



All or any

The state must have bandwidth to guard against concentration of resources

That the Constitution has an economic philosophy rooted in socialist principles, mainly embodied in its Directive Principles of State Policy, is well understood. However, a question that has often arisen for judicial review concerns how far the state's obligation to subserve the common good and prevent the concentration of wealth and means of production can be allowed to go against fundamental rights of individuals. The state's obligation to ensure that the ownership and control of "material resources of the community are so distributed as to subserve the common good" and to prevent the working of the economic system to the common detriment is found in Articles 39(b) and (c). The recent verdict of a nine-judge Bench of the Supreme Court, holding that not all private resources would fall under the ambit of "material resources" of the community in Article 39, is notable for its examination of whether the underlying economic thought should be given an expansive view, or there are limitations on what sort of private property can be the subject of state action. The Court's majority opinion rejects the expansive view taken in a few precedents in favour of any private resources, including those individual-owned, falling under its ambit. In tune with present day economic realities, it holds that this directive principle cannot be seen through any particular ideological prism, and disappears of such earlier formulations.

The majority view is that while, theoretically, private resources could be part of the community's resources, the relevant consideration for the state to acquire or distribute them in pursuit of the common good will depend on "non-exhaustive factors": the nature of the resources and their characteristics, whether such acquisition is essential for the community, the scarcity of such resources, and the consequences of their being concentrated in private hands. Land acquisition has always been based on the principle of eminent domain, while allocation of natural resources will require fair and transparent processes. On the other hand, nationalisation of utilities, services and industries has required constitutional justification through the Directive Principles. The majority is right in holding that the Constitution-makers consciously worded Article 39 in broad terms so that they do not tie down future regimes to any particular strand of economic thought. However, Justice Sudhanshu Dhulia's dissent has significance. Highlighting the continuing inequality in society, he has questioned the majority for seeking to limit the scope of the "material resources", when the better approach would have been to leave it to the wisdom of the legislature.

Testing time

Donald Trump's second term could add to the stress on climate action plans

Many goals related to climate change and public health have important deadlines by 2030: reducing carbon emissions, financing poorer countries' climate mitigation and adaptation plans, protecting biodiversity, anticipating future pandemics, and instituting sustainable development. It does not bode well for any of them that in the second half of this decade — when the world has greater need of science sensitive to societal, developmental, and humanitarian needs plus cross-border trust — Donald Trump will be the U.S. President. Those goals have been instrumentalised by treaties that demand collective action, the ability to negotiate and compromise, and a willingness to assume the long view, all of which Mr. Trump has shown he is incapable of, thus jeopardising the desperate progress the world needs to make. Already, at the recent COP16 summit, the world's richest countries refused to meet their own commitments to pay for biodiversity management and instead pointed to private-sector funding to bridge the gap. COP29 will begin next week to draft the framework in which the carbon offsets system will operate without devolving into a "pay to pollute" scheme. In his first term, Mr. Trump pulled the U.S. out of the Paris Agreement; refused to fund WHO, whose research findings promoted the expansion of carbon-intensive industries; and fanned pseudoscience. He also visited scientific collaborations by raising the bogeyman of "hidden" political agendas and, after his appointees to the Supreme Court overturned the Chevron doctrine, weakened federal agencies' ability to regulate emerging technologies.

Given the U.S.'s likely turn towards transactionalism for the next half decade and the world's rapidly shrinking carbon budget, countries fighting climate change must consider binding agreements so that commitments thereunder survive changes in government, while bracing to miss targets by wider margins in the interim. Then again, Mr. Trump's U.S. cannot be treated as an isolated stressor. For one, the repercussions for U.S.-Europe trade under Europe's new Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism are yet to be worked out. Similarly, if the U.S. reduces adaptation financing, which is not unlikely, the drain on other countries' budgets will compromise their capacity to deal with everything from pathogen surveillance to early-warning systems. There is still hope, however. U.S. States have considerable power to effect subnational action and, while less than ideal, it must not be underestimated. Mr. Trump's re-election also places a higher premium on other governments' support — material and otherwise — for their scientists, their collaborators, and evidence-based policymaking to keep the world on course to meeting its goals.

The New Collective Quantified Goal (NCQG) will be a key determinant of COP29 (also touted as a "finance COP") turning out to be successful. The foundation of climate finance actions is unequivocally centred on addressing the "needs and priorities of developing countries", as mandated in Article 9 of the Paris Agreement. NCQG, and set to be finalised at COP29, will shape the future of climate finance. COP29 is being held in Baku, Azerbaijan, from November 11 to 22, 2024.

Unresolved battles

In the debate over the NCQG, countries with diverse interests are taking sharply differing positions, as highlighted in the recent high-level ministerial dialogue on NCQG ahead of COP29. Key unresolved issues include the structure and the scope of the NCQG, the scale of financial contributions, and time frames, and sources. Developing countries insist that the financial burden must not shift unfairly onto them. They emphasise the responsibility of developed countries to provide support, laying stress on the need for equity in climate finance, with a balance between adaptation and mitigation. Their position favours clear, quantitative targets, with a focus on public finance, grants, and concessional loans, alongside specific, predictable time frames of either five or 10 years.

In contrast, developed countries push to broaden the contributor base, advocating for a more inclusive approach to climate finance. They prioritise outcome-driven strategies, targeting low emissions and climate resilience, while exploring innovative financing and flexible, multilayered finance structures. The \$100 billion annual climate finance pledge, made in 2009 and extended to 2025, has been a glaring source of distrust. Developed countries missed the original 2020 deadline, only meeting the target in 2022, undermining faith in their commitments and leaving developing countries struggling with the consequences of delayed action. Moreover, the \$100 billion target is woefully insufficient. Trillions are needed. The Standing Committee on Finance estimates that for 48% of costed needs from 98 parties, the amount required for climate action ranges between \$5.036 trillion and \$6.876 trillion.

Although the OECD reports that the \$100 billion goal was met for the first time in 2022, with developed countries mobilising \$115.9 billion, the reality exposes serious flaws. There are insufficient resources for adaptation, and the over-reliance on loans, instead of grants, is putting vulnerable countries further into debt. Grants-based public finance must be the core of climate finance, with concessional loans supplementing but not replacing it. Private investment is useful for clean energy but falls short in adaptation projects, where the returns



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With developing countries burdened by the climate crisis they did not cause, the critical question is whether negotiations on global climate finance will deliver outcomes or just promises

are less clear. This investment bias towards mitigation leaves crucial adaptation efforts such as infrastructure resilience and disaster management severely underfunded. Accessing funds from entities such as the Green Climate Fund and Global Environment Facility remains a significant hurdle for developing countries, hindering their ability to adapt.

Issue with expanding the contributor base

Discussions on expanding the contributor base for the NCQG raise significant concerns regarding equity and the effectiveness of climate finance negotiations. According to submissions on the new collective quantified goal on climate finance, Switzerland and Canada have proposed expanding the contributor base to include additional countries based on criteria such as emissions and GNI per capita (PPP). The Canadian and Swiss proposals largely seek to target China along with oil-producing countries such as Bahrain, Brunei, Kuwait, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates. Considering climate change impacts, aspects such as vulnerability, energy poverty and human development are extremely important.

The discussions on expanding the contributor base are not new and were pushed during the Paris Agreement talks. Developed countries argued that wealthier nations should step up, citing shifting global economies. The developing countries pushed back, seeing it as an attempt to sidestep the core principles of equity and common but differentiated responsibilities that underpin climate negotiations. This move was seen as a threat to dilute accountability, shifting the burden away from those historically responsible for the climate crisis. The discussion on the contributor base exceeds the intended mandate, risking delays in crucial negotiations. Given the pressing need for climate action, this debate risks stalling progress at COP29.

The foundation of the NCQG and climate finance commitments should be firmly anchored in Article 9 of the Paris Agreement, which mandates a balance between adaptation and mitigation finance, emphasising public and grant-based finance for adaptation to avoid increasing the debt burden on developing countries.

Yet, developed countries are advancing a narrative focused on "low greenhouse gas emissions and climate-resilient development", which carries significant political implications for their legal obligations under the Paris Agreement and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.

This narrative shift appears to be an attempt to dilute explicit responsibilities by broadening the scope of interpretation. Such a shift undermines both the spirit and the letter of Article 9 of the Paris Agreement, violating the principle of *pacta sunt servanda*, which demands that treaties and

agreements be upheld in good faith.

The Standing Committee on Finance (SCF) has updated the operational definition of climate finance. The current definition of climate finance is "Climate finance aims at reducing emissions and enhancing sinks of greenhouse gases, aims at reducing vulnerability, increasing adaptive capacity, and mainstreaming and increasing resilience of human and ecological systems to negative climate impacts, and includes financing for actions identified in a country's nationally determined contribution, adaptation communication, national adaptation plan, long-term low-emission development strategy, or other national plan for implementing and achieving the goals of the Paris Agreement and the objective of the Convention".

The absence of an explicit reference to additionality in the adopted definition is a critical oversight, as it leaves room for ambiguity on whether climate finance constitutes new and incremental support. Finance refers to the targeted allocation of public funds from developed to developing countries to support climate mitigation and adaptation, while investment involves the allocation of capital with the expectation of profit, which may not align with climate priorities. Counting private investments as part of the NCQG risks diluting the accountability and the responsibility of developed countries to provide clear, targeted, and equitable climate finance, as private capital often lacks the public purpose and oversight essential to meeting international climate objectives, especially adaptation. Having common accounting frameworks continues to be critical.

On the NCQG

Developing countries need not only finance but also technology transfer and capacity building as a means of implementation to support both mitigation and adaptation. However, procedural barriers within multilateral mechanisms, which often prioritise "value-for-money" over "need-for-money", can hinder their access to funds.

As COP29 approaches and the NCQG is set to be finalised, the negotiations will decide if climate finance truly addresses the urgent needs of developing countries burdened by the climate crisis they did not cause.

The NCQG's success hinges on whether it restores faith in multilateralism and rebuilds the fractured trust between developed and developing countries. If the process fails to account for historical responsibility, the unique challenges of developing countries, and the need for capacity building, it risks widening the divide. As the world heads towards Baku, the critical question remains: will the negotiations on global climate finance deliver just outcomes or just promises?

India, Pakistan and modifying the Indus Waters Treaty



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India's move to serve formal notice on August 30, 2024, in line with Article XII (3) of the Indus Waters Treaty (IWT), underlines its concerns about meeting ever-increasing domestic water needs in a sustainable manner. The notice is to review and modify the treaty to address India's specific concerns relating to altered population demographics, along with agricultural and other uses apart from the need to accelerate the development of clean energy to meet India's emission rights. India has also mentioned in the notice that the impact of persistent cross-border terrorism in Jammu and Kashmir is impeding smooth operations of the Treaty, undermining the full utilisation of its rights in the Indus.

Article XII, which allows modification in the treaty from time to time, lays down a very high threshold: "a duly ratified treaty concluded for that purpose between the two Governments". If one goes by the plea made by India and Pakistan during the Kishenganga arbitral award 2013, it appears unlikely that Pakistan and India will reach a modification formula that is to their satisfaction.

Divergent approaches

India, as the upper riparian, treats optimal utilisation the object and the purpose of the IWT. This is opposed to Pakistan's (the lower riparian) understanding of uninterrupted flow to its side. This divergent approach relating to the interpretation of the IWT's purpose is one of the factors responsible for the claims and counterclaims by India and Pakistan over water use. The Hague based Permanent Court of Arbitration (PCA) did not side with the plea of ecological harm raised by Pakistan under Article IV (6) of the IWT. It allowed India to build hydropower projects on the Kishenganga. But the Tribunal has added a caveat: that India has to

Given the lack of trust between the two countries, renegotiating the IWT to review and make changes might prove difficult

maintain a minimum nine cubic metre a second flow. India has 33 hydro-power projects, in either construction or planning phase, along the western tributaries. The use of western rivers for hydro-power generation is permitted under the IWT but the crucial point is about India maintaining minimum flow.

Challenges in managing resources

Ensuring optimum utilisation and maintaining minimum flow would require better management of the entire Indus Water Basin, resulting in enhanced water resource. Meeting these goals is remote in the given structure of the IWT, which divides the separation of the Indus Basin into eastern and western waters. India has proprietary rights in the eastern rivers (Article II, Ravi, Sutlej and Beas) while Pakistan has proprietary rights in the western rivers (Article III, Indus, Jhelum and Chenab). The idea of partitioning the rivers was driven by historical contingency relating to Partition and the appeal to the Indian and Pakistani leadership as the only rational strategy. The partitioning of the river basin essentially severed hydrological relationships between the rivers and their tributaries, which not only made integrated water resources management elusive but also led to either minimal or no cooperation.

Although the IWT does not have a provision relating to no harm rule, it still binds both the riparians as the rule is a customary international law. The obligation not to cause significant harm is a due diligence obligation — it amounts to saying that both riparians have to take every appropriate measure to prevent harm while undertaking a hydropower project or projects on the shared water course having a potential transboundary impact. The International Court of Justice (ICJ), in the Pulp Mills on the Uruguay

river case (2010) has identified conducting a transboundary environmental impact assessment (EIA) as an essential requirement of customary international law for projects or activities with a potential for transboundary effects. This judgment amounts to saying India and Pakistan will have to undertake EIA if a project has potential transboundary effects. The ICJ did not identify the core components of an adequate EIA.

The Rule relating to equitable and reasonable utilisation (ERU) of international watercourse, which is enshrined in Article 5, and the factors and circumstances for consideration to arrive at an ERU in Article 6 of the 1997 UN Watercourses Convention can guide both the riparians to meet unforeseen circumstances. The ERU may be leaned on to deal with unforeseen effects of climate change such as depletion of glacial reserves which cause a 30%-40% decrease in the Indus water flow.

The proposal to review should consider the provision in Article VII(c) which explicitly provides that if both the parties are in agreement, they can cooperate in joint engineering projects along the river. Joint projects that are appropriately designed and operated could offer a chance to mitigate water variability that arises from climate change.

Some suggestions

Given the lack of trust between the two parties, renegotiating the treaty to review and make modifications might prove difficult. A suggestion could be using the IWT's formal negotiation procedures to arrive at a memorandum of understanding and other cooperative avenues that address issues as they arise, while using the treaty as a structure to organise their development of the basin (N. Zawahri and D. Michel, 2018).

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

The U.S. election result

The resounding victory of the Republicans shows that the U.S. electorate is still not receptive to the idea of a woman President. That voters have "condoned" the past actions of and serious charges against Donald Trump is strange. Mr. Trump's election will be a double-edged sword: his capacity to bring peace in war-torn regions of the world vs his America's first

policy (which may result in a trade war) and disregard for the environment.
Aanya Singhal,
Noida, Uttar Pradesh

Unfair criticism

Justice B.V. Nagarathna and Justice Sudhanshu Dhulia must be complimented for distancing themselves from Chief Justice of India (CJI) D.Y. Chandrachud's remarks that the 'Krishna river doctrine' had done a

diservice to the spirit of the Constitution of India. The long history of Justice V.R. Krishna Iyer's life and his many achievements hardly justify such a statement. In Telicherry/Thalassery, where Justice Krishna Iyer started his practice, he appeared for the peasantry and the downtrodden. He was a prolific author and an elected member of the State Assembly, a Law

Minister, a Member of the Law Commission, a judge of the High Court and the Supreme Court, where he faithfully adhered to the high constitutional principles. It is unfortunate that the outgoing CJI has not understood that Justice Krishna Iyer's judgments were in line with the principles of the Constitution.
N.G.R. Prasad,
Chennai

Vande Bharat train service

This is a letter by a senior citizen expressing concern over a decision made by the Indian Railways. In August 2024, Vande Bharat train services commenced between Ernakulam Junction and Bengaluru. But they were stopped abruptly after a month without any valid reason. This is a decision that affects people living in and around Ernakulam and in

Thrissur and Palakkad districts. We are baffled by this decision as the train was running to full capacity. It was also a boon to frequent travellers such as students, professionals and businesspersons. This is also a violation of the tall political guarantees that were made to the people of Kerala about ensuring better connectivity.
K.K. Philip,
Kochi

Are pro-natalist policies the way to address the ageing population problem?



Gita Sen

Honorary Senior Adviser and Distinguished Professor, Public Health Foundation of India

PARLEY

Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu recently expressed concern about Andhra Pradesh's ageing population and urged the people of his State to have more children. Days later, Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M.K. Stalin attended a mass wedding event in Chennai. He said that the Census and delimitation process may encourage couples to give up thoughts of having a small family. Are pro-natalist policies the best way of addressing the ageing population problem? Gita Sen and Udaya Shankar Mishra discuss the question in a conversation moderated by Jagriti Chandra. Edited excerpts:



People celebrate Bhai Dooj at an old age home in Jammu. PTI

While India's Total Fertility Rate dropped to 1.9 in 2021, below the replacement fertility rate of 2.1, implying population stabilisation, there are sharp regional variations. Could you tell us more about the national and regional context of population growth?

Udaya Shankar Mishra: Let me first clarify that there is often a lot of confusion regarding population growth attaining the replacement level of fertility. Though the population growth in India has slowed down, the country's population will keep on growing till 2070 as of now, whereas the world population will keep on growing till 2080. This means that our population will stop growing earlier than the world average. The reason behind the trajectory of population growth in India is its population momentum, which can occur after a period of high fertility, and which is when a large cohort of women come into the reproductive age bracket over time. Although the fertility rate declines, they still contribute significantly to the quantum growth in population. The replacement level of fertility rate is indicative of the fact that in terms of replacement reproduction, every mother is getting replaced by another mother. But that does not in any way imply that India's population growth is going to immediately experience a negative growth rate.

Having said that, I must also elaborate on the birth rate and death rate transition in India, which will give you the outcome of growth rate. Between 2060 and 2070, the death rate will cross the birth rate curve. Until then, the growth rate will continue. But there is a distinct north-south divide in the growth rate. Population growth in the south is slower than in the north. But the age composition of the population continues to remain in a manner such that it can sustain the population.

There are two concerns which need to be highlighted. One is the issue of sustaining the population, and the other is the aspect of federal representation, which was enunciated by Mr.

Stalin. The issue of sustaining the population encompasses the size of the working age population, the size of the non-working population, the population age, structure, and composition. But federal representation is in terms of share of the population of a State, which needs some rethinking. In this regard I had done some work with the last Finance Commission where we added demographic performance in the reading of populations, so that you are not just looking at population count but also qualitative aspects such as longevity.

Can you share some data with us to show the scale and the pace of ageing in different parts of the country?

USM: The scale and pace of ageing is actually measured in terms of the proportion of population that has aged. In 2021, Bihar's proportion of aged population was 7.7% as against India's 10.1%. Compare this with Tamil Nadu or Kerala, where the proportion was higher than the national average – 16.5% in Kerala and 13.7% in Tamil Nadu. When this pattern is projected for 2036, the share of the elderly population in Tamil Nadu will grow from 13.7% to 20.8% and in Kerala from 16.5% to 22.8%, whereas in Bihar it will grow from 7.7% to 11%. So, the pace of ageing in the northern States with high fertility is much lower. And I would say this pace of ageing is not only due to reduction in fertility levels, but also due to increasing longevity in southern States.

