# HTOO **OPINION**



### A risk-averse pivot by RBI

Geopolitics calls for caution, but are high interest rates justified when inflation is being driven by food prices?

he Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) has left he Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) has left the policy rate unchanged at 6.5%. This is the tenth consecutive time the MPC has left interest rates unchanged since it last raised them in February 2023. Monetary policy's stance, however, has been changed from the withdrawal of accommodation to neutral in the latest meeting. This is the first change in policy stance since June 2022. Both these decisions are on expected lines and most analysts believe that the MPC will begin bringing down interest rates from its December meeting. But would it not have been better to cut interest rates

in October itself?
The MPC itself has noted that the economy is in a good place as far as growth-inflation balance is concerned. The former is robust and the latter seems to be finally aligning with the 4% target. Annual projections for both growth (7.2%) and inflation (4.5%) have not changed between the August and October meetings of the MPC. Also, the reason why the inflation is still high is food prices, which has very little to do with monetary policy. The positive rhetoric about growth notwithstanding, it would be wrong to argue that interest rates that have been high for long have not hurr growth on both consumer and investment fronts.

The key question then is whether the MPC's staggered pivot — first stance, then rates — is unnecessarily risk-averse behaviour. This newspaper would have argued on these lines even a month ago. But geopolitical and hence economic waters have become significantly muddier in the last few weeks because of the escalation of hostilities in West Asia. Brent crude prices have surged from \$70 per to \$80 per barrel in the last month or so and continue to be volatile. The presidential election results in the US, especially if Donald Trump manages to take the White House once again, could notch up the policy uncertainty dial even more. Hopefully, the MPC will have more clarity about both these questions when it meets next in December and this is reason enough to make a campblic pixel rather than our trate and elaw. make a symbolic pivot rather than cut rates and change

policy stance together.

To be sure, this temporary rationale does nothing to do away with the more fundamental dilemma facing the larger economic policy environment: Are high interest rates justified when inflation is being driven by food prices?

### Dominant parties and niche brands

ssembly elections in Haryana and Jammu and Kashmir were a crowded affair with numerous political groups fielding candidates. But the new legislative assemblies reveal a near bipolar picture, with the BJP and Congress dominating in Haryana and the National Conference (NC), its ally Congress, and the BJP filling in J&K. Among those vanquished are the People's Democratic Party and Indian National Lok Dal, which have led governments. Add to this the Jannayak Janta Party, Awami Ittehad Party, and J&K People's Conference, and evidence of a political bloodbath emerges.

Voters are no longer willing to back inconsequential Voters are no longer willing to back inconsequential players in an electoral battle. Nothing in politics is etched in stone, and this trend too is unlikely to be permanent or uniformly replicated across the country. What is true, however, is regional politics tends to see pulls and pressures for and against large umbrella parties and niche regional brands. In Haryana and J&K. the pull was in favour of the big players, which offered to be umbrella parties, appealing to almost everyone. In Haryana, the polarisation and subsequent mobilisation seem to have favoured this trend — the mobilisation seem to have favoured this trend - the Congress, despite its historical legacy as a big tent, lost to the BJP because it was seen as the voice of a single dominant caste. In J&K, a similar trend favoured the

dominant caste. In J&K, a similar trend favoured the NC and BJP in Kashmir and Jammu respectively. Small parties, however, are important because, in their best avatars, they represent interests! groups that appear marginal to dominant parties. In some states, especially when there is a pull in their favour on account of mobilisations, they are co-opted by a dominant party as allies — in Tamil Nadu, for instance, the DMK and ALDMK have been generous in accommodating smaller parties in alliances. Dominant parties in Maharashtra, where elections are due, are wundering if they can be agregators on are due, are wondering if they can be aggregators on their own or need to rope in marginal players.

# Case for compassion guiding the judiciary

about applying laws in a rigid, mechanical manner. It involves a deeper engagement with the human condition

the human condition

am often asked the following questions: Having fought for freedom and justice all your life, with a recommendation of the decision of the decision of the decision of the procession contradictory? Can the strong hand of the judiciary emerge from a place of deep compassion? These are valid questions.

The principle of justice is foundational to a civilised society. It is indispensable. Compassion is the inner manifestation of this connectedness. It is the deepest feeling of connection with the suffering of someone as if it were your own, with the compelling of the compassion to the compelling of the compassion to the device of the contradictory of the compassion to the device of the deliverance of justice. To understand the relationship between compassion and justice, consider this metaphor. When prehistoric man reasked that he needed to get to a more active that the needed to get to a form the deliverance of justice. To understand the relationship will be the complete of the deliverance of justice. To understand the relationship between compassion and justice, consider this metaphor. When prehistoric man reasked that he needed to get to a form the deliverance of justice. To understand the velocities of the deliverance of justice, the prehistoric man reasked that he needed to get to a form the deliverance of justice, consider this metaphor. When prehistoric man reasked that he needed to get to a form the deliverance of particles of the deliverance of justice, and the prehistoric man reasked that he needed to get to a form the deliverance of the deliverance of particles and the prehistoric man reasked that the needed to get to a form the deliverance of the d

The absence of fuel renders even the most expensive whiche inoperative. In this metaphor, the parh symbolises the Constitution and laws that pave the way for a just society, the ever-evolving and improving which is akin to justice delivery systems—governance, police and court systems. These systems carry citzens through the laid-out path towards an ideal society. Finally, the function of the fuel is comparable to companion within the

ety. Finally, the function of it comparable to compassion we justice delivery system. Con will be the energy source even for the strictest of laws and most robust institutions. Just as a car has little use without fuel, the justice delivery system will not achieve true justice without compassion. Compassion. Little with the con-traction of the contraction of the time that the contraction of the con-traction of the contraction of the contraction of the con-traction of the contraction of the contraction of the con-traction of the con-traction of the contraction of the contraction of the con-trac

tice delivery systems, to instal-latification of the compassion. At a recent event, justice Sanjiy Khanna shared his beliefs about the critical need for a compassionate jud-ciary. Many judges eech his vision for justice delivery in India, opening up innumerable awenues for justice that reach the most marginalised in our country.

The absence of compassion within the judiciary and its repercussions are visible in plain sight. A study con-ducted by our eganisation, the Kai-lash Satyarthi Children's Foundation, ducted by our eganisation, the Kai-lash Satyarthi Children's Foundation, found that the mumber of child sexual abuse cases pending trial has increased from about 71,000 in 2007 to about 226,000 at the end of 2023. At the same time, several undertrials who mostly belong to marginalised sections

are languishing in jail, often without hearings or even FIRs. These are only examples. The property of the pro



We need justice delivery systems to i

We need justice delivery systems to in where a simple handwritten letter by a concerned citizen was admitted as a PIL in India, allowing a common person to approach the highest court of the country with any instance of violation of constitutional rights. Cases like these were known, but it was justice Bhagwards compassion that drove him to take the extra step to make the high-tip control to take the extra step to make the high-tip control to take the extra step to make the high-tip control to the control to the

timely justice delivery without bias or corruption. Their appointments can be conducted based on their compassion quotient, which we are now develop ing. Their performance must be evalu ated against their ability to demon strate compassion in their orders and

and the person their ability to demonstrate comparison in their orders and interactions.

Justice is not merely about applying laws in a rigid, mechanical manner, it intolves a deeper engagement with the human condition, recognising the suffering and hardship experienced by those who seek legal recourse. Compassion in the judiciary does not imply a compromise of legal principles or an erosion of objectivity and exactress. It encourages judges to adhere to the law, to interpret legal provisions in ways that uphold human rights.

Undoubtedly, we need to continuously strengthen our laws and institutions. But ultimately, it is human beings like you and me who execute and deliver justice. And we want those the section of the compassion and gaids to on the path to justice. Compassion will being path to justice. Compassion will being be path to justice. Compassion will being the compassion and paids to on the compassion and

### Indian cinema entertains, but also unifies the nation

inema speaks a universal language," said filmmaker Satyajit Ray, capturing the essence of its unifying power. Indian cinema, with its vast linguistic and cultural diversity, brings together people from every corner of the country, allowing them to share in common emotions and experiences. Whether it's a Tamil drama, a Hindi blockbuster, or a Marathi indie film, cinema fosters a deep sense of belonging, bridging divides and reminding us that despite our differences, we are one.

reminding us that despite our differences, in a are one.

The universality of Indian cinema less in a sality to Transcend regional and linguistic boundaries, making it a powerful force for anatonal unity, From Raj Kapoor & Cassles like Shree 420, which resonated across languages to Mani Ratamari Roja, which found nation-wide acclaim, Indian films speak a language of emotions that everyon a language of emotions that everyon the sality of the salit

on strugge, love, and trumph are not confined by borders, proving that cheena is truly a unlying force in the cheena is truly a unlying force in the cheena is truly a unlying force in the cheena in the cheena cheena that is celebrated every year when the best films, best directors and best actors are honoured with the National Film Awards by the President of India. This is not an eye-dazzling, head-turning event which is usually what other such occasions are. It is an acknowledgement of talent — the talent of creators, storyleders and enactors. It is also an affirmation of India's many-splendoured, many-hued diversity of languages and dislets which together wave the magical tapes truly of this great nation's unity and continue to who speak hundreds of languages and their several offspring dialects.

The uniqueness of the National Film Awards is evident in the fact that among the best film winners is Sikaisai (If Only Trees Could Talk), a film made in the Tiwa language. This is the language of the Tiwa people, a Theto-fourness entire group whose members are found across India's Northesst, and in Bangladesh and Myanntar. For the 70th National Film Awards, the government received 305 films in 32 different languages in the Found Film and the Silver Lotus, with films from Malayalam, Gujarat, Kannada, Haryarvi, and Bengali also winning the award. Silver Lotus Awards were conferred on 10 films from the languages included in the Eighth Schedule of the Consti-

THE UNIVERSALITY OF INDIAN CINEMA LIES IN ITS ABILITY TO TRANSCEND REGIONAL AND LINGUISTIC BOUNDARIES, MAKING IT A POWERFUL FORCE FOR NATIONAL UNITY

ution of India. A film release in Hindi and Urdu won the Golden Lotus for the best non-feature film.

Much as the nihilists of language politics may argue, the fact remains that nearly 75 years after the making of the Republic of India with linguistic states, the barriers of the past have largely evoded over the decades. There is no denying that Bollywood has made Hindi widely acceptable. But that is only one big impact of films on diverse strands of indian society. The second big impact is to make people aware of "other" linguistic groups and identities, fostering a deep, a boding sense of unity in the diversity of Ek Bharat, Sirresthha Bharat.

Bharat.
That's more than a slogan when it comes to Indian cinema which showcases the unimaginably large community of creators who bring together their talent to create magical entertainment undergirded by universal beliefs across politics, society, callure and that unquantifiable universal beliefs across politics, society, callure and that unquantifiable thing we call morals and ethical values that bind us as a people, and the people as a nation. In fact, no Indian strength of the society of the

# SHAKTIKANTA DAS | GOVERNOR OF RBI

The growth is holding firm and steady. So, it would not be correct at this point in time to impinging on growth



### Climate crisis adds to mental health worries

India has reasons to be wary. Recent data reveals a troubling rise in mental data reveals a troubling rise in mental data reveals a troubling rise in mental health challenges, with the country having the highest number of suckes worldwide. According to the National Crime Records Bureau, I.7 laids popel deal by suicide in 2022. Depression prevalence among the youth ranges between 31% and 57%, and a UNICEF report states that one in seven young Indians aged 15 to 24 often fat dynerosed. The climate crisis threatens to exacerbate this situation, leading to long-term implications for mental well-being and continuous content of the co

ment risks of meralt heath across regions and can project associated shifts in moods, behaviours, and patterns of psychiatric issues (such as anxiety, depression). This results in inefficient mental heath diagnostic practices, misalboation of resources, and inadequate crisis response mechanisms. By leveraging advancements in telepsychiatry, wearable health devices, and other digital health terhologies, India can generate real-time data that informs adaptive mental health strategies.

Transforming mental health care from reactive, post-incident treatment to proactive prevention of mental libras due to climate impact demands robust implementation on the ground to lower. India e sotiating mental health care from reactive, post-incident treatment to proactive prevention of mental libras due to climate impact demands robust implementation on the ground to lower. India e sotiating mental health survey revenis a treatment of avareness and access, India has a consistent of avareness and access, India has only 0.7 mental health patients receive treatment, and the National Mental Health Survey reveals a treatment gap of over 85% for common mental disorders, largely due to a lack of avareness and access, India has only 0.7 mental health professionals for every one lakt poople— far below the global guideline of at least three per least three per lateral treatment ground the professional for every one lakt poople— far below the global guideline of at least three per lateral treatment ground the professional for every one lakt poople— far below the global guideline of at least three per lateral treatment ground the professional for every one lakt poople— far below the global guideline of at least three per lateral treatment ground the ground th

Aparna Roy is a fellow and lead Climate Change and Energy, ORI The views expressed are persona

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### THE ASIAN AGE

10 OCTOBER 2024

### BJP needs to show grace after Haryana poll victory

Tis perfectly legitimate for a political party and its leaders to take creditions and the components of the components o

### RBI 'neutral' as future uncertain

RBI 'neutral' as future uncertain

The Reserve Bank of India-led Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) on
Wednesday kept the repo rate — the interest rate at which RBI lends
— unchanged for the tenth consecutive time at 6.5 per cent. However,
it unanimously decided to change the monetary policy stance to neutral,
itting inflation concerns driven by uncertain geopolitical scenarios and
stubborally high food prices.

Previously, the RBI's monetary policy stance — policy direction in common and spariance — we may be a supplied to the season of virthdrawal of accommodation, which
means easy monetary policies are being withmeans easy monetary policie

### THE ASIAN AGE

002 at BFL Infosech Ltd., C-9, Sector-III, Nolds -201301. Quickmarsh Ltd, 8th Floor, Block 2, Elizabeth House, 39 York Road, London, SE1 7NQ.



# How 'social engineering' led to BJP triumph in Haryana



n August 16, when the E le ction on Commission of India called for Jammu and Kashmir and Haryana, a victory for the Congress in the latter was considered a given — all that remained to be determined by the electoral process was the toxtent of the process of the control of the capacity to dramatically weaken the party and across northern India, especially Haryana. The two agitations were the furners' str and the wrestlers' protest. The issue of unemployed youth denied from 200 defence forces and lifetone. The issue of unemiployed youth denied from 2621 onward a long career in the defence forces and lifelong post-retriement pension because of the "Agniveer" scheme, was appended to these and a theory was propounded — that Haryana was dominated by three the search of the

activists, beauties on activists, beauties of the BJP's fence. The sense was so overpowering that when in March this year, the BJP replaced the chief minister, Manohar with Nayah this year, the BMP replaced the chief minister, Manohar Lal Khattar, with Nayab Singh Saini, whose legislative career had started only in 2014, the majority of such people dismissed the move as a desperate act to extricate the party from the morass the party was trapped in. It was considered an act of desperation, conceived without much thought because just a day earlier, Prime Minister Narendra Modi had praised Mr Khattar at a public event, recalled their old association and the days when how he rode pillion on Mr Khattar's motorbike while they carried out party work. The party's social engi-neering in this move was overlooked. Instead, the

Mr Hooda as its CM face. He refused to accommodate

OBC Saini leader, was another step to consolidate non-Jat communities behind

most notably Kumari Selja, a Dailt, and Randeep Singh Surjewala. This heightened the fear of Jat hegemony among those from other costse.

castes.

Significantly, the
Congress almost matched
the BJP's social mix of candiates: 20 OBCs for BJP's
2, 11 Puniphis or Sikhs to
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2, 11 Puniphis or Sikhs to
five from the BJP. However,
the Congress to five from the BJP. However,
the Congress put up 25 Jat
candidates while the BJP
fielded 17. Bat, more than
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fielded 17. Bat, more than
the candidates' social profless, Mir Hoods's refusal to
ess leaders send chills down
the spines of non-lats—if
he refused to accept party
leaders and their supporters, this sentiment would
percolate to the community
and they would hegemonise
all avenmes to privilege.

Congress in losing the election which should have
been theirs. First, the
party's central leadership
must be more assertive and
disallow dominant satrage
to
impose their hegemony
over state units, especially
curring the
mannal Naft, Ashok
Gehlot and Bhupesh Bagbel
in Madhya Pradesh,
Rajasthan and Chhattisgarh
respectively, durring the
Assembly polls in
November-December 226.3.

Asseminy poils in November-December 2023, consequently a handing power to the BJP. The same act was repeated in Haryana. Second, the Congress leadership needs to rediscore merits for the congress leadership needs to rediscore merits. Despite differences within the BJP, it has to be accepted that its electoral machinery is extremely well-olded and runs smoothly with aides of top leaders micromanaging the entire campaign. It must be noted that the only states where the BJP fixed hurdles in establishing its hegemony are those where the principal adversary has an efficient

booth management system in place, for instance West Bengal, where the Trinamul Congress' infrastructure is extremely well organised. The decisive victory in Haryana gives a push to the state becoming one from where the Bir's hegemony becomes almost permanent or extremely hard to discipled, like in Gujarat and victories, from a virtually clean slate prior to 2014, the party is close to establishing permanence. The credit for this goes to the central lead-ership and not its state lead-ers, the Bir in any case does not have many of them, save the likes of Yogi Aditynamd and Himantia Biswa Sarma. It is a different matter that

the likes of Yogi Adityanath and Himanta Biswa Sarma. It is a different matter that the BJP's central leadership has destroyed the party's collegial style of functioning. The Congress needs to convert itself on a tillout compromising on principles of democracy.

While the verdict from Haryana will give the BJP a push towards retaining power in Maharsahra and regaining it in Jharkhand, the results from Jammu and Kashmir bestows it with people's mandate on a day-to-day basis and allow the new government founction and not hamper governance in the UT; the way it has interfered in Delhi in recent years. It is turne for the BJP vears. interfered in Delhi in recent years, It is time for the B.IP to stop making governors and lieutenant-governors and lieutenant-governors act like its handmaidens. With the humungous and structured organisational network of the Sangh Parivar and the party, it is time for the B.IP to make gubernatorial offices truly non-partisan. Haryana has presented the B.IP with the first real opnortunity to presented the BJP wan to first real opportunity to reverse the downward trend reverse the downward trend seen during the 2024 Lok Sabba elections. With this win, it can strategise better for improving performance in Maharashtra, Jhark-hand, and eventually Delhi.

Nilanjan Mukhopadhyay's latest book is The Demolition, The Verdict and The Temple: The Definitive Book on the Ram Mandir Project. He is also the author of Narendra Modi: The Man, The Times. He tweets at @NilanjanIdwin

### WHY BJP WON HARYANA

Political analysts and exit pollsters were forced to eat crow on Tuesday when the BJP came from behind to beat anti-incumbency and a faction-ridden Congress in Haryana. Granted it was too close to call, but bias caused the media to get it woon. to se to call, but bias caused the media to get it wrong. More than anything, the Congress failed to win due to the negative narrative it was pushing in the print and electronic media. The ruling electronic media. The ruling BJP won as the pace of its development projects were well liked by electors. The replacement of CM Manohai Lal Khattar by Nayab Singh Saini was also widely accepted. The BJP lived up to the expectations of the populace and "doubleengine" governments were yme governments were en to be working. Yugal Kishore Sharma

Faridabad, Haryana

### DHANKHAR'S HYPOCRISY

DHANKHAR'S HYPUURISY
VICE-PRESIDENT
Jagdeep
Dhankhar continues to talk through
his hat. The other day at a function
in Delih les said the Northeaut is the
'heart and soui of India'. If that is
'reast true, or If his sentiment sincere, then
Manipur, which is the heart of
hearts, is distraught. It is almost as if
it has had a continuous heart attack
dead, so many others have lost families and property, and there is a complete collapse of law and order. But
'Prime Minister Narendra Modi is
yet to visit the state. The Manipur
CM was recently heard claiming all
is okay, Why doesn't Mr Dhankhar
put his money where his mouth is'
Srinivas Ramat
Mysuru

THE 2024 Noble Prise for Literature will be announced on Thursday. Some say it will go to reclusive Australian writer Gerald Murnane. The 85-year-old is best known for his 1962 novel The Plains, and has also composed the world's longest palindrome. Also in contention is Chinese writer Can Xue. This 71-year-old has twice been long-listed for the International Booken for her novel, Love in the New Millennium, and her story collection, I. Live in Haruld Murakami, Cesar Aira, Thomas Pynchon and Margaret Atwood.

D.B. Madan

Every Monday the best letter of the week wins ₹500. Email: asianage.letters@gmail.com.

### **Bhopinder**



Why India needs to be watchful as new spymaster takes over at ISI If you want to read the tea leaves of the direction that those who run the government of Pakistan seek to pursue, keep a hawk's eye on the choice of its spymaster, that is the director-general of Inter-Services intelligence (ISI). Arguably the second most powerful post in Pakistan (after the Army chief), it acts as the key bridge between various competing forces — the Pakistani "establishment" (meaning the military), civilian politicians, the clergy, international partners (such as China, the Arab sheikhdoms and the United States) and even the so-called "meastate actors", et al.

al partners (such as China, the Arab shelkhdoms and the United States) and even the so-called "non-state actors", et al.

The recent appointment of Lt. Gen. Asim Malik as the new D-G of the ISI has the unequivocal stamp of the Pakistan Army chief, Gen. Asim Munir, and his clear preference. Beyond the charade of a democratically elected government, run by the completely beholden and "selected" coalition of the unlikely partners - the PML-N and the PPP — the real McCoy in the current Pakistan harrattive is Gen. Asim Munir, Therefore, is choice of Lt. Gen. Asim Malik is indicative of the auturies.

tic announcement by the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) confirmed that Lt. Gen. Asim Malik would be the new ISI D-G.

The ISI D-G can significantly shape the national destiny, as the "religiously minded" D-G ISI Lt. Gen. Muhammad Riaz Khan did in supporting Gen Zia-ul Haq's coup, or his successor Lt. Gen. Adhammad Riaz Khan the ISPR ISI-CIA campaign in Afghanistan. They could also harbour unprofessional ambitions like the inflamous bour unprofessional ambitions like the Inflamous bigoted and "anti-West" like Lt. Gen. Auevel Nasir, Lt. Gen. Amber Lt. Gen. Jame Park Interfered in domestic politics and were mired in personal amoralities like Lt. Gen. Zaheerul Islam. But perhaps the most unhinged and politically aligned (to Imran Khan) in recent times is the much-in-the-news Lt. Gen. Palic Hameed, now facing court-martial, who was Palic Hameed, now facing court-martial, who was Palic Hameed, for the Ambition of the Palician in Palicia

professional like Lt. Gen. Asim Malik appears to be reassuring. From the heartland of Pakistani soldering (Sargodha) and hailing from the martial Awan clan, he is the son of Sandhurst-educated Lt. Gen. Chulam Muhammad Malik. Himself a "sword of honour" from the Pakistan Military Academy, he has served in significant command and staff postnigs, including in the restive areas of Waziristan and Balochistan. More important, he is not expected to be "anti-West", given that he has trained in Fort Lasenworth with the US Army and at the Royal College of Defence Studies in the UK. These international exposures and also as the rare serving soldler with a Ph.D. on the sensitive and at the Royal College of Defence Studies in the UK. These international exposures and also as the rare serving soldier with a Ph.D. on the sensitive topic of "Pakistan-US relations", ought to afford a certain strategic nuance, moderation and measure in outlook. Given that his senior command responsibilities of a brigade and a division have entailed counter-terrorism operations and cross-fire from across the Durand Line (Pakistan-Alghan border, as opposed to threats from the Line of Control (with india), he should be aware of the permictions implications of religious extreminates of the permictions implications of religious extreminates of the permiction implications of religious extreminates of the permiction of the permiction implications of religious extreminates of the permiction of the permiction implications of religious extreminates of the permiction of the permiction implications of religious extreminates of the permiction of the permitted of the permiction of the permitted of the permiction of the permitted of

their soldiers by elements that were once seeded and nurtured by the Pakistani "establishment", pandering to religious extremism could take a back seat. His profile naturally lends itself to approachability by the US and other Western patrons, who faced cold reception from "anti-west" ISI D-65 like Lt. Gen. Ahmed Susha Pasha or Lt. Gen. Mahmud Ahmed in recent times. He is also expected to keep a distance from revi-sionist politicians from the clerical order or the likes of "Palibian Khan" (Imran Khan), whose pol-itics tend to be regressive, puritanical and reac-tionary.

titics tend to be regressive, puritancia and reactionary.

The Pakistani "establishment" seems to be in cleanising mode as it steps up the pressure on residual elements of Imran Khan's regime, including sorting out former ISI DG Lt Gen. Fair Hameed. At this crucial stage, Lt. Gen. Asim Unlike many other contemporaries, his track record suggests straightforward soldiering and that itself is a welcome break from what could have been yet another over-ambitious, religiously charged or partisan general. However, India can never lower its guard with any top-ranking Pakistani general, let alone the head of the Inter-Services Intelligence.

### the hindu businessline.

### Behind the curve

MPC is taking too sanguine a view on growth

he Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) meeting this week decided to stick to its guns on rates for the tenth consecutive time, holding the repo rate at 6.5 per cent, while softening its stance on liquidity from 'withdrawal of accommodation' to 'neutral'. The changed stance on liquidity will not move the needle much, because market interest rates have already trended down in recent months on the back of improving liquidity and ample foreign portfolio inflows, which have moderated the long end of the yield curve.



The MPC has justified its 5:1 decision on holding rates with hawkish commentary on inflation, accompanied by a sanguine view of India's economic prospects. However, incoming data suggest that the growth momentum is a cause for concern. There is a risk of the MPC falling behind the curve in easing policy rates in time to support the economy. The MPC has chosen to stay with its optimistic real GDP growth projection of 7.2 per cent for FY25, same as in the August review. The Economic Survey as well as many private forecasters peg India's real growth at 6.5-7 per cent this fiscal. The MPC cites a healthy kharif crop bolstering rural cites a neathy knair crop bosisering tural consumption, besides strong business and consumer confidence and improving global trade as supporting factors. However, many high-frequency indicators have been signalling a slowdown in India's growth momentum in the last three months, stretching beyond the general-election-effect. Core sector output

contracted in August, while automobile and tractor sales shrank in August and September. Growth in GST collections slowed to a 40-month low of 6.5 per cent in september. Both manufacturing and services Purchasing Manager Indices have receded from peaks. For Q1 FY25, India Inc reported its slowest pace of profit growth in

While the above-normal monsoon will While the above-normal monsoon will likely lift agricultural output, the two largest economies in the world are grappling with slowdown fears, creating disinflation risks for commodities. These risks can spill over to India. In Q1, GDP growth at 6.7 per cent significantly undershot the MPC's projection of 7.1 per cent. Given that rate cuts usually impact the economy with a two or three quarter lag, a cut now would have been timely. In fact, two exiting members of the MPC argued in the August meeting that high real rates were holding back the economy from growing at its true potential.

On inflation, the last two CPI prints at 3.6 and 3.65 per cent have been below the 4 per cent target. While the MPC expects a 'big jump' in September, it also admits that food inflation may 'sequentially moderate in Q4' due to a healthy kharif harvest, ample buffer stocks and a good rabi season. Yes, geopolitical risks which can flare up oil or industrial commodities remain a risk. But these are ever-present and it is moot if they can be quelled through monetary policy. With its all-out efforts to keep the inflation horse stabled, the risk is that the MPC might end up doing the same to the growth





with audio and video muted!



he MPC of RBI in its for bi-monthly he MPC of RBI in its fourth bi-monthly meeting in the current fiscal, which concluded on October 9 decided to hold the policy reporate unchanged at 6.5 per cent, with one dissent work from one of its newly

appointed members.

The stance of the policy was shifted to 'neutral' from 'withdrawal of accommodation' for the first time since June 2019. This decision was

unar 2019. This decision was unanimous.

The outcomes of this meeting of the MPC are broadly in line with the market's expectations, although on the issue of the stance of the monetary policy, some prominent analysts didn't anticipate any change. Their argument has been that as things have evolved since the introduction of the flexible inflation targeting framework in 2016, the policy stance is more about providing future guidance than about money supply and liquidity. And in the recent past, the MPC has steered clear of providing any future guidance about its rate decisions.

Another aspect of the meeting's

providing any future guidance about its rate decisions. Another aspect of the meeting's outcome that has caught attention of the observers is the dissent vote by a member in favour of a cut in the policy rate by 25 basis points. In each of the last two meetings of the MPC, there were two dissenting votes for a rate cut. However, with all the three external members being new this time, it was thought unlikely that any of them will vote against the three RBI officials on the MPC so carly on. But the fact now is otherwise, which should be seen as positive for the reputation and credibility of the MPC. The equity market experienced some early gains after the policy announcement which were pared later on. The yield on the benchmark 10-year G-Sec moved a bit lower.

### GROWTH, INFLATION PROSPECTS

GROWTH, INFLATION PROSPECTS
In the lead up to the MPC meeting, a
view was gaining ground on the back of a
slower GDP growth of 6.7 per cent in the
April-lune quarter, below the RBI's
projection of 7.1 per cent, and signs of
soft urban consumption that growth
risks were getting tilted to the downside.
Manufacturing PMI falling to an
eight-month low and services PMI
easing to a 10-month trough in
September, 2024 supported this
impression.

September, 2024 supported this impression.
Against this backdrop, the general expectation has been that the meeting will provide insight into India's broader economic growth trajectory.
Annual CPI lindation at 3.65 per cent in August remained below the target of 4 per cent for a second consecutive month. Notwithstanding the dip, as per a poll conducted by awire agency a few weeks back, inflation was likely to rise



# MPC's nuanced 'wait and watch' approach

RATE PATH. The shift this time lies is in the change of liquidity stance to 'neutral'

again, averaging 4.5 per cent in FY 2024-25 and 4.3 per cent in the next fiscal. Food inflation has remained elevated at 5.65 per cent.

The MPC, however, has kept the real GDP growth projection for 2024-25 unchanged at 7.2 per cent, with the projection for 0.1203-25 at a higher at 7.3 per cent. The lower GDP growth number for the first quarter of the current fiscal is most possibly seen as an aberration caused by a fall in government expenditure due to the holding of parliamentary elections during that period.

POSITIVE OUTLOOK
Going forward, the outlook for private consumption and investment seems good. On the whole, the MPC does not foresee any notable downside risk to the resee any notable downside risk to the untry's growth trajectory in the reseeable future. In other words, there is no slowdown story vet.

