



Identity card

Politics over tribal and religious identities at core of Jharkhand polls

With campaigning for the Jharkhand election in its final leg, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and the ruling INC-DIA bloc led by the Jharkhand Mukti Morcha (JMM), are locked in a debate on the State's Adivasi identity. The BJP's sharp focus has been on the rhetoric of "Bangladeshi infiltration", which it is linking not only to the State's demographic changes but also to crimes against tribal women, land alienation, and what some Adivasi communities perceive as a gradual dilution of their indigenous cultural practices. The party accuses the JMM-Congress-RJD alliance of encouraging "infiltrators" to bolster the alliance's voter base. This campaign has been running alongside the BJP's efforts to stress the importance of unity among SC, ST and OBC groups using the messaging of "ek hai to safe hai (safe when united)", suggesting that the BJP's campaign is targeted at having a coalition with more place for Adivasis alongside the party's existing base of non-Adivasi Hindu voters. Amidst the blitz of campaign speeches by the BJP's star campaigners, the ruling alliance's campaign led by Chief Minister Hemant Soren and his wife Kalpana Soren, has squarely put the onus of checking alleged "infiltrators" on the Centre, without explicitly negating the claim of the BJP. The INDIA campaign also tries to drive home the point that as Jharkhand has no international borders, the onus of checking alleged infiltrators should be on the Union, where the BJP is in power.

Another central theme in the INDIA bloc's campaign strategy has been the promise of implementing land registries as they had been surveyed in 1932 for the purpose of determining domicile. But the JMM and its allies are careful here too, as Jharkhand has had a history of settlement with migration from neighbouring States in waves ever since. Some senior BJP leaders have suggested a National Register of Citizens in the State, though the party does not mention this in its manifesto. The BJP is talking up charges of corruption that sent leaders such as Mr. Soren and the Congress's Alamgir Alam to jail. The JMM has been questioning the announcement of the election in the State a month before the term of the current Assembly ends, calling it as a BJP ploy to disrupt the welfare schemes of the Soren government. While the BJP is going all out to attack the popularity of these schemes by questioning their implementation at the end of the alliance government's term, its manifesto has tried to outdo the JMM's in terms of sops being promised for the youth, women and farmers in the State.

A resounding victory

The JVP now can unify Sri Lanka with a progressive economic agenda

It is an unambiguous and resounding mandate for the Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP)-led National People's Power (NPP), a coalition that includes civil society groups and trade unions, in Sri Lanka's just-concluded parliamentary election. The election has demonstrated the NPP's growing appeal among all sections, who had in 2022, frustrated with economic hardships and the old political establishment, thrown out what they despised as a corrupt regime. Having elected JVP chief Anura Kumara Dissanayake as the country's President in September, the people have now provided the ruling alliance with a hard-to-get over two-thirds majority. The NPP, which has secured 141 seats, with around 6.87 million votes in 196 seats, bagged 18 more seats under the system of proportional representation, giving it 159 seats in total in the 225-member legislature. The NPP has accomplished what former President Mahinda Rajapaksa could not get in the 2010 poll after the LTTE's defeat.

The significance of the poll also lies in the extent and geographic span of the NPP's victory. It has been a remarkable show in Jaffna and Vanni in the Northern Province, that is home to Tamils and the stronghold of the Illankai Tamil Arasu Kadchi. Except for Batticaloa, the NPP emerged the top party in the east, with its sizeable population of Muslims, and in the Central Province's Nuwara Eliya district, with its majority hill-country Tamils. In its vote share, island-wide, the coalition outperformed Mr. Dissanayake, who touched the 50% mark only in four electoral districts in the September poll. The rise of the coalition, from three seats with 3.84% vote share in 2020, to a super majority now, is remarkable. The political calculations of Mr. Dissanayake, who called for a poll within days of assuming office, have paid off, as the Opposition did not put up a fight. Though Sajith Premadasa's Samagi Jana Balawegaya remains the principal Opposition party in Parliament, its vote share has dropped considerably. The parties backed by two former Presidents, Ranil Wickremesinghe and Mr. Rajapaksa, have performed miserably. While voters have spared Mr. Dissanayake the compulsion of seeking allies to pursue his reform agenda, he should still consult all sections. His promises at the time of the presidential poll, such as the abolition of executive presidency, a new Constitution, and the repeal of oppressive laws, cannot be fulfilled merely with support in the legislature. The big takeaway from the November 14 poll is that the country has voted for decisive change that it sought from the time of the citizen's uprising in 2022. Mr. Dissanayake, at the commencement of his innings, described the unity of Sinhalese, Tamils, Muslims, and all Sri Lankans as the bedrock of the new beginning. He can now build on this unity.

The M.A.O. College, established by Sir Syed in 1877, as also its outgrowth, the Aligarh Muslim University has been the finest constructive manifestation of Muslim educational and cultural activity after 1857. The Supreme Court of India in *S. Azeez Basha* (1967), without even giving the university an opportunity of being heard, had declared it to be an institution that was neither established nor administered by Muslims. The seven-judge Bench judgment in the Aligarh Muslim University (AMU) case (2024) is in tune with the series of liberal and progressive decisions on minority rights by the top court in the last 75 years with the only aberration being *Azeez Basha* (1967), now comprehensively overruled. But to say that the judgment is a 4:3 one may not be correct as on certain points one finds unanimity on the Bench. Even though dissenting judges such as in the 1967 judgment attached much importance to the statutory provisions of the Aligarh Muslim University Act, they were of the view that merely looking at the incorporating statute is not the appropriate test to determine the minority character of a university.

Dissent was not really dissent

The AMU judgment 2024 is unique where dissents were not really dissents in the broad interpretation of Article 30 of the Constitution – in terms of it extending protection to universities, pre-constitutional-era institutions, and non-waiver of fundamental rights. Interestingly, Justice Dipankar Datta himself admitted that he was in a minority within minority as despite his substantial agreement with 'thoughts and conclusions' with the two dissenting judges, his views too differed with theirs. Accordingly, on the issue of the validity of the 1981 reference to seven judges, the judgment is 4:3. But on the validity of the 2019 reference, the judgment is 6:1. Therefore, the former Chief Justice of India (CJI) D.Y. Chandrachud-led bench had a valid reference to answer. He may not have any quarrel with Justice Datta's appreciation of pre-Independence-era judges including CJI K.N. Wanchoo, who was an ICS officer, but the Constitution cannot remain a living and transformative document if earlier judgments of a positivist era are not overruled. The Supreme Court is not bound by its earlier judgments. Its jurisprudence improved when it overruled formalistic interpretations of 'procedure established by law' of A.K. Gopalan (1950) in *Maneka Gandhi* (1978). Similarly, K.S. Puttaswamy (2017), saw the eight-judge Bench judgment in *M.P. Sharma* (1954) being overruled to declare the right to privacy as a fundamental right. There is a long list of such overruled decisions.

Even on the indicia to determine minority character, there was broad agreement among the seven judges, including Justice Datta, that broader criterion is to be preferred with a flexible framework and a holistic approach. There is



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In the Aligarh Muslim University (AMU) case, the test that the claim of minority character must rest on an exclusive or near exclusive communal character of the institution is not a good sign

unanimity in the judgments that minorities must prove 'intent to administer'. Justice D.Y. Chandrachud observed that the 'right to administer' is the consequence of establishment. To do otherwise, would amount to converting a consequence to a pre-condition. He was simply following the ratio of *Basha* (1967); that if a minority has established an institution, it would get the consequential right to administer.

Judicial discipline has been rightly given prominence by the dissenting judges. But then, in deciding the contours of administration, how can they go beyond the 11-judge Bench judgment in *T.M.A. Pai Foundation* (2002) that limited it to selection of students, fixation of fee, choosing of governing bodies and right to discipline employees? The nine-judge Bench in *Xaviers* (1974) explicitly observed that 'under the guise of exclusive right of management, minorities cannot decline to follow the general pattern. In *Kerala Education Bill* (1958), the Court had held that the dominant word in Article 30 is 'choice'. *Xaviers* (1974) reiterated this choice, both in establishment as well as administration.

Focus on the incorporating Act

Dissenting judges attached much importance to the incorporating Act. But then, Justice M.H. Beg in *Xaviers* (1974) was categorical that "if the object of an enactment is to compel a minority institution, even indirectly, to give up the exercise of its fundamental rights, the provisions which have this effect will be void or inoperative against the minority institution". Similarly, the CJI was right that mere acknowledgment of the founder's name in itself in the statute cannot be the determining factor. In fact, if the 'overriding governmental control' test of dissenting judges is applied on their own examples of institutions, it would become clear that in comparison to AMU, they have much tighter governmental control, including the power to dissolve such minority universities. India's courts have been permitting governmental regulations to maintain efficiency and standards and not as a yardstick to determine minority character. Greater governmental control is basically allowed in the interests of non-minorities who receive education in such minority institutions and those who are affected by the administrative decisions of minority management.

Surprisingly, Justice Datta, who alone held both the references as *non est* or invalid, in an unprecedented manner, not only answered the reference but also decided the matter himself by applying the indicia given by the majority as well as minority judges leaving nothing for the three judges' Bench. This was also after observing in paragraph 13 that "It is foregone conclusion that history would be rewritten and declaration of Aligarh Muslim University by this court as a minority educational institution is only a matter of time". If he himself was correct in applying the indicia and reached a definite conclusion, why

was he so sure that a three-judge Bench would reach a different finding? A reference Bench generally avoids pre-judging the outcome of a matter by the regular Bench.

The dissenting judges also emphasised the test of minority dominance to such an extent that a minority university cannot get minority character just because being a university, it accepted its governance structure being similar to that of other universities. The test that the claim of minority character must rest on exclusive or near exclusive communal character of the institution is not a good sign. Universities are different from religious institutions and the expectation of liberal institutions of secular education to indulge in ghettoisation is contrary to the vision of Article 30.

Where there was erring

Justice Datta's view that ₹30 lakh was not raised for establishing the AMU is factually incorrect. There is a letter dated August 9, 1912 from Harcourt Butler, Member of the Governor-General in the Council, making this a condition precedent for the incorporation of the university. Justice Datta has overlooked some crucial clauses of the dissolution provision which retained the continuity with the M.A.O. College. The AMU inherited all debts, liabilities, privileges and rights of M.A.O. College. Since Justice Datta himself has accepted M.A.O. College as a minority institution, in terms of Section 4, the AMU automatically inherited its character.

Where the majority went wrong was on the question of the minority surrendering its right to administer because the apex court in *Basheshwar Nath* (1959) had held that a waiver of fundamental rights is constitutionally impermissible. Dissenting judge Justice S.C. Sharma himself ruled out the possibility of such surrender. In the context of Article 30, Justices Y.V. Chandrachud and K.K. Mathew were of the opinion, in *Xaviers* (1974), that these rights cannot either be 'bartered or surrendered'.

In no other case on Article 30 has the Supreme Court done this kind of minute scrutiny as in the AMU cases – in 1968 and 2024. The former CJI has rightly held that a minority institution too can be an 'institution of national importance' because minorities are an integral part of the nation and may establish great institutions. Sir Anthony Patrick MacDonnell, Lt. Governor of the North West Province and Oudh in 1896, rightly predicted the future character of M.A.O. College when he said, "It is not too much to hope that this College will grow into the Mahomedan University of the future; that this place will become the Cordova of the East, and that in these clusters Mahomedan genius will discover, and under the protection of the British Crown, work out that social, religious and political regeneration, of which neither Stamboul, nor Mecca, afford a prospect." The AMU has lived up to this expectation.

India needs a globally recognised public policy school

Why is it that the world's largest democracy has yet to produce a world-class public policy institution? The United States and Europe boast of institutions such as the John F. Kennedy School of Government (Harvard Kennedy School) and the London School of Economics which train leaders who shape not only national but global governance. Yet, India, with its complex democratic structure and urgent developmental challenges, sends its finest to be trained abroad. This is not for lack of policy schools – India has many – but it has to do with the structure of India's political and institutional landscape.

The executive has the reins

Public policy institutions thrive only when they influence power and decision-making. However, in India, there are limited access points for public policy commentators, academics, and civil society groups to influence policy. This is because much of the decision-making power is vested in the executive and operationalised primarily through the political elite, government officials and bureaucrats rather than through a deliberative legislative process. The oversight role of the legislature over the executive too is limited, leading to a fundamentally different policy ecosystem than in other major democracies.

In the U.S., Congress' power to craft legislation independently of the executive creates space for a thriving policy ecosystem based on analysis, debate, and expertise, with each public representative providing a possible entry point into the deliberative process. This decentralised process sustains a vibrant ecosystem of policy schools, think tanks, and advocacy groups, that can secure funding and find paying clients because their analysis and expertise can meaningfully influence lawmaking.

But in India, the centralisation of power within the executive – and of party leadership within political parties – diminishes the influence of these groups unless they have access to top leadership and are aligned with their political



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The structure of India's political and institutional landscape is why there is no such school till now

priorities. The weak formalisation of the Indian state further creates a disconnect between politics and policy, relegating policy discourse to a downstream role rather than making it a constituent of the larger political platform. Consequently policy professionals lack the top-tier influence of other countries.

The power factor and where the wind blows

Further, influence on decision-making is closely tied to who is in power. The executive's ability to realign the public sphere when power changes hands is more extreme in India than in more institutionalised democracies. This creates fragility in public life, where those central to decision-making can find themselves sidelined when regimes change. In more institutionalised democracies, think tanks, media and civil society groups can maintain relative influence regardless of who is in power, which helps stabilise the policy ecosystem.

These factors are unique to India among other large democracies and demand a different approach to policy education. To create a top-tier public policy school in India, we must design an institution suited to our political reality – where power is informal, personalised, and heavily dependent on executive control. Such an institution must serve dual purposes: first, equipping students with both traditional policy expertise and an understanding of India's unique power dynamics; and second, facilitating a more stable policy ecosystem.

Unlike western policy schools that focus on formal institutions and assume straightforward paths to influence, an Indian institution must teach students to navigate a complex web of informal networks, regional power structures, and social dynamics. The curriculum must go beyond traditional policy education to map how power actually works – through relationships, caste hierarchies, regional elites, and grassroots movements. Students need to learn not just policy theory but also how to be effective in a system where power is opaque and unevenly

distributed, where idealism must meet pragmatism and the ability to adapt to local conditions to create real change.

Most importantly, to truly train development leaders who want to do good for their country, the school must select for, and cultivate, empathy for the people of our country. Too often, empathy for the lived reality of people's lives is overlooked and leads to top-down dictates that can wreak havoc in people's lives.

The need for space

Finally, the current situation where political legitimacy and influence are tied too closely to the executive leads to sycophancy, opportunism and instability. A school focused on nation-building must thus facilitate a broad institutional space in which legitimacy and influence would be based on the depth and the quality of public interventions instead of proximity to power. At its deep end, this would require a series of structural reforms in our politics and governance, but a foundation could be built through diverse partnerships and the identification of nation-builders across the political spectrum and sectors. Such a network cutting across politics, bureaucracy, civil society, academia, think tanks, and media would provide depth as well as opportunities for influence and collaboration across all regimes.

By creating this non-partisan, yet politically aware, space, the institution could nurture development professionals who maintain relevance despite regime changes. This would create more stable channels for policy input, improving the quality of public debate and governance in India.

It is this dual role that would allow the school and its graduates to influence power instead of operating at lower levels. Such an institution would set an example for other developing nations and gain global prominence by demonstrating that effective policy education must arise from local realities rather than mirror western models

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

An assuring verdict

The Supreme Court of India's verdict delegitimising the barbaric practice of bulldozing homes in an arbitrary manner will hopefully also demolish the king-sized egos and the bulldozer mindsets of not

only arrogant rulers but also the bureaucrats involved in the execution of such orders.

The verdict will go a long way in restoring the faith of the public in the rule of law, especially among religious minority groups who seem

to be the worst hit. **M. Jameel Ahmed, Mysuru**

Safety and medical staff

As a member of the medical profession, one cannot reiterate the need for ensuring the safety of

medical staff. All people, and this includes the media, need to condemn all forms of heinous crimes without giving space for excuses such as 'fit of rage', 'mental agony' or 'extreme passion'.

