy, who playfully changed his name in France to Paul du Rove, has few levers to get out of jail. India would be wise to consider the wider implications of Duroy's arrest and not see it merely as an opportunity for schadenfrued or to haul up Telegram. Firstly, the geopolitical 'great agame' that underscores these developments is complex. Therefore, we should withhold related inferences while the case is still playing out.

the case is still playing out. Durov is more Russian than French, His business was originally backed by an oli-garch close to Russian President Vladimir Putin, and Telegram has cooperated with the Kremlin's requests to suppress opposi-tion politics. It suspended all chat bots used

by deceased opposition leader Alexei Navalny to rally popular support in the run-up to parliamentary elections in 2021. But the Kremlin hasn't taken a hard position on Durov's arrest. Spokesperson Dmitry Peskov maintains that Durov haseverything he needs to organize his own defence as a citizen of France. This mysterious Russian faith in the French judicial process contrass with liberal commentary on the event. It also seems mischicivous, given the Kremlin's own distaste for justice domestically. These circumstances are ripe for a political understanding between Paris and Moscow, one that transcends a simplistic understanding of the issues at play.

A second takeaway is that the Telegram app is despite Pavel (espite Pavel Cespite Pave

A second takeaway is that the Telegram app is still available in France despite Durov's arrest. The investigations may entually lead to a take down of the app, but there are no signs of a hair-trigger impulse to ban it. Conversely, app bans in India are often ordered without requi-

QUICK READ

It's noteworthy that Telegram hasn't been banned in France despite Pavel Durov's arrest, as the legal process isn't over, unlike in India where apps get

banned without due diligence

We should build state capacity

to investigate cyber crimes and not mistake protectionist app regulation in the name of national security as a silver bullet to deal with cyber challenges.

site due diligence on grounds tenuously connected to national security.

Sudden takedowns of apps without carefulinvestigation have led to absurd events in the past. PUBG, a wildly popular gaming app, was banned in India in 2020, only to resurface in a new avatar in June 2021 with state sanction. While the specific reason for the 2020 ban was not revealed, it was likely linked to its part-Chinese ownership. The game was relaunched as Battlegrounds Mobibi India, apparently based on assurances that its data would be stored on serversin cest that its data would be stored on serversin trusted locations. In another twist, the game was taken down again in July 2022, only to reapty that Telegram portal relations and the state sanction.

state capacity to trans-parently investigate crimes in cyberspace and orimes in cyberspace and not pursue seemingly arbitrary bans. A cyber-crime investigation unit attached to a court in Paris began investigating Durov much earlier in the

year. The unit is headed by Johanna Brousse, a magistrate and an international cybercrime expert who is regularly involved in training the judiciary on the subject. India is among the most vulnerable countries in cyberspace. It ranks tent thin Oxford University's World Cybercrime Index, a global metric of cyber criminality, and saw a 24% annual increase in cybercrimes in 2022, according to the latest report of the National Crime Records Bureau. However, unlike the French, we haven't built any meaningful judicial capacity to investigate cybercrimes. Our digital dividend is likely to turn into a nightmare unless we build specialized investigative capabilities. Finally, the Durov affair may also give rise to calls for stricter regulation of communication apps like Telegram on grounds of national security. Indian telecom companies are among the biggest advocates of such action because users prefer such apps to traditional voice calling and SMS. The telecom regulator has also raised the issue in several stakeholder consultations. But telecom regulator has also raised the issue in several stakeholder consultations. But India mustn't mistake protectionist app regulation in the name of national security as a silver bullet for capacitating itself to deal with the challenges of cyberspace. These are the author's personal views.

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

Law Commission: its role, members, & recommendations

LAW

DAMINI NATH NEW DELHI, SEPTEMBER 5

THE UNION government has notified the THE UNION government has notified the constitution of the 23rd Law Commission of India with effect from September 1. The commission, which was notified on September 2, will have a three-year term. The tenure of the previous Law Commission chained by former Karnataka High Court Chief Justice RRIU Raj Awasthi ended on August 31.

The commission has been notified at a time when some key items on the BJP's agenda, including the implementation of a Uniform Civil Code and holding simultaneous elections to Lok Sabha and state Assemblies, were given a fresh push by Prime

Assemblies, were given a fresh push by Prime Minister Narendra Modi during his Independence Day address.

Commission and importance

The Law Commission is a non-statutory commission (not created by a law of Parliament) formed by the Union Ministry

tion to help the government review function-ing of laws, suggest repealing of obsolete leg-islation, and make recommendations on

islation, and make recommendations on matters referred to it by the government. The commission is usually chaired by a retired judge of the Supreme Court or a High Court, and has legal scholars as members. Serving judges can also be appointed to the commission, according to the notification on the appointment of the new panel. The 22 Law Commissions appointed since independence have submitted a total 289 reports to the government. The govern-ment is under no obligation to accept the re-ports; however, the commissions' recom-

ports: however, the commissions' reco mendations have over the decades led to the enactment of important legislation includ-ing the Code of Criminal Procedure, 1973

ing the code of criminal Procedure, 1973 (CPC), and the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009 (RTE Act). The process of scrapping more than 1,500 obsolete central laws was taken up by the government after recommendations for their "immediate repeal" in reports submit-

Constitution of the 23rd panel

The September 2 notification issued by the Law Ministry's Legal Affairs Department says the panel will have a full-time chairperson, four full-time members including a member-sec-retary, not more than five part-time members, and the secretaries of the Legal Affairs and Legislative departments as exofficion members. The commission's term will be

and the secretaries of the Legal Affairs and Legislative departments as cogffish members. The commission's term will be until August 31, 2027.

The chairperson and four full-time members cambe serving SC or HC judges or "other category of persons", who can in theory be any expert chosen by the government. The notifications of the 2020 (22nd) and 2016 (214) commissions also said this.

and 2015 (21st) commissions also said this but the two commissions were headed by

Justice Awasthi and former Supreme Court judge Justice B S Chauhan respectively. The chairperson and members of the 23rd Law Commission are yet to be named. The decision will be taken by the

Appointments Committee of Cabinet chaired by the Prime Minister, government sources said. The chairperson and members of the 22nd Law Commission were named only in November 2022, which was effectively when the commission's work started.

A serving judge, if appointed to the commission, serves until retirement or expiry of the panel's term, whichever is earlier, and gest no additional remuneration apart from the usual judge's salary. In the 'other' category, a chairperson is entitled to Rs.2.50 lakh as monthly salaryad a member.

monthly salary and a membe Rs,2.25 lakh. The member-sec retary must be an officer of the Indian Legal Service of the rank of Secretary.

Terms of reference of panel

The terms of reference of the 23rd Law Commission are broadly the same as those of the past few commissions. The first three terms are: "Identify laws which are no longer needed or relevant and can be immediately repealed.' Creating a Standard Operating Procedure (SoP)

for periodic review of existing laws inter dial for the undertaking of simplification of lan-guage and processes; Identify laws which are not in harmony with the economic needs of the times and require amendments." Like the 22nd and 21st commissions, the 23rd Law Commission from bas been asked

Like the 22nd and 21st commissions, use 23rd Law Commission too, has been asked to examine "the existing laws in the light of Directive Principles of State Policy and to sug-gest ways of improvement and reform and also to suggest such legislations as might be necessary to implement the Directive Principles and to attain the objectives set out the Property of the Constitution". in the Preamble of the Constitution

The Prime Minister's call last month for a "secular civil code" reflects the Directive Principle that the "state shall endeavour to secure for the citizens a uniform civil code throughout the territory of India". The 22nd Law Commission also looked into this gues tion; but, its views are not known — the chair-person assumed office as a member of the Lokpal in March, before the Law Commission could submit its report to the government. The 23rd Law Commission is also man-

carry out a post-enactment audit for socio-economic legislation, and review judicial ad-ministration to make it more responsive to the needs of current times

What 22nd panel said

The 22nd Law Commission presented 11 reports, including one in April 2023 that recommended that Section 124A of the Indian Penal Code, the widely criticised law against sedition, should be retained. The commission cited threats to internal security, including from Maoists, militancy in the Northeast, terrorism in Jammu& Kashmir and the Khalistan movement to back its previous entities. However, the control of ment to back its recommendation. However the commission did recommend certain amendments to "bring about greater clarity regarding the usage of the provision". This March, the commission presented a

report recommending a new law to protect trade secrets. It also worked on a report on simultaneous elections, but this report, like that on the Uniform Civil Code, was not pret on u.e. c. ited to the go

EXPLAINED SCIENCE

WHY SATURN'S MAJESTIC RINGS WILL BRIEFLY 'DISAPPEAR' IN MARCH 2025



The event will be an optical illusion that occurs every 13-15 years, NASA

though only briefly. Here is why

An optical illusion

An optical illusion It is not as if the rings will cease to exist. Inoir as if the rings will cease to exist. Their "disappearance" — when viewed from Earth — will be an optical illusion. Saturn, which is tilted at an angle of 26.73 degrees, takes about 29.4 Earth years to complete a single orbit of the Sun. This means that for half of a Saturn year (roughly 15 years), the gas giant is tilted towards the Sun, and for the other half it is tilted away from it. Its rings too are tilted at the same angle, and as the planet revolves, they appear to change their orientation when viewed from Earth. Every 13 to 15 years, the edge of Staturn's Every 13 to 15 years, the edge of Staturn's Burga alligus directly with Earth. This is what will happen in March 20.25 when only the edges of the ring will be visible from our

will happen in March 2025 when only the edges of the ring will be visible from our planet, Since Satum's rings are very thin — just tens of metres thick in most places — at this position, they will reflect very little light, essentially making them invisible. Imagine viewing the edge of a thin sheet of paper from a great distance. But as Satum continues to go around the Sun, its rings will gradually reappear.

This phenomenon last occurred in 2009.

But rings won't last forever NASA confirmed in 2018 that Saturn will indeed lose its rings for good. In fact Saturn's rings are constantly being pulled towards the planet because of its gravity and magnetic field. "We estimate that this 'ring rain' drains

"We estimate that this 'ring rain' drains an amount of water products that could fill an Olympic-sized swimming pool from Saturn's rings in half an hour," NASA scientist James O'Donoghue said in 2018. At this rate, Saturn will completely loss rings in the next 300 million years — or producers constitution.

perhaps sooner.
Data from NASA's Cassini spacecraft Data from IVAN's Cassim spacecraft revealed that Saturn's rings are made of billions of chunks of ice and rock, whose size varies from as small as grains of dust to as large as mountains. According to cur-rent consensus, the rings evolved just a 100 million years ago due to the collision of two icy moons. The debris from this caset cost and Saturn's circumstancing.

event created Satum's signature rings. It is possible that other gas giants like Jupiter, Uranus, and Neptune too had rings once. Today they have only thin ringlets

hard to capture even with a telescope. Saturn, on the other hand, possesses rings that span a massive distance — nearly five times the diameter of Earth. There are seven major ring divisions, each possessing a complex structure.



EXPLAINED DIPLOMACY & STRATEGY

Singapore & semiconductors

Focus on chip manufacturing during PM Modi's visit to Singapore is of great geo-strategic and geo-economic importance. Singapore was an early mover in the industry, and collaboration with it carries much promise



SHUBHAIIT ROY

PRIME MINISTER Narendra Modi visited Singapore during the second leg of a two-na-tion trip to South-East Asia this week, hav-ing travelled to Brunei Darussalam in the first leg, It was the first visit by an Indian Prime Minister to Brunei, and Modi's fifth trip to

Brunei is an important partner in India's Brunei is an important partner in India's Act East Policy and Indo-Pacific vision, and the talks with Sultan Haji Hassanal Bolkiah, the

talks with Sultan Haji Hassanal Bolkish, the world's longest reigning monarch, were fo-cused on trade, defence, space and culturalties. The Singapore leg of the Prime Minister's visit was marked by agreements on semicon-ductors, digital technologies, health and skill development. The PM and his newly elected Singaporean counterpart Lawrence Wong witnessed the exchange of the Memorandum of Understanding on an India-Singapore Semiconductor Ecosystem Partnership.

India's push for chips

Given the critical importance of semicon-ductor chips in virtually everything from

ductor chips in virtually everything from missiles to mobile phones and from cars to computers, the pact with Singapore has great geo-strategic and geo-economic importance. Supply disruptions during the Covid-19 pandemic and the geopolitical tensions aris-ing out of China's aggressive moves in the Taiwan Strait and the South China Sea have brought great unserver to India's efforts tradebrought great urgency to India's efforts to de-velop its own semiconductor ecosystem. The global chip industry is dominated by com-panies from a very small number of coun-tries, and India is a late entrant into this high-

launched in 2021 with a Rs 76,000 crore chip incentive scher incentive scheme, under which the central government offered half the plant's capital government offered half the plant's capital expenditure costs as usbidy, In February, the Cabinet approved semiconductor-related projects adding up to investments of about Rs 1.26 lakh crore.

That same month, the government announced a partnership between the Tata Group and Taiwan's Powerchip Semiconductor Manufacturing Corporation (PSMC)



Prime Minister Narendra Modi with his Singapore counterpart Lawrence Wong during their visit to AEM Holdings Ltd. in Singapore on Thursday. Pπ

to set up a semiconductor fabrication plant. The Cabinet has so far approved five semi-conductor units, including four assembly units, under the incentive scheme.

Singapore's chip story

Singapore has a well-developed semi-conductor industry, the outcome of an early start and the vision of its first Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew.

The story, according to Chris Miller's Chip War: The Fight for the World's Most Critical Technology (2022), goes that LKY told US President Richard Nixon in 1973 that he was President Richard Nixon in 1973 that he was counting on exports to create employment for his people — thereafter, the government of Singapore supported Texas instruments and National Semiconductors in building assembly facilities in the city state.

By the early 1980s, the electronics industry was already accounting for 7% of Singapor's CoRP and a quarter of its manufacturing jobs, Miller notes.

Today, Singapore contributes around 10% of the global semiconductor output, along with 5% of the global wafer fabrication capacity (silicon wafer is a circular piece of under piece of the global wafer fabrication capacity (silicon wafer is a circular piece of under piece of the global wafer fabrication capacity (silicon wafer is a circular piece of under piece of under

pacity (silicon wafer is a circular piece of ulpacity (silicon water is a circular piece of ut-tra pure silicon, usually 8 – 12 inches in diam-eter, out of which chips are carved) and 20% of semiconductor equipment production. Nine of the world's top 15 semiconduc-tor firms have set up shop in Singapore, and the semiconductor sector contributes signif-

icantly to the country's economic growth. Singapore has players in all segments of the semiconductor value chain: integrated cir-cuit (IC) design, assembly, packaging and testing; wafer fabrication, and equipment/ www.material production. raw material production

Some important lessons

In the 1960s and 70s, American chip mak-ers, looking for lower labour costs and a suf-ficiently skilled workforce, started to offshore parts of their production process to countries in South-east Asia.

What worked especially for Singapore What worked especially for Singapore were infrastructure and connectivity, stable business conditions, a critical mass of leading companies based in the country covering the full value chain from design to testing, and suitable human capital.

Semiconductor plants in Singapore are clustered in four wafer fabrication parks spread over 374 hectares, where the government offers custencied in feature that so the control of the

ment offers customised infrastructure solu

To develop talent, Singapore's universities offer majors on microelectronics and IC design, and collaborate with semicon-ductor companies in doctoral research by their employees.

their employees.

Singapore is now seeing the benefits of the global focus on de-risking and improving supply chain resilience, as it appears to be a safe bet in the era of sharpening US-

- In 2022, Taiwan's United Micro-electronics Corporation announced an in-vestment of \$5 billion for a semiconductor fab in Singapore that is expected to begin op erations this year.
- rar. mber 2023, GlobalFoundries inaugurated a \$4 billion fabrication plant in Singapore that is capable of manufacturing specialty chips at the advanced "28 nm" node
- technology.

