Demand flux

Growth dynamics may falter with waning urban consumption

Growth dynamics may falter with Waning urban consumption

India's resounding 8.2% GDP growth in 2023-24 came with two worrying portents. The farm sector lost momentum due to an unhelpful monsoon, and private consumption spends rose at less than half the economy's pace. In fact, the 4% growth in private final consumption expenditure (PFCE) was the weakest since 2002-03, if one excludes 2020-21, when COVID-19 first hit the world. Of course, some of this stemmed from the farm sector's rain woes that weighed down rural demand, while economists flagged a K-shaped consumption pattern of higher-end goods and services seeing greater offake than the rest. A normal monsoon this year, it was hoped, would help the farm sector and rural demand rebound, and shore up overall consumption to levels that spur growth as well as hasten an uptick in industrial capacity utilisation rates to thresholds that compel private investors to ramp up. This much-awaited outcome is vital for the virtuous cycle of more investments leading to more jobs and higher consumption to kick in.

Growth numbers for the first quarter suggested this story was playing our, with the PFCE rising at a seven-quarter high of 7.4%, outpacing the 6.8% GDP uptick. Rural demand signals such as two wheeler sales also perked up. India Ratings reckons that real rural wage growth turned positive in July and is expected to stay positive, aided by cooling inflation. This bodes well for consumption. However, a twist in this tale may be imminent, with urban demand beginning to show some fatigue. Last Tuesday, S&P Global Ratings, which expects India to grow 6.8% this year (lower than the 7.2% rise penned in by the Reserve Bank of India), said high interest rates are tempering urban demand. The RBY consumer confidence sales through April to August as a barometer of stuttering urban demand. The trend warrants monitoring, it said, while expressing hope that festive ferevour could trigger a course reversal. With wallest crimped by persistently high food inflation (that also clou

Mad doctrine

Any threat of use of nuclear weapons must be viewed seriously

must be viewed seriously
ussian President Vladimir Putin's revision of Russia's nuclear doctrine announced last week is a worrying increase
in the war rhetoric surrounding the Russia-Ukraine conflict. It would once have been considered unthinkable for permanent members of the UN Security Council to behave in this manner. His announcement was that in the event of a conventional attack on Russia by any country that is supported by a nuclear power, Russia would consider that a "joint attack" and presumably, deal with the threat accordingly. He added that Russia could use nuclear weapons in response to a conventional attack posing a "critical threat to [its] sovereignty", a threat that was repeated by Russian Foreign Minister Sergy Lavrov at the UN General Assembly meet over the weekend, when he said the idea of defeating Russia on the battlefield is "senseless" and a "suicidal" weekend, when he said the idea of deteating Rus-sia on the battlefield is "senseless" and a "suicidal escapade" given that Moscow has nuclear wea-pons. Clearly, the context of Mr. Putin's nuclear sia on the battlefield is "senseless" and a "suicidal escapade" given that Moscow has nuclear weapons. Clearly, the context of Mr. Putin's nuclear doctrine revision and the comments is Ukraine President Volodymyr Zelenskyy's visit to the United States, where he attempted to present a new "victory plan" for Ukraine. Mr. Zelenskyy wants the permission of the U.S. and other western countries to use missiles and other heavy weaponry procured from them for attacks deep inside Russia. Thus far, the weaponry, including Storm Shadow and ATACMS missiles, can only be used for Ukraine's defence, although western capitals turned a blind eye when Ukrainian forces invaded the Russian Oblast of Kursk in August with tanks and weaponry, allowing Mr. Zelenskyy to rack up a symbolic win and possibly some leverage in future negotiations for peace. However, much of the euphoria in Kyiv has since dissipated with Russia hitting back anew, sending in troops to Kursk, and also opening a new front around Ukraine's Pokrovsk, and western countries remaining loathe to enter the theatre of war. To that end, U.S. President Joseph Biden has now announced nearly \$8 billion in additional military aid for Ukraine, but made no reference to the demand for its utilisation inside Russia.

It remains to be seen whether Mr. Putin will be assuaged, or if concerns about the war reaching a "nuclear threshold" will grow from this point on, and it is hoped countries, including India, that have committed to finding a path to dialogue and peace, redouble their efforts to prevent such a catastrophe. New Delhi has said that it "conveyed messages" to Moscow when safety concerns grew over the Zaporizhshia nuclear plant. Prime Minister Narendra Modi may be called on to do the same when he visits Russia in October for the BRICS summit. As the world grapples with the spectre of escalation in West Asia, the last thing it needs is a reversion to chilling cold war scenarios in Eurasia, of mutually assured destruction.

