# THE HUNDS

## Flipping scripts

BJP and INDIA bloc emerge clear winners in Haryana and J&K

BJP and INDIA bloc emerge clear winners in Haryana and J&K

ontrary to pollsters' predictions, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has managed to retain power in Haryana by increasing its seats from 40 to 48 and vote share from 36.5% to 39.9%, securing a third consecutive term. The Congress's vote share also accrued a whopping II points to register 39.1% but its seat tally increased marginally, by six, to 37. The two regional parties catering to the influential Jat community, the Indian National Lok Dal (INLD) and Jannayak Janta Party (JIP) did poorly as their combined vote share fell from 21% in 2019 to 7% in 2024, aiding the Congress. But the BJP's astute social engineering, gaining support from non-jat OBCs by propping up leaders from among them, besides its strengths in urban areas, helped it sall through. This is a remarkable achievement for the BJP which was saddled not just with anti-incumbency but also facing a resurgent Congress that was projected to win more seats. While the farmer and wrestler-led agitations helped the Congress to dowell in rural areas, it was not enough to break the BJP's social coalition there or dent the BJP's updays and wided party leadership, did not help matters. The win also addis gloss to the BJP's central leadership that had taken some flak since the party's underwhelming performance in the 2024 general election. The Congress will have to go back to the drawing board to rework its strategy of upending the BJP in the Hindl heartland.

The results in Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) were two-faced. The BJP increased its share by five points to 45% in Hindu-majority Jammu, helping it win in 29 seats and retain its seat shares in the region. The National Conference-Congress del aliance (INDIA bloc) won in four seats reserved for Scheduled Tribes. In the Kashmir Valley winning 41 out of the 47 seats and reducing the PDP to three seats. The INDIA bloc's ability to compete in Jammu and donnimate in Kashmir was enough for it to win a decisive majority of 49 seats, a number that should have been

strive first to get statehood for J&K. An empo-wered government that has the acceptance of the wered government man has the acceptance of the people, who participated in good numbers, should help the prospects of peace in the con-flict-prone province. The BJP-led Centre must heed the mandate and allow the government to function and fulfil its promises.

### Deep roots

Physics Nobel Prize acknowledges the diverse foundations of Al

or an idea whose time has come, look no further than artificial neural networks (ANNs) and machine learning, the 2024 Nobel Prize in Physics seems to suggest. John J. Hopfield and Geoffrey E. Hinton have been honoured "for foundational discoveries and inventions that enable machine learning with artificial neural networks". The foundations of ANNs are rooted in various branches of science, including statistical physics, neurobiology, and cognitive psychology, and artificial intelligence (AI) has become a household term today by drawing on such disparate insights. ANNs are networks of neurons (or processing centres) designed to operate like those in animal brains. In 1982, Hopfield, a towering figure in biological physics, introduced an ANN called the Hopfield network. Each neuron in this network is connected to all the others, and the flow and weight of information are not preferential to one direction. The neurons can process some input using Hebbian learning ("neurons that fire together, wire together"). The network as a whole was programmed to be analogous to a group of atoms, each with some magnetic energy. When 'activated', the ANN could receive, for instance, a noisy timing and dynamically denoise it by minimising the analogous magnetic energy of the system. Similarly, the Boltzmann machine was an earlier model for a spin glass – a material in which roughly half of atom pairs have their quantum spins aligned while the other half have them anti-aligned. This disorder causes the material to be frustrated and minimise its energy through more configurations than if the disorder was absent. Alongside Terrence Sejnowski, Hinton popularised the use of Boltzmann machine was an earlier model for a spin glass – a material in which roughly half of atom pairs have their quantum spins aligned while the other half have them anti-aligned. This disorder causes the material to be frustrated and minimise its energy through more configurations than if the disorder was absent. Alongside Terrence Sejnowski, Hinton popularised the use of Boltzmann machine was an earlier model for a spin glass – a material

## Sunset for the U.K.'s coal-fired power, lessons for India

he shuttering of Britain's last coal-fired power plant, in Nottinghamshire, is a milestone and indicates the hastening of an ongoing paradigm shift in energy production globally. But this has by no means been a frictionless transition, as it has been portrayed in much of the press. There have also been calls to replicate the United Kingdom's coal phase-out globally. While Britain's experiment could hold good for a few developed economies, a far more tailor-made approach would be required for developing and least-developed nations.

required for developing and least-developed nations.

Britain's coal phaseout must also not be viewed as beginning with its 2015 Paris pledge to bring down unabated coal-fired power to zero by 2025. It must largely begin with the disastrous Great Smog of London of 1952, leading to the enactment of environmental legislation such as the 1956 Clean Air Act and other protracted processes over a 70-year period, which included goe-political, environmental, economic and social pressures. The discovery of natural gas in the North Sea in 1965 and the desire to move away from coal imports from the Soviet Union at the height of the Cold War, as depleting domestic reserves made mining uneconomical, thereby jacking up costs of coal-fired energy production, collectively hastened the transition away from coal, which began almost 60 years ago. The subsequent forced closures of about 20 mines in the mid-1980s by the Margaret Thatcher government, despite a year-long miners' protest, government, despite a year-long miners' protest led to blight and inter-generational poverty that some parts of the erstwhile coal-reliant regions the U.K. continue to face. This is not to nt regions of undermine the urgency with which nations m work toward drastically reducing their carbon emissions over the next two decades, but to

emissions over the next two decades, but to appreciate and emphasise the vastly different trajectories and plans required to reach this goal. Let us consider comparing India with the U.K.'s trajectory to achieving net zero emissions. At the 2021 Glasgow COP, India and China stood out consists are proceeding to the final declaration seeking an amendment to the final declaration and having the phrase 'phasing down' and not 'phasing out' of coal introduced. India pledged to achieve net zero emissions by 2070 and meet half its energy needs from renewables by 2050.

Cumulative emissions India is the third largest carbon emitter, behind the United States and China, emitting about 2.9 gigatons in 2023, far ahead of the U.K.'s 384 illion metric tonnes in the same year. But India's population is over 20 times that of the U.K. Moreover, India's per capita emissions were at 2 tonnes in 2023, less than half the global average of 4.6 tonnes and almost a third of the

U.K.'s 5.5 tonnes in the same year.

An analysis by Carbon Brief that considered historical emissions of nations between 1850 and 2024 (till the closure of the Nottinghamshire plant), took into account their carbon footprint as colonial powers. This put the U.K. at fourth place, with emissions touching 10.4 billion tonnes,



Kunal Shankar

which Carbon Brief said was 'more than most countries ever produced from all sources'. Britain built the earliest known public coal-fired power plant in 1882 in the heart of London near Fleet Street. Coal became the mainstay in Britain, powering homes, industries and businesses for well over half a century until the mid 1960s. Coal employment peaked in 1920, employing 1.2 million miners at about 3,000 mines nationwide. About a 100 small coal-fired power plants dotted the landscape at this time, supplying power to nearby towns and industrial areas. And, Britain dominated coal exports in the early 20th century accounting for 30% of global exports in 1913. The U.K.'s peak thermal power consumption was in the 1950s and 1960s, when 90% of energy was generated by coal, before steadily shifting to natural gas, nuclear and, more recently, wind and solar.

India's first coal mine, the Raniganj coalfield, straddles present-day West Bengal and Jharkhand. While it was established as early as in 1774 by the British East India Company (and this 174 by the British Lask india Company (and mis is why historical CO<sub>2</sub> emissions matter), this led to large-scale coal extraction from much of India's eastern and central States of Jharkhand, West Bengal, Odisha, Chhattisgarh and Madhya Pradesh. India's first coal-fired power plant was the University of South Thomas (Parish Parish State). the Hussain Sagar Thermal Power Station, established in 1920 in Hyderabad, during the Nizam's rule. It powered the twin cities of Hyderabad and Secunderabad well into the early Hyderabaa and secunderabaa well into the ear 1980s. But it was not until 1956, when the Trombay power station near Mumbai was commissioned, that thermal power was truly heralded as India's mainstay. Moreover, the average age of India's coal-fired power plants is about 12 years, meaning they have a few decades before they could be decommissioned. While Derore they COULD be decommissioned. While India has exported coal to neighbouring Myanmar and Sri Lanka, it has largely used its reserves for domestic power production. Of late, it has even been importing coal as power deman has been steadily rising.

India is yet to reach its peak coal production ad consumption, which is expected between the years 2030-35, about 80 years since Britain reached this spot. About 70% of its energy output is currently from coal, accounting for 218 GW of installed capacity. It has more than 350 operational mines and about 120 new ones have been planned. A study by Global Energy Monitor estimates that these mines provide direct employment to almost 3,40,000 miners. This is likely an under-estimation as many from the agriculture sector are seasonal workers at min A Council on Energy, Environment and Water (CEEW) study estimates that India's thermal power plants employ about 4,00,000, people, again a likely under-estimation as informa again a neety under-restination as mioritaria, employment at thermal power plants is high. This means that at its peak, about 10 years from now, the coal sector is likely to provide employment to well over a million people, which is about how any miners alone worked in Britain more than a

Moreover, Britain's per capita energy consumption was almost three times India's in 2022, and this is despite the Russia-Ukraine war-induced energy austerity, and even as the world was at the tail end of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Having made the Caso the control of the COVID-19 pandemic.

pandemic.

Having made the case that a direct comparison on coal phase-out between the two countries cannot be made, there are lessons that India could learn from the U.K.'s transition particularly in the past decade, and also ensure it does not make the mistakes Britain made in the 1980s and 1990e.

Britain's transition

After committing to phasing out coal by 2025, when Britain had already reduced its use to a fifth of its energy needs, it pursued a holistic transition of not just the workforce of the sector but also the regions and communities that depended on it. Retraining programmes focused on sectors that required skills similar to those in coal mining and power generation such as engineering, heavy machinery operation and maintenance. This was mixed with early retirement and redundancy payments; new education and apprenticeship programmes, and community and regional redevelopment of historically coal-dependent regions, or imputsu to set up new industries in regions, or impetus to set up new industries in their place. The sighting of renewable energy projects, particularly offshore wind farms close to major coal producing regions such as the North Sea off Yorkshire, and repurposing the existing grid infrastructure to transmit wind energy along with remodelling old coal-fired power plants for other forms of energy generation such as biomass in Drax, have helped alleviate some of the fears of job loss and economic slowdown. This is not to say concerns do not remain, but the gradual decline in coal, with growing awareness about climate change, and transparent, fixed timelines to transition, enabled Britain's coal phase-out. Outliers remain, like the protests at the now shuttered Talbot steel plant as the Tata-owned facility attempts to shift from coking coal to electric furnaces, but this might likely be a

nporary closure. While India has set itself a sufficient timeline of 45 more years to attain net zero emissions, there has already been a steady and impressive growth in renewables capacity. But coal-fired energy use also has risen, and the country must begin working on fixing timelines on plant decommissioning, regional redevelopment programmes, and retraining of miners and power plant workforces, bearing in mind that India's historically coal-dependent regions are some of the poorest in the country, and have workers who have largely transitioned from agriculture to mining. Only a holistic, transparent, and early forward planning approach, would hasten a transition that is inclusive and just.

## From solidarity to pseud, India's shift on Palestine

Values or 'interests'?

ndia's position on Palestine, once a symbol of its anti-colonial ethos, has been diluted since the end of the Cold War and has dramatically shifted over the past decade. The alignment with Israel, the marginalisation of Palestine, and a focus on transactional diploma are not isolated phenomena but interconnected trends shaped by an interplay of domestic and global factors.

### Hindutya and foreign policy

First, India's evolving policy on Palestine is inseparable from the rise of Hindutva. The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and the Sangh Parivar have sought to influence India's diplomacy based on a Hindu nationalist worldview. This ideological shift has manifested itself in a growing affinity with Israel, seen as a natural partner against, and apparently a victim of, the perceived threat of an 'Islamic terror' – a ve deeply ingrained in the Hindutva

narrative deeply ingrained in the Hindutva discourse.

Historically, India's support for Palestine was rooted in its anti-colonial struggles, self-determination, and anti-racism. However, in 'New India', this support is seen through a communal lens, where the Palestinian cause is linked exclusively with the Muslim identity. The public discourse, fuelled by right-wing media, frames pro-Palestinian protests and solidarity as a threat to national security and 'anti-nationalism'. Protests supporting Palestine are often met with crackdowns, arrests, and even charges under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act. Leaders such as Asaduddin Owaisi, who publicly voice support for Palestine, are routinely vilified, while students expressing solidarity are targeted. The state's tacit approval in delegitimising the Palestinian cause helps it align with Israel, not just diplomatically but also ideologically. Prime Minister Narendra Modi's unscheduled stop at Mount Herzl to pay tribute to Theodore Herzl, the founder of Zionism, during his 2017 visit is emblematic of this ideological convergence. Under him, foreign policy is no longer framed by its historical commitments, but



India could

earn from the

U.K.'s transition

ensuring that it

the mistakes Britain made

Chetan Rana

Associate Editor, 9dashline and a doctoral candida Jawaharlal Nehri

In these times of great power politics, the legacy ideals of non-alignment and anti-colonialism as baggage

The second factor driving India's shift is a transition from values-based to transactional diplomacy. During the Nehruvian era, India's foreign policy was deeply intertwined with anti-colonialism, including strong backing for Palestinian statehood. At the end of the Cold War. that ideological foundation began to give way to a more transactional approach, where narrowly defined interests took precedence over historical commitments. India-israel relations are a product

by a new narrative that views Israel as a strategic ally in a shared battle against perceived threats.

of this transition.

India's ties with Israel have flourished recently. with bilateral trade reaching over \$10 billion in 2022-23. Cooperation extends across sectors st as defence, agriculture, and technology, areas where Israel has become an invaluable partne where Israel has become an invaluable partner. The renewed engagement is defined by the dual pillars of 'dehyphenation', treating India's relations with Israel and Palestine as separate, and 'depolitication', enhancing cooperation by circumventing politically sensitive questions. To dehyphenate and depolitics are political acts. This allows New Delhi to deepen its engagement with Israel while paying lip service to the Palestinian cause. lestinian cause. However, this shift towards tran

However, this shift towards transactional diplomacy is not unique to India. Globally, foreign policies are increasingly guided by constructed economic and strategic interests. In India's case, the West Asia policy has evolved significantly since the 1990s, with energy security, diaspora, and investments taking centre stage. The old Non-Aligned paradigm, which once governed India's position, is now seen as inadequate for pursuing these objectives.

India's approach to Palestine reflects this trend. As the government focuses on attracting investments from the Guif and forging new partnerships, the Palestinian issue, lacking immediate economic or strategic benefits, has been relegated to the margins. The shift is stark when contrasted with Jawaharlal Nehru and

Indira Gandhi's India which saw support for

### Ambitions and the great game

Finally, India's aspiration to emerge as a great power has also played a crucial role. While it is flirting to emerge as a broker in the Ukraine conflict, it is simultaneously abdicating its support for Palestine. India's alignment with the U.S., Israel's staunchest ally, amidst the China-U.S. contest across various theatres,

including West Asia is also a contributing factor. In these times of great power politics, the legacy ideals of non-alignment and anti-colonialism are seen as baggage. This is best reflected in the rhetorical shift from non-alignment to strategic autonomy to multialignment. While the operational essence remains the same, every rebranding has witnessed normative dilution. This is evident in

witnessed normative dilution. This is evident in India's muted response to Israel's war on Gaza. Despite the extensive loss of life and destruction, New Delhi's reaction has been limited to (non) statements calling for peace and dialogue. The focus remains on strengthening ties with Israel, securing defence partnerships, and leveraging other sectoral opportunities.

The rise of Hindutva, transactional diplomacy, and India's retraction ambitions in the contest of

leweraging other sectoral opportunities.

The rise of Hindutva, transactional diplomacy, and India's strategic ambitions in the context of the China-U.S. rivalry have all contributed to the marginalisation of the Palestinian cause.

While official rhetoric may still endorse a two-state solution, the reality on the ground reveals a distinct shift towards strengthening ties with Israel and prioritising economic and strategic interests over normative commitments. In this new era of international politics, India seems to have moved away from its role as a champion of anti-colonial struggles. Instead, it has embraced a path defined by narrow interests over values. As the global order continues to evolve, will India continue down a path that increasingly aligns it with power politics over principles?

As it stands, the 'new' international order will likely be the same game with just new players.

### LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Exit polls, actual results The spectacular victory of the BJP in Haryana has jettisoned all exit polls. Such a 'pre-result exercise' lacks proper analysis. Even the exit polls for Jammu and Kashmir were quite the mark. As all pre- and post-election exit polls vitiate the free will and mental peace of voters

respectively, the Election Commission of India may consider banning them in the interests of a healthy democracy. The people have reposed full faith in

K. Chellappan,

The poll results have spelt a

surprise for the main national parties, the Indian National Congress and the Bharatiya Janata Party, and psephologists alike. Psephology has lost its

earlier charm. In the last two or three elections, psephologists' predictions have been going awry. A. Thirugnanasam

CM CM









### CACHE



## Global Digital Compact: advancing digital innovation in a sustainable fashion

The GDC is a diplomatic instrument which focuses on the potential of digital technologies, with the specific intention to harness and regulate them for the common good. The GDC rests on the idea that digital technologies are dramatically changing our world

Neethu Rajam Krishna Ravi Srinivas

the recently concluded 'Summit of the Future' organised by the United Nations, member countries adopted the 'Global Digital Compact' (GDC). This ambitious Compace (GJO2). This ammount instrument is perhaps the first of its kind in the international arena focusing on the potential of digital technologies, with the specific intention to harness and regulate them for the common good.