 In June 2024, NNP Semiconductors and TSMC-backed Vanguard International Semiconductor Corp amounced a 578 billion joint venture for a plant that will make 40 to 130 mm chips for the automotive, and the automotive, and mobile markets segments. And the support of t

Challenges, opportunities

Challenges, opportunities
In the view from New Delhi, Singapore's
semiconductor industry is limited to 'mature-node chips' (process node technology
of 28 mor more), which are used in appliances, cars, and industrial equipment. It is
not equipped to make high-end logic chips
like the ones used in the AI sector (process
nodes of 7 m and smaller, requiring specialised production methods).
As the costs of production increase, semiconductor companies are seeking to diversify some low-cost and labour-intensive operations out of Singapore, for example, Ulac,
a semiconductor test and assembly services
provider, has moved some of its more man-

vider, has moved some of its more mar ual and technologically dated operations to Thailand. Also, Singapore does not appear keen on following the path of countries who are offering incentives to attract semicon ments.

ductor investments.
As several countries including India work
on building domestic semiconductor sectors,
the industry in Singapore may come under
pressure, especially with the increasing cost
of production and the limited resources of
land and labour in the country.
From New Delhi's perspective, there is
scope for collaboration with Singapore in talent development, and knowledge-sharing
about best practices in managine semicors.

about best practices in managing semicon-ductor industrial parks (called Wafer Fab

Parks in Singapore). India's abundant land and competitive India's abundant land and competure labour costs could encourage semiconductor companies in Singapore to look at the country for their expansion plans. There is also scope for India to engage and collaborate with semi-conductor equipment and material manufac-turers in Singapore to develop its own semi-conductor manufacturing ecosystem.

What is the significance of first global 'legally binding' pact on use of Al

THE UNITED States, the European Union, and the United Kingdom (UK) signed the Council of Europe's convention on artificial intelligence (A), the first "legally binding" international treaty on the use of the revolutionary new technology, on Thursday. The treaty, which priorities human rights in its approach to the regulation of public and private-sector Al systems, is seen as the first read are regenerated more the low.

public and private-sector Al systems, is seen as the first real agreement among the key players in the development of Al. It comes amid concerns that disparate regulations proposed by individual countries could thin-der the evolution of this technology.

Officially known as the Council of Europe Framework Convention on Artificial Intelligence and Human Rights, Democracy and the Rule of Law, the treat was opened for signature during a conference was presented to signature during a conference and the state of the signature during a conference and the signature

Pact with teeth, responsibility

The treaty that was drafted over the last two years by more than 50 countries adopts a risk-based approach to the design, develop-ment, use, and decommissioning of Al sys-tems, It covers the use of Al systems in the public sector – including companies acting on its behalf – and in the private sector, and will be applicable across geographies. Signatories will be accountable for 'any harmful and discriminatory cutcomes of Al

Signatories will be accountable for "any harmful and discriminatory outcomes of AI systems", and will ensure that "outputs of such systems respect equality and privacy rights, and that victims of AI-related rights violations have legal recourse".

Council of Europe Secretary General Marija Pejcinovic said: "The Framework Convention on Artificial Intelligence is a first-of-its-kind, global treaty that will ensure that AI upholds people's rights. It is a

egal standard supported by states in dif-ferent continents which share the same values to harness the benefits of Al, while mitigating the risks. With this new treaty, we aim to ensure a responsible use of Al that respects human rights, the rule of law

Obligations and applicability

Upon ratification, member

Upon ratification, member states will have to ensure that:

It their Al systems are "consistent with obligations to protect human rights."

These systems are not used "to undermine the integrity, independence and effectiveness of democratic institutions and processes, including the principle of the separation of powers, respect for judicial independence and access to justice";

measures are put in place "to promise measures are put in place "to pro-

tect...democratic processes in the context of activities within the lifecycle of artificial intelligence systems", including individu-als fair access to and participation in pub-lic debate, as well as their ability to freely form opinions. There are a few exemptions in the scope of applicability, such as national security

EXPLAINED

There are a few exemptions in the scope of applicability, such as national security and research and development. The treaty puts an obligation on parties to address the risks posed by activities within the lifecycle of Al by public and private actors. The treaty comes at a time when sovereign governments and smaller multilateral groups have come up with a clutch of new regulations and agreements to oversee Al tools, including the G7 pact on Al (October 2023), Europe's Al Act (provisional deal in December 2023), and Bletchley Declaration signed by 28 countries (November 2023).

International Code of Conduct for Organizations Developing Advanced Al Systems. The 11-point code aims to "promote safe, secure, and trustworthy Al worldwide" through "voluntary guidance for actions by organisations developing the most advanced Al systems". These include generative Al applications like ChatGPT, and the foundation models they are built on, Europe's Al Act provides Al developers and deployers with obligations regarding specific uses of Al, and seeks to reduce administrative and financial burdens for small and medium-sized businesses, It also de-

and medium-sized businesses, It also de-fines four levels of risk associated with AI

nnes tour levels of risk associated with Al-systems, with those coming under "unac-ceptable risk" to be banned.

The Bletchley Declaration saw 28 coun-tries - including the US, China, Japan, and India — declare that global action was needed to tackle the potential risks of Al. Earlier in 2023, X owner Elon Musk, Apple co-Tounder Steve Wozniak, and others

signed an open letter calling for a six-month pause in Al development, until a shared safety protocol on the risks posed by Al was drafted.

Issues and concerns

Even though the treaty is being called "legally binding", there are concerns that it does not contain provisions for punitive sanc-tions such as penalties or fines. Compliance is primarily ensured through "monitoring", which is not much of a determent from an en-forcement notif of view.

which is not much of a determent from an en-forcement point of view.

Apart from European countries, those who signed the treaty early on included Israel and Georgia. Hanne Juncher, the Director of Security, Integrity and Rule of Law at the Council and who is in charge of the negotiations, was quoted by the Financial Times as saying. "This is confirmation that (the convention Igoes beyond Europe and that these signatories were super invested in the negotiations and...satisfied with the outcome".

WORDLY WISE

THE WORST FORM OF INEQUALITY IS TO TRY TO MAKE UNEQUAL THINGS EQUAL.

RAMNATH GOENKA

BECAUSE THE TRUTH INVOLVES US ALL

IN THE DOCK

Sebi needs to urgently put its house in order. The stakes are high

HE STOCK MARKET regulator continues to be at the centre of controversy. Reportedly, around 500 officials from Sebi, in a letter to the government, have attacked the regulator's leadership for creating a "toxic work culture" — "shouting, scolding and public humiliation have become a norm in meetings", they said. In its response, the market regulator has said that the allegations are "misplaced", that the officers have been "misguided", possibly by "external elements", and that this may be an attempt to "target" the "credibility" of the regulator and its leadership. Unfortunately,

www.ever, this is not the only occasion in the recent past when Seb has found itself in the dock.

A few days ago, the Congress party alleged that SEBI chairperson, Madhabi Puri Buch, as "holding an office of profit at ICICI bank", and had received Rs 16.8 crore as income was inoloning an unlocal prioritial it.a.C.I alians, and natal receivenders in sociore as income after becoming a whole-timer of SEBI in 2017. In response, ICICI bank, in a statement to the stock exchange, said that it has "not paid any salary or granted any ESOPs" to Buch af-ter her retirement, other than her retiral benefits. A few weeks before that, Hindenburg Research had Sought to draw a link between Buch's investments and what it saw as in-action on the Adani investigation by Sebi. It claimed that Buch and her husband "had hidden stakes in the exact same obscure offshore Bermuda and Mauritius funds, found in the same complex nested structure, used by Vinod Adami". During the time Buch was a Sebi whole-time member, it alleged, she had a financial interest in Agora, an offshore Singapore consulting firm, and that she only transferred her shares to her husband after being ap-

consuming initin, and must are only claimseried her shares oner missand after being ap-pointed Sebi chairperson. Buth has responded by saying that "all disclosures as required have already been furnished to SEBI". Clearly, the stock market regulator needs to put its house in order. From matters concern-ing conflict of interest to lack of disclosure and employee dissatisfaction rising to the surface — in the face of these, simply issuing blunt denials or brushing off allegations is unlikely to work, issues such as these, central to the working of the regulator, need to be carefully in-vestigated and addressed in a transparent manner. Coming at a time when there has been a sharp surge in stock market investors, the primary objective of all stakeholders should be to strengthen the regulator, safeguard its autonomy and independence, and protect the into strengmen the regulator is autonomy autonoperuner, any protect the in-tegrity of the markets. At the same time, however, this dismal saga should not be used to stymieth entry of private personnel into top positions in either the regulatory or govern-mental apparatus. The growing complexity of the economy requires that such positions are open to the best possible candidates, drawn from a large pool of individuals with the required expertise, whether from the private sector or the bureaucracy.

NO TURNING BACK

Revisions to medical curriculum, now rolled back, threatened hard-won gains for dignity of all, regardless of gender, sexuality

N 2022, FOLLOWING a Madras High Court order, the National Medical Comm (NMC) took welcome steps towards making the competency-based medical education (CBME) curriculum more progressive and non-discriminatory. It modified modules that characterised sodomy and "lesbianism" as unnatural sexual offences and removed the "two-finger test" as a test for virginity, among other changes. These modifications and deletions were seen as part of a wider move to afford all citizens, irrespective of their gender and sexuality, equality and dignity within the medical system. Which is why the decision to reverse those changes in August — rolled back on Thursday — bringing back definitions of virginity and "defloration", removing the dis-tinctions between consensual sex between queer individuals, adultery and offences like incest and bestiality, as well as doing away with a seven-hour training module on dis-ability, were inexplicable and disheartening.

abuity, were inexpircative and disnearements.

The revised curriculum also ran counter to existing laws regarding the health and well-being of the LGBTQH+ community and other marginalised groups, like persons with disabilities. For example, the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2019 and the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016 both mandate a review of the medical cur-riculum to address the healthcare needs of disabled and transgender persons. These pro-visions were made keeping in mind the gap in access and quality of healthcare between these groups and their fellow citizens. The outdated definitions of "virginity" and transvestism (defined as a "sexual perversion") served to further stigmatise communities that have, historically, had limited or no access to social, economic and medical infrastructure. As a study by Initiative for Health Equity Advocacy And Research (iHEAR), published earlier this year, showed, thanks to a health system that is designed for cisgender and able-bodied persons in the binary of male and female, queer and transgender individuals often end up self-medicating or turning to quacks, further risking their lives and well-being. Many delay or avoid accessing healthcare because of negative experiences in the past. With a new batch of students under the CBME system likely to enno lin October, a new generation of doctors availst training. In a medical system that has been slow to act on le-

gal mandates such as the provision of transgender wards and washrooms in all govern-ment hospitals by 2022, sensitivity among healthcare workers can make the crucial dif-ference. The MAC has done well to rethink the revisions to the CBME. It must do more to reinstate dignity of all citizens at the heart of medical education.

TIAFOE VS FRITZ

In tennis, as an era comes to a close, new players will find their place in the sun

OR A COUNTRY that gave the tennis world Jimmy Connors and John McEnroe in the 1970s and '80s, and the formidable quartet of Pete Sampras, Andre Agassi, Jim Courier and Michael Chang in the 1990s, the last two decades have been a barren period for the US. Andy Roddick was the last American man to win a Grand Slam singles title (2003 US Open), and the last to feature in a final (2009 Wimbledon). That jinx is set to be broken with Frances Tiafoe and Taylor Fritz facing off in an all-American US Open semifinal.

Evidently, it's not just US players who have been found short since three racquet-

evolenny, it's not just us pages win have been ound short since mere facture-wielders named Roger Federer, Rafael Nadal and Novak Djokovic emerged on the tennis stage. There have been at least two generations of high-quality talent — players such as Tomas Berdych, Jo-Wilfried Tsonga, David Ferrer, Nikolay Davydenko and David Nalbandian — who were brushed saide by the Big. 31, needed the calibre of Andy Murray and Stan Wawrinka — occasionally Milos Raonic and Juan Martin del Potro — to stay relevant. In fact, 2024 is the first year since 2002 when neither Federer, nor Nadal or Djokovic have won a mign. As their era comes to a close, Fritz and Tiafoe may be two of several play-ers — behind Carlos Alcaraz, Daniil Medvedev and Jannik Sinner — who will attempt to fill the void. Fritz won just two of his 15 matches against the Big 3 (both against Nadal)

while Tiafoe had solitary success in seven attempts (also against Nadal). Hence, it may be a case of them finding their place under the sun beyond the long shadows of the legends. US women's tennis since the late 1990s has been dominated by the Williams sisters (alongside Lindsay Davenport and Jennifer Capriati). But with the likes of Coco Gauff, Sloane (alongside Lindsay Davenport and Jerminer Caphalds, but whither insert is seen seen seen Stephens and Sofia Kenin now winning majors, there's no problem with depth. There are five Americans in the top-20 on the women's side as well, and with the less heralded Jessica Pegula and Emma Navarro in the US Open semifinals, there's no cause for worry

The Indian EXPRESS Have you heard the teacher?



Their grumble, however inaudible, takes a heavy toll on the nation. The cost multiplies with each passing year

KRISHNA KUMAR

THERE IS NO standard operating procedure for reforming education. Every country tries it in its own way. One can't think of a country where radical changes happened amidst widespread resentment and melancholia among teachers. Melancholia is the right term to describe the psychological state wherein both anger and cynicism have proved insufficient for achieving mental peace. Why teachers are not involved in choosine the changes they are supposed to peace. Why teachers are not involved in choosing the changes they are supposed to implement is just a one mark question. Everyone can guess the correct answer—that teachers are not trusted in our system. They are perceived as culprits. It is no easy task to show that they are, in fact, victims. "Anyone can teach", is a common view. Earlier thisyear, Bihar decided to use retired policemen as teachers. I am sure they brought in hard discipline among children. That's what our schools lack, many believe, and hold teachers responsible. Many others

and hold teachers responsible. Many others feel that teachers don't want to work, so they don't deserve the salary they get. This line of thought has led to popular endorsement of the low-pay policy that the vast majority of private schools follow. And then there is the view that teachers form an obstacle to reforms, so the only way to bring changes is by forcing teachers to adapt.

Administrators who deal with teachers with a heavy hand are praised and remembered. Stories of how they suspended someone on the spot circulate as proof of a time when no one came late or left early, and exam results shot up. This is the ultimate indicator of quality even if the examination feel that teachers don't want to work, so they

exam results shot up. This is the ultimate in-dicator of quality even if the examination system is derided too. Comparisons between government and private school teachers al-ways show the former in a poor light, fur-nishing easy justification for parental pref-erences for private schools. On top of every other complaint is the charge that teachers indulge in politics. Dismantling their unions is the path several state governments have taken over the recent decades. Pressure to conform has been the school

teachers' lot all along, and now that pressure

covers the college and university teacher as well. Badgered by CCTV and the routine demand for uploading evidence, school teachers have lost what little autonomy they had before the advent of digital life. Such circumstances have encouraged distrust towards the teacher to grow exponentially. Irecall my watershed moment when a private school principal in Surat housted: "Los above you what is going on in every classroom without rising from my chair." It was early in the century, and the CCTV coverage in that school was already comprehensive. Not eacher or child was beyond the camera's eye. This was a heady advance over mere firing on the spot. In Delhi, the goynerment gained popular approval when it offered a link of CCTV surveillance to parents. All these years, governments assumed they knew how to sort out teachers. A new, strange challenge has now surfaced and no state directorate is sure of what to do. The coaching industry has stumped the pundits

coaching industry has stumped the pundits of education. Coaching has usurped secondary of education. Coaching has usupped secondary education in both government and private schook. Historically, secondary level teachers were responsible for preparing children for board exams. They still do that, but the coach has munched away at this job. By calling its employees "teachers", the coaching industry has quietly changed the mould that defined both teaching and the format of exams. Multiple choice questions (MCQs) are the dominant currency of mowhedge now. It gives the class teacher just one choice: To conform. The distinction between coaching and teaching was once important, but the market

The distinction between coaching and teaching was once important, but the market has brought them closer. The coach has a limited objective and he — most publicised coaches are male — plays a narrow role in an adolescent's life. A teacher, on the other hand, faces the full gamut of needs that adolescence brings, in addition to academic demands. In mary lives, the secondary teacher plays a decisive role, and is often remembered with graftiude.

Teachers of primary and pre-primary classes play an even more decisive role, but they are seldom remembered. Nor are they

recognised within the system, especially by administrators. The primary teacher has no status in our society and the early childhood teacher has even less. She performs the sensitive task of inducting the child into a community of knowledge in every field, creating predispositions that shape the child's interests and intellectual energy. These words mean little in our system. Both tradition and the nule structure unfold the norm that the the rule structure uphold the norm that the younger the child you teach, the lower your

younger the child you teach, the lower your status and salary.