Dr. B. Sadanarayan, Moodbidri, Karnataka

Drug menace

It is distressing to read and hear/watch reports everyday about the arrest of people with narcotics. The problem seems to be growing day after day. The punishment being awarded is inadequate for such slow

poisoning. There needs to be stringent punishment for such evil. State governments and courts of law need to end a menace that is destroying people and the younger generation. **S. Thayappan, Chennai**

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[OUR TAKE]

Breathless in
the CapitalDelhi's pollution woes call for urgent,
collaborative action from all stakeholders

The two photographs of the Lotus Temple on the front page of this newspaper on Friday, one a clear shot taken in May and the other on a hazy November morning, painted a stark portrait of just how far Delhi has descended into its annual pollution abyss. For the third consecutive day, the city's two million residents awoke to a day of "severe" pollution, as calm winds and the arrival of winter amplified a familiar nightmare: A thick, choking haze of smog blanketing the city, laced with the acrid tang of pollution. At Thursday 4pm, the air quality index (AQI) recorded 424.

The tragedy is that this is an annual feature. And we already know what fuels this crisis, what damage it inflicts, and what could be done to curb it. Yet, every winter, Delhi endures the same pattern: Citizens struggle for breath and government agencies fumble. Those entrusted with addressing the crisis continue to shrug off responsibility, deflecting blame onto everyone else. The science, however, has always been clear. The local and external sources of Delhi's pollution are well-documented; experts even understand the exact proportions each source contributes to the toxic mix, a fact that should, theoretically, enable targeted interventions. But, the mounting scientific evidence only helps to underscore how inefficient the system has been in tackling the crisis. Year after year, the same players in government either remain passive or scapegoat one another, unwilling to act decisively.

Consider the case of stubble burning, a known villain in this saga. Courts have stepped in with stringent orders. Yet in fields across Punjab and Haryana, smoke continues to billow. In recent days, the contribution of stubble burning to Delhi's pollution levels has surged from 17% to 30%. On Thursday, data from Punjab revealed that nearly half of the state's paddy fields remain unharvested, signalling that the peak season for these farm fires — and the pollution they bring — is still ahead. The plight of farmers, who feel compelled to clear their fields swiftly for the next crop, is understandable. Many lack the resources to invest in stubble management machinery. This is where State intervention could make a meaningful difference — through rental schemes, subsidies, or other support systems to encourage alternatives to burning.

The fact is the government in Delhi has privileged political gamesmanship over meaningful engagement with neighbouring states. Effective solutions demand cross-border collaboration; administrators cannot afford to work in silos. Transparent, cooperative dialogue across state lines could yield more comprehensive anti-pollution strategies if only the political leadership is willing to take that step. To be sure, Delhi's geography also compounds its troubles, which makes proactive administration essential. It took two days of "severe" air for the Commission for Air Quality Management (CAQM) to enforce stage 3 of the Graded Response Action Plan (Grap) in the city, which is counter-intuitive to its primary mission — to act preemptively before air emergencies arise, not after. Delayed interventions only prolong the damage.

To truly protect its people, Delhi must abandon piecemeal emergency responses and adopt a science-driven, proactive approach. Partisan political posturing has no place in a crisis of this magnitude. Instead, leaders need to work collectively, anticipate air quality threats, put public health before politics, and plan for the welfare of the city's residents.

Trump's triumph
and the revival of
America's creed

The meaning of Donald Trump's return to the White House is that America is beginning to confront the jagged question of our time — can the West remain "the West"?

The triumphant return of Donald Trump brings to mind the saying that "once in an accident, twice is a pattern". But what is the pattern to notice here? To the losing side, the outcome reveals only the faults of others — apparently, Trump won by appealing to the worst instincts of the American people. But if the American people really are "garbage", as President Biden put it, then why did they vote for the Democrats for much of the past two decades? The conclusive nature of Trump's victory indicates a broader "shift". His ranks are swelling because of a pervasive sentiment that something has gone deeply wrong in America. The fundamental worry is that public authority is not being used as it should — to maintain personal liberty and uphold public order.

Liberty is a cherished human value because free thought, voluntary association, and private enterprise allow human beings to take responsibility for their lives. Hence, we only want the authorities to interfere with our freedom when there is wide consensus that this is necessary. But consider some of the more controversial ways that Democrats have recently employed public authority. In California, for instance, the law empowers teachers to keep from parents a child's decision to change their gender identity.

What makes such a use of public authority alarming is not that it tries to protect or support vulnerable individuals, which is a perfectly reasonable objective, but how it does so. On the basis of still-controversial theories about gender, it brings public authority to bear on the intensely private, indeed sacred, relationship

between a parent and child. It is hard to imagine a policy better calculated to alarm a populace famous for its attachment to "family values".

If public authority has been used too freely in some cases, in other instances it has been used too little. Consider some of the miseries that afflict America — crime, drug abuse, gang warfare, illegal immigration, and violent demonstrations. In these matters, where public authority ought to be employed vigorously, to police and punish wrongdoers, the Democrats suddenly evince a profound regard for individual liberty. Where does this leave citizens who abide by the law only to watch others — shoplifters in San Francisco and arsonists in Portland, for instance — go unpunished? It is not that Republicans have an enviable track record on matters of law and order; they do not, especially on gun violence and drug abuse. But they do have the bare virtue of being able to call a crime a crime. A border wall, for instance, may prove ineffective, but it is a slight better than Democrat-run "sanctuary cities" that use tax dollars to house and feed illegal immigrants, including those with criminal records.

The long and short of it then is that in some important respects, Democrats have governed America backwards: Where they ought not to meddle, they have; where they ought to show mettle, they have not. This is what Trump wants to change. But the Democrats have done cannot be easily

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Rahul Sagar



To produce lasting change, Trump will need to refashion American society — to change the mentality of the country at large

undone, because of how widely America's political system disperses power. Consider, for example, the mass deportations that Trump has promised. Such a policy will impose heavy costs, both moral and economic, when non-citizens are treated brutally and citizens see supply chains break down. It will also be fiercely opposed by Democrats who control large states and have powerful allies in media and civil society. The ensuing turmoil may lead the average voter to see Trump as the one abusing public authority.

This means that if Trump wants to create lasting change rather than mere disruption, he will need to refashion American society — to change the mentality of the country at large. Indeed, this has always been the ultimate objective of Trumpism: To revive the American "creed" or the values that reigned in the era when the United States rose to greatness. This creed is under pressure on two fronts. A sizeable portion of the country has come to doubt the nobility of America's past. To them, its foundational values have been corrosive for social and economic development. It will not be easy for a polarising figure like Trump to persuade them otherwise. A free society can only be inspired, not forced, to change its mind. Such inspiration cannot be conjured up and it tends to dissipate at the least sign of bad faith. The other factor weighing on the American

creed is the demographic effect of immigration. Because the American creed rests on culture rather than race or ethnicity, it has the great virtue of being transmittable. But it is one thing to receive migrants from near cultures when fertility is high and quite another to receive them from distant places when fertility is low. The former raises the hope of assimilation, the latter creates a fear of inundation. This is because the culture of a people and a place owes much to having elements like language, religion, and history in common. No one of these elements is indispensable, but the less they are shared, the less certain the footing of that culture becomes. The implication is that the vitality of the American creed depends not a little on the willingness of Americans to reproduce more. But this is something that even the most powerful man in the world may not be able to convince them to do.

In sum, the meaning of Trump's return is that America is beginning to confront the jagged question of our time: Can the West remain "the West"? Different people will see the endeavour differently — as noble, quixotic or dangerous. What we can agree upon is that history is about to be made.

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Kumar: The Tragedy of India
The views expressed are personal

Blind men ignorant about
the ways of the elephant

An old Indian parable describes the experience of blind men who touched an elephant for the first time. One man caught the trunk and described a snake, the second touched the ears and described a fan, another touched the legs and described a tree trunk, the one who touched a body described a wall and the tail was described as a rope by the last man. The adage holds true even today as we are still perceiving elephants in parts but not the whole.

As some communities see elephants as living Gods, farmers who lose their year's crop overnight to elephants see elephants as pests. While protected area managers take pride in growing elephant populations, managers of reserve forests or revenue land see them as a problem that needs to be driven from one area to the other. Ecologists see their vital role in the ecosystem but fail to understand the complex relationships that elephants have with human society and the increasingly changing landscape. To secure the future of this iconic species — less than 50,000 of which remain in the wild today — the world looks up to India, home to more than 60% of the species sharing space with 17% of the world's population in less than 3% of the global land area.

Recently, 10 elephants succumbed in Bandhavgarh tiger reserve, Madhya Pradesh. As per a toxicology report from the Indian Veterinary

Research Institute, Bareilly, the elephants consumed "a large quantity of kodo plants/grains", which was also found to be the cause of death. This unexplained underlying questions for conservation and management. While on one hand,

elephants are ecosystem engineers that maintain natural systems, they are also responsible for substantial crop losses, faced by people who are often already marginalised. Requiring vast stretches of habitats that can provide 150kg of wild fodder and 80 litres of fresh water to a single adult individual, elephants are hardwired to move long distances. As these habitats become increasingly fragmented due to expanding human footprint, elephants and people meet more often, thereby increasing the probability of adverse interactions, particularly with marginalised people. Agriculture practices that do not account for local ecology often pit farmers against elephants as crops vital for local food security such as paddy, maize, and millets, being part of the grass family, are also staples for elephants. Further, mining in mineral-rich areas (such as parts of Central India) displaces peopled. Elephants have recently moved back to Central India and are now permanently residing there after a period of several decades. Going for-

ward, several approaches have to be considered simultaneously.

First, crop compensation schemes have to be operationalised. In Madhya Pradesh, schemes exist but lack effective implementation. Second, innovations need to be made to reduce crop loss. What the elephant considers food, a person considers a thief. Joint approaches between the forest department, NGOs and the agriculture department can be adopted to promote crops that do not attract elephants in forest-adjacent villages like Bandhavgarh. Such a policy could have potentially saved the lives of the elephants

that died in Bandhavgarh and could have also saved marginalised farmers from yearly losses to raids by wild herbivores. Third, harmful weeds and invasive species have to be removed from areas with elephants to augment habitat. Fourth, we can strengthen coexistence through progressive means like a small cess from tourism revenue. As per state data, only five major protected areas in Madhya Pradesh witnessed as many as 6.3 lakh tourists in 2023. A small cess of ₹100 for human-wildlife coexistence from this tourist revenue could cover the annual cost of compensation for livestock loss and human casualties, which stood at an annual average of ₹34.3 crore between 2014 and 2019, as per the 2022 report of the Comptroller and Auditor General of India, Madhya Pradesh on Wildlife Conservation and Sustainable Management of Wildlife Habitats.

In the Bandhavgarh instance, it is unclear how much time the elephants spent in the millet fields. A similar case of poisoning through lo-

millets was recorded in Vannathiparai, Tamil Nadu, in 1933 (recorded in the Journal of Bombay Natural History Society in 1934). The viscera from the Bandhavgarh elephants have been sent to more labs for testing. While the ultimate cause of death is still to be ascertained, it is abundantly clear that the way forward includes communities and stakeholders working together in the landscape.

Finally, with no lived experience of sharing space with elephants in Central India among the local communities and wildlife managers (the last records of resident elephants in this region are from the 1900s) it is imperative to work fast and make the region conducive for elephants. Fair and prompt compensation for crop losses, early warning and rapid response mechanisms to prevent the loss of human lives, and overpasses and underpasses next to highways and railway lines to ensure free movement of elephants, are just some of the approaches that may work. Efficient delivery of these services would also need increasing cross-sectoral collaborations between government departments and greater involvement of the society at large. Surveillance systems and ground monitoring of elephants must be related to local people.

While the last remaining wild elephants still find solace in the forests of India and the hearts of Indians, the writing on the wall is that all is not well for these giants, or for communities that share space with them. The reoccupation of Central India forests by elephants presents us with an opportunity — to plan well, and to find synergies between state and non-State actors to secure the future of the species.

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Aritra Kshetry



Neha Sinha

Ram Narayan and the
sarangi's many moods

India lost one of its last sarangi giants with the passing of Pandit Ram Narayan at the age of 96. He was the most passionate advocate of this string instrument that has gone through challenging cultural topographies in the historical landscape of Indian classical music. He was blessed with gifted hands on the sarangi and an articulate tongue in telling its story and those of the crosses its previous masters had to bear. Ram Narayan often used to recollect how giants like Ustad Bade Ghulam Ali Khan and Ustad Amir Khan had to give up playing the instrument to pursue the greener pastures of vocal music. He, too, learnt vocal music but decided to continue on his sarangi odyssey.



Gopalakrishnan

Gaan Maharishi Krishnarao Shankar Pandit validate his argument showcasing some of the best sarangi accompaniments but sans the deserved time or space. He had accompanied legends including Amir Khan, Bade Ghulam

Ali Khan, Pandit Omkar Nath Thakur, Hirabai Barodekar, and Gangubai Hangal as a staff artist of the All India Radio (AIR) in 1947.

In 1963, Ram Narayan joined the Lakshmi Narayan of AIR. Partition robbed India of an all-time sarangi great, Ustad Bundu Khan, who left for Pakistan, but gained another as Ram Narayan migrated from Lahore to Delhi. Ram Narayan considered two people the greatest in sarangi: Bundu Khan and Ustad Abdul Wahid Khan, whom he considered the real founder of the Kirana gharana. He always lamented the fact that he did not have enough recordings of Bundu Khan, Sabri Khan and Abdul Wahid Khan, and also that most sarangi talents couldn't express themselves innovatively due to the innate positioning of accompanying artists in a vocal concert. Among Carnatic violinists, Dwarani Venkateswamy Naidu became an established soloist, and, fortunately, his music was recorded extensively by the public service broadcaster and private studios.

Ram Narayan was blessed with intelligent humour, and his stories about the place of the harmonium in North Indian music had plenty. Of course, he had a justified grief about the way the harmonium replaced the sarangi on stage, but he logically challenged the harmonium's

inability to express Indian music. He said, "Harmonium is an out-of-tune instrument and it will remain the same in future too. Whosoever sings with it, will suffer for it." He asked if even the sarangi couldn't match Pandit Kumar Gandharva on stage, then what can a harmonium do? Ram Narayan had a stint in Hindi film music, which he particularly didn't relish. However, he will always be remembered for making the sarangi popular in Bollywood. He knew that a western musician such as Yehudi Menuhin or Pablo Casals would understand the value of the bowing, four base strings and 35 sympathetic strings in a sarangi better than his Indian counterparts.

Today, as we mark his passing, I remember his response on being asked why the sarangi was chosen as the music of mourning by the national broadcaster. He replied, "The sarangi encompasses all human moods. It is due to mere illiteracy that the sarangi is understood as music for mourning. The government must think about better ways to deal with ministers' passing."

Gopalakrishnan is a writer, broadcaster, and founder of the podcast, Dilli Dilli. The views expressed are personal

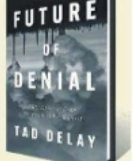
EDITOR'S PICK

HT's editors offer a book recommendation every Saturday, which provides history, context, and helps understand recent news events

THE SHAPE OF CLIMATE DENIALISM

Donald Trump won the US presidential election just days ahead of the ongoing climate summit in Baku, Azerbaijan. Trump is a known climate-sceptic, and there is considerable doubt about the course the US, the world's largest historical greenhouse gas emitter, may take. Climate denialism is, of course, not solely a Trump problem. If we look among world leaders. But it is merely one of rejecting evidence of the crisis unfolding or refusing to see its anthropogenic roots?

Tad Delay, author of *Future of Denial: The Ideologies of Climate Change*, posits that climate denialism takes many forms, some of which we fail to recognise: Pinning climate action responsibility to persons reducing their individual carbon footprints against economy-wide actions, the failure to understand that the space for hydrocarbons in the energy economy has long run out, banking on carbon offsets instead of overall reduction, among others. Some of Delay's polemic militates against the concerns of developing nations, but much of it also rings true for the West. Amid climate talks and an incoming Trump presidency, *Future of Denial* is an essential read.



Future of Denial: Tad Delay
Year: 2024



Opinion

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 16, 2024



GREEN TRANSITION & GROWTH

Union petroleum minister Hardeep S Puri

Balancing the trilemma of availability, affordability, and sustainability is not only a priority but a commitment that we are meeting head-on with a focus on exploration, production, and energy security

Who to tax?