If the food inflation behaves well and if there is no flare up in the crude oil price, the MPC may slash policy rate by 25 bps either in Q4 or Q1 FY26

The MPC expects a significant pick-up in CPI inflation in September broadly in line with the conclusions of the poil referred to above.

However, it expects food inflation to ease by Q4:2024-25 on better kharif arrivals and rising prospects of a good rabi season. Input cost pressures are also likely to ease. Overall, CPI inflation for 2024-25 is projected at 4.5 per cent with Q2at 4.1 per cent; 23 at 4.8 per cent; and Q4 at 4.2 per cent.

CPI inflation for Q1:2025-26 is now projected at 4.5 per cent vis-à-vis-4.4 per cent in the last meeting. The very recent upturn in key commodity prices, especially metals and crude oil is possibly being seen as a source of risk to the inflation trajectory, as above. However, by the RBI's own admission the last mile for durably aligning the headline inflation with the target of 4 per cent has not yet been traversed yet. The metaphorical horse has to be tamed to stay inside the stable.

Otherwise, it can bolt anytime.

What happens after the shift in stance?

What happens after the shift in stance? Before the meeting, a good number of market analysts expressed an opinion that a shift in policy stance to 'neutral' would imply commencement of policy rate cuts later this fiscal itself. Some expect the rate to be cut by a cumulative 100 basis points by the end of December

100 basis points by the end of December 2025.

However, no commensurate indications in this regard have been noticed in the movements in G-Sec yields and 1-year Overnight Index Swap rate. However, if the food inflation behaves well consistently and if there is no flare up in the crude oil price due to a marked escalation in the current geopolitical tension in the Middle East, the MPG is likely to slash the policy rate by 25 basis points either in Q4: 2024-25 or in Q1: 2025-26.

The 51st meeting of the MPC also marked eight years of its existence. The adoption of flexible inflation-targeting framework was indeed a significant structural reform. It altered and set right many of the inadequacies and imperfections of the conduct of monetary policy in the past. Equally importantly, it irreversibly reset the institutional relationship between the RBI and the Central government.

Fiscal dominance over monetary policy has largely ended, as a result. One hopes that the same benefit will extend to the conduct of the RBI's policies for the financial sector in the foreseeable future.

The writer is a former central banker and a consultant to the IMF. (Through The Billion Press)

# Pitfalls of being driven by politically correct fads

An IMF paper's correlation between women's STEM representation and emissions is problematic

he economics department of the IMF has co me out with another intriguing piece of research which, unfortunately, also seems rather pointless: women stand to lose as the world turns increasingly green because not enough of them have what it takes to get a green job, namely, education in science, technology, engineering and medicine (STEM).

This is what the IMF comments.

medicine (STEM).

This is what the IMP economists say 'Men hold about 70 per cent of the world's polluting jobs, so one might think that they have most to lose from the transition to cleaner energy. "Yet, women are also at risk of losing out... because too few women study the science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) subjects that are vital to the green jobs of the future."

What both the IMP and the World Bank appear to be concerned about is

Bank appear to be concerned about is underrepresentation of women in the upcoming less polluting industries. The salaries and wages in these industries, they say, are higher and women will miss

out because they don't have STEM education. Where does India stand in the female STEM ranking? We beat even the developed countries. Our women are safer than elsewhere, at least in this regard

regard.

INDIA AHEAD

Thus according to the World Bank
"India's share of female graduates in
STEM at 42.7 per cent in 2018, was
higher than comparable data available
for the US at 34 per cent in 2017, and
Germanyat 27.6 per cent in 2017, and
Germanyat 27.6 per cent in 2017, and
Germanyat 27.6 per cent in 2017, and
the World Bank are saying the same
thing. This doesn't happen very often.
Both are saying that countries where
women lag behind in STEM education
should make efforts to catch up.
The IMP economists say "This (topic)
is significant because green jobs
command a substantial wage premium
over other jobs in the economy, even
after accounting for workers' education
and experience, as our calculations
based on several representative
countries show."



It's hard to understand, however, why gender should matter in an economic sense. Politically and socially it does if the objective is to level the playing field between men and women.

between men and women.
But it really ought not to make any
difference in the labour market. As long
as there are enough hands to combine
with capital to produce something, how
does it matter whether it's a male or a
female hand?

After all, to take but one example, 15

After all, to take but one example, 15 per cent of pilots in India are women, three times the global average. Indeed, IndiGo alone has around 800 of them. The planes don't care. Actually, sociological issues are also unclear. How does it matter if fewer women work in certain industries? As long as they get paid as much as men, it should make no difference even sociologically

The paper makes a huge leap in logic when it says that "Countries with a bigger share of STEM-educated workers bigger share of STEM-educated workers and stronger gender equality policies tend to have steeper reductions in greenhouse gas emissions in response to climate policies. Emissions in response to climate policies. Emissions in tensity in these countries is 2 to 4 percentage points lower."

This isn't obvious even intuitively let alone logically. Gender should make absolutely no difference either to the adoption of climate friendly reconstitutions of the policies.

technologies or to policies.
To see why, look at China. It has a low
STEM ranking for women but is doing
very well in climate friendly policies and
technologies.

**Encouraging employees** 

The article "Healthy work places" (October 9) made for a good read. Job security for employees, one feels, is vital to keep them fit and

grounds. Of course, the success of any organisation hinges on how well it divides the tasks and assigns the work to necode.

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

### Status quo stance

reconstituted Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) to keep the re-rate unchanged at 6.5 per cent fo the tenth consecutive monetary policy review does not spring any surprise, with food inflation continuing to stay elevated. While the monetary While the monetary policy stance has been changed by the MPC from withdrawal of accommodation to neutral, which allows the RBI to reduce or hike rates based on the reduce or hike rates based on the inflation trajectory, the panel kept the retail inflation and GDP growth forecasts unchanged. No doubt, shifting to a neutral stance now gives enough leverage for the RBI to respond dynamically to future economic stability and long-te

M Jeyaram

This refers to MPC keeps reporate unchanged; changes stance to neutral' (October 9). The Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) retaining the reporate unchanged at 6.50 per cent by a majority of 5 out of 6 members, did not come as any stranger. surprise.

surprise. However, MPC unanimously did to change the policy stance to neutral from withdrawal of accommodation alongside unambiguously remaining focu on inflation target as a precurs

But as regards the RBI Governor's

### Booster with a warning

This refers to the edit "Poll vault" (October 9). A high point of the recent State Assembly elections is the stellar way the Election Commission conducted polls, particularly in Jammu & Kashmir where it drew more than 60 per cent

voters to the booths overlooking th security risks.

The BJP's solid victory in Haryana was a timely win that would help it refurbish the Prime Minister's image as a most popular leader. Its timing power vis-à-vis its partners in Maharashtra, reestablish its leading role, and enhance its chances of winning them. winning there and in Jharkhand. However, this success should not be However, this success should not be overrated by the PM. For example, he will gain more psychological advantage if he replaces "Modi's guarantee" with that of his party in public and party meetings.

work to people. Needless to say, human beings need continuous encouragement for doing their bit in the best possible

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### Offline CBDCs' potential

Financial inclusion in areas with poor connectivity

n the evolving digital global economy, Central Bank Digital Currencies (CBDCs), which are digital sovereign currency, issued and regulated by a nation's central bank, have promised to enhance payment efficiency, reduce transaction costs, and strengthen monetary policy implementation. But while online CBDCs have garnered significant attention, the potential of offline CBDCs—digital currencies operable

digital currencies operable without constant internet without constant internet connectivity — remains largely unexplored. The promise of offline CBDCs is particularly pronounced in countries such as India. A substantial portion of the country's population resides in regions with poor internet connectivity, which makes it harder to adopt digital payment platforms that require constant connectivity.

### EXTENSION OF SERVICES

By enabling digital transactions without continuous internet connectivity, offline CBDGs can extend financial services to remote and underserved regions. Users can conduct secure, peer-to-peer transactions using digital currency stored on devices such as smart cards or mobile wallets, which synchronise with the central system once connectivity is restored. Implementing offline CBDCs would thus empower urral people while reducing reliance on cash transactions. Moreover, offline CBDCs could Moreover, offline CBDCs could extend financial services to

while reducing reliance on eash transactions.

Moreover, offline CBDCs could enhance the resilience of payment infrastructure by ensuring the continuity of financial services during network outages or emergencies. Offline CBDCs, financial transactions could continue uninterrupted during natural disasters such as floods, allowing individuals and businesses to access essential goods and services.

For farmers, it would mean timely payments for their produce; for small businesses, efficient transactions with

actions with suppliers and customers; and for

women, greater financial autonomy and security. India thus presents a compelling case for integrating offline CBDCs into its current digital public infrastructure. To scamlessly integrate offline CBDCs with existing digital platforms like UPI and Aadhaar, interoperability will be crucial. Technical standards need to be established to ensure that offline

October 10, 2004

thehindubusinessline.

TWENTY YEARS AGO TODAY.

Air Deccan drops trunk route fares by 20 per cent Air Deccan has announced a 20 per cent drop on the fares that it charges on the trunk routes. The move comes just a day after the three other airlines—indian Airlines, Let Airways and dix Sahara—announced a 10 per cent hike in their fares mainly on account of the northward movement in global prices of

BSE's A group stocks outperform others

Govt tightens metallic scrap import policy
The Government has tightened the policy and procedures for import of
metallic waste and scrap. The Directorate General of Foreign Trade (DGFT)
has altered the import policy to specify that import of metallic waste and sc
would be permitted only in the "shredded and compacted form".

Mid-cap stocks outperrorm others
Mid-cap stocks have had a rollicing time since september 2001, when the
markets sank to a low in the aftermath of the terrorists' strike in New York.
However, BSE statistics reveal that the aggregate market capitalisation of A
group stocks, an index of wealth, has recorded the most gains in the period
between September 2001 and August 2004.



ECTIVITY. With other

CBDC wallets can communicate with other payment systems once connectivity is restored, for

connectivity is restored, for example.

This requires developing protocols that allow for the synchronisation of offline transactions with the central ledger without compromising security. In addition, robust encryption and secure hardware elements in devices are essential to safeguard against unauthorised access and counterfeit currents. Collaboration between the Reserve Bank of India, payment service providers, and technology firms will be vital to creating a secure and interoperable secure and interoperable

ecosystem.

Further, regulatory
frameworks will need to mandate
stringent authentication
processes to prevent fraud and
double spending, especially given
the offline nature of transactions. The government will need to
establish clear guidelines on data
collection, storage, and sharing
practices to protect sensitive
personal and financial
information from breaches and
missuse.

For the RBI, financial stability

misuse.

For the RBI, financial stability considerations include managing the impact of GBDCs on monetary policy transmission and banking sector liquidity.

Establishing independent oversight bodies to monitor compliance and address grievances can further strengthen governance. By prioritising data privacy and robust governance, India could ensure that the integration of offline CBDCs enhances its digital public infrastructure without compromising individual rights or economic stability.

By leveraging existing digital frameworks, integrating offline capabilities for CBDCs, and developing a hybrid system that operates both online and offline, India can ensure that the benefits of digital currencies are accessible to all its citizens.

The writer is research director of digital economy at CIGI

# For mobiles, PLI is not enough

INDUSTRY MOVES. Apart from being a hub for assembling global brands, policy must also support local value addition



he news of increasing mobile phone exports as well as investment wild as investment announcements for mobile phone assembly plants and few component manufacturing facilities may make one believe that India seems to have finally caught on to the mobile manufacturing bus. The production linked incentive (PLI) scheme announced by the government is undoubtedly one of the reasons for these desirable outcomes in the industry. Will these be sustained beyond the PLP.

One recent mobile manufacturing and exporting success story often cited has been of Vietnam, where well-known manufacturers were given huge financial

manufacturers were given huge financial and tax incentives to set up global scale facilities and their ecosystems.

and the control of th

Compared to the Vietnamese, the Compared to the Vietnamese, the Chinises attempt at entering the mobile manufacturing was better. China followed multiple paths — linking of domestic market access and technology transfer for global brands; industrial policy to shield and nurture domestic firms; and investment in indigenous standards.

policy to shield and nurture domestic firms; and investment in indigenous standards.

Domestic standards forced global brands to adapt and develop entirely new products for the domestic market, which established an ecosystem and provided an opportunity for local manufacture. By investing to build its own standard China also built-up capability to assimilate and absorb different technologies.

As a result, value addition by Chinese



VALUE ADD. A manufacturing ecosystem based on government incentives or subsidies alone may not be the best path for India

firms that supply components for iPhone manufacture increased over iPhone manufacture increased over time. Development of the world's largest cell phone industrial cluster at Shanzhai not only helped expand the domestic market but also saw the global rise of Chinese brands that focused on of downstream activities such as branding and marketing to increase their value addition.

addition.
One country that built its capability before the multilateral trade context o World Trade Organization kicked in w. South Korea. Government funding for over two decades in national R&D projects helped South Korea build human capabilities in electronics and telecommunication.

telecommunication.

Domestic market was opened to local firms that used indigenous code division multiple access (CDMA) standards thus protecting them from competition with global brands. A secured home market not only helped local firms build capabilities but also focus on exports. Numerous studies have shown that it is cheaper to produce a mobile phone in China and Vietnam than in India. This

Local electronic firms that have the potential to supply mobile phone parts or components should be encouraged by the government

implies that a cost-competitive manufacturing ecosystem based on government incentives or subsidies alone may not be the best possible path

for India.

In other words, just relying on ph manufacturing programme (PMP) p PLI may not be enough; policy needs create conditions that will not only enable the continuation of assembly operations of the global brands bur a an increase in local value addition in post-PLI world.

### ESTABLISH LINKAGES

ESTABLISH LINKAGES
First, local electronic firms that have the potential to supply mobile phone parts or components should be encouraged by the government to establish linkages with mobile assembly facilities.

Second, Indian mobile manufacturers, who till very recently focused on importing components in knocked-down format and assembling, need to develop design and other capabilities. This will encourage them to increase their value addition by focusing on branding and marketing.

Chinese and South Korean experiences show us the way. Publicly-funded research in electronics has helped India acquire some capability in electronics. Sadly, India has neglected similar investments in mobile technolors, and has not centrated any

similar investments in mobile technology, and has not generated any intellectual property in the mobile phone manufacturing space.

Recent investment efforts at developing our own 6G standard is a welcome step in this direction. The

welcome step in this direction. The South Korean example clearly shows that building capabilities is a long-term project, a path that has larger investment commitment with lesser returns in the short-run.

Finally, and most importantly, we need the government to continuously invest in indigenous standards and technologies, which down the road will help build up India's capabilities. These capabilities will help the country strengthen its mobile manufacturing ecosystem, which hopfeully, by then, PLI and the scheme for promotion of manufacturing of electronic components and semiconductors

manufacturing of electronic components and semiconductors (SPECS) would have built.

Adoption of the indigenous standards and technologies in our domestic market has the potential to multiply India's capabilities in the sector.

To conclude, if India wants mobile investments to generate livelihoods on a sustained basis and contribute to the revival of manufacturing in the country, then it is important to build capabilities, not only by investing in mobile technology research, but also by making itself-indispensable in the production plans of global brands and component manufacturers.

The writer is Associate Professor, Centre for Development Studies, Thiruvananthapuram

### A closer look at RBI's warning to NBFCs

### **bl**.explainer

### Lokeshwarri SK

What was the warning given by RBI to NBFCs in the October monetary

given by RBI to NBFCs in the October monetary policy?
The RBI governor gave a pat to NBFCs (non-banking finance companies) in the MPC statement, acknowledging that they have recorded strong growth, enabling the flow of credit to the remote areas and to the unbanked segments, helping financial inclusion. But, it gave a warning to some NBFCs who are chasing rapid growth in business by following irregular practices. The central bank warned that such growth is unsustainable.
This warning should be seen in the context of RBI's recent actions against NBFCs such as JM Financial and IIFL, asking them to cease operations in

them to cease operati certain segments.

Which categories of NBFCs has RBI

The RBI has said that microfinance institutions (MFIs) and housing finance companies are pressured by their investors to show large profits. This is driving them to charge usurious rates of interest, which become even more exorbitant when the processing fee is added. The central bank has also pointed to frivolous penalties on consumers to drive returns.

what has been the RBI's approach in dealing with malpractices in advancing credit in the recent past? The central bank has been closely monitoring the rapid growth in loans to individuals since the pandemic. The problem is that within retail loans, unsecured personal loans and credit card loans have shown sharp growth, increasing the risk for lenders. Two, the retail segment was edging out loans to corporates and industries. Third, mamy lenders began using unsavoury lenders began using unsavoury



approach by RBI accounts
practices to drive retail loans.
The central bank has been
increasing its scrutiny of the
retail loan books in recent
months. Wherever any
regulatory lapse was found,
the lenders were given time to
rectify them. If the lenders
were found non-compliant
after the end of the time given,
action was taken against then,
such as restricting their
operations in some segments,
imposing monetary penalties,
etc.

What has the RBI said about the employee incentives given in NBFCs?

The central bank says that the

high growth in NBFC credit could be more due to the 'push effect', as NBFC employees are being given targets for driving business. This could result in loans being given to sub-prime borrowers who do not have the capacity to repay them. Further, to mask the non-performing assets, these loans are rolled over into fresh loans, further boosting the credit growth numbers.

RBF's review of books of NBFCs has shown malpractices, such as many accounts being linked to the same PAN number, fake IDs being used to open accounts, some accounts being closed within a few days of opening and so on. The central bank has, therefore, told NBFCs to review their employees' compensation packages. If a large proportion of a variable pay is linked to customer acquisition, it can lead to the deployment of unsavoury practices to show growth.

Are such malpractices

Are such malpractices rampant across NBFCs?

No, the governor clarified in the press conference that the lapses were seen only in some entities and the central bank is engaging with them bilaterally. But it has issued a warning to all entities in the sector to put appropriate checks in place.

# What is RBI's concern regarding inoperative deposits, mule accounts, etc?

deposits, mule accounts, etc?
A recent review of FATAF (Financial Action Task Porce) to prevent money laundering and terror financing flagged that the systems to check money laundering were very weak in small finance banks, co-operative banks, and other smaller lending institutions.
Deposit accounts which are not operative are easy channels through which money can be laundered. Similarly, miscreants can use mules or people willing to allow accounts to be opened in their names to create fake accounts through which they can carry out nefarious activities.

### BL TWO-WAY CROSSWORD 2544



### EASY

ACROSS 1. Opening in deck or

wall (5) 4. Snake, old musical instrument (7)

8. Blameworthy (13) 10. Highly praise (5) 11. III-favoured (4) 12. Walking with a

limp (4) 16. To any, or no. 17. Twenty-four hours

non-stop (5,3,5) 19. Climbing devices (7) 20. Used brush (5)

### DOWN

1. Concerned with gardening science (13)

2. Summit (3) 3. Took warning (6) 4. Bedlinen (6)

6. Make one feel uncomfortable (9) 7. Pass to see play,

etc (7.6) 9. Eight ounces (4-5) 13. 'Title' (6) 14. Lid hairs (6)

15. Situates (6) 18. Unit number (3)

### NOT SO EASY

Draw in the shading and bring forth a chick (5)
 Satan, the old one, used money when embracing

'is female (7) 8. He rebels in rep anyhow, so should be blamed

for it (13) 10. Sing one's praises for entering the next Olympic

11. Hug topless lady first and last, though she's no beauty (4)

12. Am to be held by the French, being unable to

walk properly (4)

16. A lofty, alternative division, to any extent (2,3) 17. Tour of Big Ben taking twenty-four hours? (5,3,5)

20. Was bristling as one haughtily left? (5)

...

### DOWN

1. Arrogant-sounding of art to have to do with gardening (13)

2. Behead the very best (3)

3. Misdeed with high exp

note of (6)

4. Sleepers get between lines for sailors (6) 5. It is known at end of match from Ulster maybe (6) 6. It's up to me to get Academicians in pubs to

discomfort one (9) 7. It may admit one to watch, even if it's only play (7,6)

9. Fifty-pence weight? (4-5)

13. Have the management of a title (6) 14. Flogs a number of trees (6)

15. Sets Labour leader in Steppes, by the sound of

18. The unit for a person who's indefinite (3)

### SOLUTION: BL TWO-WAY CROSSWORD 2543

ACROSS 1. Sired 4. Lion cub 8. Temptress 9. Sir 10. Noughts 12. Inch 14. Antlers 17. Four 18. Shake-up 20. Nip 21. Chorister 23. Everest 24. Giddy DOWN 1. Sit on the fence 2. Rumour 3. Ditching 4. Lie 5. Oust 6. Casino 7. Birthday party 11. Seasons 13. Creaking 15. Purple 16. Bested 19. Acre 22. Oft

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### A GREEN FUTURE

Union minister for new & renewable energy Pralhad Joshi

We remain committed to our pursuit of a sustainable energy future that aligns with our growth ambitions and environmental responsibilities. India stands as a global voice of reason

### Rate cut is inevitable

In its fight against inflation, the monetary policy committee should not end up derailing growth

S WIDELY EXPECTED, the Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) left the reporate unchanged at 6.5% at its meeting on Wednesday while altering the stance to "neutral" from "withdrawal of accommodation". With this, the countdown to the start of a accommodation". With this, the countdown to the start of a rate-cutting cycle has begun — the MPC is expected to announce a 25 basis point cut at its December meeting and follow it up with another one in February. A cut might have been possible now but for the escalating tensions in West Asia and the sharp spike in crude oil prices, to nearly \$80 a barrel, after having fallen to sub-\$70 levels. As the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) Governor Shaktikanta Das said, there are upside risks to inflation and, therefore, some degree of caution was to be expected.

That said, inflationary pressures have been easing and with global prices of care uposities of care inflation, a lovel of the prices of care in the large in flation and the global prices of care inflation and the global prices of care inflation and the large inf

That said, inflationary pressures have been easing and with global prices of commodities expected to stay benign, core inflation should remain soft. In general food inflation, which has been somewhat sticky, is expected to ease later in the year. While there could be a couple of blips in some months caused by base effects.—September and October, for instance — the central bank appears to be satisfied with the price situation. The governor said there is now greater confidence that inflation is easing and that has prompted the central bank to retain its inflation forecast for the year at 4.5%. Economists believe that, ceteris paribus, retail inflation could undershoot this level by March next year, moving towards the 4% target.

towards the 4% target.

Liquidity has been adequate ever since the government resumed spending after the elections and is expected to remain in surplus, on average, in the next few months. The shift to a neutral stance will give the MPC age, in the next tew months. In estimate a neutral stance will give the MTC more flexibility to act on rate change. The bond markets clearly believe there will be action in December; yields fell to 6.75% after the announcement. The problem, however, is that the scramble for deposits continues leaving the cost of borrowings for banks elevated. As such there is unlikely to be much relief for those borrowers whose loan rates are based on banks'

leaving the cost of borrowings for banks elevated. As such there is unlikely to be much relief for those borrowers whose loan rates are based on banks' cost of funds. However, a rate cut will have a salutary effect on interest rates in the system and the MPC should not delay this beyond December because recent data clearly points to a slowdown in the economy.

The RBI governor believes that the growth story remains intact and that rural demand is trending up while urban demand continues to hold firm. To be sure, the good monsoon should boost the farm economy but urban demand is certainly slowing. For one, sales of passenger vehicles fell sharply in September, a festive month in some parts of the country. Again, the subdued volumes reported by consumer goods companies and cement manufacturers over the past few months suggest a loss of momentum. Credit growth has slowed while goods and services tax collections, manufacturing purchasing managers' index data, and corporate tax collections have all been softer than expected. Merchandise exports, of course, continue to suffer, which will impact the employment numbers. The average real wage growth remained tepid at 0.7% year-on-year (y-o-y) in Q1FY25; although this is more encouraging than the average contraction of 1.6% y-o-y between Q2FY19 and Q1FY25, the growth is unlikely to be able to boost demand meaningfully. There are, therefore, downside risks to the RBI's growth projection of 7.2% for FY25. The fight against inflation should not end up derailing growth.

### **A FINE BALANCING ACT**

MPC'S CHANGE IN STANCE AND OTHER REGULATORY ANNOUNCEMENTS ARE FORWARD-LOOKING

# The finesse of RBI's stance

HE NEWLY CONSTI-TUTED Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) deliv-ered a forward-looking ver-dict changing the stance to neutral while keeping the policy rates unchanged for the tenth time in a row.

neutral while keeping the policy rates unchanged for the tenth time in a row. It is interesting to note that the change in stance was a unanimous decision. The first meeting of the MPC in all earlier terms also began with unanimous decisions on a rate cut or pause.

A change in stance to neutral comes against a backdrop of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) steadfastly siding with a 7.2% growth this fiscal and 7.1% in FY26. Interestingly, a simple interpretation of Mint Street's manifesto discloses the dilemma it faces; preparing to cut rates in the near time even when the growth rate is 7%-plus (or quite elevated in terms of large economies) and the undaunted commitment to the midpoint of inflation target. Add to this the changing dynamics of Indian financial markets where the shifts in saving preferences are re-scripting the tale, altering the conventional sources of liquidity pools, as also associated cost dynamics. However, it is understoot that RBI is giving a long rope to markets to readjust perfore the engine proving market where the RBI is giving a long rope to markets for eadjust before the engine proving markets where the RBI is giving a long rope to markets to readjust before the engine plant or the proving proving the refore the engine proving the reference and the refore the engine proving the refore the engine proving the refore the engine proving the refore the engine refore the engine proving the refore the engine proving the refore the engine refore

pools, as also associated cost dynamics. However, it is understood that the RBI is giving a long rope to markets to readjust before the ensuing pivot.

RBI projections suggest economic growth is robust and may remain above 7% for the next couple of quarters. The growth may surprise on the upside as the agriculture sector is expected to perform well on the back of above normal ainfall and robust reservoir levels leading to healthy kharif sowing. This raises the question whether the RBI will cut rates when growth is already in a strong momentum. Recent country-wise experiences indicate that with the exception of the Philippines, the GDP growth at the time of rate cut was much lower than the average growth of the preceding four quarters. Thus if a rate cut has ppens, it will bear testimony to the RBI's confidence of tacking buoyant growth with manageable inflation. Perhaps 7% growth with a rate cut has never happened in Indian or world history, but for 2016 when the MPC first took over.



Group chief economic advisor, State Bank of India, a member, 16th Finance Commiss

Even as the RBI has prepared the market for a 7% growth rate, govern-ment projections at 6.5-7% look more reasonable at this point. The credit-deposit differential has narrowed to 150

deposit differential has narrowed to 150 basis points (bps), the lowest since May 2022, and down from the high of 810 bps in December 2022. Interestingly, the year-to-date growth rate in the current fiscal shows that credit growth, after adjusting for the merger, is still lower by 43 lakh crore (as of September), but more interestingly higher by 43.4 lakh crore compared to deposit. There is also a slowdown in the leading indicators of consumption. Perhaps the months of October and November could script a different story.

Mexico Philippi US UK

China

months of Orbober and November could script a different story. The apparent slowdown in deposits has also ensured a crescendo of misplaced narratives with a lower pace of money supply being cited as a strong reason for lower reserve money creation and hence lower deposit growth. However, in an inflation targeting framework money is endogenous, and also the link between money supply and reserve money is agnostic as digitisgant in a strong strong the strong stro

increasing money multiplier with much lower cur-rency leakage. Coming back to the role of monetary policy in enabling better

policy transmission, it is observed that while the transmission from a rate change is instantaneous in the money market, it is not so in bank lending. Starting April 2022 the repor rate increased by 250 bps, though the increase in the weighted average lending rate (WALR) on outstanding rupee loan was only 117 bps and for WALR on fresh rupee loan sanctioned was 190 bps. However, in an increasing rate scenario, the retail and micro, small and medium enterprise loan pricing has been impacted immediately, which is not the case for large corporate. The pricing of large corporate depends on many factors including liquidity, rating, pricing power, etc. It is pertinent to mention that 57.5% of the total outstanding floating rate rupee loans outstanding floating rate rupee loan are linked to the external benchmark average cours are rupee loans are linked to the marginal cost of fundsbased lending rate, while 38.6% are linked to the marginal cost of fundsbased lending rate. The shift to a neutral stance could further a better pricing deal for corporate loans, enabling faster time of average and complete the standard further as the correct learns, enabling faster to credit growth. The RBI has ensured that system liquidity remains comfortable by conducting two way marked for the standard fo

Female foeticide, often blamed on traditional Indian

values, can be traced directly to colonial policies, later weaponised by international NGO advocacy

deficit till end-June, before turning the corner in July and remaining in surplus mode since then, trudging carefully between absorption through the liquidity adjustment facility and government surpluc ash balances. After IP Morgan and Bloomberg, FTSE Russell becomes the third global bond index to include Indian bonds in their Emerging Markets Government Bond Index over ask: month period from September 2025 with incremental inflows expected by about 34.6 billion, providing further support to liquidity.

The other regulatory announcements mirror the RBI's penchant to reinforce the banking and financial services structural architecture, non-leny of prepayment charges extended to micro/small loans, smoothing data asymmetry for tackling climate funding through proposed two-stage RB-GRIS platform, enhancing UPI Lite wallet limit to \$5,000 (while the pertansaction limit in feature phonecentric UPI 123 Pay stands enhanced from \$5,000 to \$10,000, and introducing name look-up facility in interbank transfers to mitigate customer woes and reduce frauds. They all go a long way in making banking forward-looking yet connected to the ground.

The RBI's balancing act is auda-cious, defying the odds and orbit of the other big boys' club to take an independent rate cut call. This fine balancing act, assiduously choosing the mid-looking yet connected to the ground.

The RBI's balancing act is auda-cious, defying the odds and orbit of the other big boys' club to take an independent rate cut call. This fine balancing act, assiduously choosing the mid-looking yet connected to the ground.

The respective of the service of the stream of the RBI under the stewardship of Shatkikanta Das where consultation is in financial markets like the US commonly termed as "end game" with that of the RBI under the stewardship of Shatkikanta Das where consultation is the hallmarky. Echoing the governor, one can only expect the calibrate the significance of the horse's return to reinforce the sovereign's supremacy.