All teachers are produced by the higher education system, and that is now the new frontier of breathless reforms. Within the last few sessions, huge shifts in established practice have occurred. They include the semester system, four-year undergraduate programme, centralised admission through a MCQ-based test. Teachers have been critical send semision of these textures in changes. The ceptical of these tectonic change senior, outgoing generation of teachers is frus trated. Filling of vacancies poses an intractable problem because the backlog is so huge. For

problem because the backlog is so huge. For many years now, ad hoc teachers have kept the system going. With their careers compro-mised, they feel deeply unhappy. A swelling workload and an increasing sutudent-teacher ratio have rendered them incapacitated for professional growth. Their job is just as important as that of jun-ior doctors, but universities and colleges have no emergency ward. Victims of a prejudiced public perception, teachers are used to the rhetoric repeated on Teachers Day, Yes, it is day to renew one's idealism, to feel inspired, but for a vast rumber of teachers today, it is but for a vast number of teachers today, it is hard to ignore the daily grind and ignominy. Teachers' Day is a good occasion to remember that no nation can escape paying a heavy price for making its teachers chronically unha-ppy. Their grumble, however inaudible, take a heavy toll on the nation's human resource and the cost multiplies with each passing year

mer Director of NCERT. His new book Thank You, Gandhi, will be released next month



A CHAMPION OF ASIAN CINEMA

With critical acumen, sharp curatorial instincts, Aruna Vasudev expanded its reach

SHUBHRA GUPTA

THE FIRST TIME I met Aruna Vasudev was at THE FIRST TIME I met Aruna Vasudev was at a boutique film festival in Nantes, the Festival des 3 Continents, which focussed on the cinemas from Asia, Africa and Laith America. It was one of the first film festivals to switch from the overwhelmingly Occidental fare programmed in these places, to pivot towards what were then considered "emerging film nations" by the West.

R was one of my first forays into covering an international film festival. Vasudev, who managed the feat of being diminutive and formidable at the same time, looked me up and down, and said "hallo". It was a greeting from someone well-established to someone

and down, and said "hallo". It was a greeting from someone well-established to someone just starting out, which said "watch and learn". Gracious, yet firm.

Though many years have passed since that first encounter, I remember how struck I was by Vasudev's clear eminence, as small eddies of people kept fetching up to greet her. She was, quite clearly, holding court, that distinctive dipped-in-malt voice booming, cigarette smoke swirling, switching easily between English and French I remember being introduced to a dizvzine arrang of film festival introduced to a dizvzine arrang of film festival

tween English and French. I remember being introduced to a dizaying array of film festival heads, agents, writers, all of whom nodded politely at me and then turned their attention back to Vasudev.

Asian cinema's most vociferous champion at work. And the world was listening. It was a time when the only Indian filmmaker that the cinephiles in the West certificably knew was Satyajit Ray, If it hadn't been for Vasudev and her relenties push, the kind of awareness of cinemas from South Asia, South East Asia, and Ian. shat became prowing expo-East Asia, and Iran, that began growing expo nentially, would have taken a lot more time

She had parlayed her knowledge and connections into creating, in 1988, Cinemaya, a journal marked by its exemplary focus on Asian cinema. It was well-produced, took its subject very seriously, and introduced many of us to writers and films we had barely heard of. That was a time without the internet, but Vasudev's net was large and she cast it wide, corralling voices and points of view that gave us much to

Pressure to conform has

all along, and now that

pressure covers the college and university teacher as well. Badgered by CCTV and the routine demand for uploading evidence, school teachers have lost what little

autonomy they had before the advent of digital life.

Such circumstances have

exponentially. I recall my watershed moment when a private school principal in Surat boasted: 'I can show

encouraged distrust towards the teacher to grow

you what is going on in every classroom without rising

from my chair."

been the school teachers' lot

After that initial meeting, we kept bumping into each other at film festivals, both domestic and international, and conversation always flowed easily.

Meanwhile, of course, she had parlayed her knowledge and connections into creating, in 1988, Ginemaye, a journal marked by its exemplary focus on Asian cinema. It was well-produced, took its subject very seriously, and introduced many of us to writers and films we had barely heard of. That was a time without the internet, but Vasudev's net was large, and she cast it vide, corralling net was large, and she cast it wide, corralling voices and points of view that gave us much

woices and points of twew that galve us means to ruminate on.

There was a lot that Vasudev and her collaborators Latika Padgaonkar and Indu Shrikent could legitimately take credit for when it came to expanding the sheer reach of Asian cinema. She founded NETPAC (Network for the Promotion of Asian Cinema), an organisation which always kept its mandate centre-stage. She was the chief architect of Cinefan, a film festival in Delhi. For those of who have having an international film. ord Crine-Sage, was the cure a drinest of us who missed having an international film festival in the Capital (IFFI, International Film festival of India, had moved to Goa), Cinefan was a godsend. It brought back the joy of hav-ing access to top-notch international films, mainly from Asia, Africa, and and the Arab countries, as well as a superbly curated sec-tion on independent Indian cinema. Even as it gave us much joy, it was clear that if Cinefan wanted to be bigger, it would need a lot more support from its financial partners and creative stakeholders, even if it never lacked enthusiastic participation. Those who were present that evening will never for-

sultation with the government.

TEACHERS' DAY WAS celebrated all over the country coinciding with the 96th birth an-niversary of the former president, S Radhakrishnan, an eminent teacher and philosopher. At a function in New Delhi,

get the line of people waiting to get into Stein Auditorium at the India Habitat Centre for a Wong Kar Wai retrospective: It wound out from the building, down the circular drive-way, all the way down to Lodhi Road — a jaw-dropping sight. Sadly, Cinefand windled and died much before its time, despite best intentions. To date, no one has been able to find a replacement for either IFFI, or Cinefan, even though the Habitat Centre itself now runs couple of excellent film festivals annually.

And I doubt if there will be anothe Aruna Vasudev, with her combination of Aruna Vasudev, with her combination of critical acumen and sharp curatorial in-stincts, who was much at home in the Capital's tony salons, as she was in movie halls heaving with viewers. Her sister Uma, who passed away in 2019, was an accom-plished journalist-turned-author (one of the first editors of India Today, and one of Indira Gandhi's early biographers) and between both of them, the sisters were invariably on every guest list that mattered. In the lastfew years, you could see she had visibly slowed down, Just a few months back, I remember her telling me how she was time.

visibly slowed down, lust a few months back, I remember her telling me how she was tired of taking all those interminable flights. It was at one of the post-film dinners, and I had just returned from jury duty at the EI Gouna Film Festival in Egypt. She chuckled when she head it was a NETPM; jury, even as she said, for the nth time, "I don't know how you see all those dreadful Bollywood movies", and we raised a toast to cinema. And that's pretty much what I see her do-ing in the hereafter.

shubhra.gupta@expressindia.com



SEPTEMBER 6, 1984, FORTY YEARS AGO

PM DENIES ROLE

ruminate on

PRIME MINISTER INDIRA Gandhi asserted that her party had nothing to do with splits in other parties. But it certainly wished that those affected by the split were allowed to choose instead of being held captive. In a meeting held under the auspices of the Bihar PCC-I, Mrs Gandhi said in the face of such undemocratic methods, opposition leaders had no right to teach Congress about democratic traditions.

SINO-INDIA TALKS

DESPITE THE POSSIBILITY of the country going to the polls by the year-end, the Indian

government appears to be taking the up-coming talk with China seriously. This is ev-ident from the preparatory work going on in the Ministry of External Affairs for the talks scheduled to be in Beijing from September 17. India's Ambassador to China A P Venkateswaran has reached for pre-talk con-sultation with the government. President Zail Singh presented national awards for 1983 to 159 teachers for their meritorious services and devotion to the cause of education. State governments also honoured their teachers at various functions. CANADA ELECTION

CANADA'S PROGRESSIVE CONSERVATIVE TEACHERS' DAY AWARDS

CANADA'S PROCRESSIVE CONSERVATIVE. Party had a landslide victory in the general election, ousting the ruling Liberals. After the win, Brian Mulroney, Conservative leader, hailed "a brand new day for this wonderful Canada." His party, which was in opposition for allbut one of the last 21 years, scored up-set wins across the country.

DIS/AGREE THE BEST OF BOTH SIDES

A fortnightly column, which offers not this-versus-that, but the best of both sides, to inform the debate



West Bengal has passed an anti-rape bill laying down harsher punishments, including death penalty. But do stringent laws act as a deterrent to sexual violence?

Hard and hollow

Harsher laws are only a political response to public outrage



NEETIKA VISHWANATH

THE RAPE AND murder of a doctor at the R G
Kar Medical College and Hospital has reignited
the demand for stricter laws and the death
penalty for rape. Unsurprisingly, the West
Bengal government has significantly enhanced punishments for sexual offences
against women and children in the Aparajita
Woman and Child (West Bengal Griminal Laws
Amendment) Bill, 2024 passed by the state assembly. Among the proposed enhancements
is the mandatory death penalty for rape that
results in death or permanent vegetative state assembly. Among the proposed enhancements
is the mandatory death penalty has
been included despite it being declared unconstitutional by the Supreme Court in Mithu
vSate of Punjah (1983). While these proposed
state amendments to central taxes (BNS 2024
and POCSO 2012) will require the approval of
the President to become enforceable law, these
measures should force us to confront larger
questions. First, will harsher punishments
contribute to preventing sexual violence in our society? Second, irrespective of its preventive
potential, should we impose harsh punishments on individuals guilty of such offences
as something that they "deserve"?

The ingrained political
tactic of responding to highprofile protests over incidents of aggravated sexualviolence with harsher
punishments is not new.

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hancements to punishments

The particle of the properties of the punishments on and the punishments on and the punishments on and the punishments on and the punishments on a punishment on a puni THE RAPE AND murder of a doctor at the R G

punishments is not new. There were significant en-hancements to punishments in the wake of the 2012 Delhi gang rape, and the incidents of child rape and murder in Kathua and Unnao, Faced with mounting public and political pressure, govern-ments find it convenient to make the laws stricter to make the laws stricter to make the laws stricter.

ments find it convenient to make the laws stricter to prove their commitment to addressing sexual violence. But the hollow nature of this engagement must be obvious to us. Harsher laws are part of the established political playbook to quieteen public clamour but can do very little to prevent incidence of sexual violence in our society. Instead, they play on society's collective anger and desire to inflict harsh punishment in the immediate aftermath of such incidents. In our reflections on whether harsher laws will prevent sexual violence, we need to con-

will prevent sexual violence, we need to cor front the actual source of sexual violence in our society. The dominant understanding of sexual violence is as isolated actions of indisexual violente is as isolated actions or inaviduals with deviant behaviour. However, sex-ual violence is an outcome of deeply ingrained gender, caste, and religious hierarchies that routinely produce and legitimise sexual vio-lence. Rape is an assertion of power, it is part of a larger spectrum of violence against women towards which there is widespread apathy in our homes, workplaces, institutions etc. While

the spectre of sexual violence created in public discourse is one of stranger rape, perpetrators are well-hown to the victims in over 90
per cent of rape cases.
Suggestions that the death penalty will
deter offenders make flawed assumptions
about the Indian criminal justice system. We
assume that those charged with rape end up
being convicted for it. But that is unfounded.
Conviction rates in rape cases are under 30
per cent. The punishment stage of a trial is
activated only if the accused has been held
guilty. Criminologists across the world have
argued that it is the certainty of the punishment and not its severity that deters crime.
Challenges in effective and prompt investigations, concerns with prosecutorial capacity and quality, questions about the institutional capacity of courts to conduct fair trials
without undue delay are all impediments to
pursuing accountability for sexual violence.
Focusing on harsher punishments allows
governments to divert attention from these
difficult questions and effective long-term
measures. The shrill invocation of the death
penalty as a response also ignores the justice
needs of victims. It is politically convenient
and ignorant of reality to think that victims'
needs can be captured by resorting to harsh

penalty as a response also ignores the justice needs of victims. It is politically comenient and ignorant of reality to think that victims' needs can be captured by resorting to harsh punishments. Navigating pre-trial and trial stages, including registering police complaints, emerge as the biggest challenges for survivors. Survivors are subjected to inhumante treatment by doctors during medical examination. The lack of witness protection schemes forces many survivors to compromise out-of-court, especially when perpetrators are from dominant backgrounds.

When the death penalty for rape fails on account of its ability to prevent rapes, it is justified as a proportionate response to a grave crime. Reasoning that rape without nurder warrants the death penalty, a punishment also prescribed for ending another person's life, reinforces the pathadoughted the penalty of rending another person's life, reinforces the pathadoughted the penalty also werkoles the med four societies of the death penalty also werkoles the med four societies of the penalty also werkoles the med four societies.

Reasoning that rape

without murder

warrants the death penalty, a punishment

also prescribed for ending another persons

life, reinforces the patriarchal logic that

'rape is a deathless shame'. It undermines the hard-fought efforts

of women's movements.

to the death penalty also overlooks the role of our soci-

ght efforts overlooks the role of our socitovernents, etyl in perpetuating and promoting sexual offences and creating conditions of impunity for perpetrators.

Putting the complete blame on perpetrators is highly self-righteous for a society that arctively contributes to a culture that trivallises violence against women. We must recognise our hypocrisy in being selectively enraged about stranger rapes only when the bodies of victims bear marks of violence serious enough to shake our collective conscience. to shake our collective conscience.

to shake our collective conscience. While there is no one way to tackle sexual offences, tougher laws and the death penalty are undoubtedly the wrong ones. We require broader social reforms, sustained governance efforts, and stronger criminal justice institutions. We must call out the hollow tough-on-crime political agenda on sexual violence. It is nothing but a distraction.

Surendranath and Vishwanath are with Project 39A, National Law University, Delhi Views are persona

Stricter rape laws are needed

Wherever punishment is swift and harsh, incidence of the crime is much lower

Despite the various

guidelines given from time to time by the Supreme Court about

the counselling and medical treatment of

rape victims, the harsh reality is that these are

not readily available. Women who report rapes are statistically

more prone to violence.



Tris BECOME ALMOST like clockwork—
every few months, the nation wakes up
to the news of another rape. Statistics
show that a woman is raped in India
every four hours — that is 90 women a
day — from just the rapes that are reported. A simple Google search shows
that one of the top suggestions related to
rape in India is "rape without a medical".
It is a telling indication of how many
women are struggling with the legality of
the issue, that women who have been
raped are trying to find a situation where
they do not have to underge a medical examination either because of societal pressure or due to their own perceived and
extremely misplaced jidea of societal pressure or due to their own perceived
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activemely misplaced jidea of societal pressure or due to their own perceived
as of societal pressure or due to their own perceived
as objects to stisstly the needs of shame.
At this point, we are all tired of chantiga slogars like "matri devo bhava". No
woman is not treated as a god, she is
treated worse than a pest. We are enablers in a society where women are seaas objects to stisstly the needs of a man, at
home or outside. We are not seen as individuals. It is telling that rapes are on
of the first twa crimes committed when
a political territory is occupied and is
used as a means to induce terror.

The Indian juridical
response to rape has
been a long-drawn
process, right from the
date of Turkarmar Vistae of
Maharashtra in 1978 to
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and against the obstacle IT'S BECOME ALMOST like clockwork -

created in the name of the innocent-until-proven guilty doctrine. Despite the various

Despite the various guidelines given from time to time by the Supreme Court about the counselling and medical treatment of rape victims, the harsh reality is that these are not readily available. Women who report rapes are statistically more prone to violence and the police do not handle the matter with sensitivity. What it creates is an environment favourable to the predator, giving him the audacity to look at women solely from a lens of subjuga-

at women solely from a lens of subjuga-tion or pleasure.

Rape is old news in India. Protests take place and then life goes on the way it aways has. Thals commence, rapists take advantage of legal loopholes, like minor discrepancies in medical reports or names, and try to get away. In the December 2012 gangrape, a fast-track court was set up and the matter was con-cluded in eight months. However, it took

seven years to hang them. The Government of India has now repealed the earlier laws and enacted the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), 2023, the Bharatiya Sakshya Adhiniyam, 2023, and the Bharatiya Ragarik Suraksha Sanhita, 2023, to replace the Indian Penal Code, creating stricter laws and much needed streamlining in implementation. However, there are still core issues in rape laws that need to be tightened. Stricter laws create a mindset where a perpetrator is afraid of the consequences. This determence is extremely vaccessary intoday's terrence is extremely necessary in today's India. World over, we see that where the punishment for rape is swift and harsh,

punishment for rape is swift and harsh, incidence of rape is much lower.