It's premature to shift tax burden to individuals; growth of the middle class must be the priority

IT IS INSTRUCTIVE to note that industry chambers have refrained from demanding another reduction in the rate of corporation tax after it was slashed from 30% to 22% for domestic companies effective FY20. In their wish list for Budget FY26 presented to the revenue secretary recently, the chambers have turned their focus on seeking relief for individuals, rather than for themselves — for instance, they want a lower tax on interest income from bank deposits to align it with taxes on capital gains from equities, where the bulk of the beneficiaries would be individuals rather than firms. The shift in the approach of India Inc stems from the fact that our corporate tax is now at par with or even lower than in the developed countries; for companies with profit before tax higher than ₹500 crore, the effective tax is just around 20%. The average statutory corporate tax rate across 181 jurisdictions stood at 23.45% in 2023, and, when weighted by GDP, at 25.67%. The average top corporate rate among the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries is 23.7%.

Also, the global trend, barring the promise of the US president-elect Donald Trump to cut corporate tax further (and even eliminate personal income tax), is to raise the tax rates on businesses, as was seen in the UK and Turkey recently. Even the low-tax jurisdictions with minimal or nil corporate income tax are embracing the concept of minimum tax of 15% under the OECD's 'Pillar Two' agreement. A lower tax on corporate income hasn't triggered an investment spree as the government expected. This lays bare the fact that corporate investments are less of a function of taxes or interest rates, but influenced predominantly by the aggregate demand in the economy. A further reduction in tax burden on individuals is now being wished by even the large companies because they want consumption demand to pick up. This raises a question mark on the efficacy of the investment-led growth strategy being steadfastly followed by the current government. Unless India's middle class acquires greater purchasing power, demand is bound to remain subdued.

Policies in recent years have engineered a shift of the tax burden away from businesses to individuals. As a result, personal income tax (PIT) is now the largest source of tax revenue (19% of government receipts in FY25BE versus 17% from corporate tax), and is growing at the fastest clip. Year-to-date growth in gross PIT collections (pre-devolution) is 20% against the BE of 13.6%, while corporate tax receipts grow so far in the year is just 6.5% against 12% targeted for the full year. Government functionaries acknowledge the shift was the result of a conscious policy decision, and call it a 'pro-priority' step. According to them, in a country where a large number of people have started investing in the capital market and equities and the tax on capital gains is the most elastic source of revenue, when corporations are taxed at a high rate, the tax incidence moves away from the super-rich and becomes average across all. However, it is too early for India to adopt such a tax policy given that even today, just 30 million people or only 2% of the country's population actually pay tax on income. The priority must be to rapidly increase the number of taxpayers. It will let the tax burden reduce and the tax-GDP ratio go up.

IT'S THE ECONOMY, stupid! This famous mantra, coined by the political strategist James Carville, helped Bill Clinton unseat President George HW Bush in 1992, and now it explains another election. The economy played a critical role in the 2024 presidential race, creating conditions not only for Donald Trump to trounce Kamala Harris, and for the Republicans to gain control of the Senate and the House of Representatives, but possibly also for a counter-elite to usher in a new power structure.

The election's outcome reflected two seemingly opposing views of the economy, both of which are correct. The interaction between them says as much about the basic economics-related strategies of the two political campaigns, good and bad, as it does about the state of expert economic communication in today's America.

The message from voter surveys was unambiguous: The economy was one of the two main issues in this election (the other being illegal immigration). When asked for specifics, many said 'inflation', and if pushed harder, they reported being heavily influenced by what they see as excessively elevated prices, and the lack of any sign that they are coming down.

The Trump campaign masterfully exploited voter dissatisfaction with the cost of living. Following Ronald Reagan's example in 1980, they repeatedly posed variations of the question: 'Are you better off today than you were four years ago?' One reason why Democrats failed to respond is that they were obsessed by another (ironically correct) characterisation of the economy. The Harris campaign emphasised America's 'economic exceptionalism', echoing a point that many professional economists have been making. The Democrats

MOHAMED A EL-ERIAN

President, Queens' College, University of Cambridge, and professor, Wharton School, University of Pennsylvania

pointed to robust US growth, which has outpaced the rest of the G7, and to recent gains in real wages, owing to the decline in the inflation rate. And, of course, there have been multiple record highs in the stock market.

But this approach signalled to many voters that the Democrats simply did not understand what was going on, that they are fundamentally disconnected from pocketbook realities on the ground. On some occasions, they even came across as being full of hubris.

After all, a 'K-shaped economy' means that improvements associated with robust growth are not evenly shared. Some sectors and households prosper; others struggle. Among those struggling the most are very-low-income households that have exhausted their pandemic savings, maxed out their credit cards, have no financial buffers, and, therefore, live with an unsettling degree of economic insecurity.

Michael Spence, the Nobel laureate economist, put it well at a recent lecture at the University of Cambridge's Judge Business School. Pointing to data illustrating the financial fragility of the bottom half of the income distribution, he noted that such households hearing about economic exceptionalism from the traditional media may have one or more of the fol-

lowing reactions: 'the media doesn't know what it is talking about'; 'the media is biased'; or 'the media is not to be trusted'. From these starting points, one can easily arrive at a belief that whoever is talking about the economy doing well simply doesn't understand or represent one's interests.

The Democrats also lost control of the narrative on inflation. It did little good to tell people that the rate of price increases, while still positive, had fallen sharply from its 2022 high, when their concerns were with the overall price level.

The cumulative effect of inflation has added to their cost of living and thus reduced their quality of life. Similarly, record-breaking equity-market runs mean little to households that own few, if any, stocks. Meanwhile, a housing-price boom is far from a blessing for those seeking to buy their first home.

But the issue is not just how each party communicated to voters. The traditional expert economic consensus also has proved wanting, at least in its inability to describe clearly and widely the interaction between these two views. Mainstream economists also stood little chance of changing voters' minds about the other big issue in this election: immigration.

By bolstering the US economy's sup-

IT HELPED TRUMP'S WIN AND ALLOWED A COUNTER-ELITE TO USHER IN A NEW POWER STRUCTURE

It was the economy, stupid

Insurance must regain consumer trust



SRINATH SRIDHARAN

Policy researcher and corporate advisor
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IN RECENT YEARS, Indian insurance leaders have faced a tough task when talking about 'industry growth drivers' and 'consumer trust'. For some, it has turned into little more than lip service, detached from the consumers' real challenges and insurance potential. While the industry speaks of lofty goals, the hard truth is that Indian insurance remains far from realising its potential. Despite regulatory ideas to increase penetration — from opening up 100% foreign direct investment (FDI) to reducing capital requirements for new insurers — the industry has seemingly lost sight of a core need: consumer trust.

Insurance penetration in India stood at just 4.2%. The Indian insurance sector is also heavily skewed toward life insurance, which accounts for 76% of total premiums, compared to a global average of 43.7% with non-life insurance forming 56.3% of the market.

Consumer trust is foundational to insurance sector, yet recent surveys suggest many Indians would not even recommend their insurer to a friend. This lack of advocacy reflects an industry that appears self-serving, with talent often shifting between companies but rarely moving towards customer-centred reform. The primary focus has instead been on metrics and the same pool of industry insiders. True security in insurance lies not in policies or profits alone, but in the trust earned by placing consumers at the heart of every decision.

Looking back, certain lobbies sought to keep FDI capped at 49%, benefiting from fixed internal rate of return (IRR) deals that many foreign 'partners' had signed to access India. These arrangements effectively

meant foreign brands renting local support to gain legitimacy. When FDI range restrictions changed, many hoped for improvements in products and service. But ownership alone doesn't address underlying issues. What the sector truly needs is patient capital, committed to at least 10-12 years of strategic investment. Instead, there's a focus on rapidly building a profitable book and diluting stakes for higher valuations. This behaviour — enabled by a lenient regulatory stance — prioritises short-term gains over consumer interest and product quality.

While regulatory shifts have been taking place, they have often felt incremental, lacking the boldness to elevate the sector to a level comparable even to India's other financial regulators. Changes have come, but they feel held back by a culture of hesitancy. Why? The answer may lie in a reluctance to engage in deeper reforms that prioritise consumer welfare over industry growth metrics. The answer would further be found in the rigour of regulatory supervision over the industry.

For example, claims processes in Indian insurance is another pain point. While fraud prevention is essential, the current approach burdens honest consumers with an adversarial system where each claim feels like a battle. The overarching ideology seems to assume guilt, requiring consumers to prove themselves at every step. This might be rooted in real fraud concerns, but such a

Financial sectors in India have seen regulatory action against malpractices, but insurance appears insulated from such scrutiny. It calls for tougher regulatory stance

blanket approach creates a deeply hostile environment for policyholders. In general insurance claims as well, policyholders often express concerns about settlement times and the final amount. No amount of digital innovation or streamlined processing will fix this if the underlying attitude remains distrustful. Insurance is unique as a sector where consumers rely on absolute trust, given that the benefits of policies are often realised only in difficult times — after a loss of life, health, or property. Unfortunately, a gap seems to exist in meeting this essential expectation. Despite the industry's attempts to dazzle with buzzwords like 'consumer engagement', 'distribution reach', and 'digital access', these efforts ring hollow.

Financial regulators like the Reserve Bank of India, the Securities and Exchange Board of India, and the Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India should work together to curb malpractices like mis-selling of financial products across industry segments. Without regulatory accountability, the consumer is left vulnerable, with little recourse in a legal and grievance redress system known for inefficiency and delay.

Take health insurance, a prime example of the sector's brokenness. It seems an open stakeholder conversation that hospital bills are often inflated, purportedly hand in glove with the sector, with insurers only partially covering costs, claiming fraud concerns. Yet the lack of regulatory

action on this speaks volumes. A simple yet radical change would be to mandate 'full settlement' within a stipulated period, forcing insurers to pay out fully and promptly unless they can prove otherwise. This would shift the burden from consumer to insurer, creating a system where the regulatory position is to honour rather than deny claims.

Regrettably, the insurance industry's influence is akin to regulatory capture, often muting any true accountability. While other financial sectors have seen regulatory action against malpractices, insurance appears insulated from such scrutiny. This calls for stricter supervision and a tougher regulatory stance. The regulatory vision of 'insurance for all' by 2047 to match the political aspiration of Viksit Bharat is well-intentioned, yet setting a distant goal without clear, annual milestones is more tactic than true strategy. With most industry leaders and regulators unlikely to hold their positions by then, this approach lacks immediate accountability. The insurance sector needs overhaul, not just superficial changes.

Indian insurance needs genuine introspection and a shift in behaviour, where consumer welfare becomes the core purpose of its existence. The regulator must reinvent itself to adopt a 'consumer-first' and 'digital-first' approach, to cut through the sector's hubris and living accountability. Without reform, the industry risks remaining in its own echo chamber, ignoring the very consumers it claims to serve. Only by stepping out of this cycle can Indian insurance achieve the credibility and relevance it so desperately needs.

have to do the heavy-lifting given. And to top it all, the first statement given by President-elect Donald Trump against clean energy is worrisome.

So, clarity on climate accounting and equities for the most people live to 90. Many Republicans are very excited about DOGE. But its governance structure is undefined and untested. It does not have a natural home or an enduring constituency. It cannot engage in much favour-trading. Its ability to keep Trump's attention and loyalty may be limited. And it's not clear that deregulation is a priority for many voters. In other words: DOGE, and Trump, will have to pick and choose which things to make more efficient. In government, as in economics, there is an equity-efficiency trade-off.

How Musk's DOGE can actually do some good

THE NEWLY ANNOUNCED Department of Governmental Efficiency, to be known by the acronym DOGE (get it?) and headed by billionaire Elon Musk and entrepreneur Vivek Ramaswamy, is evidence that President-elect Donald Trump's administration will at least attempt to deregulate the US economy. All memes aside, this could turn out to be a worthwhile enterprise, deserving of bipartisan support — so long as enough temper their expectations.

The first thing to realise is that it is not possible to eliminate every law, regulation, committee, or agency that deserves to be. The system was set up such that getting rid of anything is a tough legal slog. It is not easy to fire large numbers of bureaucrats, and in any case their pay is a small part of the federal budget. When it comes to reducing red tape, there are bound to be more losses than victories.

So it's important to set priorities. One is that it is easier to keep new sectors of the economy free from regulation than it is to deregulate existing sectors. The US should not impose onerous restrictions on the development of artificial intelligence, for example. With so many state-level bills pending, the federal government should aim for preemption and a light regulatory hand, at least initially.

The government does not have a great track record, to put it mildly, of addressing major problems before they have surfaced. Over time, AI might need more regulation, especially around areas that implicate national security. In the meantime, AI offers the potential for boosting US productivity in many other sectors, from software to health care.

Cryptocurrency is another new sector of the economy, and here the goal of efficiency may require more government involvement rather than less. The Securities and Exchange Commission and the Commodity Futures Trading Commission should give greater regulatory clarity and predictability to crypto, which currently has an unclear legal status. This would keep the US in the forefront of financial innovation and prove popular with the millions of voters who own crypto assets. This is one case where 'deregulation' consists of writing new laws and legal definitions.

Another way to make the government more efficient would be to embrace the YIMBY movement, which aims to make it easier to build more housing in part by reducing government regulation. Not only will this help the economy, but embracing YIMBY would also allow Trump to be bipartisan, as many of the movement's ideas are popular among Democrats. He could even expand the definition of YIMBY to include more freedom to build nuclear, solar, and wind power. That will boost green energy, attract moderate voters, and help sustain the AI revolution.

Another priority should be to deregulate medical trials. America is now in a golden age of medical discovery, with mRNA vaccines, anti-malaria vaccines, GLP-1 weight loss drugs, and new treatments against cancer all showing great promise. AI may bring about still more advances.

Unfortunately, the US system of clinical trials remains a major obstacle to turning all this science into medicine. There are regulations concerning hospital protocols, the design of the trials, FDA requirements, the procedures of universities and institutional review boards, and the handling of data, among other barriers. America can have better and speedier approval procedures without lowering its standards.

Of all the tasks I've outlined, this is by far the most difficult, because it involves changes in so many different kinds of institutions. Yet it has one of the highest possible payoffs, because more treatments might be developed and made available if the clinical trial process weren't so onerous. Reforming clinical trials should also appeal to older Americans, who are especially likely to vote and who think the most about their medical care. The goal should be an over-the-counter most people live to 90. Many Republicans are very excited about DOGE. But its governance structure is undefined and untested. It does not have a natural home or an enduring constituency. It cannot engage in much favour-trading. Its ability to keep Trump's attention and loyalty may be limited. And it's not clear that deregulation is a priority for many voters. In other words: DOGE, and Trump, will have to pick and choose which things to make more efficient. In government, as in economics, there is an equity-efficiency trade-off.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Indo-US dilemma

Apropos of 'India and the US elections' (FE, November 15), the US will be led by Donald Trump, who is self-interested and transactional in his approach, prioritising the 'America First' dictum. Trump may continue the same self-designed strategies without taking stock of geopolitical and economic situations. Specifically, China will sustain rough weather with the US since Trump will renege his

tariff war. India has concerns about Trump's aggressive stance on imposing tariffs on Indian exports to the US, his stringent immigration policy which could affect India's information technology sector through controlling H-1B visas, and his comment that India imposes more tariffs on its import. India should take a stance only after analysing the pros and cons on Trump's move towards trade, technology, and defence. —NR Nagarajan, Sivakasi

The green shift

Apropos of 'Tightrope walk at Baku' (FE, November 15), so far not much of an amount has been collected through the proposed Green Climate Fund. And when we know that only 5% funds will be allocated through grants and as much as 60% through loans, it is this massive sum of loans which is bound to be a huge financial burden on developing and poor nations. So, developed nations will

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GROUND ZERO



A six-month-old elephant calf, part of the herd of 13 that lost 10 members in October, being treated at the Rama Elephant Camp of the Bandhavgarh Tiger Reserve in Madhya Pradesh. A.M. FARUQUI

A jumbo crisis in Madhya Pradesh

Ten elephants died at the Bandhavgarh Tiger Reserve between October 29 and 31. Lab reports found that they had eaten large quantities of fungus-infected Kodo millet, which had caused acute toxicity. **Mehul Malpani** reports on the tragic incident in a State that is struggling to deal with its increasing jumbo population

It was business as usual at the Bandhavgarh Tiger Reserve (BTR) in Madhya Pradesh on the morning of October 29. All the officers were headed to the BTR headquarters at Umaria for a review meeting. Some had already gone home for Diwali, while some were to leave in the next two days.