### An economist's guide to help hurricane victims

with NORTH CAROLINA still reeling from the aftermath of Hurricane Helene and Hurricane Milton landing in Florida, it is natural to ask What is the best way to help the victims of these storms, and how can society best protect itself from such damage in the future? As an economist, I realise that I come at these questions with a bit of a different perspective.

First, whenever possible, it is better to use private insurance, such as homeower's insurance and flood insurance, to protect against loss. One of the functions of insurance is to make losers at least partially whole after the fact, but another is to make risky decisions too expensive to contemplate in the first place. This second function of insurance is sespecially important for Florida. The state is vulnerable to storms, so market prices for insurance should be allowed to adjust to higher levels, most of all for vulnerable properties. High prices in an area are a sign that building and renovation should not take place there. With fewer people living in vulnerable areas, the cost of storms will fall accordingly.

That sounds harsh, but "incentives matter" is the first and primary principle of economics, and sometimes incentives should be allowed to operate. Unfortunately, Florida has a state-run insurer offast resort which continues tobal out to mecowers. Political debates tend to frame this issue as whether to help poor, struggling losses because of storms. But whateveryou think of such ballounds after the fact, with better incentives ahead of time, at a suddictaining all calams on the public purse ex-post. The upshot is that insurance costs must rise toprobibilitive levels in them, or may be a subject to the providing insurance services. The storm that hit Asheville is an example of this, as such powerful storms have not admitted the providing insurance work in the providing insurance work in the providing insurance and the providing insuran

We economists have a reputation, mostly justified, as being hardheaded. But in some cases, such as disaster relief, our way of thinking can enable a more

# The dangers of outsourcing development

GDP GROWTH AT THE TIME OF RATE CUT

50 bps

25 bps 25 bps 50 bps 25 bps

50 bps

### BIBEK DEBROY, SANJEEV SANYAL, & ADITYA SINHA

non-governmental organisations (INGOs) have pushed donor-driven agendas that have often harmed local communities. In Tanzania and Kenya, INGO-led conservation displaced Masasi communities, disrupting their livelihoods. In Bolivia, water privatisation in Occhabamba, backed by INGOs, restricted access, leading to public outcry and policy reversal. Similar patterns have emerged in India, where INGOs promoted projects with conditions that ignored local realities, undermining development goals. More of us should read Unnatural Selection by Mara Hvistendahl, asi theds light on one such example where interventions by INGOs led to an increase in incidence of female feeticide in India. While the Western narrative tends to focus on how cultural preferences in India have fuelled this tragic practice, it conveniently ignores the historical role that British colonial policies and western NGOs have played in perpetuating causing gender imbalance on an industrial scale.

British colonialists claimed moral superiority but overlooked their role in exacerbating practices like infanticide. Celebrated figures like lonathan Duncan were halled for opposing "barbaric customs", yet scholars such as LS Vishwanath and Bernard S Cohn have shown that British land reforms in the late 18th and early 19th centuries directly increased infanticide among land-owning castes. Rajputs began killing their female infants not because of long-standing traditions, but in response to economic pressures from colonial rule. Nevertheless, the British perpetuated the narrative that female infants of the British perpetuated the narrative that female infants of the British perpetuated the narrative that female infendence of driven agendas, often reflecting the same colonial

mindset. The interventions by INGOs
— driven by the Malthusian fears of
overpopulation — ended upworsening
female foeticide.

Between the 1950s and 1980s,
INGOs such as the Ford Foundation,
Rockefeller Foundation, and Population Council played a central role in
introducing sex determination technologies to India as part of a broader
population control agenda. By the
1960s, India's population was seen as
major global concern, and Western
experts identified its as "text case" for
population management. In 1975,
egged on by INGOs, 5996 of India's
health ministry budget was directed
toward family planning, with little left
for other pressing needs like tubercullosis and malaria. The
introduction of amnioexpense is not extra the All.

centesis tests at the All India Institute of Med ical Sciences (AIIMS), which were initially meant to detect foetal

meant to detect toetan abnormalities, quickly became tools for deter-mining foetal sex. A key figure in this episode was Sheldon Segal, head of the Popu-lation Council's bio-medical division with

medical division who was posted to Delhi with backing from the Ford Foun-dation. Segal was directly advising Lieu-tenant Colonel BL Raina, India's director tenant Colonel Bl. Raina, India's director offamily planning. Segal helped in reorienting Raina's focus solely to population control. By 1963, personnel from the Ford Foundation alone in Delhi rivalled the US embassy staff in size, and the Rockefeller Foundation had its largest presence outside the US in New Delhi. The economic leverage these INGOs wielded further cemented their control. By the 1960s, India was receiving \$1.5 billion annually in aid, much of it being spent on population control measures.

The World Bank made loans for food and public health projects contingent on stringent population control policies. INGOsalsoestablished strongholds in India's most prestigious institutions to make pilable Indians to fight the "intellectual battle" on their behalf. For instance, the Population Council established India's first demography centre at the International Institute for Described for the Population fo first demography centre at the Interna-tional Institute for Population Sciences Mumbai, while Western funding focused heavily on AIIMS, where Segal set up a neavity on AliMa, where Segal set up a department of reproductive physiology. The Rockefeller Foundation had embed-dead visers at AlIMS since 19 98, and the Ford Foundation began backing the insti-tution in 1962 with a \$1.7-million grant. Nudged by these INGOs, at AlIMS, doctors openly promoted the use of sex determination technol-

According to a 2006 study published in The Lancet, the ogy for population con-trol purposes. A paper published by IC Verma published by IC Verma and colleagues in Indian Paediatrics defended the use of amniocente-sis for sex selection, arguing that it could help reduce "unneces-saryfecundity" by allow-ing families to stop reproducing once they had a male child. The ledged that seven out of introduction of prenatal sex-determination technologies led to an estimated 10 million missing female births in India over two decades

had a male child. The paper acknowledged that seven out of eight families that underwent the test primarily for sex determination chose to abort female foctuses. By 1978, over 1,000 female foctuses had been aborted at AIIMS alone, and between 1978 and 1983, an estimated 78,000 female foctuses were aborted nationwide as sex determination spread to other government hospitals. In other words, the INGOs were fully aware of what they were promoting.

Census data reveals a troubling decline in the child sex ratio over the decades, with a particularly sharp fall

decades, with a particularly sharp fall after the 1970s. In 1951, the ratio

stood at 943 girls per 1,000 boys, close to the natural sex ratio of about 950. However, subsequent decades saw a steady drop, with the ratio decreasing to 941 in 1961, 930 in 1971, and 934 in 1981. By 1991, it had further dropped to 927. Notably, the most significant decline occurred in 1971, closely coinciding with the introduction of sex-determination technologies and amplicenties it sets in India

tion of sex-determination technologies and amniocentesis tests in India during the late 1960s. Incidentally, these INGOs also funded the import of ultrasound machines to India.

Studies reveal that states with easier access to sex-determination tests saw sharper declines in the female-to-male ratio. By 2001, early adopters like Punjab and Haryana experienced drastic drops in their child sex ratios. Punjab of 376 and Harvana of Al-Meshlev 1976.

drops in their child sex ratios — Punjab to 876 and Haryana to 861. Notably, both states are close to Delhi, the head-quarters of these INGOs.

According to a 2006 study by Jha et al., published in The Lancet, the introduction of prenatal sex-determination technologies led to an estimated 10 million missing female births in India over two decades. The study further noted that between 1980 and 2010, an average of 500,000 female foetuses were aborted annually.

Femalé foeticide, often blamed on tra-Femalé foeticide, often

orted annually. Female foeticide, often blamed on tra Female foeticide, often blamed on tra-ditional Indian values, can be traced directly to colonial policies, later weaponised by INGO advocacy. This is not todeny the existence of traditional biases in India but to highlight that large-scale foeticide resulted from deliberate actions by agencies that now lament the issue. Gender imbalance in India is just one example of how external agencies, even when they have good intentions, can cause lasting harm. Therefore, local poli-cymakers must exercise caution and acepticism when considering advice from INGOs and consultancies.

Views are personal

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# Titan of industry, icon of modern India

Indian business to which he brought a rare combination of beauty and brains; A man of refined tastes and self-effacing to a fault, he built India's finest industrial conglomerate

— Shakespear's Hamlet

atan Naval Tata (RNT) is
no more. He would have
been 87 this December. He
ror most of us thought
which he brought a rare combination
which he brought a rare combination
tastes and self-effacing to a fault, be
usult india's finest industrial conglomcrate. Alongside. he loved dogs, flew
planes well into his 70s and messerised millions with his luminous personality, his chivalry and his simplicaty.

Nor was he an effete neer As he.

His contribution went far beyond the boardroom. He endeared himself to several people thanks to his humility, kindness and an unwavering commitment to making our society better

planes well into his 70s and mesmerised millions with his luminous personality, his chivalry and his simplicity.

Nor was he an effete poet. As he showed in his bruising early career battles with the powerful Tata group sarraps, beneath the soft exterior lay a tough hard-nosed, even ruthless empire builder.

It was a straight of the properties of the p

NARENDRA MODI,

in a gladiatorial consets, the likes of which has rarely been seen by Indian business. What followed was an early prequel to the game of thrones. Though he had the retiring chairman's tact blessings, he was largely an unproven and unknown figure. The more flamboyant satraps of the group like Russi Mody who led Tata Steel (then still Tisco), Ajit Kerkar at Indian Hotels and Darbari Seth, who headed Tata Chemicals, refused to take him seriously. Most in fact though the would be a pushover, a softie, who had been handed over the top job because of his name. One among them, did more than just ignore him. Russi Mody, the uncrowned king of Jamshedpur, whose business instincts had been forged in the flery furnaces of the steel city, fought the new boss tooth and nail.

In a flerce boardroom battle, RNT

steer city, lought the new ooss uotun and nail.

In a flerce boardroom battle, RNT
In steel the older man and took charge of Tata Steel. It wasn't just coprorate goo or a battle of wills. He had rightly assessed that for all his charisma. Tata Steel under Mody was III equipped to handle the radically altered business convironment in the wake of the recoveryments in the wake of the property of 1991. The company would prough several rounds of planfial

restructuring before it became a mod-ern steel company but there was no questioning RNT's authority or his ability to envision the future after that, Indeed, through his 22 years at the helm of the Tata group, RNT had his eye firmly on the future. The empire he inherited was unwieldy though vast. Its topline was impressive but not so its bottom line with most busi-nesses, it, the versus offering nour. sast. Its topline was impressive bar not so its bottom line with most businesses in the group offering poor returns on investment. Under JRD's benign oversight, each company had been free to chart its own course, even if it was to nowhere. The ruling amily too had been guitly of benign neglect. Early in RNT's tenure, with the promoter stake in Tata Steel a lowly 5 percent, the new chairman learnt that the steel company faced the threat of a hostile takeover. He proceeded to nullify the attack white shoring up the promoter stake in 1ath enoting up the promoter stake in 1ath shoring up the sh

the humbled American giant Ford Motors that had once spurned his advances.

Similar derring-do was evident in building that car, the Nano. Sure, there was always room for another affordable car in India besides what Maruti was making. But putting the price tag before the first blueprint had been generated ist't how cars are made. And doing that just because you wanted to give a misdle class family of four the joy of migrating from a goot to a few migrating from the good of the few migrating from the good of the migrating from the few migrating from the good of the late Cyrus Mistry's accession to the top lob and his subsequent exit, engineered by the very man who had brought him in. Neither of the two events brought any credific for professionalism.

But then Tata Motors is today the domestic market leader in electric RIL 5 billion. What's more, Mistry was replaced by N Chandrasekaran, the first ever chairman of the group who was neither from the larger Tata family, nor a Parsi and not even a shareholder. Just goes to show that while Tata might have made errors of timing or judgement, his intent was always kosher.

Among the pantheon of contemporary indian business leaders RNT

or judgement, his intent was always kosher.

Among the pantheno of contemporary Indian business leaders RNT stands tail. He earned billions for his companies and spent barely millions. That his personal net worth added up to less than half a billion dollars is testimony to his philanthropic ethos, a wital part of his inheritance. He will be remembered not just for his many business successes but as much for the grace and decency with which he achieved them. The man who would hold open the elevator door if he saw an employee rushing to take it, was the perfect role model for business leaders. It is India's loss that few of those around him have taken the cue.



Ratan Tata was a man with a vision. He has left a lasting mark on both business and philanthropy. My condolences to his family and the Tata community

RAHUL GANDHI, Congress MP

India's economy stands on the cusp of a historic leap forward. And Ratan's life and work have had much to do with our being in this position

ANAND MAHINDRA

Ratan Tata wasn't just a business leader – he embodied the spirit of India with integrity, compassion and an unwavering commitment to the greater good. Legends like him never fade away. Om Shanti

GAUTAM ADANI,

Industries, and was chairman of Air Industries, and was chairman of Tota Industries, and

October: Returns as

# Remembered by the nation as a visionary and compassionate pioneer

rine Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday led the nation in paying tributes to veteran industrialist and Tata Sons Chalman Emeritus Ratan Tata, who died at 86 of age-related ailments.

Describing Tata as an "visionary business leader, a compassionate soul and an extraordinary human being", Modi said on X: "He provided stable leadership to one of India's oldest and most prestigious business houses. At the same time, his contribution wentfair beyond the board-room. He endeared himself's ose-veral people thanks to his humility, kindness and an unwavering commitment to making our society better."

He was not the Forefront of Amarpiocal decaming by and giving back.

The was at the Forefront of Amarpiocal and the Same and the Same

tion, animal wertare to an action of said.
"I would meet him frequently in Guj-rat when I was the CM. We would

exchange views on diverse issues. If found his perspectives very enriching? he added, President Droupadi Murmu also offered tributes and said: "India has lost an icon who blended corporate growth with main building, and excellence with ethics." 'A recipient of Padma Withiashan and Jadma Bitushan, he took forward the great Tata legacy and gave it a more impressive global presence. He inspired dents alike. His contribution to philarhopy and charty is involuable, 'She said. Urison home minister Amit Shah said Tata 'selflessly dedicated his life to the development' of the country. 'Every time Iran Han, his seal and commitment to the betterment of Bharat and its people anazed me. His commitment to the velocation of millions of derarts', he wrote on. X. 'Time cannot lake Ratan Tata I away from his belowed taskon. He will alway from his belowed taskon he will alway from his belowed taskon. He will alway from his belowed taskon. He will alway from his belowed taskon. He will alway from his belowed taskon he will be alway from his belowed taskon he will be alway to the search and the search and the will be alway to the search and the search an



Ratan Tata during a press conference in June 1993.

Ratan Tata. He was a Titan of the Indian industry known for his monumental contributions to our economy, trade and industry. My deepest condolences to his family, friends and admirrers. May his soul rest in peace, "he said on X.

Congress lawmaker and Leader of

remembered the "great industrialist and philanthropist". "Shif Batan Taka's simplicity, foresight and spirit of service will remain a source of inspiration for ages. His departure is an irreparable loss for the country, "he suggested with the simple state of the country, he suggested with the simple state of the country, he suggested with the suggested

lanthropy, and nation-building that will increen inspire generations. A life well-lived. An iconic legacy to cherish." he said. Several industrialists also paid hornage to Tata, citing him as an inspiration. "Tam unable to accept the absence of Ratan Tata. India's seconomy standson the cusp of a historic leap forward. And Rataris life and work have had much to do with our being in this position. Hence, his menturship and guidance at this point in each of the control of the control

nty, compassion and an unwavering com-mitment to the greater good. Legends like him never fade away. Om Shanti."



### **ACHIEVING WORK LIFE BALANCE**

A healthy work-life dynamic not only benefits individuals but also strengthens communities



In recent years, the world has faced unprecedented challenges, from the COVID-19 pandemic to ongoing socio-economic disruptions. These crises have not only claimed lives but have also altered the very later of our daily routines and working environments. Amidst these turnultuous times, the concept of work-life balance has emerged as a crucial necessity, emphasising the importance of maintaining mental and physical well-being while fulfilling professional responsibilities. The rising death toils and widespread fear associated with global crises have taken a toil on mental health. Today, grief, andety and uncertainty have become commonplace as people grapple with loss and disruption. There is no denying the fact that fast-paced technological advancements require constant adaptation and learning, which can be overwhelming and contribute to stress. In many Indian companies, there is a culture of overwork, where taking time off is frowned upon. Many executives even end up working extended hours, sacrificing their time and health, which contributes to physical as well as mental exhaustion. Moreover, this can even lead to a toxic environment where employees not only feel they have to prove their worth constantly, but the stigma associated with failure may even drive them to push themselves to unhealthy limits to succeed. Poor diet, lack of exercise and high-stress levels have led to ilfestyle-related health issues such as heart disease, diabetes and hypertension, which are prevalent among high-level executives. years, the world has faced unprecedented challenges, from



Economic downturns and market volatility add pressure on executives to perform, leading to increased stress and associated health risks. In such a climate, achieving a balance between work and personal life has such a climate, activering a balance between work and personal lier has become essential for fostering resilience and promoting overal well-being. A healthy work-life balance allows an individual to dedicate time towards self-care, family and community, which are vital for emotional recovery and stability. The shift to remote work and flexible schedules, prompted by the pandemic, has underscored the need for a re-evaluation of tra-

by the pandemic, has underscored the need for a re-evaluation of tra-ditional work structures. If remote work offers flexibility, at the same time it has also blurred the lines between personal as well as professional life, leading to longer hours and increased stress. It's the need of the hour for organisations to recognise this and promote policies that encourage employees to set boundaries, take breaks and prioritise personal time. Addressing the high death foll among execu-tives in Indian companies for instance the Pune CA death followed by a regulated Indian working for NBEC and comprising suicides on a similar arouted Indian working for NBEC and comprising suicides on a similar a reputed Indian working for NBFC and committing suicide on a similar ground- i.e. work pressure and mental distress from the seniors neces-states a multi-faceted approach. Organisations must prioritise mental health support, promote a healthier work-life balance, and create a cul-ture that values employee well-being. By taking these steps, companies can not only help mitigate the risks associated with high-stress envi-ronments but also foster a healthier and more sustainable workload by fostering an environment that values work-life balance, employers can enhance productivity and employee satisfaction, thereby leading to

can enhance productivity and employee satisfaction, thereby leading to lower turnover rates and a more engaged workforce. Achieving work-life balance is not solely a personal endeavour but it also has broader implications for society. When individuals can manage their work and personal lives effectively, they are more likely to engage in their communities, volunteer and support local initiatives. This communal engagement will foster social connections and strengthen the fabric of society, thereby making it more resilient in the face of adversity. By prioritising work-life balance, we as citizens of the nation will contribute not only to our well-being but also to the health of our communities. (The writer is a motivator; views are personal)

The key to a sustainable and low-carbon future



By adopting energy-efficient practices, the country not only cuts emissions but also saves millions of tonnes of oil equivalent, leading to a more sustainable future

nergy efficiency refers to the practice of using less energy to achieve the same level of output or perform the same task. It is one of the most impactful strategies for reducing energy consumption, cutting costs, and mitigating environmental harm. As global energy demand continues to rise, enhancing energy efficiency has become critical in the fight against climate change, resource conservation, and ensuring a sustainable future. According to the International Energy Agency (IEA), the global rate of energy efficiency improvement has averaged around 2 per cent per year, with some variations during the COVID-19 pandemic. In 2023, global energy consumption reached approximately 15,000 million tons of oil equivalent (MTOE), as reported in the Enerdata Vearbook 2024. A 2 per cent improvement in efficiency would save about 300 MTOE—an amount greater than India's entire industrial energy consumption, which stands at around 270 MTOE in 2022-23. In 2022-23, sectors such as industry, bulldings, and transport consumed 552 MTOE out of India's total primary energy consumption of 850 MTOE. The industrial sector accounted for 49 per cent of this total, while transport and buildings (residential and commercial) contributed 12 per cent and 13 per cent, respectively. India is one of the few nations with a comprehensive legal and institutional framework for energy conservation. The Energy Conservation Act of 2001 and the Bureau of Energy Efficiency under the Ministry of Power are pivotal in driving energy efficiency programmes across various sectors. India's flagship programmes include the Perform, Achieve, and Trade (PAT) Scheme for energy-efficiency under the Ministry of Power are pivotal in driving energy efficiency programmes across various sectors. India's flagship programmes include the Perform, Achieve, and Trade (PAT) Scheme for energy-efficiency where the Ministry of Power are pivotal in driving energy efficiency would be annual emissions by approximately 306 million tons of CO22. This energy efficiency would be annual

energy enterency communion accounts for about 10 per cent of India's annual emissions, which stands at around 3 billion tons of CO2. Energy efficiency is projected to play a crucial role in global climate action. It is estimated that nearly 40 per cent of the emissions reductions needed to reach net zero by 2050 must come from energy efficiency measures, many of which offer short payback periods ranging from 3-5 years. Often dubbed the "first fuel," energy efficiency is seen as a vital tool in maintaining a sustainable, low-carbon future. Given the constrained carbon budget outlined in the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) Sixth Assessment, energy efficiency is more important than ever in controlling global temperature rise. The Importance of Energy Efficiency: It is a correstone of sustainable development, offering multiple advantages such as cost savings, environmental protection, energy security and resource conservation.

Energy-efficient technologies reduce consumption, which, in turn, cuts utility bills for individuals, businesses, and governments. Reduced energy use decreases green-house gas emissions and helps combat global warming, It also diminishes pollutants that harm air and water quality. Additionally, energy efficiency decreases overall demand, reducing dependence on fossil fuels and



**ESTIMATED** THAT NEARLY 40 PER CENT OF THE EMISSIONS REDUCTIONS NEEDED TO REACH NET ZERO BY 2050 MUST

COME FROM **ENERGY EFFICIENCY** MEASURES, MANY OF WHICH OFFER

SHORT PAYBACK **PERIODS** RANGING FROM

3-5 YEARS

mental impact. Key Sectors and Strategies indus-

try: The industrial sector is the largest global energy consumer, driven by processes such as manufacturing, mining and machinery use. Enhancing energy efficiency in this sector involves optimising processes, recovering waste energy, and implementing energy management, improving production methods, and utilising efficient motors and pumps can significantly reduce energy consumption. The National Mission for Enhanced Energy efficiency (NMEEE), launched in 2011, targets energy-intensive industries. The industrial sector is the

industries. Under its PAT Scheme, industries industries.
Under its PAT Scheme, industries are assigned specific energy-saving targets (energy use per unit of product), and the market-based approach allows trading of excess energy savings. This initiative has resulted in substantial energy savings, leading to a reduction of approximately 110 million tonnes of CO2 emissions. As of August 2024, the PAT scheme covers 1,333 energy-intensive industries and establishments across 13 sectors, including steel, cement, aluminium, fertilizer, petroleum refineries, thermal power plants, and others. As India develops its carbon market mechanism, many of these sectors will participate as "obligated entities" with specific greenhouse gas (GHC) emission reduction targets. The carbon market will facilitate this transition by implementing a market will facilitate this transition by implementing a market will accompany of the sectors will participate as "obligated entities" with specific greenhouse gas (GHC) emission reduction targets.

transition by implementing a mar-ket-based approach to pricing GHG emissions. This mechanism encouremissions. I his mechanism encour-ages both public and private entities to engage in decarbonisation efforts across various sectors. Entities that reduce emissions below their targets can earn Carbon Credit Certificates, while those that do not must pur-chase credits to comply.

Additionally, the mechanism will have a voluntary component, allowing non-obligated entities to register projects focused on reducing, removing, or avoiding GHG emissions to obtain carbon credits.

The Standards & Labeling (S&L)
Programme: launched in 2006, rates appliances based on their energy efficiency, from 1 to 5 stars.

Programme: launched in 2006, rates appliances based on their energy efficiency, from 1 to 5 stars. This program covers 38 appliances with 16 falling under mandatory regulations. As of August 2024, the programme has saved 82 billion units of energy, equivalent to cut-ting 58 million tons of CO2 emis-sions.

units of energy, equivalent to cutting S8 million tons of CO2 emissions.

The UJALA Scheme and the Street
Light National Program (SLNP)
have also been successful in replacing inefficient lighting with LED
solutions, leading to significant
energy savings and emission reductions. As of September 2024,
approximately 370 million LED
bulbs and 7.2 million LED bulbs
and 7.2 million LED tube
lights have been distributed through
the UJALA scheme. This has resultedi nan annual reduction of 39 million tons of CO2 emissions.

Buildings Buildings are another
major energy consumer, particularly
through heating, cooling, and
lighting. Energy-efficient building
design, proper insulation, and smart
energy management systems can
dramatically reduce energy use.
The Energy Conservation Building
Code (ECBC), introduced in 2007,
mandates minimum energy performance standards for commercial
and residential buildings. Recent
updates, such as the Energy
Conservation and Sustainable
Building Code (ECSBC) and the
Eco Niwas Samhita (ENS) for residential buildings, aim to further
reduce energy consumption in large
buildings by up to 18 per cent.
Transportation: It is a major contributor to global energy use, primarily from fossil fuels. Improving
fuel efficiency in vehicles and promoting electric and hybrid vehicles
are key strategies.
The Indian government has implemented fuel efficiency standards for

passenger cars and heavy-duty vehi-cles and aims to expand the electric vehicle ecosystem including charg-ing infrastructure. As of 2024, India's charging stations are expect-ed to increase to 100,000 by 2030, supporting the growing number of electric vehicles. To create awareness of the benefits of Electric Vehicles (EVs), the "Go electric" Campaign was launched in Feb 2021. This involves radio jingles, poster/leaflets distribution, awareness through social media platforms, street plays, etc.

social media platforms, street plays, etc. Electricity Generation and Transmission: Upgrading power plants and incorporating renewable energy sources such as solar and wind are vital for reducing emissions in electricity generation. Under the PAT Scheme, India's thermal power plants have improved their efficiency, contributing to a reduction of 30 million tons of CO2. As of August 2024, 46 per cent of India's installed power capacity comes from non-fossil fuel sources, surpassing the commitment made at the Paris COP 21 summit.

iosail fuel sources, surpassing the commitment made at the Paris COP 21 summit. Challenges: Despite its benefits, the adoption of energy efficiency measures faces challenges like high upfront costs, limited awareness, and policy gaps. These barriers can be addressed through financial support mechanisms, capacity-building initiatives, and the development of comprehensive, flexible policies. Conclusion Energy efficiency is an essential driver of sustainable development, offering significant economic, environmental, and social benefits.

and social benefits.

As technology improves and policies strengthen, energy efficiency will remain crucial in reducing energy demand and mitigating climate change. By adopting energy-efficient practices in our homes, industries, and transportation systems, we can contribute to a cleaner, more sustainable future.

(The writer is DDG, Bureau of Energy Efficiency, views are personal)

# Surva Ghar Yojana: A sustainable alternative to free electricity politics

Unlike conventional freebies, this scheme boosts long-term savings, infrastructure investment and promotes sustainable energy production

In response to the growing trend of political parties offering free electricity to secure votes, the Narendra Modi government has introduced the Pradhan Mantri Surya Ghar Yojana. This initiative alipse to proposely espler Surya Ghar Yojana. This initiative aims to promote solar energy adoption by providing homeowners with a subsidy ranging from Rs 30,000 to Rs 78,000 for installing one to three kW solar panels. The scheme is designed to reduce dependence on government subsidies while offering households the henefit of free electricity for up to 25 years. Solar Power for Households Under this scheme, a consumer will spend around Rs 40,000 to Rs 70,000 to install a two to three kW solar panel.

a two to three kW solar panel. This investment allows house-



units of electricity per month, covering a significant portion of their energy needs. At the current rate of Rs 8 per unit, this translates to a monthly saving of Rs 2,400. Over 25 years, the total savings per household would amount to approximately Rs 7,20 lakh, ensuring that the initial cost of installation is recovered within one to two years. The government has also made provisions for consumers to finance

the remaining amount at a concessional interest rate of 7 per cent.
Addressing the Politics of
Free Electricity

Free Electricity
In recent years, several political parties have leveraged the
promise of free electricity as a

promise of free electricity as a means to gain political sup-port. States like Delhi, Punjab and Himachal Pradesh have implemented such schemes, offering free or subsidised electricity to a significant portion of their populations.

In Delhi, for instance, the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) government provides up to 200 units of electricity for free and a 50 per cent subsidy for those consuming between 201 and 400 units. However, the cost of these schemes has placed a significant burden on state budgets. In Delhi, Rs

3,250 crore was allocated for electricity subsidies in the 2023-24 budget, out of a total budget off 87 8,800 croc. Under AAP's rule, the capital expenditure growth rate has declined from 19.6 per cent during the previous Congress government's tenure to 9.2 per cent. Consequently, infrastructure development in Delhi has slowed, with fewer new projects being launched. The situation is similar in other states where free electricity has been promised. Punjah, Andhra Pradesh, Kerala, and Himachal Prudesh are all grapping with mounting debts, making it increasingly difficult to sustain free electricity schemes. In some cases, states have had to scale back or abandon these initiatives due to financial constraints. to financial con



A Viable Alternative
The Pradhan Mantri Surya
Ghar Yojana offers a more sustainable solution. By encouraging households to generate
their own electricity through
rooftop solar panels, the
scheme reduces the long-term
burden on government
finances. The total investment required by households under

heme is Rs 1.5

including the government sub-sidy. With one crore house-holds expected to participate, this would result in an addi-tional capacity of 30 GW of solar power, significantly boosting India's renewable

boosting India's renewable energy output.
Unlike traditional free electricity schemes, which are fundad by annual government subsidies, the Surya Ghar Yojana provides long-term benefits without placing a strain on the budget. By generating their own electricity, households will no longer be dependent on yearly subsidies and will contribute to reducing the country's carbon footprint. This aligns with India's broader goals of increasing renewable energy production and achieving net-zero emissions.