There is an urgent need for deterrent laws. BNS, 2023 already encompasses stringent provisions for the punishment of rape and related offences. Sections 64, 67, 01, 71, 72(1), 73, 124(1), and 124(2) of the BNS provide a comprehensive legit framework addressing various aspects of sexual violence, including rape, rape and murder, gangrape, repeat offence and the disclosure of a victim's identity. These sections emphasise the severity of these sections emphasise the severity of these disclosure of a victim's identity. These sections emphasies the severity of these crimes and the necessity of strong deter-rents. For instance, the BNS includes new chapter on 'Offences against Woman and Child', introduces electronic First Information Reports (e-FiRs) to fa-cilitate swift reporting, and mandates the application of all relevant sections of the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act, 2012 (POCSO Act) if the vic-tim is a minor. The BNS outlines severe penalties: Section 64(1) prescribes im-prisonment ranging

prisonment ranging from 10 years to life for rape, while Section 64(2) extends this to life imextends this to life im-prisonment for the re-mainder of a person's natural life in cases of ag-gravated rape. Section 66 of the BNS provides for a minimum of 20 years of rigorous imprisonment for contribution of the sec minimum of 20 years or rigorous imprisonment for certain offences. Despite BNSS making laws stringent, the R

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tatistically
to violence.

The West Bengal government laws do
not act as deterrent
act as deterrent
enough, that stricter
laws are necessary.
The West Bengal government has passed
the Aparajita Woman and Child Bill
(West Bengal Criminal Laws and
Amendment) Bill 2024, which is a laudable step towards creating an environment where there is true deterrence. The
Bill proposes capital punishment for
those convicted of rape if their actions
result in the victim's death or leave her
in a vegetative state, as well as a fist-track
mechanism of completing the investigation and trial within 21 days and 30 days
respectively. I believe that right now
India needs this.

The writer is a graduate of the Harvard Law School, former Additional Solicitor General of India in the Supreme Court and a recipient of the French order of Merit

From India to Global South

Sharing development experiences and insights could help create new policy choices for countries



SACHIN CHATURVEDI

PRIME MINISTER NARENDRA Modi, at the inauguration of the Third Voice of Global South Summit (VoCSS), attempted to rebal-ance the terms of South-South engagement

South Summit (VoCSS), attempted to rebal-ance the terms of South-South engagement with a new conceptual framework that he described as a "Development Compact". The idea behind the concept is to leverage five different modalities of engagement in har-monised manner, where one reinforces the other. These are capacity building, technol-ogy sharing, trade for development, grants and the most important, concessional fi-nance. If implemented well, India's Development Compact would set a new baseline for wider engagement with the Global South.

Due to imbalances in the modalities of engagement, a large section of the Global South has ended up in indebtedness of dis-tressing proportions. The figures from UNC-TAD (2023) say it all: Developing countries' public debt in 2023 was 292 tillion; develop-ing countries net interest payments and developing countries esperienced a negative net resource transfer in 2022. Here, it is also worth recalling that the debt crisis has been further accentuated by the continued failure of the OECD countries in meeting their glob-ally agreed UN target of 1870 of providing 0.7 per cent of CNPs a CNA (official development assistance); so as their commitment on di-mate change for \$100 billion.

ally agreed UN target of 1970 of proxiding 0.7 per cent of CAP as ODA (official development assistance); so as their commitment on climate change for \$100 billion. It is extremely important for the Global South to go back to basics and nevisit the idea of development which disappeared from the global policy landscape. Led by Reaganism and Thatcherism's approach to finance driven globalisation and regimenti-sation of GATT to WTO, the transition completely squeezed out the policy space for developing countries. This, in a way, reinforced the apprehensions that Raul Prebisch and others came up within the form of the centre-periphery theory. Since the collapse of Washington consensus, WCoSS has given new hope for discussing development in its new incarnation for exploring alternative pathways for economic growth, social inclusion and environmental sustenance. In this respect, mutual sharing of development experiences and insights on policy making would play a crucial role in evolving new choices. With this year's theme of "Empowering Global South for sustainable future", the summit has focused on sharing each other's experiences, insights and possibilities for evolving an alternative developiling contents of the province of the pr

future" the summit has focused on sharing each other's experiences, insights and possibilities for evolving an alternative development paradigm. The ticke as to have development narrative based on Southern experiences and perspectives, addressing southern hopes and aspirations. There are five broad possibilities from the recent development initiatives in India that may be adapted for locally relevant eccopstems inthe Clobal South. The first is in the realm of sustainability, wherein the em-

phasis is on Lifestyle for Environment (LiFE), re-energising SDCs and promoting renew-able energy through rooftop solar panels and solar farms. The second is the area of and solar farms. The second is the area of promoting health security where the driving force for India is around the concept of "One World One Health". Here, India's contribution for Arogya Maitri may be recalled. The assistance that India provided to Africa solar her Pacific Island countries by building hospitals and Jan Aushadri Kendras, assumes significance. The third is India's emergence as the first responder in humanitarian crises, be that in Papura New Guines, Kenya, Gaza and Ukraine. This highlights the effort that India has been making to prepare other countries to bring in disaster resilience and necessary institutional mechanisms for necessary institutional mechanisms for countries to bring in disaster resilience and necessary institutional mechanisms for quick, effective and efficient responses. The fourth relates to promoting financial inclu-sion and last mile connectivity to be achieved through UPI and Digital Public Infrastructure. Incla has already signed an agreement with 12 countries for the promo-tion of DPI. The fifth is the need for strengthe-ening interfiniacyses in the field of education, skills and capacity building. For sharing finds a development experi-ence, institutional frameworks would play a vital not in connective avious entities and

vital role in connecting various entities and people. At the VoGSS, the PM recalled India launching the Global South Centre o Excellence, called DAKSHIN, for knowledge

launching the Global South Centre of Excellence, allo DASHIN, for knowledge promotion, experience sharing and evolv-ing programmes for skills and capacity building. The role of such institutions is to promote a two way flow of knowledge and experiences. A pluralistic perspective would enrich the Global South vision of develop-ment by bringing in strategies for overcom-ing challenges specific to ensuring access, equity and inclusion. These institutions may facilitate the co-creation of knowledge. Apart from the Development Compact, some of the other announcements are also significant, as they have been targeted to bridge the gaps where they are clearly evi-dent. Policy impact analysis and trade per-formance have been weak links in the de-leopment journey of the Global South. Keeping this in mind, a special fund for ca-pacity building with S2.5 million and \$1 mil-lion for training in trade policy making has been announced. India has also announced etting up of a Social Impact Fund with an initial contribution of \$25 million. According on an RIS study, India currently extends around \$7.5 billion annually to various part-ner countries in the Global South. Prime Minister Modi?s emphasis on the Global South to come together for voicing

around x/s bilion annually to vanous part-ner countries in the Global South. Prime Minister Modi's emphasis on the Global South to come together for voicing their common concerns and also bringing in positive approaches for global solutions is an important call that should be heard earnestly by the Global South community. WGCS3 as a platform to discuss some of these issues is an important initiative in a world where uncertainty and vulnerability have multiplied for democratically elected gov-ermments. The emphasis on de-stabilising esigns through terrorism and active en-gagement of tools to promote secessionist forces and sectional voloriene, assumes great significance given the recent events in Engladesh, whose interim government's chief advisor Muhammad Yunus was also attending the session.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

THE TEACHER'S WAYS

THIS REFERS TO the article, 'The world's THIS REFERS TO the article, 'The world's unborn soul' (IE, September 5). S Radhakrishnan's approach to the world was born out of India's age-old visidom was unborn soul's her was dead to the world is one family). He prioritised humanity over nationalism. We need his ideas to achieve peace in today's world tour apart by mindless violence. His philosophy could put an end to persecution of innocent souls, in any part of the world. He could rightly be described as a true Gandhian who longed for universal peace and brotherhood. The nation has much to learn from his ways.

SH Quadri, Bikaner

SHQuadri, Bikame THIS REFERS TO the article, The world's unborn soul' (IE. September 5). Since 1936, the world has undergone a sea change but the teachings of S Radhakrishan remain relevant. He expected societies to remain close-knit in the commercial, social and political spheres. The world has become a global village but the world citizens are neglecting cultural cohesion. Many members of a particular community have to face violence by members of other faiths. We are all God's children, any kind discrimination is unwarranted.

Subhash Vaid, New Delhi

IUSTICE FOR HER

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'In her THIS REFERS TO the editorial, "In her name" (IE, September 5). The wift passage of the Aparajita anti-rape bill comes and protests from the public, demanding isstice and accountability from the Amazia Banerjee-led government, thas sparked a debatte about whether such measures are merely a politically mortised reaction to silence growing unrest. The law provides for quick investigation and prosecution of cases. The problem lies with implementation, Justice will be better served if barriers to women's advancement are removed by first making workplaces and homes safe for them.

SS Paul, Nadio

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'In her name' (IE, August 5), it is apparent that the West Bengal government has passed the Aparajita anti-rape bill 2024 to blunt the Opposition attacks and assuage public anger. If a law could solve all problems, crimes like murder would have stopped. Moreover, death penalty for rape will need credible evidence for prosecution. It is evident from the current conviction arter of 28 per cent in care cares as por the rate of 28 per cent in rape cases as per the NCRB (2018-22) that more laws are not the answer. It is therefore more impor-tant to counter the culture of patriarchy and misogyny in the society.

LR Murmu, New Delhi

China shifts gears to combat strong rivals



MAJ GEN GG DWIVEDI (RETD)

HE Chinese mili-tary is shifting its focus to winning stronger opponents unting challenges. stronger opponents amid mounting challenges. According to a South Crina Moming Post report, President Xi Jinping, who is also the Chairman of the Central Military Commission (CMC), Chairman of the People's Liberation Annual Post Authorities Annual Post Annua tion Amy (PIA) to enhance its strategic capabilities to defend the country's sovereignty and developmental interests.

elopmental interests.
i unveiled the new direcwhile commemorating Deng Xiaoping's 120th birth ersary on August 22. He highlighted Deng's vision for highlighted Deng's vision for the PIA — which was instru-mental in developing it into a strong, modernised and well-organised force — emphasis-ing the importance of 'fewer but better troops'. General Miao Hua, a member of the CMC stated while compent. CMC, stated while comment ing on the strategic shift, "In the new journey, we should focus on strengthening capa-bilities to defeat strong eneA recent article in the PLA Daily, while referring to Deng's 1980 strategic judge-ment that "a world war can be postponed or avoided", noted that China now faces great changes unseen in a century. It asserted the need for the armed forces to remain vigiarmed forces to remain vag-lant and maintain strategic clarity on the possible risk of war, make full preparations for military struggle, effectively deterwar and resolutely win it.

The Chinese leadership has refined its warfighting doctrines of winning local wars since the 1990s through wars since the 1990s through white papers and strategic guidelines. The first White Paper on National Defence' was published in 1998. Fol-lowing the release of White Paper on National Defence (2006)', the PLA adopted the (2006), the PLA adopted the 'local wars under informa-tionised conditions' doctrine to match technologically superior adversaries. Through the 'informa-tionised war' doctrine, China cought to improve high costs. sought to impose high costs on conventionally superior opponents by targeting com opponents by targeting com-mand, control, communica-tion, computer, intelligence, surveillance and reconnais-sance (C4ISR) networks. The recent directive to the military to prepare for wars

against strong enemies marks another strategic shift, prima rily as a response to the chal-lenges China is facing, both in the land borders. Incidentally, Xi, on assuming power in



2012, had initiated a slew of deep-rooted military reforms as he had envisioned the PLA to play a key role in realising the 'China Dream' of a pros-perous and powerful China by the middle of the century. Sov-creignty was identified as one of the key national objectives. Besides fostering nationalism, it was to ensure the security of periphery and the integration of Taiwan and all claimed ter ritories with the motherland

To provide strategic direc To provide strategic direc-tion to implement Xi's vision, the 'White Paper on National Defence, 2015' (China's Mili-tary Strategy) was released. Its theme was 'active defence', and its focus was on winning local wars under conditions of modern technolosy'. It of modern technology'. It implied a major transition in plied a major transition in a naval strategy from 'off-ore waters defence' to a

China does not consider India as a

major threat, given the prevailing asymmetry in the Comprehensive National Power between the two.

open sea protection' to secure China's maritime interests.

To operationalise the new doctrine, the CMC was restructured and military regions reor-ganised into theatre comgamsed into treater com-mands. A number of measures were instituted to enhance mil-itary capabilities across the spectrum. PLA navy (PLAN), numerically the biggest navy todaywithmore than 350 ships is expected to reach a strength of 450, including six aircraft of 450, including six aircraft car-riers, in the next few years. The Chinese Coast Guard is the largest in the world, with over 100 vessels. The PLA air force is in the process of building an 'air space defence force' to enhance its power projection capabilities. It is expected to have a fleet of over 1,000 stealth and fifth-generation fighter air-craft by around 2035. Besides, the Rocket Force arsenal is

anticipated to go up to 700 before the end of the decade, duly complemented by hypersonic glide vehicles

and cruise missiles. Under Xi, the White Paper on National Defence, 2019' (Defence in the New Era) was published; it was US-specific. It flagged the fact that America and China are competing superpowers and the latter's military is developing to the point that it could challenge the US. China further revised the limited war fighting doctrine based on 'informatisation and based on 'informatisation and intelligentisation'; the thrust was on information technology, artificial intelligence (AI) and digitisation. Through informa-tised warfare, China plans to take on opponents superior in conventional terms by targeting the C4ISR systems.

The rationale behind Chi-

na's recent doctrinal shift is epossibility of confrontation th the US and its allies du to the ongoing maritime dis-putes in South and East China seas and Beijing's persistent claims over Taiwan. Hence, to caims over lawan. Hence, to get the better of its powerful opponents, China plans to increase its strategic capabili-ties significantly by leveraging disruptive technologies, including the weaponisation of AI by building networks of unmanned weapon systems. unmanned weapon systems. The 'grey zone warfare' is a force multiplier that encompasses the concept of 'Three Warfares' (psychological, media and legal warfare). It is already being effectively

vaged by the Chinese Coast Guard and PLAN in the South China Sea. China does not consider India is a major threat, considering the prevailing asymmetry in the Comprehensive National Power between the two, which distinctly favours the former Ironically Line of Actual Control (LAC) in Ladakh, despite a number of meetings of the Working Mech m for Consultation anism for Consultation and Coordination and Corps Com-manders, besides numerous ministerial-level interactions. Given the massive military build-upacrossthe LAC in Tibet opposite Arunachal Padesh, the enactment of the newborder the eractment of the newborder law in 2022 and the Beijing-Islamabad collusion, China apparently has no design to resolve the border issue anytime soon. India must be fully pre-pared for possible escalations. Chino's presided a proportion

China's periodic pronounce ments of new military doc ments of new military doc-tines serve a dual purpose it ensures strategic clarity for the defence planners and sub-te messaging to the global polity. While the Chinese lead-ership foresees stability and a peaceful environment, it makes no bones about its intent of using force in pursuit intent of using force in pursuit intent of using force in pursuit of its national interests. China's recent doctrinal shift erits a realistic analysis ravel the Dragon's grar sign and its implications.

Food processing sector symbolises India's growth story



RAVNEET SINGH BITTU

ing sector in India stands out as a beacon of our nation's ambi-tion, symbolising the strides we are making toward Viksit Bharat. No longer just a con-tributor to the economy, this sector is rapidly transform ing into a cornerstone of India's growth story. Under India's growth story. Under the visionary leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, a masterful blend of policies, initiatives and infrastructure development new heights, turning it into a formidable force on the global stage. India currently al stage. Incla currently boasts a thriving economy valued at \$3.7 trillion, with ambitious goals of reaching \$30-35-trillion economy by the nation's centenary of Independence in 2047.

At the core of India's trans-formation lies its rich agro-climatic diversity, empower-ing our farmers to cultivate a remarkable variety of crops. remarkable variety of crops. As a global leader in produc-ing pulses, millets, milk, wheat, rice and a vast range of fruits and vegetables,

leled resource base for value addition. This agricultural abundance, meticulously nurtured by our hardworking farmers, has sparked a wave of innovation and entrepreneurship, giving rise to a thriving food pro-

cessing sector.

This sector has become a keystone of India's economic development, driving growth through employment generation, technological advancements and the creadvancements and the cra-ation of new market opportu-nities. India also boasts the largest and youngest work-ing population among the top global economies, fur-ther fuelling this dynamic transformation. By harness ing advanced processing technologies, the industry has been instrumental in has been instrumental in reducing post-harvest loss-es, extending the product shelf life and ensuring that receive returns for their efforts.

returns for their efforts.