Arpit Mairal, the forest range officer of Pataur range, was running late for the meeting. On his way, at around 11 a.m., he got a call from the beat guard of Salkhaniya village, who told him that a herd of 13 wild elephants was behaving strangely.

"The guards and the beat officer had spotted the elephants some 200 metres away. They told me that four of them were lying on the ground and not moving, while some were sitting or standing in unusual positions," says Mairal. Elephants do not usually lie down or sit for long as they find it difficult to get back on their feet.

Mairal immediately drove for an hour and a half to the spot on the border of the Pataur and Khitauli core ranges near Salkhaniya. He and some guards found 10 elephants lying on the forest floor in a radius of 100-150 m.

Mairal called the Bandhavgarh Deputy Director, Prakash Kumar Verma. He asked Verma to cancel the meeting and rush to the spot with all the rangers and sub-divisional officers (SDOs).

"Four elephants were dead. Six were barely moving — they were flapping their ears or moving their tails slowly," he recalls, as he prepares a detailed report sought by the Union Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change.

Mairal says Verma despatched all the officials to the spot and stayed back at the headquarters to call veterinarians from other national parks and from Umaria. BTR's lone wildlife vet, Dr. Nitin Gupta, who was on his way to Jabalpur for personal reasons, rushed back to the reserve.

By 5 p.m., there were 150-200 guards, rangers, senior officials, and private and government vets, apart from a few heavy machines, tractors, and medical equipment at the spot. When it became dark, the two halogen lights installed for treatment proved insufficient. The officials positioned 10-12 cars in a half circle and used the vehicle lights. They also made small trenches and lit a fire to keep away other wild elephants.

For the next 36 hours, the spot turned into a makeshift hospital. However, despite their best efforts, four elephants died on October 30 and the remaining two passed away the next day. A post-mortem was conducted at the same spot and the pachyderms were buried nearby. During the burial, other elephants turned up, stood at a distance, trumpeted, and flapped their ears.

A crop that can kill

The death of the 10 elephants — nine female and one male — brought the BTR into the national limelight. Multiple teams of Central and State agencies visited the reserve for investigation. Chief Minister Mohan Yadav sent a three-member high-level team to Bandhavgarh. The State government suspended the Chief Conservator of Forests and Field Director as well as an SDO for negligence. Earlier this week, the Central government sent the Director General of Forests and Special Secretary in the Environment Ministry to Bhopal to report on the incident and the measures taken on elephant management.

The post-mortem report stated that the ele-

After the elephant deaths, the forest officials ploughed many fields where Kodo had been grown.

RAJPAL SINGH GOND
Farmer

phants died after eating Kodo millet. Forensic examinations confirmed this. A toxicology report from the Indian Council of Agricultural Research's Indian Veterinary Research Institute (IVRI), Bareilly, said that a high concentration of cyclopirozinic acid was detected in multiple organs of each elephant and that the animals might have consumed a large quantity of Kodo plant/grains. A report from the School of Wildlife Forensic And Health (SWFH), Jabalpur, found acute toxicity in the vital organs of the animals. The BTR management also sent samples of Kodo crop and seeds to the International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-arid Tropics, Hyderabad, which found extremely high contents of cyclopirozinic acid in the crop samples, a source says.

Meanwhile, test results from the State Forensic Science Laboratory, Sagor, ruled out poisoning from pesticide, insecticide, or any other chemical. Allegations that the jumbos were killed by poachers were also found to be baseless.

On November 12, the National Green Tribunal issued notices to the Union Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare; the Wildlife Institute of India; IVRI, Bareilly; the Principal Chief Conservator of Forests and Chief Wildlife Warden, Madhya Pradesh; and the Umaria Collector into the deaths of the animals and the connection with Kodo.

Days after the 10 elephants died, a wild elephant killed two men and critically injured one. This led to concerns about a serious human-animal conflict in the region. Officials at BTR suspect, based on the description of the elephant and the location of the two deaths, that a male elephant, aged 10-12 years, captured after the killings, is from the same herd of 13. While another fully grown adult male remains untraced, a six-month-old calf of the herd was rescued in a distressed condition about a week later in Katni, about 80 km from the spot where the rest died. It is now at BTR's Rama Elephant Camp.

A perfect storm

Known as a 'wild cereal', Kodo has been grown in India for centuries, but was largely limited to forests and tribal regions. As it is high in protein and fibre, Kodo has now become popular among people with lifestyle diseases. Kodo, once sold

for about ₹40-50 per kilogramme in local farmers' markets in Madhya Pradesh, is now priced at ₹90-120 per kg.

Bandhavgarh Deputy Director Verma says Kodo used to be grown on small patches of land. Now, farmers have started cultivating it on a large scale for commercial purposes.

The farm where the elephants ate Kodo belonged to Manoj Kumar from Salkhaniya. Verma says Kumar and two or three other farmers had grown Kodo in about 10 acres of land that was on the boundary of the core zone and the village.

Dr. A.B. Shrivastava, founder-director of SWFH, Jabalpur, who has been roped in to help at BTR, says symptoms of Kodo toxicity can be easily detected and treatment given for both animals and people. But in BTR, symptoms could not be detected and help provided in time because the animals were in the wild. They had eaten nearly 8 acres of Kodo, say officials.

Dr. Shrivastava highlights the need for a study on the health impacts of Kodo so that there is a designed treatment in place. "Right now, we only give treatment to animals based on the symptoms they display. Treatment includes fluid therapy with IV drips and other fluids to dilute Kodo, as well as multivitamins," he says.

There is also limited research available on Kodo and more specifically, its relation with elephants. A 1983 research paper says, "Farmers believe that Kodo millet is poisonous after rain. It is known to produce unconsciousness or delirium with violent tremors of the voluntary muscles. There are reports that elephants have died from eating Kodo millet..."

A 2023 research paper titled 'Potential Risk of Cyclopirozinic Acid Toxicity in Koda Poisoning', says, "Although millet is cultivated in dry and semi-arid regions, sometimes environmental conditions like spring and summer strike as being suitable for a certain kind of poisoning which leads to greater economic crop loss." It adds that such conditions make millets more susceptible to fungal infections, especially from ergot fungi. The infection produces cyclopirozinic acid.

Dr. Shrivastava explains that such climatic conditions are rare, but are mostly seen in October when the sun is bright, the crop is ready for harvesting, and the region receives heavy rainfall. In the BTR case, high contents of fungus were also found in the harvested crop that was kept in bundles in the farm where the elephants ate.

A struggle in the wild

The eastern forests of Madhya Pradesh have always had elephants as visitors. In November 2018, a batch of 41 elephants arrived at BTR from Chhattisgarh and stayed. Within a year, they bred two calves. Since then, three forests in Madhya Pradesh — BTR, the Sanjay Dubri National Park in Sidhi, and the Kanha National Park in Mandla — have received multiple batches of elephants, mainly from Chhattisgarh and Odisha. The estimated jumbo population is 150. Bandhavgarh alone is home to 65-70 elephants, Mairal says.

But the State does not have the resources to deal with this increasing population. Forest guards, tasked with tracking the movements of animals such as tigers and elephants, are not pro-



I think the 13 elephants were part of a larger herd of 32. When the others returned and saw the scenes during the post-mortem, they began to roar loudly.

PUSHPENDRA DWIVEDI
Former honorary wildlife warden of Umaria

vided with tranquilisers or vehicles to protect themselves in case of an attack. Gyaan Singh, a forest guard, survived an attack by a tiger in 2014. "The animal left me alive simply because it wanted to. I had no way of saving myself," he says.

Chhullu Singh, a fellow guard posted closest to the spot where the 10 elephants died, carries an axe and rides a bicycle. He says the door and the windows of their quarters were broken by an elephant three years ago. "I wrote to senior officials many times but nothing has happened," he says.

Verma says the department started building elephant-proof trenches around these quarters last year but is yet to cover all of them.

The tragedies show various other lapses on the part of the BTR management and at the policy level. "We don't have a training team to work with wild elephants, especially orphans, when we rescue them," says Verma. "We don't know how to rehabilitate them. We need special enclosures to keep elephants which come away from their herd. We also need them to treat elephants that get hurt." These facilities are available in Chhattisgarh. Talks are on with the Madhya Pradesh government to work on these aspects, he says.

The State government is also sending officials to Tamil Nadu and Karnataka, which have large elephant populations. They are expected to gain exposure on best practices on elephant management. The first batch is leaving on Sunday.

The government plans to use satellite collars on one or two members of a herd to track movements. Verma says a proposal to use thermal imaging to locate the animals easily is also being discussed. Another official at BTR says this can also be used to alert villagers about the movements of elephants. If these measures work, the forest department can use trap cameras to identify individual elephants, Verma contends.

Officials also admit that one or two of the elephants could have been saved if another doctor had been available. Dr. Gupta, the only vet at Bandhavgarh, recalls the events of October 29-31 as being "extremely stressful".

"I was running around giving instructions to all the other vets we had brought in. Local vets mostly deal with domestic animals and don't have expertise in dealing with wild animals," he says. "It is difficult to give an injection or a drip to an elephant as it keeps moving and could hurt people. In such cases, we have to sometimes give liquid medicines through the animal's rectum."

Dr. Gupta says there is no permanent facility at BTR to treat animals and that he always travels to the spot to do his job. The new Field Director, Anupam Sahay, says the forest department is considering providing an assistant to Dr. Gupta, who has been with BTR for about 15 years.

Madhya Pradesh Additional Principal Chief Conservator of Forest-Wildlife, L. Krishnamoorthy, says there is no separate budget for elephants in the State. Two years ago, Project Elephant was merged with Project Tiger in Madhya Pradesh. "As part of this, we get funding from both the Central and State governments," he says.

'They were family'

Meanwhile, locals are concerned that the human-animal conflict could become worse. Nine WhatsApp groups, one for each range of BTR, have suddenly become active. The groups have village heads, members of Hathi Mitra Dal (a designated group in each village to create awareness about elephants), local beat officers, rangers, and the Deputy Director as members. They receive messages every hour from people asking about elephant movements, and provide updates.

There is a tense silence in Salkhaniya village, about 1.5 km from the farm where elephants ate Kodo. Manoj Kumar's house is locked.

A farmer, Rajpal Singh Gond, is one of the few who is willing to talk. "After the elephant deaths, the forest officials ploughed many fields where Kodo had been grown. Farmers were not even allowed to harvest and store the yield," he says. "Nobody here will talk against the forest department as we have to rely on them for compensation in case of crop damage by animals."

Sahay says Kodo had been cultivated in about 1,500 acres of land within the boundaries of BTR and more than half had been harvested. For the unharvested crop, farmers were given the option of handing over their yield to the forest department and getting compensated. Some agreed.

"Kodo in itself is not harmful, but at the moment we don't have a way of identifying the fungus-infected crop. So, we considered all Kodo as harmful in the current circumstances," he says.

Elsewhere, there is sorrow. Pushpendra Dwivedi, former honorary wildlife warden of Umaria, recalls the distress of other elephants during the post-mortem. "I think the 13 elephants were part of a larger herd of 32. They must have split up in search of food. When the others returned and saw the scenes during the post-mortem, they began to roar loudly. We had to use sirens and other noises to keep them away and continue the examination," he says.

After the incident, patrolling teams have spotted smaller groups of elephants wandering in the forest. "We suspect that they are searching for their herd members. They generally end their search once they find evidence that their herd members are no more," Mairal says.

Most officials say the three days were "traumatic and sad". Brij Kishore Barman, a beat guard with Khitauli range, doubts if anyone celebrated Diwali. "You don't celebrate festivals when someone in your family dies," he says. "Here, we lost 10 of them."



An elephant being treated by veterinarians. It died along with nine others. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

The EDITORIAL PAGE

The Indian EXPRESS

FOUNDED BY

RAMNATH GOENKA

BECAUSE THE TRUTH INVOLVES US ALL

BLUNT INSTRUMENT

Re-imposition of AFSPA in parts of Manipur could aggravate distrust. Centre and state must address political failures

IN THE 19 months since Manipur has been roiled by ethnic conflict, the state government's actions have been restricted to empty rhetoric, blaming outsiders, imposing internet bans and issuing vague promises of dialogue. The Centre's moves to bring the warring communities to the negotiating table too have not inspired confidence. Now, after a fresh spate of violence, the Union Home Ministry has reimposed the Disturbed Area status under the Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA) in six police stations of the state. The area covered under the Act may not be large. However, given the history of opposition to AFSPA in Manipur — and other parts of the Northeast — the move could aggravate the atmosphere of distrust in the state.

Ethnic identities have always played an important role in the socioeconomic life of Manipur — they have influenced landownership patterns and shaped the contours of the state's political faultlines. The latest conflict began with a Meitei demand for ST status and a Kuki-Zomi pushback. The conflict has displaced people from both sides and taken a heavy toll of lives and livelihoods of people. Today, volunteers from both communities reportedly patrol villages as part of "defence committees". More than 5,000 weapons looted during the early months of the conflict remain missing. The police and the army have not been on the same page in how to deal with the warring groups. The problem also is that the state government continues to view the problem from the sole prism of law and order. Its blinkered outlook could compound the difficulties of the Armed Forces in the Northeast, at a time when neighbouring Myanmar and Bangladesh are embroiled in political turmoil.

AFSPA was first imposed in Manipur in 1958 in the Naga-dominated districts of Senapati, Tamenglong and Ukhul. In the 1960s, the Act was extended to the Kuki-Zomi-dominated Churachandpur district. The rest of the state came under its sway in 1979, when groups in the Meitei-dominated Imphal Valley began an armed insurgency. The sweeping powers it provides to the Armed Forces made the Act unpopular. In 2000, activist from Sharmila began a hunger strike against AFSPA that would continue for 16 years. In 2004, the then-UPA government set up a five-member committee under former Supreme Court Justice Jeevan Reddy. The Commission recommended the repeal of AFSPA a year later, describing the Act as "highly undesirable". The Second Administrative Reforms Commission endorsed these recommendations. In recent years, the Centre has been rolling back AFSPA from several parts of the Northeast. As Union Home Minister Amit Shah rightly pointed out in 2021, these moves have been guided by the decline of militancy in the region, fast-tracked by the government's development projects. Manipur, it appears, has been an outlier. Once amongst the most prosperous regions in the Northeast, the state now brings up the rear in most socioeconomic listings. It's imperative, therefore, that the Centre and state government address political and administrative failures, and not resort to blunt measures such as the restoration of AFSPA.

ANOTHER JOB SCAM

Alleged irregularities in job exam in UP will erode public trust. Probe must be conducted and accountability fixed

MINISTERS NEPHEW: The son of the Legislative Council secretariat-in-charge; the son and daughter of the Department of Parliamentary Affairs-in-charge; the son of a Deputy Lokayukta. These are some of the candidates who were selected to fill administrative positions in the Uttar Pradesh Assembly and Legislative Council after at least two rounds of tests in 2020-21. An Indian Express investigation has revealed that a fifth of the 186 vacancies for which approximately 2.5 lakh people had applied went to relatives of officials, with at least five successful candidates connected to owners of the two private firms that had conducted the recruitment test. For young aspirants competing for the security and mobility afforded by a few hundred government jobs, these revelations would be further evidence of the odds being stacked against them.

As the Allahabad High Court observed on September 18, 2023, when hearing a plea by three unsuccessful candidates, the process is "not less than a recruitment scam". The CBI probe it ordered was stayed by the Supreme Court, following an appeal by the Legislative Council, with the next hearing scheduled for January 6, 2025. Delays will add to the anxiety and frustration of the youth, at a time when public trust in education and recruitment exams is already low. Earlier this year, controversies over irregularities in NEET and NET severely dented the credibility of the National Testing Agency, while an investigation by this newspaper in February revealed 41 documented instances of paper leaks in recruitment exams, across 15 states in five years, and affecting 1.4 crore job seekers. These instances, taken together, point to a deeper crisis that needs urgent attention. At a time when jobs that number in the mere hundreds attract lakhs of applications, it is all the more important that a level playing-field is ensured. When the integrity of such a system is compromised, as seen in the NEET-NET episode, it can be extremely dispiriting for young people, who have spent years preparing for an examination that they believe will change their lives for the better.

A probe into these irregularities must be conducted urgently, else the erosion of already diminishing public trust in the system will not be easy to overcome. Consider the protests this week against the Uttar Pradesh Public Service Commission's decision to conduct exams in different shifts and using a normalisation system for evaluation to obviate unfair advantage to candidates at any one shift. Applicants alleged that these complicated procedures would expand the scope for corruption of the process. Of course, the demand-supply mismatch is so large that it is open to constant exploitation. For a country hoping to reap the dividend of a large working-age population, expanding opportunities should be top priority.