Economic and

Environmental Impact
The Surya Ghar Yojana has far-reaching economic and environmental benefits. First, it provides households with a reliable source of free electricity for 25 years, ensuring significant savings on energy bills. This also reduces the government's reliance on costly subsidies, freeing up funds for essential infrastructure development. Second, the scheme is expected to generate large-scale employment, with over one lakh people required to be trained to install and maintain solar panels. This will not only create new jobs but also develop a skilled workfore in the renewable energy sector. Third by increasine solar

Third, by increasing solar energy production, the scheme will help India reduce its

dependence on fossil fuels, contributing to the country's efforts to combat climate change. Rooftop solar panels are an environmentally friendly alternative to coal-based power plants, and their wide-spread adoption will significantly reduce carbon emissions. By encouraging households to invest in solar energy, the scheme not only reduces the burden on state budgets but also contributes to India's renewable energy goals. The widespread adoption of rooftop solar panels has the potential to transform the energy landscape, providing households while helping ludia move closer to achieving its environmental objectives. dependence on fossil fuels

its environmental objectives. (The writer is Professor, PGDAV College, University of hi: views are person

### The Tribune

### Congress in a spot

Party should learn lessons from poll reversals

stunning defeat in Haryana and a dismal performance in Jammu & Kashmir have under formance in Jammu & Kashmir have under-mined the Congress' pre-eminent position in the INDIA bloc ahead of the Maharashtra and Jharkhand Assembly elections. The grand old party was sitting pretty after an impressive show in the Lok Sabha polls, but things have changed after the October 8 verdict. Some of its allies, such as the Shiv Sena-UBT (Uddhaw Balasahe) Thackeray), the CPI and the Aam Aadmir Party (AAP), have advised the Conand the Anii Nation Tary (Ver), new divised the Con-gress to introspect and review its strategy for the upcom-ing polls. With the Maha Vikas Aghadi's seat-sharing talks in Maharashtra entering the last lap, the Shiv Sena-URT and Sharad Pawar-kel NCP are sensing an opportu-nity to extinct a better bargain from the Congress.

The Congress has been quick to remind its alliance part-ners that it was the top performer in Maharashtra in this year's Lok Sabha polls, winning 13 of the 17 seats it contest-ed (Shiv Sena-UBT and the BJP won nine each). However, there is simply no room for complacency after the party made the blunder of regarding Haryana as low-hanging futil. Its decision to go solo rather than tying up with AAP has come under scrutiny. Though AAP drew a blank, its

nas come under scrutary. I mough Arb rulew a bank, as wote share of 1.79 per cent impacted the outcome of the neck-and-neck mee between the BJP and the Congress. As the Congress high command returns to the drawing board, it needs to be more accommodative of its INDIA partners. With the BJP in the ascendant in Jharkhand, the Congress should be humble enough to play sec-ond fiddle to the Jharkhand Mukti Morcha. In Maharash-tra, too, it must prioritise what is best for the alliance over what suits its own interests. The BJP has regrouped very well after its underwhelming show in the parliamentary polls — hubris has made way for coalition dharma. The Congress can learn a lesson or two from its archenemy.

### Save Buddha Nullah

Turn rejuvenation plans into reality

HE recent review of the Buddha Nullah rejuve nation project underscores the urgent need to restore this vital waterway. A tributary of the Sutle) river flowing through Ludhiana, it has long been a significant resource for the region. However, rampant pollution has turned it into a toxic drain, threatening both public health and the environment. The Central and state governments' commitment of Rs 840 crore to rejuvenate the nullah is promising, yet progress has been sluggish, with pollution sources still unchecked. Industrial waste from Ludhiana's dyeing units, untreated

sewage and solid waste have severely polluted the nullah. One major problem is the lax enforcement of pollu-tion control regulations. Although the Punjab Pollution Control Board (PPCB) recently ordered three common Control Board (F-C-b) recensity ordered times common effluent treatment plants to stop discharging into Bud-dha Nullah, compliance remains spotty. These facilities continue to disregard the ZLID (zero liquid discharge) mandate, and over 120 pollution points remain unchecked, adding to the degradation. A recent deciis sion to form a joint task force by the Centre and the Pun-jab Government is a step in the right direction. This team of experts is set to inspect critical pollution points, nfrastructure gaps and recommend long-term solutions. This collaborative approach underscores that restoring the nullah requires strict oversight, improved waste management and community involvement. The situation is critical. For the residents of Ludhiana

and surrounding areas, the pollution in the nullah results in contaminated drinking water, increased health risks and degraded agricultural lands. Civil society and environmental groups have advocated for stronger pollution controls, immediate action at the pollution sources and public awareness on waste management. The Buddha Nullah rejuvenation project represents an opportunity to reverse years of environmental degradation. This lifeline must be restored to its pristine state so it can again support the ecosystem and serve the people sustainably.

ON THIS DAY...100 YEARS AGO

### The Tribune.

LAHORE, FRIDAY, OCTOBER 10, 1924

Muslim educational conference

Muslim educational conference
THE presidential address delivered by Khan Bahadur Sheikh
Abdul Qadir, Bar-et-Law, at the Muslim Provincial Educational
Conference held at Campbellpur is a remarkable pronouncement
in many respects. It not only sets forth dearly the educational needs
of the Mussalmans of the province, but is singularly free from that
bitterness and communal bias which not unoften characterise simdiar pronouncements. The Khan Bahadur rightly emphasies the
importance of liberal education, and we have no doubt that this
impressive appeals to his or-edigionists to pay greater attention to it
will meet with a suitable response. It is, indeed, a welcome sign of
the times that the Mussalmans of our province are awakening to a
sense of their responsibility in this matter, and we have no hesitation is in full sympathy with any reasonable efforts that may be
made to further the progress of education amongst the Mussalmans. Illiteracy, be it amongst the Mussalmans or Hindus, and
neither of them can be said to have attained even an appreciable
measure of success in their fight against it, is a potent source of
rational weakness. No one, therefore, who has an iot at of patriotic
feeling in him can fail to sympathise with the effort of any section
of the population to promote education, so long as it is not sought
to do so at the expense of other communities. The Khan Bahadur on the population to promote cuttaining, so long as it is not sough to do so at the expenses of other communities. The Kham Bahadur seems to be fully conscious of this fact, and he does not plead for the government withdrawing the educational facilities enjoyed by the existing institutions of other communities and placing them at the disposal of newly started Muslim institutions.

# Let's not fail the voters of J&K

This election, like the one held in 1977, has called for restoration of the people's dignity



WAJAHAT HABIBULLAH FORMER BUREAUCRAT, J&K CADRE

O, the election results are out after much conjecture and wild guesses. The UT of Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) now has and Kashmir (J&K) now has an elected Assembly. But as one commentator on a popular TV programme surmised, "What were all the promises about —including the promise of restoration of state-hood?", considering that the Vidhan Sabha is only a cipher with nominal authority. So, does the 2024 J&K election have any significance in the have any significance in the context of being part of the context of being part of the world's largest democracy and given that this was the first Assembly poll since the state lost both its statehood and its supposed special status under the now-trashed Article 370 of the Constitution on August 5, 2019?

This was also the first Vidhan Sabha election held after the extension of the notification of Scheduled Tribe (ST) status in February to February to Status in February t

status in February to the Muslim Rajput (Pahari) com-Muslim Rajput (Pahari) community, primarily residing in Poonch and Rajouri areas of the Jammu division with a scattering in Kashmir—nearly two years after the Delimitation Commission redrew constituencies and submitted its report in May 2022. The latter meant that 44 per cent of the population, which constitutes residents of Jammu, would vote in 48 per cent of the seats, while the 56 per cent living in Kashmir would exercise their framir would exercise their framire would exercise their framing was seat to the seats while the 56 per cent living in Kashmir would exercise their framing was seat to the seats while the 56 per cent living in Kashmir would exercise their framing was seat to the seats while the 56 per cent living in Kashmir would exercise their framing was seat to the seats while the 56 per cent living in Kashmir would exercise their framing was seat to the seats while the 56 per cent living in Kashmir was seat the seat mir would exercise their fran-chise in the remaining seats.



Yet, the election campaign was lively, even rowdy and redolent of the 1977 election, which returned a triumphant Sheikh Abdullah to power, roundly defeating a coalition led by none other than the Janata Party, the ruling party at the Centre led by then Prime Minister Morarji Desai. And this time, too, avowedly separatist and radical elements entered the fray. cal elements entered the fray although under different entitles but not disavowing entitles but not disavowing their stated agenda. One idiotic 'leader' called upon diotic 'leader' called upon the winner to refuse to form the government. What then, one might ask the gentleman, was the purpose of fighting the election? This election, like the one held in 1977, has called for the restoration of the people's dignity.

The 2024 poll results are as decisive as those of the 1977 election. What could be disconcerting is that all Hindu-

India and its natural constituent (J&K) acted as one entity in upholding democratic rights - to contest as well as to speak out.

majority seats have alm unanimously gone to the BJP But the ruling party's effort at polarising the tribal com-munity worked decisively in of the National Cor ence (NC), the choice of most

Kashmiris. On the eve of the election, I had spoken to an old friend from Sakhi Maidan, a Rajput village in ST-reserved Mendhar constituency in Jammu. He told me that he had given his word as a Rajput to the BJP leadership to vote for that party if ST status were granted. They had kept their word, he said, and now he must keep his. and now he must keep his. The Mendhar seat was won by Javed Ahmed Rana of the NC, which bagged six ST-reserved seats, with the Conreserved seats, with the Congress getting one, Independents (likely to join the NC-Congress coalition) two and the BJP none: There is then no polarisation in the support base of any party except the BJP Does the party need to review its appeal? Yet, the big question remains: With the Vidhan Sabha being an organism with little authority, what is all the fuss about? The CM-

every Kashmiri?
The economic and political challenges facing the people of J&K, which they share with the nation, are common knowledge. Omar has identified these in outlining the tasks that he has set for himself. Economic amelioration amid rising inflation, education and healthcare, gender equality, all working together in what is constitutions. er in what is constitutional decentralisation, harnessing public mobilisation through panchayati raj — these are all common aspirations. The all common aspirations. The people have passed through decades of suffering and violence. The victorious alliance has shown its sensitivity to these issues in its manifesto. Are we going to allow them to deliver? The voters of J&K have given their voice to joining a national aspiration. But what they have also said loud and clear is that they want to do this themselves want to do this themselves and not forcibly through an authoritarian hand. Let us

designate, Omar Abdullah, has already given a call for the restoration of statehood, but there is little doubt that his election to the position will not give him the authori-

will not give him the authori-ty to deliver on this demand. Nevertheless, the enthusiasm generated, the debate and dis-cussion and the interest aroused in this election across the country, crowned by the widespread participation in the process by all sections of

the population — be it in Jam-mu or Kashmir — carry their own lessons. The most note-

own lessons. The most note-worthy of these is that India and its natural constituent (J&K) clearly acted together as one entity in upholding democratic rights — to con-test as well as to speak out. Is that not the common aspira-tion of every Indian? Should this not be recognised inas-much as also the dream of every Kashmirt?

The economic and political Kashmiris. On the eve of the

### THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

The greatest task of democracy, its ritual and feast — is choice. — HGWells

### 'Googlopathy' is here to stay

P LAL

The most interesting was: 'Googlopath' is the was not distincted by during a conversation with me. It was not distincted to guess that the term 'I was not distincted to guess that the term referred to the Google search by patients about ailments, treatments and drug side-effects and the subsequent exercise of putting questions to doctors on the basis of the 'knowledge' gleaned, Medical practitioners, however, in general, are not comfortable with the trend.

A Google search led to several definitions of this term. The most interesting was: 'Googlopathy is the most modern branch of medicine where the patient prescribes medicines to his doctor!'

In India, patients are generally unaware of the prevenive, diagnostic and curative aspects of illnesses. After providing basic information and asking a few simple questions, they accept whatever the doctor prescribes. To them, the doctor is next to God!

However, the advent of the Internet and search engines such as Google has changed the scenario. Educated patients have started questioning doctors. The questions are based on information obtained from various sources, including Google. Health supplements of various newspars to nake a part in making the nepole ware of illness.

patients have started questioning doctors. The questions are based on information obtained from various sources, including Google. Heash is supplements of various newspapers, too, play a part in making the people aware of illnesses and their prevention/cure.

The rights of a patient include the right to information (RTI). The April 2024 Patient Safety Rights Charter of the World Health Organisation lists it at No. 7 among 10 rights — right to information, education and supported decision-making. India 5 Ministry of Health and Family Welfare released a charter of patients' rights in 2018; RTI was placed at the top. The National Human Rights Commission has enumerated 17 rights of a patient; RTI finds a prominent place among them.

An informed discussion between the doctor and the patient remains elusive in India due to three key reasons. First, questioning a doctor is against the tradition prevalent since ages. Second, medical practitioners are short of time; they cannot afford to engage in lengthy talks with patients when scores of others are waiting for their turn. Third, and this is most important, the patient is unable to separate the wheat from the chaff among the plethora of information gleaned by him; hence, many a time, his queries are not only irrelevant but also silly. No wonder doctors, busy as they are, are put off by such patients.

During my interaction with renowned doctors over the past 50 years with regard to my allments, I found most of them open on an informed discussion, leading to a positive contribution to proper diagnosis and treatment.

proper magnosss and treatment.
There is no turning back on the era of information and knowledge. 'Googlopathy' or whatever you may call it, the patient's 
right to information ought to be accepted and respected.

### LETTERS TO THE EDITOR Exit polls go wrong in Haryana

Exit polls go wrong in Haryana
Refer to 'Against all odds'; exit polls, once
keenly awaited by voters before the
results, have lost much of their credibility.
The key reason for the exit polls gettig
t wrong could be that voters are now hesitant to reveal their preferences. As a
result, political parties are also not able to
judge the voters' mood. Parties should
learn a lesson from the unanticipated
results in Haryana. A huge crowd at big
rallies is no guarantee of votes. The victorious BJP must acknowledge that people
have voted for it despite several unaddressed issues and now it should try to
resolve the grievances of the public.
YOGNODER SINGHAL, LADWA

### Results defy predictions

Refer to 'Against all odds'; the Assembly elections in Haryana have delivered a sur-prising result. The BJP's promises of a cor-ruption-free government, combined with the ntre's outreach, ensured that the 'Bra Modi' appeal remained intact. While the BJF Modi' appeal remained intact. While the BJP managed its internal conflicts effectively, the Congress struggled with factionalism. Former CM Bhupinder Singh Hooda dominated the party's ticket distribution process, favouring his loyalists over more deserving candidates. The Congress's overemphasis on national issues such as the caste census and economic disparities failed to attract Haryana's electorate. This misstep contributed to the party's failure to make the most of the anti-incumbency factor.

SANAY CHOPRA, MOHALI

### No dent in BJP's vote bank

With reference to 'Rahul's missteps & BJP's gains'; once you lose in politics, umpteen stonies and narratives are circulated about the fall. ries and narmtives are circulated about the fall. After the exit poll predictions, the notion that the Congress would win hands down was prevalent everywhere and the BJP's top leadership had silently accepted defeat. The AAP's miscalculations and ambitions reduced the Congress' votes substantially, with no dent in the BJP's committed vote bank. CM Saini's claim on the eve of the poll results that "all would be fine" mised doubts about the poll arosess, for people remember how the Chandiprocess, for people remember how the Chandi-garh mayoral election was rigged.

BM SINGH, AMRITSAR

### Boost to BJP's morale

Boost to BJP's morale
The verdict of the Jammu & Kashmir and
Haryana Assembly elections has turned to be
a shocker for the Congress and a booster for the
BJP After a below-pur show in the Lok Sabha
elections, the BJP corrected its course and
emerged as the winner in Haryana. The Congress became overconfident on seeing signs of
recovery and allowed internal issues to affect
its working, thus squandering the advantage,
ending up as the loser for the third time in a
row. The victory in Haryana and the performance in J&K have put the BJP back on track.
The loss has weakened the bargaining power of
the Congress in forming alliances.

not fail them

the Congress in forming alliances.

DVG SANKARA RAO, VIZIANAGARAM

### Work for social inclusiveness

Work for social inclusiveness Refer to 'J&K's clear verdict'; the editorial highlights that there is no room for a repetition of mistakes in Jammu and Kashmir. The National Conference (NC) has staged a comeback. The promises made by the party in its manifesto include the restoration of 'J&K's 'political and legal' status. However, the restoration form the Constitution as it compromises the unity. Article 370 is itself a deviation from the Constitution as it compromises the unity and integrity of India. The restoration of Article 370 and 35A may be a legitimate demand of the NC, but the party must go beyond rhetoric and work for social inclusiveness and economic development.

PAWAN YADAY, JAMMU

### Sharpen India's defence strategy

Refer to 'Indianise certainly, but also demystify defence'; India's defence shortfalls are a matter of grave concern for national security. While the UK regularly conducts al security. While the UK regularly conducts Strategic Defence Reviews (SDRs) and invests 25 per cent of its GDP in this sector, India spends less than 2 per cent of its GDP despite looming threats from Pakistan and China. India must initiate SDRs, modernise its forces and raise the defence budget to 3 per cent of the GDP and not rely on outdat-det equipment. With hostile neighbours at the gate, India must fortify its defences by prioritising advanced technology and strateprioritising advanced technology and strate-gic preparedness over political rhetoric and cost-cutting. Indianisation is welcome, but not at the cost of military capability.

AMARJEET MANN, UNA

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

# How Jats ruined Congress' party in Haryana



CHANDER SUTA DOGRA

ago, there was a buzz in Punjab and Haryana High Court circles about Court circles about the consolidation of non-Jut communities in Haryana, against the growing Jut fortification in the Congress. It was the first indication that, perhaps, things were not going according to popular perception. Litigants from districts like Rothata, Gurgaon, and Faridabad shared their fear and resentment over Jut asserand resentment over Jat asser tion in the run up to the polls. People told us that th they had initially decided to vote out the BJP this time, the vote out the ESP ins time, the manner in which aggressive Jats in their neighbourhood had begun to assert their might even before the polls, was making them do a re-think," a lawyer said. In the din of the election cam-

paign where every analyst and observer felt otherwise, such pieces of information may well have been dismissed as mere s in the wind. As it turned he one party — the Constraws in the wind. As it turned out, the one party — the Con-gress — which should have paid attention to the changing pattern of electoral winds was too busy giving hope and mus-cle to its lat vote-bank. The Harvane election story

The Haryana election story will be dissected and analysed

A quiet subterra

A quiet subterranean consolidation of non-Jat communi-idation of non-Jat communi-ties like Brahmins, Banias, Scheduled Castes, Punjabis and Other Backward Castes took place without any of them making a noise about it. Contrast this with the high decibel Jat assertion that dom-inated the airwayes during the inated the airwaves during the election campaign. The high octane coverage of Vinesh Phogat's journey from the airport to her village in Charkhi Dadri with Congress Lok Sabha MP Deepender Lok Sabha MP Deepender Singh Hooda accompanying her in a colourful cavalcade was not missed. The BJP maintained a distance. The Jat community went delirious with joy, even as the others watched in sillen silence.

The BJP ran an effective l

key campaign that focussed on stoking fears of Jatdominance the return of 'kharchi parchi' the so-called bribe — the so-called bribe-giving system of handing out jobs— as well as its welfare agenda for smaller backward groups. The BJP's transparent job recruit-ment policy resonated with voters, giving them hope that going ahead, the distribution of viba would be more equitable. jobs would be more equitable. Candidates and workers, in small roadside meetings reminded people of how a return of the Bhupinder Singh return of the Bhupinder Singh Hooda style of governance would impact their lives. That they would go back to existing on the firinges of governance while the powerful Jat comma-nity would corner government largesse. For many communi-ies, like the Banias and Sainis, bitter memories of the 2016 Jat



agitation when they suffered the loss of both property and lives, were rekindled. More than anything else, however, the Haryana election results reflect a larger social churn in which marginalised communities are openly clamouring for their place in the sun. They remain fearful of ive dominance of a the aggressive dominance of a single community, but are willing to quietly hit back to retrieve their rights. The BJP has successfully tapped into this vein of fear. Whether OBC or Dalit, the coveriding theme in the coun-

overriding theme in the coun-tryside that has led to the curent sharp polarisation seem to be their growing aspirations coupled with an acute con-sciousness of their rights. To sciousness of their rights. To say 'no' to dominant groups riding roughshod and no longer as willing to make way for powerful communities. Even less willing to wait for a better tomorrow. And so the BJP stepped in and offered to hold their hand.

In rally after rally Amit Shah

repeated the mantra — how the BJP was determined to expand reservations for back-ward castes in Group A and Group B government jobs. Chief Minister Nayab Singh Sain missed no conventivity Saini missed no opportunity to stress his OBC caste, pointedly asking the Congress if they would ever nominate an OBC as chief minister.

as chief minister.

The Congress' high decibel campaign — greater rhetoric, but reduced reliance on cadre support — was no match for the BIP's meticulous election management, which returned to the RSS' formidable grassinosts network, with prachasic fanning out into the villages to sevened the nearest's message to

fanning out into the villages to spread the party's message. It all happened so quietly, that many even in the BJP were perhaps taken by suprise when the poll results carne in. The BJP gained in runal areas mainly on the strength of the RSS push, winning 22 out of 65 rural seats. It even gained in some Jat dominated seats, winning 18. The OBC and Dalits in these seats rallied against in these seats rallied against

Uchana Kalan is a case in point Located in the Jat heart nd of Jind, Uchana Kalar land of Jind, Uchana Kalana waswon by a Brahmin, Deven-der Chakurbhuj Attit, who defeated the scions of two prominent Jat families of Haryana. Dushyant Chautala, former Deputy Chief Minister and great grandson of Chau-dhary Devi Lal, stood fifth and forefield his security deposit hasy Devi Lai, stood fifth and forfeited his security deposit. The Congress' Brijender Singh, great grandson of Sir Chotu Ram and son of former Union Minister Birender Union Minister Birender Singh, who has represented the constituency several times, lost, by the slimmest of mar-gins, only 32 votes. Attri's vic-tory is evidence of the BIP's micro-management tactics ir which independent Jat candi dates were propped up to divide the Jat votes here. One of them bagged 21,000 more votes than Dushyant Chautala.

votes than Dushyant Chautala.
Then, on September 12when
the election campaign was
peaking, a Congress supporter
in Namaund made a casteist
shur against Kurnar Seja, the
Dalit Congress MP from Sinsa.
The video went viral and a case
was registered. Hooda, who
was leading the Congress's was leading the Congress's election campaign dismissed the episode, by saying that the person "who has reportedly said this cannot be a Congress said this cannot be a Congress worker." But Selja's support-ers were ernaged. She, henself, stopped campaigning and sat at home for almost a fortnight until she was placated by Rahul Gandhi and persuaded tojoin a mily in Ambala. As the talket Dalit leader of the state, Selia was trated shockilly be Selja was treated shoddily by

It was clear that she was being put in the shade - out of put in the shade — out of Haryana's 90 constituencies, only nine seats were given to her nominees, companed to the 76 decided by Hooda. She made it dear that she wanted to contest the Assembly election and be considered as a possible chief ministerial candidate, but she wasn't allowed to do so. she wasn't allowed to do so. The Dalits took the cue and began talking of a non-Jat (read Dalit) CM if the Congress

ame to power. After the Narnaund episode After the Narnaund episode, Selja emenged as a symbol of Dalit angst "If our tallest leader was treated so budly, what can we expect," asled a Dalit Congress worker from her constituency. Sensing an opportunity, BJP workers worked hard to publicise the video far and wide, in the hope that it wasted further alienate that it would further alienat the Dalits from the Congress. Haryana's 21 per cent Dalit population which had coa-lesced around the Congress, began to abandon the party and west towards the BJP. Now that all is said and done, it is clear that Kumari Selja has had her revenge. It is also clear that her stand should force the Congress to we-invent itself. The electorate the Dalits from the Congress

re-invent itself. The electorate saw through the hollowness of Hooda's slogan of working for the 'chattis biradari' (all astes). Hooda's loss v ne BJP's gain. Caste consol lation helped the BJP beat 10-year anti-incumbency, nor so much on the strength of its 10-year-long rule but because of the insecurities of Haryana's lowest castes.

# India's economy up despite West Asia conflict, but dangers loom

The Haryana

election results

reflect a larger social

churn, where the

marginalised

communities are

clamouring for their place in the sun.



SUSHMA RAMACHANDRAN JOURNALIST

YEAR has elapsed since the Israel-Hamas conflict erupted on the were worries that it would stall India's trajectory towards a higher growth path in the higher growth path in the post-Covid recovery phase. These fears have been put to rest as the gross domestic product (GDP) rose by a surprising 8.2 per cent in 2023-24. The first quarter of the current fiscal has been subdued, at 6.7 per cent, but the central sund expects an overall growth of 7.2 per cent in 2024-25. However, external headwinds could still be a spoiler, given the latest developments

given the latest developments in West Asia. Israel's attacks on Hezbollah in Lebanor on Hezboliah in Lebanon have been followed up by Iran's flurry of retallatory missiles. The situation remains tense in the region amid fears over the prospects of a wider regional conflagration. In case this becomes a reality, it would be a bir blow reality, it would be a big blow

has not remained unscathed by geopolitical tensions. The disruption of the movement of merchant shipping through the Red Sea has led to a diversion of most Europe- and US-bound cargoes to the longer and more expensive route via the Cape of Good Hope. This has come as a double wham-my for exporters as they simul-taneously face new carbon emission rules laid down by the European Union for a wide

range of products.
The Russia-Ukrainewaralso continues to have ramifica tions in the form of depressed

The situation remains an irri-

al passage through the canal. It must be remembered that 12 per cent of the global trade uses this ley shipping lane. On the other hand, oil mar-lets have moved to the bearish mode after the initial shock of the onset of the Israel-Harms conflict. Prices have been drift-

sequences.

Even in the past year, India

tions in the form of depressed demand in critical western markets. Import costs are similarly rising as many ship-ments from the west are now moving through the longer route to avoid the Suez Canal and the ongoing depredations of the Yernen-based Houthis. The situation remains an in-

tant, with roughly two-thirds of all merchant shipping report-ed to be avoiding the traditional passage through the canal. It

ing lower partly due to the fact that the oil-producing areas

OUICK CROSSWORD



ents in West Asia could be a spoiler for India. REUTE

we not been directly affect ed, at least as yet. The other factors, including reduced demand from China and excess supplies in the market, have weighed more heavily on excess supplies in the market, have weighed more heavily on the crude oil prices. Currently, despite a spike after missile attacks by Iran, the bench-mark Brent crude is ruling at around \$77 per barrel while the West Texas Intermediate West Texas Intermediate crude is around \$73.

for India which imports over 85 per cent of its fuel needs 85 per cent of its fuel needs. The fact that oil prices have not shot up over the past year despite the challenging geopo-litical scenario has been a con-siderable relief for this country. The situation is now chang-ing in several respects. Most ing in several respects. Most important is the prospect of

an economic revival in China. One of the main factors

Initsown self-interest, India should make a strong push for peace in West Asia.

behind the softening of oil prices was the slowdown in prices was the slowdown in the world's largest importer. The latest monetary stimulus package announced by the Chinese government seems to be the first step in bringing the economy back to better health. In case these measures succeed, the demand for oil could pick up significantly and this, in turn, would push up global prices.

The Indian equity markets are already facing the brunt of the enthusiasm offoreign institutional investors (FIIs) for stocks in China, where valuaare considered more ive. The FIIs have turned sellers in the past month, lured by the fact that the Hang Seng index shot up by 26 per cent.

up global prices.

At the same time, the sce-nario on the Israel-Iran front has become even more omithat more strategic attack: may be on the way. These indi-cate that Israel could be think ing of launching missiles at Iran's oil installations or ports.

Most of Iran's crude is sold to China owing to the sanc ns imposed on it by the US tions imposed on it by the US. But its availability has been a moderating factor in the world markets. Attacks aimed at cut-ting off franian crude supplies would immediately lead to a spurt in the prices. In case this happens, a region that produces most of the hydrocathous needed in

the hydrocarbons needed to run the global economy will be engulfed in a war.

Asfaras Indiaisconcerned, it will be worried about the fate of will be worried about the fate of millions of expatriate citizens residing in the Gulf region who may be at risk due to the con-flict. Rescue operations may be needed to evacuate them in some cases. Any strife will also affect the flow of remittances to this country which have been a major source of revenue in recent vesus. recent years.

The outcome of the harden ing oil prices will be inflation ing oil prices will be inflation-ary pressures on the domestic economy. Costs will rise for industries reliant on oil and gas as feedstock. The power sector could face serious shortfalls in availability, lead-ing to outages in parts of the country. Pertilisers is another leve area that would bear the key area that would bear the burden of higher costs and

this could potentially affect the agriculture sector. Disruption in the global sup-ply chains would affect coun-tries around the world, includ-ing India. It is difficult to make a detailed assessment of the impact as it would depend on the extent to which the conflict the extent to which the contact widens in West Asia. There is no doubt, however; that it could potentially create an even big-ger shock to the world econo-my than the Russia-Ukraine war, owing to the energy resources located in the region. In this context, it must be not-

In this context, it must be not ed that the biggest oil producer in the world is now the US. Yet, the Gulf region accounts for a sizable amount of oil and gas supplies to the rest of the w supplies to the rest of the word, with Saudi Arabia being the largest exporter. It is also the midway point for trade flows between Europe and Asia. Even a regional conflict will, obviously, spill over to create ripples elsewhere.

pples elsewhere. As far as India is concerned it has so far managed to push ahead with economic rec despite mounting geopolitical challenges. In case the Israelchallenges. In case the Ismel Iran conflict remains sporadic, the domestic economy is resilient enough to sustain the pace of growth. But if it expands into a wider war, there could be wider and as yet unknown repercussions. In its could be wider and as yet unknown repercussions. In its own self-interest, therefore, India should make a strong push for peace in the region

ACROSS

1 A shelter from pursuit (6)
4 Amount produced (6)
9 Decisive (7)
10 Flower (5)
11 Brightened (3, 2)
12 Risky enterprise (7)
13 Extremely diligent
person (5,6)
citizen-soldiers (7)
20 Afford to do without (5)
22 Decorate (5)
23 Outcry (7)
24 To blush (6)
25 Time of greatest
vigour (6)

Summon to return (6) Source (5) Momentary view (7) Situated in a city (5)

7 Meddle (6) 8 Gesture of reconciliation (5,6) 14 With everything considered (3,4)

considered (3,4) 15 To be won or lost (2,5) 16 To damage (6) 17 Unrestrainedly enthusiastic (6) 19 Stretched tight (5) 21 Audibly (5)

Yesterday's solution

Across: 1 Emulous, 5 Debar, 8 Out of harm's way, 9 House, General, 11 Petite, 12 Broody, 15 Rooster, 17 Admit, 19 Up the minute, 20 Buyer, 21 Hatchet.

Down: 1 Epoch, 2 Untrustworthy, 3 Offbeat, 4 Shaggy, 5 Demon, 6 By word of mouth, 7 Royalty, 11 Perturb, 13 Real ist, 14 Breech, 16 Tutor, 18 Treat.