Is rapid ageing necessarily a bad thing or is it part of a natural progression in how a population changes over time? What should we really worry about?

Gita Sen: It is part of the natural progression. The question, however, is when you think of the population of a State or a country. There are different kinds of development approaches, and



What we should really worry about are a whole range of development and social factors, including health factors, as a population grows older

GITA SEN

policies towards population and fertility play a big role in whether ageing is something to worry about and how to handle it. So, what we should really worry about are in fact a whole range of development and social factors, including health factors, as a population grows older. These include non-communicable diseases, heart issues, cancers, etc. The second is about jobs and what work is going to be possible for an older population. As the economy becomes more and more IT linked, physical strength and musculature have become less critical. This opens doors for the kind of work that an older population can do. There are other elements too, such as migration, and how one handles gender inequality and care services, which are critical regardless of the age of the population.

USM: In fact, the pessimistic outlook of ageing is primarily because of the reading of ageing in a static way rather than a dynamic way. A dynamic reading of ageing would take into account life expectancy, which should be moving upwards. Second, the characteristics of the future elderly population would be very different from the present-day elderly population. So, apart from numbers, we should also take into account the characteristics of the ageing population as all the elderly can't be deemed unproductive.

Given the pace of ageing in southern States, is having more children the solution?

GS: In the first half of independent India, we were concerned about a 'population bomb'. As a result, we tried different policies, such as forced sterilisations, which didn't work very well and which led to human rights violations. Now we seem to be swinging in the other direction, which is, how can we make people have more babies? We are talking about incentives. The incentives that Mr. Naidu is talking about are absurd. For instance, he mentioned that you can only stand for local elections if you have more than two babies. Earlier policies said one could only stand for local elections if one had less than two babies. So, we keep swinging. If anybody thinks that people will make decisions about electoral participation on the basis of whether they have more or less babies, that is absurd. What happened when we had the disincentive previously? Any local strongman who had five children would simply claim that he had only

two and say the remaining three were not his, and that they belonged to either his brother or neighbour. Now if you tell people you need to have two or more, it is very easy to trot out someone else's child and say these are mine.

Why do young couples not want to have kids? Shouldn't government policies also try and understand and study those?

GS: Since 2015, worldwide, a number of countries, such as Hungary, Poland, Greece, Finland, and Sweden, where ageing is a major issue, have moved in the direction of pro-natalist policies. Under such policies, governments try to increase maternity leave or paternity leave and increase child support or reduce taxation if you have more children. They also try to give cash incentives for people to have children. Why don't these work? Because of the cost of living. Is there adequate housing? What is the cost of raising a child? What does it cost to put a child in kindergarten and then school? Even in India, these issues are very serious. The other aspect is the big opportunity cost for women, who are largely responsible for the unpaid care of babies. They drop out of work, either permanently or for a short period of time. And when they go back, they would have lost their place in the promotion ladder. So, it is unlikely that women are going to want to have two-three children.

Given all these regional disparities, what should be at the heart of population policies?

GS: The human cost, human rights, and gender equality questions. Second, we need to look at the effectiveness of our policies. This can't be through coercion, but by making them worthwhile in society, which also have financial costs. So, we need to address the needs of an older population by way of healthcare, or taking advantage of technology to create job opportunities. There is also a huge potential for trained, empathetic carers when we have a very serious employment problem. But we can't treat our care service workers as though they are cheap labour. We need to take care of them.

But I would like to also add that from an ecological sustainability point of view, maybe it is not such a bad idea to move towards a smaller population size and towards replacement fertility. We need to think of planetary requirements and a standard of living that provides people with a decent way to live, ensures work-life balance, and gender equality.



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NOTEBOOK

War, news, and Trump

U.S. mainstream media is caught in the whirlwind of domestic politics

Varghese K. George

A recent headline on the CNN website declared, "Trump says 'war hawk' Liz Cheney should be fired upon in escalation of violent rhetoric against his opponents." On voting day, *The Washington Post* fact-checked Donald Trump's statement that "we have crime through the roof" with data to apparently prove that crime is in fact lower than before.

American mainstream media (MSM) is caught in the whirlwind of the country's domestic politics. Until the rise of Mr. Trump and his populism, American MSM and its political and strategic establishment had a cosy relationship where nearly all opinion makers agreed on the basics. The complete manifestation of this mutual reinforcement of the country's politics and its media peaked with 'embedded' reporting, literally, of the Iraq war. The questioning of American political and economic order and its foreign policy remained on the margins of public discourse until Mr. Trump built a political movement around it. MSM journalists – a group overwhelmingly dominated by self-identified Democrats – concluded by the end of the 2016 election that objective reporting was not desirable any more. In fact, a segment of journalists even doubted whether critical reporting of Hillary Clinton in 2016 enabled the rise of Mr. Trump, and by implication, endangered democracy. By the next presidential election in 2020, MSM platforms were clear that they would do nothing to harm the campaign of Democrat Joe Biden. That approach led to the MSM not reporting on the 'Hunter Biden laptop episode', a decision which has raised several questions regarding ethical journalism.

Mr. Trump's allies leaked, days before voting day in 2020, data from a laptop that belonged to Mr. Hunter, which suggested corrupt practices by him. Soon after *New York Post* published it, the story was barred from social media platforms and MSM outlets. Supported by a bevy of national security experts who labelled the story as Russian misinformation, most MSM reporting was on saving Amer-

ican democracy from foreigners. Four years later, it is clear that the laptop indeed belonged to Mr. Hunter and the data that appeared in the public domain was genuine. Questions of journalistic practices raised by this episode remain unresolved. Do journalists have a duty to report on public figures, regardless of what the consequences will be, including for larger issues such as democracy and national security? Or should they report only in advancement of a declared goal? Ethical clarity on such questions may have been easy in circumstances such as the national freedom struggle, but is difficult when public opinion within a country is divided, as it is today in the U.S.

Mr. Trump and the MSM also have a mutually beneficial relationship in a peculiar and even perverse way. In nearly all his speeches, he berates and insults journalists, calling them "fake news," "garbage," "not good people", and "scum"; his supporters lap it up.

In the U.S., war no longer unite the nation. Mr. Trump's populism is built, among other things, on an anti-war stance. What led to the CNN headline cited above is from Mr. Trump's critique of U.S. wars abroad. After explaining how wars initiated or encouraged by the U.S. were leading to the suffering and deaths of people, Mr. Trump, as usual, blamed the politicians who support wars. Talking of Ms. Cheney, former Republican lawmaker and daughter of former Vice President Dick Cheney, he said: "...is a very dumb individual, very dumb. She's a radical war hawk. Let's put her with a rifle standing there with nine barrels shooting at her..." What was said as a criticism of advocating war turned out to be call for violence in most reporting on the topic.

Contesting Mr. Trump's statement in Denver that the city was being "overrun" by Venezuelan gangs, a TV anchor said to his running mate J.D. Vance: "The incidents were limited to a handful of apartment complexes," trying to prove false the claim that the city was being "overrun." Gallup polls record that public trust in mass media has been in decline in the U.S. since 1972 and in 2024, it is at the lowest point.

PICTURE OF THE WEEK

Light and warmth



Border Security Force personnel light candles to celebrate Diwali near the India-Bangladesh Border, at Atila, Tapan, in Dakshin Dinajpur district of West Bengal, on October 31. PTI

FROM THE ARCHIVES

FIFTY YEARS AGO NOVEMBER 8, 1974

Travel facilities restoration: Pak. attitude unhelpful

New Delhi, November 7: The Indo-Pakistan agreement for the restoration of travel facilities has run into difficulties because of the Pakistani insistence on scrapping the simpler procedures followed in the past for casual visits and regulating all future movements between the two countries with proper

The Hindu

international passports.

Before the 1971 conflict, the two Governments used to issue special red passports which were more in the nature of identity cards for travel between India and Pakistan by ordinary visitors, members of divided families and pilgrims.

The agreement signed in September by the Foreign Secretaries of India and Pakistan, Mr. Kewal Singh and Mr. Aga Shahi at the last round of official-level talks in Islamabad provided for the resumption of communications and the restoration of travel by people from either side as part of the Simla process of normalisation.

A HUNDRED YEARS AGO NOVEMBER 8, 1924

Progress of war in China

Peking, Nov. 5: In consequence of the decision of Feng-Yu-Hsiang to take over the Imperial City, Hsuan Tung, the Boy-Emperor, accompanied by the Maachu family left the Imperial Palace to-day and took up residence in the Palace of the Prince Chun, Ex-Regent, father of the Emperor. A number of officers of the Imperial household remained behind to take an inventory of the archives and treasures and to determine the belongings of the State and the Manchu House.

Text & Context

THE  HINDU

NEWS IN NUMBERS

People evacuated due to wildfires in southern California

10,000 A wildfire fuelled by heavy winds was tearing through a community northwest of Los Angeles for a second day after destroying homes and forcing thousands of residents to flee when it exploded in size in only a few hours. *AP*

Proposed age limit for kids to use social media in Australia

16 years. The Australian government announced legislation that would institute an age limit of 16 years for children to start using social media and hold platforms responsible for ensuring compliance. The age limit would take effect 12 months after the law is passed. *AP*

The deportation period under a new Israeli law

7-20 years. Israel's parliament passed a law that would allow it to deport family members of Palestinian attackers, including the country's own citizens, to the war-ravaged Gaza Strip or other locations. The law passed with a 61-41 vote. *AP*

Sweden central bank's largest rate cut in over a decade

0.5 percentage points. Sweden's central bank cut its key interest rate by half a percentage point to 2.75%. It added that "if the outlook for economic activity and inflation remains the same," the policy rate may also be cut in December, and during the first half of 2025. *AP*

Cubans affected by grid collapse due to Hurricane Rafael

10 million. Cuban authorities struggled to return power to the island on Thursday morning after Hurricane Rafael knocked out the country's electrical grid. The grid collapsed as Rafael tore across Cuba with top winds of 115 mph (185 kph). *Reuters*

COMPILED BY THE HINDU DATA TEAM

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Can the state acquire all private property?

When can private properties be taken over by the government? Why was the right to property taken out from the list of Fundamental Rights? What does Article 39 (b) of the Directive Principles of State Policy articulate? Why was Justice V.R. Krishna Iyer's interpretation of the same struck down?

EXPLAINER

Rangarajan, R

The story so far:

A nine-judge Constitution Bench of the Supreme Court, in a majority judgment (8:1), held that not every private resource can be considered a 'material resource of the community' to be used by the government to serve the 'common good.' This overturns the earlier interpretation formed in 1977 that has been followed by the Supreme Court till 1997.

What are constitutional provisions? Part IV of the Constitution contains the Directive Principles of State Policy (DPSP). These are principles that the government should follow to achieve social and economic justice in our society. Article 39(b) in Part IV provides that 'ownership and control of material resources of the community are so distributed as best to subserve the common good.'

The Constitution originally guaranteed right to property and compensation for acquisition as a Fundamental Right under Articles 19(1)(f) and 31 respectively. Article 31C was added through the 25th amendment in 1971. It provided an exception that laws made to fulfil the principles under Articles 39(b) and (c) shall not be void on the ground that it violated Fundamental Rights including right to property. In the *Kesavananda Bharati* case (1973), a 13-judge Bench of the Supreme Court upheld the validity of Article 31C but made it subject to judicial review. In 1978, the right to property was omitted from Fundamental Rights and made a constitutional right under Article 300A. Any law to acquire private property by the government should only be for a public purpose with adequate compensation meted out.

What were earlier judgments?

In *State of Karnataka versus Ranganatha Reddy* (1977), a seven-judge Bench of the



ISTOCKPHOTO

Supreme Court upheld a Karnataka State law that nationalised private bus transport services. Justice V.R. Krishna Iyer wrote a separate 'afterword' interpreting the phrase 'material resource of the community' contained in Article 39(b). He held that it embraces all national wealth, not merely natural resources, and all the private and public sources of meeting material needs. This minority judgment formed the basis of the *Sanjeev Coke Manufacturing Company versus Bharat Coking Coal Limited* (1982) case, that upheld the nationalisation of coke oven plants. It was again relied on in *Mafatlal Industries Limited versus Union of India* (1996).

What is the current ruling?

In *Property owners' association versus State of Maharashtra*, a seven-judge Bench

referred the issue of interpretation of Article 39(b) to a nine-judge Bench. The current majority opinion (for seven judges including the CJI) held the interpretation of V.R. Krishna Iyer, that every privately-owned property could be used by the state as a 'material resource' to 'subserve the common good', as a rigid economic ideology that advocates greater governmental control over private resources. Therefore, it was rejected by the majority opinion which said that India has moved on from a socialistic model to a market-based liberalised economic model.

It held that to qualify as a 'material resource of the community,' a resource must be 'material' and 'of the community.' The 'public trust doctrine' and context-specific key factors that would determine this are the inherent

characteristics of the resource; its impact on community well-being; its scarcity; and the impact due to its concentration in private hands. Hence, certain resources like forests, ponds, spectrum, mines and minerals may fall within the scope of Article 39(b) even if they are privately held. However, not every private resource automatically qualifies just because it meets material needs. The term 'distribute' in Article 39(b) also carries a wide meaning that can include both government acquisition and redistribution to private players, as long as it serves the common good. Justice Nagarathna concurred partially with the seven-judge majority while opining that all private resources except 'personal effects' like apparel, jewellery etc., can be transformed into a 'material resource of the community' through nationalisation, acquisition etc. Justice Sudhanshu Dhulia wrote the sole dissenting opinion where he upheld the interpretation of V.R. Krishna Iyer in the *Ranganatha Reddy* case and opined that it is for the legislature to decide on how the ownership and control of material resources is to be distributed.

What is the way forward?

Our economy has changed from a socialistic pattern to a liberalised, market-oriented model. The ensuing growth has uplifted vast majority of people from abject poverty. However, there is also a growing inequality that needs to be addressed. This judgment should protect the small farm and forest lands of marginalised sections from forceful acquisitions by the government. Equally important is the sustainable exploitation and distribution of material public resources within the domain of the government.

We must bear in mind that we have not inherited the earth and its resources from our ancestors but have borrowed it from our future generations.

Rangarajan, R is a former IAS officer and author of 'Polity Simplified'. Views expressed are personal.

THE GIST

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Are CSR contributions to agriculture properly tracked?

How much of an impact does agriculture have on India's GDP? What are the key requirements to improve agricultural sustainability? What hinders CSR's potential with respect to agriculture?

Dasari Giridhar, Manan Bhan

The story so far:

A decade ago, India became the first country to legally mandate Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR). Section 135 of the Companies Act 2013 outlines the rules and regulations governing CSR. According to the National CSR Portal, from 2014 to 2023, ₹1.84 lakh crore of CSR funds were disbursed. With the extent of contributions increasing, a question arises: how can CSR help agriculture?

CSR's contribution to agriculture

Nearly 47% of the population depends on agriculture for employment, and the fraction of India's labour force in agriculture is significantly higher than the global average of 25%. Economically, agriculture accounts for 16.73% of India's

GDP. Now that India's food production is on a relatively stable footing, concerns focus on the degradation of the natural resource base, stagnant farmer incomes, and threats caused by climate change.

Lately, there have been clear signs from corporate entities that they wish to contribute to climate action and sustainability in the agricultural sector in India through their CSR budgets. According to an outlook report prepared by a CSR platform last year, 23% of companies surveyed had "environment and sustainability" as their CSR priority area. Capital requirements and infrastructural development are the most important needs of Indian agriculture today – and this is also where CSR activities have previously contributed and are expected to continue doing so. Some examples of such activities include establishing grain banks, farmer schools, livelihood projects based on agriculture

and allied activities, water conservation projects, and energy-efficient irrigation. The recent paradigm shift in agriculture towards sustainability and modern agriculture makes a good case for CSR funds from the private sector.

The main obstacle

There is an important problem that hinders CSR's potential in agriculture: there is currently no way to fully determine the extent of funding going into these projects consistently and distinctively, and to categorise them based on targeted sectors of CSR activities. In other words, current reporting mechanisms have little to no emphasis on agriculture-related CSR initiatives. Under activities mentioned in Schedule VII of the Companies Act, activities targeting agricultural sustainability could fall under 11 of the 29 development sectors of CSR allocations.

These are gender equality; agroforestry; poverty, eradicating hunger and malnutrition; technology incubators; animal welfare; environmental sustainability; livelihood enhancement projects; conservation of natural resources; rural development projects; socio-economic inequalities; and women's empowerment. But there's little chance of tracking the funds spent for agriculture-related initiatives alone because these 11 sectors encompass a great variety of activities, many of which are unrelated to agricultural sustainability, thus affecting reporting and limiting sectoral impact assessments.

Given the importance of agriculture for the Indian economy and its place in the country's plans and strategies to engender more sustainable growth and effect a just transition, specifying agriculture as a distinct sector in CSR activities is crucial. Transitioning the reporting framework based on sectors receiving funds would also help streamline and better target the available funds, add more meaning to the contributions, and ensure transparency. Likewise, identifying the prevailing sustainability issues vis-à-vis agroecosystems and directing funds according to requirements will help drive tractable changes.

Dasari Giridhar is a research associate and Manan Bhan is a Fellow in Residence – both at ATRIE, Bengaluru.

THE GIST

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IN THE LIMELIGHT



Enduring tale: A figure of Luffy, a character from *One Piece*, displayed at the 2024 New York Comic Con, at the Jacob Javits Convention Center in New York City, U.S., on October 17. REUTERS

Pièce de résistance: on the cultural impact of 'One Piece' as it completes 25 years

A quarter-century in, Eiichiro Oda's sprawling Japanese pirate saga has transformed into an ever-evolving odyssey, spawning a multimedia franchise to rival its Western counterparts. It also occupies a special space in Japan's cultural consciousness

Ayaan Paul Chowdhury

At 25, *One Piece* has pulled off a feat few could have foreseen. This Japanese saga, launched as a modest manga series by Eiichiro Oda in 1997, has ballooned into a multimedia empire, complete with thousands of manga chapters, an anime adaptation with over 1,100 episodes, feature films, video games, and a hit live-action Netflix series that topped streaming charts worldwide.

What began as a swashbuckling pirate story for teens has grown to rival, if not outshine, the seasoned cultural legacies of *Star Wars*, *The Lord of the Rings*, and even the MCU. Today, *One Piece* stands not only as the best-selling manga in history but as a monolithic testament to the power of storytelling – a ship that defies every storm and limitation, with Oda as its enduring captain.

Dreams that refuse to die
Since its debut, the series has served up a delightful blend of slapstick antics and musings on justice, freedom, and camaraderie, inviting those curious enough to join Luffy and his crew for the meaningful messes they make along the way. In Oda's world, oppressive regimes masquerade as do-gooder governments, and mischievous pirates often emerge as the ethical heart of the Grand Line. Its cheerful, straw-hatted protagonist lures you in with his Cheshire cat grin and childlike enthusiasm for becoming the Pirate King, while the series quietly drags you into something more complex, a story that's as much about resilience as it is about finding the fabled treasure.