What is the GDC? The GDC is not a binding law but a diplomatic instrument with a set of shared goals for governments, institutions, firms, and other stakeholders to bear in mind. Once there is greater adherence, the terms of the compact may become soft laws in each country

become soft laws in each country.

Earlier, the Un helped pilot and
legitimise two other compacts: the 'Global
Compact' ("a voluntary initiative based on
CEO commitments to implement
universal sustainability principles and to
take steps to support UN goals") and the
'Global Compact for Safe, Orderly, and
Regular Migration' (covering all
dimensions of international migration in a
holistic and comprehensive manner). holistic and comprehensive manner). The GDC rests on the idea that digital

technologies are dramatically changing our world. While they offer potential benefits for societies and for our planet by enabling Sustainable Developmen Goals (SDGs) – they also pose serious challenges and concerns.

Realising the GDC The GDC is a collaborative project with the objective of ensuring human oversight of technologies in ways that advance sustainable development. Building on the norms of international law, the Universal Declaration of Human rights, and the UN 2030 Agenda, among others, the GDC

proposes global cooperation in the governance of data and digital

member countries have committed to establish two panels – an 'Independent International Scientific Panel on AI [Artificial Intelligence]' and a panel for

'Global Dialogue on AI Governance'. These goals include closing the digital These goals include closing the digital divide, including everyone in the digital economy, improving access to data, and advancing responsible and equable data governance. In the same vein, the Compact's principles are based on inclusive participation, access to data and digital technologies, sustainability, and trustworthy technologies that function within a free and competitive market. within a free and competitive market.

## Digital goods and services To address the digital divide, the GDC

To address the digital divide, the GDC proposes "digital public goods" that will include open-source software, open data, and open AI models, plus adherence to privacy and best practices. This is an acknowledgment of digital public goods' ability to drive social change as elements of a "digital public infrastructure" that delivers services. Such infrastructure involves the development and use of shared digital development and use of shared digital systems according to specific priorities and needs of stakeholders. To this end, the GDC envisions partnerships, including

What are the GDC's lacunae? First, the extensive European experience with public-private partnerships vis-à-vis digital projects suggests openness within such partnerships is restricted between 'as open as is required' and 'as closed as is essential'. In other words, openness in the context of the digital public the context of the digital public infrastructure may be limited by contractual requirements such as non-disclosure, confidentiality, and

protection of intellectual property. Second, the GDC adds little to existing frameworks of internet governance but importantly it calls for digital technology companies to self-regulate to keep their users safe and their users' trust. This is not a contribute solution because in the contribute of th not an optimum solution because self-regulation has already proved to be ineffective in practice. Third, the GDC recognises

Initit, the GD. recognises interoperable data governance as essential to foster innovation and promote economic growth. But experts have noted that the increasing collection, sharing, and processing of data – particularly for AI – may amplify risks in the absence of effective personal data protection and prince law and project laws. protection and privacy laws.

Fourth, the Compact stresses on achieving SDGs within a paradigm where achieving SDGs within a paradigm where governments and private entities track, collect, and analyse data to measure progress, while underscoring the importance of governing data in the public interest. For this the Compact proposes to give corporate entities more power in data and internet governance. However, it falls to emphasise the countervailing measures required to stave off monopolistic control.

The GDC and the UN In many sections the GDC makes wishful statements that bypass the complexity of underlying issues, assuming the comity of nations will be enough to achieve its

nations will be enough to achieve its objectives. But this stance may also reflect the UN's wish to remain a major player in governing technologies, including Al. For example, in the 21st century data is oil: it is as valuable even as its use is embedded in extractive industries with polluting effects. Consider the ongoing explosive growth of generative Al models and the spheres, volumes, and varieties of and the spheres, volumes, and varieties of data collected to train them. The GDC acknowledges issues in AI governanc has little to offer in terms of concrete

solutions or even strategies. Similarly, the GDC does bat for "data flow with trust" but many countries have refused to accept this idea because it goes against the spirit of digital sovereignty. Some even have specific laws that require data about their citizens to remain within

Finally, the GDC links various objectives and proposed actions with the relevant SDGs. This is a welcome move relevant SDGs. This is a welcome move because it reflects the view that digitisation should play a prominent role in realising the SDGs. At the same time, when the SDGs were adopted in 2015, the current AI revolution hadn't started. Given the unimpressive record of nations in realising the SDGs, it is doubtful whether, an add-on Compare like the GDC whether an add-on Compact like the GDC could make a difference.

could make a difference.

The UN's member states are striving to find ways to work with and regulate Big Tech while also asserting their digital sovereignty. The global governance of digital technologies thus is too complex to be captured or "inseed" by a singular entity like the GDC. We need multilateral as well as regional negotiations to go with it to address jurisdictional, regional, and/or local needs. By appealing to existing modes of digital governance as well as by combining SDCs with digitalisation, the GDC is positioning itself as an instrument of brainstorning rather than as a provider GDC is positioning itself as an instrument of brainstorming rather than as a provider of roadmaps. Still, the GDC can help with capacity building and with South-South and North-South collaborations in the development of digital public goods. In sum, the GDC may not result in a paradigm shift in the world's governance of digital technologies but it can facilitate significant and tangible outcomes if member states take it seriously. Neethu Rajam is Associate professor of intellectual property and technology law,

intellectual property and technology law, National Law University Delhi. Krishna Ravi Srinivas is Adjunct professor of law, NALSAR University of Law Hyderabad.



## FROM THE ARCHIVES

## Know your English

## K. Subrahmanian Upendran

Recently we got a copy of the 1892 FA General English question paper of Madras University. "FA" stands for "Fellow of Arts." The question paper gives us an idea of the General English syllabus one undred years ago. I. (a) What is case? Name, and explain

nctions of the different cases of the

(b) Write down the plural forms of: father-in-law, genus, series, alkali, deer, phenomenon. II. Explain and illustrate the difference

in the use of (1) that and which as relatives, and (2) each and every. III. (a) What is tense? Construct short

III. (a) What is tense? Construct short compound or complex sentences, introducing correctly the forms: I was going, I want, I have gone, I had gone.

(b) Write down the past tense and past participle of sow, saw, smite, seethe, spoil; and the 2nd person singular. Past Perfect, Subjunctive, Passive Voice, of the verb call expressed negatively.

IV. Remark in explanation of the italicised portions of the following words, and give another example illustrating each case explained: kine, chicken, hillock, needs (adverb).

V. (a) "If a horse falls down. I miss the

V. (a) "If a horse falls down. I miss the

(I) Supply the future auxiliary for each

(2) How would you recast the conditional clause, if it is to express a supposition opposed to the actual fact employing first that "the horse did not fall," and secondly that "the horse did fall," and what corresponding changes would have to be made in the consequent clauses?

(b) "The corresponding changes would have to be made in the consequent clauses?

(b) "The stream was very shallow. onsequently I could not swim in it."

Express the thought of these two ntences (1) in a simple sentence, sentences (1) in a simple sentence, employing (1) the expression "too shallow," (ii) the correlatives "so" – "as," and also (2) in a complex sentence, employing the correlatives "so" – "that." (c) Convert the following – addressed by Brutus to Cassius – into the indirect speech, modernising where necessary. That you do love me, I am nothing icalous:

What you would work me to. I have

How I have thought of this and of these

times,
I shall recount hereafter, for this
present, I would not so with love I might
entreat you, Be any further moved.
VI. (a) Tabulate, with care, the clauses
in the following sentence and describe
their character and relations:
"He who they located birned fruith."

their character and relations:
"He who hath pleased himself with
anticipated praises and expected that he
should meet in every place with
patronage or friendship, will soon remit
his vigour, when he finds that from those his vigour, when he finds that from those who desire to be considered as his admirers nothing can be hoped but cold civility, and that many refuse to own his excellence, lest they should be too justly expected to reward h." (b) (i) "The King commanded his minister to see to the execution of the prisoner." Recast this sentence, employing a clause in place of the infinitive phrase.

finitive phrase.

Published in The Hindu on August 17,

## Word of the day

Comity:

Usage: There is a lack of comity between the

Pronunciations: newsth.live/comitypro International Phonetic

Alphabet: /kpmsti/



THE DAILY QUIZ Here is a quiz on some of the events that happened on October 9

## Sindhu Nagaraj

## QUESTION 1

On this day in 2004, for the first time in this country's history, voters went to the polls to choo a President, selecting Hamid Karzai, who had served as the interim President since 2001. Name the country.

## QUESTION 2

This 15-year-old activist was at on this day in 2012. Despit being struck in the head, she

Boulder Dam begins to generate

## QUESTION 4

he Khmer Republic was proclaimed in is country on this day in 1970. Name he country in which this happened.

## QUESTION 5

and later the newly constituted British Indian Army. Born on this day in 1864, he was responsible for the Jallianwala Bagh massacre that took place on April 13, 1919, in Amritsar. Name the office

### QUESTION 6

onal day is observed This international day is observed every year on October 9 to commemorate the anniversary of this specialised agency of the United Nations that coordinates postal policies among member nations ar facilitates a uniform worldwide postal system. What is the day? Name the



Questions and Answers to the previous day's daily quiz: 1. The year in which the post of the Chief Minister came into existence in erstwhile J&K. The CM post replaced this one. Ans: 1965; Prin 2. The first Chief Minister of erstwhile J&K

Ans: Ghulam Mohammed Sadig

3. The first general election in post-independence J&K. Ans: For the Constituent Assembly of Jammu a

 Kashmir
 The first woman to be a Cabinet Minister in Jammu and Kashmir. Ans: Sakina Itoo
 The seats reserved for Pakistan-occupied regions in Kashmir. Ans: 6. The number of times Governor's rule was imposed in J&K while it was a State

Visual: Identify this person. Ans: Sheikh Early Birds: Tamal Biswas Dodo

# Study uncovers surprising new 'spatial grammar' of gene expression

The findings can 'help filter and refine genomic tools and algorithms that predict gene expression,' which can inform new diagnostic and therapeutic strategies for diseases like cancers caused by mutations in regulatory elements, says Meenakshi Ghosh, a structural biologist turned clinical scientist

Sneha Khedkar

n his quest to understand how each n his quest to understand how ea cell of an organism interpress the same genome in a different way, researcher Sascha Duttke wondered whether there might be any undiscovered rules of biology. The human genome contains information about our development, functioning, growth, and reproduction, and all of it takes up only about 2 MB of stage.

and au of it takes by only, space, "That led us to wonder: maybe some of the magic is in the CD player, too?" Duttke, an assistant professor at the College of Veterinary Medicine, Washington State University, wrote in an email. "In this analogy, the CD is our genome and the CD player is the regulatory machinery," and the transcription factors are important transcription factors are important components in the player.

nscription factors are proteins that bind to specific portions of the DNA and control the rate at which the cell transcribes genetic information from DNA to RNA. The cell then makes proteins by

to RNA. The cell then makes proteins by "reading" the RNA.

Groundbreaking new work by Duttke and his colleagues has shown that the fate of a gene being transcribed depends on the location of the transcription factor

the location of the transcription factor binding site relative to the location where transcription begins.

The results, published in the journal Nature, provide insights into how different spatial arrangements of the same transcription factors can have different effects.

effects.
The findings can "help filter and refine genomic tools and algorithms that predict gene expression," which can inform new diagnostic and therapeutic strategies for diseases like cancers caused by mutations in regulatory elements, Meenakshi Ghosh, a structural biologist turned clinical scientist, said.

scientist, said.
"Watching my toddler destroy a puzzle
by forcing in the right colour but the
wrong shaped piece made me think:
maybe we've been focusing too much on
transcription factor binding sites and protein interactions, and not enough on how everything fits together spatially and in an even bigger picture," Duttke said.

## Before or after?

Before or after?
The team investigated whether the arrangement of transcription factors relative to the transcription start site could influence gene expression.
When presented with the DNA, the activator transcription factor binds to it at



specific points, the binding sites. These points are different from the transcription

Team members developed tools to help them analyse patterns in the building blocks of the DNA that are typically found at the start sites. They subjected cells specially cultured in the lab to a form of RNA sequencing that could detect these sites in RNA. Then they identified the preferred locations at which transcription factors bound relative to an active start

The researchers found the binding sites for activator transcription factor NRF1 were located before the start sites and for factor YV1 it was located after the start site. Curiously, NRF1 is an activator whereas YV1 is both an activator and a repressor, a factor that stops transcription.

Next they checked how the relative position of the start site affected how the transcription factor behaved.

When they knocked down the gene that cells used to make NRF1, the cells transcribed less DNA only when NRF1's binding site was located before the transcription start site. If its binding site was located after, the absence of NRF1 increased the transcription rate. The researchers found the binding sites

### atural genetic variation

Natural genetic variations
These results were "surprising," Duttke
said. "If you look in textbooks or even
Wikipedia, transcription factors are
usually grouped into either activators or
repressors. The fact that some factors can do both was considered unusual." Organisms often carry natural genetic

variations at the binding sites. The researchers assessed how these variations influenced the start of transcription. They analysed more than 4 million variation

If you look in textbooks or even Wikipedia, transcription factors are usually grouped into either activators or repressors. The fact that some factors can do both was considered

and 80,000 start sites in mice cells and found opposing transcription outcomes depending on whether the variations affected the factors before or after the start site. For instance, only mutations affecting NRF1 binding before the start site reduced the transcription rate.

The researchers also synthetically inserted binding sites for six factors at different distances from the start sites in some DNA sequences. They observed similar position-dependent outcomes. For example, adding an NRF1 binding site ahead of the start increased transcription, consistent with its activator function. Inserting it after the start site reduced transcription.

'Spatial grammar' Last, the researchers studied the relevance of these effects in human

They identified start sites from genomic sequences from 67 people and combined this information with databases that describe disease risk linked to specific genetic variants. Consistent with previous results, they observed position-dependent effects of disease-associated variants based on the location of the start sites and the binding

"Uncovering this spatial 'grammar' was

a true eureka moment for many scientists like us who are working to understand how DNA encodes the instructions for turning genes on and off," Duttke said, adding it would be "exciting" to explore how interactions between different

factors affect this spatial grammar. These results have "vast potential

disease-associated mutations, called

polymorphisms, that occur outside genes and provide a basis for therapeutic

and provide a basis of interventions.

"How many of those polymorphisms contribute to disease is currently largely unknown," he said. "The discovery of the spatial grammar may help to change

The light of evolution
"This study is pretty cool," Ghosh said. "It
adds crucial new insights about how
positioning and spacing relative to [start
sites] can impact the ability of [factors] to
either activate or repress gene
expression:

She added that the results can also prove our understanding of evolution

and how organisms regulate gene expression to adapt to environmen changes.
Duttke said he would like to
understand more about how this

grammar evolved and how it helped create complex organisms like humans.

He quoted the title of geneticist Theodosius Dobzhansky's famous 1973

essay to make his point: "Nothing in biology makes sense except in the light of

(Sneha Khedkar is a biologist turned

freelance science journalist. snehakhedkar30@gmail.com)

applications," including helping researchers identify and predict

The cell then makes proteins by reading the RNA The fate of a gene depends on the location of the transcription factor binding site relative to where it begins. Cells transcribed less DNA only when NRF1's binding site was before the transcription start site. If it was located after, absence of NRF1 increased transcription

Transcription factors are proteins that bind to DNA and control the rate at which the cell transcribes genetic information from DNA to RNA.

THE GIST

This spatial grammar was a defining moment for scientists working to understand how DNA encodes instructions for turning genes on and off. The results have vast potential, including helping researchers identify and predict disease-associated mutations



### BIG SHOT

This NASA image released in 2015 shows Pluto's moon Charon just before the New Horizons spacecraft made its closest approach in July that year. Scientists using the Jam Webb Space Telescope have detected carbon dioxide on the frozen surface of Pluto's biggest moon, Charon, for the first time, research revealed on October 1 this year. The discovery, along with hydrogen peroxide, is hoped to shed light on how icy worlds formed and evolved. NASA,WEP

## QUESTION CORNER

## How ants free fall without incident



body is controlled

mainly by the gravitational attraction of the earth. The strength of the

gravitational force depends on the mass of the falling object. A heavier object is thus "attracted" more than a lighter

This attractive force is

This attractive force is opposed by an upward thrust, or resistance, that is offered by air on the falling body. The strength of the resistance depends among other things on the surface area of the object. If the surface area is greater, so is the resistance. When any object falls through the air, these two forces compete with each other.

other.

In the case of an ant, the force of gravity is almost completely balanced by the resistance offered by the air Thus the ant is able to land safely.