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

# YESTERDAY'S SOLUTION 6 9 1 7 5 3 8 4 2 2 7 4 8 6 1 9 3 5 5 3 8 4 9 2 7 6 1 9 1 7 6 2 5 4 8 3 3 6 2 1 4 8 5 9 7 8 4 5 9 3 7 2 1 6

7 5 9 3 1 4 6	2 8
CALENDAR	
OCTOBER 10TH 2024, THUI	RSDAY
Shaka Samvat	1946
Aashwin Shaka	18
Aashwin Parvishte	25
Hjari	1446
Shukla Paksha Tithi 7, up to 1	2.32 pm
Atiganda Yoga up to 4.37 am	

	THURSDAY FROMY		
CITY	MAX	MIN	
Chandigarh	34	21	
New Delhi	35	23	
Amritsar	32	19	
Bathinda	35	21	
Jalandhar	34	21	
Ludhiana	34	21	
Bhiwani	35	23	
Hisar	36	20	
Sirsa	35	23	
Dharamsala	28	16	
Manali	23	10	
Shimla	24	13	
Srinagar	23	10	
Jammu	32	20	
Kargil	26	08	
Leh	17	04	
Dehradun	32	19	
Mussoorie	23	13	

### **Editorial**

### Against the odds

The Congress could not counter the caste polarisation in Haryana

The Caste potarisation in Haryana
y winning a third consecutive term in Haryana, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)
has demonstrated that its pole position in
the Hindi heartland remains intact. Its failure to
win an absolute majority in the 2024 general
election has not eroded its social base, and in Haryana, it increased its vote share and the number of seats increase, but
yote share and the number of seats increase, but vote share and the number of seats increase, but not enough to win power. The simultaneous gains for both parties are indicative of a sharper polarisation, but that does not entirely end the importance of smaller outfits and influential independents as it turns out – they tilted the scale in several constituencies. The outcome mirrors a social reality of Haryana that the BJP cleverly en-gineered to its benefit and which the Congress overlooked, namely, a broad alignment of non-Jat communities against Jat dominance. Incumbent Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini, who is set for a

communities against lat dominance. Incumbent Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saint, who is set for a second term, became the face of the BJP's mobilisation of Other Backward Classes. The BJP's strategy of offering political space for marginalised Hindu communities is one that is working well for it. Jats possibly united against the BJP's at the eclipse of the INLD and JJP suggest, but that worked in the BJP's favour by aiding the countermobilisation of disparate groups. The Haryana poll outcome also helps Prime Minister Narendra Modi reinforce his authority over the party.

The Congress failed to inspire confidence among a wider spectrum of society as former Chief Minister Bhupinder Singh Hooda and his son Deepinder dominated the campaign. Their own Jat community railled behind the party which possibly caused a counter consolidation of the rest. The Hoodas have so controlled the Congress in Haryana that the party organisation is either non-existent or ineffective. They stalled the central leadership's efforts to form political alliances. The Congress's Haryana setback follows the pattern of the Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh elections that it lost in 2023 – regional leaders who refused to accommodate party colleagues and broaden the social base which failed the party. The party is struggling to find a balance between having a robust regional leadership and ensuring that its national outlook is not undermined. Senior leader Rahul Gandhi could not enforce his social justice agenda in the party! Haryana strategy. Dalit party leaders were huminot enforce his social justice agenda in the party's Haryana strategy. Dalit party leaders were humi-Haryana strategy. Dant party leaders were numi-liated, opening space for others. The BJP has been in power for 10 years and there was notable resentment against it among voters. But that did not translate into a change of guard as the BJP could beat anti-incumbency while the Congress failed to gain from it. A study of the Haryana outcome will be instructive of why the BJP wins so of-ten and the Congress ends up second best.

### Sweet and sour

The inquiry into laddu adulteration must not be communalised

ast week, the Supreme Court of India rightly asked the petitioners in the case of the alleged adulteration of ghee used in the famed Tirupati laddu prasadam not to make the Court a "political battleground", but the issue is unlikely to remain one about ensuring quality control of a food item associated with pomp and country. In proceedings of the processing the pr control of a lood item associated with pomp and sanctity. By appointing an "independent Special Investigation Team (STT)" under the direct supervision of the Director, Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI), the Court defity made the Centre accountable in ensuring an impartial inquiry. But given the composition of the five-member STT—two CBI officials, two Andrha Pradesh police officers and a domain expert from the Food Safety and Stundards Authority of India (RSSAD). Autorial Stundards Authority of India (RSSAD). and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) - ques-tions are likely to be raised about its neutrality. The CBI and A.P. police come under the jurisdic-tions of political alliance partners, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the Telugu Desam Party (TDP) led by A.P. Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu. The Centre's conduct in court is likely to invite further allegations of bias, where it expressed 'full confi-dence' in the SIT formed by Mr. Naidu before the

allegations of bias, where it expressed 'full confidence' in the SIT formed by Mr. Naidu before the Court decided to hand the case over to the CBI-led SIT. Mr. Modi's government has not expressed such confidence in inquiry panels set up by Opposition-ruled States such as the one in West Benjal to inquire into corruption allegations against the Saradha Group's ponzi scheme in 2013.

The laddu issue has already taken on communal overtones with A.P. BJP chief and Rajahmundry MP Daggubati Purandeswari seeking a 'declaration of faith in Lord Venketawara' from former A.P. Chief Minister and YSRCP chief Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy, a Christian. Mr. Reddy had to cancel his visit to Tirupati in September after protests by cadres of the ruling TDP and its allies, the BJP and Deputy Chief Minister Pawan Kalyan's SJP. They have blamed the erstwhile Jagan Mohan Reddy administration of complicity in the alleged adulteration. The Naidu government but ressed Ms. Purandeswari's demand by releasing 'declaration of faith' documents signed purportedly by Bollywood actors and even former Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister Parooq Abdullah. St The Hindu reported, the gas chromatography method, used to detect dairy contaminants, is unlikely to determine the exact quantum of "foreign fat" in the ghee samples. The central government must ensure that there is an impartial inquiry into the allegation that there was an attempt to contaminate the ghee supplied by a dairy in Tamil Nadu, samples of which were tested tempt to contaminate the ghee supplied by a dai-ry in Tamil Nadu, samples of which were tested on July 6 and July 12. It must ensure that this is done without communalising the issue.

The theme of World Mental Health Day (October 10) this year is about 'prioritising mental health in the workplace'. The critical link between mental health and work is examined in three articles on the Editorial and Opinion pages — two in the print edition and one in the online edition

### Mental health in India's material world

n July this year, the case of a 26-year-old woman executive working for a multinational consulting firm, ending her life due to immense work pressures moved the spotlight to an important issue that concerns millions of working Indians. In September, a 38-year-old software engineer with 15 years of experience in a Chennai-based firm, ended his life. He was on medication for depression caused by work stress. Despite their "successful" careers, the loss of these lives underscores a growing mental health crisis in India, where success is often equated with relentless productivity and often equated with relentless productivity and material wealth. These events reveal the struggles many face such as battling depression, anxiety, and a lack of purpose even as they put up a facade of success and contentment.

India is currently witnessing a surge in mental health disorders. According to *The Lancet* Psychiatry Commission, over 197 million people

health disorders. According to The Lancet
Psychiatry Commission, over 197 million people
suffer from conditions such as depression,
anxiety and substance abuse. Economic growth
has created new opportunities, but it has also
intensified societal pressures and personal
expectations. As India's developmental
aspirations rise, mental well-being is often
overlooked, fuelling a crisis driven by materialism
and a growing disconnect from community and
self-awareness.

At the core of this crisis are existential
questions that have guided human thought since
the times of Socrates and Aristode such as: Who
am 1? What is the purpose of my life? How should
live? Socrates said, "The unexamined life is not
worth living", highlighting the need for
self-reflection. Aristotle linked the good life to
eudaimonia — flourishing through virtuous living.
Today, these essential inquiries are
overshadowed by the pursuit of efficiency,
productivity and material wealth. As India
embraces consumerism, this focus on affluence
distances individuals from deeper self-reflection,
exacerbating the mental health crisis.

Rising stress and anxiety

### Rising stress and anxiety

India is grappling with a mental health epidemic, with millions suffering from disorders such as depression and anxiety. The relentless pressures of urban living, financial instability, and fierce competition are significant contributors. Even those who achieve material success often find that wealth and status do not deliver true well-being. Instead, many feel isolated and disconnected from their communities. experiencing a profound sense of purposelessness. While material wealth provides purposeessiess. while indeed at wears product temporary comfort, it fails to meet deeper emotional and psychological needs. The growing focus on consumerism, particularly in urban areas, has fostered a culture where luxury and



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conspicuous goods define status. This leads to feelings of inadequacy, stress and social comparison. As Ernest Becker noted, much of human behaviour is driven by the fear of mantan oenaviour is driven by the fear of impermanence and insignificance. People chase material wealth for social validation, hoping it will bring lasting happiness, but this pursuit neglects self-awareness. The endless quest for affluence disconnects individuals from the essential elements of a machinetic section. essential elements of a meaningful life – self-awareness life – self-awareness, purpose, and meaningful relationships – trappin them in a cycle of dissatisfaction. To break this cycle, we must

MENTAL HEALTH rethink what constitutes a good life. Current political and economic priorities reinforce the belief that wealth and consumption equate to happiness. This mindset shapes societal norms, encouraging consumption-driven choices that further

entrench the mental health crisis.

entrench the mental health crisis.

Collective action, community as solutions
To address this crisis, we must shift focus from
individual success to collective well-being. Studies
show that strong social connections, supportive
communities, and meaningful work are critical to
mental health. However, work-life balance and
legal protection are increasingly under threat.
The socio-political climate in India, where young
individuals desperately strive for a consumeristic
"good life", has led to proposals such as extended
work hours. For instance, the Karnataka Shops
and Commercial Establishments (Amendment)
Bill 2024 permits employees to work more than
12 hours a day, up to 125 hours in three months.
Amid rapid urbanisation and personal
achievement, it is essential to remind ourselves of
the deeper meaning and purpose in life that can
be found through community, joy, and
friendship.

friendship.

Examples from other countries offer lessons. In Brazil, community gardens have helped residents reconnect by sharing responsibilities and fostering a sense of belonging. Similar initiatives in India could counteract the isolation fostered by urban living and consumerism, beingten greated tomother to constructions are solations. bringing people together to create stronger social

bonds. Improving mental health requires embracing community-oriented living that challenges the individualised lifestyle promoted by consumer culture. Modern consumerism equates freedom with personal consumption, weakening social bonds that traditionally held communities bonds that traditionally field communities together. In contrast, community living fosters a sustainable alternative – shared responsibility, collective purpose, and mutual support create an environment that nurtures emotional and psychological well-being. In community settings, people share resources and experiences, reducing the pressure to compete for individual success. This strengthens social support networks and reintroduces the value of interdependence, where well-being is measured by relationships and contributions to the group rather than personal wealth. Unlike the isolation and comparison promoted by consumer culture, community living fosters empathy, mindfulness,

awing tosters empathy, minatuness, and human connection, providing fulfilment through shared experiences. These environments offer a sense of belonging, purpose, and security, all of which are crucial for reducing stress and mental health

INFOCUS

Consumer choice and liberty
A significant contributor to India's mental health crisis is the reduction of freedom to consumer choice. As India's middle class expands, many equate their ability to buy goods with personal freedom and success. However, this perspective prioritises material wealth over deeper values such as equality and fraternity. The result is a society where happiness is measured by buying power, leading to an endless cycle of consumption that does little to improve long-term mental health.

By reducing freedom to consumer choice, individuals feel growing inadequacy, unable to meet rising standards of success. In contrast, prioritising connection, community, and equity provides a healthier foundation for both personal well-being and societal progress.

Addressing India's mental health crisis requires rethinking what it means to live a good life. We must challenge the materialistic notion of success and refocus on mental, emotional, and social well-being. The solution lies in adopting alternative pathways that prioritise community and collective action over individual wealth accumulation.

Programmes that promote mindfulness, social-emotional learning, community living, and

Programmes that promote mindfulness, social-emotional learning, community living, and mental health awareness are essential for creating a culture that values mental well-being. Additionally, social policies that reduce inequality and provide mental health support are crucial to

idress the crisis. A truly good life is not about how much we can buy or achieve, but about how we relate to selves, our communities, and our environment. By prioritising community, equity, and mental well-being, we can build a healthier, more connected society where people feel supported and valued. Only by addressing the root causes of the mental health crisis can we pave the way for a more meaningful and fulfilling future for all.

# Transform workplaces into supportive spaces

n recent years, a troubling trend has emerged in several countries: a rise in suicides among young professionals, frequently attributed to overwhelming stress and tension at the workplace. This crisis underscores the increasing strain caused by excessive work, reminiscent of the Japanese term 'karoshi', which translates to 'death from overwork'. In 2023, 2,900 people in Japan ended their lives due to overwork. What was once a term specific to Japan has now found resonance in other parts of the world, especially as the relentless drive for profit and productivity continues to overshadow mental and productivity continues to overshadow mental health, personal well-being, and even human lives. A Statista report on suicide among Indian professionals in the private sector for the year 2022 puts the number as 11,486.

A competitive economy

The reason behind this brutal work culture is clear: profit. In today's competitive economy, businesses focus on cost-cutting, efficiency and productivity. As a result, employees come under immense pressure to meet unrealistic expectations, often working long hours and

immense pressure to meet unrealistic expectations, often working long hours and under strenuous conditions. Many organisations have adopted a belief system where success is tied to a "hustle and bustle" culture, assuming that perpetual activity will lead to better results. This mindest is not new. Some scholars believe that the roots of this work obsession can be traced back to Max Weber's influential work, The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism, which links hard work with moral virtue. According to Weber, success and diligence were not just signs of professional capability, but of moral worth. Today, unfortunately, this ethos thrives in high-stakes industries such as technology, finance and law, where not just hard work but also overwork is celebrated and even glorified. The consequences are devastating. Cognitive dissonance theory, a psychological concept, helps explain how employers justify this gruelling work environment. Once overwork becomes normalised, employers may rationalise



India is facing a

mental health

epidemic, with

financial instability and

contributors

fierce competition as significant

urban living.

P. John J. Kennedy

The belief system where success is tied to a brutal work culture needs to be phased out

Professor and Dean Christ University, Bengaluru

it as beneficial or even essential for organisational growth. From a business standpoint, the belief often emerges that pushing employees to their limits will filter out the "weak" and reward the "strong", fostering a culture of hyper-competition. However, this distorted view ignores the steep human cost. Chronic stress leads to burnout, anxiety, depression, and, tragically, suicide in some cases.

well-being This myopic understanding of work and success prevents companies from considering alternative models that priorit employee well-being, although research has employee well-being, although research has consistently shown that happier employees are more productive. The Human Relations Movement, which began in the early 20th century, underscored the importance of employee satisfaction in improving organisational efficiency. This perspective has slowly regained traction today, as more companies are embracing flexible work hours, mental health initiatives and policies to progress work-life balance. The policies to promote work-life balance. The challenge now is to move beyond profit maximisation to a long-term view that treats human capital as a core asset. So, how do we get there? While dismissing this

So, how do we get there? While dismissing this as wishful thinking is tempting, meaningful change is possible. The first step for companies is to reassess their work culture and expectations. Employers should reduce excessive working hours, offer flexible schedules, and embrace remote work when possible. Studies have shown that employees with more control over their schedules report higher job satisfaction and reduced stress levels. Encouraging regular breaks and vacations is also vital in preventing burnout. Equally important is providing psychological support. Companies should invest in employee assistance programmes and ensure that mental health professionals are accessible. Psychological research has proven that early intervention can

dramatically reduce the long-term effects of workplace stress. It is also crucial to foster open conversations around mental health, eliminating the stigma that often surrounds seeking help.

MENTAL HEALTH INFOCUS/

Focus on work quality
Supervisors and managers are pivotal
to driving this transformation. They
must be trained to recognise signs of burnout, such as emotional exhaustion or disengagement, and intervene before problems escalate. A culture where mental health check-ins are routine and stress

cnecions are routine and stress management is prioritised can create a healthier and more sustainable workforce. Additionally, companies should shift their focus away from measuring productivity solely based on the quantity of time spent or deadlines met. Instead, quantity of time spent or deadnines met. Instead, performance metrics should emphasise the quality of work. This approach would help create an environment where output is valued for its depth and impact rather than sheer volume. Lastly, the deeply ingrained myth that constant busyness equates to productivity must be debunked. A balanced and sustainable work uculture benefits employees and their organisations. Employers should set realistic expectations, and employees must feel empowered to set boundaries around their work

expectations, and enphysees must ree empowered to set boundaries around their work hours. This includes saying "no" when workloads become unmanageable, a daunting but necessary step in maintaining mental health. The issue of workplace stress is both societal and personal. Addressing it requires collective effort. While employees can build resilience through mindfulness, regular exercise and strong social support networks, seeking professional help should never be delayed when stress becomes overwhelming. Employers and employees must take concrete steps to break the cycle of overwork and promote a culture that values holistic well-being. Only by doing so can we achieve sustainable productivity and a future where life is valued above profit.

### LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### Elections, verdicts

It has been a case of 'one all' in this round of all' in this round of Assembly elections (Page 1, "BJP keeps Haryana, NC-led alliance bags J&K", October 9). The results augur well for a very vibrant and effective democracy. No

superiority and that is what makes and strengthens the nation. There need to be checks in places; there needs to be accountability: there needs to be questioning. With the results having

en declared, the parties should get back to work to ensure that development and progress march hand in

That the Bharatiya Janata

Party (BJP) is a formidable election machine is an established fact. The Congress should have got its act together to score over its main adversary. Haryana had real issues farmers' distress, the Agni Veer scheme and, of course,

...

massive unemployment and price rise. The BJP, however, has shown that all such issues can be suppressed as long as one can micromanage voters. The Congress has still to highlight the real issues in a convincing manner and

which will resonate. The Congress's Rahul Gandhi goes on talking about co-operative federalism but not much of a co-operative spirit is being witnessed within the INDIA bloc.

Satish C. Aikant, Mussoorie, Uttarakh

CM CM



# Text&Context

The death toll from overnight Israeli strikes on Gaza

Funds sanctioned by the Tripura Cabinet to the tribal council

The tally of polio cases reported in Pakistan this year

Potential spam calls identified by Airtel in Tamil Nadu

# On protests against Vizag steel plant sale

### What is the Samsung workers strike in Chennai about?

# THE GIST

Know your English

Text&Context











Results of the 15th Assembly elections of Haryana was announced on Tuesday. Here is a quiz on Haryana's legislature





Word of the day

# New sedimentary rock made from slag is a carbon-trapping champ

When lithified slag breaks down, it stores greenhouse gases like carbon dioxide through a process called mineral carbonation. This process mimics natural weathering. So understanding how slag undergoes lithification is crucial so that we may eventually maximise its carbon capture potential

Tejasri Gururai

uman activity has significantly altered the earth's landscape – so much so that many scientists have said the planet

is in a new geological chapter called the Anthropocene era.

Many of these changes have been wrought by deposits of materials like industrial waste and construction debris. These materials weather over time and mix with natural sediment and affect the environment by changing the acidity of soil and water, the commosition of soil and soil and water, the composition of soil, and the distribution of minerals.

Slag becomes rock
In 2015, artificial ground contributed
more than 316 million tonnes of
sedimentary material to the oceans, far
exceeding the natural supply.
But going beyond simply being
abundant in the natural environment,
scientists have been documenting some
unusual formations that wouldn't have
taken shape if not for the trash humans
are throwing out. In a recent study in the are throwing out. In a recent study in the journal Sedimentologika, for example, researchers documented a new kind of sedimentary rock made from coastal slag deposits in the U.K.

deposits in the U.K.
This rock follows other formations like
molten glass and steel in the refuse of
nuclear weapon tests and pieces of plastic
floating in oceans that disease-causing
bacteria have grabbed hold of.
Slag is a major component of artificial
ground. It is a composite material
containing metal oxides and silicon
dioxide and is a be-product of the

dioxide and is a by-product of the steelmaking process in the iron and steel

### Synthetic slag, natural weathering

Synthetic slag, natural weathering At Warton, England, old industrial waste sites are the focus of a unique study examining slag hardening, or lithification. The lithification process hardens industrial waste, including slag, into sedimentary rocks, creating artificial ground. When these sedimentary rocks weather over time, they release sediment into the environment.

into the environment.

Because the rocks are infused with industrial waste, their sediments often contain toxic metals that contaminate soil, water, and air.

Sedimentary rocks with slag are relatively more abundant in the U.K. due to historical industrial activities.

to historical industrial activities.
Slag is chemically stable and has the ability to neutralise acidity. When lithifies slag breaks down, it stores greenhouse gases like carbon dioxide through a process called mineral carbonation. This process minits natural weathering.
Understanding how slag undergoes lithification is cruical to understanding

lithification is crucial to understanding how the deposits will behave over time, so that we may eventually also maximise

so that we may eventually also maximise its carbon capture potential.

This opportunity gains significance in light of projections suggesting a 10.5% rise worldwide in slag production by 2031.

While the steelmaking industry is under pressure to lower its emissions — including with processes that mitigate slag production — reusing slag to sequester carbon could reduce the industry's carbon footprint.

Elements of rock The carbon capture process is well



iece of slag from a glazing process formed sometime between 1802 and 1450 BC in lower Egypt. РИВЫС DOMAI

understood for inland slag deposits in the U.K. and less so for coastal regions.
The researchers behind the new study collected slag samples from the Warton slag heap in South Lancashire, England, where iron and steel works were active from 1864 to 1929.

They prepared the samples for analysis with a cool-water diamond saw, which cut them into smaller pieces, then turned them into powder using a mortar and pestle, and finally filtered the particles

pestie, and minary merces are passesses through a sieve.

In particular, the team collected samples along a straight line across the slag heap from below the highest average water level to the top of the deposit to capture variations in exposure to seawater and rainwater. The researchers used four different

analytical techniques to understand the

analytical techniques to understand the slag samples' composition, starting with X-ray diffraction. This method uses X-rays to identify the various types of minerals in the sample by studying how the minerals scatter the radiation. Previous studies have shown that carbonates can form during the lithification process. These minerals contain carbonate ions (CO-2) and contribute to the hardening process. In the context of slag, the researchers found a carbonate form called calcite, a form of a carbonate form called calcite, a form of calcium carbonate (CaCO<sub>2</sub>) that is also present in chalk.

To identify the quantity of calcite in the slag samples, the researchers used

slag samples, the researchers used thermogravimetric analysis (TGA). In this method, the sample is heated to see how much weight it loses, revealing the quantity of carbonate present. The researchers also used stable is tope analysis to identify the isotopes of carbon and oxygen present in the samples. (An isotope of an element is an atom that contains the same number of atom that contains the same number of protons and electrons but a different number of neutrons.) The relative

Slag is a major component of artificial ground. It is a composite material containing metal oxides and silicon dioxide and is a by-product of the steelmaking process in the iron and steel industries

abundance of these isotopes can be a signature that points to specific sources of the calcite in the sample. Finally, they observed the samples under a scanning electron microscope to reveal the sample's surface and identify the elements present.

### The history, through science X-ray diffraction identified various

minerals in the slag sample, including a form of calcium silicate called larnite. The microscopic analysis revealed variable texture and elemental distributions in the

texture and elemental distributions in the slag, with slitton dominating weathered areas and calcium more prevalent in the wave-exposed parts. These features suggested the slag in the deposit had undergone a combination of lithification processes in different conditions.

conditions.

TGA also indicated a higher carbonate level at the top of the slag bank and lower levels in the seaward direction, echoing the influence of environmental factors like seawater and rainwater on the

like seawater and rainwater on the lithification process. Finally, the isotope analysis revealed significant variations in the levels of the carbon-13 isotope, which is crucial to understanding carbonate reactions and carbon dioxide dynamics in the environment.

environment.
Based on all these details, the researchers determined two lithification mechanisms in the slag deposit.
The first mechanism – calcite cement precipitation – dominated on the top

surface of slag and on the sea-facing side above the average water level. In this process, the minerals in slag dissolve to release calcium, which reacts with atmospheric carbon dioxide to form

In the intertidal zone, which is the part In the intertical zone, which is the part of the shoreline exposed to air at low tide and is submerged at high tide, the calcium-silicate-hydrate (CSH) cement precipitation process dominated. Here, saltwater prevents slag minerals from dissolving; instead, they form CSH minerals that exhibit varying texture and elemental distributions.

According to the researchers, understanding these processes can inform strategies with which to repurpose slag deposits to capture carbon dioxide. This is especially the case for the calcite cement mechanism, which can capture carbon dioxide from the atmosphere while eliminating the need to transport carbon and for additional processing facilities.

The researchers also said the precipitation of CSH minerals in the slag could limit the release of potentially toxic metals, such as vanadium and chromium, into the environment.

Knowing the precise way in which a particular slag deposit became a rock could also help recover valuable resources from slag deposits and increase the amount of recycled material in steelmaking.

steelmaking.
Finally, the authors suggested
hardened slag could be used to keep
waves and tides from washing away
shores and prevent coastal erosion – an
approach that would combine
environmental protection with waste
management.

management. (Tejasri Gururaj is a freelance science writer and journalist with a master's degree in physics. tejasrigururaj@gmail.com)



ustralia is developing options to vaccinate reatened wild birds in captivity. REUTERS

### Australia, New Zealand brace for looming bird flu threat

Australia and New Zealand are bracing for Australia and New Zealand are bracing for the arrival of a destructive bird flu strain by tightening biosecurity at farms, testing shore birds for disease, vaccinating vulnerable species, and war gaming response plans. Oceania is the last region of the world free of the HSNI clade 2.3.4.4b avian influenza that has killed hundreds of millions of birds and tens of thousands of mammals since ampearing in Asia.

mammals since appearing in Asia, Europe, and Africa in 2020, littering beaches with corpses and upending the

beaches with corpses and upending the agricultural industry. While the region is somewhat protected by its geography, the virus is close, having reached Indonesia in 2022 and Antarctica last year. Scientists and officials say there is a higher risk, particularly in Australia, of it arriving with smaller migratory shore birds during the Southern Hemisphere springtime months from September to November.

November.
"It is clearly a threat to our country's ecosystems," said Fiona Fraser, Threatened Species Commissioner at Australia's environment ministry.

Australia's environment ministry.

"Many of our species are found nowhere else in the world," she said.

"Vulnerable species may face long-term population setbacks and heightened risk of extinction."

Officials fear mass deaths from the avian flu and even the near-extinctions of species, including endangered sea lions, black swans, and many types of seabirds, and the loss of millions of farmed poultry. Over 100 million chickens and turkeys have died or been culled in the U.S. alone

have died or been culled in the U.S. alone

Oceania is the last region of the world free of the H5N1 clade 2.3.4.4b avian influenza that has killed hundreds of millions of birds and tens of thousands of

from this H5NI strain, causing economic losses of up to \$3 billion by the end of last year, according to the Council on Foreign

Relations, a think tank. The virus killed around 50,000 seals and sea lions and more than half a million wild birds as it moved through South America in 2022.

America in 2022.
It has also infected cattle in the U.S.
and, in rare cases, people. Health officials
say the risk to humans is low.
New Zealand is also unlikely to avoid
the virus long-term, said Mary van Andel,
chief veterinary officer for the country's
Ministry of Primary Industries.
Both countries have intensified
preparation.

preparation.
Australia created a task force across government departments and stress-tested its preparedness in August and September with a series of exercise:

and September with a series of exercises simulating an H5NI outbreak in wildlife. New Zealand has trialled a vaccine on five endangered native birds and said it could be rolled out to more species. "We're super paranoid about those five species, because the risk to them of losing the breeding population is that we could lose the species," said Kate McInnes, science advisor at New Zealand's Department of Conservation. Australia is also developing options for

Australia is also developing options for vaccinating threatened wild birds held in captivity, officials said. The two vaccination schemes are the only ones for non-farm animals in the world.

non-farm animals in the world. Farms are boosting biosecurity measures, including limiting contact between poultry and wild birds, monitoring employees' movement, sterilising water and equipment, and installing automated systems that detect wild birds and scare them away, industry officials from both countries said.

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

S ND NOE



### THE SCIENCE QUIZ The peculiar properties of Nobel-winning crystals

defects are ideal labs for sci

**QUESTION 4** 

defects are ideal labs for scientists to understand coherence and entanglement, making them potential candidates for quantum computing. What is the name of the locations within diamonds where these "defects" occur?

An Israeli scientist was awarded a Nobel Prize in 2011 for discovering

The atoms in these materials are arranged with a fivefold geometric symmetry, producing a pattern that is repeating but not periodic. Fill in the blank.

and elucidating the properties of

### Siva Shakthi A.

### QUESTION 1

In the 1940s, researchers discovered that DNA molecules discovered that DNA molecules show an X phase when placed in a saline solution. This is because the molecules become aligned with each other and are able to flow like a fluid. Name X.

The two known forms of graphite, alpha and beta, can be converted from one form to another by

altering the \_\_\_\_\_ between the layers through a mechanical treatment process high temperature. Fill in the blanks

CM C

QUESTION 3

\_ crystals are made up of nore materials such that the 

crystal's refractive index increases and drops at regular intervals. Researchers are exploring their use in next-generation semiconductor lasers. Fill in the blank.

Answers to October 8 quiz:

1. Radar type that sends, receives pulses in two dimensions – Ans:

Dual-polarisation

2. Force that contributes to cyclone formation – Ans: Corfolis

mation - Ans: Coriolis Closed air loops responsible for trade winds – Ans: Hadley cells Composition of mixture used to fix zero point of Fahrenheit scale – Ans:

zero point of Fahrenheit scale – Ans: Salt and ice 5. Cloud formed by strong updrafts of warm, humid air – Ans: Cumulus 6. 15th century wind speed meter with a rotating vane – Ans: Anemometer First contact: K.N. Viswanathan | Dalbeer Pharswan | Anmol Agrawal | P. Subramanian



Visual: Name this English scientist who won a chemistry Nobel Prize for determining the crystal structure of insulin, penicillin, and vitamin B12. UNIVERSITY OF BRISTOL ICC 897-86.3.25

INDIAN EXPRESS IS NOT AN INDUSTRY, IT IS A MISSION. - Ramnath Goenka

### **ELECTORS GIVE REALITY** CHECKS TO CONGRESS. BJP IN ASSEMBLY POLLS

HE two latest assembly election results have delivered important lessons for the two main national parties—the BJP and the Congress. The electorate displayed wisdom by voting on issues that are critical not only for their daily lives but also for their long-term well-being. The outcomes have provided a significant boost to the BJP, placing it on a strong footing for the upcoming elections in Maharashtra and Jharkhand. The party not only scored a hat-trick in Haryana but also achieved its best-ever performance in Jammu and Kashmir by winning 29 of the 90 seats. However, all of BJP's seats came from Jammu. The party's efforts to penetrate the complex socio-political landscape of the historically sensitive Kashmir Valley failed to bear fruit. The increase in total seats in Jammu from 37 to 43 through delimitation contributed to the historical high. On the other hand, the gains expected from the emergence of smaller parties in the valley did not materialise.