This anniversary comes amid *One Piece*'s "endgame" phase, a declaration that has sparked countless debates and anticipatory jitters. Will we finally learn what the *One Piece* actually is? And what does that coveted treasure say about the

moral and philosophical arcs of Oda's world? For those who've waited decades, it's like standing on the precipice of a revelation so seismic it defies calculation – a climax generations in the making, the storytelling crescendo of our time, that would eclipse the likes of *Game of Thrones*. But where George R.R. Martin's incomplete fantasy saga wilted under the pressures of its own buildup, *One Piece* stands proud as an example of sustained, escalating intrigue, precisely because its "secrets" are never just dangling Chekhov's guns but thoughtfully integrated, slow-burning tensions.

Brand new world

By now, *One Piece*'s ecosystem is as sprawling as anything Kevin Feige is cooking up at Marvel, but with an essential difference: Oda's unwavering commitment to continuity. There's no filler here; the seemingly minor players you meet hundreds of episodes ago are liable to pop up later as pivotal pieces in the puzzle. This is a world where nothing is wasted – a plot economy that renders every episode a potentially essential building block.

Few franchises have the enduring grip on popular culture that *One Piece* has – its evolution from a beloved manga series to a multimedia juggernaut is quite hard to fathom. But what's astonishing about *One Piece* is that this isn't just nostalgia rehearsed for fans. The franchise is continually evolving, adapting its epic stakes for its evolving consumers while keeping the original spirit intact. With Netflix's live-action rendition smashing expectations and drawing in millions of viewers (including many who've never cracked open a manga volume) the *One Piece* universe expands without losing an ounce of its original charm – a feat few franchises have achieved, let alone sustained over decades.

So when the next adaptation, spin-off

or even remake, inevitably drops, it's less a question of if it will succeed, and more a question of how much further it will push the boundary of what a cultural phenomenon can be. *One Piece* has become its own world, a language, and a beat that's proven a scrappy pirate tale can sail shoulder to shoulder with legends from galaxies far, far away, adventures across Middle-earth, and the chaotic sprawl of multiversal superheroes.

Inherited will

The sheer longevity and labyrinthine complexity of *One Piece* has transformed it into an unlikely social equaliser. Cosplayers pour obsessive energy into every last detail while seasoned fans play the role of sagacious guides, shepherding newcomers through plot twists and lore as if inducting them into their cult of 'nakammas'.

One Piece also occupies a special space in Japan's cultural consciousness.

It is so deeply rooted that July 22 has been officially recognised as "One Piece Day" in Japan, while massive murals of manga chapters are exhibited in museums. And while such fanfare might seem intense to an outsider, it feels almost inevitable for *One Piece*, which has become as much a part of modern Japanese culture as Hello Kitty or even good 'ol Godzilla.

In celebrating *One Piece*'s 25 years, we're not simply marvelling at its record-shattering success or even its top spots on IMDB; we're commemorating an entire universe that lives, breathes, and grows beyond the confines of its ink and paper. The power of patient storytelling – a saga that refuses to rush, unfolding deliberately across years, decades even. Isn't that the ultimate promise of a great tale? Not just to entertain for a fleeting moment, but to craft something lasting, something fans will carry long after its close.

A leap of faith

There's a sort of modern folklore surrounding the reluctance of many to start *One Piece*. For twenty-five years, the series has charmed, provoked, and outlasted even the boldest of binge-watchers. The once joyous tale of a boy with a straw hat and stretchy arms has mushroomed into an uncontainable, all-consuming cultural force that defies genre, languages, and even format. With its nearly three-decade-long episodic run, the show is, for many, a multi-year journey through seas both literal and figurative.

Yet for so many across the world, it's often also felt like a friend that sticks around, telling stories you somehow never get tired of hearing. I remember being cautioned over the dismaying episode count, as if setting sail with Luffy and his crew meant committing to a lifetime on the Grand Line (colloquially, having no life). But you don't really think about the numbers once you're in it; you're too busy laughing, crying, and rooting for this rag-tag band of pirates like they're family. The very premise that initially appears Herculean turns out to be one of the series' quiet superpowers and for those who take the plunge, *One Piece* proves a formative experience. Somehow, it isn't just a story you watch or read, rather, one you live alongside, growing up with every new (mis)adventure, every impossible dream.

As *One Piece* inches toward its grand finale, it's clear why Oda's hell-bent on delivering more than just a moral about "the journey being the reward" or some tidy, tie-it-with-a-bow ending.

The 'One Piece' at the end of the line will be the sum of every heartbeat, every hard-won friendship, and every wild adventure. And that's precisely what makes its legacy stretch out like the horizon – vast, boundless and unforgettable.



FROM THE ARCHIVES

Know your English

K. Subrahmanian
Upendran

'AMBITION' is from Latin 'ambī' ('both ways' plus 'ire' to go, to go round. In Rome, those who sought office went around canvassing for votes. Those who went around like this for position or power came to be known as ambitious people. The literal meaning of ambition is retained now in ambit, a circuit or circumference. So, if you are ambitious, you can't afford to sit or stand still; you must be on the move, pushing people or pulling wires to achieve your object. Perpetual motion is ambition!

CANDIDATE: 'Candidatus' in Latin means 'dressed in white'; 'candidus' means white. Before any election, the Romans seeking office wore white dress to symbolise their spotless character. Candidates were expected to have unblemished character. That's how those seeking office came to be called candidates. By Roman standards, perhaps very few in our country can claim to be candidates except when they wear white dress!

ARRIVE: This is from Latin 'ad', to plus 'ripa', shore. When you reach the shore after a voyage, you are said to have arrived at the place. In the past, you could arrive only by boat or ship.

RIVAL is from Latin rivus, stream. Rivals were those who lived on the opposite banks of a stream. They must have quarrelled over rights over water, fish, etc. These quarrels must have been intense during times of water scarcity. Each rival must have competed with the other to get as much water as possible. A rival in modern English means a competitor.

PARLIAMENT is from Old French 'parler', to speak. Parliament is a place where discussions and debates take place. Parley, parlance, parlour are all related words.

MINISTER: In Latin 'minister' means 'servant'. Originally, in English also, it meant the same. The old meaning is retained in the verb 'to minister' which means 'to render service'. Christ said that he had come 'not to be ministered unto but to minister'. 'Minister' has acquired an exalted status now. 'Mantri' in Sanskrit means 'adviser', 'counsellor'. The Chinese word 'mandarin' is from 'mantri'. A mandarin is a Chinese official, a bureaucrat, a respected person.

Another interesting letter on the question paper published in this column on August 17, 1993. Mr. K. Rama Iyengar (84 years), 26 Luz Avenue, Madras, writes: "This letter to you would have remained unwritten but for the reference again in the column 'Know Your English' to an earlier one dated August 17, 1993. The question paper published reminded me of a 'wish' expressed years ago by Malcolm Muggeridge, a distinguished teacher of English at Union Christian College, Alwaye (Kerala). He later became editor of Punch. "If I go to Heaven, which I very much doubt, I shall ask God one favour. And that is to send Shakespeare down to earth and make him sit for the Madras University examination in Shakespeare, just for the fun of seeing him fail."

Published in The Hindu on November 30, 1993.

THE DAILY QUIZ

On November 9, 2000, Uttarakhand was carved out of northern Uttar Pradesh and became a separate State. In honour of Uttarakhand Foundation Day, a quiz on the State

Abhinava. K

QUESTION 1
After almost seven years of its formation, the name of the State was changed. The demand to rename the State to Uttarakhand was there since the birth of the State. What was the old name of the State and in which year was it changed?

QUESTION 2
After the delimitation exercise, the first Assembly election in the State was held in February 2002. Which party was voted to power in the election? Since the first election, how many Chief Ministers have helmed

the State?

QUESTION 3
In 2011, the State hosted the South Asian Winter Games at a famous winter sport destination. The place is known as the ski capital of India. Name the place.

QUESTION 4
Who was the first President to take part in the celebrations held for Uttarakhand's Foundation Day?

QUESTION 5
In 2001, Uttarakhand adopted the tiger as its State animal. Is the statement true or false?



Visual question: Identify the man in the picture who served as the Chief Minister of two different States in India. Apart from Uttarakhand, name the other State he helmed. P1

Questions and Answers to the previous day's daily quiz: 1. This particular insect preferred to lay its eggs on hair growing on the human scalp. **Ans: Head louse**
2. The specific historical event that brought wig-wearing to an end in Europe. **Ans: French Revolution**
3. Name the English monarch who popularised wigs with long hair. **Ans: Charles II**
4. Name the type of clay people typically used to clean their wigs in the early modern era. **Ans: Fuller's earth**
5. In 2007, judges of a state court in this country voted on whether they should continue to wear wigs when presiding over trials. **Ans: Australia**
Visual: Name the type of hairpiece game show host Carl Reiner wore. **Ans: Toupee**
Early Bird: Arvind Tillway

Word of the day

Indolence:
inactivity resulting from a dislike of work
Synonym: laziness
Usage: His failure is probably due to his own indolence.
Pronunciation: bit.ly/indolencepro
International Phonetic Alphabet: /ɪndəˈləns/, /ɪnd(ə)ns/

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

THE IDEAS PAGE

Not so eminent domain

Supreme Court has said that not all private property qualifies as 'material resources of the community'. Its interpretation curtails state power, while enhancing power of judicial review



ALOK PRASANNA KUMAR

AT THE HEART of the Supreme Court's nine-judge bench decision in the *Property Owners Association v State of Maharashtra* (2024) case is an old conflict: Property rights versus the state's power of eminent domain.

This was one of the defining constitutional issues in the first three decades of the republic, resulting in a long tussle between the court and the legislature. Courts kept striking down laws which infringed on the right to property and Parliament kept amending the Constitution to narrow the right further. In 1971, Parliament introduced Article 31-C, which said that if a law was intended to further the Directive Principles contained in Article 39 (b) and (c) of the Constitution, it could not be held to violate the Right to Equality or the freedoms guaranteed under Article 19 of the Constitution.

The specific question before the nine-judge bench was the meaning of the term "material resources of the community" found in Article 39(b). Though not binding, Article 39(b) exhorts the State to make policies which ensure "that the ownership and control of the material resources of the community are so distributed as best to subserve the common good." In the context of a 1986 amendment to the Maharashtra Housing and Development (MHADA) Act, which allowed the state government to take over dilapidated buildings from their owners and hand it to tenants, the question was — do "material resources of the community" necessarily include private property? If they did, building owners could not challenge the law claiming that it violated their rights under Article 14 or Article 19.

No judgment had definitively answered this question so far, but one line of cases seemed to suggest that "material resources" included all private property as well. However, these cases were doubted by the Supreme Court in the 1990s resulting in the need for a nine-judge bench to settle the matter once and for all.

The majority judgment, authored by CJI DY Chandrachud (on behalf of himself and six other judges) holds that "material resources of the community" may include private property but do not include all forms of private property. The majority holds that whether private property would amount to "material resources" is "context-dependent" and lists out a non-exhaustive set of factors to decide whether such private property is a "material resource". These factors include the nature of the resource, its impact on "the well-being of the community", its scarcity, etc. Justice Sudhanshu Dhulia disagrees with this finding in a dissenting opinion holding that "material resources" necessarily include all private property. However, Justice B Nagathiraja agrees with the majority opinion but adds the nuance that the personal effects of an individual cannot become "material resources".

Superficially it might seem that the Court has turned away from the "socialist" interpretation of Article 39(b) favoured by judges such as Justices V R Krishna Iyer and O Chinnappa Reddy. The majority opinion disagrees with what was taken for granted in earlier judgments — that all private property would constitute "material resources" for the purposes of Article 39(b). The old view, one might argue, has been rejected keeping in view the shift in the dominant economic policies followed by the government. That the imperatives of nationalisation and redistribution have now been replaced by the imperatives of a welfare state, which compen-



C R Sasikumar

sates those left out of the lightly regulated market economy.

However, in my view, the Supreme Court's judgment in *Property Owners Association* is actually about the power of judicial review. Article 31C tried to reduce the scope of judicial review over laws limiting the right to property. The majority judgment in this case has expanded judicial review over such laws in a different way by leaving it to the court to decide, on a case-by-case basis, whether a law redistributing private property violates fundamental rights or not. Earlier, a simple invocation of Article 39 (b) was enough to put the law out of the reach of judicial review. Now, the court will decide what 39(b) itself means in each case before deciding whether the law is outside its reach. Article 31C's effort to ban judicial review of certain kinds of laws has been effectively skirted by the court.

The minority view of Justice Dhulia argues that the Constitution does in fact have a certain idea of how wealth should be distributed in society: what constitutes wealth and how it should be distributed should be left to Parliament to figure out. "Material resources of the community," in Justice Dhulia's view, cannot be interpreted in any way to exclude private property because the framers of the Constitution meant to include private property. Justice Dhulia wants Parliament to have the final say on these matters since an elected legislature knows best what resources should be in whose hands.

Given that the *Property Owners Association* judgment only lays down principles, it remains to be seen if and to what extent courts

When reading the Supreme Court's narration of the facts in 'Property Owners Association', one is reminded of Saeed Akhtar Mirza's immortal satire, 'Mohan Joshi Hazir Ho'. Mohan Joshi is an old man living in a dilapidated building that is almost falling apart. His landlord refuses to renovate, hoping the dangerous building would convince the tenants to leave and allow him to redevelop and sell it at a higher price. Joshi approaches the court and that is where his real saga begins as the judicial process only adds to his misery and provides little resolution.

review or strike down laws on acquiring and redistributing private property.

When reading the Supreme Court's narration of the facts in *Property Owners Association*, one is reminded of Saeed Akhtar Mirza's immortal satire, 'Mohan Joshi Hazir Ho'. Mohan Joshi is an old man living in a dilapidated building that is almost falling apart. His landlord refuses to renovate, hoping the dangerous building would convince the tenants to leave and allow him to redevelop and sell it at a higher price. Joshi approaches the court, where his real saga begins as the judicial process only adds to his misery and provides little resolution.

The 1986 Amendment to the MHADA Act was the perfect solution to Mohan Joshi's problem but that is not the comparison I am making.

When challenged by aggrieved landlords, the Bombay High Court in 1991 upheld the 1986 amendment. The matter then travelled to the Supreme Court in 1992 and has languished there since. It has been referred by a three-judge bench to a larger bench of five judges, then to a bench of seven judges and finally to a nine-judge bench. The nine-judge bench judgment delivered this week does not end the matter — it will go before another, smaller bench to decide the constitutional validity of the 1986 Amendment. The twist in the tale here is that the landlords, not the tenants, have now spent 32 years (and counting) in the Supreme Court awaiting final judgment.

The writer is a co-founder of the Vidhi Centre for Legal Policy. Views are personal

WHAT THE OTHERS SAY

"As for Israel, Donald Trump is an unabashed supporter of Tel Aviv, and the far right in Israel is jubilant at his return. It remains to be seen how his promises to Arab-American voters to bring 'peace' to the Middle East reconcile with his blatantly pro-Israel bias."

— DAWN, PAKISTAN

Something new, & old, about Vijay

Superstar's political rise in Tamil Nadu will challenge Dravidian parties. But he doesn't seek to displace Dravidian political imagination



KARTHICK RAM MANOHARAN

SOME YEARS AGO, a local BJP leader in Tamil Nadu "accused" a popular actor of being a Christian, as if being one is a crime. The celebrity in question, however, did not back down and, instead, flaunted his name and identity in a press release that followed. Joseph Vijay could count on the millions of fans who adore him to look beyond his religious or caste identity. In his speech at the first state conference of his party Tamilaga Vettri Kazhagam (TVK) last week, Vijay expressed his opposition to communal politics, alluding to the BJP. He also alleged that corruption hid behind slogans about the "Dravidian Model". But does Vijay's emergence as a political figure really mark a change from Dravidianism?

Even before he floated TVK, Vijay's political ambitions were well-known. For a long time, in Kollywood's hierarchy of stardom, Vijay was on the second-rung, along with his close competitor Ajith Kumar. Rajinikanth and Kamal Haasan, the stars at the top, had also sought to enter politics. Rajinikanth, the celebrated superstar, made some incoherent statements about bringing together spirituality and governance, but dropped out of the political race altogether. Haasan's outfit Makkal Neethi Maam had no electoral success. To survive in the theatre of politics, the thespian needed to align with bigger formations in the state. Vijay's Desiya Murpokku Dravida Kazhagam (DMDK) had an impressive initial run, but was soon out of the game. While the political fortunes of the bigger stars waned, it appears as if Vijay's is on the rise.

Commercially speaking, Vijay is one of the most bankable actors in Kollywood, with a considerable fan base across urban, semi-urban and rural centres of Tamil Nadu. He also has a following among the Tamil population in Sri Lanka and the Tamil diaspora in the West. The release of his films are festive events, especially for a young male crowd. While the sexism in his films would rile liberal senses, Vijay, as the virile masculine hero, is shown defending popular causes. Through his characters, Vijay voices support for Tamil sanitation, farmers' protests, the threat of jallikattu, etc. and opposes the "anti-people, pro-corporate" establishment. He has cultivated a political base through his films and public appearances.

In TVK's first state conference, Vijay declared that his party would follow the path of Periyar E V Ramasamy, the iconoclastic rationalist and leader of the Dravidian Movement, along with K Kamaraj, B R Ambedkar, Velu Nachiyar and Annalaji Ammal. What has provoked curiosity is Vijay's statement that except for Periyar's anti-god position, he would like to subscribe to all his other ideas. Though atheism was central to Periyar's vision, this should pose no ideological inconvenience to Vijay since

the Dravidian parties themselves have shelved Periyar's opposition to god.

C N Annadurai, the founder of the DMK, famously appropriated the Saivite saying, "One common humanity, one god", and posited it as his principle. At a time when Periyar was notorious for breaking images of deities, Annadurai said that he would neither break Pillayar statues nor break coconuts for them. The DMK knew that the majority of its supporters were religious believers and it wouldn't be politically prudent to take a hard line on atheism. While Karunanidhi occasionally made caustic remarks about religion, he also celebrated religious reformers like Ramanujacharya and Ramalinga Vallalar. AADMK leaders MGR and J Jayalalitha were known to be quite religious. However, all of these leaders held Periyar as an inspiration. Periyar was a social reformer who had no interest in political positions. He believed that this enabled him to speak his mind on any social issue. Periyar's views on religion were quite provocative, but so were his opinions on nationalism, caste, gender, language, and the big leaders and political movements of his time. He saw social problems as interconnected, with the combination of caste and religion being a key hurdle to social progress.

Political parties could not dare suggest the measures he advocated. For instance, Periyar advocated that a woman should not just walk out of her marriage if it's abusive, but also to pursue career goals or if there is incompatibility. Dravidian politicians could not take such a position before their electoral audiences. What politicians, whether from DMK or AADMK, could do is use Periyar in a minimalist way. While they could not follow his radical libertarian approach to the women's question, they could implement policy and welfare measures to ensure equal rights and access to women. The Hindu Succession (Tamil Nadu Amendment) Act of 1989 under Karunanidhi's regime gave equal rights in family property to daughters. The free bicycle scheme for girls students under Jayalalitha's rule in 2001 greatly enabled female mobility.

As of now, Vijay has not expressed any strong disagreement with Dravidian political leaders of the past, unlike the BJP or the Tamil nativist Naam Tamilar Katchi, both of whom seek to root out Dravidian legacy from the state. The TVK party's positions Vijay announced: Annadurai and MGR, Vijay has supported greater autonomy for the state, the continuation of the two-language formula, greater representation for women, a caste census and secular politics, and has opposed NEET, communal politics, and casteism. He has also said that Dravidianism and Tamil nationalism are like the eyes of his party. All of these are compatible with the Dravidian ideology in a broad sense.