In fact, if there is a wind blowing, the ants may just

blowing, the ants may just float away. But if a cluster of ants or a sufficiently large ant is forcibly hurled at the



strength of the gravitational force depends on the s of the falling object. DWID HIGGINS/UNSPLASH

ground, they will get hurt. This is how much we know from the laws and theories of physics about how ants fall through the air. Whether the ant actually gets hurt is another question entirely — and probably one that hasn't been answered so far.

For feedback and suggestion for 'Science', please write to science@thehindu.co.in with the subject 'Daily page'

CM C

















# Text&Context

THEMANHINDU

### **NEWS IN NUMBERS**

The growth in the United Kingdom's population since 2023

in million. According to
Britain's Office for National
Statistics, immigration is the
key driver of this growth. It is the largest nual percentage and numerical increas-ice comparable data began in 1971. APP The death toll in the Gaza Strip since October 2023

in the last 24 hours, as per the health ministry, which said 97,590 people were wounded in Gaza since the war began.

Number of senior doctors of R.G. Kar Hospital who resigned

tendered their resignations in a mark of solidarity with medics who have been on a fast-unto-death demanding justice for the

Number of drunk driving challans issued in Delhi this year

18,478 The number of drunk driving challans issued till September 15 was the highest in the last three years. Number re 16.235 in 2023 and 2.320 in 2022. PT Share of parents who wish to restrict tech usage in education

According to the All India
Parent Survey 2024, parents
wish to restrict usage and set explicit limits in order to balance screen time and manage other risks. PTI

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# What does USCIRF report say about India?

What is the mandate of the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom? How does the UNSCIRF designate a country as a 'Country of Particular concern'? How has the Indian government reacted to the report?

G. Sampath

The story so far:

he Washington DC-based United States Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) on October Freedom (USCIRF) on October 2 released a country update on India, flagging "Collapsing religious freedom conditions". Among other things, the report highlighted how throughout 2024, individuals from minority communities have been killed and lynched by viglante groups, religious leaders have been arbitrarily arrested, and places of worship have been demolished. The Indian government has rejected the report as coming from a "biased organisation".

### What is the USCIRF?

The USCIRF is an independent, bipartisan U.S. federal government agency created under the 1998 International Religious Freedom Act (IRFA). It monitors the universal right to freedom of religion or belief (FoRB) in countries other than the U.S. Its assessments of countries are based on international human righ standards, and in particular, Article 18 of
the Universal Declaration of Human
Rights, which states, "Everyone has the
right to freedom of thought, conscience
and religion, this right includes freedom
to change his religion or belief, and
freedom, either alone or in community
with others and in public or private, to
manifest his religion or belief in teaching,
practice, worship and observance."
The USCIRF is distinct from the Office
of International Religious Freedom (RF),
which is part of the U.S. State
Department. The IRF also releases annual
reports on religious freedom. While the
USCIRF's reports could have a bearing on
a country's image, the IRF's stance is
more consequential for bilateral relations. standards, and in particular, Article 18 of

more consequential for bilateral relations.

What does the USCIRF do? As per its mandate under the IRFA, the



USCIRF monitors religious freedom travel, research and meetings with representatives of international human representatives of international human rights groups, NGOs, victims of persecution, and foreign officials with the aim of putting out a report every year, listing the countries that meet the threshold for designation by the U.S. State Department as a "Country of Particular concern" (CPO). It also shares another list of countries that, in its assessment, ought to be included in the State Department's 'Special Watch List' (SWL). Countries that 'commit systematic, ongoing, and egregious violations of

ongoing, and egregious violations of religious freedom" would be designated as a CPC. Countries "whose governments engage or tolerate in severe religious freedom violations, but do not rise to the CPC standard of "systematic, ongoing,

d egregious" would be included in the and egregious" would be included in the SWL. If the U.S. State Department accepts the USCIRF's recommendation and designates a country as a CPC, then under the IRFA, it has a range of policy options, including sanctions, to address such kind of violations.

What does USCIRF's country update on India state? The report, authored by Sema Hasan, Senior Policy Analyst with the USCIRF, says that religious freedom in India in 2024 has been on a "deterlorating and concerning trajectory". It stated that the Indian government, through legislations such as the Citizenship (Amendment) Act, 2019 for which the rules were published 2019 for which the rules were published in May this year, and "through the enforcement of discriminatory legislation like anti-conversion laws, cow slaughter

laws, and antiterrorism laws", continued laws, and antuerross have, continued to "repress and restrict" religious minorities. It also details how "indian officials have repeatedly employed hateful and derogatory rhetoric and misinformation to perpetuate false narratives about religious minorities, inciting widespread violence, lynchings, and demolition of places of worship." In its 2024 annual report, the USCIRF designated India as a CPC.

How did India respond? Spokesperson of the Ministry of External Affairs Randhir Jaiswal rejected the report, stating, "Our views on the USCIRF are well known. It is a biased organisation with a political agenda. It continues to misrepresent facts and peddles a motivated narrative about India. We reject this malicious report, which only serves to discredit USCIRF further! He further to discredit USCIRF further." He further added, "We would urge USCIRF to desist from such agenda-driven efforts."

## Is the USCIRF 'biased' and

'agenda-driven'? Its reports are backed by research and rous citations sourced from credible domestic and international media. besides direct testimonies. In the case of the country update on India, there is no evident instance of misrepresented facts, with every claim backed by publicly verifiable documentation. However, the timing of this update has raised eye brows, and opened it in up to concerns such as those voiced by the MEA, about the report being "agenda-driven". The USCIRF, as a body that works with the U.S. government, and notwithstanding its "independent' status, is considered by many countries as a tool of U.S. foreign policy. besides direct testimonies. In the case of

## Are the USCIRF's recommendati

binding?
No, they are not. It is up to the U.S. Statement Department whether or not to accept them, and typically, calculations related to bilateral relations and larger foreign policy goals come into play

### THE GIST

The USCIRF is an independent, bipartisan U.S. federal government agency created under the 1998 international Religious Freedom Act (IRFA). It momitors the universal right to freedom of religion or belief (FoRB) in countries other than the U.S.

Its reports are backed by research and numerous citations sourced from credible domestic and international media, besides direct

Spokesperson of the Ministry of External Affairs Randhir Jaiswal "Our views on the USCIRF are well known. It is a biased organisation with a political agenda".

## Why is the textile industry struggling to perform better?

What caused the slump in the Indian textile sector in the last two financial years?

## M. Soundariya Preetha

The story so far:

| John Minister for Textiles Giritaj Singh recently said that the Indian textile and apparel sector is aiming for a total business of \$350 billion annually by 2030, which is a formation of the sector in the which is to generate 3.5 crore jobs. However, the industry went through a tumultuous phase during the last two financial years, casting a shadow on the possibility for 10% CAGR.

### What is the status now?

CM

The size of the Indian textile and appare industry was estimated to be \$153 billion in 2021, with almost \$110 billion contributed by domestic business. In in 2021, with almost \$110 billion contributed by domestic business. In FY22, India was the third largest textile exporter globally, enjoying a 5.4% share. India is also said to have the second largest manufacturing capacity, with a robust capability across the value chain. The sector's contribution to GDP is close to 2.3% (FY2I) and 10.6% of total manufacturing Gross Value Added (GVA) in FY23, About 105 million people are employed by the textile and garment units, directly and indirectly. For an industry that has 80% of its capacity spread across MSMEs and is sensitive to international developments as it is strongly linked to global markets, FY2021/2022 saw tremendous growth FY2021-2022 saw tremendous growth with \$43.4 billion exports.

However, slowdown in demand that tarted in 2022-2023 only worsened in FY24 with a slump in exports and domestic demand. This impacted comestic demand. This impacted manufacturing clusters severely. For instance, Tamil Nadu, which has the largest spinning capacity in the country, saw the closure of nearly 500 textile mills in the last two years. In Tiruppur, which is a knitwear production destination, many units saw a 40% drop in business in FY23.

# 

Why did exports slump? Geopolitical developments and a slump in demand in buying countries hit the exporting units. This was exacerbated by

high raw material prices of both, cotton and Man Made Fibres (MMF), and the growing import of fabrics and garments. The imposition of a 10% import duty on cotton has made Indian cotton more expensive compared to international prices. In the case of MMF, introduction of quality control orders has disturbed raw material availability and price stability. The industry is repeatedly demanding removal of the import duty demanding removal of the import duty on cotton at least during the off-season months of April to October. "This is an industry in which the stakeholders compete in the international market with compete in the international market w countries that heavily support their domestic production capabilities. So, India needs schemes that run for at the five years and boost investments. Raw material should be available for the domestic industry at internationally competitive prices," says a spokespers of a leading industry association.

What are the other challenges? Apart from policy issues, the industry is

also staring at disruptions in its traditional business systems. Direct retailing to customers through e-commerce is a trend oussiness systems. The creatman customers through e-commerce is a trend that is catching on among garment and home textile manufacturers, with more startups entering this space. A report by Wazir Advisors notes that "Greeign) brands are fast-tracking the adoption of ESG sustainability across the supply chain." They are defining their sustainability targets and want to source from vendors who will meet these targets. Further, there is a rise in comfort wear, loungewear, and athlesure as the emphasis on comfortable clothing has increased among consumers. "Even in the domestic market, much has changed in the way business is done. Customers in rural and semi-urban areas prefer to shop in multi-brand outlets or hyper markets." They do not want to step into outlets of less known brands," said Palanisamy, a basic garment producer in Tiruppur.

What next? The industry is looking at a \$100 billion investment across various segments of the value chain by 20:30 to augment production capacities and meet the \$350 billion target. Labour constitutes roughly 10% of the production cost in the textile sector. The average daily wage of a trained textile worker is reported to be \$550 a day. The industry has no option but to look at technology and skilling of its workforce to improve productivity and reduce wastages, say industry sources. investment across various segments of the

...

## THE GIST

The size of the Indian textile and apparel industry was estimated to be \$153 billion in 2021, with almost \$110 billion contributed by domestic business.

Apart from policy issues, the industry is also staring at disruptions in its traditional business systems. Direct retailing to customers through e-commerce is a trend that is catching on among garment and home textile manufacturers, with more startups entering this space.

## WORDLY WISE

A VOTE IS LIKE A RIFLE; ITS USEFULNESS DEPENDS UPON THE CHARACTER OF THE USER.

- THEODORE ROOSEVELT

## The Indian **EXPRESS**

RAMNATH GOENKA

BECAUSE THE TRUTH INVOLVES US ALL

# Not a mandate foretold



Predictions of the BJP's slide after the setback of June 4 were greatly exaggerated

## PRATAP BHANU MEHTA

Two decisive wins, ONE SORE LOSER

BJP's historic third term makes its road to Maharashtra, Iharkhand a little less uphill. Congress should get back to drawing board instead of its outrageous conspiracy-theorising

HE ASSEMBLY polls in Jammu & Kashmir and Haryana took place together, but heir outcomes are momentous in different ways. In J&K, there is a need to pause at the election itself before taking stock of the result. After all, this con-test came after a decade of election lessness in the erstwhile state and five years after it was stripped of its special status by the abrogation of Article 370 and split into two Union Territories. The Supreme Court laid down a deadline, the Centre respected it and commission steps due to the challenge of holding an election, despite the surge of violence in the Jammu region. Now the National Conference's remarkable achieve-ment—it has held together through great adversity and in alliance with the Congress, crossed the halfway mark—must take second place to the trust reposed in the power of the vote by the J&K electorate. Commendably, and in a constitutional democracy, hearteningly, the people of I&K have cast aside parratives of alienation and boycott politics and

ingsy, the people of pair have cast about hardrares or alternative and appeared to the membraced a new consensus on political participation and electroal engagement.

In Haryana, the BJP has coursed to a historic third consecutive win in a state that is not a traditional bastion. Its victory, only months after the unambiguous setback in the Lok Sabha verdict in June, speaks of the party's ability to get back on its feet again and go for the win. For students of Indian politics, it is a cautionary tale — this country's politics retains its ability to sping a surprise. But it seems that the story of the Haryana election is not yet over even after the votes have been counted — and therein lies a second cautionary tale.

HE CONGRESS party has taken a step that is as unprecedented as it is bizarre. It has become the first mainstream party to question an election result in an electoral system deservedly applauded for its streamlined machinery and impeccable credibility. That the Congress is impuring that the Haryana election was less than free and fair is outrageous, it speaks of a sore loser and, much more than that, an irresponsible stakeholder.

In a system in which candidates who have lost by narrow margins, or even by one vote. have not questioned the fairness of either the umpire or the electoral mechanisms, the Congress's unchecked flailing is enormously disturbing and a hoge self-goal, Rahul Gandhir party need to tale a step back from its moment of defeat. It must ask itself fits esterme petu-lance is doing itself, and the people who vote for it, a grave disservice. As the leading lance is ooing insent, and me people with over for it, a grave disservice. As the leading Opposition party at the Centre, which also leads governments in three states, it ill behoves it to refuse to respect the result just because it has gone against its ambitions and expecta-tion. To make matters more absurd, two prominent Haryana Congress leaders, Bhupinder Singh Hooda, altors more absurd, two prominents and chief ministerial wannabe, Kumari Selja, have conceded defeat, even as their party's central leadership challenges the result.

A STHE Congress conjures up spectres and focuses on conspiracy theories in Haryana, it risks losing sight of the task it shares with the National Conference in JBK. Here, the hard work of politics and governance lies ahead.

It will include arduous negotiations within the structural constraints. The Lieutenant Governor was given a role larger than the assembly by the Jammu and Kashmir Reorganisation Act 2019; recent amendments to the transaction rules have increased the already considerable powers of the Centre's nominee. Delhi, the only other UT with a legislature, has showcased the damage that can be wreaked by constant attrition between the elected government and the unelected constitutional functionary.

In an interview in August, on the occasion of the fifth anniversary of the abrogation of Article 370, [8K L-G Mano] Sinha told this newspaper: "will work towards achieving a fine balance with the elected government to achieve peace, prosperity and development... If this is the objective, then where is the possibility of a clash?" Ornar Abdullah, who did well to change his mind on entering the electoral race — he had told this paper, also in August: "I have been... the CM of the (once) most empowered state. I can't see myself in a position where I would have to ask the I.-G for appointing my peon" — will need to hold the I.-G to his words. And as his ally, the Congress will need to help him to do that.

By giving in to its own worst instincts in Haryana, the Congress could be abdicating its

opportunity in J&K, where sobriety and sagacity are demanded of it as a partner in the new government, which must contend with the people's high expectations even as it possesses

T MUST be hoped that the Congress will retrace its steps on the perilous path it set out on, or Tuesday. In Haryan, instead of quarreling with the verdict, it needs to a skitself some tough questions. While the Lok Sabha verdict gave its hopes a leg-up, it may have overread it. It may have sought to counter the BJP's Hindutva appeal with a crude caste politics, that sought to draw us-and-them lines deeper, instead of building larger coalitions, and smudging identity politics, if not transcending it.

The Congress lost in Haryana, and has a chance to govern in J&K, and the sooner it gets down to its work in both states, the better for it. And for the BJP, the stunning Haryana triumph and the healthy showing in Jammu mean that the road aladed from the Lok Sabha verdict towards Maharashtra and Jharldand suddenly looks less uphill.

## THE EXIT POLL SHOW

Come the next poll, be ready for the exit poll. Just remember it isn't the result

HE MESSENGER, ESPECIALLY when she has to deliver bad news to the pow-ers that be, is used to dodging bullets. The soothsayer, for many, is an indul-gence in the small hope that there is an order to life, luck and its fluctuations. The Indian pollster, in the light of his recent mixed record, has the worst of both worlds. Exit polls have had a poor showing this year. First, they got the largest vote in the world wrong — most of them predicted a clear victory for the BJP in the 2024 general election. Now, in the just-concluded assembly polls in which most polisters predicted a comfortable win for the Congress in Haryana, the BJP's win has once again led to sheepish justifications from those who were confidently analysing their own projections as though they were final results.

as mough they were that results.

Gauging political opinion is not an exact science. That doesn't mean, of course, that it's
guesswork. Robust sampling, the right questionnaires and the sort of training interviewers receive can all have a huge impact on the accuracy of a predictive tool. And sometimes, despite the best intentions of polisters in voter can deet the a priori categorisation of their franchise. Even polisters in the richest democracy in the world failed to predict Donald Trump's victory over Hillary Clinton in 2016. In fact, given that exit poll results in India are usually declared between 36 and 72 hours before election results, it begs the question: Why go through the exercise at all?

The mixed results of exit polls havent led to the exit of pollsters for a simple reason: They

make for good TV. In election after election, "experts" treat the exit poll as a dress rehearsal for result day, analysing a tentative speculation as a final diagnosis, complete with pre-scriptions for the political players who ostensibly lost at the hustings. And the viewer laps it up — politics, after all, is as much a national pastime as cricket, and public memory is short. Come the next poll, be ready for the exit poll. Just remember it isn't the result.