FADING STRAINS

With the demise of Pandit Ram Narayan, the sarangi seems to have lost its glory days

WHEN SARANGI GIANT Pandit Ram Narayan, a rare musician who could coax magic out of one of India's oldest bow instruments, passed away last week in Mumbai at 96, the country lost a brilliant musician. The maestro's demise is also a cause for anxiety about the sarangi's future.

There is no doubt that some of the younger artists today — Sabir Khan, Kamal Sahai, Suhail Yousuf Khan and Murali Ali — who play regularly as accompanying musicians in Hindustani classical concerts are giving the sarangi its due and also inspiring others to take up the instrument. But the sarangi has been yielding in concerts to the harmonium — an extremely versatile instrument. Add to that, the difficulty of learning to play the sarangi.

A folk instrument, the sarangi evolved as an important accompaniment to the music of courtesans in the 18th and 19th centuries. The anti-naught movement, which marginalised these singer-performers, also degraded the status of sarangi players. The instrument was resurrected and put on a high pedestal by musicians such as Ram Narayan, Ustad Sultan Khan, and Ustad Sabir Khan. Before them, maestros such as Ustad Abdul Latif Khan and Bundu Khan played important roles in raising the sarangi's stock. It found status as a solo instrument — this status hangs somewhat in the balance after Ram Narayan's demise.

A glimpse into the sarangi's glory days comes to the fore in a grainy video of Abdul Latif Khan — a home *baithak*, where he plays while holding a cigarette and smoking it at regular intervals. After a particularly captivating glide of the instrument's strings, a patron takes bundles of cash and showers them over Khan. Such pomp harkens to an era, long lost. However, it will be tragic if the sound that mimics the human voice at its soulful best is lost.



ABHISHEK SINGHVI

HOW DO YOU judge a Chief Justice of India or, for that matter, any person in high office? The tests must be contextual to the job but, above all, if the overwhelming predominance of any person's work is good, praiseworthy and positive, the fact that he has, fractionally, committed errors, does not deserve a harsh verdict. It only shows that he, like us all, has no claim to divinity or infallibility. When eminent persons, within and without the Bar, use the 10 per cent test to chastise or berate, we not only choose to ignore the 90 per cent glass full but do disservice both to the man and to the institution.

The recently retired CJI, usually referred to by his acronym DYC, firstly did what all judges, including CJIs, are supposed to do, but frequently not. That is the dual activity of judging and writing judgments. Both as a puisne judge and as CJI, DYC has authored more nine, seven, five and three-judge judgments than any of his predecessors in the past two decades. Seminally vital issues were jurisprudentially addressed with high intellectual quality — not by mere numbers alone. They range from the nine-judge *Puttaswamy* privacy judgment to *Common Cause* on the right to die with dignity to *Shafin Jahan* on the right to marry freely to an expansion of abortion rights in *X vs NCT*. From striking down the criminality attached to same-sex consensual sex in *Navtej* to the recognition of queer couples' right to relationships to overruling his father not once but twice while decriminalising adultery and negating the infamous *ADM Jabalpur*, DYC has painted with a broad brush. Federalism issues, from the five-judge decision in the NCT case to the very recent nine-judge decision in *States versus Centre mining rights*, have coexisted with his judgments on religious issues like *Sabarimala* and *Ayodhya* as also the Electoral Bonds case.

Merits apart, to wield the pen (actually the computer) with such dexterity has not been seen since the 1960s and 70s. If judging and writing judgments, and writing them well, is the primary test for a judge (something too easily forgotten), no fair view can say that DYC has not passed it with flying colours. We all

D Y Chandrachud's tenure as CJI was almost without blemish. It should be celebrated, not denigrated

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That he has been able to do it while being on the lecture circuit, speaking across the country on diverse issues, dealing with an ill-administrative and management issues of the Supreme Court is testimony to his unprecedented industry and diligence, reinforced by a lifetime of discipline. It is reflected in his self-confessed musings on being a lark (and not an owl), yoga, alternative medicine, diet restraint of a high order and meditation. It is this humongous industry which has left him leave a mark on so many issues.

Thirdly, no CJI has done so much for infrastructure and technology. Accessibility issues, so much in sync with his passion for facilitation of the differently abled, staff training and exam centres, staff library, a national judicial museum, archives, the beautification of the lawns, the new enclosed spaces with air-conditioning, renovation of courtyards and bar rooms, media enclosures, canteen facilities, the new canteen by the differently abled, all sit majestically with his most important contribution — the institutionalisation of virtual hearings in most courts and tribunals across India, despite resistance. The use of *avast* guard technology and AI has yielded a huge number of translated judgments in Hindi and regional languages, a more efficient national judicial grid linking all courts from the lowest to the highest across India. Again, many of these achievements are statistical, even boring, and are continuous journeys not destinations, but he does shine on all these fronts by contrast.

Fourthly, his conduct of proceedings inside courtrooms has been almost blemishless — no mean achievement amidst strong provocations and the vicissitudes of high-profile cases and sometimes irritating trivialities. He has been polite, courteous and considerate, yet firm and decisive. Hardly any advocate, irrespective of seniority, has gone back

feeling that he/she has not been heard or that his/her point is not appreciated. The presence of such qualities, in earlier eras taken for granted, are now remembered frequently in the breach amidst the pressures of modern day, over-congested judging.

There is no doubt that he could have avoided both the "Patriotism" episode as also the pre-Ayodhya decision comment. It has led to a lot of snide remarks in the last days of an illustrious career. But it would be wrong to ascribe a motivated plan of action to what I think is at best an error of judgement. Contextually, the second comment is understandable, though may not be justifiable, coming as it did amidst small children in his own village's school, who were chatting informally about all and sundry with the illustrious son of their village. The PM episode leaves him open to all kinds of misinterpretations and was best avoided. That DYC continued to explain or justify these episodes in his later retirement-era interviews was a third error of judgement.

Equally blameworthy may be the decision not to decide the Shiv Sena/NCP disqualification cases as also the NCT vs LG constitutional cases. He lists them then and again, never refused to hear them but allowed time to run out under his watch. The NCT example was even more inexplicable because two earlier judgments, both by DYC himself, had decided and clarified the issue in great detail, leading to the new NCT parliamentary amendment by the Modi government. There was no one more familiar with the subject than him in the SC to decide the issue expeditiously.

In the end, I have no hesitation in saying that all these shortcomings fall well within the 10 per cent rule, neither blemishing nor erasing his spectacular achievements and lasting legacy.

The writer is fourth term MP, jurist, former Chair, Parliamentary Standing Committees on Commerce, Law & Home, Member, Congress Working Committee; former Additional Solicitor General; senior National Spokesperson, Congress; Chair, Cong Department on Law, Human Rights & RTI and author



SHUBHRA GUPTA

SOME FILMS BECOME cult for the right reasons. That they were hidden gems, unappreciated for their plots and performances, that they had zeroed in on the high and low notes of the times they were set in. That they were lost in the slew of surrounding films, and "paarth darkshaks in later darkshaks" gathered them up in fervent embrace.

And some films are like *Andaz Apna Apna* (AAA), written and directed by Rajkumar Santosh, starring Aamir Khan and Salman Khan, the two clean-cut legacy star kids who had hit the movies bright at the end of the dreadful '80s and became overnight sensations. Despite its starchy wattage — with Raveena Tandon and Karisma Kapoor playing the female leads, along with a whole bunch of popular comic actors — the film disappeared without having left off any noticeable firecrackers. It's only much later that it was dusted off, and appropriated: Thirty years on (the film released in early November 1994), it is truly baffling why it is such a darling amongst those who worship at its altar.

I watched it again after all those years, and of course it hasn't aged well — it's determinedly mid-quality is even more glaring. It feels like it was assembled as it went along, the way so many Hindi films used to be, back in the day. The lads and lassies, the former in colourful shirts and mullets which switch lengths, continuity be damned, and the latter in bright orange and pink lipsticks and big hair, jump about Ooty's hillsides. The villains show up as and when, in and out of their den.

What struck me most, all over again, was

ANTI-CLASSIST AND CHEERFUL

If there's an ode to silly, it has to be 'Andaz Apna Apna'

This is very much a 1994 film, presenting a time of idealised innocence, teetering on the brink of a just-liberalised India, when two callow gold diggers who had rarely never seen the inside of a gym, and whose six packs were well into the future, could make you believe that they were really after, what else, 'sachcha pyaar'.

its anti-classist cheap-and-cheerful aesthetic. Everyone in the film exists to tell us that regardless of the exigencies of the thing that passes for a plot — heiressees looking for true love, layabouts in search of purpose, lookalikes switching identities, and a bag of diamonds — all will end well. That happiness is just around the corner. And most importantly, nothing matters as much as silliness: If there's an ode to silly, it is *Andaz Apna Apna*. When you can celebrate silliness, life is still worth living.

The '90s was a decade when movies were in recovery mode. Except for a handful of films, with home entertainment having nearly steamrolled theatrical outings, Hindi cinema had sunk from B grade to C. The back-to-back success of two youthful romances — Aamir's *Qayamat: Ki Qayamat Tak* (1988) and Salman's *Akshay Kumar* (1989) — brought the "gen-try" and optimism, back to the movies.

Santosh himself was coming off the success of serious dramas like *Chayal* (1990) and *Damini* (1993), and was looking to make a "light" film: *Andaz Apna Apna* felt like such a 360 degree turnaround that it was hard to believe that it was from the same director who had made movies topline the hard-knocks—hero-and-heroine and their grim struggle to stay afloat.

There is nothing grim about AAA. It spreads its gins. Yes, you can groan, like I did, at the non-stop carousal of lame jokes — Salman revealing an ability to carry a line lightly, even more so than Aamir, even though both played well with each other — but you can't help cracking up in some places. How

else to react when Shakti Kapoor, immortalised as Crime Master Gogo, the nephew of the legendary Mogambo (one of the endless hat-tricks to beloved film characters), leaps out from behind yet another bush, his patently false moustache straggling off a lip? Parsh Raval who may have invented the serio-comic baddie in Bollywood has a double role, and his yearning-for-riches Teja remains a rumpled classic.

I did feel distinctly uncomfortable at Aamir's Amar falling all over Raveena's Raveena in a few songs-and-sequences (almost a precursor to the 1995 *Dilwale Dulhania Le Jayenge* with Shah Rukh Khan doing ditto with Kajol in the back of a Aurai compartment), but again that is a post-facto insight. Thirty years ago, as in the previous decades, heroes and heroines were routinely bracketed in ways which would be considered strictly off-limits these days.

Which is really the thing — this is very much a 1994 film, presenting a time of idealised innocence, teetering on the brink of a just-liberalised India, when two callow gold diggers who had rarely never seen the inside of a gym, and whose six packs were well into the future, could make you believe that they were really after, what else, 'sachcha pyaar'.

Finally, it is all about the candyfloss nostalgia of a bygone era when you could happily wallow in the nonsense surrounding those markers of unserious meme, Mark and Teja. And in the belief that Amar and Prem were forever.

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NOVEMBER 16, 1984, FORTY YEARS AGO

MRS GANDHI'S ASSASSIN

POLICE INVESTIGATORS REPORT that a senior officer ordered the shooting of Indira Gandhi's assassins after their surrender. Surviving assassin Satwant Singh claims guards fired without provocation. This contradicts earlier police statements that the assassins were shot while resisting commands. Evidence shows they were shot in the guard room ten minutes post-surrender.

TERRORISTS ESCAPE

SEVEN TERRORISTS FREED four colleagues from police custody, killing one bus passen-

ger and injuring two police escorts near Faridkot district in Punjab. The incident occurred following the arrest of terrorists who were returning from court to jail. The terrorists also seized ammunition from injured policemen. The freed terrorists were identified as Subhdev Singh and Kulwant Singh. Just four policemen — three constables and one head constable — were put on duty for as many terrorists

TAMIL NADU POLLS

THE TAMIL NADU GOVERNOR, S.L. Khurana, dissolved the State Assembly on the recommendation of the Council of Ministers. The Finance Minister met the governor on

November 14 to convey the Council's decision, seeking a fresh mandate from people for implementing socialist and secular programmes alongside parliamentary elections.

BJP'S VISION

THE BJP'S NATIONAL executive called for "a new policy, new government and new leadership" in the country. In a resolution passed at their concluding session, the party committed to value-based politics, democracy and positive secularism. The resolution emphasised the need for a government that represents the country's diversity and restores the state's moral authority.

THE IDEAS PAGE

My two Indias

The country I was born in will, sadly, not be one in which I will die. I was told to 'go back to Portugal'. This toxicity is symptomatic of mindsets that have grown across families and WhatsApp groups



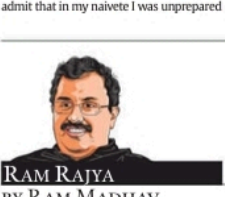
PETER RONALD DESOUSA

THE STORIES OF discussions taking place in Resident Welfare Association (RWA) chat groups, University Alumni gatherings, the Officer's mess, and even in IT WhatsApp groups — where the scientific temper is supposedly pervasive — of members being misled because of their religion and ethnicity, I only half regarded as serious. These to me were passing moments of toxicity. Essential India with its philosophical openness would re-emerge from such cesspools of prejudice. I have now learnt that I am mistaken. The poison has gone very deep. It has entered the groundwater of our national soul.

A few days ago, during an argument, I was told to "go back to Portugal". Not one to take such abuse without a fight I responded and asked my adversary to "go back to Afghanistan". He was outraged. "I'm not from Afghanistan," he roared. "Well, I'm not from Portugal," I said. Two things came together in this brief exchange that are worth thinking about. My name and his outrage. For him I was obviously the outsider and, equally obviously, he was the insider. Both for him were self-evidently true. In this exchange, my argumentativeness faced his righteous anger. He said he was confronting me because I was evil. That we went to school together more than half a century ago did not matter.

I narrate this story because I must honestly admit I was surprised at the vitriol. There was more abuse directed at me but I ignored it. His educational and professional journey seemed to have had little tempering effect on his views, not just as an adult but as a retired senior. What began as a discussion on an Indian festival, soon descended into a toxic spat watched by others who, in their silence, appeared to endorse his views that it was inadmissible for me to talk about things Indian, especially Indian culture. What did I know? And who was I anyway? An Indian on probation? Now I know what Draupadi must have felt in the assembly when she asked the custodians of dharma her question. They did not answer. They remained silent. It is unclear to me if they looked down in embarrassment, but Sanskrit pandits tell me that they did not. Which only makes it worse!

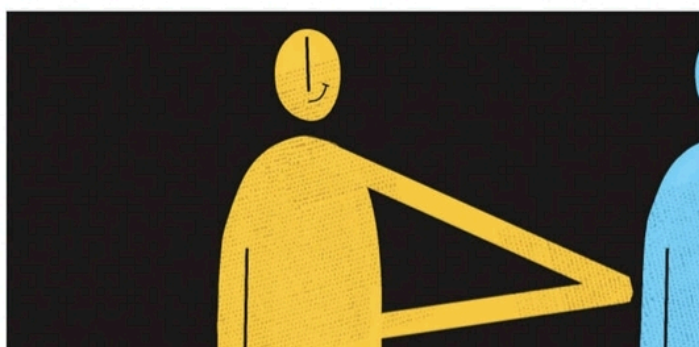
Curiously, we were both defending the same thing, *bharatiya sanskriti*. He was doing it from a worldview constructed after listening to hours of lectures at Hinduva university. An alternative view comes from analysing the exchanges in the Constituent Assembly. When one reads the interventions of illustrious Indians such as Rajkumar Amrit Kaul, K M Munshi, N Gopalaswami Ayyangar, Syama Prasad Mookerjee, Jerome D'Souza, Maulana Azad, S Radhakrishnan, and of course B R Ambedkar, and others, it is clear that in the India they imagined both of us are equally insiders. The word "equally" is crucial here since what was being given to us, when we adopted the Constitution, was equal citizenship. That is under threat today. My story is only a pointer to the challenge ahead. My story is only a pointer to the challenge ahead. My story is only a pointer to the challenge ahead.