As India's food processing sector continues to evolve, it not only meets international quality standards but also diversifies its offerings to cater to the ever-changing tastes and preferences of global consumers. The close synery. preferences of global con-sumers. The close synergy between agriculture and food processing has thus become a powerful engine of economic progress. It underscores the vital role that our farmers and agri-culture play in shaping the nation's future, ensuring

OUICK CROSSWORD



BENCHMARK: After the resounding success of World Food India-2023, the Ministry of Food Processing Industries is organising the third edition of the global event from September 19 to 22. TRIBLAGE PHOTO

that India's agricultural produce reaches every cor-ner of the world with enhanced value and quality Through this integration supported by a vibrant and supported by a vibrant and youthful workforce, we wit-ness the emergence of a resilient, globally competi-tive sector that is poised to lead India toward a prosper-ous and sustainable future.

As an inflection point, the As an inflection point, the Covid-19 pandemic revealed the sector's impressive resilience, swiftly adapting to the rising demand for processed foods. The gradual shift towards ready-to-eat, ready-to-eook and value-added products emphasised added products emphasised

Brief analysis (3-4) Conform (4,4,4)

A likeness of a per 6 Stretched tight (5) 7 Unbiased (8)

8 Exaggerate grossly (3,2,2,5)

We are not merely advancing an industry but also embracing a shared vision of a future in which innovation. sustainability and prosperity uplift every comer of our nation.

A strong food processing sec-tor is essential for addressing food and nutritional security challenges in India, provid challenges in India, provid-ing convenience, a longer shelf life and better access to remote areas. It also ensures improved price realisation for farmers and enhances market opportunities, making a significant impact on the GDP and sup-

impact on the GDP and sup-porting livelihoods.
At the forefront is the Ministry of Food Process-ing Industries (MoFPI), championing flagship pro-grams like the PM Kisan SAMPADA Yojana

transforming the sector by developing cutting-edge infrastructure and optimising supply chain manage-ment from the farmgate to ment from the tarngate to retail. Complementing these efforts, the PM For-malisation of Micro Food Processing Enterprises Scheme propels the growth of micro food processing units through support for technology ungrades technology capacity-building and marcapacity-building and mar-keting. The Production-Linked Incentive Scheme further energises domestic manufacturing and export growth by offering finan-cial rewards tied to incre-mental sales. Additionally, mental sales. Additionally, the Special Infrastructure Fund of Rs 2,000 crore under NABARD (Nati under NABARD (National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development) plays a crucial role in reinforcing the sector's infrastructure. This coordinated approach underscores a comprehensive strategy to elevate the food processing industry and related sectors, ensur-ing a robust, integrated and forward-looking growth path. India's rapidly growing

economy and its demograph-ic dividend create a unique and unprecedented opportuand unprecedented opportu-nity for the food processing sector to reach new heights. The government's pro-busi-ness reforms, including strategic tax incentives, streamlined ease of doing husiness initiatives and size. business initiatives and sig-

environment ripe for invest ment and growth. This sup-portive landscape not only attracts global attention but attracts global attention but also positions India as a dynamic hub for innovation and expansion in the food processing industry. After the resounding suc-cess of the 2023 edition of World Food India, the min-sitry is organism the third

World Food India, the min-sitry is organising the third edition of the global event from September 19 to 22. Stakeholders from every facet of the food industry will come together to exchange ideas, explore opportunities and contribute to the overall development of this crucial development of this crucial sector. It will be a one-of-akind gathering of manufac-turers, producers, investors, policymakers and organisa-tions from across the global

ers converge to explore innovations, forge partner-ships and chart a course ships and chart a course towards a sustainable food future. Let us seize the opportunities and embark on a journey towards a more prosperous and resilient food system that benefits all stakeholders across the value chain. In this moment of ue chain. In this moment of convergence, we are not merely advancing an indus-try but also embracing a shared vision of a future in which innovation, sustain-ability and prosperity uplift every corner of our nation.

- ACROSS
 1 Afflicted (8)
 5 An attempt (4)
 9 Spite (5)
 10 A soft wool fabric (7)
 11 A racing bird (6,6)
 13 Elaborately
 decorated (6)
 14 Bring down (6)
 17 Idle gossip (6-6)
 20 Enlarged
 photographically (5,2)
- 20 Enlarged photographically (5,2) 21 Likeness (5) 22 Catch sight of (4) 23 A failing (8)

Yesterday's solution

Across: 1 Sangfroid, 8 Epoch, 9 Come off, 10 Barter, 11 Ter der, 12 Au revoir, 15 Dreadful, 18 Lounge, 20 Misery, 21 Sapling, 22 Raven, 23 Gallantry.

Down: 2 At one, 3 Greedy, 4 Riffraff, 5 Debate, 6 Portion, 7 Third-rate, 11 Trademark, 13 Roll call, 14 Pensive, 16 During, 17 Sullen, 19 Goner.

SU DO KU 6 7 3 1 3 2 4 2 7 3 5 2 1 2 6 9 2 HARD

6 2 8 3 1 7 4 9 5 7 4 3 5 9 2 1 8 6 9 1 5 4 8 6 7 2 3 CALENDAR SEPTEMBER 6, 2024, FRIDAY

YESTERDAY'S SOLUTION

- Bhadrapad Parvishte hukla Paksha Tithi 3, up to 3.02 p
- ukla Yoga up to 10.15 pm ■ Hast Nakshatra up to 9.25 an ■ Moon enters Libra sign 11.01 pm

S 6 7 8 4 2 1 8 2 7 6 4 5 3 9 3 9 4 2 5 8 6 7 1 1 8 5 9 6 7 3 2 1 4 2 1 4 5 9 6 7 4 7 6 9 2 1 3 5 9 6 7 6 7 6 7 3 1 7 4 7 6 9 2 1 3 5 9 6 7 6 2 8 3 1 7 4 7 6 9 2 1 3 5 8 6 7 3 1 7 4 7 6 9 2 1 3 5 8 6 7 СПУ MAX MIN Bathinda Ludhiana Hisar 32 24 Manali 22 15 Kargil 24 12

The Tribune

ESTABLISHED IN 1881

Paralympics champs

Indian athletes deserve recognition, support

HARAMBIR, Harvinder Singh, Nitesh Kumar, Sumit Antil and Avani Lekhara are not household names in India, but they should be. What makes them special? They are all Paralympics gold medallists. Over-coming enormous odds, they have excelled in the world's biggest sporting extravaganza for the differently abled ongges sporting extravagaizator are americany anomal. Their stories are awe-inspiring. Harvinder, an archer halling from Haryana, was just a toddler when he was stricken by dengue; his treatment went horribly wrong, and he

en by dengue; his treatment went horribly wrong, and be ended up with impaired legs. However, he had dreams far bigger than his disability. On Wednesday, he became the first Indian archer to win a Panalympics gold.
Dharambir, also from Haryana, was left paralysed from the waist down when he misjudged a dive into a cmal and fell on rocks. Confined to a wheelchair, his future looked bleak. But he relied on the power of his shoulders and arms to become the Paralympics champion in club throw. Yet another Haryamvi, Javelin thrower Sumit Antil, and Rajasthan shocter Avani Lekhara saw their world turn upside down by road accidents. But they rose from the asheslike the proverbial phoenic. With back-to-back gold medals (Tokyo and Paris Games), Sumit has done what even his famous compatrich (Neerai Choora falled to do.

even his famous comparirot Neeraj Chopra failed to do. Unfortunately, Paralympic Games don't excite too many sports buffs in India, and para-athletes are not regarded as 'real' athletes. This flawed mindset must change. Sports Minister Mansukh Mandaviya has rightly urged people to cheer for the athletes participating in the Paris Paralympics, but a lot more needs to be done to support sport spersons who defy disabilities to win laurels. Most of us might be unaware of the myriad categories of compe titions, but that should not stop us from saluting those whe epitomise the triumph of the indomitable human will.

SC rap to Dhami

Blocks feudal approach to appointment

hand Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhami on Wednesday over his decision to appoint IFS officer Rahul as the director of the Raja-ji Tiger Reserve underscores the critical importance of public trust in governance. The choice of Dhami, made against the objections of the principal sec-retary and forest minister, signals a troubling disregard for institutional checks and balances. The appointed for institutional enecks and datances. The appointed officer was removed two years ago from the Corbett Tiger Reserve for alleged involvement in illegal tree felling, and the case is still being investigated. In its sharp criticism, the Supreme Court reminded the CM that we were not living in a 'feudal era' in which

leaders could bypass the due process. Justice BR Gavar's remark that Dhami should have provided detailed rea-soning for his decision reflects a broader concern about soring for his decision reactes a broader concern about the transparency of executive actions, particularly in mat-ters involving environmental conservation. Even though the officer concerned has since been removed from the post, the court's timely intervention shows that it takes swift action when deemed fit. The prompt action in this case underscores the need to preserve the delicate ecolog-ical balance in wildlife reserves, as also the fact that com-promises with the integrity of the system, including in

appointments, undermine conservation efforts.
This episode serves as a reminder to all authorities across the country that governance must remain accountable, transparent and in the service of public and environmental interests. It raises concerns about political influence over appointments critical to environmental conservation.

Political leaders must remember that their decisions can have long-lasting repercussions on sensitive ecological matters. Diami's decision to ignore the objections of experts and sideline the due process reflects a worrying trend in which political considerations take precedence overenvironment. In a country already grappling with ecological degradation, such decisions jeopardise the wildlife and weaken the campaign against environmental crises.

ON THIS DAY...100 YEARS AGO

The Tribune.

LAHORE, SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 6, 1924

Mahatmajis offer
THE speech made by Mahatmajis offer
THE speech made by Mahatma Gandhi at a meeting of the Congress Committee at Mandvi, a telegraphic summary of which
appeared in these columns yesterday, throws a flood of interest
ing light both upon the recent conversations between him and
Annie Besant, and the letter he sent to the Swarajist leaders Annie Besant, and the letter he sent to the Swarajist leaders through Sarojin Naidu on the eve of their conference in Calcutta. In both cases, he has been represented as having advocated and striven for unity. A passionate longing for unity is the keynote of his address to the Congress Committee. Speaking of the two parties in the Congress, he said that "they should not fight amongst themselves but must unite." He himself did not want to fight, he said, and admitted his defeat. It was India's misfortune that they had differences which were retarding their misfortune that they had differences which were retarding their misfortune that they had differences which were retarding their progress, he added. He had written to Pandit Motilal Nehru that he was not going to fight but had laid down his arms. All that he he was not going to fight but had laid down his arms. All that he wanted was universal spinning, Hindu-Muslim unity and the removal of untouchability, on which independence rested. These words were uttered with particular reference to the two Congress parties, but the context in which they were uttered leaves no room for doubt that they are intended to have much wider application, and, in fact, refer to all political parties in India which believe in self-government as India's goal and want to achieve that goal by peaceful, legitimate and honoumble means. Looking at the mater from this point of view, we have no hesitation in saying that the speech of the Mahatma on this occasion is one of the most momentous that he has ever made.

Crumbling statues, falling standards

The fear that haste may lead to waste does not seem to worry the authorities



trapati Shivaji Maharaj, the great Maratha warrior Maratha warrior known for his guerrilla warfare skills — which he suc-cessfully used against the Mughals — was knocked down

Mughais — was knocked down by strong winds blowing across the coastal town of Malwan in the Konkan region of Maharashtra. The statue had been erected in a hurry prior to the Lok Sabha elections this year to permit Prime Minister Narendra Modi to inaugurate it. Modi, always will-ing to preform such one-election ing to perform such pre-election obliged. Just six months chores, obliged, Just six months later, he was forced to apologise for the mishap, though he him-self could hardly be blamed for nature's vagaries. His syco-phants were the real culprits. Anound Rs 83 crow ever spent on the statue's construction, which was entrusted to the Navy in deference to the preprocy of

in deference to the memory of Maratha admiral Kanhoji Angre, who commanded the Mara who commanded the Maratha navy in those glorious days. The original plan, it now appears, was to build a six-ft statue and the design for it was scrutinised and approved by the Directorate of Art as per the prescribed proce-dure. December 2019 on itself its dure. One wonders who mised its height and why. Those who would have claimed credit for the statue will now seek anonymity

for valid security concerns.
Stories of incompetence and blatant corruption are doing the rounds, all leading to the doorstep of Mahayuti leaders Eknath Shinde, the Mahamshtra Chief Minister who leads a faction of the Shiv Sena, and BJP leader Devendra Fadnavis, one of the two deputy chief ministers. Nationalist Congress Party



(NCP) leader Ajit Pawar, who abandoned his uncle Sharad abandoned his uncle Sharad Pawar for personal aggmandise-ment, is the other Deputy CM, but he has distanced himself fromhis partners because he had sensed the Maratha anger against the toppling of the statue. The BJP realises that Ajit is proving to be a liability in the three-party alliance. Ajit's uncle still commands the loyalty of the Maratha community, as was

Maratha community, as was proved in the 2024 Lok Sabha elections. Fadnavis, the BJP's man in the state, had erroneously calculated that the ambitious Ajit would be able to bring in the bulk of the NCP's vote bank, but that was not to be. Sharad continues to be the Maratha strongman, despite his others piece and all the best to the strongman of the strongman. advancing age and ill health.

Ajit's tirade against his friends in the Mahayuti is not going to in the Mahayuti is not going to help him advance his political career. At present, it has only succeeded in weakening the rul-ing alliance's chances of retain-ing power. The molestation of two four-year-old girls in school at Badlapur in Thane district had already done harm to the fortunes of the Mahayuti. And now, nature has joined forces with the Opposition MVA (Maha-

The pressure to complete works expeditiously, which is happening often when elections are round the corner, should be avoided.

rashtra Vikas Aghadi), led by the Congress and consisting of a resurgent Shiv Sena-UBT (Uddhav Balasaheb Thackeray)

(Uddhav Balasaheb Thackemy) and the presently dominant Sharad-led faction of the NCP. As of today, the dice is loaded against the parties in power. The BJP had made inroads in urban areas of the state. It will hold on to its voters, but the two parties on whose strength it relied will not be able to contribute to the cottent Edward and the strength of the country and the country factors. extent Fadnavis expected them to do. In fact, there is the distinct

possibility of the NCP's Ajit faction gradually fading into obliv-ion. When the foot soldiers find that their leader will not be able

that their leader will not be able to provide the expected goodies, they will gravitate to those in a position to oblige. Reverting to the matter of the statue, it is quite obvious to even the poorly informed that such construction needs such construction needs expertise of a superior calibre. It also needs supervision of a higher order with officials for the purpose being chosen from the purpose being chosen from among those with a reputation for integrity. Fortunately, there still remain many in the IAS with that qualification. The pressure to complete works expeditiously, which is happening often when elections are round the corner, should be

are round the corner, should be avoided. The PM inaugurated the new Parliament building in the new Parliament building in a bit of a hurry and very soon it developed leakages and defects. Modi did not apologise for that fiasco like he did for the fall of Shivaji's statue! According to his statement, the Maratha warrior was a 'god'. Agreed that a building cannot be deified, but a Parliament building is a second late. is a sacred place, because like the poet Byron wrote about the Castle of Chillon in Switzer-land, "May none those marks efface! For they appeal from tyranny to God."

tyranny to God."

A massive project is underway in my city of Mumbai. It is the Coastal Road project that has reclaimed acres and acres of land from the sea to decongest the heavy tuffic caused by the proliferation of cars. The work goes on relembessly day and night since targets are set (as they should be) and important leaders are eager to inaugurate even minor section and the section of the to inaugurate even minor sec tions of the project.
The fear that haste may lead to

ste does not seem to worry the authorities like it worries thinkauthorities like it worries think-ing citizens. I temember the car journey I took once from Knotoon to the mainland of Hong Kong through an undersea tunnel. It was a feat of engineer-ing. A similar tunnel was a part of Mumbai's Coastal Road. Very soon, it developed leaks. When the media carried the news, the media carried the news, many senior citizens decided against travelling by car brough that tunnel. I am told that the leaks have been patched. That is a consolation, but why are we so tolerant of shody work which is inevitable if it has to be complet-ed in a hurry to accommodate leaders who want their names embossed on a store? embossed on stone?

Bihar has not yet received its annual quota of rainfall, but as soon as the first showers fell, as soon as the first snowers rea, as many as a dozen newly con-structed bridges collapsed! In Rajkot (Gujarat), a bridge col-lapse resulted in the death of

car passengers.