HARYANA IS A small state. But the BJP's historic victory, for a third term, has significant consequences nationally. For one thing, this election is a massive shor in the arm for the BJP and a shock for Congress. There is a lot of local analysis to be done, and the mathematics of vote share-to-seat share conversion doubtless played a role in this election. Those kinds of tactical issues matter. But there is no getting away from a couple of large messages. The first is that predictions of the BJP's slide after the setback of June 4 were greatly exaggerated. Winning a third way and the state of the HARYANA IS A small state. But the BIP's hisof the BJP's slide after the setback of June 4 were greatly exagerated. Winning a third term in a state where the BJP does not have the kind of default cultural identification it has in Gujarat or Madhya Pradesh is no mean feat. It will give pause to those who were beginning to doubt the BJP's tactical acumen, To use Milan Valshnav's phrase, the BJP-led Fourth Party System is still resilient. l resilient. By the same token, this defeat is a shock

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By the same token, this defeat is a shock
for the Congress. There has not been another state election where it has, in principle, had as clear a path to power as in
Haryana. There was momentum behind it.
Even the BJP was conceding to challenges
on a number of fronts: Corruption, unemployment, agrarian distress and urban dysfunction. To fritter this opportunity will
hurt; it changes the momentum of Indian
politics. It strengthens Prime Minister
Narendra Modi, who was beginning to look
very shaky, and is indicative still of a large
residual resistance to accepting Rahul
Gandhi, It is a little unfair to make these
judgements on every election. But confidence in the Congress's tactical judgements
will be dented. Its impressive vote share
suggests that Congress has the potential to
consolidate anti-BJP sentiment behind itself. But its internal rivalries are still tooclose to the surface, its two attempted master narratives, one on caste and the other on
farmers, are not enough to consolidate an
electoral strategy, and may even backfire
under some circumstances. This is because
both narratives fall prey to social determinism. They quite simply underestimate the
chum in rural India. Both caste and class
identities are more complicated. It is an
unmistakable trend that communities can
now vote for different parties. They also
underestimate the new contradictions this

There is real agrarian distress. But the politics of those who claim to represent farmers has become a politics of preserving the status quo privileges of dominant farmers. In fact, insofar as there is a caste dimension in these results, the BJP has played the politics better, consolidating more anti-Jat votes. Congress cannot pretend that it can be the old Lok Dal, BSP and Congress all at once, without recognising that the material contradictions within the OBC and other marginalised communities are stronger. In the case of Haryana, perhaps, it conjured up the image merely of restoring the status quo ante in the form of the rule of the Hoodas, whereas the BJP reminded people of its promising early work in the Khattar administration.

social churn produces, It is harder to build broad social coali-It is harder to build broad social coali-tions, when your pitch on farmers still op-erates within a paradigm that privileges old dominant castes over others. There is real agararian distress. But the politics of those who claim to represent farmers has become a politics of preserving the status quo priv-ileges of dominant farmers. In fact, insofar as there is a caste dimen-sion in these results, the BJP has played the politics better, consolidating more anti-Jat votes. Congress cannot pretend that it can be the old Lok Dal, BSP and Congress all at once, without recognising that the material

be the old Lok Dal, BSP and Congress all at once, without recognising that the material contradictions within the OBC and other marginalised communities are stronger. In the case of Haryana, perhaps, it conjured up the image merely of restoring the status quo ante in the form of the rule of the Hoodas, whereas the BJP reminded people of its promising early work in the Khattar administration. There is also another lesson: That leaders like Hooda who stake their claim largely on one caste will always be more vulnerable than leaders who transcend their social base.

largely on one caste will always be more vulnerable than leaders who transcend their social base.

The Congress has to ask whether merely banking on the distribution of constrained state resources, like public sector jobs or reconfiguring reservations, creates more nonzero-sum conflict than help forge broad coalitions. The BJP's logic of religious divisions is dangerous. But it will not be countered by sharpening other social divisions, without a forward-looking agenda. In effect, while people see that the BJP has not quite tackled agrarian distress or unemployment or corruption, a crude focus on caste is equally untenable. The logic of social movements can translate into agitational politics where there is a clear focal point. It is not sufficient to build a claim to rule. It also has to be said, somewhat depressingly, that the election is also a vindication of the claim that Hindutva is consolidating as an identity for a significant number of voters; there is no penalty for communalising or coarsening politics. This was a campaign in which Yogi Adityanath's shadow was present, as was the growing undercurrent of communalism. They may have not won because of this, but it is not a deal breaker. How much of a factor Gurmeet

Ram Rahim Singh's release was, in the final analysis, is an open question. Clearly the Bip thought it would be important. But it is illustrative of the fact that a convicted criminal can both have a large welfare function and create social identities. How do conventional governance metrics, law and order, caste and class, economic measures, deal with this kind of complex social reality? It also makes drawing any simplistic conclusions from any election more difficult. But one thing is clear. This election will unfortunately only embodden Hindutva. It will be denying reality not to see this consequence. Ram Rahim Singh's release was, in the final

Hindutva. It will be denying reality not to see this consequence. The elections in Kashmir are a triumph in the sense that they happened. It is also a political triumph for the National Conference, a political party whose staying power is quite remarkable in the long and troubled are of Kashmir. The questions that the election raises are forward-looking. First, when will statehood be restored? Without that restoration, there is a real damager of a Delhi-like situation. The proclivities of the BJP do not give reassurance on this score. The second is whether the political divide between Kashmir Valley and Jammu can be bridged, given the near-total concentration of the Opposition in Jammu. The third question is whether the new administration can make a break with the past and write a new administrative chapter in dividence and the processing the proces write a new administrative chapter in Kashmir. It is not going to be easy, because lots of forces will be arrayed against its success. From a national point of view, the Centre should invest in the success of a National Conference administration; it can turn a sullen acceptance of the post-Article 370 situation into a genuine normalisation, which will be measured by a full restoration of civil liberties. But from a political point of view, the BJP will play spoiler, making governance difficult. If statehood is restored and this administration is even moderately successful, it will be a riposte to militancy and external interference in the state. So the stakes are incredibly high. But the only abding lesson is: Never presume to understand the complexities of Indian democracy. write a new administrative chapter is

The writer is contributing editor, The Indian Express



## READING THE HARYANA WIND

PM Modi's appeal trumps farmers and wrestlers' protests and other discontents

Manraj Grewal Sharma

SECURING AN UNPRECEDENTED third term in a state that appeared increasingly discontented, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has achieved a victory that even the party itself may not have fully anticipated. For once, most polisters seemed on the same page as they predicted a Congress win in Haryana, a sentiment echoed by some within the BJP inself. However, the BJP not only defied these predictions, but also posted its best ever result with 48 seats.

The win marks the first time a party will form a government for three consecutive terms in Haryana. It also signals a significant shift with the appointment of an OBC Chief Minister, Nayab Singh Saint, in a state long known as 'Jalandan'. Saint, representing the 40 per cent OBC electorate, was elevated to the top seat ahead of the elections in March and led the party as its CM face.

Coming so soon after the Lok Sabha results, the win is a shot in the arm for the BJP, which had to form alliance so retain power at the Centre, It's also a testament to the harty's object oil readers. SECURING AN UNPRECEDENTED third term

at the Centre. It's also a testament to the party's robust poll strategy and machinery. Starting in January, the BJP started its cam-paign with "Modi Ki Guarantee" vans visiting villages to highlight welfare schemes and adThe win marks the first time a party will form a government for three consecutive terms in Haryana. It also signals a significant shift with the appointment of an OBC Chief Minister, Navab Singh Saini, in a state long known as 'Jatland.' Saini, as Jauand. Saini, representing the 40 per cent OBC electorate, was elevated to the top seat ahead of the elections in March and led the party as its CM face.

dress grievances. Aware of the anti-incumbency it faced, the BJP restructured its leadership, replacing Mannhar Ial Khattar, aclose adie of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, with Saini, an MJP and the first OBC to lead Haryana. This was part of the BJP is longstanding strategy to consolidate non-Jat voters, who form over 70 per cent of the electorate. The groundwork was laid in 2014 when the party surged from four seats in the 2009 assembly elections to 47, driven by the Modivawe, and appointed a Punjabi khatri as the CM.

The natry remained on course despite a

The party remained on course despite a challenging performance in 2019, when it had to join forces with the newly-formed Jannayak Janta Party (JP) to form the government. This time, the BJP took a clinical approach, fielding 60 new faces for the 90 assembly seats to counter anti-incumbency. The strategy succeeded in landing BJP a windfall. The win also highlights Prime Minister Modi's enduring appeal in the state, where he retains strong loyalty despite the farmer agitation, the women wrestlers' protest and the Agnipath scheme.

In hindsight, Congress, which drew its strength from these very issues and made The party remained on course despite a

them central to its campaign, appears to have misjudged its strategy. The party continued to rely on its veteran leader and two-time CM Bhupinder Singh Hooda. A delayed ticket disto rely on its veteran leader and two-time CM Bhupinder Singh Hooda. A delayed ticket distribution process saw Hooda's camp securing over 70 of the 90 seats, causing discontent among those left out. The party remained divided, with Kumari Selja, a key Dalit leader and MP, joining the campaign only at the last minute, largely limiting herself to her strong-hold of Sirsa. Although Rahul Gandhi drew large crowds, his heavy focus on the corporate versus farmers narrative may not have resonated with the trading community and other upwardly mobile voters.

The results offer little succour to regional parties as well. While the Indian National Lok Dal-BSP alliance secured two seats, the IJP failed to win any. The Aam Aadmi Party, which had long eyed Haryam after it success in Punjah, also couldn't open its account. In the end, it won't be wrong to say that the Opposition failed to read the pulse of the people. And while slogans like "Jal Jawan, Jai Kisan, Jai Pehalwan" stirred emotions, they failed to translate into votes.

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## OCTOBER 9, 1984, FORTY YEARS AGO

### KERALA LANDSLIDES

AS MANY AS 15 persons, including three women and four children, were killed in landslides and floods in different parts of Kozhikode district. Landslides claimed eight lives near Koorachundu in Quilandy taluk, four near Kavilambara in Badagara taluk and two near Talavad in Quilandy taluk. One woman was washed off by the flood waters of Kakkody river near Mavelikadavu.

## **RAM ВНООМІ МАКСН**

A 130-KM LONG march by Hindu devotees started from Ayodhya to Lucknow to demand

from the government liberation of Ram Jamma Bhoomit, (birthplace of lord Rama)after having taken a pledge on the bank of river Saryu to accomplish their mission whatever may be the cost. However, Ayodhya, the birthplace of Rama and an ancient town of great antiquity remained apathetic to the oath-taking congregation.

### TEMPLE HANDOVER

THE PROCESS OF handing over the Guru Ram Dass Sarai, Tej Singh Samundari Hall and the Guru Nanak Niwas to the SGPC will be com-pleted today. R V Subramaniam, Senior Advisor to the Punjab Governor, N N Vohra, Home Secretary and the local officials had a meeting with four of the five head priests and senior functionaries of the SGPC.

### IAF UPGRADES

THE CHIEF OF Air Staff, Air Chief Marshal L M Katre said that with the induction of so-phisticated aircraft into the country, the Indian Air Force (IAF) had a greater responindian Air Force (IAF) had a greater respon-sibility to ensure maximum utilisation of advanced and expensive hardware. Addressing a ceremonial parade on the 52nd anniversary of the IAF, he assured the nation that the Air Force was fully prepared to meet any challenge.

# **3** The Ideas Page

## WHAT THE OTHERS SAY

"With Israel showing no signs of heeding the countless warnings by the United Nations or the International Court of Justice, the onus really lies on Israel's Western allies to stop its forever war. They have delayed action for too long."

—THE DALY STAR

## The victor's task

Apart from forming the government, which is the easy part, the National Conference needs to regain the political power to be able to once again set the narrative



HASEEB A DRABU

THE MANDATE OF the just concluded elections is decisive for the National Conference as a political party, could pose difficulties for it as it runs the government and is potentially disruptive for the politics of Jammu and Kashmir, BKK is a complex region whose politics has just become more complicated. Apart from the historical alienation of the Valley from the Union, politics within the erstwhile state seems to have become completely obtained.

valley into the Joins, joints's valley in the Joins's restricted to the present of the present of the Joins and th

the 75-year-old Dison plan of dividing the state along the Chenab seems to have been resuscitated.

With the elected representatives of the entire region of the Jammu plains not being ingovernment, it should not come as a surprise if the demand for a separate statehood for Jammu, which is often raised, becomes strident. Post 2019, for all practical purposes, Jammu has been virtually bifurcated from Kashmir, administratively. The geographically split mandate has distanced the two politically. This has only added to the fissures between Jammu and Kashmir, which at the best of times have been adversarial, if not antagonistic to each other. The two now share little else than a troubled past, having nothing in common; geographically, linguistically, culturally, ethnically conditions, and the committed of the common for eligion.

The only option going forward is for the National Conference to once again become the pan-J&K party which it was till 1996. The last five years have shown that NC is a mass based, strong, and rooted party even if it has a leadership that is centralised, and familial. It is inclusive party with a support base cutting across sumis, shias, guijars, pahadis and pandiks! goes to their credit that despite a grave situation, the National Conference to once so to their credit that despite a grave situation, the National Conference has won should give them some hope and direction.

The BJP has, of course, not won; it hasn't lost either. It has consolidated its base in Jammu way beyond what was expected. This deeple the business community of Jammu.

lost either, It has consolidated its base in Jammu way beyond what was expected. This despite the business community of Jammu, a very powerful stakenholder, having borne the brunt of abrogation of Article 370 in terms of loss of business; from rice milling to liquor or loss of business; from rice milling to liquor or loss of business; from rice milling to liquor lusiness, their interests have been badly hurt. In this context, the Congress Party's po-litical wisdom and electoral strategy is sim-tered by affilier. They were best placed to give

ply baffling. They were best placed to give BJP a run for their money and even beat them in Jammu. Indeed, till a couple of months ago,



BJP was clearly struggling in Jammu. Yet they did not go for the kill. Rahul Gandhi chose to campaign in the safe seats in the Valley but not in Jammu. On the contrary, the BJP put all the heavy

not in jammu.

On the contrary, the BJP put all the heavy political artillery to good use. Where the BJP's electoral strategy has failed is in trying to fragment the votes in the Valley. The big lesson for them from the election is that it is difficult to convert a demographic majority into a political minority. They must also go to the drawing board in light of the fact that in this election, in the Valley, it was not only relevant who people voted for but also who they voted against. The vote in the Valley was decisively anti-BJP. Organisations like Apni Party, Awami Ittehad Party and many others including independents have been decimated for being perceived as proxies goes to show precisely that.

Having suffered a shocking defeat in the parliamentary elections, Omar Abdullah

Having suffered a shocking defeat in the parliamentary elections, Omar Abdullah must be relieved to have won both the seats he contested and delighted that his party has registered a resounding victory. But he must not be looking forward to being a titular Chief Minister with the elected cabinet playing second fiddle to an unelected appointee. With its mandate, the National Conference with its extensive cadres across the Valley will be expected to soothe and satisfy the "collec-

the conscience of Kashmiris". This can be done only by reasserting the primacy of the legislature and restoring or redefining the power of elected representatives. It is a first step in the journey for restoration of statehood, reaffirming the social identity and reshalancing the asymmetric federal relations that J&K had. A very tall order, indeed. A part from forming the government, which is the easy part, the National Conference needs to regain the political power to be able to once again set the narriative across the state. It might be worthwhile for them to ponder if a return to the past is the best way to the future. The contours of a new compact relevant to today's time merits collective societal thinking.

The politics of Kashmiris, what historian Primo Levi once described, in the "grey zone": Situations in which individuals and institutions strive to survive through a mistiautions strive to survive through a mistiaution strive to survive throug

institutions strive to survive through a mix-ture of weakness, compromise and hesita-tion, as well as with public displays of moral courage and diginty. This election has been about the latter, For the last five years, the majority has hald its way— in the Parliament and in other institutions. In the just con-clude election, the minority has had its say, not meekly but loud and clear.

The writer is former finance minister of Jammu & Kashmir

## Divide and lose

Congress, NC tried to play identity politics. Modi government's performance, growing democratic consciousness, ensured that it did not work



RAKESH SINHA

THE ELECTION RESULTS of Haryana and lammu & Kashmir tell two different sto-THE ELECTION RESULTS of Haryana and Jammu & Kashmir tell two different sto-ries and defy narratives. The reason is ob-vious. The assembly polls were important, especially in terms of a broader political perception, because they were the first major elections after the Lok Sabha polls in which the BJP's tally was reduced. Since then, opposition parties, primarily Congress and its leader Rahul Gandhi, have spread propaganda against the BJP with particular size of the BJP with particular propagation of the BJP w

in which the BJP's tally was reduced. Since then, opposition parties, primarily Congress and its leader Rahul Gandhi, have spread propaganda against the BJP with great vigour. Yet, they do not have anything concrete with which to sway the people against the ruling dispensation. Propaganda cant change reality.

The Haryana election result is undoubtedly not a verdict for Mannohar Lal Khattar or Bhupinder Singh Hooda. They may have been the primary actors, but election was about far more. Had the BJP been defeated, it would not only have embodened the Opposition parties but also encouraged them to initiate a fresh campaing against the BJP in general, and Prime Minister Narendra Modi in particular. Although Haryana is a small state, it is a litmus test. The Opposition's delusions of a victory foretoid proved to be a boon for the BJP. There is no doubt that the Haryana election was a referendum on Modi's popularity and the impact of the BJP's socioeconomic programmes.