While Vijay's rise will be a challenge to Dravidian parties, from his statements it does not appear as if he seeks to displace the Dravidian political imagination. And Vijay can follow Periyar's path while not being anti-god — or even being pro-god, for that matter — as long as he subscribes to the basic notions of social justice and secularism.

The writer is faculty at National Law School of India University

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

AFTER THE LOSS

THIS REFERS TO the editorial 'A leap of faith' (IE, November 7). India's humiliating whitewash against New Zealand in the home Test series is indeed unprecedented. It is further aggravated by the fact that cricket in India is like a religion. Naturally, BCCI officials cannot avoid taking responsibility for the current loss. The question then arises: Why does the BCCI have to retain senior players who have consistently failed to perform? Is it the lack of young, talented players? Or a lack of faith in them? Or is it the love of star culture? Unlike other sports bodies in India, the BCCI has a robust system in place to pick up talent from the chieftain country, having a population of over 14 billion. The BCCI needs to critically examine its retention policies, and focus on nurturing the next generation of cricketers.

LR Murmu, New Delhi

SWINGING DEFEAT

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'Why Kamala Harris lost' (IE, November 7). Kamala Harris's defeat in the 2024 US presidential election stemmed from a complex mix of political, economic, and strategic factors. She struggled to strike a chord with key swing voters who remained unconvinced by her policy approach. Economic concerns, particularly inflation and rising living costs, dominated voter priorities, and many

Americans felt the administration had not adequately addressed these issues, thus eroding trust among undecided and independent voters. Further, Harris faced criticism over the administration's handling of foreign policy and national security, where polarised opinions created uncertainty among centrist voters. The Republican campaign capitalised on these vulnerabilities, portraying the Democratic party as disconnected from the average voter's concerns.

Siddhant Pathak, New Delhi

WHERE WE STAND

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'Hostility & History' (IE, November 7). The fight for the office was considered to be among the closest ever, but it did not turn out to be the cliffhanger it was billed to be. The world was invested in the outcome of the election, not only because the US is a big player, but also because a victory for Trump was seen as potentially disruptive and altering international relations in key regions. While the Trump victory will change the internal politics of the US, it may also have an impact these current major global issues — the Ukraine war, the Israel-Palestine conflict, and the international fight against global warming. It has been claimed that a Trump win would be better for India than a Kamala Harris victory. But there is no evidence for this claim in the past.

Khokan Das, Kolkata

ZERO HOUR
BY DEREK O'BRIEN

Life, as it happens

On rediscovering an old love and learning to enjoy the journey

WE NEED TO finalise the subject for this week's column. Any ideas? The winter season of Parliament is still more than a fortnight away, so the piece we planned on pre-legislative consultation of bills is not entirely topical. Hold for now. Do one on Indo-China ties? Any issue on public policy which would make for an engaging 800 words? How about: Five reasons which will influence the polls in Jharkhand and Maharashtra? Political. Topical. Insightful (whatever that means!).

Control. Alt. Delete.

This one is all heart. No stats. No deep dive data. No BC (Before ChampionPM) on the state of the economy when compared with AD (After Demigod). No political smart one-liners. Leave all that aside.

This week's column is about Dr Sandip Chatterjee (63) and Ratan Sood (58), two people from Kolkata I knew. This week's column is about Rohit Bati (63) and Bibek Debroy (69),

two people from Delhi who I had never met, but had only read about. All four are gone. This is not a quadripartite obituary. Nor a dirge to four accomplished gentlemen who dwell in an urban jungle, aka an Indian city. Their recent deaths — all of them were about the same age as me — have made me think a little more about life. And living. As John Lennon put it: "Life is what happens to you, while you're busy making other plans!"

Growing up, football was by far my favourite outdoor sport that I played. You will never guess what my favourite indoor "sport" was. Contract bridge! My dad encouraged my two younger brothers (Andy and Barry) and me to learn bridge in our early teens. There was a phase in my 20s and 30s when I was playing bridge three times a week. I never played beyond the local club level, but loved the sport. Alas. Between shooting multi-cam quiz shows

in Mumbai television studios and the last two decades in politics, the fascinating card game had become a memory.

Last week that changed.

After more than 25 years, my old bridge mates organised a three-hour session at the DL, a club in Kolkata we call our second home. There was Joe (94), Elias (84), Nikki (79) and a 63-year-old. Post the game, they assured me that I hadn't lost my touch. What an afternoon. With boyish enthusiasm, I shared a photo of the session with my two siblings. Here, verbatim, is what one of them replied on WhatsApp.

"This afternoon was huge for three reasons.

(i) That you made the time to dig deep — and DO what you really wanted to do, even if it's once in a while!

(ii) These gentlemen are still fit and mentally alert at 94, 84, and 79 — and DOING what they want to do!

(iii) You are still good at it — means that your mind can "unclogger" itself when you need to."

What else do I have to share on this subject about living life to the full? Surely we need to put in a couple of more paragraphs. Or maybe punch in an anecdote or two. After all, the understanding with this newspaper is that the column I write should be "about 800 words".

So what now? Write another 200 words to reach the target, the goal, the destination. Or just enjoy the journey.

I'll choose the latter. Thanks

The writer is MP and leader, All India Trinamool Congress Parliamentary Party (Rajya Sabha).
Research credit: (the writer's parents) the (late) Joyce and Neil O'Brien

SCIENCE



Have Ozempic's 'weight conquering' qualities transformed treatment of diabetes and obesity?

While injectable forms of semaglutide have taken the world by storm, the oral form, available in India, is helping doctors see results in diabetes control with the added benefit of weight loss. Some benefits to the heart and kidney have also been noted. The cost remains a deterrent for a treatment regimen that patients will have to continue throughout their lives

EXPLAINER

A few years ago, one word began to do the rounds amongst people with diabetes and those struggling to lose weight: Ozempic. Touted as a wonder drug, it soon took the world by storm. Celebrities such as Elon Musk revealed that they had used it. Reports of "Ozempic parties" followed, and, as the drug's popularity surged, supply became a drag in various countries.

Ozempic, known generically as semaglutide, is an injectable prescription drug. It was approved in 2017 by the United States Food and Drug Administration (FDA) for use in adults with type 2 diabetes. In 2021, the FDA approved another injectable semaglutide, Wegovy, for chronic weight management in adults with obesity or overweight and with at least one weight-related condition (such as high blood pressure, type 2 diabetes, or high cholesterol). Ozempic and Wegovy are manufactured by Danish drugmaker Novo Nordisk.

So what is semaglutide and who uses it in India? Semaglutide belongs to the class of drugs called Glucagon-like peptide-1 (GLP-1) receptor agonists. This drug mimics the actions of the hormone GLP-1 made by the small intestine, which the gut releases after eating. What this does is slow down digestion and reduce the appetite, while triggering the pancreas to release more insulin.

The use of the drug therefore, leads to weight loss, and some benefits to the heart and kidney have also been noted, says V. Mohan, chairman of Dr. Mohan's Diabetes Specialities Centre, Chennai. Semaglutide is available in oral (Rybelsus) and injectable (Ozempic/Wegovy) forms. The injectables result in weight losses of about 10 to 15%, Dr. Mohan says. "The daily oral tablet (Rybelsus), launched in India a few years ago, is a breakthrough, though it cannot be compared with the effectiveness of the injectable forms that are not available yet," he says.

In a country with 10.13 crore diabetes patients, and with an abdominal obesity prevalence estimated at 40% among women and 12% in men, semaglutide has attracted widespread interest, though costs remain a significant barrier to its use, and side effects deter some patients.

Diabetes control
Doctors across India have been prescribing

oral semaglutide to patients for two years now, and say they have seen results in terms of diabetes control and weight management.

Anoop Misra, chairman, Fortis CDOC Hospital for Diabetes and Allied Sciences in Delhi, has seen an increase in the number of patients who want to start on Rybelsus. "An increasing number are asking for prescriptions. Most have heard about it from relatives or friends abroad where these drugs are popular," he says.

While the weight loss factor often overshadows diabetes management, and has led to a surge of interest from patients looking for a quick fix, doctors emphasise that this drug is not for simple weight management and is not a first-line option.

"Diabetes is not a single disease and it comes with a host of complications, all of which need aggressive management. Semaglutide, with the added benefits it provides as far as renal, cardiovascular and hepatic issues are concerned, is primarily to treat diabetes. The weight loss benefits are just the cherry on top for diabetes patients for whom weight gain, because of insulin use is a concern," says Mathew John, a senior endocrinology consultant, in Thiruvananthapuram.

Also, not everyone who wants the drug is eligible, say doctors: "While I receive 15-20 enquiries a week, only 2-3 patients are eligible. We prescribe it to those with diabetes who are at a high risk of cardiovascular disease, since the drug reduces the risk of heart attack, stroke, and cardiovascular deaths in such adults," says Mahesh D. M., consultant in endocrinology at Aster CMI Hospital in Bengaluru.

"We do not recommend the drug for people just looking to shed 10-15 kg. This is a drug for the obese, for whom weight loss is an uphill task even with a healthy diet and moderate physical activity. We generally see that along with a healthy diet and physical activity, semaglutide leads to significant weight loss in many. At the same time, I have also seen patients for whom the drug did not work," says Akhil Krishnan, Associate Consultant in Endocrinology, Kimshealth in Thiruvananthapuram.

For those taking the drugs, experiences differ. Many may swear by it, for some, the side effects are an issue.

Since the drug works on the stomach, the most common side effects are bloating, nausea, and vomiting. In rare cases, Dr. Mohan says it can cause stomach paralysis, inhibit the stomach from contracting, and pancreatitis.

Between 5 and 10% of

patients cannot tolerate the side effects and discontinue the drug, says K.V.S. Hari Kumar, consultant endocrinologist at Fernandez Hospitals, Hyderabad and honorary secretary of the Endocrine Society of India.

Patient experiences

For 47-year-old Arundati, from Hyderabad, the drug worked wonders. On semaglutide for six months now, she experienced nausea and vomiting initially, but says her body eventually adapted. "I have lost about 10 to 12 kgs over six months. The weight loss has also allowed me to reduce my thyroid medication," she said.

Saumya, also from Hyderabad, began semaglutide after being unable to lose weight despite intermittent fasting. "After starting the drug, my hunger and cravings reduced, and I lost seven kilograms in the first month, and six in the second." Additionally, her blood sugar levels stabilised. She did experience acidity as a side effect.

To help counter side effects, doctors say they start with a small dose and build it up. "We start at a low dosage of 3 mg, and escalate over time. The biggest advantage is not weight loss but the fact that you can reduce insulin by almost 80%," says K. Jothideva a diabetes specialist, who has around 1,500 patients on semaglutide in his four comprehensive diabetes centres in the southern districts.

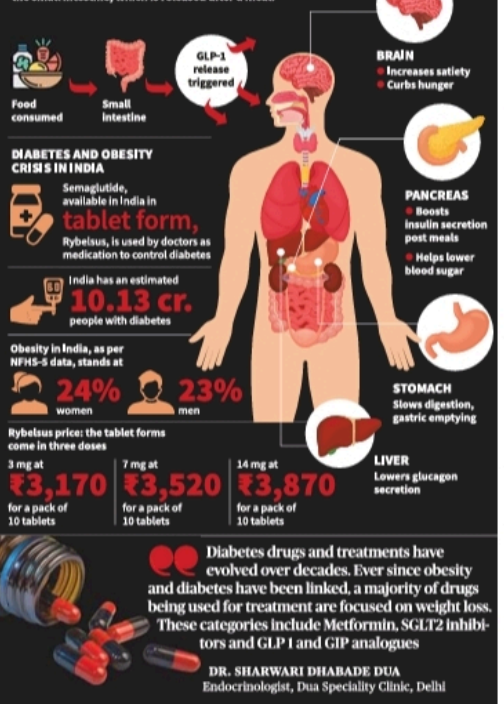
Arun, a patient from Bengaluru, was prescribed semaglutide because he was reluctant to start insulin. Arun, who is obese and has diabetes, says he started on a 3 mg dose. "After six weeks, my sugar levels and blood pressure were under control, and I had lost almost 5% of my baseline weight in three months. Although I had nausea and vomiting, the symptoms subsided after a while. The drug reduced my appetite and I felt full with very little food. My doctor has now increased the dose, and I have been advised lifestyle changes," the 40-year-old says.

Doctors say the obesity crisis in India – National Family Health Survey 5 data reveals that obesity stands at 24% among women and 23% among men – needs to be addressed. Obesity is known as the mother of all diseases, says S. Chandrasekar, professor and head, Department of Medicine, Government Stanley Medical College. "At least 40% of those with diabetes are either overweight or obese. When patients with diabetes lose 15% of their body weight from the baseline, it can result in remission of blood sugar levels. Many of my patients have lost 10 to 15 kg in nine months to 1.5 years. The drug not only brings down blood sugar levels but also blood pressure as a result of weight loss, and improves physical agility over a period of time."

But not everyone has had an exemplary experience. Gopi, a 50-year-old media consultant in Thiruvananthapuram, who is obese, has

How does semaglutide work in your body?

Semaglutide belongs to a class of drugs known as GLP-1 receptor agonists. It mimics the hormone GLP-1 made by the small intestine, which is released after a meal.



diabetes, and sleep apnoea, found his weight loss journey difficult, given his hectic work schedule. He was prescribed Rybelsus prior to a bariatric surgery. However, he could not follow the drug regimen due to gastric issues. Despite his experience though, he plans to get back on the drug soon.

Chitra, a 38-year-old woman with a BMI of 32 and a history of gallbladder issues, which made her susceptible to pancreatic problems, experienced vomiting soon after she was put on semaglutide.

"After three weeks, I had severe abdominal pain, which developed into pancreatitis. I required hospitalisation and medication was discontinued. My doctor said it is unclear whether semaglutide or the gallstone history caused the pancreatic inflammation. My treatment has now been switched to insulin."

Cost remains a barrier

Cost, however, remains a major barrier to access. Rybelsus comes in three doses: 10 of the 3 mg tablets sell for ₹3,170; 7 mg costs ₹3,520; and 14 mg ₹3,870, says B. Thiruvannakaras, president of Bengaluru District Chemists and Druggists Association.

Even at the lower end dosage of 3 mg, 30 tablets a month work out to nearly ₹10,000 a month – a significant cost in a country where out-of-pocket expenditure on health, as a percentage of total health expenditure, continues to remain high, at nearly 40%.

Chemists across States say that Rybelsus is sold only as a prescription drug, and, as its cost is high, sales are modest.

A black market, however, has emerged, warns Shivam Sharma, head of department and consultant, internal medicine & diabetology, SHALBY Sanar International Hospitals. "There are dangers associated with self-medication. Users should know that each patient has to be medically evaluated before being

prescribed this drug as it can interfere with the digestive process and can cause sudden weight loss along with low sugar levels and electrolyte imbalances," he says. Media reports also indicate a flourishing grey market in imports and alternatives.

This is also a drug that patients have to take lifelong. "For those who do not develop any complications, we prescribe and adjust the medications based on their sugar levels lifelong, just like any other diabetes drug," says Subrata Das, Head of the Department of Internal Medicine and Diabetology at Sakra World Hospital.

The weight loss effects, however, may reverse: patients may put on weight again, though they can attempt to keep the weight off with lifestyle modifications or other medications, he points out.

In many ways, semaglutide is and may continue to remain a miracle drug for some time to come. New research and studies currently underway indicate the drug could be used to treat a wide range of illnesses linked to heart failure, arthritis, Alzheimer's, and even cancer, with possible benefits for cognition and nicotine dependence too.

For those who can and do want to access the injectable forms in India, however, there may be a wait of several months, though Indian drugmakers are now joining the race for weight-loss, anti-obesity drugs. Novo Nordisk's Wegovy has so far not been approved in India, and while rival drugmaker Eli Lilly was given the green-light for its drugs, Mounjaro/Zepbound (active ingredient - tirzepatide) for import and marketing in July, pending final approval, it is not expected to launch until perhaps next year.

(Some names have been changed to protect privacy.)

(Collated by Zubeda Hamid, with inputs by Bindu Shajan Perappadan from Delhi, C. Maya from Thiruvananthapuram, Afshan Yasmeen from Bengaluru, Siddharth Kumar Singh from Hyderabad, and Serena Josephine M. from Chennai)

AMU verdict in top court today: the case and what's at stake

ABHINAVA HARIGOVIND
NEW DELHI, NOVEMBER 7

ON FRIDAY, the Supreme Court will give its judgment on whether Aligarh Muslim University can claim minority status under Article 30 of the Constitution. A seven-judge Bench led by Chief Justice of India D.Y. Chandrachud reserved its verdict in February.

History of the dispute

The legal dispute over the university's minority status is more than a half century old. In 1967, the Supreme Court ruled on a challenge to two amendments to the university's founding Act, which argued that they deprived the Muslim community, which had set up AMU, of the right to administer it under Article 30.

The first of these amendments, in 1951, allowed non-Muslims to be members of the University Court, its supreme governing body

at the time, and replaced the university's Lord Rector with the Visitor, who was the President of India. The second, in 1965, expanded the powers of AMU's Executive Council, which meant the University Court would no longer be the supreme governing body.

The Supreme Court held that AMU was neither established nor administered by the Muslim minority — rather, it came into existence through an Act of the central legislature (Aligarh Muslim University Act, 1920). (S.Azeez Basha vs Union of India, 1967)

Faced with a backlash over the ruling, the government amended the AMU Act in 1981, saying that it was established by the Muslim community to promote the cultural and educational advancement of Muslims in India.

In 2005, AMU for the first time provided 50% reservation for Muslims in postgraduate medical programs. The following year, Allahabad High Court struck down both the university order, and the 1981 amendment on the ground that AMU was not a minority institution as per Azeez Basha.

The HC order was challenged in the SC soon after. In 2019, the matter was referred to a seven-judge Bench. Friday's verdict will decide whether Azeez Basha will be overruled — or effectively, whether AMU is a minority institution protected by Article 30 ("Right of minorities to establish and administer educational institutions").

What minority status means

Under Article 15(5), introduced in the Constitution in 2006, minority educational institutions are exempt from reserving seats for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. Since AMU's minority status is *sub-judice*, and the SC decided in 2006 that status quo be maintained, the university does not have SC/ST quotas.

The Centre argued before the Supreme Court this year that if AMU is declared a minority institution, "it will continue not to provide for reservation for SCs/STs/OBCs/EWS, [in jobs and seats, but] it will provide for

reservation for Muslims which can be up to 50 per cent or even more".

Also, "the administrative structure" of AMU "will change from the current set-up which provides for the supremacy of Executive Council consisting of people from various fields of life with domain expertise" — and despite being an institution of national importance, AMU would have an admission procedure separate from other such institutions.

The Centre also argued that "a large national institute like AMU ought to maintain its secular origins and serve the larger interest of the nation first".

Submissions made on behalf of AMU stated that it was "fallacious" for the Centre to hold that AMU's minority status "would be contrary to public interest as it would exempt them from reserving seats for other disadvantaged groups", since this negates the Constitutional provision that shields special rights of minorities.