BY RAM MADHAV

THERE WAS A futile *tamasha* in the Jammu and Kashmir legislature last week in the name of passing a resolution on the restoration of special status. Without directly referring to Article 370, the resolution demanded the restoration of the "special status and constitutional guarantees, which safeguarded the identity, culture, and rights of the people of Jammu and Kashmir". If anyone harboured doubt as to whether it referred to Articles 370 and 35A, abrogated five years ago, Chief Minister Omar Abdullah laid them out to rest by explaining the "special status" in his maiden address: "We have lost a lot in the last six years. When I was last in this House, we were a State, we had our own Constitution, and our flag. But all of that was taken away from us."

Resolutions of this nature don't have any constitutional validity. Sometimes, they acquire sanctity because they express the solidarity of the nation. On February 22, 1994, both Houses of the Indian Parliament unanimously passed a resolution on J&K demanding that Pakistan must vacate the areas in that state that it occupied "through aggression". It was hailed as the expression of "national resolve". On the contrary, the resolution that the U.T legislature passed on November 6 was a howl of woe. What sanctity would such a resolution have, which was hurriedly pushed through a voice vote amidst strong opposition from the BJP? The resolution can at best be described as the deception by the "Gupkar Group".



C R Sasikumar

for the ferocity of the onslaught. The language of "us vs them" has clearly taken root among educated middle-class Indians.

As I narrate this story, I'm not sure if it is an admission of defeat. As one who has spent more than 40 years as an educationist believing in the promise that we were building rational minds and a rational public sphere, the experience of both vituperation and silence surprised and saddened me. It was as good a laboratory experiment as one can get in the social sciences, all things being constant. Members who were a part of the group were educated in a public school and later in a public university. They worked in secular organisations both national and international. They held club memberships and played the occasional game of golf. They even enjoyed whiskey on the rocks. But views from Hinduva university had begun to dominate their perception of the world.

If my story is unique to me then it need not go any further. But I believe it is symptomatic of the mindsets that have grown not just across the country but also in families and neighbourhoods. My experience the other day dispelled the illusion that I had harboured, as a political scientist, that this toxicity was only temporary, that India's failed hospitality (our welcome to the Parsis and the Jews) was deeper than the surface poison.

And this is where my anxiety lies. I firmly believe (or believed) that the only way to build a strong nation is to make it a nation of people, to nurture its diversity, based on the imagination crafted in the Constituent Assembly. It would not be easy. Ambedkar warned us that we would be entering a world of contradictions. Contradictions are good. They enable new resolutions that can lead to exciting new outcomes. Like our cricket team. This will, however, not happen if the more powerful among us impose their viewpoints on others, maligning them as anti-national. I believe that this demonising that is being encouraged is not the way to build a future India. But maybe I'm wrong.

I see such "poisonous othering" pervading our opinion-forming institutions. In addition to the media, we find this attitude of constructing the "hostile other" being formulated in NCERT textbooks, university curricula, ICHR research projects, and of course,

Curiously, we were both defending the same thing, *'bharatiya sanskriti'*. He was doing it from a worldview constructed after listening to hours of lectures at Hinduva university. An alternative view comes from analysing the exchanges in the Constituent Assembly. When one reads the interventions of illustrious Indians such as Rajkumar Amrit Kaul, K M Munshi, N Gopalaswami Ayyangar, Syama Prasad Mookerjee, Jerome D'Souza, Maulana Azad, S Radhakrishnan, and of course B R Ambedkar, and others, it is clear that in the India they imagined both of us are equally insiders.

WhatsApp groups. Minds are being infected. The "other" is being vilified. Although this has been said many times before, I bring it up again not because of my recent experience but because of the silence of the majority who watched the exchanges as if it were a theatre performance. The silent majority will, through their silence, become colluders in this venomous new India.

This bothers me as a poet. But what bothers me more is the impossibility of this Hindutva project. India, I believe, cannot be built on the idea of majoritarianism, as Hindu supremacy. Its fundamental diversity will break out of this forced and imposed uniformity. Our civilisational history shows this to be the case. It will not permit such uniformity. Astika and Nastika philosophical systems, each with their own warning groups, cannot be reconciled. Nor can the Zaidi school of law in Shia Islam agree with the Hanafi school in Sunni Islam. Even within our small Parsi community, there are grumblings against the rulings of the Parsi panchayat. And even God, I'm told, does not have many times many Christian groups there are in India. The Constituent Assembly recognised such diversity and constructed an institutional and legal edifice to accommodate it. We had embarked upon the greatest experiment in human history, of making a plural nation of equal citizens. It was unparalleled in its ambition. But this has been stalled by Hindutva. It is being dismantled. It appears to be succeeding.

Maybe I am wrong. Maybe it is possible to build a majoritarian nation even in the face of the challenges of modernity. According to the IMF, we are not doing too badly. Hindutva may be able to build a modern, technological, economically successful, and supremacist nation. They will find ways to dance to Diljit Dosanjh's hip-hop while also crushing Valentine's Day celebrations. The majority will be silent. The toxicity has spread. Paraphrasing Ambedkar one thing is certain: The India in which I was born will, sadly, not be the India in which I am going to die.

The writer is an independent scholar and co-editor with Rukmini Bhaya Nair of *Keywords for India: A Conceptual Lexicon for the 21st century*

WHAT THE OTHERS SAY

"[PTI] has seemed quite rudderless and impatient for instant gratification of its demands. Its mercenary support base does not really help. Without discipline from within, the PTI cannot expect to achieve much."

—DAWN, PAKISTAN

What we burn is what pollutes

Acknowledging the true scale and sources of our pollution crisis is the first step toward meaningful action



CHANDRA BHUSHAN

A QUARTER-CENTURY AGO, over 200 scientists from the US, Europe, the Maldives, and India came together to study the heat over the Indian Ocean. Led by atmospheric scientist V Ramanathan of the Scripps Institution of Oceanography in California, the Indian Ocean Experiment (INDOEX) undertook intensive field observations using aircraft, ships, surface stations, and satellites. They discovered a giant brown layer of cloud hanging over much of the Indian Subcontinent and the Indian Ocean between October and February, which they termed the Indian Ocean Brown Cloud or Asian Brown Cloud. INDOEX revealed that this layer was primarily created by the burning of biomass in fields and homes, as well as fossil fuels like coal in industries, and that it traveled thousands of kilometers. The study also found that the haze significantly affected regional temperatures, precipitation patterns, and ground-level pollution, reducing agricultural productivity and causing widespread respiratory and cardiovascular diseases.

When the UN Environment Programme published the INDOEX report in 2002, some prominent Indian scientists called it sensationalist and argued that the "Indian Ocean" or "Asian" Brown Cloud was not unique to India or Asia and should, therefore, be renamed. Because of their opposition, the name was changed to "Atmospheric Brown Cloud with a Focus on Asia". Governments in South Asia ignored the report.

This episode underscores two key points: First, the causes of air pollution have been known for at least 25 years and second, we have been avoiding the issue for just as long. By injecting ideology and politics into what should be a straightforward matter, we covered up the real causes. Debates over SLVs versus poor farmers versus city-dwellers, SLVs versus cook stoves, and Diwali versus stubble burning have stalled real action.

The result of this obfuscation is that today, from Amritsar in Punjab to Agartala in Tripura, an arc of brown haze, up to 3 km thick, has engulfed the Indo-Gangetic plains (IGP), impacting lives, livelihoods, and the economy. While pollution levels are severe in the IGP, air quality is poor across the country. Most Indian cities fail to meet national ambient air quality standards, which are quite lenient compared to WHO's health-based guidelines. The primary cause of this pollution remains the same as what Ramanathan and his colleagues identified 25 years ago.

In a study conducted by my colleagues and me in 2023, we estimated that India emits about 52 lakh tonnes of PM_{2.5} (particulate matter less than 2.5 microns in size, which has high health impacts) annually, excluding dust from natural and manmade sources. Around 48 per cent of these emissions come from biomass use — such as agricultural residue, fuelwood, and dung cakes — for cooking and heating in homes. Stubble burning contributes an additional 6.5 per cent, making biomass burning responsible for 55 per cent

of total PM_{2.5} emissions. Industry and power plants are the second-largest emitters, contributing about 37 per cent, primarily from coal burning. The transport sector, a major focus of air pollution mitigation, contributes about 7 per cent of the emissions, while the remainder comes from sources such as open garbage burning.

These findings are not surprising if we follow the dictum: What we burn the most, pollutes the most. In India, we burn about 220 crore tonnes of fuel and waste. Of this, 85 per cent is coal and biomass, while 15 per cent comprises other fuels such as petrol, diesel, and natural gas. Naturally, most of our pollution is due to burning biomass and coal. Additionally, dust from roads, construction sites, and barren land contributes to particulate pollution, especially PM₁₀.

To address air pollution decisively, we must follow a scientific approach, and move beyond optics like odd-even, construction bans and artificial rain, and instead focus on the real solution — energy transition. Shifting households to LPG, biogas, or electricity for cooking and heating will eliminate a significant proportion of PM_{2.5} emissions. It will also prevent 8,00,000 premature deaths, caused by exposure to 2.5 invisible homes. Though challenging, this is achievable through targeted policy initiatives like a new PM Ujjwala Yojana that provides sufficient incentives to encourage low-income households to move away from traditional biomass.

Similarly, energy transition in industry, especially in MSMEs, along with rigorous monitoring and enforcement, is necessary to reduce pollution. A programme encouraging MSMEs to adopt cleaner fuel and technologies, such as electric boilers and furnaces, could curb emissions significantly. Law enforcement of stringent pollution norms is a basic necessity for larger industries and thermal power plants. For that, the modernisation of pollution control boards is urgently required.

On the other hand, eliminating stubble burning is essential to decrease severe and hazardous pollution days in October and November. Technological interventions along with incentives/disincentives can solve this problem. The simplest technological solution is to modify or mandate combine harvesters that cut closer to the ground, like manual harvesting, leaving minimal stubble behind. Additionally, an incentive of Rs 1,000 per acre — similar to what the Haryana government provides — could encourage sustainable stubble management, along with fines and exclusion from government schemes for those who continue to burn.

As far as automobiles are concerned, scaling up electric vehicles and public transport is crucial. This will need clear targets for EV adoption and the promotion of public transport as a lifestyle choice. Lastly, to reduce local sources of pollution — dust from roads and construction, garbage burning, and traffic congestion — local bodies must be strengthened and held accountable.

Real progress will only begin once we accept the science. Acknowledging the true impact and sources of our pollution crisis is the first step toward meaningful action.

The writer is CEO, International Forum for Environment, Sustainability and Technology (FOREST)

Don't cry over Article 370

J&K Assembly resolution on restoration of special status is futile, duplicitous

was taking steps in that direction". In Parliament, in an oral reply, he said that Article 370 had been "eroded and Kashmir stands fully integrated".

When Prakash Vir Shastri, a Jana Sangh member, moved a Private Member's Bill in Parliament in 1964 on Article 370, it received wide support. Abdul Ghani Goni from J&K, a close associate of Sheikh Abdullah's, delivered an aggressive speech stating that the then Prime Minister of J&K, Bakshi Gulam Mohammad, had moved for abrogation of Article 370, but the central government was not agreeable to it at that time. "I do not know whether the Central Government is under the influence of the West or wants appeasement policy towards Pakistan... they want to please their neighbours at our cost. The people of Kashmir had decided once and for all that Kashmir is an integral part of India, whether there is Article 370 or not Article 370. It is only a provisional and temporary provision which can be removed at any time," he said, appealing to the Congress members for support to the bill "so that we may also be treated as equal citizens, as good citizens of India as any other citizen. Don't treat us as second-class citizens, and don't treat us as a colony of India. We are as much a part of India as other states."

Syed Nasir Husain Samnani, another member from that state, rose to make a passionate speech, saying, "We, the people of Kashmir, never demanded that we should be treated differently. We do not want Article

370. I want to end this curse in my lifetime, for my safety, for my children's safety, for the safety of our future generations. We should have the same laws as Maharashtra, Madras, Kerala, Bengal."

The reality is that by the time of its neutralisation in 2019, the Article was largely hollowed out by the Congress party under popular pressure, while the NC supported it tacitly by looking the other way. But Congress lacked the courage and political will to remove the Article. Displaying that courage, the BJP government did away with the vestiges of it for two reasons. First, it was being used by Gupkar leaders to create a false sense of "special status" and an emotional wedge between the people of Kashmir and the rest of the country. Second, the namesake separate state constitution that existed was creating hurdles in running the administration. For example, while J&K abrogated the GST law, it continued to levy state taxes also, a double whammy on its people, because there was no provision to amend the state constitution.

It is clear that the ending of the 370 regime gave great relief to the people of the UT. But the NC and Congress, known for their duplicity of stating one thing in Delhi and the opposite in Kashmir, are again displaying their mastery over the politics of deception. They know very well that Article 370 is dead, "long live Article 370".

The writer, president, India Foundation, is with the BJP. Views are personal

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

FALL IN SENSEX

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, "A correction" (IE, November 15). The fall in the BSE Sensex can be attributed to the slow momentum in the domestic economy. Rural demand has also plummeted substantially. China has again become an attractive destination for FDI, owing to the government's recent economic policies. The US is expected to change its economic policies under the Trump administration. It remains to be seen whether Trump will bring about substantial tariff changes, as these would affect India's trade policies and the stock market's performance. Domestic retail investors are hoping for better returns, as they believe that the Indian economy will show dynamism and resilience.

Anil Thakore, Nagpur

SMOG WINTER

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, "Severe air again" (IE, November 15). As winter sets in, Delhi again confronts an extreme pollution crisis. The seasonal smog has rendered the capital's air quality "hazardous", driving pollution levels to among the highest globally. Reduced visibility, grounded flights and indoor confinement warnings reflect an emergency

affecting millions. Although natural factors contribute, human activities — vehicle emissions, industrial discharge and stubble burning — remain the primary causes. Each winter's predictable haze reflects systemic failures in air quality management. The situation demands comprehensive, preventive solutions targeting root causes.

Khokan Das, Kolkata

SPORTS AND BORDERS

THIS REFERS TO the article, "Cricket & violence don't go together" (IE, November 15). Matches between the two nations are among the most watched sporting events globally, with fans passionately supporting their teams. However, the spirit of cricket has been overshadowed by political tensions that complicate India-Pakistan ties and threaten regional stability. The ripple effects of this tense dynamic affect players and fans, who often carry political discord into what should be friendly competition. This has led to verbal abuse and social media conflicts, creating a hostile atmosphere and restricting matches to international tournaments like the World Cup or Asia Cup. To honour cricket's spirit of sportsmanship, must foster respect and sportsmanship.

Siddhant Pathak, New Delhi

EXPLAINED POLICY

In 'life certificate' month, how Govt's Jeevan Pramaan has been faring

DAMINI NATH
NEW DELHI, NOVEMBER 15

EVERY NOVEMBER, retirees, including from the government, Defence services, Railways, public sector undertakings, and many higher education institutions, etc. have to submit a "life certificate" to continue to receive their pensions for another year.

Since 2014, the government has been issuing Digital Life Certificates (DLCs), or Jeevan Pramaan, so the pensioner does not have to physically appear before the pension-disbursing authorities — which include banks and post offices — or deliver a paper life certificate to them in the prescribed format.

Jeevan Pramaan can be generated online anywhere, and is made available directly to the relevant pension-disbursing authority.

The third annual DLC Campaign began on November 1, and will continue until November 30. The Department of Pension and Pensioners' Welfare (DoPPW) under the Ministry of Personnel, Public Grievances and Pensions, is holding 1,900 camps to help pensioners generate their DLCs.

However, pensioners who prefer to physically go to post offices or banks to submit their life certificates can continue to do so.

Number of pensioners

As of March 31 this year, there were 64.88 crore central government pensioners, including 10.90 lakh civilian pensioners, 31.92 lakh Defence pensioners, 15.25 lakh Railways pensioners, 4.56 lakh telecommunication pensioners, and 3.04 lakh postal pensioners, DoPPW data show.

Jeevan Pramaan numbers

A total 1.47 crore certificates were generated during last year's DLC campaign, including those of 45.46 lakh cen-

tral government pensioners.

DoPPW sources said more than 50 lakh central government pensioners could show up at the camps this November.

Generation of a DLC

The Jeevan Pramaan portal uses Aadhaar for biometric authentication, which can be done by pensioners on their own, or by visiting a camp. From 2021 onward, face authentication has been added as an option.