Four factors led to the BJP's victory. One, heationalisation of the election diverted voters' attention from local leaders and factors. The massive welfare programmes created a strong, silent vote bank for the BJP, especially among the marginalised classes. They remain unmoved by the caste and religious appeals of local leaders. Women and youth are also among the beneficiaries of Modinomics.

Second, the social philosophy of the Congress has not evolved. The party has been unable to gauge either the public semiment or the impact of Hindurky on the Indian mind. Rahul Gandhi has been trying, with dedication, to resurrest and dversion of secularism. The Congress is mired in a lack of Larity as far as culture, religion and the legacies of the nation are concerned.

Sampumanad or K M Munshi — to engage and debate with Rahul Gandhi on vital so-cial and cultural issues. He is both an ideologue and a leader. This was not the case with Jawaharfal Nehru or Indira Gandhi. Third, the centre of the Congress campaign was the home of its leader, Hooda. The BJP on the toher hand, works — literality and symbolically — through the

party. The message is clear. In a democracy, people can't be hostages to a dynasty. Literacy is growing, and so is democratic consciousness.

Fourth, as a result of its politics, Congress habecome the party of a particular caste in Haryana. The BJP's outreach and ideology is more holistic. Moreover, Congress failed to reorganise or reorient its workers at the grassroots. Its success depends on fragmentation in society. Therefore, it allies with leaders and forces who galvanise caste, communal and regional politics. This is the Congress's folly. The BJP used constructive social programmers to enhance its social support base.

The verdict in Jammu and Kashmir is unfavourable to the BJP — but the result is also about a less obvious narrative. This was

social programmes to enhance its social support base.

The verdict in Jammu and Kashmir is unfavourable to the BJP — but the result is also about a less obvious narrative. This was the first election after the abrogation of Article 370. The abrogation herafled a new rear in the state, in the last is kye-sr, the state has experienced much-desired development. More than two crore tourists visited J&K in 2023. More than 70 lakh beneficiaries received Rs 6,000 crore through Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT). The enrolment of 18,0000 children in pre-primary schools shows that the days of stone-pelting have ended. The empowerment of panchayats and local leadership is visible in the state. Nevertheless, the Muslim-majority state has rejected the BJP. The onus is not on the saffron party, its policies and programmes remain non-discriminatory. The larger question is about the impact of religion on voting. Diversity is not only essential tocal-rular and social life — it is in politics too. Segmentation along caste or community lines can make democracy stagnant. Political modernity requires thinking in erms of development and non-sectarian policies. The BJP's outreach to the lindus in general and RSS in particular. For the last hundred years, the process has been one-sided the state — in diverse roles from outside the state — in diverse roles

the last hundred years, the process has been one-sided more and more people from outside the state — in diverse roles and professions, including business, government worders, etc — was missued as a political issue by the National Conference. The importance of safeguarding against such narratives is a lesson for the BJP.
Haryana and JBK have demonstrated that the people are now at the centrestage — an ellist spolitics has no purchase. Every election adds a new dimension to Indian demoracy. The biggest challenge beyond the verdict is to liberate parties from a narrow, divisive approach, which undermines the values of fiberal demoracy. The BJP's strength is its organisation and workers. The same is not true for the Opposition. Both in Haryana and JBK, Congress depended on dynasts and caste and communal polarisation. Will it learn or continue on a failed path?

The writer is a former BIP Raiva Sabha MP

ENCOURAGE TRAVEL

ENCOURAGE TRAVEL

HIS REFERS TO the report, More Indians
travelling abroad but arrivals yet to hit
pre-Covid levels' (E. October 7). The
surge in the number of Indians travelling
abroad reflects a significant recovery in
the tourism sector post-Covid. However,
inbound tourist arrivals to India have yet
to return to pre-pandemic levels. India's
slow recovery in tourism can be attribtoreturn to pre-pandemic levels. India's
slow recovery in tourism can be attribured to lingering concerns about health
safety and inadequate marketing of India
as a safe destination. To revive inbound
tourism, India must improve
infrastructure, simplify visa processes,
and actively promote its rich cultural and
natural heritage.

and actively prom natural heritage.

STATE'S FAILURE

## Don't forget the voter

The BJP made that mistake in Kashmir, Congress in Haryana

IWATCHED WITH amusement and an inde-scribable schadenfreude the palpable dis-comfluer of the BJF spokesperson as he tried to valiantly rationalise the predicted deba-tice of his party in the Haryana and Jammu and Kashmir assembly election results. Doing it is not easy. I should know. I have been there at housand times before. But this was till about 9,30 am on October 8, 2024. Shortly afterwards, the unthinkable hap-pened in Haryana. In a remarkable reversal of counting trends, the BJF suddenly acceler-ated ahead off its archival Congress. The cel-ebrated Indian voter, once again embar-rassed allex in poli psephologists and gave a knock-out punch to the grand old party in Haryana. Jammu and Kashmir voted the National Conference-Congress in, after a 10-ouer electoral hiatus. Instead of a double whammy for the BJF, kended up even steven. IWATCHED WITH amusement and an indewhammy for the BJP, it ended up even steven. But the Congress successfully completed its

But the Congress successfully completed its laamiliazer mission. The October 8 election verdict could have provided the reinvigorated opposition, led by an unusually resolute Congress, the second booster shot after a determined fightback in the Lok Sabba elections. But it turned out to be a mirage, Will the BJP see a potential crack, a cleavage that could lead to its potential reso-surrection after a dreary run? That is the bil-lion-dollar question. We have now entered into a most fascinating phase of Indian poli-tics after a 10-year stranglehold by a seem-ingly invincible Narendra Modi. The voter is becoming increasingly unpredictable.

coming increasingly unpredictable. A few broad strokes will best explain (the

granular analysis of the numbers will be in several pie-charts in every news medium anyway) how India, always a tricky conun-drum, has surprised itself. For one, PM Modi must be hopelessly

For one, PM Modi must be hopelessly nonplussed; his two big trump cards, the nonplussed; his two big trump cards, the Am temple construction and the abrogation of Art 370 in Jammu and Kashmit; which were permanent fixtures in the BJP manifesto for decades, have made negligible impact on the party's political fortunes. BJP lost the Faizabad seat (Ayodhya is located in this constituency), which has 78 per cent Hindu population, and was humbled across Uttar Pardaeths by the INDA bloc. Religious polarisation, its political business model, had failed to deliver. The JBK results are further evidence of its over-reliance on the majoritarian programme. If post-2019, there had indeed been a sin-cre, inclusive outreach towards social assiminers, inclusive outreach towards social assiminers.

in pos-2015, there is an interest oct assistance; inclusive outreach towards social assimilation of disparate groups, why did the BJP field only 19 Candidates from 47 constituencies in the Kashmir Valley? Vully did into win a single east? Why was its vote share a laughable single-digit figure? But perhaps the most unmistatable rejection of its Kashmir politics is the striking underperformance in Jammu, which in had clearly considered its rich cache, a guaranteed sure-shot sweep. Despite the gerrymandering that led to an increase of 43 seats in Jammu, the BJP got only 28 seats. In 2014, thad won 2.5 If the Congress had shown an avaricious appetite, the BJP would have faced a wipeout in Jammu too.

The disillusionment with the politically cere, inclusive outreach towards social a

motivated and hastily rescinded Article 370 and the loss of statehood that followed had hurt sentiments cutting across religious lines, besides the absence of an economic wind-fall which was assured. There could not be a

Omar Abdullah must be

relieved to have won both the seats he contested and

delighted that his party has registered a resounding victory. But he must not be looking forward to being a titular Chief Minister

with the elected cabinet

playing second fiddle to an unelected appointee.

besides the absence of an economic wind-fall which was assured. There could not be a more stunning rebule from the people of J&K to the BJP's game plan to appropriate for itself amjoritarian-nationalist partystature. Whatever happened to the Insaaniyat, Jamhooriyat and Kashmiriyat trope of for-mer PM Atal Behari Vajpayee which was cur-sorily abandoned? The hard truth is that Kashmir became a political laboratory to po-sition India's largest minority population as fifth columnists across India. The J&K result means that the stratagem bacdired. Former Governor and subsequent rebel Satya Pal Malkis probably having the last laugh. Secondly, in politics, momentum is a crit-ical play. Post-June 4, 2024, Rahul Gandhi is the agenda-setter, and he is doing that with cool aplomb. The opposition looked gal-vanised. The taliwinds were helping. Arvind Kejriwal's release from prison added to the opposition arsenal. The NC-INC alliance in J&K, the professed solidarity between the squabbling Congress blgwigs in Haryana, and the relatively tactful understanding emerg-ing in the MVA alliance in Maharashtra, ap-peared to hold a lot of promise. But Congress committed hara-kiri; a déja ur reminiscent of Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgaria about a year ago. Political arrogance is its bugbear, and in losing Haryana (like it did Punjab to AP earlier). Congress sentout a woeful mes-sage that its political comeback was still an sage that its political comeback was still an

incomplete project.

The near collapse of JJP and PDP, both opportunistic allies of the JJP, in these elections shows that a dalliance with the saffron party is akin to a kiss of death. There is alesson there for the Congress: For the biggest election of the season coming up in Maharashtra in November 2024, it will help if the party backs Uddhav Thackeray as the chief ministerial candidate. Petty egos, local leaders getting greedy, or a myopic understanding of the ramification of that election, could be disastrous for the NDIA bloc. They have a chance, but like Haryana, they could offer it magnanimously to the JJP of the Model. Haryana notwithstanding. After falling worfully short of the pompos 400 number in the Lok Sabha, Modi looks a woebegone shadow of his carlier fire and brimstone avatar. The NDA 3.0 under greater public scrutiny looks frangible; its economic record is 1fly, its governance shambolic, despite the braggadocio. The crowds have thinned and got bored by the execrable verbiage. But Modi and the 3JP are tough losers; and as Haryana shows, the JJPP an unger for power is its USP. The Congress is happy to trend on Twitter.

But for the moment, the gutsy wrestler Vinesh Phogat is symbolic of the power of the public voice. Hurt and humiliated, shamed and targeted, shamed and targeted, she hung in. Her electoral success is Olympian.

The writer is a former Congress spokesperson 

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

## TO PROTECT KIDS

THIS REFERS TO the editorial The loids are online' (IE, October 8). Most parents find it challenging to restrict their children's digital activities. The adverse effects of children's excessive smartphone and social media engagement are obvious. Even while various tools allow parties to reposite and excellent of the children and excel ents to monitor and oversee digital ac-tivity, youngsters, far more tech-savvy tonly, youngsters, far more ecri-savy, find easy ways to circumvent these restrictions. Further, basic measures such as limiting screen time and keeping an eye on children's online activities could result in unintended repercussions for parents, such as instilling rebellion in venuesters, stringulating their interest in parents, such as instilling rebellion in youngsters, stimulating their interest in forbidden content and impairing their trust. The best possible strategy for par-ents is to devote more time to children, foster open communication, and moti-vate them towards other hobbies. Kamal Laddha, Bengaluru

## MODEL FOR SUCCESS

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'Return of the league' (1E, October 8). The Hockey India League 2024-25 will feature eight india League 2024-25 will feature eight men's teams and six women's teams, marking the first time a standalone women's league will run concurrently with the men's competition and will involve world-class players and coaches. There's hope that it will be ablig boost to the women's team. Having a better business model and hockey ecosystem will ultimately help us get gold at the Olympics. It would be imprudent to depend on television only to monetise the sport, other options should be explored to make for a better financial model.

SSPaul, Nindlo

STATE'S FAILURE
THISREFERSTO the editorial, 'Prisons of prejudice' (E. October 5). With India's independence, Article 17 of the Indian Constitution anobished 'untouchability', and prohibited its practice in any form. Seventy-five years later, the Supreme Court has to pass an order against 'untouchability' practised and perpetuated inside prisons under state watch. The SC reference to Utate Pradesh, West Bengal, Madhya Pradesh and Andhra Pradesh Prison Rules exemplify how they reinforce caste and colonial prejudices. It is shocking that amid the "decolonisation" discourse which presses for legal reforms, officials and experts involved in the framing of the Model Prisons and Correctional Services Act, 2023 failed to recognise and address the issue of caste basis in the administration and functioning of prisons.

LEMBurmus, Nov Debit.

LR Murmu, New Delh

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

# Discriminatory: Why SC struck down caste rules in jail manuals

LAW

AJOY SINHA KARPURAM

THE SUPREME Court last week struck down a bunch of rules in several state prison man-uals, saying they "reinforce caste differences" and target members of marginalised communities, especially those dubbed as "crim-inal tribes" in the colonial era. These rules vi-olated the fundamental rights of the prisoners, the top court said.

### The petition and the ruling

The 148-page ruling authored by Chief Justice of India (CJI) DY Chandrachud came on a petition filed by journalist Sukanya Shantha onthe rules and provisions in prison manuals across states. The day-to-day ad-ministration of prisons is governed by the Prisons Act and Prison Manual in the state or Union Territory concerned.

file tures in question deal with the clas-sification of prisoners, and the prison work that is assigned to them. The court said the manuals assigned prison work in ways that "perpetuate caste-based labour divisions and rce social hierarchies'

For instance, under the Madhya Pradesh Jail Manual, 1987, prisoners from the Mehtar Jail Manual, 1987, prisoners from the Mehtar caste — a Schedueld Caste community — are specifically assigned thework of cleaning the latrines. Similarly, under the West Bengal Jail Code Rules, 1967, Rule 741 dealing with 'Sickness in cells' states: "Food shall be cooked and carried to the cells by prisoner-cooks of suitable caste, under the superintendence of a jail officer".

The Supreme Court has declared all such provisions and rules unconstitutional and directed states and Union Territories to revise their prison manuals within three months, It has also directed the Centre to make net-

It has also directed the Centre to make nec sary changes to address caste discrimina the draft Model Prisons and Correction Services Act, 2023, within the same per

### Manuals reinforcing caste prejudices and stereotypes The Criminal Tribes Act of 1871 allowed

The Criminal Tribes Act of 1871 allowed the British Raj to declare any community as a "criminal tribe" fits members were deemed to be "addicted to systematic commission of non-bailable of-fences". As a result, several tribes were forced to settle in designated locations, and they faced severe restrictions based on stereotypical assumptions about "born criminals", including the threat of arrest without a warrant.

After multiple changes, the Act was repealed in 1952, and the former "criminal tribes" became known as "denotified ribes". However, the apex court noted that the manifest in the state of the state of

ver, the apex court noted that the man-

gais reinforce stereotypes against denotified tribes by classifying them as habitual and non-habitual criminals.

The court used the example of Madhya Pradesh, where "any member of a denotified tribe may be treated as a habitual criminal, subject to the discretion of the State Government" under Rule 41.

### **EXPLAINED** Fundamental rights of prisoners violated

of prisoners violated
The court said the rules violated several fundamental
rights guaranteed under the Constitution.
RIGHT TO EQUALITY (ARTICLE 14):
The court held that caste can only be used as
a ground for classification "as long as it is
used to grant benefits to the victims of caste
discrimination", and would otherwise "reinforce caste differences or animosity that ought to be prevented at the first place". This would deny some incarcerated individuals

RIGHT AGAINST DISCRIMINATION (ARTICLE 15): The court held that the man-uals both directly and indirectly discriminated against marginalised comm directly through the assignment of tasks

directly through the assignment of tasks such as cleaning and sweeping to the marginalised castes, and cooking to the "forward" castes, and indirectly by perpetuating the stereotype that "people from these communities are either incapable of or unft for more skilled, dignified, or intellectual work". ABOLITION OF UNTOUCHABILITY (ARTICLE 'I'): The court referred to an Uttar Pradesh rule that allows convicts to perform "duties of a degrading or menial character" if they belong to "a class or community accustomed to perform such duties." In this regard, the court held that "the notion that an occupation is considered as "degrading as "degrading an occupation is considered as "degrading as "degrading as "degrading". an occupation is considered as "degrading

d untouchability".

RIGHT TO LIFE WITH DIGNITY (ARTICLE 21): The Supreme Court held that the right to life with dignity under Article 21 "envisages the growth of individual person-ality" and "provides for the right to overcome caste barriers as a part of the right to life of individuals from marginalized communities". Some rules in the prison manuals, however, "restrict the reformation of prisoners from marginalised communities" and "de-prive prisoners from marginalised communities" and "de-prive prisoners from marginalized groups of a sense of dignity and the expectation that they should be treated equally", violating this right, it held.

PROHIBITION OF THE PROPERS OF THE PROHIBITION O caste barriers as a part of the right to life of

HIBITION OF FORCED LABOUR (ARTICLE 23): The court held that "impos-ing labour or work, which is considered im-pure or low-grade, upon the members of marginalized communities amounts to "forced labour" under Article 23".