On reservation not being applicable to

AMU senior advocate Kapil Sibal stated in a rejoinder note submitted on behalf of the AMU Old Boys' (Alumni) Association that "Article 30 is itself a recognition of rights of communities that also require special protection". Therefore, the exemption for minority educational institutions provided by Article 15(5) is "not an exception to equality but simply a different facet of it, which seeks to balance the needs of different sections of society whether on the basis of religion, or caste and class".

The St Stephen's reference

In 1992, the SC referred to the minority status of Delhi's St Stephen's College, its right to administer the institution, and to have its own admission process (St Stephen's College vs University of Delhi). The college reserves 50% of seats for Christian students.

In its arguments, the Centre submitted that St Stephen's was founded by the "Cambridge Mission in Delhi in collaboration with the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel (SPG)", and there was no gov-

ernment involvement", while AMU was created by an Act of Parliament.

Also, St Stephen's was housed in premises that were rented, and subsequently bought by the SPG, while AMU has "from the outset [been] in receipt of government grants...".

Sibal, however, argued that in St Stephen's, the SC had held that "the right to administer is meant to be interpreted as a continuing right to administer on part of the minority community establishing the university and not a test for the identification of an MBI (minority educational institution)". Thus, "once a minority establishes an educational institution, that institution becomes the subject of the 'right to administer' under Article 30".

Senior advocate Rajeev Dhavan submitted on behalf of AMU: "...There are universities such as Aliah University (Kolkata) and colleges such as St Stephen's College fully aided by the government", which implies that "the government recognizes that even if an institution is fully funded by the government, it does not lose its minority status".

EXPLAINED SCIENCE

HOW CLIMATE CHANGE IS BRINGING BACK THE IDEA OF AIRSHIPS

ARJUN SENGUPTA

NEW DELHI, NOVEMBER 7



Hindenburg on its first flight on March 4, 1936. Wikimedia Commons

AIRSHIPS WERE the first aircraft capable of controlled powered flight and were thought to be the future of travel for some years in the early 20th century. However, fundamental technological shortcomings and the rapid development of aeroplanes killed the idea of airship transport. They see limited use today as advertising platforms, for aerial observation by scientists and militaries, and in the tourism industry.

Of late, a few companies are attempting to control the buoyancy of airships — a longstanding challenge that has prevented their use for cargo transportation.

How airships work

Airships are lighter-than-air aircraft that are filled with gas with a density lower than atmospheric gases. This principle also operates in helium balloons.

Early airships used hydrogen as the propellant gas since it was cheap, easy to produce, and the lightest existing gas. But hydrogen was too extremely flammable. A few high-profile accidents including the infamous Hindenburg disaster of 1937, shattered public faith in airships.

Most modern airships use helium, which is non-combustible. However, it is scarce on Earth, and thus very expensive — 1 cubic metre, the amount of gas required to lift 1 kilogram of weight, costs roughly \$35.

Varying buoyancy challenge


While aeroplanes easily beat airships on speed, airships could in theory be ideal freight vehicles because of their exceptional "lift-to-drag ratio" — which means they expend far less fuel to move the same mass of material.

But to be practical cargo vehicles, they also need to be capable of varying their buoyancy and compensating for weight changes as loads were picked up and dropped off. The simplest solution would be to release and refill the lifting gas — but cost and scarcity of helium has made this a non-starter.

EXPLAINED CLIMATE CHANGE

Solar alliance stocktake

The International Solar Alliance, launched by PM Narendra Modi in 2015 and led by India ever since, has delivered less than its formidable promise. The offtake of solar in the Global South has remained poor



AMITABH SINHA

AT THE 2015 climate conference in Paris, India in collaboration with a few other countries including conference host France, set up the International Solar Alliance (ISA) to accelerate the deployment and absorption of solar energy across the world, and mainly in the developing countries.

The ISA was a unique initiative in which India took the lead in establishing a global organisation. Over the years, the ISA has evolved into an intergovernmental organisation with more than 110 countries as members. However, its impact on expediting the deployment of solar energy in the developing world has been extremely modest until now.

ISA slow on delivery

The ISA was never meant to be a project developer. It did not have to install solar projects itself. It was envisaged as a facilitator, or a force multiplier, which would help countries overcome financial, technological, regulatory, or other barriers in harnessing solar energy.

The end result was supposed to be large-scale deployment of solar energy, especially in countries where energy access was very low. But nine years down the line, the ISA doesn't have much progress to show. An ISA-facilitated solar power project is yet to start operations.

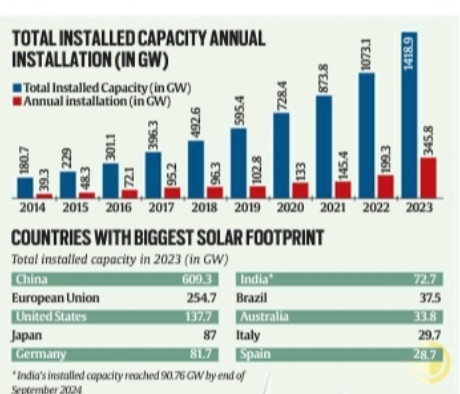
The first such project is expected to be in Cuba where auctions have taken place and a developer has been selected to set up a 60 MW plant, which is supposed to be followed by several other similar-sized or bigger projects totalling about 1,250 MW.

Several other countries in Africa and Latin America are said to have completed the preparatory work, and are ready to follow Cuba's example.

China ahead of pack

The inability of ISA to facilitate many more projects is striking, considering the rapid growth in solar energy deployment. The global installed capacity of solar power has been increasing at over 20 per cent annually over the last five years. Last year, it grew by more than 30 per cent, according to World Solar Market Report 2024, a publication of the ISA.

But as Ajay Mathur, director general of



global energy transition that is critical to tackle the challenge of climate change. It is the fastest-growing renewable energy source, despite its inherent limitation of being intermittent. In most regions of the world, solar is now also the cheapest source of energy when sunshine is available. Solar energy installed capacity is projected to grow between 3 and 15 times in different scenarios for achieving global net zero by 2050.

But as Mathur pointed out, only a handful of countries have been deploying it on a large scale (see box). About 43 per cent of global solar PV capacity is installed in China alone. The top 10 markets account for more than 95 per cent of installed capacity. Less than 2 per cent of new additions are happening in Africa, a region that houses about 80 per cent of the nearly 745 million people who still do not have access to electricity.

The solar manufacturing industry is even more imbalanced. Over 80 per cent of the manufacturing process is concentrated in China, which is seen as another barrier to quick spread of solar energy in smaller markets.

In fact, it is this lopsided nature of solar development that the ISA was meant to address and balance.

India's leadership role

Deployment of solar energy is only a vehicle. The ISA was created to serve a much larger strategic purpose for India. It is an important part of India's outreach to the Global South, particularly to countries in Africa.

Despite being an inter-governmental multilateral organisation, ISA is still largely viewed as an Indian initiative. This is not without reason — it is headquartered in New Delhi, it is almost entirely funded by India, and India has presided over its general assembly since its inception. It will continue to do so, at least until 2026.

ISA is thus intricately linked to India's diplomatic objectives. For this reason, the ISA's performance would reflect on India's capabilities to claim leadership of the Global South and speak on its behalf. Prime Minister Narendra Modi himself has been championing its cause, and has spoken about its crucial role in every relevant forum.

Unfortunately, the ISA's good offices have remained largely underutilised till now. It has been under-staffed and under-funded, and has not been able to establish a working relationship with the Ministry of New and Renewable Energy, which is its liaison ministry with the Indian government.

But more importantly, it has failed to create excitement about solar energy in countries that are in desperate need of access to cheap and reliable energy source.

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regulatory environment."

The ISA has been working with governments and local institutions to create regulatory structures, draft power purchase agreements, and train human resources. "One of our important interventions has been the setting up of STAR (Solar Technology and Applications Resource) centres in partnership with local institutions. This has resulted in local expertise and capacity building," Mathur said.

Mathur said the results of these efforts would become visible soon.

"I think the heavy lifting has been done in the last few years. At least half a dozen countries are on the verge of floating tenders for power projects. We expect this to escalate quickly," he said.

ISA has been targeting deployment of 1,000 GW of solar energy, and unlocking a trillion dollars in solar investment by 2030.

Why solar matters

Solar is the most crucial element of the

time of selection.

Moreover, the SC had said that these rules would only be applicable until states enacted their own Police Act — something that at least 17 states have enacted since 2006. These Police Acts either provide for DGP appointments according to guidelines, or have constituted a committee which is expected to choose a DGP from a list of five senior most eligible officers in the state. Notably, current UP DGP Prashant Kumar is 13th in seniority in the State.

Do UP's new rules comply with the SC's directions?

Yes and no. While the rules conform to directions regarding the DGP having a minimum tenure of two years, and a minimum remaining service of six months before appointment, the SC specifically said

that these were to be brought in by the enactment of a Police Act. What UP has done instead is to frame rules on the Indian Police Act of 1861.

"UP has only framed rules. It has also very smartly picked up para from the SC judgment giving a sense it is in conformance of the directions," former UP DGP Prakash Singh, whose petition led to the SC's 2006 directions, told *The Indian Express*.

The new rules could also fall foul of two SC judgments from 2018 and 2019, which had said that states cannot enact laws or frame rules on the matter contrary to SC's directions.

What did the 2018 and 2019 apex court judgments say?

In 2018, following an intervention application by Prakash Singh, a Bench of Justices AM Khanlikar and DY Chandrachud stated that states could not appoint temporary or Acting DGPs. It had also said that

Why Uttar Pradesh has introduced new rules for appointing its police chief

DEEPTIMANTIWARY
NEW DELHI, NOVEMBER 7

UTTAR PRADESH has framed new rules for appointing the state's Director General of Police. This comes after the Supreme Court last month, in response to multiple petitions, issued contempt notices to eight states — including UP — for appointing temporary DGPs.

In the last two years, UP has had four temporary DGPs. The incumbent, 1991 batch IPS officer Prashant Kumar, was appointed Acting DGP in January this year. The aforementioned petitions have argued that this is in violation of the apex court's judgment in the 2006 Prakash Singh case, which sought to free police leadership from political interference.

What are the new rules?

The Director General of Police, Uttar

Pradesh Selection and Appointment Rules, 2024" was cleared by the state Cabinet on Monday. According to these rules, UP's DGP will be appointed by a selection committee based on his remaining tenure, service record, and experience.

Only officers with a minimum remaining tenure of six months from the date of creation of the vacancy would be eligible for the appointment as DGP. Once appointed, the police chief would have a minimum tenure of two years.

The selection committee will be headed by a retired judge of the High Court, and will include the UP Chief Secretary, a nominee of the Union Public Service Commission (UPSC), the chairperson or nominee of the Uttar Pradesh Public Service Commission, the Additional Chief Secretary/Principal Secretary, a representative of the Home Department, and a retired DGP.

UP's new rules essentially reduce the

role of the Centre in the appointment by eliminating the process of sending a list of officers to the UPSC.

What is the existing practice?

Currently, DGP appointments are made based on the SC's directions in the Prakash Singh case. The state government is supposed to send to the UPSC a list of senior most eligible officers in the state, three months before the incumbent DGP is set to retire.

The UPSC vets this list, and based on the officer's seniority, service record, integrity, and field experience, sends three names back to the state. The state is expected to appoint one of these three as the new DGP.

The apex court's directions also said that the DGP so appointed should have a tenure of at least two years, and should have at least six months of service left at

the time of selection.

Moreover, the SC had said that these rules would only be applicable until states enacted their own Police Act — something that at least 17 states have enacted since 2006. These Police Acts either provide for DGP appointments according to guidelines, or have constituted a committee which is expected to choose a DGP from a list of five senior most eligible officers in the state. Notably, current UP DGP Prashant Kumar is 13th in seniority in the State.

Do UP's new rules comply with the SC's directions?

Yes and no. While the rules conform to directions regarding the DGP having a minimum tenure of two years, and a minimum remaining service of six months before appointment, the SC specifically said

that these were to be brought in by the enactment of a Police Act. What UP has done instead is to frame rules on the Indian Police Act of 1861.

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What did the 2018 and 2019 apex court judgments say?

In 2018, following an intervention application by Prakash Singh, a Bench of Justices AM Khanlikar and DY Chandrachud stated that states could not appoint temporary or Acting DGPs. It had also said that

states, as far as practicable, should not appoint an IPS officer as DGP unless they had two clear years of service before them. This was later modified and restricted to "at least six months" of service by then Chief Justice of India Ranjan Gogoi in 2019.

The 2018 judgment also said that "any legislation/rule" framed by a state or the Centre which runs "counter to the direction shall remain in abeyance to the aforesaid extent." This came in the backdrop of multiple states enacting laws that were said to have either circumvented the SC's directions on police reforms, or violated their spirit.

CJ Gogoi's 2019 judgment suggested that the apex court would examine the validity of state Acts. "The above direction, naturally, will hold the field until the validity of the Police Acts in force which provides to the contrary are examined and dealt with by this Court..." the judgment had said.

10 THE EDITORIAL PAGE

WORDLY WISE
"THE AIR OF IDEAS IS THE ONLY AIR WORTH
BREATHING." — EDITH WHARTON

The Indian EXPRESS

FOUNDED BY
RAMNATH GOENKA

BECAUSE THE TRUTH INVOLVES US ALL

A perilous moment

US under Trump will be less racially inclusive, more
immigration-unfriendly, selectively retributive



ASHUTOSH VARSHNEY

A SPECTRE OF unchecked power is likely to haunt America in the next four years — a terrifying prospect for many, but in equal if not greater measure, a troubling prospect for others. America's midwest and south have rebelled against its coastal elites. This kind of rebellion is now called right-wing populism. Such populism uses electoral democracy to elect those who crush liberal democracy and, in particular, "discipline" dissenters and minorities.

Given America's worldwide presence and power, weaker than before but still substantial, the international system may also be shaken to the core. Political moments such as these have conventionally been called perilous. They are hugely welcome to some, but equally errant to others.

In winning power again, Donald Trump has achieved something he earlier lacked. Like 2016, he has defeated his rival in the electoral college, but he is also winning the popular vote, a feat that was beyond his grasp in 2016 and 2020. He is doubly empowered and restored.

To understand how he might exercise power, it is important to consider the other tier of institutions of the polity. In a presidential system, the legislature can exercise a check on the power of the executive. Senate approval is necessary for Cabinet-level appointments and the House of Representatives, by denying budgetary resources, can even shut down the government. "Divided we govern" is a well-known dictum of American polity. America's founding fathers instituted these checks to ensure that the president would not become a British-style monarch, against whom the US fought the War of Independence.

How would these constraining institutions fare in Trump's second term? These elections, in addition to picking a president, also selected one-third of the upper chamber of the legislature, the US Senate, and all 435 members of the lower chamber, the House of Representatives. The Senate now has a Republican majority. While, at the time of this writing, the fate of the House of Representatives remains undecided, it seems also to be headed towards a Republican majority. And even if the House of Representatives gets a slim Democratic majority, it can really take on a president so passionately opposed to the idea of institutional checks on his power?

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The US Supreme Court, another independent institution in theory, has a substantial number of life-time judges appointed by Trump in his first term. And philosophically, a majority of Supreme Court judges subscribe to the view that the job of courts is to aid executive power, not constrain it. A few months back, the US Supreme Court allowed the president virtually unbridled powers in the execution of public responsibilities and functions. Only the use of presidential power for private purposes would be judicially bounded.

We thus have an institutional environment at the polity's top tiers that is eminently well-suited for a relatively unfettered exercise of presidential power. More importantly, it is in accord with how Trump wishes to rule.

His oft-repeated wishes include how he wants some other theoretically independent institutions, such as the Department of Justice (DOJ) and the FBI, to function. In his campaign, he often emphasised that he would like to use government machinery to prosecute "the enemies from within". The internal enemies, he said, are worse than external enemies. The DOJ will be the arm of the US government entrusted with this task. And the DOJ's actions would not be judicially hampered so long as their purpose is the defence of state and national interest, often a legal fiction to penalise dissenters and critics.

If that is the likely institutional reality under Trump, what else can we say about the issues that governed these elections? Anxieties about the economy, hostility to immigration from the southern border, an inward looking foreign and economic policy, and a White majoritarian political impulse dominated Trump's platform. The Harris platform emphasised reproductive rights for women (especially covering abortion), a more racially inclusive America, threats to democracy posed by Trump and a globally oriented foreign policy, heavily favouring international alliances.

Trump's platform has handsomely won. Citizens most concerned about the economy and immigration heavily voted for him, whereas those concerned with reproductive rights and threats to democracy voted for Harris. The statistical point, of course, is that the former group far outnumbered the latter. Harris could not make abortion and threats to

democracy bigger than economics and immigration for the electorate at large.

This leads us to the final question. How do we understand which sections of society supported whom? Solid statistics will take some time to come. But exit data, though always less than final, do allow us to identify the bigger statistical points.

Of the many inferences that can be derived, two stand out. The first point is racial. As expected, a clear majority of Whites voted for Trump, as did an overwhelming majority of Blacks for Harris. It is the Latino and Asian communities that moved substantially towards Trump. Latinos are as big as the Black community today, if not bigger. Moreover, unlike the Asians, they are important in some swing states. In a widely noted Trump rally in Madison Square Garden, a White speaker chosen by the Trump campaign described Puerto Rico as a "floating island of garbage", which did not make any material difference to the vote. Latinos either have serious internal divisions and Puerto Ricans are not internally liked, or enough Latinos don't mind White hegemony of American socio-political space.

Second, in terms of gender, while White women voted more for Harris, they could not make up for the much larger White male vote for Trump. One way to interpret this is that for them, abortion was not the only important issue; instead, for many of them, economics, immigration or race were more important. Hence their vote for Harris was not larger. Misogyny, thus, triumphed in the end.

The US under Trump will be less racially inclusive, more immigration-unfriendly and selectively retributive. There will be tax breaks for the rich and tariffs on imports — the China policy will especially come wrapped in tariffs. There will be a move towards pro-Russian and pro-Israeli war settlements in Ukraine and Israel-Palestine. There will also be a serious pressure on NATO, benefiting Russia greatly.

That is what the victory of Trump implies. There is no beating around the bush.

The writer is Sol Goldman professor of International Studies and the Social Sciences at Brown University, where he also directs the Savana Center for Contemporary South Asia at the Watson Institute. Views are personal.

RIPPLES OF VICTORY

First Trump administration ramped up tariffs, trade restrictions.
Trump 2.0 promises, or threatens, to do more of the same

AS THE DUST settles on a keenly contested US presidential election, the focus will shift to the likely consequences and disruptions in the foreseeable future — for one, in terms of the economic impact of Donald Trump's second term as president. Trump ran a campaign centred on the promise to Make America Great Again (MAGA). Outside the US, such a campaign promise sounds odd primarily because the US has long been, and continues to be, the world's pre-eminent economic power. Within the US, however, there has been palpable resentment towards the process of globalisation, fuelled by a perception that the rest of the world has benefited at the cost of the US. Since the start of his first presidential campaign in 2016, Trump has aggressively voiced this sense of grievance and repeatedly promised to protect US interests by adopting policies that are firmly "America First".