The valley has refused to embrace the BJP, indicating the party needs to recalibrate its strategy. Atal Bihari Vajpayee's mantra of winning the hearts of Kashmiris and strengthening the roots of peace through "insaniyat, jamhooriyat and Kash miriyat" (humanitarianism, democracy and the Kashmiri way of life) could help illuminate the path forward. The division of the state into two Union territories emerged as a major electoral issue. Kashmiris voted resoundingly in favour of restoring statehood, helping the National Conference that campaigned aggressively on the issue to reach close to a majority on its own. PM Narendra Modi should now fulfil his promise of restoring statehood without delay. This would help build a bond of trus between the people of Kashmir and the BJP, and has the potential to start a new chapter in the troubled state's history.

The Congress, on the other hand, faced a stunning upset in Haryana and fared poorly in J&K, where it failed to effectively articulate its vision for peace and development. The party's lack of cohesion in Haryana coupled with the BJP's successful cobbling of a formidable caste coalition against the Jat-dominated opposition turned the tide in favour of the ruling party. Rather than blaming voting machines for its defeat, the Congress needs to introspect on its failure, build its organisation at the grassroots and bring its warring factions in the state togethe

### MICRO FIND WITH MEGA GENE THERAPY POTENTIAL

WO US scientists, Victor Ambros and Gary Ruykun, have won the 2024 Nobel prize in medicine for their discovery of microRNA—a new class of tiny ribonucleic acid (RNA) molecules that play a crucial role in gene regulation, unfolding how multicellular organisms live. Their work ex-plains how cells develop into different types—such as those in muscles and nerves—although all cells in an individual contain the same set of genes and instructions for growth. More specifi cally, they discovered the role microRNA played in this process, RNA is essential for most biological functions, setting a template for production of proteins, the building blocks of all animal life.

for production of proteins, the building blocks of all animal life. When a single-strand messenger RNA is decoded and translated into making proteins, microRNA comes into play. Ruvkun describes microRNAs as a "communication network among genes", enabling our cells to generate complex structures and functions. Together, the two scientists have revealed a new principle of gene regulation that turns out to be essential for multicellular organisms. It is fundamental to how organisms develop and function. They found how a single microRNA can except the two recession of most officers of the control of the composition of regulate the expression of many different genes, and conversely how a single gene can be regulated by multiple microRNAs, thereby coordinating and fine-tuning entire networks of genes to contribute to cell formation, and in turn committing to form

different organs, muscles and tissues in the body.

Modern medical professionals are increasingly familiar with genetic predisposition to diseases—the tendency of people developing particular diseases in the future based on their genetic makeup. Diabetes, heart disease, asthma, cancer and single-gene disorders are some of them. The Ambros-Ruvkun research re yeals that cells and tissues cannot develop normally without microRNAs. The flipside: abnormal regulation by microRNA can contribute to cancers; mutations in genes coding for micro-RNAs can cause congenital hearing loss, eye and skeletal disorders; and mutations in a protein required for microRNA produc tion can result in the DICER1 syndrome, a rare but severe syndrome linked to cancer. The medical science community considers this discovery a major breakthrough with far reaching consequences including newer treatments—and, potentially, prevention—for a whole range of diseases through gone therapy. So the Nobel-winning find is a major shot in the arm for the medical fraternity in particular and humanity in general.

### QUICK TAKE

### FOR CHILDREN'S MENTAL HEALTH

HIS World Mental Health Day, let's rededicate ourselves to being empathetic to children's psychological challenges. We must not forget these young ones lived through a pandemic and are vulnerable to a range of stresses caused by alienation from peers and learning setbacks. The National Mental Health Survey of 2016 reported the prevalence of mental disorders among children aged 13-17 was 7.3 per must learn how to spot early signs of such disorders, have con-tinuing conversations with children about their feelings and plan appropriate activities. The government must decentralise more mental health services to the community level.

XTERNAL Affairs Minister S

XTERNAL Affairs Minister S
Jaishankan's upcoming visit to
Islamabad recalled to memory
a statement by a former defence secretary who said only
Punjabis negotiating on behalf
of both India and Pakistan
could find permanent solutions to disputes between the two countries.

The occasion, about 30 years ago, was
a book release by a foreign secretary who
had retired around the same time as this
Punjabi defence secretary. Rosponding to
this argument, the former foreign secretary; a Malayali, quoted Urdu poet Ghalib
from the book being released: "Nuktacheen hai gham-edil usko sunaey na
baney | Kya baney baat jahan baat bemaye na baney." (The cogitations of my
heart are so complex and convoluted;
how can I explain them to my protagonist! How can I create a harmonious re-

how can I explain them to my protago-nist? How can I create a harmonious re-lationship when the impulses and moti-vations for it are not there?)
P V Narasimha Rao, then the prime minister, appeared to give the defence sec-retary's rationale an honest ity. He picked R L Bhatia, minister of state for external affairs and an Amritsari, to break the ice with Pakistan and sent him on a visit to Islamabad. It came after a long hiatus in bilateral talks following the demolition of Babri Maşid. In the end, Bhatia's Is-lamabad visit amounted to nothing. Bhatia told the Rejya Sabha subsequently that Pakistan was given another chance to engage India. That was when the for-eign secretary went to Islamabad to take part in a meeting of the Commonwealth's senior officials in November 1994. "We had

senior officials in November 1994. "We had conveyed in advance to Pakistan through diplomatic channels that the foreign sec-

conveyed in advance to Pakistan through diplomatic channels that the foreign secretary would be available for any discussions, formally on informally on bilateral issues. Pakistan, however, did not avail itself of the opportunity to resume the bilateral dialogue, "Bhatia said.

Jaishankar's clarification last week that he was not going to Islamabad to discuss India-Pakistan relations is a familiar case of history repeating itself on one side or the other. When Jaishankar said "I am a courteous and civil person, I will behave myself accordingly" in Islamad, what he meant was that there will be a handshake between him and Pakistan's Foreign Minister Mohammad Ishaq Dar. There was a time when Indian and Pakistani leaders refused to shake each other's hands if they came across one another. That period of mutual incivility after the Kargil intrusion and the December 2001 terrorist attack on parliament ended a year later at the SAARC summit

Not resuming bilateral dialogue with Pakistan may make sense for now, but not forever. It could be time to foster reciprocal approaches with our neighbour's provinces

### OUT OF THE BOX & INTO PROVINCES ACROSS THE BORDER





in Kathmandu. After finishing his address to South Asian heads of state and government, General Pervez Musharraf

government, General Pervez Musharraf took everyone by surprise when he walked towards Prime Minister Atal Bi-hari Vajpayee with an extended hand. Vajpayee got up from his seat and took Musharraf's hand. But Vajpayee was cutting when his turn came to speak. Departing from his prepared text, Vajpayee said: "I am glad that President Musharraf extended a hand of friendship to me. I have shaken his hand in your presence. Now Presi-dent Musharraf must follow this gesture-by not zermitting any activity in Pakiby not permitting any activity in Paki-stan or any territory it controls today which enables terrorists to perpetrate mindless violence in India."

Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Jaishankar are right in not wanting to resume bilateral dialogue with Pakistan resume bilateral dialogue with Pakistan at this stage. It will be a wasteful exercise. Even though there will be no talks with Dar or anyone else of similar standing across the border—as of now—there will be a spring in Jaishankar's steps in Islamabad. The largely peaceful conduct of assembly elections in Jammu and Kashmir and the impressive voter turn-out have significantly added to the credit column of Pakistan diplomacy in South Block, the sent of the ministry of external affairs. Because the B.P. did not win outright in the Union territory, there will be greater credibility for the poll process, unlike the notorious, rigged assembly elections in 1867, for instance. All the same, not engaging Pakistan cannot be a permanent policy. The government's position that talks and terrorism cannot go hand in hand is appealing to the Indian masses, but it will not cut ice with the international community forever. The world is moving on—the long strife in Northern Ireland has ended, Timor-Leste is independent and at peace, the Balkans are no longer seeing genocide, nor is Rwanda, to give some of many contemporary examples.

If India is to claim its rightful place as a responsible big power in the long run or

responsible big power in the long run or take its permanent seat at the horseshoe table in the United Nations Security Councall chamber, it must solve its disputes with Pakistan. At least, it must be seen to be do-ing something about it. That is what diplo-

Pakistan. At least, it must be seen to be do-ing something about it. That is what diplo-mats are for, juxtaposed with rabble-rous-ing, vote-seeking politicians. Jaishankar must think out of the box sconer than later about what to do with Pakistan, since rou-tine steps have been tried and have failed. State policy in Islamabad and Rawalpin-di, the Army General Headquarters, to-wards India is unlikely to change. It can only harden with domestic politics in the northern neighbourhood rapidly de-scending from a sump into a cesspool. Caught up in daily efforts to stop blood-shed from cross-border terrorism and neutralise plots almost weekly, India's policymakers have never sufficiently ac-knowledged that Pakistan is not a mon-lith in the way it views India. The people of Balochistan have a lot of affection for India owing to the region's history. Resi-dents of Sind have more in common with Gujarat and Maharashtru han they have with the rest of Pakistan. It is time to break down a comprehen-

dents of Sind have more in common with Gujarat and Maharashtra than they have with the rest of Pakistan. It is time to break down a comprehensive Pakistan policy into reciprocal approaches towards its provinces. If it shas been done in the past, it has been done in the past, it has been limited by way of outreaches to the Muttahida Qaumi Movement in Karachi and Baloch nationalists. Their objective has been to corner Islamabad. These outreaches have to be widened. India must have a contingency plan for the dangerous eventuality of a break-up of Pakistan in view of its ongoing siege within. Indians could envisage living in peace with the people of Sind and Balochistan if Rawalpindi's veto on India policy is weakened. Maybe, as the former defence secretary said three decades ago, Punjabis on both sides of the border could then negotiate their own people-topeople relations through border trade and a shared heritage.

(Views are personal)

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### WHY KARNATAKA'S POLITICAL PILOTS CAN'T AVOID TURBULENCE

ARNATAKA politics has become familiar with tumult. Over the last four decades, less than two years after every new government has settled into office with fanfare, it has gotten caught in crossfires regarding visible misgoverance, allegations of corruption, waves of political instability or challenges to leadership. It has offen been a combination of these factors. Siddarmanh's 16-month old govern-

Siddaramaiah's 16-month-old govern-ment faces multi-track challenges de-spite being given a clear mandate by votment faces multi-track challenges despite being given a clear mandate by voters. The same happened to Ramakrishna Hegde in the mid-1900s, followed by three Congress chief ministers within a span of five years (1989-94), which were succeeded by Janata Dal coming to power and witnessing frequent splits (1994-90). All of this was followed by a Congress government headed by S M Krishna (1999-2004) that went into a tailspin with brigand Veerappan's abduction of veteran actor Rajkumar.

This was followed by coalition instability (2004-08) and a BJP government with three chief ministers that had to manage with the support of independents (2006-13). This made way for a Congress government headed by Siddaramain (2013-18) and a return to another five-year phase that saw three chief ministers heading coalition governments, and a majority by switchovers (2018-23). Now, there seem to be portents of history repeating itself.

Governance in the state seems to have taken a backseat with the chief minister.

tory repeating itself.

Governance in the state seems to have taken a backseat with the chief minister being engulfed by the Mysore Urban Development Authority land allotment scandal and the government having to answer several uncomfortable questions

scanicar and the government awing to answer several uncomfortable questions on a range of other issues. The CM is clearly on the backfoot, attempting to stave off one googly after another. Some would argue that it is a matter of time before the Congress would need to consider a leadership change.

The timing of such a change is the focus of immense speculation. The party would clearly not want to give the impression that it has buckled to opposition pressures. It would build a case for a new leadership as a mid-course change of guard to take forward the promises made in the last election and ensure a well-crafted ₹image makeover as it completes the rest of is term. Yet, there are a spate of internal chal-



lenges the party would need to resolve.
An honourable exit for the present incumbent would be the first.
In his second term as chief minister,
Siddarmaniah represents a style of politics uniquely different from those who
have had their political career within the
framework of the Congress, Siddarmaniahales, we seems to the sections of the congress. ah also represents the backward castes and as an Ahinda (a Kannada acronym for minorities, backward classes and



No Karnataka govt over the last four decades has had more than two untroubled years after swearing in. There are signs that such fractious history might be about to repeat itself. The Congress needs to resolve a spate of challenges before considering a change in leadership

Dalits) leader, has a great deal of traction in the wider politics that the Congress is pursuing at a national level. This factor was key to his return to the chief ministership in 2023. While the developments in the last few months have clearly dented his standing, the party would need to strategise with caution before taking any action.

strategise with caution before taking any action.
Deputy Chief Minister D K Shivakumar would see himself as the natural successor—given his backing out of the race in 2024, a lot would depend on the stand the Congress high command chooses to take. While many state leaders of the Congress have made it clear that they see themselves as potential



candidates, it could well be political posturing for a better position in the event of missing out on the leadership if there were to be any change. The stand of the incumbent chief minister on the matter will also be crucial.

If the ruling Congress faces its own dilemmas, the leading opposition party, the BJP, appears to be a divided house, it appears not to have recovered from its defent in the 2023 assembly polls. While the Lok Sabha polls saw it get a majority of the seats in the state, it was nowhere to its 2019 numbers. The factions within the state unit are out in the open and the BJP central leadership appears to be unwilling to step in and broker peace.

Its alliance with the JDS is yet another matter of concern for the BJP state unit. While it may have helped keep the Congress at bay in the Lok Sabha polls, in the long run, this alliance could well undercut the BJP. The Lokniti-CSDS post-poll study in 2024 indicated that while the BJP improved its vote share among the Lingayatts and the non-dominant backward castes, it did not do as well as it anticipated among the other dominant caste, the Vokkaligas.

There is also a growing impression at the state level that Kumaraswamy appears to have gained more political visibility as compared to his BJP coun-

appears to have gained more political visibility as compared to his BJP coun-terparts in the Union council of ministers. The Old Mysore region would see a lot of political adjustments and nego-tiations in the event of the BJP-JDS al-

tiations in the event of the BJP-JDS al-liance continuing.

The crucial by-elections to the state legislature that is soon due will be a cru-cial test for the ruling party as well as the opposition alliance. While the results may not dramatically alter the respec-tive party position in the house, it could well indicate a churning in state politics. Karnataka politics is truly at a cross-roads and a critical juncture. The road ahead seems strewn with many agonis-ing \*ifs' and tantalising \*bts'. October could well see major developments in the politics of the state.

(Vieus are personal)

(Views are personal)

### MAILBAG

WRITE TO: letters@newindianexpress.com

### Industrialising Odisha

Ref: Track industry plans, priorities employment (Oct 9). The editorial underscores the need for requiring a serious course correction in tune with the demands of setting up modern industries in Odisha. Of Course, employment and sustainability must be a top priority in tracking industry plans by the new dispensation.

### Katragadda Sarveswara Rao, Bhuba

### Trump trouble

Ref: The more they bicker, the more they stay same (Oct 9). Kamala Harris and Donald Trump may be two sides of the same coin. But what we have seen thus far indicates that Harris is a less troublesome option. Any US administration will always be guided by the American interests alone. C G Kuriakose, Kothaman

### Haryana hat-trick

### Prediction errors

Prediction errors
Entipoliponits appeared to have "erred" in
Haryana but 'succeeded" in J&K. In Haryana, the
BJP wan a record 3nd consecutive victors, In J&K.
Entire, the KI-MC combine buildozed its way to
power. Unfortunately, the voting percentage
in the state is not improving much, perhaps
because several citizens wen't turn up to vote.
Govardhana Myneedu, Vijayawada

### Accepting defeat

Accepting defeat

R: Wor's accept Haypan result, says

Cong (Oct 9). Senior Congress leader Jaisan

Ramesh (salms the party is not going to accept

Haypan's evently, suspecting manipulation. If

he has any complaint, he has to take it up with

he election commissioner. Lieuweis, the BIP

was expecting over 400 seats in the Lot Sabha

election, but the result was far from their

expectations. They never asked complaints

against the voting machine.

Veniktasubramanian, Colmbatore

### Wake-up call

Warke-Op Catt

Fifty senior dotors of the R 6 Kar hospital
tendering their resignation in solidarity with
the medicos on hunger strike should bestir
the concerned authorities to accede to their
10-point agenda. It is a wake-up call, and
authorities must settle the issue before it snowballs into a bigger problem. HP Murall, Bengaluru

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

### THIS WORD MEANS | FORTIFIED RICE -

# Rice with added nutrients, Centre to continue supply until 2028

HARIKISHAN SHARMA NEW DELHI, OCTOBER 9

THE UNION Cabinet on Wednesday ex-tended the universal supply of fortified rice in all central government schemes provid-ing free food grain under the National Food

ing free food grain under the National Food Security Act, 2021, in its present form, until December 2028.

In a briefing on the Cabinet decision, Union Information and Broadcasting Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw said that the aim of this was to "address anaemia and micro-nutrients deficiency".

The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA), in April 2022, had decided to implement the rice fortification initiative throughout the country in a phased manner by March 2024. All three planned phases have now been successfully completed, with the target of universal coverage achieved by March 2024, and official statement following March 2024, an official statement following the Cabinet announcement said.

What is rice fortification, and why is it needed?

The Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI), country's top food regulator, defines fortification as "deliberately increasing the content of essential micronutrients in a food so as to improve the nutritional quality of food and to provide public health benefit with minimal risk to health". India has very high levels of malnutrition among women and children.

According to the Food Ministry, every second woman in the country is anaemic, and every third child is stunted.

"According to the National Family Health Survey (NHS-5) conducted between 2019 and 2021, anaemia remains a widespread issue in India, affecting children, women, and men across various age groups and income levels. Besides in on deficiency, other vitamin and mineral deficiencies, such as Vitamin B12 and folic acid, also persist, impacting the overall health and productivity of the population," the aforementioned government

statement said.
Fortification of food is considered to be one of the most suitable methods to combat malnutrition. Rice is one of India's staple foods, which is consumed by about two-hirds of the population. Per capita rice conthirds of the population. Per capita rice con sumption in India is 6.8 kg per mont! Fortifying rice with micronutrients is an op tion to supplement the diet of the poor.

### at is the process by which rice is

fortified?

Various technologies, such as coating, dusting, and 'extrusion', are available to add micronutrients to regular rice. The last mentioned technology involves the production of fortified rice kernels (FRKs) from a mixture using an 'extruder' machine. It is considered to be the best technology for India. Dry rice flour is mixed with a premix of micronutrients, and water is added to this mixture, which is then passed through a twin-screw extruder with heating zones, Kernels similar in shape and size to rice are

produced, which, as per Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution guidelines, must "resemble the normal milled rice as closely as possible". The kernels are dried, cooled, and pack-aged, FRK has a shelf life of at least 12 months. The kernels are blended with regular rice to produce fortified rice. Under the Ministry's euidelines. 10 or 6FRK must be blended with

produce fortunes consist the summary a guidelines, 10 of FKK must be blended with 1 kg of regular rice. According to FSSAI norms, 1 kg of forti-fied rice will contain the following: Iron (28 mg-42.5 mg, 50 kia caid (75-125 microgram), and vitamin B-12 (0.75-1.25 microgram). Rice may also be fortified with zinc (10 mg-15 mg), vitamin A (500-750 microgram RE, vitamin B-1 (1 mg-15 mg), vitamin B-2 (1.25 mg-1.75 mg), vitamin B-3 (1.25 mg-2.0 mg) and vitamin B-6 (1.5 mg-2.5 mg) per kg.

### How is fortified rice cooked and eaten?

It is no different from the way any rice is cooked and eaten. The rice needs to be cleaned and washed in the normal way be-

fore cooking, After cooking, fortified rice re-tains the same physical properties and mi-cronutrient levels as it had before cooking. Fortified rice is packed in jute bags with the logo ('+F) and the line "Fortified with Iron, Folic Acid, and Vitamin B12".

### How has the fortification initiative fared

In his Independence Day speech in 2015 In his independence Day specerim Auto, Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced that rice distributed under various central government schemes like the Public Distribution System (PDS) and Mid-Day Meal Scheme in schools, would be fortified by 2024. In April 2022, the Centre cleared a phase-wise plan to implement the rice forti-fication initiative.

PHASE 1 had already been implemented when the Centre's plan was cleared. It saw wo programmes — Integrated Child Development Services and PM POSHAN —

vered by March 2022.

PHASE 2 extended the supply of fortified

rice to PDS and other welfare schemes in Aspirational Districts in 27 states, and 291 I stunting burden districts by March 2023. PHASE 3 saw all remaining district the country get covered under the initia by March 2024.

the country get covered under the initiative by March 2021.

The cost of rice fortification is around Rs 2,700 crore per annum - less than 2% of India's annual total food subsidy bill. Since the 2019-20 fiscal year through March 31, 2024, approximately 406 lakh metric tonnes (LMT) of fortified rice have been distributed through the PDS, the government said in a statement issued in July this year.

As per officials, there are 925 fortified rice manufactures in the country, with a capacity of 111 LMT per annum. FRK produced by these manufacturers are sent to India's 21,000-odd rice mills for blending, installed bienders in these mills have a monthly capacity to produce 223 LMT of fortified rice.

According to Vaishnaw, the Centre has invested Rs 11,000 crore for developing the for-

vested Rs 11,000 crore for developing the for tified rice supply chain in India.

### EXPLAINED SCIENCE

### HOW EVM BATTERIES WORK, HOW THEY ARE CHANGED

**DAMININATH** 

A DELECATION of Congress leaders met
the Election Commission of India (ECI) on
Wednesday evening, and sought a thorough probe into the alleged "manipulation" of Electronic Voting Machines
(EVMs) in the Haryana elections.
A memorandum with complaints
from seven constituencies was submitted to the poll panel. The Congress said
that there was a "discrepancy" related to
the battery charge in some EVMs.
".some EVMs used for counting were
operating at 99% battery capacity, while

"...some EVMs used for counting were operating at 99% battery capacity, while other EVMs were operating at 60-70% battery capacity, in some cases, in the same polling station..." the Congress memorandum said.

The EC has assured Congress of a writer response to its complaints on a point by-point basis, the party's leaders said.

### How does the battery in an EVM

EVMs run on batteries so they can be used in remote areas which do not have electricity. According to the ECI, the con-trol unit (CU) of the EVM has a power pack of 7.5 or 8 volts, and the Voter trol unit (CU) of the EVM has a power pack of 7.5 or 8 volts, and the Voter Verifiable Paper Audit Trail (VVPNT) unit, which is attached to the EVM, has its own power pack of 22.5 volts. These batteries are manufactured by Bharat Electronics Cimited (BEL) and Electronics Corporation of India Limited (ECIL), the public sector undertakings in charge of manufacturing EVMs.

According to the ECI website, "The wer packs of CU and VVPAT are periodically monitored and the balance power status is displayed by the control unit as 'High', 'Medium', 'Low', 'Marginal' and 'Change Battery' along with the per centage." Powerpacks are replaced when the CU displays the "Change Battery" status. ECI sources said that a new battery usually lasts for an entire



EVMs, including the VVPAT, run on alkaline batteries instead of

election and counting process, with the display showing "99%" charge till the time the electrical potential of the battery is between 7.4 to 8 volts. The "Change Battery" status is displayed when the battery reaches 5.8 volts.
Exactly how long the battery lasts depends on the usage – how many votes were cast during the mock poll, how many times the votes were totalled by pressing the "total" button, and the number of votes cast during the old. ber of votes cast during the poll

Now are EVM batteries changed?

EVMs are fitted with new batteries before any election at the time of first-level checking. Political parties are informed beforehand, and their representatives can be present during this check. If the battery level dips during the mock political peld on the moning of voting of the battery pack must be changed. This too happens in the presence of polling agents of the candidates.

At the close of the poll, the presiding officer of each oolling station has to sub-

officer of each polling station has to sub-mit a report to the EC about any battery change. This is a part of the overall pre-siding officers' report. The format of this report includes the unique ID of the con-



### THE NOBEL PRIZES 2024

# Deciphering proteins using AI

The three recipients of this year's Chemistry Nobel have been awarded the prize for developing tools that make it easier and quicker to decipher proteins' structures, and develop entirely new proteins



AMITABH SINHA

PROTEINS ARE some of the most important

PROTEINS ARE some of the most important life-sustaining molecules in anyliving organism. They perform a critical role in almost all biological processes. In fact, life itself would not be possible in absence of proteins. This is why these large and complex molecules have been subjects of scientific studies for decades. This research, over the years, has led to significant breakthroughs when it comes to the understanding of the structure and functioning of these proteins, many of which have garnered Nobel Prizes.

This year's Nobel Prize in Chemistry too was awarded for research on proteins. This award, however, is slightly different to previous ones. Scientists David Baker, Demis Hassabis and John Jumper have been honoured not for presenting any new insights into proteins themselves, but for developing tools that make it vastly easier and quicker to decipher their structures, and make entirely new proteins.

Hassabis and Jumper, who share one half of the prize, are co-creators of an artificial intelligence—based tota called Alphas-Bold they.

of the prize, are co-creators of an artificial in-telligence-based tool called AlphaFold that can predict the structure of a protein with outstanding accuracy. Baker, winner of the other half, used similar computational tools to create new proteins, which are not avail-able in nature, but can perform many useful functions. Together, the trio managed to accomplish things that scientists have been striving to achieve for several decades.

### Critical element of life

Proteins are made of long chains of amino acids, which themselves are small organic molecules containing carbon, hydrogen, nitrogen and oxygen and sometimes sulphur. There are 20 different amino acids that some as the hills. times sulphur. There are 20 different amino acids that serve as the building blocks of proteins. Different combinations of amino acids, arranged in a sequence and folded tightly into unique three-dimensional shapes, form the proteins that are vital to almost all biological processes.

Certain kinds of proteins, called enzymes, can speed up biochemical reactions

### NOBEL PRIZE IN CHEMISTRY 'FOR COMPUTATIONAL PROTEIN DESIGN' & 'FOR PROTEIN STRUCTURE PREDICTION



DAVIDBAKER, 62 Professor at University of Washington; PhD from University of California



DEMISHASSABIS, 48 CEO of Google DeepMind; PhD from University College London



JOHN M JUMPER, 39 Senior Research Scientist at Google DeepMind; PhD from University of Chicag



structural support to cells and tissues. Then there are some proteins that help in im-mune response, while others can store nu-

mune response, while others can store nu-trients or energy.

It has long been known that the structure of proteins determines their functions. A few cades ago, it was discovered that it is the sequence of amino acids that decide how

sequence of amino acids that decide how they will fold in three-dimensional shapes, thus determining the final structure of proteins. This discovery earned biochemist Christian Anfinsen the Chemistry Nobel in 1972, which he shared with Stanford Moore and William H Stein.

"So, the sequence of amino acids determines the structure of proteins, and the structure in turn determines the function of the proteins. But there are so many sequences of amino acids that are possible. It is like words in any language. They cam be arranged in different ways to make a very large number of sentences. But notall combinations are valid," P Balram, former director of Indian Institute ferent ways to make a very large number of sentences, But not all combinations are valid." P Balram, former director of Indian Institute of Science, told The Indian Express. "So just like in language, there has to be a grammar to the arrangement of amino acids in proteins, and this grammar has been very difficult to un-derstand," he said. Although scientists have been trying to

unravel the structure of proteins for several years for the insight this provides regarding biological processes in the body, progress in this regard has been slow.

"Traditional methods of decoding the structure of proteins, through x-ray cry lography, is a laborious and time-consu ocess. It takes months, if not years, to figur this out," Arun Shukla, of the Departme

Biological Sciences and Bioengineering at IIT Kanpur, told The Indian Express. Still, over the years, the structures of thousands of proteins have been cata-

Indusanes of proteins have been catalogued. Simultaneously, a database containing all known sequences of amino acids has also been created.

Hassabis and Jumper built upon this work to create AlphaFold. The Al tool predicts the structures of proteins using known sequences of amino acids from the database.

These profile increases have not been detailed. These predictions were then matched to cat d protein structures in the other database. With training, the AI tool gained suffi

base. With training, the Al tool gained suffi-cient accuracy in predicting protein structures, given a particular sequence of amino acids.

Although developed just a few years ago, the tool has already undergone multiple up-grades. Today it is being used by a large num-ber of researchers.

"This method is a spectacular departure from all previous efforts to decode the structure of proteins. Earlier efforts involved a lot of chemistry and physics. This one uses data and computation. This is extremely interesting and promising," Balram said.

### New proteins

Baker relied on slightly different kinds of computations to design completely new, synthetic proteins that are not found in na-ture. He has produced new sequences of

ture. 'He has produced new sequences of amino acids that are valid proteins and perform useful and desirable functions, it is like constructing new sentences. This opens up huge new possibilities,' Balram said.

The new proteins can perform functions that naturally-synthesised proteins are not designed to. Theoretically, for example, a synthetic protein can be designed to degrade plastics which are otherwise not biodeeradable. radable

The alternative way of producing syn-The alternative way of producing synthetic proteins is a long process. "One can take the evolutionary approach, for example. Protein molecules can be allowed to undergo mutations until they acquire the desired characteristics. But this can involve hundreds of mutations and can take years. Baker's process of producing synthetic proteins is much more efficient and effective; biologist Alok Bhattacharya of the Ashoka University told The Indone Express.