Plain-speak on the AKD phenomenon in Sri Lanka

etting all family-based traditions of political domination to a side, the election of the 'relatively unknown' 55-year-old Amura Kumar Dissangake (AKD) of the JVP (Netople's Liberation Front)-led NPP (National People's Power), as Sri Lanka's President comes as a true serendipitous surprise. He is that – relatively unknown – in more senses than one. Though 'around' for decades in Sri Lanka politics as a Marxist politician schooled in the radical lanatha Vimukhil Perannua (IVP). the radical Janatha Vimukhti Peramuna (JVP), and a cabinet Minister (2004-05) in Chandrika Bandaranaike Kumaratunga's coalition government, AKD has swum below the radars of most Lanka-watchers. But he is 'relatively

most Lanka-watchers. But he is 'relatively unknown' also in the important sense (important all over South Asia but particularly so in Sri Lanka) of being 'unknown as a relative' or kin descended from a political family.

Of all early analyses that I have come across of AKD's dramatic victory, the most insightful is off of the from an acute observer of Lankan affairs from the perch of Tamil Lanka but not a 'standard political exhaustation'. perch of Tamil Lanka but not a 'standard political columnist', Shvanadnil Duraiswamy. The Jaffna-based littérateur who is, whether or not so in a formal sense, a sociologist, sums up the scene in a note that is a nuggest of fact and comment: "The mandate if any was against what Mao Ze Dong termed the decadence of the state, the sufferings of humanity and the darkness of society'. It was in reaction to International Monetary Fund (IMF) austerity and the extravagant recklessness of the Colombo elite. It represented a paradigm shift where a monollingual outsider who belonged to a party that rose in revolt twice in 1971 and in 1987-89 [resulting in the deaths of 80,000 Sinhalese [resulting in the deaths of 80,000 Sinhalese youth] is now at the helm. Further, AKD is not from the dominant Sinhalese Govigama caste from which all 15 Heads of Government, except none, belonged to in our 75-year post-independence history. That is itself a significant achievement. He is likeable, self-made

significant achievement. He is likeable, self-made and charismatic." Having given AKD his rightful due, she goes on to explain some of the interstices of the AKD phenomenon. Chief among these, in my retelling of those with my added observations, are the following.

The vote and challenges
AKD's dramatic win must be seen with the hard realities he must face. Foremost of these is plainly political: if 42% of the electorate has voted for him, 58% voted for others in a scattered way but



Gopalkrishna Gandhi

a former High Commissioner of

decisively against him. This large non-AKD if not anti-AKD majority comprises the huge chunk of Sinhala majority voters who voted in 'old UNP' style for the two former 'UNPer's the second-in-the-race, Sajith Premadasa, son of the late Prime Minister R. Premadasa and Ramil Wickremesinghe, taken together. This AKD-negative chunk includes also, almost the entirety of the Tamil electorate in the nation's 10 non-Sinhala majority districts in the north, east and the central highlands.

This means that AKD has to not just consolidate his own Left-inclined and

consolidate his own Left-inclined and Left-supporting Sinhala support base but seek support from non-Left Sinhala and Tamil Lanka support from non-Left Sinhala and Tamil Lanka as well. If AKD is to form a stable government he has to do so with his own JVP and NPP MPs and others. The most logical and, in Sri Lanka, the tried-and-tested way of doing this would be through the coalition path. Or through 'outside

through the coalition path. Or through 'outside support' ever tenuous.

The next biggest challenge is financial. AKD has to meld his tare of past ideological positions with the hard reality of fix Lanka's dependence on IMF funding. How he will be able to convince his support base — his 'bread and butter' — about the inevitability of the self-denying austerity regimen that comes as the price for IMF funding, remains to be seen. If Ranil Wickremensinghe was judged and judged out in under two years, AKD will have a lither calendar to now kwithin. If a work of the control o judged and judged out in under two years, AKD will have a tighter calendar to work within. If Sri Lanka's polity is a minefield, its political economy is an all-but dry lake. Early reports suggest that AKD will negotiate, not scrap, the Ranil government's convergences with the IMF. If AKD holds deliberations with the outgoing President's economic team, that could lead to calibrated increments in decision making. Ranil

increments in decision making. Ranill
Wickremesinghe may have made political
Wickremesinghe may have made political
misjudgements, especially in his
more-than-generous handling of the Rajapaksa
order. But his grasp of economic affairs is not a
resource to be lightly disregarded.