Are our engineers and contractors incompetent or, as is more likely, have they dipped their likely, have they dipped their hands into the till? Since no one is held responsible and pun-ished, Modi's promise of remaining squeaky dean him-self and ensuring that his administrators also remain above board is like his promise to show no mercy to those con-victed of molesting women— only an empty promise meant only an empty promise meant for luring voters to keep doubleengine governments in office

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

Power tends to corrupt, and absolute power corrupts absolutely. - Lord Acton

Infallible predictions of village soothsayer

ECADES ago, when sex determination through ultrascnography machines was alien to the people in rural
areas, the predictions by a man seemingly possessing
wizardly powers in our town never failed. Popularly known as
Yotishthakur (venerated astrologer), he was a septuagenarian
with a beard and hair that had a saffron hue.
His forehead would be smeared with thick vermilion
mixed with turmeric paste and ash. Garlands of colourful beads and rudrukshar of different shapes and sizes
would adorn his neck and thin wrists. A large number of
pregnant women, especially those belonging to the surrounding villages, looked forward to Yotishthakur
revealing the gender of the unborn baby.
The wispy little fellow would visit villages on foot with an
oblong little tin box, selling bangles, rings, pendants, etc.—
all made of conch shells. His outfit started attunting people
and made them regard him as a saintly person. His appear-

and made them regard him as a saintly person. His appearance gradually overshadowed his three-generation profes-

and made them regard him as a saintly person. His appearance gradually overshadowed his three-generation profession of hawking conch shell products.

His modus operandi was quite safe. At first, he somehow guessed through casual conversations the wish of the pregnant woman and her family members. Most of the families desired a male child. He would never disappoint them. After ameticulous examination of the husband's right palm and the wife's left one, he would prophesy in accordance with their wish.

He would polynesy in accordance with their wish.

He would advise expecting mothers to wear an amulet bessed by Goddess Kali to get the desired result. The amulet was supposed to be the protector of the coming child from any sort of evil spell. Besides fulfilling his monetary demand, people would replenish the saffron bag hanging across his shoulder with rice, vegetables, fruits and sweets. When delivering his prophecies, he would demand that the amulet be returned to him immediately after the birth of the child. He also warned clients never to open or lose the amulet as it might lead to miscarriage. Naturally, never did the naïve villagers think of going against his wishes. In case his prediction went wrong, he would melt wishes. In case his prediction went wrong, he would melt the paraffin used to seal the amulet, revealing a piece of the paraffin used to seal the amulet, revealing a piece of paper on which the gender of the newborn baby would be mentioned. He would then explain that he, in fact, had known the gender of the baby but did not want to upset the expectant mother. For this reason, he would claim, he had written the correct prediction on the paper inside the amulet.

Actually, the gender he wrote on that paper would always be the opposite of what he would prophesise. If the prophecy didn't come true and the paper was taken out, it would be found that Yotishthalur was, in fact, right. People's trust and respect for him never waned. Unwittingly, his predictions managed to prevent foeticide.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR Anti-rape Bill unnecessary

Anti-rape Bill unnecessary
Apropos of the editorial 'A desperate step';
several experts have pointed out that the passage of the anti-rape Bill in the West Bengal
Assembly was unnecessary. Strict laws
already exist in our country to punish rapists.
The real struggle begins with the start of a
probe. Proving the crime and bringing the
perpetuator to justice is a Herculean task. The
respectation faces hurtles at every step. Not prosecution faces hurdles at every step. Not all victims of rape survive to fight for justice. There is an urgent need to work on improving the quality of investigations into such cases.

A step in the right direction
With reference to the editorial 'A desperate
step'; the nationwide protests by healthcare
professionals seeking justice for the young
doctor who was brutally raped and killed at a
government hospital in Kolkata spurred the
step responses to table diese the Assets. state government to table and pass the Apara state government to table and pass the Apara-jua anti-ape Bill. If approved by the Governor and the President, it could instil fear-of the law in criminal elements. We need more stringent laws in the country to tackle the spike in heinous crimes. The West Bengal Govern-ment has taken a step in the right direction. ABHILASHA GUPTA, MOHALI

Deal with criminals strictly

Refer to the editorial 'A desperate step'; the Mamata Banerjee-led West Bengal Govern-ment's move to tighten the noose around antiment's move to tighten the noose around anti-social elements is welcome. But it will remain an exercise in futility in the absence of strin-gent implementation of the law. If those con-victed of such heinous crimes are prematurely released or are granted furloughs from time to time, it would make a mockery out of the jus-tice delivery system. Political considerations must not come into play when it comes to senmust not come into play when it comes to sen sitive issues like women's safety. Those guilty of sexual violence and other serious offences must not be able to walk out of jail so easily.

MD SHARMA, SHIMLA

Clear backlog of cases Apropos of the editorial "Tytler in the dock'; while flagging the inordinate delays in the delivery of justice, President Droupadi Mur-mu has rightly called for an end to the culture

of adjournments. It is high time that the judi of adjournments. It is high time that the judi-ciary understood the importance of clearing the backlog of cases on priority. The Delhi court's order to frame charges against Con-gress leader Jagdish Tytler in connection with the Gurdwara Pul Bangash killings comes as a ray of hope for justice. Addressing the shortcomings in the system without com-promising its integrity is the need of the hour. MONA SINGH, BY MAIL

J&K will have its say

J&K will have its say
The first Assembly elections in Jammu and
Kashmir since the abrogation of Article 370 are a
long time coming. In the fray are leaders from
parties that backed the abrogation of Article 370
and those who want the statehood of 3&K
restored as soon as possible. Peace and development in the region are some factors that will
weigh heavily in the minds of the voters. The peale of 1&K who heavilory been deriving of page. ple of J&K, who have long been deprived of basic rights, will choose their leaders wis

KRISHAN KANT SOOD, NANGAL

Star power in politics

Star power in politics
With reference to the news report 'Phogat,
Punia meet Rahul, may contest on Congress
ticket'; the question is, why do film stars and
famous athletes choose to pursue a career in
politics in the first place? All that such stars
do is capitalise on their popularity among
guilible admirers. It is a pity that political
parties don't hesitate to field celebrities
with no prior experience in governance as
candidates in elections just because of
their popularity and ability to win a poll.

MAGDISHCHANDER, MANDER.

Boost for football in UP

Football is a sport that has long been given short shrift in India. So, UP CM Yogi Adityanath's plan to build 18 football stadiums across the 18 com missariats in the state is a breath of fresh air. The project will give a major boost to the beautiful sport. The construction of football stadiums will sport. The construction of football stadiums will do more good for society than the building often-ples. As Nelson Mandela had once said, "Sport has the power to change the world... It has the power to unite people in a way that little else does." The UP CMhas done well lo recognise the importance of promoting sports.

ANNASH GOBBOLEY, DEWAS (MP)

Letters to the Editor, typed in double space, should not exceed the 200-word limit.

These should be cogently written and can be sent by e-mail to: Letters@tribunemail.com





GROWTH MOMENTUM

Data shows that the fundamental growth Data shows that the fundamental growth drivers of the economy are gaining momentum. This gives us the confidence to say that the Indian growth story remains intact

The chief economic adviser is right in forewarning about markets' excessive influence on policy discourse

HE NEXUS BETWEEN finance and growth, or capital markets and the real economy, has been long debated. Historically, over long terms extending into decades, economies and markets broadly followed the same trends, even though the latter tended to be forwardlowed the same trends, even though the latter tended to be forward-looking and factor in historical economic performances, as instant economic data usually came with a lag. The correlations between the two are now belie-ved to be comparatively weaker in emerging economies, especially when ret-all investors dominate the markets. In India, the policymakers used to lament "low" retail participation in financial markets, and how they therefore are deprived of the dividends of rapid economic growth and corporate value cre-ation. However, the burst of speed with which retail accumulation of capital market assets has occurred of late, contributing in good measure to the mark-ets outgrowing the real economy, has now been greeted with notes of caution.

ets outgrowing the real economy, has now occur greened with index of satisfact. Chief economic adviser (CSA) VA mantha Nageswaran said recently that when the market becomes bigger than the economy (about 1.4 times in India now), it is natural, but not necessarily reasonable, that the considerations and priorities of the market influence the policy discourse. Such "financialisation", he warned, results in "unprecedented levels of public and private sectors are such that the consideration and the consid

tion", he warned, results in "unprecedented levels of public and private sector debt, some visible to regulators and some not, make economic growth dependent on continued increases in asset prices to offset the leverage that has built up, and hence a massive surge in inequality".

A day later, Reserve Bank of India deputy governor Michael Debabrata Patra, however, reiterated that "a well-functioning financial market is a prerequisite for resource allocation and exploiting growth potential". A process of rebuilding of the (fallen) financial assets of households has already begun, and the sector is likely to remain the primary net lenders to the economy in the coming decades (too), Patra opined. There is no denying that India's massive infrastructure upgrade will have to be financed mainly by households, rather than (uncertain) external capital. Higher retail role in financial markets is in sync with this formulation, so is a rise in the working-age population. The retail surge in India's capital markets, however, coincided with a plunge in household financial savings, and a trend towards physical asset creation, on increasingly borrowed finance. There has also been a higher level of leveraged consumption since the pandemic. So, rather than a bout of pros-

of leveraged consumption since the pandemic. So, rather than a bout of pros-perity or sustained income growth, the influx of individual investors in the markets appears to have, to a large extent, been due to households taking a markets appears to have, to a large extent, been due to households taking a knee-jerk reaction to a crisis engulfing them. In other words, it was a desperate move by the larger household sector to join the bandwagon of Corporate India, which was "swimming in profits" in splendid is olation. The United States' stock market may hugely outperform not just its domestic economy, but even the markets of fast-growing economies like India (as it did in 2023) but India isn't so privileged. Nageswaran's premonitions about" a financialistion trap" and the unprecedented (and partly invisible) Indian debt merits serious attention. The steps in the latest Budget to dampen emergent retail interest in the volatile options and futures markets, and a series of measures being implemented and contemplated by the market regulator to curb unwarranted exuberance among retail investors signal the CEA's caution unwarranted exuberance among retail investors signal the CEA's caution didn't come too early. However, these need to be complemented with policy changes that will alter resource allocation in the economy, in a way that bolster the capacity of the household sector.

Time to get real

LESSON FROM EUROPE GROWTH IN RENEWABLE GENERATION HAS TO BE IN TANDEM WITH THE ECONOMICS OF BATTERIES

A negative power price pickle

Adopting fanciful

targets, in isolation, like tripling of

newable capacity by 2030 (as done

at the COP28)

at the cost of batteries just does

not make sense

N 2024, EUROPE has clocked the largest number of hours when electricity prices have been negative in the wholesale market. This literally means that there is excess supply and that power producers have to pay the distribution companies to evacuate the surplus power. Negative prices, however, are nothing new in Europe and have been reported for about 15 years. It's just that the frequency has gone up and is now plaguing more countries in addition to Germany which has witnessed this phenomenon in the past. Negative prices, however, may not mean a bonanza for retail consumers since their tariffs may be locked in long-term agreements.

their tariffs may be locked in long-term agreements.

There are several reasons for the low (or negative) price for electricity; the most important is that there has been a phenomenal growth in renew-able generation, especially solar and wind. In addition to this, generation from hydro and nuclear plants has also been good. The installed capacity of solar solar plants has doubled from 2019 to the been good. The installed capacity of solar plants has doubled from 2019 to 2023 as the capacity in Europe went up from 119 gigawatt (60) 263 Gw. Apart from the increase in supply, there has been a fall in demand due to a mild winter which means less electricity is demanded for space heating. Successful adoption of energy conservation measures has also contributed to the fall in demand. The decline in demand is stark on weekends due to the closure of some industrial/commercial establishments. The massive growth in renewable capacity has ensured that the share of renewable sources to total generation has reached 44%. The share of solar and wind alone is about 27% of the total, and wind generation has surpassed gas for the first time. There has been a noticeable fall in generation from fossil fuels, which has led to a decrease in carbon emissions from the power sector.

SOMIT DASGUPTA

Senior visiting fellow, ICRIER, and former me nomic & commercial), Central Electricity Aut

Electricity prices in the wholesale market would be very different if stor-age batteries were to be economically viable today. Although battery costs have come down drastically (from almost \$800/unit in 2013 to about \$140/unit

\$800/unit in 2013 to about \$140/unit in 2023), there is still along way to go. To put it in simple terms, the levelised cost of electricity in respect of batteries is about \$70 per unit in the Indian context, which means that it is still quite expensive for large-scale adoption. Recently, there was a case where the levelised cost of battery came down to about \$70 per unit. Actually, it is all a function of how much de-risking has how much de-risking has been done by the organisa-tion issuing the tender. Any perceived risk would be hedged, increasing the cost

without of the deged, increasing the cost of storage.

The author is tempted to digress a bit and mention a few words about competing battery technologies. Today, the market is dominated by lithium—ion batteries thin a few countries and when it comes to processing, it is largely confined to China. This raises serious supply chain issues. As an alternative to lithium-based batteries, we have the sodium-ion batteries and sodium batteries have several advantages over lithium ones, Sodium is available in abundance, untilke lithium. Sodium batteries are cheaper than lithium by about

30%. They can operate within a large temperature range and can be charged/discharged many times more compared to lithium. Sodium batter-ies are not hazardous since they are not liable to catch fire, unlike lithium. Lithium has other drawbacks; for

Lithium has other drawbacks; for example, such batteries use minerals like cobalt, nickel, and graphite which suffer from supply chain issued to Cobalt, incidentally, is concentrated in the Democratic Republic isolation, iling of Congo and there are several reports highlighting comparity in the proposed of the propos batteries, ittnum batteries rule the roost. Partly the reason is that lithium batteries have had a head start and have the bene-fit of economies of scale. Incidentally, both lithium and sodium-based batteries are simi-

e sense lithium and sodium-based batteries are simi-based batteries are simi-based batteries are simi-one making lithium ones can switch to sodium without much effort. Some reports peg the market value of lithium batteries at \$270 billion in 2030, whereas the corresponding value of sodium is only \$920 million. Lithium batteries have a higher energy density, meaning that for storing an equivalent amount of energy they will be smaller in size compared to sodium. Consequently, lithium is more appro-priate for use in transport vehicles,

especially for long distances.
To come back to the topic of electricity prices turning negative, what emerges is that renewable generation has become a victim of its own enthulation. emerges is that renewable generation has become a victim of its own enthusiasm. Due to the lowering of whole-sale prices, profit margins are getting thinner and investments in the renewable sector is slowing down in Europe. The moral of the story is that growth in renewable generation has to be in tandem with the economics of batteries. It's not really a chicken and egg story, and a fall in battery prices are a precondition for adding to renewable capacity and not the other way around. Adopting fancful targets, in isolation, like tripling of renewable capacity by 2030 (as done at the COP28) without looking at the cost of batteries just does not make sense.
Finally, batteries are not the only form of storage, We also have pumped storage plants (FSPs) and gas-based generation though they may not be viable in all countries. India is a good example where there are very few

generation though they may not be viable in all countries. India is a good example where there are very few functioning PSPs (approximately 4,000 megawatt) as well as a very limited availability of domestic gas for power generation. Gas, of course, can be imported but it's not economically viable given the high price of this resource in international markets. One may like to add green hydrogen as another medium for storage but, unfortunately, it is no more than a concept as of now, quite contrary to the optimism that is being generated. Green hydrogen is difficult to produce, difficult to store, and difficult to store, and difficult to the rely mainly on batteries, and guess who we will be dependent on for this? The answers is China, which is the world leader in not only lithium-based batteries but sodium batteries as well.

Tame your inbox by thinking like a monkey

IFYOU'RE CONFRONTING an endless string of unread emails after a long weekend or summer vacation, try thinking of responding as a game. A status game. Since reading the 2012 book Games Prinates Play, by University of Chicago behavioural scientist Dario Maestripleri, I've never looked at my inhook the same way. Email, writes Maestripieri, is governed by the rules of dominance hierarchy, which is central to the games we social prinates are writed to play. Monkeys spenda great deal of energy establishing who stands where in the social hierarchy — who has access to the best food and the most attractive mates, and who picks mites out of whose fur. Humans also put hierarchy at the heart of much of what we do, whether at home, at work or online.

The book proped into my mind last weeks when I read an article in the Well Street.

Moinkeys spend a great deal of energy establishing who stands where in the social hierarchy — who has access to the best food and the most attractive mates, and who picks mittes out of whose fur. Humans also put hierarchy at the heart of much of what we do, whether at home, at work or online.

The book popped into my mind last week when I read an article in the Wall Street journal about the dreaded post summer-vacation entail pile—19. Some people were trying to head off the debuge with blumtness. But readers instructively picked up on the status imbalance inherent in these tactics in the comments section, complaining that they were not so high in the pecking order that they could afford to put up an in-your-face autorepty or ignore email requests from colleagues, clients, or customers.