The work of the three scientists has huge implications in drug discovery, and in overcoming stubborn diseases that occur due to protein disorders.

protein disorders.
Interestingly, both the Physics and Chemistry Nobel prizes this year have been given to artificial intelligence related research. In fact, while acknowledging the foundational work in Althat led to the Nobel Prize in Physics this year, the Nobel Committee had listed AlphaFold as one of the examples of the kind of impact that was already evident. The Chemistry prize has now picked up the co-creators of AlphaFold for the honour.

ese AI-powered breakthroughs in predicting the structure of proteins have been creating a lot of buzz in the research

neen creating a lot of blizz in the research community, and a Nobel recognition was al-ready being talked about. So, this hasn't come as a surprise. 'Shukla said. Balram said after the Physics Prize was announced on Monday, he had wondered whether AlphaFold would also be very quickly recognised. 'It was done the very next day.' he said.

# traordinary circumstances. Kashmir's tallest leader, Sheikh Abdullah, had been intermed in 1965, and the National Conference, and the Stain and the National Conference had been forced to merge with the Congress, The Congress won 61 of the 75 seats in the Assimble election with only the Jamaat worked as perspective of 1967, and went into the 1972 election with only the Jamaat and Bharattya Jana Sangh (195) as the opposition. The 195, congress of the volta and sporsored some candidates for the 1969 panchayat elections – some of whom won 18 seats, and was followed by independents of the Jamaat put up candidates for the 1969 panchayat elections – some of whom won 18 seats, and was followed by independents of the Jamaat put up candidates for the 1969 panchayat elections – some of whom won 18 seats, and was followed by independents of the Jamaat put up candidates for the 1969 panchayat elections – some of whom won 18 seats, and was followed by independents of the Jamaat put up candidates in 22 of the 75 veats. It won five seats and finished second trine. It secured 7% of the total vote and most 24% of votes at the seast it contessor. Setbacks in 1977, 1983 Following the 1974 Indiana. Setbacks in 1977, 1983 Following the 1974 Indiana. Setbacks in 1977, 1983 Following the 1974 Indiana. Fringe player, limited impact: A short electoral history of Jamaat in Kashmir

THE JAMAAT-E-ISLAMI, the proscribed Islamist outfit that was billed as the 3' factor that could potentially influence outcomes at the 10 jammu and Kashmir Assembly seats where it backed Independent candidates, came a cropper of Tuesday. Eight of these 10 candidates lost their deposits, and the candidates and the candidates and the candidates and the candidates are sopre, which was once the bastion of the late hardline Hurriyat leader Syed Ali Shah Geelani. ext only 406 votes.

of the late hardline Hurriyat leader Syed Ali Shah Geelani, got only 406 votes. The Jamaat, which has been banned under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA), involved itself in an election in J&K for the first time since 1987. This was welcomed in some quarters as a sign of broad-basing of electoral politics; others saw the Jamaat as a force that could split the anti-Bly vote. In fact, data show the Jamaat, which has

traditionally enjoyed significant socio-cul-tural significance in Kashmir, has never been a formidable political force on its own. The only exception was the infamous elec-tion of 1987, when the Muslim United Pro-(MUF), an alliance of more than 16 organi-sations including the Jamaat, won more than 30% of the void expire ladged heavy rigging in favour of the National Conference.

### Inception & early years

Inception & early years

The Jamaat-e-Islami Jammu and
Kashmir grew out of an Islamic reformist
movement in the late nineteenth century.
One of its early pioneers was the Mirwaiz
of Kashmir, Maulana Rasul Shah, who
formed the Anjuman Nusrat ul-Islam in
1899 with the aim of imparting both modemand Islamic education, and eliminating
the allegedly un-Islamic "innovations" and
superstitions that were part of popular
Kashmini Suff practices.
Following Partition, the Jamaat opposed

won 13 seats and the Congress 11.

The Jamaat contested 19 seats, but won on Jamaat contested 19 seats, but won on Jamaat contested 19 seats, but won on Jamaat contested, the Jamaat won 13% of the vote.

The 1983 Assembly election turned out to be worse for the Jamaat. The National Conference more or less retained both its vote share and seats tally, and the Congress improved significantly — but the Jamaat could not win even one of the 26 seats it contested. It did retain its overall vote share of almost 4%, though.

### of almost 4%, though. 1987: the last attempt

The MUF, of which the Jamaat was part, won more than 30% of the vote but only four seats. It has been argued that had the elections not been rigged, the MUF would have swept the poils. The rigging of these elections is believed to have lithe fire of militancy, with many MUF candidates or leaders going onto

become separatists or take up arms.
Two ley figures who contested as MUF
candidates were Syed Ali Shah Geelani and
Mohammed Yousuf Shah, who would later
come to be known as Syed Salahuddin.
Geelani won in Sopore, but Yousuf Shah was
declared defeated by more than 4,000 wotes
from Amirakadal—even though he had led
by a significant margin through the day as
wotes were counted. Yousuf Shah's election
anamer use the runner Vasin Malie

votes were counted. Yousuf Shah's election manager was the young Yasin Malik.

Geelani went on to become the chief of Tehreeke-e-Hurrylat. Yousuf Shah and Malik became militants. Yousuf Shah joined the Hizb-ul-Mujahideen and took the norn de guerre of Syed Salahuddin. He iscurrently the chief of United Jihad Council which also controls the Hizb-ul-Mujahideen, and based in Palestan Occupied Kashrnir. Malik sin prison. 1987 was the last time the Jamaat contested elections — until 2024.

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# 14 THE EDITORIAL PAGE

WORDLY WISE

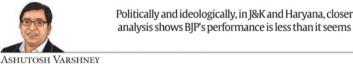
THE PRESTIGE OF THE NOBEL PRIZE IS SUCH THAT ONE IS SUDDENLY PROMOTED TO A NEW STATUS.

### The Indian **EXPRESS**

S FOUNDED BY S RAMNATH GOENKA

BECAUSE THE TRUTH INVOLVES US ALL

# A qualified victory



### A CHANGE IN STANCE

With greater confidence on the disinflation path, RBI shifts to neutral position, opens door to cutting interest rates

N THE FIRST meeting of the newly reconstituted monetary policy committee hree new external members were appointed recently — members voted 5-1 to maintain status quo on interest rates. This decision is in line with that taken at the last committee meeting in August, although then two external members had voted in favour of a cut. The departure this time was on the stance of policy, All committee members have voted in favour of changing the stance from "withdrawal of accommodation" to "neutral". This has opened up space for the MPC to begin easing policy rates in subsequent meetings. The change in stance comes after the European Central Bank, Bank of England, and more recently, US Federal Reserve, have pivoted, beginning their rate cut cycles.

The decision to change the policy stance could be attributed to "greater confidence in

navigating the last mile of disinifation. This in turn possibly comes from greater confi-dence over the trajectory of food prices. Food inflation has been a source of concern for the committee, even as it has declined from 8.6 per cent in February to 5.66 per cent in August. The central bank now expects prices to ease further, notwithstanding the likely uptick in the September data. Agricultural production is expected to be healthy on the back of a good monsoon season. Further, as per the RBI, there are growing prospects of a good rabi season. There are also sizable buffer stocks of foodgrain. And though the RBI covernon has voiced concerns over "unexpected weather events and worsening of geopolitical conflicts" which could have a bearing on inflation — for instance, an escalation in initial conflicts. When Could have seeining on inflamon—for instance, an escalation in the conflict in the Middle East could adversely impact crude oil prices—the central bank has retained its forecast for the year at 4.5 per cent. It has now projected inflation to trend lower to 4.3 per cent in the first quarter of the next financial year. Considering expectations that core inflation will likely remain "Proadly contained", there now appears to be comfort in the "progress towards realising a durable disinflation towards the target."

On the growth front, the central bank sounds optimistic, emphasising that the drivers of growth – consumption and investment – are "gaining momentum". On private consumption, it says that rural demand is "trending upwarfs," while urban demand is holding steady. However, incontrast, the economic review by the finance ministry for August had noted that there are "incipient signs of strain" in sectors such as automobiles and fast-moving consumer goods sales in urban areas. On investments, the RBI says that after the contraction seen in the goods assert in unamment capital spending is "rebounding", while private investment "con-tinues to gain steam". Greater clarity will emerge when GDP data for the second quarter is re-leased. The central bank has projected the economy to grow at 7.2 per cent this year. This is higher than assessments by others. For instance, while ICRA has pegged the economy to grow at 7 per cent, as per Crisil, growth is expected to moderate to 6.8 per cent.

### SCIENCE IN THE MACHINE

Nobel Prize in Physics is an acknowledgment of Al's enabling and disruptive possibilities

T MIGHT NOT be easy to discern the physics in a paragraph composed by ChatGPT or in talking digital assistants like Siri or the facial recognition technology used in some offices. However, the Nobel Committee's decision to award this year's Physics
prize to the pioneers of Artificial Intelligence, which drives these services, is a recognition of machine learning's links with the discipline in realms as diverse as processing data, particle physics and surveying the universe. It is also a salient acknowledgment of Al's enabling and disruptive possibilities. On Tuesday, Princeton University professor John J Hopfield and Geoffrey E Hinton, professor at the University of Toronto, were awarded the Nobel for discoveries that have helped computers learn somewhat in the way the human brain does. In recent years, the Nobel Committee has shown an inclination to go beyond tradition.

In 2021, for instance, the Physics prize went to three climatologists for the first time. The prize's citations acknowledged the contributions of the scientists to understanding one of the most pressing problems facing the world. This year's prize similarly underlines that Hopfield and Hilton's contributions have revolutionised science, engineering, and daily life. The work of both scientists has transcended disciplinary boundaries. Hopfield began his career as a classical physicist, studying the properties of solid matter, but felt limited by the discipline. In the 1980s, he began studying how the work of neurons in the human brain could be a model for machines. His neurobiology-inspired thesis showed how a network in a machine can process information in one go, remembering all connections and patterns, unlike traditional computing in which data is stored in small bits. Hinton who has a background in Cognitive Psychology and Computer Sciences — and an abiding interest in carpentry — took forward the American scientist's work to help machines make sense of complex data sets and patterns. The two developed on each other's work, and that of colleagues, to increase the ability of machines to make complex associations.

reagues, to increase the abunty or macrines on have complex associations. Hinton has often compared Al to the industrial Revolution and extolled its possibilities in increasing productivity and improving healthcare. At the same time, both pioneers have cau-tioned about the Frankerstein effect of the technology—artificial networks exceeding the human neurous. Last year, Hinton resigned from Googles or bath Evould speak freely about cre-ating safeguards around Al, Hopefield has likened Al to the splitting of the atom—it can produce both bombs as well as bountiful energy. Significantly, this year's Nobel recognises this facet of the scientists' work as well. It's a message for technology and ethics to work in sync.

### THE TRAY IS PRETTY

It is absurd to decorate an airport security tray for social media. It also offers a spot of relief from the unpleasant and boring

NYONE WHO IS curious about the absurd lengths to which the social media-fuelled pursuit of beauty can be taken, only needs to look at two recent trends. The first is the so-called airport tray trend, which involves the artful "curation" of one's possessions — sunglasses, watch, bag etc, besides a board-ing pass and/or passport— on a plastic airport tray. The second is "fridgescaping"; in which, besides the usual eggs, milk, butter etc, one places decorative items like flower vases and photo frames inside a refrigerator. If photos of these two trends have been lapped up by users and brand marketing departments — publishing house Faber, for example, has used the airport tray trend to pitch its season's reads — they've also caused many to ask how much is too much, when it comes to the relentless glamourisation of the banal.

Beyond what critics see as the obvious ludicrousness of these trends — does a fridge

really need "decoration"? - they're also marked by a troubling prioritisation of social media validation over everything else. The airport tray trend, in particular, may seem in-considerate of other people. Is an airport security line, one of the most patience-testing aspects of travel, really the place to take one's own time to arrange objects for a photo? For harried airport staff and co-passengers, it is just one more irritant, adding further fric-

tion to an already irisome experience.
It could be argued, however, that there is something valiant about trying to make room for beauty in the banal, boring or anxiety-inducing, Going through airport security or opening one's fridge need not involve a course in art appreciation, but what is wrong with making the experience, even if only for a moment, a little more aesthetically pleas ing? There is much about the world today that is unpleasant and ugly. Coming across a stranger's photo of a prettified airport tray in the bottomless scroll of one's social media feed could offer a spot of relief.

WHAT A PUZZLING result in Haryana, and

wyth I a PUZZLING result in Haryana, and what a traditionally expected one in Jammu and Kashmirl Let's begin with some statistics. According to the Election Commission of India, the vote difference between the Congress and BJP was only 0.85 per cent in the Haryana elections. The BJP received 39.94 per cent of the vote and the Congress 39.09 per cent. Vet, the seat difference was 11 (BJP's 48 toll NCS 37), making all the difference between victory and defeat.

This has hanonenvolvedore between Indianal Congress 39.00 per cent. Vet. This has hanonenvolvedore between Vet. The State Congress 39.00 per cent. Vet. The State Congress 39.00 per c

victory and depensed before, both in India and elsewhere. Indeed, the vote-seat paradox of a first-past-the-post system means that results can be sensitive to the distribution of the overall vote. Basically, more than the Congress, the BP successfully managed to get its voters to the booth in those constituencies where the contest was on a knife-edge. It is a booth-and constituency-level victory of a serious sort. That is where the BP defeated Congress.

This result will undoubtedly boost the BP and Himdutto. The game of interpreting a man-

and Hindutva. The game of interpreting a man-date is normally based on how many seats a date is normally based on how many seats a party has won, not on the comparative statis-tics of vote shares, Indeed, in an irmit twist, the BJP would benefit from the same political logic that hurit it after the 2024 Lok Sabba re-sults. The widespread expectation then was that the BJP would win. But the BJP, finishing short of a majority, felt remarkably deflated af-ter June. In Haryana, most observers thought the Congress would win, but it finished sec-nod. The ran between expectations and results. the Congress would win, but it finished sec-ond. The gap between expectations and results helped the Congress then and would lift the BPnow. The deflationary logic of the 2024 par-liamentary elections will be temporarily ar-rested for the BJP. making the forthcoming elections in Maharashtra, flant-hand and Delhi even more significant.

But whatever the political momentum of a particular time, a deeper story is sometimes hidden in election statistics that must be unearthed. It can alert us to the dif-ferences between momentary logic and longer-run tendencies.

longer-run tendencies.

longer-run tendencies. Remarkably, compared to the 2019 state elections, Congress's vote has gone up by as much as 11 per cent, whereas the BJP's vote is up by only 3.5 per cent. If we compare these results with those of the 2024 parliamentary elections, the BJP's vote is down by 6.1 per cent

If the Congress had played its alliance-making, its constituency management and its candidate selection better and acquired another 2 per cent vote, one can easily show that depending on the distribution, the results could have been very different. No great assumptions about how differently the caste game could have been played are strictly necessary to explain such a narrowly differentiated result. Any larger claims about ideological victory or defeat are also irrelevant, though that is how politicians would spin it. The gap between the two votes is so minuscule that the best argument accounting for the outcome is about the ground game, candidate selection and the

logic of alliances.

and the Congress's vote by 3.7 per cent (though some allowance will have to be made for the AAP's small vote). An even more dramatic comparison is with the 2019 Lok Sabha elections. At a whopping 58.2 per cent of the vote, the BJP had a victory of hegemonic proportions. There has been a massive 18.3 per cent slide in its vote share since then. In the 2019 Lok Sabha election, the Congress had only 28.5 per cent of Haryana's vote. In comparison, its vote share this week was up by 10.6 per cent. Of course, one can introduce assumptions about how Lok Sabha end with an Sabha results should be compared and make the status

about now LoX sabha and Vidinah sabah re-sults should be compared and make the sta-tistical analysis more technically demanding, but whatever assumptions we make, the larger point is unmistakable. In Haryana, despite this victory, the BJP has lost its outsize role. Of course, devoid of upper-caste social domi-nance, lacking a significant statewide Hindu-Muslim cleavage and possessing a heavy agri-cultural base. Haryana was not the BIP's cultural base, Haryana was not the BJP's traditional habitat, But after 2014, arguments traditional habitat. But after 2014, arguments about the Bif's natural homes have become less relevant. It has penetrated many relatively impervious political theatres and by obtaining 58.2 per cent of the state's vote in the 2019 general elections, it had established a truly gigantic presence in Haryana. In sum, in a momentary sense, it is a big victory, but if we apply the longer-run perspective, it is a qualified victory. If the Congress had played its alliance-making, its constituency management and its candidate selection better and acquired another 2 per cent vote, one

management and its candidate selection bet-ter and acquired another 2 per cent vote, one can easily show that depending on the distri-bution, the results could have been very dif-ferent. No great assumptions about how dif-ferently the caste game could have been played are strictly necessary to explain such a nar-rowly differentiated result. Any larger claims about ideological victory or defeat are also in-relevant, though that is how politicians would spinit. The gap between the two votes is somi-nuscule that the best argument accounting for the outcome is about the ground game, can-didate selection and the logic of alliances.

the outcome is about the ground game, can-didate selection and the logic of alliances. We also need to bring Kashmir into our analysis. We will yet again see why the elec-tion results are not a thumping BJP victory. On Kashmir, an enduring Hindu national-ist argument has been that its regional parties

and separatist forces prospered because of Article 370 and the indulgence of Kashmir Valley in Delhi, especially by the Congress. Moreover, a necessary corollary of this argu-ment has been that if Article 370 was removed and the benefits of development and moderni-sation were brought to the Valley, it would weaken the regional forces, Kashmir would join the national mainstream, and regionalism and separatism would feine way to greater next join the national mainstream, and regionalism and separatism would give way to greater national unity. Often, another argument was always added to the claim about development making greater national cohesion possible. It was contended that a firm resolve on the part of Delhi and the use of force, instead of indulgence, would discipline the Valley. Use Lincoln's hand, not Candhi and Nehru's beart, to generate order and peace.

A Hindu-majority Jammu has rarely been a problem for Hindu nationalists. This is certainly true since Syama Prasad Mookerjee's 1953 movement. The movement established a Hindu nationalist forthold in Jammu. These

a Hindu nationalist foothold in Jammu. Thes a Hindu nationalist footbold in Jammu. These elections, as well as those held earlier, continue to show that Hindu nationalism's bastion in Jammu is intact, it is the Musslim-majority Kashmir Valley, which has always attracted the adversarial ideological attention of Hindu nationalists and provoked repeated arguments about how to alter its mansistial psyche). Since August 2019, Article 270 has not been in existence, the BJP government has done its best to promote investment and development in the Valley and even another larger amount of the Valley and even another larger amount in the Valley and even another larger amount.

best to promote investment and development in the Valley and even applied a large amount of coercion. Yet, a customary regional party, aided by the supposedly misguided and indugent Congress, has returned to power. Despite August 2019, the Valley's mansikta remains fundamentally unchanged.

The BJP would, of course, interpret Kashmir results expansively — as a victory of democracy, of people voting in large numbers. But the inherent weakness of its 2019 strategy should be obvious. Putting the two elections together, we can even more clearly see why the results are only a qualified victory for the BJP.

Only a specific of the writer is Sol Goldman professor of ernational Studies and the Social Sciences at Brown University, where he also directs the exena Center for Contemporary South Asia at the Watson Institute



# What BJP Got Right

Its Haryana win shows that Dalits, OBCs vote for the party that gives them their due

### ADITI NARAYANI PASWAN

THIS YEAR, THE general election showed Dalit THIS YEAR, THE general election showed Dalit voters' disenchantment with the BJP in Haryana, UP and the party's other northern strongholds. However, the speed of turn-around on this front is evident from the results of the recently concluded assembly election in Haryana. This result has concretized the fact that currently there is only one big-tent party. The BJP. The past decade has metamorphosed the BJP from an upper-caste nationalist party to an all-encompassing political instrument that gives space to voices from all castes and beliefs. Be it Dalits, Patsmandas or other marginalised sections of society, leaders representing all interest groups have found their footing in the BJP. A tag, which, for several decades after Independence, was with Congress. However, unlike the Congress, the BJP has not played appeasement politics. Instead, it has spoken to the aspirations of marginalised groups. It has ensured that disentendented communities find political leadership and mainstreamed their voices.

Veters are now able to discern the difference between what is being said and done. Whilst Congress was building up a narrative of Constitution and caste the BIP was a liening.

Whilst Congress was building up a narrative of Constitution and caste, the BJP was aligning Constitution and case, the BJP was aligning itself with stark ground realities. It gave nine out of the 17 reserved tickets to Deprived Scheduled Castes (DSCs), a non-dominant and more deprived caste group amongst Dalits. Congress's politics, in contrast, was being played by one particular family, It sidelined the Dalit leadership.

Harvana voters, more specifically Dalits and OBCs, have been clear in their pattern. They do not just want leaders to talk about caste and casteism, but what is being done on the ground. The Prime Minister's focus on the pillars of 'garib' (poor), 'yuva' (youth), 'annadata' (farmers), 'nari shakti' (woman power) have found resonance among Dalit youth and women

The Indian political system has, for ification and communal divide into carefully crafted vote banks. After Babasaheb and Babu Jagiwan Ram Ji, there was a significant gap in Dait political leadership. The BJP in the last decade, has been able to break into those silos to create a broad-based political spectrum of ideas and leaders. This was on display on Tuesday, when the results were being announced: Dalit communities, OBCs constitute a leadership caucus or bloc which decides whom to vote for as per its own preferences for party and candidate. It will not rely on the hollow rhetoric of the Constitution and caste when the actions of those espousing theseval-when the actions of those espousing thesevalcrafted vote banks, After Babasaheb and Bab then the actions of those espousing these val-

when the actions of those espousing these val-ues lean elsewhere.

This election outcome must also put a stop to the idea that voters' memories are short-lived. They remember Congress's time at the Centre and in state government - they promoted the dominant castes' aspirations. This is evident from the front and centre role B S Hood and his supporters played in the campaign, while Kumant Sela was missing from action. Jats canvassed for their leader Hoods and online the OBE and Hooda, and quickly and quietly, the OBC and Dalit votes shifted to the BJP. The message is clear: Dalits and OBCs will vote not on symbolism but on action.

Donism but on action. Haryana voters, more specifically Dalits and OBCs, have been clear in their pattern. They do not just want leaders to talk about caste and casteism, but what is being done

on the ground. The Prime Minister's focus on the gittlars of garib (poor), yuva (youth), annadata (farmers), nari shakti (woman power)(GYAN) has found resonance among Dalit youth and women, From gas cylinders Dalit youth and women, From gas cylinders for Rs 500 to Haryana's adoption of Madhya Pradesh's Ladli Behna Yojana in the form of Lado Lakshmi Yojana struck a chord with women from Dalit and OBC backgrounds. Apart from this, several women and youth-centric schemes by the central government have benefited not only Hindu Dalits and OBCs but Musslim women and youth, too. Despite their differences, all sections of the media have noted one thing: Government schemes, whether central or state, whether BlP-ruled or not, have reached the last in-

BJP-ruled or not, have reached the last in BJP-ruled or not, have reached the last in-tended person on the ground. The churning of the majority of socio-political structures and re-alignment of voters from marginalised classes and castes has made the BJP's Fourth Party System more resilient. It is now set to play a central role in India's polity, where vot-ers are not just concerned about local issues but also about the overall growth trajectory of the country. Dalits are not just a part of the electorate. They want to play a major role in electoral politics. They will support the party they think vill give respectable space to their leaders, ideas and aspirations.

The writer is assistant professor of Sociology, Lakshmibai College, Delhi University

### OCTOBER 10, 1984, FORTY YEARS AGO



### NO PEACE TALKS TILL POLL

INDIA HAS DECIDED not to resume talks with Pakistan on a peace pact in the near future. The stalled dialogue on Pakistan's suggestion for a no-war pact and India's draft treaty for friendship, peace and cooperation is unlikely to be resumed until after the Lok Sabha elec-tions, being held in late December.

### CURFEW IN UP

INDEFINITE CURFEW CONTINUES in Azamgarh district of Uttar Pradesh following recurrence of communal violence when one sub-divisional magistrate was shot dead, one

three others were stabbed. Violence erupted when the curfew was relaxed. The 55-year-old sub-divisional magistrate, Indra Deo Singh was shot when he was directing an operation to extinguish a fire.

### PM ON WAR & PEACE

CAUTIONING THE NATION against imminen CAUTIONINGTHE AVIION against imminent threats of war from all around, Prime Minister Indira Gandhi urged people to stand together and work towards strengthening the country. "Those very nations which were propagating peace were involved in stockpiling arma-ments," she said, The country is entering a new phase of advanced technology and ad-vancement in all fields of education, indus-trial manufacture and social sciences. Even those nations who belittled India a few years ago for its backwardness were today praising for its achievements, Mrs Gandhi said.

### ARMY PULLS OUT

THE SECURITY FORCES pulled out from Gun Ram Dass Sarai, Teja Singh Samundri Hall and Guru Nanak Niwas, entrusting them to the SGPC after almost four months. The three buildings and the Golden Temple complex was under Army control since June when the Army launched its operation against extremists.

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# 15 THE IDEAS PAGE

### "What is needed right now is for the entire society to unite around the baton of macroeconomic regulation policies, strengthen confidence, and take practical actions. We must cultivate a sense of responsibility to achieve the annual economic goals." — GLOBALTIMES, CHINA annual economic goals."

WHAT THE OTHERS SAY

# How the ball turned in Haryana

The only way of making sense of the election outcome is to see it as a result of a series of strategic moves by the BJP, which neutralised the huge initial advantage enjoyed by Congress



BY YOGENDRA YADAV

THE INSTANT ANALYSIS of the Haryana

THE INSTANT ANALYSIS of the Haryana Assembly elections illustrates the problem with our political commentary. To borrow a cricket metaphor, we seek to explain the outcome of every match as if it was an "innings defeat", where one team outperformed the other in every respect. Whatever the winner did was right and whatever the loser did was wrong.

What makes the BJP's victory in Haryana so politically consequential was the staggering gap between expectation and outcome, not the gap between winner and loser. The vote share gap between winner and loser. The vote share gap between the BJP and Congress is less than 1 per cent. In cricket terms, the Haryana election was a T-20 match that should have been won with two overs to spare, but was dragged till the last ball, and then lost. So, we need to explain three things: Why did we expect it to be a neasy affair? Why was it dragged till the last ball and then lost. So, for Haryana, we need to understand the structural reasons for Congress's perceived advantage, the strategic factors that helped the BJP neutralise it and the tactical moves that resulted in an unlikely victory for the BJP. A statutory clarification before I turn to

and the tactical moves that resulted in an unlikely victory for the BJP.

A statutory clarification before I turn to these questions, I write this on the assumption that the result as declared by the EC is a fair reflection of the way people voted. Congress has raised serious objections to the results, presented some evidence to support its claim and promised more. The onus is on the EC to clarify, For now, I have taken the official results, counter-intuitive as they are, at face value and bracketed all other concerns about manipulation.

face value and bracketed all other concerns about manipulation.

Let us begin by understanding the structural shift Congress enjoyed at the beginning of this election. The party suffered a dramatic collapse of its vote share in Haryama – from around 40 per cent – to Lok Sabha elections of 2014 (23 per cent), assembly elections the same year (21 per cent), 2019 LS elections (29 per cent) and assembly elections the property of the same year (21 per cent), 2019 LS elections (28 per cent), IS elections (28 per cent), IS elections (20 per cent), IS elections (2 cent). In I.S elections of 2019, it trailed the BIP by nearly 30 percentage points. Haryana Congress was staring at the fate of its counterparts in UP and Bihar. This is where the farmers' movement and the wrestlers' protest changed the political landscape, wearing away the dominant farming community from the BIP. Congress revival after the Biharat Jodo Vatra made sure that the disdifferent farmers turned to Congress carbor affected farmers turned to Congress rather than the INLD or JJP. Rahul Gandhi's aggres-

than the INLD or JJP. Kantu Gandhi's aggres-sive pitch on the Constitution helped bring a big chunk of Dalit voters back to Congress. This was reflected in the IS elections, as the vote share of Congress (including AAP) made a huge leap of 19 percentage points to finish 1 percentage point ahead of the BJP. So, contrary to post-poll commentaries,



kisan, pahahwan and samvidhan did work. Else, Congress would not have been a seri-ous contender in these elections, Anti-in-cumbency against the 10-year-old state gov-ernment was palpable on the ground. The obvious expectation was that the BJP would fare much worse in the assembly elections, as it had done in 2014 and 2019. So, in an in-creasingly bipolar situation (the combined wote share of Congress and BJP rose from 55 per cent in 2014 to 79 per cent in this assem-bly election), that would have meant a deci-sive defeat for the BJP and a comfortable majority for Congress.

sive defeat for the BIP and a comfortable majority for Congress.

But this structural advantage was not enough to win elections. This was the mistake in the kison-janwan-pahalwan-samvid-han narrative. I was among the many analysts who believed that this initial structural advantage for Congress was large and irreversible in the short run, enough to absorb the effect of any strategic or tactical move by the BIP Although, unlike in the LS elections, Idefrained from makine a formal sears formal search s

the effect of any strategic of tattual move by the BJP. Althogy, unlike in the IS elections, Irefrained from making a formal sears forecast for the Haryana assembly, I shared the widespread belief that a comfortable majority (or a wave or even a tsumani for Congress was on the cards.

The BJP strategists were smart enough to see an opportunity in adversity. They could see that the big shift towards Congress came largely from the Jats. And there was an opportunity to split the Dalit votes in view of the sub-quota controversy. By all accounts, they went about executing their strategy meticulously.