To generate a DLC, the pensioner must have an Aadhaar and a mobile number linked to it, and should have registered their Aadhaar with the pension-disbursing authority. If they choose to use the Jeevan Pramaan app or website on their own (without going to the camp), they also need a biometric (fingerprint scanning) device.

The camps are being held in 800 cities and towns across the country and at Indian missions abroad. Separately, post offices and banks are holding their own camps.

Campaign takeaways

In its review of the first 11 days of the campaign, the DoPPW is learnt to have found that more pensioners (31.02%) opted for face authentication than over the same period last year (less than 20%). Of the 48.10 lakh DLCs generated between November 1 and November 11, more than 63% opted for fingerprint authentication.

In the first week of the campaign (November 1-8), 37.60 lakh DLCs were generated — 45% of which were for pensioners aged 60-70 years, 28% for those 70-80 years old, and 21% for those below 60 years. The largest number of DLCs have been generated in Maharashtra so far, followed by Tamil Nadu, West Bengal, Uttar Pradesh, and Karnataka.

"The digital empowerment of pensioners is a big step forward, saving them the trouble of visiting the pension office every November," DoPPW Secretary V Srinivas said.

Team Trump takes shape

Trump's picks for his second term reflect the lessons he has learnt from his first, his determination to build an administration in his own image, and the unparalleled premium he places on personal loyalty

ARJUN SENGUPTA

NEW DELHI, NOVEMBER 15

OVER THE past week, United States President-elect Donald Trump has made several appointments in his incoming administration, including filling 10 Cabinet-level positions.

His choices reflect the lessons he has learnt from his first term in the Oval Office, his determination to build an administration in his own image, and the unparalleled premium he places on personal loyalty.

As Team Trump takes shape, here are some key takeaways.

Loyalty above all else

Trump has tapped his staunchest allies and well-wishers for the positions he considers the most important, regardless of their past experience or qualifications for the job.

The standout example is Trump's choice of Pete Hegseth, a military veteran and an ultra-conservative Fox News host who has been his die-hard supporter and advocate, as Secretary of Defence.

Hegseth, 44, will be the youngest ever in the post. With no previous experience in administration at any level, he will be in charge of the world's most powerful military.

Former Democratic Representative Tulsi Gabbard, who has been tapped to be Director of National Intelligence, has no previous experience in national security and intelligence positions — even though she has served for long in the Army National Guard.

Lessons from Trump 1.0

Analyses by The New York Times and the Financial Times noted that Trump appears to have learnt lessons from his 2017-21 term, during which he, still an outsider to Washington, made more conventional appointments from the Republican policy establishment. These appointees, the NYT said, were often "too independent" for him.

In picking Hegseth, Gabbard, and Matt Gaetz (for Attorney General), Trump has targeted the three pillars of the so-called "deep state" that frustrated him the most in his first term — the Pentagon, intelligence agencies, and the Department of Justice.

Appointees to these posts in Trump 1.0 either resigned or were fired after fundamental disagreements with Trump, including a refusal to help legitimise his presidency and overturn the results of the 2020 election.

Eye on legal cases

The appointment of Gaetz, 42 — the subject of a now-dropped federal sex-trafficking investigation and a House Ethics Committee inquiry, and the architect of a far right revolt that ousted the Republican Speaker Kevin McCarthy — is key in the context of the legal challenges that Trump continues to face.

A plant head of the Department of Justice could simply dismiss the two federal cases against Trump (related to the January 6, 2021 Capitol attack and his handling of confidential documents after he left the White House), without putting the President in a situation in which he has to pardon himself.

Gaetz has been a strong critic of the DOJ and FBI, organisations that he will, if confirmed by the Senate, head as America's top law enforcement officer.

Unease among Republicans

Most of Trump's appointments will have to be confirmed in the Senate, which will be under Republican control come January.

Several Republican leaders are said to be unhappy or uncomfortable with Trump's choices. Gaetz's confirmation, especially, is said to be up in the air, given that he is disliked by a number of both Democrats and Republicans.

Given the mandate Trump has got from American voters, however, most Republican Senators will likely fall in line. The only Republican Senator to have broken publicly from Trump's choice so far has been Susan Collins of Maine, who has specifically questioned the choice of Gaetz.

Trump, on his part, has hinted that he wants to make "cess appointments", which would bypass hearings in Congress.

ALL THE PRESIDENT'S MEN & WOMEN

Marco Rubio



TAPPED FOR: Secretary of State
SHORT STORY: Contested against Trump for Republican nomination in

2016. Their relationship improved, and Rubio's foreign policy views aligned more with Trump's.

ROLE: Secretary of State is President's chief foreign affairs adviser.

INDIA CONNECTION: Has advocated deeper US-India partnership, especially in light of China's increased heft in global affairs. Said in 2023 that US and India's economic and security interests overlapped on many issues.

Pete Hegseth



TAPPED FOR: Secretary of Defence
SHORT STORY: TV host at Fox News, has supported Trump's America

First view since his first term. During that time, he reportedly lobbied for pardons of three military personnel who faced allegations of committing war crimes in Iraq and Afghanistan.

ROLE: Department of Defence is the largest government bureaucracy, with a national defence budget of \$842 billion. Secretary is the principal defence policy maker and adviser.

Matt Gaetz



TAPPED FOR: Attorney General
SHORT STORY: Has long supported Trump, repeating his claims of being unfairly targeted

by the Biden administration and the Department of Justice.

ROLE: As AG, Gaetz will be the federal government's top legal officer. The AG heads the Department of Justice and gives advice and opinion to the President and the heads of the executive departments. Gaetz will have power to control the proceedings in the two federal cases against Trump.

Susie Wiles



TAPPED FOR: White House Chief of Staff
SHORT STORY: Met Trump for the first time in 2015, was appointed co-chair

of his Florida campaigns in 2016 and 2020, and co-chair of 2024 presidential campaign. Was reportedly one of the few people who could control some of Trump's worst impulses.

ROLE: Chief of Staff helps define President's agenda, executes his vision. She's the President's gatekeeper.

ALIND CHAUHAN & RISHIKA SINGH

Robert F Kennedy Jr



TAPPED FOR: Secretary of Health and Human Services
SHORT STORY: Environmental lawyer and former

Democrat ran for President as an Independent before dropping out and endorsing Trump. Has been a vaccine sceptic and critic of the pharma industry. Trump has said he would "let Kennedy go wild on health".

ROLE: Job is to protect Americans' health; will be in charge of 80,000 staff; run around 100 programs, including Medicare and Medicaid.

Michael Waltz



TAPPED FOR: National Security Adviser
SHORT STORY: Leading critic of China, has flagged the need for US to

be prepared for a potential conflict in the Asia-Pacific. Has applauded Trump for pushing NATO allies to spend more.

ROLE: NSA plays a major role in foreign and national security policy decision-making, briefs the President on key national security issues.

INDIA CONNECTION: Head of India caucus, has advocated stronger US-India defence & security cooperation.

Tulsi Gabbard



TAPPED FOR: Director of National Intelligence
SHORT STORY: Former Democrat, unsuccessfully ran

for President in 2020. Later switched loyalty to Republicans and Trump. **ROLE:** According to The New York Times, she "would oversee 18 spy agencies and would be responsible for preparing the President's Daily Brief, a daily written intelligence summary."

INDIA CONNECTION: Her mother Carol took a deep interest in Hinduism; Gabbard is a practising Hindu.

Kristi Noem



TAPPED FOR: Secretary of Homeland Security
SHORT STORY: South Dakota's first woman Governor became a

Conservative star after she resisted federal regulations to slow the spread of the Covid-19 virus. Has backed Trump's mass deportations plan. Was criticised after she wrote about killing a dog that was "untrainable" and a goat that was "nasty and mean".

ROLE: Will oversee immigration laws, will be chief implementer of Trump's headline immigration agenda.

Elon Musk



TAPPED FOR: Co-lead, Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE)
SHORT STORY: Musk was one of Trump's biggest campaign contributors, used X to campaign for him. Has gained extraordinary influence over Trump's transition process, reportedly sitting in on nearly every job interview.

Vivek Ramaswamy



TAPPED FOR: Co-lead, DOGE
SHORT STORY: Competed against Trump for Republican nomination but subsequently dropped out and endorsed him. Has vowed support for Trump's plans to cut bureaucracy; proposed to eliminate Education Department, FBI, IRS; cut federal workforce by 75%.

More effective term likely

Trump seems likely to be far more effective in furthering his political agenda in his second term than he was in his first. With a cabal of ardent loyalists backing him, and a massive mandate that has seen Republicans

take control of both the House and Senate apart from the White House, there is seemingly very little that could thwart his legislative agenda.

Trump is also likely wiser from his previous experience as President, and might

be better able to control some natural impulses of his personality that commentators have repeatedly flagged as hurting his own objectives.

A presidency of radical change is likely for the US and the world.

Nissar Commission

In the wake of a number of complaints against Kerala's Waqf Board, the CPM government under in 2008 appointed an inquiry commission led by retired district judge MA Nissar. The terms of reference for the commission included fixing responsibility for the loss of assets by the board, and recommending action for their recovery.

In its report, the commission deemed the land in Munambam to be waqf property, and said the college management had approved of its sale without the board's consent. It recommended action for its recovery.

In 2019, the Waqf Board suo motu de-

clared the Munambam land to be waqf property as per Sections 40 and 41 of the Waqf Act of 1955. The board directed the Revenue Department not to accept land tax from the present occupants (who had been paying taxes for the past several years). This directive was overruled by the state government in 2022.

After being challenged in the Kerala High Court in 2022, the state government's decision was stayed. Currently, more than a dozen appeals regarding this dispute are pending with the court.

The Farook College management too has challenged the Waqf Board's takeover. It has maintained that the land was never waqf land but gifted to the college by the Sait family.

What is the Kerala waqf land dispute, which became a byelection issue?

SHAJU PHILIP
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, NOVEMBER 15

ASA parliamentary panel deliberates on the Waqf (Amendment) Bill 2024, a land row in Kerala has become national news.

The Kerala State Waqf Board has long staked claim over 400-acre of land stretching across the villages of Kuzhupally and Pallipuram at Munambam, on the northern edge of the Vypin Island in Kerala's Ernakulam district. This land has been occupied for generations by fisherfolk. It is home to some 600 families today, around two thirds of whom are Christians belonging to the backward Latin Catholic community,

and the rest are backward Hindus.

With residents protesting against the Muslim body's claim, the BJP made it a poll issue in the recently-held bypolls in the state, more so with the Kerala Assembly unanimously passing a resolution against the Waqf Amendment Bill last month.

Genesis of issue

The roots of the controversy can be traced to 1902, when the erstwhile Travancore royal family leased 404 acres of land, already occupied by fisherfolk, to a trader named Abdul Sathar Moosa Sait, who had settled in Mattancherry near Kochi.

In 1948, his successor and son-in-law Mohammed Siddique Sait got the leased

land registered in his name. He then decided to hand over the land to the management of Kozhikode's Farook College, which was established in 1948 to educationally empower Muslims of northern Kerala.

On November 1, 1950, a waqf deed was registered at the sub-registrar's office in Edappally, Kochi, executed by Sait in favour of the president of the Farook College. A waqf deed is a document that establishes a waqf — property that is permanently dedicated for charitable or religious purposes under Islamic law.

First legal battle

Farook College's management received

the title deed for the land around a decade later. In the late-1960s, a legal battle began between the land's occupants, who despite residing there for generations did not have official documents to prove ownership, and the college's management, which wanted to evict these occupants.

Eventually, in an out of court settlement, the college's management decided to sell the land to its occupants at

market rate. Documents show that in the sale deeds, the college management did not mention that the land in question was waqf property granted to the president of the college management committee for the purpose of education. They instead said the property

EXPLAINED
POLITICS

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Here's how Trump could lose the coming trade war



PAUL KRUGMAN

The good news: I don't think Donald Trump will cause a global trade war. The bad news: The reason I say that is I believe that a trade war would be coming even if Mr Trump had lost the election, largely because China is refusing to act like a responsible economic superpower. Unfortunately, Mr Trump may be the worst possible person to guide US policy through

the turmoil that's probably ahead.

He won't be the reason we have a trade war, but he may well be the reason we lose it. China is the greatest economic success story in history. It used to be very poor; there are still many people alive who remember the great famine of 1959-61. But after the reforms that began in 1978 its economy soared. Five years ago, China is now a middle-income country, with gross domestic product (GDP) per capita substantially lower than ours or in Western Europe. But China has a huge population, so by some measures it is now the world's largest economy.

However, all indications are that China's era of torrid economic growth is behind it. For decades, Chinese growth was fuelled mainly by two things: A rising working-age population and rapid productivity growth driven by borrowed technology. But the working-age population peaked around a decade ago and is now falling. And despite

some impressive achievements, the overall rate of technological progress in China, which economists measure by looking at "total factor productivity," appears to have slowed to a crawl.

But a growth slowdown doesn't have to be a catastrophe. Japan went through a similar demographic and technological slowdown in the 1990s and, as on the whole, handled it fairly gracefully. China, however, has built an economic system designed for the high-growth era — a system that suppresses consumer spending and encourages very high rates of investment. This system was workable as long as supercharged economic growth created the need for ever more factories, office buildings and so on, so that high investment could find productive uses. But while an economy growing at, say, 9 per cent a year can productively invest 40 per cent of GDP, an economy growing at 3 per cent can't.

The answer seems obvious:

Redistribute income to households and reorient the economy away from investment toward consumption. But for whatever reason, China's government seems unwilling to move in that direction. Again and again, stimulus policies have been aimed more at expanding productive capacity than at empowering consumers to make use of that capacity. So what do you do if you have lots of capacity but your consumers can't or won't buy what you make? You try to export the problem, keeping the economy humming by running huge trade surpluses.

And I mean huge. Tellingly, China seems to be playing games with its trade numbers in an attempt to make its surpluses look smaller than they really are. But China appears to be exporting close to \$1 trillion more than it imports, and the trend is upward. Hence the coming trade war. The rest of the world won't passively accept Chinese surpluses on that scale. The "China

shock" of the 2000s taught us that whatever the real virtues of free trade, a huge import surge does unacceptable damage to workers and communities in its path. Furthermore, China is an autocracy that doesn't share democratic values. Allowing it to dominate strategically crucial industries is an unacceptable risk. That's why the Biden administration has been quietly pursuing a quite hard line on China, retaining Mr Trump's tariffs and trying to limit its progress in advanced technologies. So the trade war is coming: in some ways it has already started. What will Mr Trump add to the story? Ignorance, lack of focus and potential cronyism, Oh, and gullibility.

Ignorance: Mr Trump's insistence that tariffs don't hurt consumers — even as businesses across America are planning to raise prices when his planned tariffs hit — strongly suggests that neither he nor anyone he listens to

understands how global trade works.

Lack of focus: By proposing tariffs across the board, not just on China, Trump will raise costs for many American businesses and alienate allies who should be part of a cooperative response.

Cronyism: The president has great discretion in granting tariff exemptions to selected companies. During his first term, such exemptions went disproportionately to companies with Republican political connections. It's naïve to think this isn't likely to happen again, and on a much larger scale.

Finally, gullibility: During his first term, Mr Trump eventually stopped raising tariffs after signing what he called a "historic trade deal" in which China agreed to buy \$200 billion in American goods. How much of that total did China actually buy? None.

As said, serious trade conflict is coming as China tries to export its policy failures. But America just elected perhaps the worst possible leader to manage that conflict.

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ILLUSTRATION: AJAY MOHANTY

Neighbourly insights



VIEWPOINT

DEVANGSHU DATTA

The US elections have thrown a spotlight on a controversial polling method called the "Neighbour Effect." A French national who calls himself "Theo" made a significant fortune betting on Donald Trump.

Then put the equivalent of at least \$30 million in bets on a Trump victory on the crypto currency betting site Polymarket. He may have received winnings of somewhere between \$48 million and \$84 million, according to various analysts. Theo bet on an Electoral College victory, Trump winning in four key swing states, and a win of the popular vote for the Republican.

He claims to have placed these bets based on polls he commissioned using a reputed US pollster. What is really interesting is the way these polls were designed — instead of asking voters about their own preferences, they were asked to predict who their neighbours would vote for.

According to Theo, the neighbour polls showed strong preferences for Trump in states where standard opinion polls were tied within very narrow margins. One caveat: It is impossible to judge the veracity of Theo's statements, as he has refused to share any details

about the polls, or even the name of the pollster he hired.