Since the end of the Second World War, and especially after the Cold War, the US has shepherded the world order through its military might as well as by laying down the rules and regulations for global trade and commerce. In the first term, Trump's policies sought to upend this global order as the US adopted a more inward-looking, insular and transactional approach. This came as a shock to both its allies and competitors. For instance, Trump has questioned the role of other NATO allies and demanded that they contribute their full share. A key feature of his first administration was the sharp ramping up of tariffs and trade restrictions vis-à-vis China. In his second term, Trump promises, or threatens, to do more of the same. He intends to use punitively higher import tariffs as the primary weapon to cut trade deficits that the US has with the EU countries and Asian economies such as China and South Korea. He has also promised not to drag the US into new international conflicts and is unlikely to ramp up support to existing ones, such as the war between Russia and Ukraine.

The effects of Trump's second term can already be seen and heard. Germany's coalition government collapsed on Wednesday after Chancellor Olaf Scholz sacked his finance minister, and coalition partner, Christian Lindner. The apparent trigger was Scholz's demand for raising more debt to support Ukraine at a time when Trump's White House is expected to cut funding. Trump's tariffs are expected to raise the US's domestic inflation and, with that, force the US central bank to keep interest rates high. Trump tariffs will most likely also result in a trade war that will disrupt established global supply chains. But there are a few ways in which India may benefit as well. One, if the US decides to drill more oil, it could lead to lower fuel prices in the medium to long term. Two, Trump's desire to cut illegal migration by providing green cards to international students who study in American universities could make it easier for some Indians to live their American dream.

DELHI TO SRINAGAR

J&K Assembly resolution calling for dialogue on special
provisions must be the beginning of a conversation

OVER FIVE YEARS ago, the special status of Jammu and Kashmir was abrogated and the erstwhile state divided into two Union Territories. The reading down of Article 370 is now a reality, de facto and de jure, with the Supreme Court upholding the decision. The resolution by the newly-elected J&K assembly has balanced this reality with the principles and political compulsions of the ruling National Conference. The resolution "reaffirms the importance of the special status and constitutional guarantees, which safeguarded the identity, culture, and rights of the people of Jammu and Kashmir, and expresses concern over their unilateral removal." It also calls upon the government of India "to initiate dialogue with elected representatives of the people of Jammu and Kashmir for restoration of special status, constitutional guarantees and to work out constitutional mechanisms for restoring these provisions."

A stronger version of the resolution was earlier introduced by the PDP — the party has subsequently assented to the final document, despite its reservations. BJP MLAs have condemned the move. The state BJP, as the dominant electoral force in Jammu, represents a significant voice in the erstwhile state. The questions raised by representatives from the PDP and independents like Sheikh Khurshid (MP Engineer Rashid's brother) too, must be heeded. Physical confrontation, such as the one between BJP MLAs and Khurshid and others, has no place in the House and diminishes the institution of the legislature. The uproar must not be allowed to divert attention from the substantive import of the resolution — dialogue and negotiation are the only way to deepen federalism and address the concerns of the erstwhile state in a democratic manner.

A major criticism of the Centre's abrogation of Article 370 and Article 35a was the lack of consultation ahead of the move. An argument in its support was that it "unified" India by removing a state of exception in the federal framework. By invoking "dialogue" and "national unity", and not explicitly talking about the return of the old provisions, by leaving room open for other measures, and not harking back to the past, the J&K House has signalled that it is being politically pragmatic. It can also be read as a good-faith invitation. The BJP-led government in Delhi has invested considerable political capital in the revocation of J&K's special status. But that should not prevent it from talking to the representatives of the people in Kashmir. The first item on the agenda must be the restoration of statehood at the earliest — the conversation between Delhi and Srinagar must continue from there.

CANNED AIR

Its appeal goes beyond connection with celebrity. It may have
something more vital to offer

AS FAR AS celebrity memorabilia go, t-shirts and used napkins are passé. No matter where one is in the world, it is now possible to breathe the same air as George and Amal Clooney — without having to pay thousands of dollars for it. For as low as €10 (\$11), tourists visiting Italy can now buy cans containing 400 ml of "100 per cent authentic air" collected from Lake Como, close to where the Clooneys own a house. Marketed particularly to appeal to American vacationers, the souvenir has been described by its creators, the communications company ItalyComunica, as "something original, fun and even provocative".

Selling air may be provocative and "fun", but it is certainly not an original idea. Soon after World War II, an Italian businessman found a novel use for the empty cans left behind by US troops. He filled them with air, calling the product "Aria di Napoli" meaning "air of Naples" and began selling them back to the Americans as souvenirs. New York City went one step further — selling not just generic NYC air, but an especially curated air formula "connected with equal parts Empire State Building, Grand Central Terminal, Chrysler Building, Statue Of Liberty" and other landmarks.

While it is easy to dismiss these cans of air as merely perpetuating an out-of-control consumerist culture where anything, even a wisp of breath, can be packaged and sold as long as it has the vaguest connection to a celebrated person or landmark, the story of a Canadian company selling canisters of fresh "Rocky Mountain air" suggests that there may be something deeper, more vital to the appeal. In 2015, the company found that hundreds of its products sold out within weeks in Beijing. Turns out, citizens in the Chinese capital, which at the time had a reputation for noxious air, especially in the winter months, were simply gasping for something cleaner. As residents of Delhi-NCR struggle to breathe amid poor AQI, perhaps some Lake Como air could come to the rescue?



AARTI KHOSLA

SECURING BETTER CLIMATE finances for the Global South has emerged as the pre-emi-

nal goal for COP29. It's a necessary pursuit as the developing world houses the majority of the worst-affected regions. However, the Global South and the Global North should not come to the table as adversaries. The Global South's finance needs have shot up to over \$1 trillion a year today, compared to the \$100 billion a year offered back in 2009. Yet, the numbers suggest that it was only in 2022 that the financing went past \$100 billion for the first time. Even so, more than half of it is reported to be in the form of loans to already struggling nations. So neither the quantum of the funds nor their manner of disbursement instils confidence. It has been reported that some of the poorest Global South countries were spending around 40 per cent of their budgets on debt servicing alone — at a time when they desperately need to channel every dollar into more clean-energy capacities and climate-resilient towns and cities.

This is exacerbated by the lack of access to concessional finance since the cost of capital for investing in essential infrastructure (like utility-scale solar) in, say, Germany, would be three to four times lower than India. It gets worse in the traditionally riskier markets, like sub-Saharan Africa. But the trouble is that climate impacts are not just threatening to upend critical sectors like agriculture and insurance in the Global South. The richer nations are also witnessing unexpected wild-

CoP FOR CONSENSUS

At Baku, Global South and North should shed adversarial positions on climate finance

Solar, wind, wind-solar hybrid and hydropower projects (amongst others) enjoy a must-run status in India, but at times their output has been curtailed and some lenders may view them as riskier. Having the backstop of international climate funds to underwrite such projects may ease their apprehensions and unlock more (concessional) financing. Of course, this presupposes that the country offers a policy environment that promotes renewable capacity addition.

fires, torrential rains and heatwaves. So it's not difficult to see why their investors would be reluctant to take on more risk by lending to the developing world.

This has understandably led to dissatisfaction since climate justice necessitates that the ones responsible for the crisis loose their purse strings. However, the revised draft of the UN's New Collective Quantified Goal attempts to say that the "parties with high GHG emissions and economic capabilities" would be expected to contribute to the global climate funds corpus. The opposition has been immediate from China and India as both are major economies that cannot be expected to throttle their growth to undo the wrongs of the past. The rest of the BRICS blocs likely to voice similar reservations. At the same time, the pathways that these economies choose could be pivotal to the world's carbon budget.

The monetary system encourages profitability, so the first way forward could be for the Global South countries to facilitate higher returns. For instance, if a private investor were to expect a 12-13 per cent annual return on a major infrastructure project in India and 8-10 years to break even, perhaps the need of the hour is to boost it to 17-18 per cent (or even higher) over the same period. This would enable the investor to recoup the funds quicker, net a higher profit and make the same money available for reinvestment much sooner. This can be explored through aggressive tax breaks, innovative revenue-sharing mechanisms or

aggregating demand for capital-intensive sectors that could be lucrative — like green hydrogen for the hard-to-abate sectors or higher subsidies for electrified public transit. The idea is to elevate India's attractiveness to foreign investors with the underlying principle of reciprocity. For those who doubt how this would impact India's earnings, a greater volume of investments would more than compensate for the lower revenues from each project.

Second, using climate finance not as loans or grants but as a backstop for the public and large private lenders may be explored. Solar, wind, wind-solar hybrid and hydropower projects (amongst others) enjoy a must-run status in India, but at times their output has been curtailed and some lenders may view them as risky. Having the backstop of international climate funds to underwrite such projects may ease their apprehensions and unlock more (concessional) financing. Of course, this presupposes that the country offers a policy environment that promotes renewable capacity addition. India is one of the most progressive in this regard, so successfully implementing the measure here would make for a good case study for the rest of the Global South.

The CoP is one of the sharpest platforms for negotiating. By definition, that requires concessions on all sides. Little more generosity from the Global South may, ironically, transform COP29 into a resounding success.

The writer is director, Climate Trends



NOVEMBER 8, 1984, FORTY YEARS AGO

TERM TWO FOR REAGAN

RONALD REAGAN HAS been re-elected as the President of the US by what is being described as the biggest margin in the political history of the country. Reagan delivered a devastating defeat on his Democratic rival, Walter Mondale. A triumphant Reagan told the nation "America's best days lie ahead, and I am gonna do it just one more time — you ain't seen nothing yet."

DELHI RECOVERS

AS THE SITUATION in the capital continues to improve, people have started moving back to

their houses from relief camps. No untoward incident was reported from any part of the city and large crowds could be seen in the market while officers reported normal attendance. The after-effects of the recent incidents of arson and looting, however, were visible.

IE PITCHES IN

THE STEERING COMMITTEE for the Indian Express Relief Fund met to consider the best way to support relief and rehabilitation of the riot-affected victims. The collection of funds from all centres of the Indian Express Group has now crossed Rs 5 lakh. The committee felt that the most practical approach would be to pick

one specific camp in Delhi and cater to its immediate need, which by common consensus was agreed to be the Balasahib Gurdwara at Bhagwan Nagar.

SECURITY OVERHAUL

THE DIRECTOR and the deputy director of the Intelligence Bureau were removed from their posts as the government changed several senior officials who were associated with Mrs Gandhi's security. The IB director and the deputy director, both IPS officers, have been reverted to their parent cadres. The Additional Commissioner of Police, Delhi, who was in overall charge of security was also suspended.

The
Hindustan Times
ESTABLISHED IN 1924

[OUR TAKE]

Fireproofing digital spaces

Conversations on social media regulation for children must focus on practical measures

Australia's Prime Minister Anthony Albanese on Thursday said his government will ban children under 16 years of age from social media, unveiling plans for a new law that he hopes to get enacted by the end of the year. This marks a watershed moment in how democracies are approaching the challenge of protecting young minds in the digital age. The move resurrects crucial questions about making digital spaces safer — questions that deserve renewed attention in India — despite concerns about practical enforceability.

The scientific consensus on social media's impact on children has only strengthened in recent years — from compromised physical activity to stunted psychosocial development, the price of unrestricted access is steep. The consequences — from cognitive impairment and academic underperformance to more severe outcomes like depression and behavioural disorders — are now well-documented. Australia's approach, alongside similar measures in Spain and France, represents a growing recognition that the time for merely debating these impacts is past; concrete action is imperative.

Yet, challenges lie in implementation. Experts have flagged concerns about the reliability of age verification methods, highlighting how easily current systems can be circumvented. Australia's proposed solution — holding tech giants accountable with substantial penalties for breaches — offers one pathway, but its effectiveness remains to be tested. It contains provisions for exemptions, such as educational content on YouTube, acknowledging the nuanced nature of information access for young people as they learn and grow. This differs from China's sweeping restrictions, which include night curfews and strict time limits.

For India, these developments offer valuable insights. India's context demands particular sensitivity — technology has been both an equaliser for the underprivileged and, paradoxically, a source of vulnerability, especially among children battling addictions to such services and games. The Australian model, especially its focus on platform accountability, could inform India's approach. However, any framework must account for the unique digital landscape, where social media often serves as a gateway to essential services, support, and information for Indians of all ages. The conversation must go beyond whether to regulate to how to implement practical measures that protect without alienating children from the digital world they will inevitably inhabit.

Public welfare versus private property rights

The Supreme Court judgment on the State's power to acquire privately owned resources for public distribution clarifies the government's eminent domain powers while ensuring a balanced approach between private property rights and collective welfare. In an 8-1 majority, the top court held that while the State may acquire private resources for public good, not all privately owned assets automatically qualify for such acquisition. By limiting the State's acquisition power to resources that meet certain criteria — scarcity, public impact, and necessity for community welfare — the Court has set down a clear framework to avoid arbitrary confiscation of private assets.

Article 39(b) of the Constitution, which allows the State to influence the distribution of material resources in ways that best serve public interest, often has been seen as a mandate for social welfare, pushing redistributive justice. However, the Court's ruling rightly emphasises that Article 39(b) should not be interpreted as a *carte blanche* for government acquisition, which could undermine property rights protected under Article 300A. This balance is crucial: While resources essential to the community, such as forests or water bodies, may fall under State control, other private assets cannot. Justice BV Nagarathna's dissent enriches the discourse by underscoring that the Court's interpretations should reflect a balance between historical values and contemporary societal needs. The majority's application of the public trust doctrine, asserting that vital resources are held in trust by the State for public benefit, provides a guiding principle.

By setting precise limits and spelling out acquisition criteria, the verdict reaffirms the importance of balancing public welfare with private property rights. Politically, this judgment sets a precedent that curbs any sweeping economic redistribution initiatives while still allowing for meaningful State intervention when it is justified.

Indian-American vote swims up to outcome

Indian-Americans are breaking from the Democrats: A shift that reflects America's new political priorities

For Vice President Kamala Harris, the Indian-American vote should have been a slam dunk. Her Indian heritage seemed like a natural bridge to a community with historically strong Democratic ties. But this election revealed a surprising shift in Indian-American loyalties — a change that ultimately contributed to a sweeping victory for President-elect Donald Trump. The story of Indian-Americans reflects what's happening across America — a reaction to what many see as a Democratic focus on progressive social agendas over practical concerns like economic stability, national security, and family values.

A recent Carnegie Endowment survey starkly illustrates this changing allegiance. From 2020 to 2024, the percentage of Indian-Americans identifying as Democrats dropped from 56% to just 47%, while support for Trump surged from 22% to 31%. This shift is particularly pronounced among younger Indian-American men, who might have been expected to rally around Harris's candidacy.

Instead, they're leading a generational realignment, pushing back against Democratic policies they feel have drifted from core priorities that resonate with them.

Indian-Americans, like many across the United States (US), are increasingly uneasy with what they perceive as the Democratic Party's fixation on progressive social issues over pragmatic, results-oriented policies. Their focus appears to prioritise symbolic inclusivity over pressing issues like economic growth, national security, and family cohesion. For a community rooted in hard work, education, and family unity, this shift feels like a departure from the values that have been central to their success in America.

Adding to this sense of disconnect is Harris's approach to her heritage. Unlike candidates like Vivek Ramaswamy, who has embraced his Hindu identity, or Vice President designate JD Vance, a devout Christian who openly is proudly Hindu, Harris has often distanced herself from the Indian-American community and her mother's religion. Many Indian-Americans, who had hoped for a deeper cultural connection from someone with shared roots, have been disappointed. Harris's approach, some feel, lacks the genuine cultural pride expressed by leaders like Ram-

aswamy and Vance's wife, coming across instead as shallow symbolism.

As legal immigrants who followed a rigorous process, Indian-Americans generally support merit-based immigration but are wary of what they see as the Democratic Party's lenient stance on illegal immigration. Many waited years — sometimes decades — to gain legal status and are troubled by seeing people crossing the border illegally, receiving refuge, social benefits, and work permits. Additionally, the Democrats have repeatedly leveraged the status of skilled workers stuck in the lengthy

immigration backlog to push for citizenship pathways for undocumented immigrants. This frustration is shared by many Americans who believe in a fair, lawful process and feel that the current approach undermines these principles.

Further alienating Indian-Americans is the Biden administration's alignment with liberal Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau on issues related to pro-Khalistan separatists. For Indian-Americans with close ties to India, the US administration's stance on groups critical of India's sovereignty — groups that have been linked to airline bombings and thousands of killings — feels like a betrayal of shared values. This sentiment echoes among Americans who see the Dem-



Vivek Wadhwa



Like the broader American electorate, Indian-Americans are pragmatic voters who value practical solutions over divisive rhetoric

ocrats as lacking resolve on global security issues. National security isn't theoretical for Indian-Americans, with memories of terrorist attacks in India, nor for Americans who vividly recall 9/11.

Like the broader American electorate, Indian-Americans are pragmatic voters who value practical solutions over divisive rhetoric. The Democratic Party's emphasis on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) is seen as sidelining essential issues like economic opportunity, public safety, and education in favour of identity-focused initiatives. This sentiment isn't unique to Indian-Americans; Americans across the country feel disillusioned by a social agenda that seems to prioritise identity over merit and practical competence.

Nearly every Indian-American I know, especially those in technology, has been rethinking their political stance because of these shifting priorities. Personally, I have always voted Democrat, and when Harris

was nominated, I even tweeted, "With a Black/Indian woman as a potential president, all I can say is that she has one at her heels." But the sentiment didn't last, and I couldn't bring myself to support Harris in the elections — because I consider patriotism, economic opportunity, and personal freedom to be more than talking points — they are core values. We want leaders who champion these values in action, not just words. With a population of over 4.8 billion and concentrations in key battleground states, Indian-Americans are an increasingly influential constituency in future elections. Both parties have recognised this, ramping up their outreach. But the Democratic Party now faces a critical challenge: Reconnecting with a community that was once a bedrock of support. Token representation won't suffice; Indian-Americans, like all Americans, demand leaders who will address their real, everyday concerns.

Vivek Wadhwa is CEO, Vintex Biosciences.

The views expressed are personal

How Bibek Debroy was different from his peers

Journalist, author, lawyer, diplomat, and one of India's most prominent public intellectuals, Khushwant Singh wrote a famous syndicated weekly column titled, *With love towards one and all*. It was half mocking and self-deprecating, but hugely popular for its commentary. He was a genial Sikh who suffered no fools and did not hesitate to call a spade a spade. He died in 2014 at the age of 99. His column's title comes to mind while writing this tribute to Bibek Debroy, who died on November 1st of the much younger age of 69. Debroy could be impish in his writing, caustic in his words, withering in his dressing down, but never malicious, much like Khushwant Singh. Used to calling a spade a spade, Debroy sometimes didn't spare to soften his words which then would be hurtful to the recipient. As a Sanskrit scholar, surely, he was aware of the aphorism, *Satyam bruyat, priyam bruyat, na bruyat satyam apriyam*. I.e. speak the truth, speak pleasant (things), but avoid speaking unpleasant truth.