And indeed, there's always an uneven burden when it comes to email. The sender wants something from the recipient the status of the cepient relative to the sender dictates whether and for howlong such a request can be ignored.

Usually, the person who wants something must spend more time on the exchange. That's because werful. So the burden to impress is on the sender.

In his book, he uses an example from his everyday life: requests for publicity. After one such fuscessfully going to get more requests for help from the less powerful. So the burden to impress is on the sender.

For me, the inbox dread comes from self-recrimination over a flood of self-imposed spann: newsletters and Substack, post and adan for a response in seconds if that's his preference.

For me, the inbox dread comes from self-recrimination over a flood of self-imposed spann: newsletters and Substack, post and other things I wish If 4 found time to read. If, after sorting these out, you're still left with an overwhelming inbox of requests and entreaties, keep in mind most of these come from lower -ranked primates. One need not spend more than a moment skimming the request and deciding whether it's beneficial or reasonable and writing a quick reply.

It takes

Gig economy crying for support

To make gig work more sustainable, the government rules governing the platforms that profit - or are looking to profit — from the workers



JAMAL MECKLAI

IT IS MORE than clear to everyone that

IT IS MORE than clear to everyone that India's primary economic need is to create jobs. The election results confirmed as much and the government has come through with set of proposals — incentives for employers and employees, an apprenticeship programme, and the like. While these are good initial steps, heir effectiveness is yet to be seen and I am sure that over time they will be tuned to start to deliver value.

However, there is another huge window which is gaping open and crying out for support — this is the gig economy. Separate studies by the Niti Aayog and SCG indicate that the medium-term potential of gig work in India is 70-90 million jobs, from today's seven-eight million gig workers; importantly, sig workers today are mostly young, which is the specific cohort that the economy needs to reach. This could be a significant force for growth — BCG estimates it could increase growthy 12.25% in the long run — provided gy work generates reasonable income and, importantly, social benefits like paid leave, accident and health insurance, and pensions.

I was chatting with a Uber driver one day last week. Het dol me that he makes, after expenses, ₹1,000 to ₹1,500 a day which is

day last week. He told me that he makes, after expenses, ₹1,000 to ₹1,500 a day. He works eight to 10 hours a day, which is quite reasonable in Mumbal and on days when he reaches ₹2,500 he quits early. He'd been driving Uber for five years and seemed quite happy with the job.

His earnings, which range between ₹4 and ₹5 lakh a year, compare quite well with the median income in Mum-bai which is around ₹3.5 lakh a year, as also with an estimate of the cost of liv

bai which is around ₹3,5 lakh a year, as also with an estimate of the cost of living for a single person fagain about ₹3,5 lakh ayeaf, file fluid with the least one other earning member, they would be, relatively a peaking, reasonably well off. Indeed, it could very well be him and his cohorts who have begun investing in the equity markets — mutual funds sahi hal — through requiry markets — mutual funds sahi hal — through requiry markets — mutual funds sahi hal — through respectively investment plans, which is providing the wind beneath the wings of Indian equities. More power to him and his breed.

Of course, there is no time off, and if theis feeling under the weather he simply has to forgo his earnings. For more serious illness, the government does provide cover and although it comes with all the attendant difficulties of government services, it could provide some stability to his life and welfare.

so that they are not as exploitative

with all the attendant difficulties of gov-ernment services, it could provide some stability to his life and welfare. To make gig work more sustinable, the government should reframe the rules governing the platforms that profit — or are looking to profit — from

The govt needs to extend initiatives which focus on

the needs of individual workers and ensure that the other side of the equation - capital - does its part

the workers so that they are not as exploitative. Already, the European Union (EU) has drafted labour rules under which gig workers could be recognised as employees with rights to pensions, pald leave, and workplace accident inaurace; Spain is the first EU country that has enshrined these rules in law with food delivery companies having to employ their couriers as are the rings the time graph the companies having to employ their couriers as a terment arment in the rings of the companies having to employ their couriers as the come the first FU companies having to employ their couriers as the trine gaps between gigs workers by are not itative or are profit—for gig workers; significantly, this wage is indexed to inflation. Singapore is unsurprisingly bracing for complex safety net rules, were meant to help.

The US, of course, remains resistant to reclassification, although some states and regions have struck out on their own. On the flip side, some experiments — notably, in Seattle — have resulted in a huge increase in the cost of take—out orders, creating chaos for customers, restaurants, and the very gig workers the rules were meant to help.

government in Rajasthan, which has recently introduced a law designed to provide social security and welfare benefits to gig workers in the state. All gig workers in the state. All gig workers and aggregators need to register under the Act, which envisages a social security fund (created by a cess of 1-2% on all platform-based transactions), which will be used to provide gig workers with benefits, including accident and health insurance, maternity benefits, gratuity, pension, etc.

The roll-out will need to be carefully ittraded to, on the one hand, build in benefits like inflation-indexing and, on the other, to make sure it doesn't lead to a Seattle-like situation of prices getting out of hand and demand collapsing. In terms of feasibility, I note that revenues at Swiggy, which has about 300,000 delivery partners, were approaching \$10,000 crote last year; 2% of this works out to over \$6,500 per gig worker, which is a respectable amount to fund certain benefits — my company pays \$2,500 per person for a very good health insurance package. Government investment of a like amount could certainly create a complete and sustainable package.

The central government needs to pick up and extend initiatives like this, which focus on the needs of individual workers — the future of India, really—and ensure that the other side of the equation — capital — does its part.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Flawed growth metrics

"India's growth in a sweet spot" (FE, September 5) presents an optimistic picture of the growth in GPP. But or fails to understand how does it matter to the majority. The much hyped growth fails to bring any change to the livelihood of 81 crore people. Food inflation, unemployment, and job loss continue to dominate the scene on the ground. Public sector banks earning thousands of crores of

rupees by slapping penalty for failure to maintain minimum balance in accounts speak of the real plight of the have-nots. At the same time, it is said, the country is producing one billionaire every five days. Perhaps all that is being counted as growth pertain to the affluent and not related to the unprivileged who are destined to depend on freebles and free rations for another five years. The system of measuring growth seems to be misguided like calculating per capita

income which includes the income of the rich. India needs a scientific system of measuring growth that reflects the ground reality. —AG Rajmohan, Anantapur

Attracting FDI

"Competing for FDI" (FE, September 4) rightly stated the need for a judicious central policy for ensuring that foreign direct investment goes tall the states for equitable growth ar to avoid interstate disparities. It is

New Delhi

important to not only attract financial capital but also the latest machinery, technology, and trained personnel from other countries. For this, the states must ensure ease of doing business, reform of land and building norms, power supply, skilled labour, raw material, infrastructure, locational advantages, hunger for industrial growth, and conducive law and order.—KC Sharma, New Delhi

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thehindubusinessline.

Welfare platform

Gig workers' e-shram enrolment must be stepped up

ne Centre recently has urged stepping up enrolment of unorganised sector workers in the e-shram portal, while also stressing that 'platform workers' be accorded emphasis in this regard. The e-shram portal, which was launched in August 2021, has enrolled about 300 million workers, which is an impressive achievement. It suggests that about 75 per cent of the unorganised sector workforce (which in turn accounts for about 80 per cent of the total workforce) has been enrolled.



However, there is less certainty on whether the promised benefits (pension, life insurance and accident insurance) are insurance and accident insurance) are provided without the beneficiaries or their kith and kin running from pillar to post. According to a statement in the Lok Sabha in April 2023, ₹704 crore was allocated for the period FY20-25 for unorganised workers' welfare schemes, of which ₹418 crore was disbursed till March 2023. This does seem underwhelming, considering the numbers underwneiming, considering the numbers enrolled. The policy focus on platform workers — those who use the 'platform' provided by an online aggregator — arises from their fast growth in the post-Covid years, coinciding with the growth of internet access as well as digital payments in urban areas. Their dual identity as entrepreneurs and workers gives rise to the apprechangion and workers gives rise to the apprehension that they may miss out on social security benefits. At present, it is not clear what proportion of such workers are enrolled on the e-shram portal, as the portal does not provide details in this regard. A drive to persuade aggregators to enrol workers is called for. At present, even the number of such workers-cum-entrepreneurs remains a mystery. The NITI Aayog study cites a figure of 7.7 million for 'gig workers' (which actually implies all casual labour) as of about three years ago, when it seems to imply platform workers.

Assuming that this is just an error of

terminology, the number of platform workers is expected to rise to 23.5 million by 2029-30, making up 6.7 per cent of the non-agricultural workforce, against less than 3 per cent today. The Periodic Labour Force Survey makes an attempt, but it remains imprecise. Another way to figure out the number of platform workers is through the welfare board route. Here, the aggregator enlists the service providers with the board, as Rajasthan and Karnataka have envisaged, with a view to deducting a cess out of the transaction fee for welfare

However, the e-shram exercise should move towards providing uniform welfare services for all categories of 'gig' or unorganised workers. Platform workers should not be excluded from well-run services such as PDS, simply because they happen to own an asset. Such categories of exclusion across schemes, such as Ayushman Bharat or its equivalent, should be revisited. But at the outset, a better dataset of the number of gig and platform workers must be made available by conducting a comprehensive survey. And, the poor offtake of benefits thus far must be looked into.

POCKET



Credit growth: getting it right

YIELD CURVE. Credit growth shouldn't go far beyond that of nominal GDP, banks must not be pushed into risky lending, appraisal and monitoring mechanism must be upgraded



redit growth, though not sufficient, is a necessary condition for economic growth. But credit or money

beyond a level can harm the economy An analysis of bank credit growth over the last two decades (businessline,

he last two decades (businessline, September 5; https://discomber 5; htt

system, well-rated corporates access non-bank sources like debt mutual funds, insurance companies, ECB, NBFC, etc. As of now, warning signal must be sounded when the credit growth crosses nominal income growth. Secondly, it is important to have better understanding of interplay of monetary policy, fiscal policy, credit growth, investment rate and their impact on real economy growth. This is essential as each of these policies has its own objectives and targets. Economist Adam Tooze suggested, there is need for overarching intelligence that help connect all the dots and guide better policymaking. Regulators need to moderate even sectoral excesses through regulatory intervention.

Thirdly, there is concentration of credit expansion. Just five banks account for 60 per cent of incremental sections are considered as a count for 60 per cent of incremental sections.

account for 60 per cent of incremental credit growth during the last few years

Micro prudential regulation may be necessary. New risks are lurking in the corner on account of transition to net zero commitments and this needs proactive response so as to avoid nasty surprises.

ERSONS FOR GOVERNMENT
Firstly, the government should realise that mere increase in bank credit by itself will not eldelive higher GDP on a consistent and sustainable basis. As mentioned earlier, high credit growth far beyond nominal GDP may end up in huge credit losses subsequently and also dinflationary pressures.
Secondly, real economy growth and credit growth are bi-directional.
Economic slowdown would amplify credit losses. Time ly fiscal interventions are necessary.

credit losses. Timely fiscal interventions are necessary.

Thirdly, reform of any sector should encompass the entire value chain as otherwise it would hamper the quality of credit growth. For example, power generation was deregulated but not the essential input, namely, coal. As the Supreme Court had cancelled coal block licences, the viability of the entire power sector and other related sectors like steel was in jeopardy, leading to huge credit losses for lenders.

Fourthly, pushing commercial banks

The temptation to push credit growth far beyond real economy growth and certainly nominal credit growth needs to be resisted

to finance high risk infrastructure finance needs to be examined. Cost and time overruns are endemic. The Gati Shakti programme has been trying to address these issues, but there is still a

address these issues, out there is stul a long way to go. Fifthly, the Department of Banking may spell out broader strategic objectives of credit growth and real economy needs and leave governance and regulation issues to the RBI and make the boards accountable.

LESSONS FOR LENDERS

LESSONS FOR LENDERS
There is need to relook at "risk pricing"
The experience of the past one decade shows that some of the infrastructure sectors like steel and construction had impaired credit of nearly 40 per cent of the portfolio and this was evident from huge haircuts incurred ranging from 60-80 per cent.

Loss given default is exactly in the control of the co

huge haircuts incurred ranging from 60-80 per cent.

Loss given default' is very high, over 80 per cent in many cases. Delay in recognition and initiation of corrective/resolution action amplifies 'loss given default' and this needs to be avoided. The Insolvency and Bankrupte's lode (IBC) also needs an uggrade.

Lenders need to invest adequate resources, both digital and human, in appraisal and monitoring. They should invest in machine learning and Al tools to monitor and identify stress early. Intervention frameworks and models need to be in place. Lenders shall desist from group think. Small and medium lenders shall not rely on appraisal of big lenders. Risk appetite shall be aligned to internal underwriting capabilities besides owned funds and aggregate credit. Banks need to be tild specialist officer cadre across industries.

During 2003-08, the ratio of credit growth to nominal GDP growth was as high as 2.2. Of course, this period also witnessed very high GDP growth of over 9 per cent — for three years consecutively. But high NPAs followed which eroded some of these gains. This induced a long pause of low credit growth (2012-20), lower GDP growth. It is necessary to navigate credit growth round nominal GDP growth. As a guide, banks need to look at expected real GDP growth and inflation. The temptation to push credit growth and eretainly nominal credit growth needs to be resisted.

While the RBI indicates projections for GDP growth and inflation with quarterly updates, it does not indicate appropriate credit growth rate to help achieve these objectives. Credit growth forecasts are credit growth rate to help achieve these objectives. Credit growth processional forecasts are left to external professional professional forecasts are left to external professional During 2003-08, the ratio of credit

professional forecasters (about 40 in number) and they are mentioned in RBI

number) and they are mentioned in RB reports.

Instead, the RB is should seriously consider giving its own macro credit growth projections constant with GDP and inflation projections. This would help banks plan their resource mobilisation and draw up credit plans aligned to the real economy. Credit growth of individual banks hinges on, among other things, their capital adequacy ratio, level of NPAs, risk appetite, deposit growth and governance mechanisms.

Conclude

Governor, Reserve Bank of India; and Sambamurthy is formerly Director and CEO, IDRBT

Govt-civil society interface in development process

Our system must create several rural innovations, as some succeed and only some amongst them successfully scale up

N Srinivasan

or evelopment, simply put, is the process of continuous growth and other thement. Governments and betterment. Governments and actors of development. Private sector is also involved through its foundations. It is often civil so society which initiates path-breaking development work, at a ground level, because of its proximity and understanding of communities. It takes necessary risks to try something new, based on foft needs, at times not even clearly articulated by people and knowing fully well that the intervention could take time to produce results. The government usually comes in later and scales up successful exemplars, touching many lives. A successful intervention is termed an exemplar, when it delivers development consistently.

Given the primacy of rural areas in

exemplar, when it delivers development consistently. Given the primacy of rural areas in India, innovations are crucial for our sustained growth. But the 'give-and-take' relationship between the government and civil society is never smooth because of the uneasy power-play. Creating systems which enable and promote rural innovations

are thus crucial. To enable innovations, understanding the idiom and nuances of development are of paramount importance, especially in line departments which interface rural population, as 'development and doles' are often erroncously linked. A few nuances are discussed:

ROLE OF CIVIL SOCIETY

ROLE OF CIVIL SOCIETY
First, why are exemplars important for development and why should civil society promote them? Exemplars are like route maps and they must be perfect. Exemplars also act as goal posts or lighthouses. They have to be co-created with people's participation. Without them development doesn't begin and can't be sustained.

Also, redundancy in development interventions is a normal phenomenon. Our system must, therefore, enable spawning of several rural innovations, as some succeed and only some amongst them successfully scale up.

While governments can create exemplars at a ground level, the question is: should it be doing that? Government's competency is best used in scaling up exemplars for the masses. Second, can all successful rural interventions be scaled up? The answer is in the negative and there are many reasons.



People's processes are not factory processes. What works in a place/region may not work elsewhere as exemplars are embedded in a specific scole-cultural milieu. This awareness and anatomy of an exemplar can help their scaling up. Third, if exemplars cannot be scaled up why put efforts? This is a wrong question and every developing country must embrace the axiom 'may a thousand flowers bloom' and enable thom happen.

Fourth, what is essential for scaling up of an exemplar? People, processes and a socio-cultural setting are ingredients of an exemplar.

For scaling, separating the processes from persons is crucial. Operational guidelines for scaling exemplars must

give primacy to non-negotiable processes and not the champion

[person]. Fifth, governments and civil society Fifth, governments and evil society must interact more often. India prides itself in its civilisational rivers and their venerated kumbh medar, which come once in 12 years. Government must institutionalise forums for frank exchange of ideas and its machinery must learn to immerse itself in civil society's thought processes like kumbh melas.