The onlyway of making sense of this outcomes to see it as a result of a series of strategic moves by the BJP that neutralised the huge initial advantage enjoyed by Congress. These moves included replacement of Manohar Lal Khattar by Nayab Singh Saini and a series of announcements meant to address the weakconists of the BJP. This strategen Manohar Lai Knattar by Nayab Singh Saim and a series of announcements meant to ad-dress the weak points of the BJP. This strategy involved a bold decision to deny tickets to many sitting MLAs and big leaders. Quietly, the BJP pressed the 35-1 (pitting 35 commu-nities of the state against Jats) polarisation strategy. This was similar to the "Yadav raj"

strategy used by the BJP successfully against the SP in the UP assembly elections of 2022. In Haryana the BJP invoked the fear of ray by one community, one district, one family. This was not a new strategy, the BJP used it in 2019 too. Although ground reports do not suggest greater polarisation this time, this is the most plausible explanation for the BJP's unexpected success. This was supplemented by a quiet campaign among the non-Jatav SCs on the issue of the sub-quota. Congress, on the other hand, either did not have a clear strategy or could not execute Congress, on the other hand, either did not have a clear strategy or could not execute

it. While Rahul assured a

government of all '36

the issue of the sub-quota. Congress, on the other hand, either did not have a clear strategy or could not execute it. While Rahul assured a government of all "36 biradari", the party could not carry this assurance, especially to the voters of south Haryana and CT Road region populated by non-Jats. The decision to renominate all sitting MLAs showed complacency — 14 of the 28 sitting Congress MLAs lost the election. Also, the ticket distribution carried the stamp of one leader and reinforced the impression of Jat dominance. Kumant Selfa's not-so-quiet protest did not hurt the party in her own areas, but it accentuated the Bly's narrative of Congress as a Jat party. While there was no electoral gain in making an alliance with the APP or SP there was a degree of complacency in addressing official and unofficial "rebels". These strategic disparities brought the electional match down to the last over, to the polling day. This is an area where the BJP has is an area where the BJP has is an area. biradari', the party could not carry this assurance, especially to the voters of south Haryana and GT Road region populated by non-Jats. The decision to renominate polling day. This is an area where the BJP has polling day, This is an area where the BijPhas an unmistakble advantage over the Congress, with its micro-largeting of voters, polling booth management and last-nimute mobilisation. Congress relied on haws, en-thusiasm and voter's self-mobilisation. These seemingly small but critical factors give the BijP upto a 2 per cent spike in every election, in every state, in the last instance, that ap-pears to have fittled this close objection in all sitting MLAs showed complacency — 14 of the 28 sitting Congress MLAs lost the election. Also, the ticket distribution carried the stamp of one leader and reinforced the impression of pears to have tilted this close election in favour of the BJP and resulted in what would Iat dominance. Kumari Selia's be described as an unprecedented and his-toric verdict. As in the T-20 finals, one catch can change the match. not-so-quiet protest did not hurt the party in her own

The writer is member, Swaraj India and National Convenor of Bharat Jodo Abhiyaan

# Ready for a lower rate

Softening food inflation and US Fed cut create space for RBI to loosen policy in December



DHARMAKIRTI JOSHI

DHARMAKIRTI JOSHI

THE RBI'S MONETARY Policy Committee
(MPC) changed its stance to "neutral" but
kept the policy rate unchanged.
Undoubtedly, high food inflation has been
anajor constraint to wielding the scalpel.
Non-food inflation stayed significantly below trend at 2.5 per cent in August, which,
incidentally, matched the average of the
first five months of this fiscal. We expect
the MPC to cut the policy rate by 25 basis
points (bps) during its December review
meeting as food inflation is likely to ease.
A significant upside to non-food inflation
sunlikely unlesse geopolitical tensions intensify and affect shipping, crude oil suphy and commodity costs.
Global monetary policy signals have
turned favourable after the US Federal
Reserve (Fed) cut its funds rate by a chunky
50 basis points by sin September – the
first such move in four years. That signalled
the decisive turn in the monetary policy
cycle among systemically important cenral banks. The European Central Bank
(ECB) and the Bank of England had slice
rates carlier. Weevpect the Fed to cut artel
by another 50 bps this year, followed by
another 125 bps in 2025.
The Fed's rate cut typically triggers capital inflows into emerging markets and creates an appreciation bias for the recipient

another 125 bps in 2025.
The Fed's race cut typically triggers capital inflows into emerging markets and creates an appreciation bias for the recipient country's currency as the interest rate pre-niumower the Us rate widers. This provides the central banks in emerging markets wiggle room to adjust their monetary policies to support growth. But the pace and direction of rates will be largely influenced by domestic dynamics of growth and inflation.

Some emerging markets had already begun front-running the Fed by cutting rates. Within Asia, the Phillippines and Indonesia intitated rate cuts prior to the Fed mow, and now have additional room for further reductions. Interestingly, Brazil, which had aggressively cut rates before the Fed, has had to move the other way because its economy was overheading and

red, nas nad to move the other way be-cause its economy was overheating and creating inflationary pressures. This is an instance of emerging-market monetary policy responding more to domestic than global conditions. The Fed's move has created space for the PBI to not be the second

the Fed had hiked interest rates by 525 bps whereas the RBI has raised only 250 bps

whereas the RBI has raised only 250 bps. Inflation was a bigger problem in the US. The gap between US and Indian policy rates, which was narrower than historical levels at the start of this fiscal, became wider with initiation of the US rate cut in September. Consequently, capital flows to India increased and the rupee has strengthened, SeP Clobal notes that this time, the impact of Fed rate cuts on capital inflows will be more pronounced in Asian emerging markets, particularly ones with healthy macroeconomic performance. Add to that India's inclusion in global bond indices — with the FTSE being the latest —

and capital inflows are bound to be robust. That said, domestic consumer inflation remains the key determinant for the RBTs decisions. Mint Road has time and again reiterated its intent of aligning consumer inflation to its long-term target of 4 per cent on a durable basis. The word "durable" is the key, as a temporary decline in inflation to the target, as we sawn in july-August, stumlikely to trigger a rate cut. During July-August, headline inflation to proper to an average of 3.6 per cent. Although keeping the interest rates high does not bring down food inflation, RBI cannot ignore high food inflation, With food and beverages having about 46 per cent weight in the consumer basket, overall inflation cannot to tarmed at 4 per cent weight in the consumer basket, overall inflation cannot to tarmed at 4 per cent which is a supplementation of the cent of the cent weight in the consumer basket, overall inflation cannot to tarmed at 4 per cent which is a supplementation of the cent

overall inflation cannot be tamed at 4 per cent without a benign flood inflation sce-nario, Past data confirms this. Also, if flood inflation is elevated in a high-growth environment, it can morph into generalised headline inflation. The RBI expects the Indian economy to grow 72 per cent this fiscal over a high base of 8.2 per cent that fiscal, a tad higher than CRSII.5 forecast of 6.8 per cent. The trans-mission from food to overall inflation can seem that the control of the mission from food to overall inflation can

CRISIL's forecast of 68 per cent. The transmission from God to overall inflation can occur through high inflationary expectations, leading to a wage-price spiral. An RBI study this year noted that high food inflation is influencing the inflation perceptions and expectations of households, with poential spillowers into non-food prices.

Non-food inflation stayed soft at 2.3 per cent in August, with core inflation at 3.3 per cent and deflating fuel prices. We do not see a significant upside to non-food inflation, as the slowing global economy will keep commotify prices suffued. SaP Global has reduced China's GDP growth forecast to 46 per cent for the current year. US GDP growth is expected to slow to 18 per cent in 2025. The SaP Global-GEP Supply Chain Volatility Index shows that spare capacity is rising worldwide, most approach of the content of the supply Chain Volatility Index shows that spare capacity is rising worldwide, most added uncertainty to crude prices and sup-dided uncertainty to crude prices and supadded uncertainty to crude prices and sup

Asia. The tensions in the Middle East have added uncertainty to crude prices and supply-chain movements.
Food inflation is the trickest and is becoming unpredictable with changing rainfall patterns and rising climate risks. The good news is that foodgrain inflation is softening due to plentiful rains. The monson ended with overall rainfall By er cent above normal during June-September. The progress in sowing augurs well for lehan'f food grain output. Improved reservoir levies and recharged groundwater should support rabi production. Vegetable inflation continues to be a worry, with tomato prices remaining firm in the TOP (tomato, onion and potato) category, according to the latest data. Potatoses were impacted by blight, and onions by poor rabi output this power. In the latest data. Potatoses were impacted by blight, and onions by poor rabi output this year. Notably, vegetable prices deviated from their typical decline during winter months in 203 due to persistent shocks from inclement weather, be it abnormal anifall or heat extremities. This year, we expect things to improve as vegetable inflation should ease in winter months with the arrival of a fresh harvest.

A combination of moderate non-food inflation, cooling food inflation, and US Fed rate cuts will pave the way for India's rate cuts to start in December.

The writer is Chief Economist CRISIL Ltd



# Don't outsource development

areas, but it accentuated the BJP's narrative of Congress as

Why policymakers must be cautious about advice of international NGOs

a Jat party.

BIBEK DEBROY, SANJEEV SANYAL AND ADITYA SINHA

FOR DECADES, INTERNATIONAL NGOS (INGOs) have pushed donor-driven agen-das that have often harmed local communi-ties. In Tanzania and Kenya, INGO-led con-servation displaced Maasai communities. servation displaced Masais communities. In Bolivia, water privatisation in Cochabamba, backed by INCOs, restricted access, leading to public outcry and policy reversal. Similar patterns have emerged in India, where INCOs promoted projects with conditions that ignored local realities, undermining development goals.

Morre of us should read Umanuta/Selection.

by Mara Hvistendahl. It sheds light on ho ventions by INGOs led to an increase in the incidence of female foeticide in India. While the Western narrative tends to focus on how cultural preferences in India have fuelled this tragic practice, it conveniently ignores the his-torical role of British colonial policies and Western NGOs in perpetuating gender imbal-ance on an industrial scale. Scholars such as LS Vishwanath and Bernard S Cohn have shown that British land

Bernard S.Cohn have shown that British land reforms in the late 18th and early 19th centuries directly increased infanticide among land-owning castes. Nevertheless, the British perpetuated the narrative that female infanticide was rooted in India's cultural backwardness. After Independence, the so-called "white man's burden" was perpetuated by INCOs pushing donor-driven agendas, often reflecting the same colonial mindset. Their interventions – driven by Malthusian fears of overpopulation — ended up worsening female foeticide.

Between the 1950s and 1980s, INGOs

such as the Ford Foundation, Rockefeller Foundation, and Population Council played a central role in introducing sex determina-tion technologies to India. By the 1960s, India's population was seen as a major global concern, and Western experts identified it as

inois population was seen as a major goosa concern, and Western experts identified it as a "test case" for population management. In 1975, egged on by INCOs, 59 per cent of India's Health Ministry budget was directed toward family planning, with little left for pressing needs like tuberculosis and malaria. The introduction of amniocentesis tests at AllMS, which were initially meant to detect fetal abnormalities, quickly became tools for determining foetal sex.

A key figure in this was Sheldon Segal, bead of the Population Council's biomedical division, who was posted to Delhi with bacting from the Ford Foundation, Segal was directly advising Lieutenant Colonel Bl. Raina, India's director of family planning, Segal helped reorient Raina's focus solely on population countrol. By 1965, personnel from the Ford Foundation alone in Delhi rivalled the US embassy staff in size, and the Rockefeller Foundation had its largest presence outside Us embassy staff in size, and the Rocketeller Foundation had its largest presence outside the US in New Delhi. The economic leverage these INCOs widelded cemented their con-trol. By the 1960s, India was receiving \$1.5 billion annually in aid, much of it conditioned on population control measures. INCOs also established strongholds in prestigious institutions to make pliable.

Indians to fight the "intellectual battle" on their behalf. For instance, the Population Councilestablished India's first demography centre at the International Institute for

Population Sciences, Mumbai, while Western funding focused heavily on AlIMS, where Segal set up a department of repro-ductive physiology. The Rockefeller Foundation had embedded advisers at Al-

whete segal set up a ucpatitude in the productive physiology. The Rockefeller Foundation had embedded advisers at AlIMS since 1958, and the Ford foundation began backing the institution in 1962 with a \$1.7 million grant.

Nudged by these INGOs, at AlIMS, doctors openly promoted the use of sex determination technology, A paper published by 
I C Verma and colleagues in Indian 
Paediartics defended the use of anniocentesis for sex selection, arguing that it could 
help reduce "unnecessary fecundity" by allowing families to stop reproducing once 
they had a male child. The paper acknowledged that 7 out of 8 families that underwent the test primarily for sex determination chose to about female foetsuses. By 1978, 
over 1,000 female foetuses had been 
aborted at AlIMS alone, and between 1978 
and 1983, an estimated 78,000 female foetuses were aborted nationwide as sex determination spread to other government 
hospitals. In other words, the INGOs were 
fully aware of what they were promoting.

Census data reveals a troubling decline 
in the child sex ratio over the decades, with 
a particularly sharp fall after the 1970s. In 
1951, the ratio stoot ad ±943 grifs per 1,000 
boys, close to the natural sex ratio of about 
950. The ratio decreased to 94 in 1961, 390 
in 1971, and 934 in 1981, By 1991, it had further dropped to 927. Notably, the most sig-

in 1971, and 934 in 1981. By 1991, it had fur-ther dropped to 927. Notably, the most sig-nificant decline occurred in 1971, closely co-inciding with the introduction of

sex-determination technologies and amnio-centesis tests in India during the late 1960s Incidentally, these INGOs also funded the im-port of ultrasound machines to India. Studies reveal that states with easier ac-

Studies reveal that states with easier ac-cess to sex-determination tests saw sharper declines in the female-to-male ratio By 2001, early adopters like Punjab and Haryana expe-rienced drastic drops in their child sex ratios — Punjab to 876 and Haryana to 861. Both states are close to Delhi, the headquarters of these INGOs. According to a 2006 study by Jha et al., published in The Lancet, the intro-duction of prenatal sex-determination tech-nologies led tran estimated 10 million missnologies led to an estimated 10 million mis ing female births in India over two decades The study noted that between 1980 and 2010, an average of 5,00,000 female foctuses

2010, an average of 5,00,000 female foetuses were aborted annually.

The female foeticide often blamed on traditional Indian values can be traced directly to colonial policies, later weaponsied by INCO advocacy. This is not to deny the existence of traditional biases but to highlight that large-scale foeticide resulted from deliberate actions by agencies that now lament the issue. Gender imbalance in India is just one example of how external agencies, even when they have good intentions, can cause lasting harm. Therefore, local policymakers must exercise caution and scepticism when considering advice from INCOs and consultancies.

Debroy is Chairman, Sanyal is Member and Sinha is OSD, Research, Economic Advisory Council to the Prime Minister. Views are personal

### LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### CONGRESS'S MISSTEPS

CONGRESS'S MISSTEPS

THIS REFERST Ot the article, Reading the
Haryana wind' (IE, October 9), It lays out
some key factors that could be attributed
to the stunning defeat of Congress visi-avis BJP in the just concluded Haryana
Assembly elections. While B is Hooda,
former CM and master crafter of the
Congress party's electoral strategy, must
own up to his sole responsibility for putting up such a dismal performance at the
hustings by banking solely on Jat and
farmers' votes, the BJP did quite astutely
manage to garner a whole lot of non-Jast
votes in its favour. Another key area of
concern-ould be the "sidelining" by him
of Kuman's Egls, the party's incumbent of Kumari Selja, the party's incumbent MP and a worthy vote catcher from the reserved category. No wonder the BJP had the last laugh.

SK Gupta, via email

THIS REFERS TO the article. 'Reading the THIS REFERS TO the article, 'Reading the Haryana wind' (IE, October 9). The Haryana Elections delivered a surprising result with the BJP winning 48 seasons against 40 in the present assembly. BJP's promises of a corruption-free govern-ment, along with the central govern-ment's outreach efforts, ensured that the 'Brand Modi' appeal remained intact. While the BJP managed its internal con-flicts effectively, the Congress seemed to struggle with factionalism. Former CM Bhupinder Singh Hooda dominated the party's ticket distribution, favouring his loyalists over more deserving candidates. Also, the Congress's overemphasis on national issues, like the caste census and economic dispartites, failed to attract Hayana's electorate, who were more focused on local concerns. National Thetoric and large-scale policy debates, while important, do not necessarily translate into votes in state elections.

Sanjay Chopra, Mohali

### GOVERNANCE IN I&K

THIS REFERS TO the article, 'The victor's task' (IE, October 9). The decisive victory ITIS SEPEIS I UTIE article, ITIN VICTORY

THE SEPTIS I THE ARTICLE, ITIN VICTORY

Of the National Conference-Congress allance marks a new beginning for the Union Territory, Cetting a chance to have their say in the Assembly elections after 10 years, the voters have chosen stability over a fractured mandate. Now begins the real test for the winning alliance and the Centre — how to negotiate the handover and exercise of power. Equally important is building trust, and the onus for it so not he leaders. A confrontational start would amount to sheer disrespect of the people's verdict. The NC-Congress aliance must recognise the altered reality. There is no room for mistakes. The restoration of statehood may be a legitimate demand, but it must look beyond the rhetoric and workfor social cohesion and economic prosperity.

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THE GOAN & THE



Following the light of the sun, we left the Old World. Christopher Columbus

# Lessons to learn for Congress in Haryana debacle

he BJP literally had the last laugh in Haryana by upsetting the mathematics of Congress and the pollsters. A win here was crucial because the Congress was attempting to resur rect itself from the dungeons and counter the onslaught of the saffron brigade bolstered by the 99-seat tally at the Lok Sabha election. However, the defeat for Congress in Haryana and a below-par score in J&K only meant that the party had gone into reverse gear once again. The BJP has not only secured a record third term but managed its best-ever performance in Kashmir signalling a dramatic turnaround.

Nobody expected the BJP to win. Not the Congress, the pollsters, or for that matter, even the analysts. The odds were against the BJP in Haryana because of the simmering discontent built up with sections of people and farmers and the wrestling community stacking against them. However, the Congress had a bigger set of problems. Difference es between the state unit of the Congress and the central leadership, as well as the various issues and rifts within state factions that were visible during the campaign trail. The old and new faces narrative

The Haryana loss means that the Congress will lose its bargaining power when it comes to Maharashtra where it is in talks with Shiv Sena (UBT) and Sharad Pawar's NCP-SP alliance, even as AAP has announced that it will not consider an alliance in Delhi

continued to dodge the party, and, sadly, the grand old party did not learn lessons from Chhattisgarh and Madhya Pradesh last year. Factionalism and internal divisions continue to hurt the party across States. Goa had its fair share of such internal party rivalries, which now appear to have been ironed out in large measure.

At a time when the Congress had a foothold in the INDIA Bloc with Rahul Gandhi emerging as a unanimous choice of leadership, the defeat came as a jolt. The

BJP may have failed to open its account in the Kashmir valley but it succeeded in maintaining its stronghold in the Jammu region, winning its individual best 29 seats - and emerging with the largest vote share of 25.5 per cent overall.

The setback in Haryana puts the goodwill of both Congress and Gandhis on a slippery slope again. The immediate criticism thrown by allies amplifies that. On Wednesday Shiv Sena (UBT) questioned the party over its decision to go alone in Haryana, while Trinamool Congress accused it of "arrogance and entitlement". The entire focus of the Harvana debacle has shifted to Congress and its decision-making as Shiv Sena (UBT) lauded the BJP for its "systematic

The Haryana loss means that the Congress will lose its bargaining power when it comes to Maharashtra where it is in talks with Shiv Sena (UBT) and Sharad Pawar's NCP-SP alliance, even as AAP has announced that it will not consider an alliance in Delhi.

Congress, on the other hand, has been alleging manipulation of the electronic voting machines to rig the results, with party spokesperson Jairam Ramesh mentioning that the results go against the ground reality. Time and again when results have gone against, EVMs have been made the target with the party refusing to acknowledge its failings. In politics, especially in the Opposition space, this happens all the time. It's time the Congress steers away from finding faults with the results and introspects on the party internals before going to polls in States like Maharashtra and Delhi.

There are lessons for the Congress in Goa too from the Haryana debacle. Overconfidence can have disastrous consequences in the political arena

### OPEN SPACE >>

### Lightning strikes a warning against construction on hills

against construction on mills

ightning reportedly struck a turret of the 460-year-old Holy Spirit Church
in Margao, causing some stones to fall onto the courtyard below damaguring a scooter in the process. Luckly no one was injured. However damage
was done to the formidable façade of the baroque-style church. Lightning also
struck a building at Mangor Hill in Vasco damaging it partially and a house at
Bogmalo. Be that as it may, it needs to be noted that tall trees are normally found
in front of churches in order to attract lightning towards it and away from the
metal bell in the belfry. One of the primary reasons occonut trees are effective
in mitigating lightning striss is their high moisture content. This high moisture
content acts as a natural conductor, allowing the lightning to pass through the
tee and into the ground without causing significant damage to the surrounding
structures. In Goa trees are being cut rampantly to make way for tall buildings
Hence high-ribe buildings will always be susceptible to lightning strikes. This
sprobably nature's way to warn against construction activities at great heights by
indulging in hill-cutting and chopping down trees.

\*\*DELMO FERNANDES, VASCO

# Wakeup call for Congress in Maharashtra?

The party has to strike the right seat-sharing deal with Uddhav Thackeray in Mumbai and Konkan and with Sharad Pawar in western Maharashtra



senior journalist who has worked for 31 years in Mumbai and Pune

ROHIT CHANDAVARKAR

he unexpected results seen in the Haryana Assembly polls have surprised politicians and political observers all over the country. Most exit polls broadcast by national news channels a couple of days ago predicted that the Congress party would win and form the government in the state.

Now it seems that the Bharatiya Janala Party has an oder and will continue.

Now it seems that the Bharatiya Janata Party has an edge and will continue
to rule the state for a third ferm.
This means that after Gujarat and
Madhya Pradesh, the BJP has found
a third state in India which has defied
anti-incumbency and chosen the same
party to form the government.
The big question now being asked is,
how the political parties in Maharashtra, especially the Maha Vikas Aghadi
(MVA) of which the Congress is a part,
will be affected by this development?
Ever since the Lok Sabha poll results
came out in the first week of June, the
Congress in Maharashtra has looked
and felt very confident. The party started getting aggressive not just with the

and felt very confident. The party started getting aggressive not just with the
ruling government but also with its alliance partners in the field.
The body language of the leaders of
the Congress started looking different
in the past four months. In Maharashtra both the political alliances, the MVA
and the BJP-led Mahayuti, are currently
going through the process of deciding
the seat-sharing formula for the upcoming Assembly poils.

the seat-sharing formula for the upcoming Assembly polls.

The Congress was beginning to take an aggressive posture in these talks with its partners Shiv Sena (UBT) and NCP (SCP) in the talks.

The leaders were looking as if they had almost taken it for granted that they would be winning the upcoming Assembly polls. Now suddenly with Haryana results out and the Congress getting a setback there, all this is expected to change.

pected to change, Uddhav Thackeray's Shiv Sena (UBT) has been constantly demanding that the MVA should announce the face of



Some observers say the problem with the Congress party is that it has very good leaders at the top and voter base, but it now lacks a widespread party cadre



the probable chief minister from the

the probable chief minister from the MVA alliance in advance. Barring the 2019 Assembly election (where the BJP announced that Devendra Fadnavis would be their CM candidate if they returned to power), Maharashtra has never seen a tradition of any party or alliance announcing their "CM candidate" in advance but the Shiv Sena (UBT) has insisted that this should be done.

The Congress has opposed this idea

that this should be done.

The Congress has opposed this idea
as they feel that once a face is announced by a particular party in advance it discourages activists of other
parties from the alliance from participating in the election campaign aggressloply.

ipating in the election campaign ag-gressively.

Now looking at the fact that the Congress party has not been able to win the Haryana polls decisively, Shiv Sena (UBT) has once again started pushing for the demand of announc-ing the CM candidate from Tuesday

evening.

The Haryana results are also likely to put the Congress on the defensive over seat-sharing talks with the Shiv over seat-sharing talks with the Shiv Sena (UBT) especially in Mumbai and Mumbai Metropolitan Region (MMR). It is now well known that seat-sharing in Mumbai city and suburbs has not been easy between the Congress and Uddhav Thackeray's party. Congress feels that it was dominating Mumbai and ruled the Brihan-Mumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) before the 1980s when Shiv Sena took over the reins in the BMC.

In fact the Congress and Shiv Sena have been bitter rivals for decades in Mumbai. Now with Congress Josing Mumbai. Now with Congress Iosing

Mumbai. Now with Congress losing Haryana both parties may be looking at the seat-sharing deal for Mumbai from a different perspective.

Some Congress party insiders said that the party's strategies may have gone wrong in many ways in Haryana. The way some leaders were given too much prominence, the way seats were distributed to candidates from a particular lobby, the way two prominent leaders of the party from Haryana were not given a big enough role; all these factors went against the party according to them.

The question is whether these mistakes will be avoided in Maharashtra. Some from the Congress party feel that in Maharashtra the party has to strike the right seat-sharing deal with Some Congress party insiders said

that in Maharashtra the party has to strike the right seat-sharing deal with Uddhav Thackeray in Mumbai and Konkan and with Sharad Pawar in Western Maharashtra. These two regions themselves ac-count for more than 100 seats out of the 288 seats of the Maharashtra As-

sembly.

sembly.

Some observers say the problem with the Congress party is that it has very good leaders at the top and a committed voter base, but it now lacks

a widespread party cadre.

The grassroots Congress worker has somehow moved away from the party and either joined some other party such as Sharad Pawar's NCP, or has

left politics.

The challenge for the top leader The challenge for the top leader-ship of the Congress at the Centre and in the state is to revive that grassroot campaigning activity and commit-ment among the activists which has been on the decline for the past few years. Whether that will happen ef-fectively is not known but one thing is obvious that the Haryana trends and results have been a wakeup call for the Congress party in Maharashtra. -FP!

### THE INBOX >>

### Has caste system become entrenched in jails too?

entrenched in jails too?

Maharashtra, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh, Mest Bengal, Odisha, Kerala, Kamataka, Odisha and Himachal Pradesh still operate on the basis of caste. The country is celebrating freedom, but in this golden age, the country seems to be lagging behind in terms of casteism. A criminal is a criminal, irrespective of his caste or religion, he is a criminal in the eyes of the law, when he goes to jail. It is based on caste that the prison administrations in the earlier mentioned states treat such criminals on the basis of caste, is this not an open violation of the right to equality under Article 14 of the Constitution of india? is it right to assign such prisoners to traditional cleaning or other work based on their caste just because they are born in a lower caste? The caste discrimination observed in the society is now "being" observed inside the prisons among those with criminal tendencies. Even though the golden age of indian freedom has dawned, the caste system has not left the prison towers.

DATAPARASAD SHIRONARA, Mumbal has not left the prison towers.

DATTAPRASAD SHIRODKAR, Mumbai

### College can't ignore safety concerns over decaying tree

concerns over decaying tree

A rapidly decaying banyan tree in the
parking tot of Chowgule College is on
the verge of collapse, posing a significant threat to the safety of students,
visitors, and nearby residents. The tree,
which could fall at any moment, is a
potential disaster waiting to happen.
Immediate action is required, as the
area is regularly frequented by young
children, students, and college visitors.
A nearby family sent a formal letter and
email to the principal of the college,
warning about the dangers posed by
the dead tree. In the same communication, the family also drew attention to
a three-metre section of the college's
parking lot wall that is leaning dangerously. Frustrated by the inaction, local
residents escalated their concerns to
the South Goa Disaster Management

### Don't entertain those stoking communal flames

Don't entertain those stoking communal flames
When one thinks Goa Chief Minister Pramod Sawant cannot get
any lower, he proves us wrong with the recent statements where
he tried to draw similar comparisons between Subhash Velingkar
and Fr Bolmax. The court reply in Subhash Velingkar anticipatory
bail brought to rest that no parallels should be drawn between
the 2 cases and Fr Bolmax statements included that Shivali was
a national hero and we need to honour and respect Shivaji; and
his statements did not insult or attempt to insult any religion.
One would expect the CM to act maturely particularly in such
kind of cases. Also while I appreciate and respect the good
efforts/intentions of some non-Goans towards Goa in various
aspects, here are some non-Goans in Goa who are well known
in constantly trying to stoke communal flames; as now being
recently done in this case of St Francis Xavier. I request Goans inrespective of religious backgrounds to please not entertain these
troublemakers and Goa CM to please take tough action against
them on an urgent basis. them on an urgent basis.

ARWIN MESQUITA, Colva

Authority, While inspections were carried out promptly, the compound wall collapsed onto the road before any official orders could be issued by the Collector. Thankfully, the collapse occurred at 2:30 am, when no one was present. However, residents now fear that the Banyan tree may not be as forgiving as the wall. The failure of Chowgule College to respond to these dangers has left the community deeply concerned, anxiously awaiting action before a tragedy occurs.

ABIGAIL BARRETTO. Via email before a tragedy occurs.

ABIGAIL BARRETTO, Via email

### No one has right to hurt religious sentiments

It has been a trend to viliate the atmosphere on the basis of religion, whenever the situation demands. Though the motives are unclear, it is quite disgusting that people resort to these things. The recent Velingkar's controversial religious remarks hurt sentiments due to his media statements criticising. St Francis Xavier, the patron saint of the state. Obviously, this is shameful and upsetting and tragic. Freedom of expression does not mean freedom to insult, belittle or sneer. Ensuring



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peace and harmony in the country and communities is the most sacred duty of every citizen of this country that they should maintain peace and harmony and ensure that their acts do not instiand ensure that their acts do not insti-gate and promote communal hatred or ill-will. The conduct of the Velingkar was an attempt to disturb the communal harmony of the Goa by trying to create a rift between the communities. It is necessary that people do not spread messages that would hurt religious sentiments. The ideals of justice, liberty, equality and fraternity in the Preamble are relevant and meaningful because are relevant and meaningful because these ideals promote a common feeling of brotherhood. One should be careful while issuing statements. Remarks should not hurt the sentiments of any particular segment of the society KG VILOP, Chorao

### New cop strategies needed to arrest rise in thefts

To arrest rise in therts
Goa is now becoming a hub of theft and
crimes. In last two months we saw daylight robberies and theft in temples, flats
and shops. The daylight robbery by fake
policeman asking ladies to give their
gold ornaments by warning of risk of robbery and innocent ladies give their ornaments and the person flees on bike with
wrong number plate. Another jewellery
shop burglary in North Goa was carried
out at midnight and ornaments valued
worth lakhs of rupees were robbed. Goa
is facing day as well as night robberworth lakhs of rupees were robbed. Goa is facing day as well as night robberies with gangs of thieves involved in the acts having easy access to konkan Railway. Inspite of CCIV cameras, the thieves wear masks and helmets to hide their identities and decamp with orna-ments and sell them outside the state for cash then spent in casinos. Night patrolling should be increased by cops in ordinary cars. Surveillance and CCIV should be with use of hidden cameras so that the same cannot be damaged. With increase in such thefts it's time to be vigilant at all times and protect citizens from increase in theft. zens from increase in thefts. RAJU RAMAMMURTHY, Vasco