But this type of polling is not unknown. It seizes out information by looking at revealed preferences rather than stated preferences. We do it all the time as individuals.

For example, suppose you are trying to think of a gift for someone you don't know well. You might ask people close to that individual for suggestions on what would be suitable. You will tend not to ask the recipient directly, as politeness and social conventions may prevent that person from telling you what they really want.

In an opinion poll involving politics, voters may shy away from revealing their true intentions, or refuse to respond. "Shy voters" are a well-known phenomenon. However, they may be more honest when discussing their neighbour's likely preferences. And crucially, they may reveal their own in their responses, if such a poll is cleverly designed.

In many cases, the respondent may also not consciously know their own preferences. Amazon and Netflix have discovered, for instance, that what people actually buy, or watch, often varies significantly from stated preferences, or wish lists. Zomato or Spotify know more about your culinary and musical preferences than you do. In politics, this can translate into an undecided voter making a snap decision right in the voting booth.

However, leveraging a "neighbour effect" to get useful answers can also backfire. For one, it presupposes neighbours know each other. This is unlikely in a modern urban environment, or a gated community. You may have no idea who your neighbours are. If you live in a typical 30-storey building,

Neighbour effects would have to be gauged by accessing and data mining resident welfare association whatsapp groups.

In a rural community or an old-style urban environment, people know each other well, but they may be afraid of standing out. Indian villages are often ghettoised by caste and community, and to a lesser extent, so are cities. This effect holds true even in America, with its Little Indias and Little Chinas.

People who belong to a certain community and live in an area with many members of the same community will tend to avoid revealing their preferences if they run counter to the norm. I know, for example, Sikhs who smoke and Jains who are non-vegetarian. However, they won't indulge in these activities publicly or reveal these preferences to members of their respective communities.

Personally speaking, I often endure music I dislike in social gatherings. I will even use Spotify to play music I dislike out of politeness, if I'm entertaining folks with those preferences. Without controls to figure out what I listen to when alone, you will make the wrong guesses about my musical tastes, or assume the account was used by different people.

These are pitfalls that make it hard for pollsters to use neighbour effects. Do such factors get amplified or normalised when dealing with large samples?

That's why the design, framing, controls and cross-tabs of whatever new, clever method is used are fascinating. Neighbour effects could be a sort of tiebreaker when conventional polls are tight. But they need to be used with care.

Two-front deterrence

India needs clear deterrence against both likely adversaries. With China, it lies in raising costs of aggression to levels it should find unaffordable. For Pakistan, it has to be punitive

Two weeks back, we had raised questions about the decline in India's defence budget as a percentage of both gross domestic product (GDP) and the national budget. We had then promised a second round of talks about how to raise the resources to increase it to 2.5 per cent of GDP, from 1.9 per cent, over the next four years, and where to invest these additional funds. Donald Trump's dramatic victory overtook events last week. That's why the second part comes now.

We can start this story from the fateful night of December 9, 1971, at the peak of the fighting in that war. It was fateful because this was the night INS Khukri was sunk by the Pakistani submarine PNS Hangor, becoming the only ship the Navy has lost to combat. Instead of hiding, the Hangor had made its presence evident, setting up a bait.

India took up the challenge and sent out a three-ship formation optimised for anti-submarine warfare to hunt for it. One ship, INS Kuthar, developed engine trouble and pulled back.

The fact remains that all three had inadequate sonars. Neither the Khukri nor the Kirpan torpedoed the Hangor. Two torpedoes fired at the Kirpan missed. The Khukri took three hits and sank almost instantaneously. That's the reason for the high fatalities, with only 67 survivors. A tale of eternal regret, however, still hangs to this day.

Though the Navy was aware of Pakistan's formidable submarine force, not enough had been done to build anti-submarine warfare (ASW) capabilities. Even in this task force, the ASW, the sonars were inadequate. India had had months to prepare for this war, yet when it began, an experimental sonar was being tested on INS Khukri. In partnership with the Tata Group.

Now, which country sends out a 1,200-tonne warship with a "Jaguar" sonar under testing? It obviously didn't work. And you know what? An engineer from the Tata team working on this modification was aboard the Khukri on this mission. He became a rare civilian war casualty in action. The reason we tell this story now is to underline the *Jaguar chalta hai*, we are too big-to-bother-as-a-few-setbacks approach to our defence.

The virus afflicts both the political and civil services, as well as the military leadership. That's how, despite knowing for years that Pakistani submarines were of its creditable naval track, India still had such poor sonars on its anti-submarine ships. How much would it have cost to try and fix this gap? Very little. But do such small fixes have

the same appeal of buying a new ship, a submarine, a squadron of aircraft, or a new set of missiles? And yet, this is how we suffer avoidable setbacks.

If this wasn't bad enough, the very next day added insult to injury. The Navy flung all available resources to hunt for the Hangor. One of these, a French-made Alizé ASW two-engine aircraft, was shot down by a PAF F-104 loitering in ambush off the Kutch coast. Overall, the Navy had a stellar outing in the war, blotted by what could have been an avoidable loss.

How do we know any of this? Please check out Indian Navy 1965-1975: *Transition to Triumph* by Vice Admiral G M Hirani, published in 2000. Hirani was the head of the naval history project. Also read Maj Gen Ian Cardozo's *The Sinking of INS Khukri: Survivors' Stories*. We can pick a dozen such stories from each of our engagements, where the forces went out to fight without vital elements — mostly to do with technology — which could have been avoided with greater alertness and commitment.

We can leapfrog to Pulwama-Balakot in 2019 when PAF AMRAAMs outranged all the IAF's missiles by a long distance, except probably the French MICA, with which fewer than 10 of its Mirages had been armed by the time the PAF had had the 2019 war. We can therefore, that the missile gap was allowed to persist for nearly a decade.

even now, work is on to equip the Sukhois with the swadeshi Astra to counter the AMRAAM. The PAF has had the 2019 war. We can see, therefore, that the missile gap was allowed to persist for nearly a decade.

Over the past three decades, beginning with General V P Malik, we have had several chiefs say in frustration that we will fight with whatever we have. The latest to say something similar is the current Air Chief. Everybody talks of China as the real threat, but we aren't even building a decisive capability against Pakistan.

We have to understand the basics first. Before preparing for a big war, India needs clear deterrence against both likely adversaries. With China, deterrence lies in making the costs of any aggression unaffordable. For Pakistan, the deterrence has to be punitive, with no hope of face-saving retaliation. For example, after Pulwama, if Balakot was bombed, such should have been the disparity in the IAF's favour that the PAF wouldn't even dare challenge it. That's what happened during Kargil when the missile gap was in India's favour.

In the case of the Army, for deterrence against both adversaries, the need is for long-range artillery, armed drones and copious volumes of loitering ammunition. More smart artillery ammunition. That could be among the first list of purchases, if only a little more money becomes available. Or modern, nipper air defence for forward units, given that the skies are going to be swarming with armed drones and cruise missiles. The infantry also needs rapidly standardised gear, from small arms and protective equipment to shoes, helmets, secure communication, night vision, and modern anti-tank guided missiles. We're been buying these in hundreds, and that's neither generous nor prudent.

The falling IAF squadron strength will take time to address. Meanwhile, just the acquisition of three or four more each of refuellers and AEW&C (Airborne Early Warning and Control Systems) will greatly multiply the current force levels. In both these vital categories, we barely match the PAF, forget China. In fact, the PAF has more AEW&C aircraft than us. These do not have the same appeal of a big flying order but they need only a fraction of the money and would be a much faster force multiplier.

The Navy desperately needs the heavyweight torpedoes for its Scorpene submarines, miniswimmers, swarm boats and probably a "navalised" version of the C-295 aircraft the Tatas are building in partnership with Airbus. These will be force multipliers too, but they need more work. The 12 P-8s by taking over the medium-range surveillance and ASW (eight hours of flying time) duties. Given the limited budget for acquisitions, much of the funds will be allocated to the few big capital purchases, ongoing or impending. The additional money should be utilised mostly to fill these critical gaps in the short run to build force multipliers and minimum deterrance against each adversary.

And finally, how to raise the money? First, minimal increases like these, about 0.2 per cent of GDP each year, can be pretty much tweaked into our ongoing budgets. Even an increase by 0.1 per cent of GDP, from 1.9 per cent now to 2, will bring in another ₹30,000 crore for acquisitions. But if that's not enough for the finance ministry, an aggressive new round of privatisation could be carried out, with the proceeds allocated to defence. Nothing could be more public opinion friendly.

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Captain Bumrah

EYE CULTURE

VISHAL MENON

Aspirit Bumrah, the once-in-a-generation fast bowler, who has captained India in a solitary Test match and a couple of T20 Internationals so far, has no qualms about picking himself as the "greatest Indian captain."

"My favourite captain is me. I'm the greatest captain," Bumrah proclaimed in an interview for a leading publication earlier this year.

Team India head coach Gautam Gambhir confirmed the 30-year-old fast bowler as the stand-in captain for the opening Test of the Border-Gavaskar Trophy in Perth next week, if incumbent Kohli Sharma opts out due to personal reasons. If Sharma remains unavailable in Perth, Bumrah will walk out for the toss with Pat Cummins, another talented pacer who was picked to lead Australia three years ago.

Apart from the one-off Test from Ray Lindwall in 1966, Australia has never appointed a fast bowler to skipper their team in the game's longest format. All-rounders Monty Noble and Jack Ryder were captains more than a century ago, while Richie Benaud, another all-rounder, led Australia from 1958 to 1964.

Across other teams, Shaun Pollock led South Africa with poise in the turbulent post-Hansie Cronje era. Under Imran Khan, Pakistan cricket underwent a tectonic shift. Khan's stint was followed by Wasim Akram and Waqar Younis. West Indies relied on the indefatigable pursuits of Courtney Walsh through the late

1990s. Heath Streak was Zimbabwe's undisputed leader for more than a decade, while Bob Willis was the last fast bowler to captain England.

Last month, the Southern stepped down as a New Zealand Test captain after the 2-0 loss to Sri Lanka. But they were, by and large, exceptions to the rule. Of the 10 bowlers to take 50 wickets or more as a Test captain, seven have a better bowling average as skippers.

Nevertheless, cricket establishments become conservative and rarely go against the grain. It remains one of cricket's biggest mysteries: Why do bowlers rarely become captains?

Benaud remarked that Keith Miller, the mercurial all-rounder from the post-war era, was the best captain Australia ever had. The same can be said about Shane Warne. Cricket's greatest spin bowler was considered too erratic on and off the field for such a prestigious post. Even though Warne captained Australia in only 11 ODIs, the world saw his leadership skills in the opening series of the Indian Premier League (IPL), when he led a less-fancied Rajasthan Royals to their only title triumph. Warne's captaincy in the 2008 IPL season was aggressive, vibrant, and in the words of Benaud, "he brought his gambling instincts onto the field."

One of the reasons why bowlers are rarely considered captains is because they are more susceptible to injuries than batters. The bowling captain's primary skill is being utilised concurrently while he is required to call the shots on the field.

In the compelling book titled *The*

Art of Captaincy, former England captain Mike Brearley argued that bowlers often struggled more than batters when appointed captains.

"It takes an exceptional character to know when to bowl, to keep bowling with all his energy screwed up into a ball of aggression, and to be sensitive to the needs of the team, both tactically and psychologically," he wrote.

India won the 1983 World Cup under Kapil Dev. In the 1970s, Bishan Bedi and Srinivasaraghavan Venkatraghavan shared the captaincy duties, while left-arm spinner Vinoo Mankad skippered for six Tests from 1955 to 1959. Perhaps, Anil Kumble was India's most underrated captain. The leg-spinner took over from Rahul Dravid in 2007. Kumble led in 14 Tests during the period of transition, including in the infamous 2007-08 series in Australia. "I became a captain by default because no one else wanted it," Kumble had said.

Left-arm pacer Zaheer Khan had the credentials for the top role, but was ignored. Apart from being a bowler of skill and intelligence, Khan also had a keen eye for talent. In 2001, it was Khan who suggested the then captain Sourav Ganguly to elevate Virender Sehwag as an opener.

In Perth, Bumrah, India's most valuable player (MVP), will seek inspiration from his opposite number.

"We have seen Cummins doing well. He is a big example... a fast bowler who takes a lot of personal responsibility, who takes a lot of pride, and has won the World Cup and the World Test Championship," he said.

For Bumrah the captain to be successful, he needs Bumrah the bowler to be fit and firing.

Is business a 'living machine'?



BUSINESS & PURPOSE

R GOPALAKRISHNAN

For over 50 years, almost every practitioner of business management has probably been a fan of Peter Drucker. I am, therefore, like a *bhakhi* in a temple town as I visit his birthplace, Vienna, to participate in the "Days of Management". The Global Peter Drucker Forum and the Living Machine Institute in Austria have joined forces to reframe "The Next Management", titled "The India Way: Humanism, Longevity, and Compounding Returns". In recent times, more people have been struck that the capitalist-enterprise model, seeded in America, is perhaps broken. What is the model? Why is it thought to be broken?

The centre-piece of this model is the joint-stock company, in which the liability of the shareholder is limited. Over the past decades, the single-minded focus of management leaders has increasingly been to promote shareholder wealth on the premise that the shareholders are the owners of the company. Are they really? The people who aspire,

dream, sweat, yearn, and love are usually not the shareholders but the people who are most affected by the company — community, society, employees, vendors, for example. The current model has evolved over a couple of centuries concurrently with the industrial revolution. When there is a sharp focus on shareholders, there emerges a strong emphasis on efficiency — of manpower, machines, and capital usage — rather than on effectiveness. What is the difference?

Peter Drucker on efficiency vs effectiveness

According to Drucker, you need effectiveness to magnify and translate efficiency into results. He emphasised that the sole purpose of business was to create and satisfy the customer. In his seminal book *The Effective Executive*, he addressed the difference between "effective" and "efficient". It comes is more important when it comes to organisational performance? You recognise an effective organisation as one that is able to get the people to collectively achieve extraordinary results. How simple yet profound — to encourage ordinary people to achieve extraordinary results!

Efficiency is getting a lot of things done while effectiveness is getting the right things done. Further, Drucker wrote effectiveness, unlike innate attributes such as talent and intelligence, entailed a set of practices you could learn. In fact, it's essential to learn effectiveness because without it, talent and intelli-

gence won't get you anywhere.

The contemporary capitalist enterprise model, with its excessive orientation to enhancing shareholder wealth, is hugely counterproductive to efficiency in extracting the maximum from a given resource. The model treats enterprise almost like a machine, whose efficiency can be enhanced by continuous improvement. Further, too often, human avarice, greed, and hubris get fed into the mechanism of efficiency. This leads to enterprise failures like Enron and Lehman Brothers — watch the play *Lehman Trilogy*, now running in theatres in London and New York. Think of India's Satyam Computer and Kingfisher Airlines. The efficiency-only trap of business was to create and satisfy the customer. In his seminal book *The Effective Executive*, he addressed the difference between "effective" and "efficient". It comes is more important when it comes to organisational performance? You recognise an effective organisation as one that is able to get the people to collectively achieve extraordinary results. How simple yet profound — to encourage ordinary people to achieve extraordinary results!

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When Roger Bannister made the four-minute record of running a mile in 1954 at the Iffley Road tracks, many scientific minds opined that the limit of human endurance would not permit further improvement to the record. Yet the human "living thing" — through advances in motivation, physiology, nutrition, and equipment — has made it possible for Moroccan Hicham El Guerrouj to record three minutes and 43 seconds. Living machines yield more than inanimate machines because of flexibility, adaptation, and human consciousness, which machines cannot yet do.

Here is the catch. Dealing with living machines requires reflection, thought, patience, and, above all, time. In the belief that the machines will not give them all time, enterprise leaders push the fixed machine beyond its limits, breaking the machine rather than training it to adapt and renew. Some Indian companies seem to have learnt this, like Godrej, TVS, Birla, Mahindra, Tata and Hindustan Lever (now Hindustan Unilever). It has been my singular fortune to have served in Tata and Hindustan Lever, where I learnt the "living machine" principles from the grassroots.

It is satisfying to expose the ideas of a living machine to a global audience.

The author's latest book is JAMSETHI TATA: Powerful Learnings for Corporate Success, coauthored with Harish Bhat. rgopal@themindworks.me

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