Finally, fireflies have been fascinating Finally, fireflies have been fascinating humanity since times immemorial. Besides, these aesthetic insects pollinate and keep pests at check. In Japan, they are culturally significant because they highlight beauty and impermanence at the same time. But these sensitive insects are being threatened by loss of their habitat and light pollution across the world. the world.

the world.

Exemplars in development are like fireflies, bringing beauty and hope of a pristine environment. Without hope there is no development, which can be ushered in only when all agencies work in unison and in this order, civil society, government and private sector.

Suryakumar was deputy managing director, NABARD. Srinivasan is a development consultant. Views are

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

Tweak scrappage policy

Tweak scrappage policy Apropos' incertives for vehicle scrappage need to be better (Sept 5), the Centre's announcement to extend cash discounts of 15-3 per cent through automakers to the buyers of new vehicles after scrapping their old ones with a view to reducing CO2 emission is welcome. But the discount that is proposed to be offered appears pretty low. To motivate the buyers of new vehicles in lieu of old ones, the discount must be in the 8-10 per cent range and be in force for five years for both commercial and past senger vehicles. The volume of applications received under Voluntary Vehicle Modermisation Programme is not quite encouraging. The number of

registered scrapping facilities needs to be increased from the existing 63 to 500, covering all major cities and towns for easy access by all vehicle owners. With Automated Vehicle Fitness becoming mandatory from October 1, focus must be on stricter implementation of the policy. **RV** Baskaran

Railways must gear up

automatic railway protection systems after a flurry of accidents is rather unfortunate. The turtle pace at which the protection systems are being

installed warrants answers from the Railway Minister. It was shocking that we failed in our negotiation with Astom and cancelled the tender of 100 aluminium trains altogether. It was a much needed project with multiple benefits. Safety of passengers and modernism uld be addressed simultaneously.

Bad loan recovery accounts by accepting reduced amounts compared to outstanding dues for different reasons after

undertaking all the recovery steps as per the law. Sometimes there may be political involvement to owhile dealing with recovery in big loan brackets. Unfortunately, in our country, there is no firm punishment for chronic and wilful defaulters and for those who mis-utilise bank funds for purposes other than sanctioned reasons. The IBC is certainly a handy

GST on research grants The article "Stifling innovation" (September 5) drove home the point that consideration, meaning

something in return, is missing in research done by universitiely institutions and hence they need not pay Goods and Services Tax (GST). The Directorate General of GST intelligence (DGG), which issue notices seeking GST on Research Grants, should discern how institutions like III St could pay crores as indirect tax. It is inconceivable. Of curses, it is enougation to learn that as indirect tax. It is inconceivative, to course, it is encouraging to learn that the Education Ministry is not happy with the notices. That said, there should be a mechanism to ensure that the money allocated for research departments is used well. ability and re ised at any cost.

Wayanad and deforestation

The tragic disaster was more due to freak rainfall

n the early hours of July 30, tragedy hit three villages located in the foothills of the Western Ghats in Wayanad. A humungous volume of runoff that flowed down the hills caused a horrific landslide.

nowed down the miss caused a horrific landslie. While there is no denying that Wayanad region had witnessed increased ecological disturbances during the past couple of decades mostly associated with tourism, quarrying and road building, the billion dollar question is whether this great tragedy had been caused by such activities. There are no empirical studies from around the world to show that the activities such as those

There are no empirical studies from around the world to show that the activities such as those mentioned above can always cause landslides of such magnitude. In this case, the two hills with thick vegetation that came crushing did not witness any infrastructure development. The second controversy is about the availability of hazard maps for western Ghat region. Much hype had already been created about the report prepared by the Western Ghats Ecology Expert Panel (WGEEP) in 2012. The panel had argued that no infrastructure development should be allowed in around 35 per cent of the Ghat region, which according to the report is ecologically most sensitive. But the point is that there is no scientific data that links the occurrence of almsdiles to construction activities, sand mining and quarvings. Even the

scientific data that links the occurrence of landslides to construction activities, sand mining and quarrying. Even the claims about increasing intensity of rainfall in the WC region, often cited by some ecologists as the cause of increasing landslides in the region, need to be verified. So let us now focus on a hazard mapping of the entire region, considering the rainfall, its intensity, soil characteristics, slopes, geological structures and land cover, the factors that actually influence the occurrence of landslides.

The third controversy is about the effectiveness of the early warning system. Some argued that the IMD's rain forecast was too vague. When the IMD is suice of considering a rainfall that the tragedy spot witnessed was much higher, around \$3.2mm in 48 hours, warranting a "red alert". But what we often ignore is that for a region which receives \$5.00 mm rainfall on an average in a year, an 'orange' elert will not create much anxiety

on an average in a year, an 'orange alert will not create much anxiety among the local people.

thehindu businessline. TWENTY YEARS AGO TODAY.

ADB pegs growth at 5.4-7.1 pc

September 6, 2004



Probably what would have Probably what would have made a difference is a warning issued on the basis of the 'cumulative rainfall' that the area received over a period of say, one week or so. So there is a need to work on the criteria for issuing

ACCURATE FORECAST That said, is there a scope

That said, is there a scope for improving the accuracy of weather forecasts? The western Ghat region witnesses wide variation in rainfall within a short variation in rainfall within a short distance (in the east-west direction) given the sharp differences in altitude. Therefore, predicting the rainfall with some degree of accuracy becomes extremely complex. Many talk about real-time monitoring of weather and wider dissemination of the data. But this data needs to be processed alons data needs to be processed alons

dissemination of the data. But this data needs to be processed along with several other datasets—land use, slopes, sil characteristics and moisture conditions, to say something about the runoff and the kinetic energy of the flowing water. Even when all these are done, the local people should be able to relate to the highly technical data.

While law-enforcing agencies

able to relate to the highly technical data.

While law-enforcing agencies should act against illegal sand mining and quarrying, putting the blame of such weather-induced disasters on cutting of trees and mining, based on half-baked knowledge, is not correct. Even the knowledge of the extent to which trees can stabilise hill slopes is often insufficient. When the slopes become unstable with several days of continuous rains, thousands of trees that the soils hold were washed away.

So let us evolve a pragmatic approach for protecting the Western Ghats based on scientific knowledge.

Kumar is Executive Director of the Institute for Resource Analysis and Policy (IRAP), Hyderabad. Narayanamoorthy is former full-time Member (Official), CACP. Views



ork' was supposed to be our emancipation: I speak for a generation of women who believed that 'being employed' offered economic security to women and a greater say in the man's world. We were brought up by women, who ingrained ambition is us, believing economic freedom was the door that one of the company of the company

economic freedom was the door that opened the room to' equality. We thought economic empowerment will give us the agency to raise our voice, determine our actions, and be independent. Work hard, prove your mettle, give your blood and sweat to the organisation, and your blood and sweat to the organisation, and your blood and sweat to the bable. The RG Kar incident reminded us we were living in a fool's paradise. Women all over the country, from villages to cities, from film studios to corporate offices, wondered if a doctor on duty, in one the busiest hospitals, could be raped and murdered in the most gruesome way possible, is any one

most gruesome way possible, is any one of us safe? Or are we left to the whims of

of us safe? Or are we left to the whims of perpetrators who may have any reason for using sexual violence against us from our clothes, to what we think to what we have raised our voice against. The RG Kar rape and murder case, has triggered continuous protests from the civil society in the last 25 days. In one of the most spontaneous of citizen protests, the whole of Bengal, and parts of India are on the streets, demanding speedy and proper justice for the young doctor brutalised and murdered on the night of August 8-9.

The 'Reclaim the night' protest on August 14 and continued protests from citizens is a protest both against the sexual violence women continue to face, as well as the rampant corruption in

sexual violence women continue to tace, as well as the rampant corruption in public offices and misuse of power. The incident, the discourses surrounding it, and the protests thereafter raise some pertinent questions about women, their safety and voice at the workplace.

LOW WORK PARTICIPATION

LOW WORK PARTICIPATION
First, the lapses in workplace security brought to forefront by this case show that the dismal female labour participation ratio in India is not an accident. In a country, where sexual violence is still seen as a women's fault, violence at workplace largely goes unreported unless taking a gruesome form as it did with this case.

India has one of lowest female labour participation is India in 2023 stood at 33 per cent, as against the world

average of 49 per cent according to World Bank data. With only a third of women at 'workplaces', we are tapping third of our potential. The conditions of work remain The conditions of work remain difficult for most women workers across the nation, without access to basic facilities. Do we make enough efforts to make the workplaces compatible to women: with access to clean washrooms, secure resting places, and regular, safe transport facilities?

Needless to say, the solution is not to

Needless to say, the solution is not to curtail the working hours for women, that is going to lead to further forms of discrimination, in addition to the

The horrific RG Kar Hospital incident is proof of how unsafe the workplace is for Indian

women and has forced us to confront our deepseated patriarchal views

Women and workplace:

What we want

CRY FOR JUSTICE. Whether it is workplace or home, women want their voices to be heard

'maternity penalty' women already face.
Second, the voice of the women at the
workplace is for long the unheard and
subjugated one, especially when they
speak up against injustice.
Women whistle-blowers, research
shows, face more retaliation than men.
Retaliation in form of secual harassment
and violence is perhaps the one that
shocks women most and forces them
into silence.
Women who speak up against any
malpractice or highlight problems in the
workplace are often termed as
'problematic' and tarnishing the
'reputation' of the organisation.
It is a time-tested ploy that forced
women into silence over ages: from
families to organisation who raises her
vice against the problem, not the
prepertarors.
Is the 'reputation' of family,
organisations, city, state, country over
and above the laws of the land or
universal ethical considerations?

This misplaced sense of 'reputation' is a deeply entrenched and patriarchal problem. Public offices are vulnerable to corruption, and unless women whistle-blowers are accorded the protection and support power in terms of special bodies designated to help, we cannot rule out corruption from public

cannot rule out corruption from public offices. Today, as we continue to join candle light marches seeking justice in the RG Kar incident, it us light the lamp in the corners of our homes and offices. From our house helps to CEOs, board members to homesands offices, from our house helps to CEOs, board members to homesand organisations? Especially in our workplaces, are women protected from subjugation and harassment, and or blamed and silenced when they raise issues, however, trivial or large? The first step to welcoming more women in our workplaces comes from making their voice heard.

Quiet quitting: The new workplace plague

Aastha Tripathi

Aastha Tripathi

While the 'Great Resignation' has been extensively discussed, a new phenomenon has emerged — "quiet quitting". This trend, motivated by similar factors that drive resignations, involves employees opting out of tasks beyond their assigned duties and exhibiting a decreased psychological investment in their work.

Quiet quitters continue to fulfil their primary responsibilities but are less inclined to work overtime, arrive early or attend non-mandatory meetings. Though' quiet quitting 'may not initially pose a problem but for numerous organisations, a workforce that is willing to exceed expectations is a crucial competitive advantage. Many jobs cannot be fully defined within a formal job description or contract, necessitating employees to take on additional tasks as required. Therefore, it is not surprising that many leaders have responded negatively to the quiet quitting trend.

While exerting additional effort can quitting trend.
While exerting additional effort can
base personal costs for employees, in a

well-functioning organisation, these sacrifices are often offset by benefits such as increased social capital, well-being, and career advancement. However, the trend of quiet quitting indicates that employees are increasingly perceiving an imbalance in this exchange. Employers are demanding more from their workers without investing sufficiently in return. As economic conditions deteriorate and quitting becomes less viable for many individuals, quiet quitting may become a more prevalent strategy. Based on both my own research and a review of existing literature, I have identified three evidence-based strategies for employers to consider to stop quiet quitting.

REVISE JOB RESPONSIBILITIES

While a certain degree of job creep is a natural occurrence, the pandemic has exacerbated this trend. Tasks once considered exceptional have become expected components of employees' roles.

roles.
To address this, managers should reassess employees' core job responsibilities. By focusing on



EMPLOYEES. At the crossroads

essential tasks and providing adequate work-life balance, managers can motivate employees to perform at their best while ensuring their well-being.

PRIORITISE LISTENING

PRIORITISE LISTENING
Organisations must prioritise listening
to and investing in their employees. By
demonstrating genuine support,
companies can mitigate the risk of
employee burnout and foster a sense of
citizenship.
Beyond empathy, organisations
should employ HR analytic stools and
conduct one-on-one conversations to
gather qualitative and quantitative data

on employee needs. Creating a safe and supportive environment where employees feel valued and heard is essential. Leaders should consult with

Leaders should consult with employees to identify targeted investments. This may include providing career development opportunities, flexible work arrangements, or transparent compensation structures.

PRIORITISE CRAFTSMANSHIP

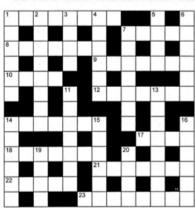
PRIORITISE CRAFTSMANSHIP In conclusion, leaders can foster positive citizenship behaviours within their teams without imposing an unsustainable "hustle" culture; that can lead to burnout. In a toxic workplace culture, employees often feel compelled to undertake excessive tasks that can negatively impact their well-being. However, when employees prioritise behaviours that align with their personal motivations and needs, these activities can be invigorating rather than burdensome.

BL TWO-WAY CROSSWORD 2520

Govt considering 100 pc FDI in pension sector
While foreign direct investment is still struggling to get close to the halfway
mark, FDI in the pension sector could travel to the full distance in the first
burst itself. A strong opinion is building within the Finance Ministry that 100
per cent FDI should be allowed in the pension sector once it is opened up for
entry of new pension fund managers (PFMs).

The Asian Development Bank has pegged India's economic growth at 5.4-7.1 per cent during 2004-05, lower than 8.2 per cent attained last fiscal, mainly on the assumption of a decline in farm output. The growth projection is comparable with those forecast by IMF (6.5-7.2 per cent), IKCA (6.6-6.7 per cent), IKCA (6.6-6.7 per cent), Crisi (5.5-6 per cent) and CMIE (6.5 per cent).

Scheme to revive 3 sick PSUs approved
The government has approved a package of revival of three public sector rail overnment has approved a package of revival of thre n makers Brathwaite Company, Burn Standard Comp



CM CO

EASY

another (8) 07. Male of honey-bee (5)

08. Belonging to another

country (7) 09. Decency, propriety of

conduct (7)

12. Glowing, shining (7)

14. A quack remedy (7) 17. Jetty, wharf (4)

18. Coal-miner (7) 21 Different ur

23. Beams supporting rails (8)

like each other (7) 16. Crucial moment, turni 19. Piece of foliage (4) 22. Rub out (5)

02. Night (8)

03. Beast's lying-place (4) 04. Soft, delicate (6) 05. Teem with rain (4)

06. Allow (6)

11. Cord-like explosive (7)

13. What counteracts poison (8) 14. American 5-cent piece (6)

15. Feel astonishment (6)

20. Accurate, right (4)

NOT SO EASY

01. In a friend it may be loud change to a different key (8)

07. Male bee will make a monotonous sound (5) 08. Grief no different, coming from abroad (7)

09. Becoming conduct breaks the code: curious! (7)

10. Clifford and Lincoln were to provide entertaining

places (4)

12. Beaming happily at a rind for a change (7)

14. Patent medicine most run out of (7)

17. Parking that is initially restricted by a mass of

with coal (7)

21. Our visa could be of assorted types (7)

22. Wipe out some of the paper as extraneo 23. They may be lying with the rails on top of them (8)

...

01. A bungler is at home with hot buttered cake (6)

02. Sends out around the animal shelter as it falls at night (8) 03. Beastly den the Scots will cover in mud (4)

04. It's not tough to offer it in payment (6)
05. Be Mum, and it will come down hard on one (4)
06. Allow one to tire PM out (6)

07. Art movement of 30s died without one being put in

13. How to donate it as an answer to poison (8) 14. It's five cents an element (6) 15. Wonder at first music Ravel composed (6)

16. Credit is repeatedly needed at a decisive mom 19. Two pages of a book may extend the table (4)

20. Is accurately adjusted to being faithful (4)

SOLUTION: BL TWO-WAY CROSSWORD 2519

ACROSS 7, Filing cabinet 8, Demonstrate 12, Alpaca 14, Rotate 16, Corona 18, Skiffs 19, Principally 23, Motor-scooters DOWN 1, Mind 2, Firm 3, Agenda 4, Matter 5, Visa 6, Mere 9, Emperor 10, Tearful 11, Mess 12, Arco 13, Can 15, Oak 17, Accost 18, Siphon 19, Pool 20, Iron 21, Lute 22, Yard