Debroy might have retorted that while truth can be bitter, it also cures. Was he then speaking unpleasant truths to help sort out the unpleasantness in India's society? Or in our policies? At other times, though, he chose to be silent. This became evident in the past decade when he was strangely silent on some economic issues. After all, he was the chairman of the Economic Advisory Council to the Prime Minister for the past seven years. Surely there would have been plenty of occasions of disagreement? I am told that within the government, dissent is kept strictly internal. How then does one speak truth to power, when you chair a high-profile council? Only behind closed doors, clearly.

Recently, taking advantage of our long friendship, I had the boldness to ask Debroy whether he had to ever speak publicly against his conscience. He admitted he had and told me the context. Since he is no more, I cannot share the details publicly in this column, but only to say that this was possibly one of the rare occasions when he was under such pressure and acquiesced. Otherwise, he was known to be stubborn and independent-minded, who could not easily be defeated in argument, let alone brow-beaten. It is also a testimony to his

humility that he admitted his errors without any hesitation or at least to his friends.

Of course, he and his office did express criticism of India's statistical system and its inadequacies, or a contrarian view of taxing agricultural income.

Debroy's brilliance, scholarship, and lucidity in articulation were never in doubt. And a streak of impulsiveness too, which probably mellowed in later years. At Cambridge, his PhD guide was Frank Hahn, considered to be a potential Nobel laureate. But the story goes that he chose to abandon his PhD over differences with his external examiner, rather than persevere and adjust. This tendency manifested later in life in his impetuous exit in 2005 from the Rajiv Gandhi Institute for Contemporary Studies, where, as late as 2012, he spent the longest tenure in his multifaceted career.

His first real job on returning to India from Cambridge was as faculty at the Gokhale Institute of Politics and Economics in the 1960s, surrounded in Pune. He was assigned a role in the East European studies group, and his early papers were on the economic systems of Communist countries. In Pune, he discovered the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, just across the road from Gokhale Institute, which provided material for a lifelong passion for the study of ancient Sanskrit texts. In another room, he returned to his research.

Last year, he was invited to give a talk on economics, but on 'An economist's journey through the epics'. This was a remarkable oration, frank, forceful, and inspiring. The sheer volume of his work, translations of epics and other texts, is incredible. He is one of two authors who have managed to translate the unabridged *Mahabharata* and the *Ramayana* into English.

Incidentally, his Indology writing began with the *Mahabharata* at the Centre for Policy Research, where he spent six years. In 2004, he recovered miraculously from a heart attack. This was like a renewed lease on life that he used for prodigious output. In later years, one sensed more serenity, a softening and detachment. An article written four days before his death revealed a kind of premonition of the final exit.

Describing Bibek Debroy in a sentence is not inwards after the initiation of writing to fit two lifetimes, scholarship across diverse and disparate fields, a connoisseur of food and classical music, an insatiable curiosity, generous to friends, and a zest for life, which endures too soon. Yet, there were aspects of his persona that remained inscrutable.

One of Maharashtra's towering personalities of the past century was PK Atre, who provided tutelage to an aspirant and later famous playwright, Vijay Tendulkar. In his tribute, Tendulkar concludes: "Despite my closeness, I still don't know this versatile man and he remains an enigma." These lines fit Bibek Debroy too, genius in many ways, a renaissance man, whose writings in economics and Indology did great service to the nation, but who also remained hidden and silent in crucial ways.

Goodbye, dear friend.

Ajit Ranade was formerly vice chancellor, Gokhale Institute of Politics and Economics.

The views expressed are personal



Ajit Ranade



An output of writing fits two lifetimes, scholarship across diverse and disparate fields, generous to friends, and a zest for life, which ended too soon

XI JINPING | PRESIDENT OF CHINA

A stable, healthy and sustainable China-US relationship is in the common interest of both countries. Washington and Beijing need to strengthen communication and manage differences



Why the spirit of RG Kar protests must be kept alive

Will tomorrow be what we would like it to be after the RG Kar Medical College and Hospital (RGKMH) rape-murder? After all, it took gruesome crime to remind us of our duty to protest against what we should not see happening in society.

The health care system in West Bengal (and possibly in many other states) is steeped in corruption. Immoral and unethical practices of a few bring in money from various sources, a portion of which is shared with members of the party in power. This partaking of dirty money paves the path to tolerance of corrupt practices. And then it snowballs, as more and more corrupt practices and practitioners enter the system. Extortion from medical students to avoid being marked as 'failed' in examinations (actual performance notwithstanding), 'cut money' from purchases, commission to allow a supply of fake drugs to hospitals, sexual harassment and exploitation of women, bribes for allocating hospital beds to patients, and many such heinous acts are overlooked for a share of the loot. When questioned, the powers that be feign ignorance.

The need now is to stand up and protest against all this if another RGKMH-type incident is to be avoided. With this crime, we realised that corruption is not confined to only a single medical institution, but infects the entire health system now.

The junior doctors, who suffered the worst of it, initiated the protests — grieving for a young murdered peer. Appalled by the crime and the skeletons that kept tumbling out of the cupboards after the initiation of a probe by the Central Bureau of Investigation, the civil society joined. The doctors went on an indefinite fast, listing 10 demands that could fix the corrupt health system to some extent. Thousands of people marched in tens of marches across the country supporting the demands of the junior doctors. The party in power, through a spokesperson, raised counter-claims and demanded an end to the uprising, without success.

A 15-point charter of demands was thrust forward as a counter to the protests. The charter, of course, merits serious consideration. But, the ruling party must also realise that many of these demands can be met by implementing discipline for government employees, including doctors; the responsibility of implementation rests with the government. In government hospitals, the doctors must deal with an enormous quantum of pressure, which often stems from unfilled positions. Indeed, the junior doctors have demanded the filling of these positions. No doctor in a government hospital should direct

a patient to a private hospital, stated the party spokesperson.

Unfortunately, in many government hospitals, instruments necessary for diagnosis of various diseases are unavailable or are non-functional. Directing a patient to go to another hospital where such instruments are available and functional is surely appropriate even if the said hospital is a private one. To avoid pushing patients to private health care, it is the government that must adequately equip public hospitals. The spokesperson said that the doctors should not direct a patient to specific diagnostic centres. Fair enough. If a doctor in a government hospital indulges in the abominable practice of referrals to obtain kickbacks, the government should punish the doctor. But, not all diagnostic centres provide services of uniform quality. The government has to ensure that the quality of service provided is uniform, without which a doctor has no choice but to refer a patient to a diagnostic centre that provides reliable results.

The junior doctors ended their protest because of requests from the parents of the young doctor who was raped and killed. Hours before they ended their protest, their representatives were called by the West Bengal chief minister (CM) to discuss their demands. The meeting was streamed live. Some demands were related to issues that were sub judice and hence not discussed. Many of the demands pertaining to the improvement of the safety and security of doctors resulted in some, albeit little, convergence between the government and the doctors. Discussions on the demands to improve the ease and transparency of access of citizens to the health care system did not result in any concrete decisions. Overall, the CM did not seriously commit to meet the justified demands of the doctors. Much time was spent discussing the legal standing of many committees and their decisions, even though the constitution and decisions of these committees followed the norms of the National Medical Commission.

Justice for the slain doctor and the remaining nine demands of the junior doctors must be delivered. The civil society must not waver in its support. On October 6, protesters sang *No nos moverda* (We shall not be moved) by Joan Baez. We should continue to sing *Unidos en la lucha*, no matter what happens in the night, we shall not be moved. Only then we can see what we wish to see tomorrow.

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Partha P Majumder

Opinion

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 8, 2024

TOWARDS VIKSIT BHARAT

Union commerce & industry minister Piyush Goyal

Achieving Viksit Bharat's vision involves transforming India into a developed nation that needs the engineering fraternity to demonstrate their commitments towards resilient supply chains and high-quality production of goods along with collective commitment towards a sustainable future

Over-regulation pitfalls

Too many and too frequent guidelines can make industry and investors nervous

INDIA'S FINANCIAL SECTOR regulators have done an impressive job in keeping things in order in the broader markets. The problem is that sometimes the fine line between regulation and over-regulation gets blurred. Take the recent proposal of the Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi) that asset management companies (AMCs) should deploy money raised through new fund offers (NFO) within 30 business days of allotment. This is nipping, at best. If one goes by Sebi's own data, out of 647 NFOs, an overwhelming 603 deployed the money before 30 days, and 98% (633) did it within 60 days. One wonders if a new rule was required for just 2%. Worse is the proposal that if the fund house does not comply, it will not be allowed to raise more funds. There are many other such proposals, like expenses of a fund needs to be paid from the scheme and not from the AMCs' balance sheet. This can lead to a lot of problems. In a situation where an index fund raises a very small amount, say just ₹10 lakh, the AMC finds itself between the devil and deep sea.

As there is a cap on expenses, it will be unable to pay the index provider from the scheme. But it cannot pay from the balance sheet either as that will be a violation of regulations resulting in warnings and penalties. Even the rules under the "skin in the game" guidelines for liquid schemes are quite tough. Sebi mandates that the fund manager will have to invest 20% of the post-tax salary in the scheme, but it has also set a deadline for redemption after three years, which leads to unnecessary taxation. At the same time, the fund manager has to make fresh investments in the same scheme in the same month. It might make more sense to consider old investments for re-investment like other schemes and defer the tax liability. Of course, even the number — 20% of take-home salary — is debatable. While a CIO or CEO, who is responsible for all schemes, will see this 20% divided among both debt, equity, and other asset classes, imagine the plight of a junior liquid fund manager who will see his entire amount being invested in a low-return liquid scheme.

To be sure, Sebi alone is not guilty of this micromanagement. Even the Reserve Bank of India seems to be falling into the same trap. After removing caps on interest rates and stipulating that monthly repayments should not exceed 50% of borrowers' incomes in the case of microfinance institutions (MFIs) in 2022, it has changed its stance and started penalising them for charging "usurious rates". Banks charge as much as 35-40% on credit cards, which doesn't seem to be catching the regulator's attention. While it is understandable that the banking regulator is worried about MFIs' unbridled growth and rising repayment stress, it need not necessarily be, due to high interest rates. Surely there are other ways to handle this; for example, ensuring that 100% of MFI books have to be insured or making underwriting more difficult. Instead, it has almost put an entire industry in the dock — something that is already affecting consumption. This is not to say that both the regulators don't have their hearts in the right place, but constant micro-management not only unsettles the industry, but it also scares new entrants.

Does Nvidia's CEO dream of electric androids?

ONE OF THE memorable moments of Nvidia Corp's most recent conference for developers came toward the end of the chip giant's semi-annual event. Clad in his ubiquitous leather jacket, Chief Executive Officer Jensen Huang strode onto the stage in front of a large screen displaying a row of humanoid robots straight out of a Philip K Dick novel. After a beat, something eerie emerged from back stage: two knee-high robots more reminiscent of Star Wars' R2-D2 waddled out, emitting beeps and boops.

This is the business Huang has been talking up for much of 2024, what he has framed as AI's next wave. Robots will bring AI that "understands the laws of physics", and how to interpret the world, he told Jim Cramer earlier this year. All factories will be robotic, and they'll be building products that are robotic. "Billions" of humanoid robots will be shipped in the coming years, Huang has said.

Having captured one of the most lucrative markets in recent times for chips that can train and run generative AI systems, Huang has been talking up three other areas he's now eyeing for potential growth: autonomous vehicles, quantum computing, and robots. You could argue Huang doesn't need to be thinking about new markets given the staggering profitability of his AI chip business. Nvidia earned more than \$16 billion in net income for the second quarter, up nearly 170% from the previous year.

But such a heavily concentrated business is risky. If Nvidia's handful of customers stop buying AI chips, or start developing their own, or if AI computing demands change in some way, Nvidia suddenly looks vulnerable. AI chip demand might seem insatiable now, but it won't be forever.

One rumour doing the rounds among chip firms has been that Nvidia will build its own robots on the ground up. The idea is that it could take advantage of its powerful chips, known as graphics processing units (GPUs), and the tools it already sells to developers to build its own robots. More than 100 robotics firms including Siemens AG and Boston Dynamics Inc. are using Nvidia's Isaac suite of software tools and AI models to test robot applications.

Building the chips, the software and hardware for robots would mean the company controls the entire technology "stack" behind such machines. How might that benefit Nvidia? In theory, it could develop all those components in tandem so that they work seamlessly with one another, allowing the company to build the best robots on the market in much the same way Apple does with iPhones. That's the idea anyway.

In practice, building robots would be a terrible idea. Antitrust regulators would probably be all over Nvidia's efforts given its dominance in AI chips. The company also lacks the supply-chain and manufacturing expertise you need to build robotic hardware. And jumping into the business would gnaw deeply into its fat profit margins, which swelled to 55.3% in the third quarter.

"Nvidia is more focused on creating new markets for their chips than building robots themselves," says David Reiger, CEO of Germany's NEURA Robotics, who added that partnering with large manufacturers made more sense.

Huang has described himself as a "market maker, not a market taker", so the idea of fighting other robotics firms over a nascent market might not even appeal to him on a personal level. But framing yourself as a platform hub for newfangled technology comes with challenges too. Arm Holdings Plc, the British chip designer whose instruction sets are found in most smartphones today, positioned itself in the mid-2010s as the low-powered, beating heart of the internet of things (remember that?) revolution. Instead, it struggled over several years to sell the necessary software to manufacturers like Robert Bosch GmbH to make good on its vision. It has since pivoted to framing itself as central to the next phase in the AI boom.

To its credit, Nvidia has entered new markets before with astounding success. Huang transformed gaming graphics cards into the bedrock of the AI revolution by becoming everyone's essential partner, not their competitor. For robotics, the playbook should probably be the same: Don't build the bodies but build the brains and tools that everyone else's robots can't live without. The profits from that endeavour probably won't match today's AI gold rush, but when that boom cools, Nvidia may be glad it plugged itself into robots too.

● STREAMLINING SECURITIES

DELISTING REVAMP: SEBI'S NEW EXIT STRATEGY PROVIDES FOR SMOOTHER TAKE-OFF

From roadblocks to runways

THE CONCEPT of "delisting" securities, as the word suggests, allows publicly traded companies to remove their securities from being listed on stock exchanges, either voluntarily or by regulatory mandate. It signifies a company's transition from being publicly traded to becoming privately held, by providing an exit route to its existing shareholders.

While the Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi) had put in place an elaborate delisting process with the Sebi (Delisting of Equity Shares) Regulations, 2021 (Delisting Regulations), instances of delisting have been rather uncommon given the cumbersome process in the reverse book building (RBB) mechanism. The old delisting norms have often left companies trapped with speculative bidding and artificial inflation of the exit price.

To address these inefficiencies, Sebi, on September 25 introduced the Sebi (Delisting of Equity Shares) (Amendment) Regulations, 2024 (Delisting Amendment). The changes are aimed at reducing friction in the delisting process, offering acquirers more flexibility and ensuring fair outcomes for shareholders.

Prior to the Delisting Amendment, the exit price for voluntary delisting was determined exclusively through RBB. The price was set based on bids submitted by shareholders, benchmarked against a floor price or an indicative price. The indicative price is the upfront price declared by the acquirer, which must be higher than the floor price. Since the announcement of a voluntary delisting is usually followed by increased volatility and activity in the trading of the company's scrip (given that the exit price was earlier determined by the RBB process), a group of bidders acting together could shoot up the exit price, causing the delisting efforts to collapse. While in theory RBB

appears to be fair and transparent, it is controlled by a handful of speculators who cartelize and ensure the failure of delisting, hurting the genuine investor who could have gained an attractive premium.

Sebi has now attempted to remedy this through the Delisting Amendment by providing listed firms with an alternative to delisting through a fixed price mechanism (FPM). Under the FPM, acquirers can set a fixed delisting price at least 15% above the floor price and must accept the equity shares tendered by the public shareholders if the acquirer's post-offer shareholding along with the tendered shares reaches 90% of the issued share capital of that class. Unlike the RBB method, this mechanism is likely to offer greater transparency and price certainty by eliminating speculative bidding and inflated exit prices. It will also reduce volatility and allow the acquirer to arrange funds for the offer in advance, thereby streamlining the delisting process.

The stringent conditions under the older delisting norms meant that acquirers could only make a counter offer if they reached a post-offer shareholding of 90% — a threshold that frequently led to failed delisting attempts. With the Delisting Amendment, Sebi has reduced the requirement to 75%, provided at least 50% of the public shareholding is tendered. Sebi has also revised the norms for the counter offer price, which could not be

lower than the book value of the company under the earlier framework. Now, the counter price cannot be less than the higher of either (a) the volume weighted average price of the shares tendered/offered in the RBB process; or (b) indicative price, if any. These revised norms are likely to better safeguard public interest while increasing the chances of successful delisting by allowing the acquirers to negotiate more effectively with shareholders.

Another significant change has been the method of determining the floor price which is no longer required to be computed in the context of an open offer as opposed to during voluntary delisting. Sebi now requires companies to use the adjusted book value of assets as a key parameter in setting the floor price, ensuring shareholders receive compensatory value. The floor price will be calculated based on a reference date, which shall now be that of the initial public announcement and not the date on which the exchanges are notified of the board meeting where the delisting proposal was considered. This change mitigates the risk of abnormal trading activity and will align the floor price more accurately with market conditions.

The new norms also introduce a concrete framework for delisting of an investment holding company (IHC). An IHC is a

The improved predictability of the delisting process will inspire confidence among both promoters and investors

firm holding investments in listed or unlisted companies or holding assets other than such investments. Since there was no separate framework for delisting IHCs, this led to the equity shares of a listed IHC being traded at a discount compared to the true value of its investments in listed and unlisted firms. Consequently, the floor price set under the Delisting Regulations often did not reflect the true intrinsic value of these investments.

With the Delisting Amendment, IHCs now have an alternate delisting route, allowing them to transfer shares of underlying listed firms to public shareholders proportionately after cash payments for unlisted investments and other assets. This will be followed by a scheme of selective capital reduction to extinguish the public shareholding in IHCs in terms of provisions of the Companies Act, 2013. However, only IHCs with at least 75% of their fair value in direct investments in listed firms can opt for this alternative.

Sebi's newly implemented delisting reforms mark a transformative step towards resolving the long-standing challenges in India's capital markets. The changes are likely to encourage smoother transactions and enhance the efficiency of market exits without compromising investor interests. The improved predictability of the delisting process will inspire confidence among both promoters and investors, balancing ease of exit with protection for minority shareholders. Counterintuitively, easier delisting can also foster more IPOs by reassuring firms that exiting the market, when necessary, will not be overly cumbersome or costly. With these reforms, Sebi has aligned India's delisting norms with global standards, paving the way for more robust, efficient, and balanced market conditions.

Co-authored with Narmeen Shankar and Pragya Garg, associates, Finesse Law Advisors

Industrial cities, parks key to Viksit Bharat



DHANYENDRA KUMAR

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WHILE COUNTRIES COMPETE for leadership in artificial intelligence and other critical technologies, manufacturing remains crucial for economic growth, especially for countries like India where job creation and greater exports are urgent. India's ambition of Viksit Bharat@2047 envisions transforming the nation into a \$30-trillion economy. For equitable growth, India's per capita income will also need to rise from ₹2,392 to \$18,000.

The government has been formulating policies to transform India into a manufacturing powerhouse. Initiatives like Make in India, production-linked incentives, PM Gati Shakti National Master Plan, and reforms like the Goods and Services Tax and the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code have created a supportive ecosystem.