## **EXPLAINED ECONOMICS**

## SMALLER AREA SOWN, RUINED CROP: WHYTOMATO HAS HITRS 100/KG

## HOW TOMATO PRICES HAVE MOVED

Date	North	South	East	West	North East
7 Oct	71.34	59.05	65.48	57.17	72.96
7 Sep	42.33	29.51	47.63	36.83	69.51
7 Aug	57.67	35.15	57.15	50.57	57.15

(Source: Price Monitoring Cell Ministry of Consumer Affairs), Zo

## PARTHA SARATHI BISWAS

THE NATIONAL Cooperative Consumers' Federation of India under the Union Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution began selling tomatoes at a subsidised price of Rs 65 per kg in Delhi as retail prices touched Rs 120–130 at some places on Monday. Customers around the country are paying at least Rs 8-80-90 kg for tomato.

Customers around the country are paying at least Rs 80-90 kg for tomato. Consumer price data compiled by the ministry show average prices on October 7 had increased significantly from a month ago, with the south zone average price having almost doubled over this period. (See Table)
Why are prices of tomato rising, and for how long will this situation last?

## Why prices are up

The main reasons for the sudden price spike is lower than expected sowing, and destruction of market-ready crop in some parts of the tomato zone due to heavy rain in the last week of September, farmers said Acod Comments.

As of September 20, total sowing of 1.98 lakh hectares (lh) of kharif tomato

1.98 lakh hectares (lh) of kharif tomato was reported, far below the target of 2.89 lh. On this date last year, 2.20 lh of kharif tomato had been sown.
Unlike onion, which is grown thrice a year, there is only a kharif and a rabi tomato. Kharif tomato is grown mainly in Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, and Fleangana; the rubi crop is grown in parts of Maharashtra and parts of Kamataka.

Rabi tomato is transplanted in February-March and harvested after about 160

days. The kharif crop is transplanted after June-July, and transplantation can continue till September in parts of Maharashtra. Abhijit Gholpa, a tomato grower from Junnar taluku of Pure district said the ex-treme heat of last year nudged many farm-ers to move from tomato to crops like maize this year. "The rubit tomato cop could not withstand sustained temperatures of more than 40 degrees Celsius," he said. Arna under maise in the country lass

Area under maize in the country has ne up from 84.56 lh last year to 88.50 lh this year, Resilience of the crop in extreme weather and increased demand from

weather and increased demand from grain-based chanol manufacturers are reasons for the popularity of maize. Many farmers had complained of bacterial and viral disease attacks on their tomato crop last kharif. Tomato is cash intensive — and farmers such as Ghodap say it needs a capital input of at least 81-12 laid per acre. With bacterial and viral diseases increasing the input cost, tomato is often or termunerative. "This is another reason why farmers have moved away," he said.

## When will prices fall?

The modal (average) price of tomato at the wholesale market of Pimpalgaon Baswant in Nashik is currently around Rs Baswant in Nashiki is currently around RS 25-255/lg. Prices are expected to stay at this level or even rise further in the com-ing days. Gholap and other farmers said. Fresh harvests in Nashik and Telangana after Dusschra will supply the market or some time, but prices are likely to rise again as another supply squeeze follows. Since the next crop will hit the mar-ket only around March, no significant re-duction in relatil prices of tomato is likely in the near future.



## THE NOBEL PRIZES 2024

# Making machines learn

Nobel recognises scientists whose work laid foundations of AI revolution. Their research helped enable pattern recognition in computers, a key component of tools like face recognition or image improvement



AMITABH SINHA

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE or Altools are used

ARTIRCUA.INTELLIGENCE, or Al tools are used by users of computers and phones around the world to seek information, create photos and videos, or interpret large amounts of data in ways that were not possible just two years ago. Al has the potential to bring about fundamental changes in the way people live and work. This year's Nobel Prize in Physics recognises two scientists whose work laid the foundations of the Al revolution that is currently unfolding, John Hopfleids, 491-year-old American, and Geoffrey Hinton, a 76-year-old Britishborn Canadian, were on Tuesday awarded the Nobel Prize for their "foundational discoveries and inventions that enable machine learning with artificial neural networks".

The two scientists, working separately, did most of their ground-breaking research in the 1980s, but the impact of their work is beginning to be felt only now.

Mimicking the brain

## Mimicking the brain

The big success of Hopfield and Hinton has been in developing computer algorithms that mimic the functioning of the human brain in performing common tasks, Computers were invented to carry out repetitive calculation invented to carry out repetitive calculation-based tasks that were too time-consuming for humans. But very soon, scientists began won-dering whether machines could also be made todo things that humans seemed to be far bet-ter at — remembering, recognising, creating, learning, and making intelligent guesses. Alhas become common parlance now, but the origin of the term dates back to the mid-1950s, when scientists began speaking of com-puters as "intelligent" machines. As comput-ers became more and more powerful over the years, they accomplished increasingly com-

years, they accomplished increasingly com-plex tasks with great efficiency, and seemingly gained in intelligence. However, these were

gained in intelligence. However, these were still calculation-based tasks - and all that was essentially happening was that the computer was able to calculate faster and do many more tasks simultaneously than earlier. Efforts to get a computer to imitate the functioning of the human brain did not make much headway until Hopfield's revolution-ary work in the 1980s. A theoretical physi-cist with interests in molecular biology and

## NOBEL PRIZE IN PHYSICS

### 'FOR FOUNDATIONAL DISCOVERIES AND INVENTIONS THAT ENABLE MACHINE LEARNING WITH ARTIFICIAL NEURAL NETWORKS'

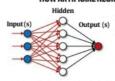


Professor at Princeton PhD fro Cornell



IN 2023: Awarded to Pierre Agostini, Ferenc Krausz and Anne L'Huillier for developing methods to produce attosecond pulses, allowing exploration of scientific processes at subatomic levels.

## HOW ARTIFICIAL NEURAL NETWORKS WORK



learn and remember while processing data. They essentially imitate the way human brains work. Neural networks comprise interconnected artificial neurons divided into an inner layer (or layers), hidden lawers and overlayers. hidden layer/s, and outer layer/s. The inner layer receives the data, hidden layer processes it, and outer layer transmits the result. The number of inner and hidden layers depends on the complexity of the problem.

neuroscience. Hopfield built an artificial neu-ral network, resembling the network of nerve cells in the human brain, that allowed computer systems to 'remember' and 'leam'. "Earlier, in 1949, the Canadian psychologist Donald Hebb had discovered that the process of learning in human beings involved perma-nent and irreversible changes in the synapses, or connections, between nerve cells where the communication palated to the learning was conmunication related to the learning w curring, Hopfield built an artificial neural net curring. Hopfield built an artificial neural net-work that could accomplish something simi-lar, and this was a big breakthrough," said Vipin Srivastawa, a former professor of Physics at the University of Hyderabad, who has himself made fundamental contributions to the field. Hopfield's network processed information using the entire network structure, and not its individual constituents. This was unlike tra-ditional computing in which information is stored or processed in the smallest bits, So,

when a Hopfield network is given new infor-mation, like animage or a song, it captures the entire pattern in one go, remembering the connections or relationships between the con-stituting parts, like pixels in the case of images. It allows the network to recall, identify or regenerate that image or song when an incom-plete, or similar-looking, image is passed as in-put. Hopfield's work was a leap towards en-abling nattern preconstition in computers. abling pattern recognition in computers, something that allows face recognition or image improvement tools that are common now,

### Deep learning

Deep learning
Hinton took froward the work of Hopfield
and developed artificial networks that could
perform much more complex tasks. So, while
Hopfield networks could recognise simple
patterns of shape or sound, Hinton's advanced models could understand voices and
pictures. These neural networks could be

strengthened, and their accuracy at pattern

strengthened, and their accuracy at pattern recognition enhanced, through repeated inputs of data, called training, Hinton developed a method called backpropagation that enabled the artificial neural networks to learn from previous mistakes and improve itself. The process of continuous learning and improvement by training on large datasets led to the development of deep neural networks that contained multiple layers of networks. Hinton demonstrated that deep networks, the complex features and patterns in large datasets. Deep learning is at the heart of modern speech and image recognition, translation, voice assistance and self-driving cars. The power of Hinton's deep networks are

em speech and image recognition, transattion, voice assistance and self-driving cars.

The power of Hinton's deep networks
were most spectacularly demonstrated at
the 2012 ImageNet Visual Recognition
Challenge, a competition organised to test
new technologies in image recognition. A
pattern recognition algorithm using deep
neural networks developed by Hinton and
his students, called AlexNet, showed dramatic improvements in recognising images.

"It was a seminal moment in the development of artificial intelligence. Until then, the
actual utility of these neural networks was not
very well recognised and demonstrated. Now,
of course, machine learning is being used in
a wide variety of fields," said Shrawan Hanasoge
of Department of Astronomy and Astrophysics
at the Tata Institute of Fundamental Research wide variety or neits, said shravan rianasog of Department of Astronomy and Astrophysic at the Tata Institute of Fundamental Research in Mumbai. Hanasoge himself extensively use

inMumbal Hanasoge himself extensively uses machine learning for his study of stars. "We deal with huge amounts of data that are full of possibilities. Machine learning helps us to focus on those datasets which have greater possibilities for new or interest-ing information," he said. 12018, Hinton was award in com-puter science. In fact, Hinton's entire work has been in computer science, unlike Hopfield, who has made contributions to physics, neu-roscience, and biology, Srivastva, the former professor at Hyderabad University, said the Hysics Noble was relevant mainly because Hopfield's 1982 work borrowed from some earlier breakthroughs in physics.

Hophield's 1982 work borrowed from some earlier breakthroughs in physics.

"Hopfield's network was inspired by a physical system called 'spin glass', alloys with some very special properties. The workings of spin glass and its mathematics was mapped on artificial neural networks, 'Srivastava said. This is not the first time that the Nobel Committee had nicked a computer science.

This is not the Irist time tunk ure vious Committee had picked a computer scienc breakthrough for the Nobel Prize in Physics In 2007, the Physics Nobel was awarded fo work that related to data storage devices like hard drives.

## TELLING NUMBERS

## Since 2014 in Haryana, move towards bipolar, tighter BJP-Cong contests

PERFORMANCE OF BJP AND CONGRESS IN HARYANA ASSEMBLY AND LOK SABHA POLLS, 2014-2024

ANJISHNU DAS NEW DELHI, OCTOBER 8

AS THE BJP on Tuesday won a historic third consecutive term in Haryana, data from Lok Sabha and Assembly poils showed that electoral contests in the state have become increasingly bipolar over the last decade. The data also reveal that the gap between the BJP and Congress, the top two parties in the state, has narrowed in the same period, as the regional parties have been increasingly squeezed out.

as the regional parties have been increas-ingly squeezed out. In 2014, the BJP won seven out of Haryana's 10 Lok Sabha seats en route to power at the Centre. While the Congress won just one seat, the O P Chautlal-led Indian National Lok Dal (INLD) wontwo. The BJP led with a 34.8% vote share, followed by the INLD at 24.4% and the Congress at 23%. Months later, the BJP won the Haryana

PARTY WISE SEATS

PARTY WISE VOTE SHARE =

In the 2019 Lok Sabha election, the BJP improved its tally, winning all 10 seats. It won a whopping 5.8.2% of the vote; the Congress got only 28.5%. However, in the Assembly polls, which blook place later that same year, the BJP fell over shares to 36.5% and 28.1% respectively.

PARTY WISE SEATS =

10

PARTY WISE VOTE SHARE =

share (39.9%) in the state. The Congress recorded an improved vote share at 39.1%, but won only 37 seats.

Over the course of the last three Assembly polls, the gap between the Congress and BJP in terms of vote share has shrunk considerably. From being separated by 12.6 percentage points in 2014, the gap is now, just 0.8 percentage points. There is a similar trend in Lok Sabha polls as well. The gap between the two parties shrank from 29.7 percentage points in 2019 to just 2.44 percentage points in 2024.

Asthe BJP-Congress contest has become tighter, the regional parties have lost out. The INID fell from a 24.2% vote share in 2014 to 2.4% in 2019 before making a marginal recovery to 4.4% this year. The JJP, which made a splash in its poll debut, secured a respectable 1.48% vote share in 2019. But this year, it fell below even the INLD, its parent party, to a 0.9% vote share.

## HT-100 **OPINION**



## A new chapter begins in J&K

The onus is on the political mainstream to reciprocate the trust of the voters in electoral democracy and deliver on governance

he National Conference-Congress alliance has won a decisive mandate in the first assembly elections in Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) since the abrogation of Article 370 and after the bifurcation of the state into the Union territories (UT) of J&K and Ladakh. The results are significant for a

host of reasons and will resonate beyond J&K.
To start with, this was one of the most keenly
watched, peaceful, and intensely competitive assembly polls in J&K, with groups such as the Jamaat-e-Islami, which in the past advocated poll boycott, fielding proxy candidates. It led to a large (63.9%) turnout, over 5% more than in the 2024 general elections but a tad lower than the 2014 assembly poll numbers. Clearly, J&K residents are invested in electoral democracy and keen that their elected representatives have a say in the administration. It is also significant that the voters have mostly supported the political mainstream and ignored other voices, especially those perceived to harbour separatist sentiments. The very ordinary performance of Baramulla MP Engineer Rashid's Awami Ittehad Party (AIP) illustrates this trend. The big loser in this election is the regional titan People's Democratic Party (PDP), which has been restricted to just three seats. (PDP), which has been restricted to just three seats, with party supremo Mehbooba Muffris daughter, Iltija Mufti, losing in a party stronghold. In the polarised atmosphere of Kashmir Valley, the PDP's record of running a government in alliance with the BJP went against it and groups like the AIP ate up its radical base. As for the BJP, it can take solace in holding on to its base in the Jammu region, while the Congress has much to introspect, having failed to revive its base south of Pir Panjal.

With elections done, the next step is to restore statehood to J&K at the earliest, as demanded by all political groups in the UT and promised by the Centre. Both the NC, which is set to head the government, and the PDP have promised a revival of Article 370 and the special status it bestows on the UT, but that's a non-starter. The Supreme Court's endorsement of the abrogation should be seen as a closure in the matter,

and the political mainstream must move on.

Linguistic and ethnic sub-nationalisms have thrived in many parts of India without special constitutional provisions or claiming exceptional status. There is a lesson here for the regional parties in J&K even if the region's history is unique. These parties may now have to recalibrate their politics to reflect the new reality and reciprocate the trust citizens have shown in electoral democracy as an instrument for social and economic transformation. The mandate is to govern responsibly: The Lieutenant Governor's office and Centre should ease the task of the government in Srinagar.

## Haryana win points to BJP's resilience

he Bharatiya Janata Party's (BJP) third The Bharatiya Janata Party's (BJF) tund consecutive win in Haryana is remarkable in many ways. It has not only sidestepped anti-incumbency of two terms but has also won more seats compared to its tally (40) in the last legislative assembly. That the party has managed this revival after it lost half the Lok Sabha seats from the state

also makes its performance remarkable. The single-most important factor that seems to have enabled the BJP's stunning reversal of fortunes is an OBC polarisation in its favour. With two-time chief minister Bhupinder Singh Hooda at its helm, the dominant Jat community had consolidated behind the Congress. The BJP turned this to its advantage by mobilising the OBCs and appointing non-Jats, first Manohar Lal Khattar and later, Nayab Singh Saini, as chief ministers. The choice of Saini, the first OBC MLA to be Haryana CM, also helped the party to neutralise anti-incumbency and make the polls a lot more about social engineering than governance. The leadership squabbles in the Congress made its governance pitch unconvincing.

The Haryana outcome will puncture the Opposition narrative that the fall in the BJP's seats in the general elections marks the beginning of a trend, and the beginning of the end. With assembly polls due soon in Maharashtra and Jharkhand, and early next year in Delhi, a win in Haryana would have next year in Deini, a win in Haryana would nave boosted the Opposition's morale. This unexpected downturn — exit polls predicted a BJP defeat — is a sobering lesson for the Opposition, especially the Congress. The BJP will now approach the crucial Maharashtra contest on a high.

# Lessons from Haryana for BJP and Congress

distribution of votes is at the heart of long-term social realignment and the current election results in the state

aryana has delivered a historic verdict. Never before has any party come to power for the consecutive terms. Everyone, from the congress. How did the Bharathya Janata Party (BJP) manage to pull Janata Party (BJP) manage to pull Gauch an impersive victory. It might be tempthing to read the increase in the BJP's vote sharar terms of such as a pro-incumbent vote seat tally as a pro-incumbent vote share t

against the BJP and Wrestling Federation of India heavyweight Brighbushan Sharan Singh were tread by the police must have added some level of resentment against the USA and the Congress was becoming the Bushan Sharan Singh were tread to the Doller State. Finally, the Lok Sabha elections signaled an erosion in the BJP's Dalit voter base and Rahul Gandhi's caste census demand cosaw some traction in the state. In hindsight, it would appear that honored among voter from the Jat community. Not surprisingly, the dominant caste anywhere is more vocal and their desires get echoed as the ground reality. The Congress gained II percentage points from its 2019 share in this election compared to just three percentage points from its 2019 share in this election compared to just three percentage points from its 2019 share in this election compared to just three percentage points from its 2019 share in this election compared to just three percentage points from its 2019 share in this election compared to just three percentage points from its 2019 share in this election compared to just three percentage points from its 2019 share in this election compared to just three percentage points from its 2019 share in this election compared to just three percentage points from its 2019 share in this election compared to just three percentage points from its 2019 share in this election compared to just three percentage points from its 2019 share in this election compared to just three percentage points from its 2019 share in this election compared to just three percentage points from its 2019 share in this election compared to just three percentage points from its 2019 share in this election of the 2019 share in this election of the 2019 share in this election is bare white the state. The 2019 share in this election is bare white the 2019 share in the 2019 shar



The results signal the decline, if not the end, of dominant families in Haryana politics — the three Lais and the Hood af family. These families have been at the hefm of affairs since the formation of the state in 1966. Barring a few short stitute by the content of the state in 1966. Barring a few short stitute by other CMs. these families have woo ther CMs. these families have woo, many have foot. There is some members of these families have woo, many have foot. There is state on these families if the BIP decides to continue with Nayab Singh Saini or some other non-Jat person as the next CM, then this could be the longest time the state has been ruled by a non-Jat CM. The sense of loss of power among the Jats is likely to increase (so will their caccion in different realms), driving apart the wedge between the dominant and non-dominant communities further. But this may will also

put the BJP in a tough situation as far as governance is concerned. What will be the implication of the Haryana verdict on the the properties of the Haryana verdict on the upcoming elections in Maharashtra and Jharkhand? While it is true that each round of elections can tilt the narrative and momentum in favour of the winner, the next round can also overturar this as we have seen in the past one year. The BJP, perhaps, became overconfident after sweeping, the assembly elections in the Hindi heartland states in December 2023. The same applies for the Congress after its improved performance in these parts of the country during the Lok Sabba elections. Parties displaying hubrits and getting alsend of voters is a path to be avoided.

Rahul Verma is fellow, Centre for Policy Research (CPR), New Delhi The views expressed are persona

## In Srinagar, the struggle begins for full statehood

ple's Democratic Party (FDP). If that happens, what can we expect for the trouble'd
former state?

The first question is whether an NC-INC
administration will be allowed to function
smoothly, or will see a Delih-ye situation in
which the lieutenant governor (LG) is consantly seen as impeding the elected government. It is too early to self, but I believe tide government. It is too early to self, but I believe tide government. It is too early to self, but I believe the
Bharafuly Jannas Party (BJP) is more
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Beb thasks are equally important
for the alliance, but weters will look
more to the former. It involves not only
undertaking policy formulation and Implementation in real-time, especially in the
conomy, but also a battle to acquire the
power to do so. Under the new rules of busifunnances, police and the bureaucracy— are
now vested in the LG, reducing the assembly
election, all key powers— over security,
finances, police and the bureaucracy— are
now vested in the LG, office over
every administrative initiative, however
small the issue.
Security will obviously be a major source

have to contend with the LG's office over every administrative initiative, however small the issue. Security will obviously be a major source of friction, given that the elected administration will wish to protect basic evil liberties such as an independent media and the right to dissent or protest, which are at present to dissent or protest, which are at present close when the product of a protect of the pr



Legally, the argument against the phased restoration of statehood is strong. The court did not rule on whether a state could be demoted to a Union territory (UT) because it was told statehood would be restored. Why it did not challenge the phase-by-phase restoration announced by the solitors general is anybody's guess. But if a state cannot be demoted to a UT, then it follows that state-hood cannot be restored in phases. This is a constitutional issue that hood cannot be restored in phases. This is a constitutional issue that the phase of the statehood cannot be restored in phases. This is a constitutional issue that the phase of the statehood filed by two individuals. The other big challenge will be freeing the conomy from state connar to to ensure opportunities for local entrepreneurs and tackle youth unemployment, which is considerably the policies of the past five years, from new land aquisition rules to the grant of mining, consumer goods and tourist licenses to he before them local companies, will yould be a before them local companies, will restore the local companies, will restore the local control to the local companies, will restore the local companies, will restore the local companies, will restore the local companies of the local companies of the local companies of the local companies, will restore the local companies, will accommend the local companies of the local companies o

FAROOD ABDULLAH | PRESIDENT OF J&K NATIONAL CONFERENCE

After 10 years, the people have given 'police raj' here but 'public raj'. We will try to release the innocent from jail. Media will be free. And we have to develop trust between Hindus and Muslims THE

## The agenda for the new government in Haryana

Dil verdicts rarely reflect political thetoric. These, however, are a fair reflection of challenges and societal faul lines
that political parties must address.
Regardless of who does the martie, focusing on
the issues thrown up in the electoral charming
is the sine qua non of good governance, As a
there is the partie of the provident of the result of the
adjus Januata Party (Rill) government must promakes the partie of the provident of the real
trip's it sting economic power.
The inter truth, however, is that a changing
continue to the providence of the providence of rushed and imprudent govremace. It is were one political parties
to all only in the diameter
than the providence of the providence of the political screen does not alter governance to be
the son key issues that the state faces.
The political versue to step back reflect
and build a consense of political parties
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from the service sector that planned urban development alone can encourage. Livesible elises attract business, human talent, entrepreneurship, and economic prosperity.

Inadequate public investment and lack of factors of consultation of the properties. In the properties of the prop



### INDIA JOB MARKET

Union labour & employment minister Mansukh Mandaviya

When compared to its peers, India stands much better today, thanks to a series of government steps taken over the years

## A year after in Gaza

Sadly, a cessation of hostilities that can prevent a wider regional conflict is not in prospect

HE GAZA WAR that was triggered by the incursion of Hamas forces into Israel killing 1,200 people and taking 250 hostages on October 7, 2023, still rages. Normally, such anniversaries are sombre affairs marked by remembrances of one's lost and renewed hopes of getting the surviving hostages back home. Sadly, however, the occasion was marked by intensified bombing by Israel in Gaza adding to the tally of 42,000 Palestinians already killed, mostly women and children. Nearly all the 2.3 million people have been displaced. Gaza has been reduced to a dystopian, rubble-strewn wasteland due to the relentless bombing over a year. The war threatens full-blown famine conditions and a humanitarian disaster as ald inflows are down to a trickle. The only silver lining has been a temporary pause to allow poliovaccination for children. While Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has vowed to continue the battle till Hamas is "totally destroyed", he has opened a new front in Lebanon targeting Hezbollah, besides gearing up for a punitive strike on Iran for launching precision ballistic missiles on Israel.

Wars do not end unless the parties involved feel the need to silence their guns as they cannot achieve their military objectives. Alas, this does not seem to be the case at present although the top leadership of Hamas, barring the military and political head, Yahya Sinwar, has been taken out

not seem to be the case at present almough the top leadership or ramas, barring the military and political head, yahy Sinwar, has been taken out and most of the militant group's 24 battalions, each about 1,000 strong, have been dismantled by Israeli forces. Much of Hamas's vast tunnel infra-structure in Gaza has also been destroyed. Despite Israel's military gains over the last year — which resulted in a sharp shift in international opinover the last year — which resulted in a sharp sint in international opin-ion including protests in US campuses — Netanyahu has expressed lim-ited interest in a ceasefire deal that would allow the exchange of 100-plus surviving Israeli hostages in Gaza for Palestinian prisoners in Israeli jails. The prospects of a ceasefire are elusive as there is also no clarity whatso-ever on who will administer and rebuild Gaza if and when the war ends. Netanyahu, who is politically backed by ultranationalists and religious extremists, has no appetite for a two-state solution in which Israelis and Palestinians will coexist peacefully.
The Israel-Hamas conflict will therefore continue unabated amidst dangerous portends of a full-blown regional war in which the US—with

dangerous portends of a full-blown regional war in which the US—with presidential elections less a month away—might be forced to be involved in. The US is not exactly a disinterested peacemaker in Gaza given its iron-clad commitment to support Israel's right to defend itself by providing billions of dollars of weaponry. But the fact remains that the Gaza war could have ended earlier if America used its leverage over Tel Aviv to implecould have ended earlier if America used its leverage over 'Tel Aviv to imple-ment its three-phase ceasefire proposal in May. Taking its support for granted, Israel instead violated every red line that the US indicated — like desisting from invading Rafah — to minimise civilian casualties. Israel added fresh conditions while Hamas sought a permanent ceasefire and a higher number of Palestinian prisoners for every Israeli hostage released that scuppered the US deal. Netanyahu reportedly plans to force civilians out of northern Gaza and put Hamas militants who remain in the area under siege in order to force the release of hostages. The upshot is that the intensification of the year-long conflict is bad news for Gazans, who have been collectively punished for what Hamas did last October, and the anxious relatives of surviving Israeli hostages. anxious relatives of surviving Israeli hostages

## Tencent bid for Assassin's Creed needs a leap of faith

ONE OF THE highlights of Ubisoft Entertainment SA's Assassin's Creed game series is the "leap of faith", when the hooded main character takes a stomachruning dive from the rooftops and always lands safely in a conveniently placed haybale. That appears to be what Ubisoft's long-suffering shareholders are being promised as the Guillemot founding family and Tencent Holdings L1d. Consider options including a potential buyout, after an 80% share-price meltdown in five years. But a safe exit is far from assured.

It's clear that something heroic is needed from the Guillemots, who began a partnership with Tencent in 2018 as a way to consolidate their grip and fend off predators like Vivendi SA. Alot has gone wrong since, with Ubisoft's enterprise value relative to underlying earnings dropping to the lowest among peers after a recent profit warning. Several game cancellations, flops, and the disappointment of Star Wars Outlaus show the firm struggling to keep up in a market where game development is prohibitively expensive and the fight for customer attention is getting tougher. The decision to delay the next instalment of Assassin's Creard to 2025 shows panic seeping into its most bankable property, which featured heavily at the Paris Olympics alongside other soft-power icons such as IVAH 15E.

A takeover or take-private would, in theory, allow Ubisoft the time and space needed to sugueze more money out of list classic franchiess and cut costs; on a peremployee basis, it makes a fraction of the revenue of Nintendo Co. or Grand Theft Astonies of Commentary Didder in an increasingly protectionist world less willings to wave through excess-ported cells, as Bloomberg Intelligence's Nathan Naidunotes. Tencent ivo along with the US and China, Ubisoft takeover and with less visibility, as Europe tries to narrow a tech gap with the US and China, Ubisoft value of a Ubisoft takeover and with less visibility, as Europe tries to narrow a tech gap with the US and China, Ubisoft value of a Ubisoft takeover and with less visibility,



CLOSE RACE

CAN TRUMP PULL OFF ONE OF THE MOST SPECTACULAR COMEBACKS OR WILL HARRIS CREATE HISTORY?

## A historic US election

VERY ELECTION IS distinct and noteworthy. The US presidential elections are no exception. But the 2024 and of colour, second person of colour (after Barack Obama), and second woman (after Hillary Clinton) to be a major party nominee for President. Clearly, more significant history will be made if Harris prevails in the election. However, there are numerous more unique characteristics of the 2024 face. The manner in which Harris replaced President joe Biden as the Democratic Party's nominee is a story worthy of a political thriller. Biden was increasingly trailing Republican nominee Donald Trump in the race between the two elderly men. Then came the historic June 27 Trump-Biden presidential debate in Atlanta, in which Biden had an abject performance that turned the race upside down and ultimately led to his decision to withdraw from consideration for re-election. A few minutes into the debate, in fact, there was a deep, wide, and extremely aggressive panic in the Democratic Party, and some within the party started demanding for Presidential denay by the presidential charty and some within the party started demanding for Presidential campalgn right then.

Though incredibly unexpected. Biden's withdraw from the presidential debates are generally negligible. Whatefaval was a landmark moment in US history. As many experts claim, the consequences of presidential debates are generally negligible. Whatever the case, there has never been a presidential debate in a merican history that has been as significant as this one, perhaps.

But one would wonder how Biden, arguably one of the most seasoned politicians alleve, could perform so poorly in a prescheduled presidential

**ATANU BISWAS** 

Professor of statistics

debate. Whatever the situation, the Trump-Biden debate effectively shifted the balance of power in the Democrats' favour — something that might not have been as simple, perhaps, if Harris had been chosen as the Democratic nominee at the outset. Interestingly, Harris was up for the Democratic candidacy in the 2020 election. But even before the primaries, on December 3, 2019, she pulled out of the context. A few candi-

on December 3, 2019, she the contest. A few candidates competed in the brief Democratic primaries in 2024, but Harris was not among them. Therefore, one can question what Harris' chances of winning the Democratic nomination would have been in the would have been in the event of a full-fledged

event of a full-fledged primary, as there was in 2020. And what would have been the outcome of the opinion polls on her chances if she had won a regular Democratic primary?

This year, however, is unique in that nearly veevy delegate chosen to support Biden in the primaries is now supporting Harris, even though she was not included on any primary ballot. It's possible that Harris was also fortunate in that she didn't have to undergo a party nomination to succeed Biden, as other

contenders swiftly jumped at the chance to support her before the Demo-cratic National Convention. That ele-vated Harris to the status of a formidable contender who might win the race in the end. Perhaps this would not have been the case if Biden's extremely dra-matic exit had not occurred during the nomination process.

matic exit had not occurred uniformination process.
And then there is Trump, who can never be written off despite having been impeached twice and being found guilty of 34 elonies. Currently, he is facing multiple legal saces and is being accused of lying on numerous occasions. But even affectioning the The Trump-Biden debate effectively shifted the balance of power to the numerous occasions. But even after losing the 2020 election, he retained firm control that might not have ominee
om Kamala Harris had been chosen as the nominee

regardless of the results of the Novem-ber 5 election. In fact, as many believe, Trump may benefit if the election is taken to court. benefit if the election is taken to court. Currently, six of the nine justices on the US Supreme Court were chosen by Republican presidents. Furthermore, it's widely discussed in American soci-ety how loyal judges are to the president and the party that appointed them. Politically speaking, it's still a close race overall. Numerous polls show that the difference between support for Trump and Harris is largely within the customary 396 margin of error. Also, in the US electoral college system, where a state is won as a whole, it makes little difference if one leads by one or two percentage points nationally. Ask Hillary Clinton; she would wouch for it. As everyone knows, the US presidential elections are truly won or lost by a small number of swing states, or battlegrounds, where the candidates are separated by as little as one or two percentage points. In 2024, Pennsylvania, Nevada, North Carollia, Georgia, Articana, Michigan, and Wisconsin are such swing states.

Again, opinion polls frequently yield inaccurate evaluations of the outcome. Polls grossly misrepresented the popular vote at any point in the election year in 1948, 1980, 1992, and 2012. Moreover, polls underestimated the election year in 1948, 1980, 1992, and 2012. Moreover, polls underestimated the sample consists of red and blue elections, and with the sample consists of red and blue balls selected from an infinite population. However, humans don't behave, in any event, like balls. The majority of individuals never answer surveys. Additionally, respondents may lie polisters or after their preferences. And pollsters must make educated guesses about the likely voters in their sample. During his final hours as president in lanuary 2021, Trump told his supporters, "So just a goodbye. We loveyou. We will be back his some form', perhaps in the vein of the Frank Sinatra classic with the polistory or an election of the form of the most spectacular political comebacks in this political comebacks in still open to anyone.

## New beginnings and old complexities President Muizzu's India visit will likely pave the way

and projects that

use to move away from India



**HARSH V PANT** 

Vice-president for studies and foreign policy, ORF, Delhi

A YEAR AFTER being elected President of the Maldives, Mohamed Muizzu is on his first official state visit to India. From his early days, the Muizzu administration was keen on reducing dependence on India, diversifying relations with other was all the company of the president of the control on India, diversifying relations with others, and expanding cooperation with China. Muizzu also went on to call India a "bully" and for long defended his party cadres who hutled racist remarks against India and Prilme Minister Naren-fax Modi. In this regard, the visit aims to infuse some fresh energy into bilaterist aims to infuse some fresh energy into bilaterist for both countries, with the Maldives receiving much-needed financial relief and India making further inroads into the country. This visit will likely pawe the way for more cooperation between both nations. That said, for all pragmatic pur-

the country. This visit will likely pave the way for more cooperation between both nations. That said, for all pragmatic purposes, the Maldvies will continue to balance India and China. When President Muizzu got elected to power after his party's prolonged "India Out" campaign, his administration had hoped that China would offer newloans, restructure existing ones, and tion had hoped that China would offer new loans, restructure existing ones, and help fulfill their campaign promises through funds and investments. In January, when Muizzu visited China for his first state visit, he signed 20 MoUs and upgraded the relations to a comprehensive strategic partnership. He also joined He Global Security initiative and agreed to revive the free trade agreement [FFA] and the Belt and Road Initiative projects. In the following weeks, he signed a defence pact and permitted the docking of a spy exsel in Madi. He also let China establish an agricultural zone on the

Uthuru Thila Falhu-Island where India is building a naval harbour, and also contracted a Chinese firm to upgrade the Kadhdhoo airport where Indian technicans are operating a helicopter. The reason, apart from ideological leanings, was that the Maldives' economy was already in a bad state. Even in his initial meetings, Muizzu had requested Indian and Chinese envoys to restructure debts. Structural issues, maturing debts from private creditors and China, Muizzu's initial investment promises, and subsequent poblitical appointments exacerbated the crisis. As of March, the Maldives debt-to-GDP ratio was 110%, and as of September the foreign reserves were \$346 million (worth a \$346 million (worth a \$346 million (worth a \$345 million (worth a \$3

Delhi has managed to retrieve several initiatives, sectors,

and as of September the foreign reserves were \$360 million (worth a month's import). But despite economic hardships and the continuous wooling of China, Beiling is hesitant to offer new loans and slow in debt restructuring. Today, the Maddives owes around \$1.1 billion (of \$8\text{ billion total debt) to China. On the other hand, India's response and accommodative policy like high-level engagements, replacing military personnel with technicians, increased export quotas, motivated Malé to approach India again. The visit of Mossa Zameer, the them Maldivian foreign milister, in May indicated the rethink. The momentum was sustained with back-to-back high-level visits, followed

up by India rolling over two treasury bills worth \$100 million. India also offered over \$29 million in loans in early 2024, despite difficulties in the relationship. Furthermore, with \$69\circ of Indian loans yet to be disbursed the Maldives saw engagement with India as an imperative, paving the way for the ongoing visit. The visit has been mutually beneficial, especially with the signing/renewal Economic and Maritime Security Particular of Mols, adapting the Comprehensive Economic and Maritime Security Farticular of Indian Security Particular of Indian Security Particu

for more cooperation. But for all pragmatic purposes,

the Maldives will continue to balance India and China

nations will increase polit ical engagements, devel opment partnerships, capacity-building, people-to-people relations, busi-ness engagements, and digital connectivity. For the economically

digital connectivity.