The development of industrial clusters, parks, and corridors with integrated state-level policies is meant to revolutionise large industries, often acting as anchors and support for micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs). Industrial corridors like the Delhi-Mumbai Industrial Corridor and Chennai-Bengaluru Industrial Corridor are laying the foundation for integrated industrial ecosystems, bringing together transportation, logistics, and production hubs. They will help improve connectivity between urban and rural centres, stimulating regional development and employment generation.

Similar approaches adopted in China, the US, and Germany have yielded spectacular results. For instance, China's net

work of industrial parks and special economic zones such as Shenzhen has been critical to the country's transformation. The US development of regional industrial clusters, particularly in tech (Silicon Valley) and automotive (earlier in Detroit) industries, spurred innovation and sustained economic growth. Renowned for its industrial hubs, Germany leverages infrastructure to support its world-class manufacturing sector. Drawing from these experiences, a focus on industrial corridors and parks can help spur economic transformation.

The Indian economy is dominated by MSMEs. According to official data, they contributed 30% to India's GDP in FY23. Besides, MSME-specified products accounted for a whopping 45.79% of the country's total exports as of May. The cumulative employment generated by MSMEs registered with the government from July 2020 to July 2024 stood at 20.39 crore. In fact, India's goal of Viksit Bharat hinges on the growth and success of MSMEs. Industrial cities and corridors can provide essential infrastructure, resources, and markets for MSMEs. Additionally, MSMEs can benefit from logistics, warehousing, and transportation facilities which enhance supply-chain efficiency and reduce the cost and complexity of moving goods.

Continuing its focus on industrial development, the cabinet recently greenlighted 12 new industrial cities under the National Industrial Corridor Develop-

The government, large businesses and MSMEs can partner in speeding up development of industrial cities and parks to generate economic activity

ment Programme (NICDP) which entails an investment of ₹28,602 crore to boost the manufacturing sector. The government seeks to develop these "smart cities", aiming to position India as a global manufacturing and investment hub. The NICDP is projected to generate substantial employment, up to 1 million direct and 3 million indirect jobs, contributing to the socioeconomic development of regions.

The NICDP focuses on 11 corridors from the national infrastructure pipeline that will support the industrial cities in its vicinity and attract investments. For instance, Ather Energy announced plans to invest around ₹2,000 crore in Maharashtra's Chhatrapati Sambhajinagar, which will act as an anchor project for the industrial city of Indir. Two corridors in Andhra Pradesh will have multiple industrial cities that are expected to attract investments from textile, apparel, automobile, pharmaceutical, and electronics manufacturing companies.

The private sector can also contribute to realising the government's vision. Established businesses and conglomerates can be anchors within the industrial cities, which will help attract MSMEs and other companies to set up operations around them. This can create demand for ancillary services, raw materials, and logistics, enabling the entire ecosystem to flourish. They can also encourage research and development through dedicated cen-

tres and innovation hubs, which can further collaborate with MSMEs and start-ups. Conglomerates can also deploy their resources to help develop the infrastructure necessary to create a conducive environment for businesses.

An example of promising the growth of MSMEs through industrial cities is Vedanta chairman Anil Agarwal's recent announcement to set up two industrial parks, one for aluminium and the other for zinc and silver. Both parks will operate on a not-for-profit basis. The group plans to acquire ~1,500 acres, preferably within 50 km of its major operations in Rajasthan and Odisha. Considering the critical role of the three metals in areas ranging from renewable energy and electronics to driving sustainability, such clusters can act as the fulcrum of economic development for MSMEs and India's start-up ecosystem that aims to capitalise opportunities in the downstream value chain.

Industrial cities offer an immense opportunity to pave the next phase of India's growth. Corporate entities need to take the lead, creating a multiplier effect to accelerate industrial growth and economic transformation. Union commerce minister Piyush Goyal expects many firms to queue up and invest in industrial parks. He recently cited, for example, a Japanese auto major, Toyota's investment in Sambhajinagar, one of the 12 industrial cities.

Together the government, large businesses, and MSMEs can partner in speeding up the development of industrial cities and parks, generating economic activity and contributing to India's aim of becoming Viksit Bharat.

an isolationist foreign policy will bear on the dynamics of geopolitics. —G David Milton, Maruthanodde

Tackling food inflation

The Reserve Bank of India governor recently assured that inflation is likely to decrease by December, raising hopes that the repo rate might also drop, which would increase cash flow in the market and boost spending. In this context, it's worth considering if the price changes of these

commodities can impact the repo rate. Increasing the number of cold storage facilities and building large warehouses near production areas would not only reduce food wastage but also protect farmers from middlemen. Such initiatives would stabilise the livelihoods of farmers, support low-income households, and boost market sentiment. —Amarjeet Kumar, Hazaribagh

● Write to us at feletters@expressindia.com

THE ASIAN AGE

8 NOVEMBER 2024

Subhani



Delhi needs to learn how to work with Trump's US

Reservations have been expressed during his long and successful campaign over Mr Donald Trump's unpredictable character, his convictions for felony, his liking for autocrats and his fitness for the office of the President of the United States. It is not with a modicum of fear over a second Trump term possibly sowing global volatility that the world has looked on at his triumphant march back to the White House.

Truth to tell, the world will have to learn to live with Trump's America and India is one country in Asia that would be looking forward to it in the belief that the benefits could outweigh the challenges while expecting some relief from the censorious eyebrow-raising ways of the liberals over India's patchy involvement with Canada over Sikh separatists resident there.

The warmth and enthusiastic cordiality of the Trump-Modi relationship that marked their ties in his first term could define how the ties go and whether the US will continue to endorse cultivating India as a counterweight to Beijing. It is also a quirk of diplomatic history that India's relationship with a Republican US President in place has invariably been warmer than with a Democrat in the White House, but only after the caustic Richard Nixon era.

Issues are bound to crop up given Mr Trump's pronouncements during his testosterone-laced campaign against a woman candidate in Kamala Harris. While everyone, while everyone, is expecting a trade war to break out over tariffs that seem inevitable, India too will be forced to deal with Mr Trump if his regime does impose tariffs as he often threatened to do when quoting the Harley Davidson bike episode.

Illegal immigration, the most aggressive part of Mr Trump's campaign, is certain to crop up as Indians constitute a fair number who risk taking the Mexico route. But that, as Mr Trump himself will know, is not something Mr Modi's government can do much about. India's concerns will be more about how conservative the H-1B visa process may get in his presidency as India's export of IT brains is integral to its status as an IT-enabling power.

India would be hoping to bolster its continuance as a strategic partner of the US and derive benefits like a favourable visa programme for genuine skilled workers and, of course, a more liberal US approach to visas for Indian students whose presence is an economic force for the host country. Transfer of high technology to sustain India's status as a defence materials buyer and partner would also be an objective given strong recent ties.

If Trump's USA, fired by an anti-China sentiment, moves along a curve of aggression to Beijing in trade, India can hope not only to suffer less from high tariffs that may specifically target Chinese goods but also to benefit from any manufacturing or assembly lines moving to India from out of China as seen in the case of Apple phones.

India has made progress as an attractive investment destination and increased FDI is something the country always hopes to get as much as active FDI bringing in money to sustain its stock markets that have moved up to record levels in the post-Covid years. That will not change because of the election result that may have been fuelled by a people tired of "overseas imbroglio, illegal cross border migration and an excessive pandering to 'woke' sentiments.

Focus on J&K statehood, not 370

The resolution passed by Jammu and Kashmir Assembly on Wednesday seeking special status for the Union territory and the one moved in the house on Thursday calling for the restoration of Article 370 and Article 35A of the Constitution reflect political expediency and one-upmanship by the parties and does not exactly contribute to the genuine demand for the restoration of its statehood.

There are many in Jammu and Kashmir, and the country at large, who are opposed to the unilateral decisions of the Union government to abrogate Article 370, divide the state into two Union territories and strip both of statehood. There was widespread resentment to the process the government adopted — it steamrolled all Opposition views, threw parliamentary etiquette to the winds, made the state an open jail and put all those who opposed the government's point of view behind bars. While this cannot be reversed, there is pressing need for the restoration of statehood to Jammu and Kashmir. Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Union home minister Amit Shah are on record committing themselves to fulfilling this demand; in fact, the Union government has assured the Supreme Court that it will do the same.

Omar Abdullah, Jammu and Kashmir's first elected chief minister after Article 370 was abrogated, sounded very competent and pragmatic when he said that he did not expect the NDA government to undo all that it has done to the state but there would be the issue of statehood. True, the government resolution did not call for Article 370 to be returned to the Constitution and asked only for a special status but it did give the BJP an opportunity to cry foul. The second resolution will only embolden the hardliners in New Delhi.

The political parties in Jammu and Kashmir must get their priorities right and ensure that their posturing does not undermine their own legitimate demands.

THE ASIAN AGE

KAUSHIK MITTAR

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K. SUBHANI

Editor & Publisher

As Trump returns, can he end key global conflicts?



Syed Ata Hasnain

America's once and future President appears to have outdone himself in his latest and most spectacular achievement. The experienced leader that he is, President-elect Donald Trump is expected to hit the ground running, especially on his favourite subject — the avoidance of war. There are two areas in which much of the strategic community is immediately looking to see the potential effect of the return of Donald Trump to the helm of the US leadership. These are Ukraine and the Middle East, including the Iran-Israel standoff. How does this look from a Trump point of view knowing that he is sceptical of any US involvement in international conflicts and prefers diplomacy over military intervention. Mr Trump's record in foreign policy in his first term was considered more than adequate, although quite a few innovations did take place, particularly in the Middle East. With that experience, he now meets a world that is on fire.

On Ukraine, Mr Trump has made it known that the war between Russia and Ukraine might never have happened if he was President. His meeting with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky in New York in September 2024 was cordial, but he did mention the need for the European nations to chip in with more resources for Ukraine. Mr Trump's first administration had provided military aid to Ukraine, but he never faced criticism for initially withholding it. During the Zelensky meeting, Mr Trump reiterated his goal of ending the war, stating: "We both want to see this end, and we both want to see a fair deal made."

However, vice-president-elect JD Vance has pro-

posed a more contentious peace plan, involving Ukraine's demilitarisation and permanent neutrality. Mr Trump has often boasted of knowing Russian President Putin very well, and his intent of stopping the war before he even assumes office may fructify if he forces Ukraine into a ceasefire. President Zelensky has resisted that all along and promised that this would be done without drawing from the US. It has been occupied, Mr Trump's compromise for Russia could be continued support to Ukraine with weapons, equipment and funding subject to an "as is where is" ceasefire; implying negotiations with all its territory back from Russian occupation, but that it should negotiate based on the current frontlines.

It is unlikely that Mr Trump will do anything in a hurry. His transition team will probably caution him about hasty "peace interventions" without full thought through because in the last four years the global order has been skewed itself. Nato has drawn upon itself a higher responsibility than any time since the end of the Cold War. The last time around Mr Trump did not order any immediate or hurried withdrawal from Afghanistan; it was finally Joe Biden who did so with-

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out being fully mindful of the consequences. So, don't expect any maverick decision-making in foreign policy from Mr Trump. One may recall the US pullout from Iraq in 2011, but Mr Trump withdrew the US from it on May 8, 2018, over 15 months after his inauguration in January 2017. It was not one of those knee-jerk responses that some may allege against Mr Trump's record. Also, we may consider the fact that it is virtually confirmed that 10,000 North Korean troops have entered the war in Ukraine. This makes early decision-making on prospective peace even more challenging.

Expect the experienced new President to pay much attention to the Middle East. The last tenure was marked by a few important developments. Among the first was the support for the move of the Israeli political capital to Jerusalem; something the Palestinians are still extremely irked about. Then came the highly contentious relationship with Saudi Arabia and the UAE in the strategic bid to exclude Iran from any finding of relevance in the Middle East. The Abraham Accords was the next step with the intent of consensus on "live and let live" between the three major faiths of the Middle East. Many believe that Mr Trump's "peace through strength" approach will actually win the US more friends and calm the world's turbulent zones, the Middle East now being the most volatile of them.

The writer, a retired lieutenant-general, is a former GOC of the Srinagar based 15 ("Chinar") Corps

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu may be easier for Mr Trump than what Joe Biden could ever achieve in the last one year of the Gaza conflict. Recently, Mr Trump advised the Israeli PM to swiftly conclude Israel's war in Gaza, emphasising the need for Israel to achieve victory quickly and end the ongoing violence. It's not certain what direction the ceasefire negotiations will take without any information on the likely release of the 100-odd remaining hostages.

Considering that it was the impact of Mr Trump's Middle East policy which indirectly led Hamas to consider the suicidal action of October 7, 2023, it remains doubtful how far Mr Trump can now influence some more important players such as Saudi Arabia and the UAE to play a greater role in securing the release of hostages. The agreement to release can then trigger further progress towards a ceasefire. Mr Trump probably has the power of personality and ability to ensure that Israel focuses more on Iran than on the Palestinians.

It's the Iran connection in the Middle East which is the most significant today. A broad assessment did speak of a potential joint US-Israeli operation to take out Iran's nuclear facilities, with some technical details which may have been jointly developed. This could be preceded by the non-intervention of Iran's oil facilities, refining and storage. The latter would send the world energy scene into a tizzy. It's unlikely that a non-interventionist US President will wish to trigger a devastating conflict which would have worldwide impact. That Iran will be handled much more strongly is a given, but Mr Trump's reputation as one who seeks peace through strength may well lead him to more initiatives across the Middle East, where he remains committed to finding stability.

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LETTERS THE BIDEN BURDEN

While digging deep, some key reasons emerge towards the defeat of Ms Kamala Harris. Foremost is that she served as VP to a President whose approval rating plunged deep in the middle of his first year in office and never recovered.

The public's judgment of Joe Biden's performance on two core issues, inflation and immigration, remained harshly negative. The fact that he waited so long to leave the race also worked against her, yet she refused to separate herself from him in any discernible way. Ms Harris also assumed that putting reproductive rights at the centre of her agenda would mobilise an army of angry women and move them to the booths in record numbers. But this did not happen.

R. Sivakumar
Chennai

AN 'AIR' OF SHAME

AFTER THE Supreme Court termed the Environment Protection Act, 1986, and the small fines for stubble burning as "toothless", the Union ministry of environment, forest and climate change on Wednesday doubled penalties against stubble burning and notified new rules under the Act for filing complaints, holding an inquiry, and laying down the adjudication process against environmental pollution. It will help improve air quality in Delhi. Perhaps they were shamed into action after Pakistan senior minister Maryam Aurangzeb's appeal for a joint action plan against air pollution in Punjab as the "wind from India knows no borders".

Sankar Paul
Chakdhara, West Bengal

QUIT, VIRAT & ROHIT

A CLEAN SWEEP of a cricket series on Indian soil and one would have thought it was the hosts demolishing the visitors. But the way Kiwis thrashed Team India in all the three Tests is shocking. The likes of Rohit Sharma and Virat Kohli could not stand the rather ordinary (but determined and hardworking) Kiwi attack. Even as the black caps were spinning a deadly web Indian spinners failed to live up to their home reputation. It is the surfeit of T-20 and lack of participation in the domestic circuit that has made our players unfit for Test cricket? It's time both men and R. Ashwin voluntarily step down and make way for talented youngsters in the upcoming Australian tour.

Syed Abdul Momin
Navi Mumbai

Mahir Ali

True Brits: Do Starmer, Tory new chief Kemi share ideology?

There are ways in which Kemi Badenoch's advent as Britain's Opposition leader, at the helm of the Conservative Party, can be seen as a remarkable progression. A black Tory leader is decidedly an advance for a party that has long relied on anti-immigrant sentiment as a core value for its electoral support.

The Labour Party has consistently boasted more ethnically diverse MPs since 1967, and by 2019 more than half of its parliamentary representation consisted of women. But it has never had a female leader, and its front bench has been dominated by white men in both government and Opposition. The Conservatives, by contrast, can lay claim to three female Prime Ministers, an Asian PM (via Kenya and Tanzania), and currently an Opposition leader who was born in Wimbledon but grew up in Nigeria, and considers herself a first-generation immigrant.

As a student in England more than 40 years ago, I struggled to understand why any Briton from an ethnic background would be attracted to the Tories. The Labour alternative was problematic in many ways, but did it not point to a relatively brighter future for ethnic minorities and the working class? I was gobsmacked in the early 1980s when a

purported Pakistani community leader in Oxford — a charming host, working class by profession — turned out to be a Tory by nature. I cannot certify whether the cause lay in his political ignorance or his illiteracy. After all, certain conservative social values were endemic among early immigrants from South Asia. But, after arriving in the promised land, how could they possibly be oblivious to the race and class divide of the society in which they found themselves?

Many of the early Caribbean immigrants recognised soon that the imagined yellow brick road was just a dirt track. It took longer for the South Asians. Some of them were radicalised by the racist experience, while others fell in line with the established order of their former colonial masters. The latter tendency has been reflected among most of those who typified both the ethnic diversity and ideological perversity of recent Tory front benches.

That's no excuse for Labour skipping on the diversity while more or less matching the perversity of the Conservatives. This aspect has been particularly evident since Kemi Starmer, under false pretences, acquired the Labour leadership and initially focused on expelling potential adversaries — mainly critics of Israel's inevitable descent into open

genocide, including his predecessor Jeremy Corbyn. It's worth noting that Labour got fewer votes this year when it won by a landslide, than it did in 2019, when it lost by a landslide. It suggests the British electorate is more attuned to the ideological ebbs and flows than one might assume.

Unlike Mr Corbyn, Labour was for a while Europe's largest political party in terms of membership. In his leadership bid, Mr Starmer vowed to adhere to the party's fairly popular manifesto, but steadily stepped away from potentially progressive leanings as Opposition leader and PM, losing little time in expelling Mr Corbyn and several of his anti-Zionist supporters from the party. Mr Starmer's attachment to the Zionist Netanyahu regime and its genocidal inclinations is reflected in the doubling of United States special forces flights to Israel from a British base in Cyprus. What are the chances that any of the culpable on either side of the Atlantic will ever be prosecuted for war crimes? After it emerged that 100 or so Labour activists had volunteered in their spare time for Kamala Harris and that Donald Trump was upset, Mr Starmer was desperate to claim that it would not affect his subservience to a future Trump administration.

Ms Badenoch, for all her "anti-woke" posturing and selective opposition to fellow immigrants who don't measure up to the Tories' standards, has been criticised by to ever replace Mr Starmer, unpopular as he may be after a budget that sufficiently assuages the IMF's concerns with its trickle-down tendencies while pumping more resources into defence than healthcare, education or broader welfare. The tax raises won't trouble the very rich, including his hitherto ATM Lord Waleed Ali, but nor will they benefit the working-class victims of his neoliberal predilections.

Ms Badenoch has revived Priti Patel's political prospects — and the likes of the even more vicious Suella Braverman, Sajid Javid and James Cleverly (who lost the leadership contest by relying too hard on the fellow idiots that populate his party) are waiting in the wings. It's unlikely, though, that anyone is betting much on her prospects of replacing Mr Starmer as PM at the next election. As the sixth Tory leader in eight years, she might not last long enough. On the other hand, who knows what will ensue if Mr Starmer needs with his self-immolation more rapidly than one expects.

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