For the economically struggling Maldives, india's currency swap of \$750 million (\$400 million and engotiate the FTA and discuss trading in local currencies. With India being one of the top sources of exports to the Maldives, the FTA is likely to benefit the latter the most. Furthermore, the possibility of trading in local currency with India's credit line and the FTA will make trade easier and cheaper for the Maldivarde easier and cheaper for t India's credit line and the FIA will make trade easier and cheaper for the Mal-dives. It will also reduce the burden of generating and using foreign reserves. For India, the visit has created addi-tional leverage. It has managed to

retrieve several initiatives, sectors, and projects that Muizzu wanted to use to move away from India. For instance, India will be helping the Maldives with health cooperation, defence platforms, surveillance capacities, information-sharing, and hydrographie surveying. Similarly, India has expressed interest in developing Thiafushi port, Investing in the economic gateway project, and extending the Greater Malé Connectivity bridge. India will also now have a consulate in Addu — the southermost atoll of the Maldives — which will be crucial of the Maldives — which will be crucial for development and strategic purposes. This initiative was also highly politicised by Muizzu's party when in opposition. In this regard, the visit has put India-Maldives relations on the right trac India's timely assistance has generated an image of being a first responder and reliant partner, and this will compel Muizzu to be more sensitive to India's concerns and interests, thereby paving the way for more cooperation. That said, the Maldives will continue to exercise agency to further its security, strategic, and economic interests.

the Maldives will continue to exercise agency to further its security, strategic, and economic interests. It realises that China has a potential to invest, and their restructuring will be crucial for the Maldives to escape a crisis. As a result, realpolitikand agency will be at the heart of the Maldives' forceign policy — and as a lindia-China competition intensifies, it will explore ways to maxmisse its benefits and interests from both countries.

Co-authored with Aditya G Shivamurthy, associate fellow with ORF's Strategic Studies Programme

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

## Illusory growth

India's per capita income has seen substantial growth, reaching \$2,730 in 2024, with projections of an additional \$2,000 increase over the next five years, as announced by a Union Minister. However, while these figures may seem encouraging, they mask deeper concerns such as the nation's persistent economic inequality and persistent economic inequality and the neglect of human development indicators. Data from the World Bank

shows that India's per capita income rose from \$711 in 2005 to \$1,351 by rose from \$71.1 in 2005 to \$1,351 by 2010, and continued to grow. Despite these gains, India's global ranking remains low at 136th in per capita income. The World Bank's analysis also highlights the long road ahead for India to catch up with developed nations. It estimates that at the current growth rate, India will take 75 years to reach just a quarter of the United States' income level. While India's leadership aims to transform

the country into a developed economy, replicating the rapid growth of countries like South Korea remains a formidable task. —Amarjeet Kumar, Hazaribagh

## Losing out on FDI

Apropos of "Foreign capital for growth" (FE, October 7), the decline in foreign direct investment (FDI) over the past few years bodes ill for India's economic growth and makes the 7.2% GDP growth number

unsustainable. Instead of constantly patting itself on the back, the government must try to find out why india is losing out on FDI despite the many advantages, and take measures to plug the deficiencies in attracting foreign inflows. There is something on the minds of foreign investors that prevents them from investing in India. The sooner we find out, the better.

—Anthony Henriques, Maharashtra

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## THE ASIAN AGE

9 OCTOBER 2024

## Complacency, factionalism in Cong aided BJP Haryana win

Cong aided BJP Haryana win

The decisive victory of the BJP in the Haryana elections hitting a hat-trick
points to the ability of the saffron party to quickly reorganise itself even in
the finion Territory of Jammu and Kashmir once again proves why it is
important to put up a united fight against a powerful opponent, especially on an
uneven playground.

The BJP had sensed the trouble anti-incumbency could bring to its electoral fortimes as it had been in power for two consecutive terms. Knowing this, it decided
to change its chief minister midway in the second term. There is nothing new in
states and found successful. Credit must be given to Mr Nayah Singh, Saini as chief
minister who has turned the tables on a re-energised Congress after the Lok Sabha
tates and found successful. Credit must be given to Mr Nayah Singh, Saini as chief
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tates and found successful. Credit must be given to Mr Nayah Singh, Saini as chief
minister who has turned the tables on a re-energised Congress after the Lok Sabha
that plague their lives has been the factor that helpad the BJP coast to victory.

The Congress has, over a long period of time, perfected the art of snatching defeat
from the jaws of victory, and Haryana proved to be just another example. The
ground was perfectly prepared for an Opposition party to have a good harvest
given the people's disgruntlement with the ruling party owing to unemployment,
given the people's discendant and the second the propulation turn
against the party, which included the treatment of
as the INLD, JJP and
even the new entrant
AAP, which have
practically been
decimated

people's disenchantment with smaller players, such as the NILD, Jannayak, Janta
such properties of the party high command was either biasulpation of Article 370 of the Constitution, has been on predicted lines. The National
Conference and the Congress will be in a position to form government or the
tate began to play its favourite game — that o

numerates threat.

Now that the people have spoken their mind, the remaining agenda for the Union Territory is the restoration of its statehood. The Indian State owes it to the people of Jammu and Kashmir, and there is no justification in delaying it further. It is time to let them be part of the Union of India with all the rights and privileges of the citizens of the republic.

## India mends Maldives ties

The many positive signals emanating from Maldives president Mohamed Muizzu's visit to New Delhi indicate that strained thes are not only being patched up but also that the relationship is being pushed to a higher plane with trade pact talks on the careful existing the president of the part of

terms of a currency swep of the control of the cont

### THE ASIAN AGE

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## Cong fatal flaws exposed by Haryana shock defeat



Shikha Mukerjee

he Congress, by handing the BJP a walkover in Haryana with a power and the status of representing the status of representing the vulnerable Hindus in Jammu as well as in Kashmir, has given the Narendra Modiled party the morale booster it needed after the shock of the 2024 Lok Sabha election. In doing so, the Congress has been irresponsible and failed in Industry and the state of the same proposition of the same proposition and its Indian National Developmental Inclusive Alliance. As the challenger, the Congress has not failed to disappoint, succeeding in snatching defeat from victory in Haryana where it was in a straight fight up to the same proposition of the same power in the same proposition of the same proposition of the same proposition of the same power in the same proposition of t

Conference, winning a set of the conference, winning a set union territory, securing it the cachet of the largest single party, means it is mandated to represent the people as a whole. It undermines to an extent the BJP's claims to be the guardian angle of Jammu, though not its champinority in its relentless drive to advocate divisive majoritarian politics.

The Congress' abysmal performance confirms that there are fatal flaws in its organisation and leadership that, going forward, could have disastrous consequences. In Markhand, where Assembly elections will be held soon. The seart-sharing discussions that seemed to have reached the finalisation stage in Maharashtra between the Congress, the Sharad Pawar-led Sharad Pawar-led Shiv Sena will have to be renegotiations.

ed. The Congress' failure to convert its 40 per cent of convert its 40 per cent was converted into its biggest electronal victoria, and management of electrons, more so because the BJP's vote share of 40 per cent was converted into its biggest electronal victoria of the converted into its biggest electronal victoria of the converted into its biggest electronal victoria of the congress for introspect, however pointless the exercise may be. The issue is not about what others make of the Congress in introspect, however pointless the exercise may be. The issue is not about what others make of the Congress in the value of the congress as an organisation and as the instrument of its success or its failures. The contrast with the BJP is stark. It bears repeating that in preparing for the election of the value of the

A weaker Congres after its shocking defeat in Haryana push as hard as it push as hard as it should to pin the Modi government down on making good on the promise to restore statehood to J&K

party by taking control over ticket distribution and then it ensured that the anti-incumbency votes were neutralised by putting up rebels and dissidents as Independent candidates. In contrast, the Congress could not even risk rubbing Mr Hooda up the wrong way by insisting on collective leadership in the campaign by pooling the strength of its multiple leaders.

strength of its multiple strength of its multiple strength of its multiple as strength of its multiple as a strength of its multiple strength of its own that matter, the best of charismatic leaders, can save the Congress from its own stupidity, if it does not want to learn from its own history of bad decisions. By losing out in Haryana and merely registering its presence in Jammu and Kashmir, the Congress has done significant damage to the larger cause of providing leadership and bolstering the strength of the anti-BJP Opposition and its platform, the INDIA bloc.

After the 2024 Lok Sabha elections, the Congress' failure to add to the tally of the IRDIA bloc by winning in Haryana and doing well in Jammu and Kashmir equals weaken

doing well in Jammu and Kashmir equals weaker ing the collective espacing the collection are due. The Congress by its actions has proved that it is neither a strong challenger to the BJP on its own nor a dependable partner in an alliance with regional parties at the state level. At stake are issues critical to the idea of india's democracy, its secularism

democracy, its secularism and the dislocation of its trajectory of pro-poor poli-cies and overall develop-ment. For starters, a weak-er Congress after its

shocking defeat in Har-yana means that it cannot push as hard as it should to pin the Narendra Modi government down on making good on the pro-mise to restore statehood to Jammu and Kashmir. The Haryana loss has also compromised Rahul

The Haryana loss has also compromised Rahul Gandhi's position as the Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha. It also bodes ill for the fight that is necessary to government from moving ahead with the One Nation-One Election agenda. The BJP's win, on the contrary, enables it to push forward with its agenda of unrolling a Uniform Civil Code, as its governments. governments Uttarakhand and Assa

Otherandiate and research have promised to do at the earliest. It embeddens the earliest. It embeddens the earliest. It embeddens the earliest. It embeddens the court's orders banning buildozer politics as a form of punishment on vulnerable communities, targeting the Muslim minority. It allows the Modi government to go ahead with the communally divisive National Register of Citizens by making it an issue in the Jharkhand election by raking up fears among the property of the

sive BH will be a much tougher proposition for the INDIA bloc, of which the Congress is the biggest stakeholder. The party has to decide if it has the appetite and the stamina to carry on a no holds-barred fight up to the 2029 Lok Sabha elections.

Shikha Mukerjee is a

sincerity of Tamil Nadu CM M.K. Stalin's anguish over the death of spectators at Marina Beach during the air show on Sunday the 6th, but at the same time, being a senior leader, he should have foreseen the tragedy. Since the deaths were caused due to dehydration, the state government should have arranged for water booths at many points. Moreover, this event was planned at a most inappropriate time, when the sun is at its acme. Like in 2003, it should taken place around 4 pm. The Southern Railways, too, goofed up by not running more trains from Velachery and back, as they

## **EXIT POLLS WRONG**

THE CONTEST in Haryana seems to have gone differently from what the exit poils predicted. The BJP has maintained a significant lead since the counting of EVMs began, and continued to lead on 49 seats for the last five hours of counting. The exit poils had predicted a majority for the Congress. The BJP having managed a historic third straight win in Haryana, it is a vindication of its tried and tested electoral arithmetic, consolidating all non-Jat votes.

Chakdaha, West Bengal

## REFORM AGRI POLICY

REFORM AGRI POLICY

A STUDY by the Reserve Bank of India reveals that when the prices of onions, tomatoes, and potatoes increase by one rupee, farmers receive only 36, 33, and 37 paise, respectively, highlighting inefficiencies in agricultural marketing. The RBI has urged the government to strengthen agricultural marketing, promote e-commerce, and support private markets, as rising food prices are driving inflation. In contrast, pulses like gram, moons, and prices are driving inflation. In contrast, pulses like gram, moons, and the prices are driving inflation in contrast, pulses like gram, moons, and the prices are driving inflation in contrast, pulses like gram, moons, and the prices are driving inflation in the dairy sector, where cooperative organisations allow milk farmers to earn 65-70 paise per rupee increase. These findings underscore the need for better cold chain infrastructure and policy adjustments to ensure fair returns for farmers.

\*\*Amarjeet Kumar\*\*
\*\*Hazaribagh\*\*



As Israel's offensive up in Gaza, Lebanon; full-scale Mideast war may be weeks away The Middle East is precariously poised on the brink of a full-blown regional war that has been widely feared for months. Israel's assassination of Hamas and Heabdlah leaders and an Iranian Revolutionary Guard commander as well as its invasion of Lebanon put Iran in a bind, leaving it with little choice but to respond. And respond it did by raining a barrage of missiles that it had the capability and reach to punish Israel that it had the capability and reach to punish Israel for its murderous actions and me-stablish a level of deterrence. It was also designed to push the US to rein in Israel.

Tehran's hand was forced by Israel's unrelenting aggressive actions even though Iranian leaders repeatedly stated they had no interest in entering a conflict which they saw as a trap by Tel Avit' to reiterated this after the missile attack. At a press conference in Doha, he declared Iran did not seek a war. It had shown patience but that elacological leared to act with greater impunity.

In remarks to a Cabinet meeting, he disclosed that Western powers had urged Tehran to exercise restraint after the assessination of Hamas chief small Hamyshe, holding out the promise of a cease-fire in Gaza. The truce didn't happen while Israel's continuing military offensive in Gaza warned of a continuing military offensive in the Gaza warned of a con

tougher response if Isruel attacked Iran but stressed the need to prevent the crisis from exclusing. Isruel of course threatened retailation for Iran's ballistic missile attack with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu saying Tebran made a big mistake and will "pay for it." While Tel a visi se reported to be assessing several military options the region is on a knife-edge. This dangerous situation prompted UN Secretary-General António Guterres to call for efforts to prevent an all-out war, which would have "profound and devastating conterres to call for efforts to prevent an all-out war, which would have "profound and devastating concurrence of the region. He told an emergency UN Security Council meeting that "the raging fires in the Middle East One scenario is that tife bort at actions between Iran and Israel take place in a measured way while the international community weighs in decisively to ensure that confrontation between the two foes remains limited There is indicared its backing for Although Washington has declared its backing for action and said it is considering sanctions against Iran, President dee Biden is urging Tel Aviv to "respond in proportion".

The US and its G7 allies have cautioned Mr Netanyahu against an attack on Iran's nuclear facilities, which would mark a major escalation. Mr

Biden has made it clear he will not support an Israeli strike on Iran's nuclear sites. As for Israel targeting Iran's oil facilities, Mr Biden first said he had discussed that possibility. But later he claimed he had advised Israel to consider "other alternatives" to oilfield strikes.

Such an attack would shake the global energives "to oilfield strikes. Such an attack would shake the global energives" to oilfield strikes. Such an attack would shake the global energianted and rising especially after Mr Biden's carrier remarks. Would Washington really warst American consumers to face higher oil prices at election time in the US? Disruption in oil supplies would have global repercussions. Half of China's oil imports, for example, come from the Middle East, including from Iran.

The other scenario is of a massive attack by Israel

imports, for example, come from the shoider least; including from fran.

The other scenario is of amassive attack by Israel followed by equally strong retailation by Iran, which descends into a no-holds barred military confrontation. It is possible that ungings for proportionality from its Western benefactors including a translation of the proposition o

could include targeting Israeli infrastructure. Iran's armed allies in the axis of resistance are already threatening to intensify their operations against Israel. In the worst-case scenario, a full-blown war could erupt with unpredictable consequences for the residen.

could crupt with unpredictable consequences for the region.

While the region and the world wait to see how the Israel-Iran confrontation will play out, Israel has continued its fierce military campaign in Gaza, bombing schools, refugee camps and an orphunage, with the death foil now exceeding 4,1,000. If has car-loglections, with over 2,000 people killed in Israell attacks, Israeli air strikes continue to pound Beirut. No condemnations are heard from Western govern-ments of Israel's aggressive actions on multiple fronts.

ments of Israel's aggressive account fronts.
Meanwhile, the Western media still reports these developments from an extremely biased lens. Interviews with freed hostages and killings of lensel isolaters receive prominent coverage, while read isolaters receive prominent coverage, while report in Gaza are mostly ignored.

The fate of the Middle East hangs in the balance. The coming weeks will determine if a wider war can be avoided or whether the region will descend into a deadly conflagration.