The third and from India's point of view, a very
serious challenge to AKD's Lethward mindscape is
the ideological voltage which will be directed to it
from China. Even if one were to disregard the
speculation about China having played a financial
role in AKD's election campaign, one cannot be
over-cautious about Beijing's reflexive leverage
over any government in Colombo. Within
touching adjacency to India, the emerald isle over any government in common. Which is touching adjacency to India, the emerald isle shares with its immediate neighbour all the frictions proximity brings. Sri Lanka's distant but deep oceanic heave with China is without the frictions that proximity brings. If IMF funding spells uneasy austerities in the short term, Chinese support cannot but script risky promissory notes in the long term.

Renewal of the democratic voice AKD cannot do better than remember a defining AKD cannot do better than remember a defining question that the great Lankan Marxist asked of those pressing for 'Sinhala only' politics in Parliament in 1956. "Do you want two languages and one nation, or one language and two nations?" On how AKD navigates the language and religious fissures of his country depends on the weracity and validity of his leadership. In this the experience of Chandrika Bandaranaile Kumaratunge in proposing federal and Kumaratunge in proposing federal and devolution principles to the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam and other Tamil political formations can be instructive for him. Let me say, with welcome admiration, that I found this statement welcome admiration, that I found this statement of AKD's at his inauguration nothing less than redemptive: "Democracy helped me win. Some voted for me, and others didn't. But my pledge is to work hard to win the trust of those who didn't vote for me as well."

vote for me as well."
In her note dated September 24, 2024,
Sivanandini Duraiswamy gives the optically
gratifying and synoptically telling news that
"AKD) took a needed first step. He visited a
Hindu Temple in Kandy today to receive a
rapturous welcome." Bravo, is what I would say to
that, bravo AKD.
An outstanding former Indian findered.

AKD. Inding former Indian diplomat, Ramu Damodaran, recently drew my attention to a new play, 'Counting and Cracking' by Lankan playwright S. Shakthidharan which is said to be currently 'dazzling' New York audiences. Anand Giridharadas, founder editor of The.Ink online journal, has interviewed Shakthidharan, where he says: "I think the best way to strengthen democracy after realizing how fragile it is – democracy after realizing how fragile it is – rather than being terrified by that – is to listen deeply to the truths of people who are differen to us and to find ways to agree to disagree." Scepticism in the shape of hard-knocked realism marks India's general attitude to its

reasism marks india a generia autudie to its neighbours. But at this point of time, India needs to view the AKD phenomenon with faith in the self-renewing power of the democratic voice. The internal gravitas of the AKD-led government will necessarily have to be ideological, its external necessary have to be beconger, as exert had outreach will need to be empirical. But its link with India, which has internal and external dimensions will have to be what they have always been and will always be: umbilical.

Common Practice Standards must have India outlook

ndia's vast potential in the agroforestry ndia's vast potential in the agroforestry sector is a unique opportunity to integrate with carbon finance projects through Afforestation, Reforestation, and Revegetation (ARR) initiatives. There is a possibility to expand the area under agroforestry from the current 28.4 million hectares to 53 million hectares by 2050. Agroforestry accounts for 8.65% of India's total land area and contributes 19.3% of the country's carbon stocks. Thus, auroforestry plays. carbon stocks. Thus, agroforestry plays a significant role in environmental sustainability and economic development.

anu economic development.
Recent research suggests that if adequate
policies, financial support, and incentives are
implemented, the sector could contribute an
additional carbon sink of over 2.5 billion tons of
CO₂ equivalent by 2030.

non Practice' in Carbon Standards

'Common Practice' in Carbon Standards In the realm of carbon finance, 'common practice' is a key criterion used to assess whether a project is additional – meaning, it goes beyond what is typically done in a given region. For ARR projects, this involves determining whether similar activities are commonly practised without the financial incentives provided by carbon credits. According to carbon standards such as Verra's Verified Carbon Standard (VCS) or the Verra's Verified Carbon Standard (VCS) or the

Verra's Verified Carbon Standard (VCS) or the Gold Standard, if an activity is deemed "common practice", it may not qualify for carbon credits, as it is not seen as contributing additional environmental benefits beyond the norm.

However, the current definition of common practice in global carbon standards often reflects the realities of large-scale agricultural practices found in regions such as Latin America, Africa, or the United States, where landholdings are extensive and contiguous. In contrast, India is characterised by small and fragmented landholdings. Recent data indicate that 86.1% of landian farmers are small and marginal, with landholdings of less than two hectares. These farmers often engage in agroforestry in a non-systematic, scattered manner, planting trees alongside crops or on small patches of fallow

While beneficial, these practices may not meet



The election

result in Sri Lanka must be viewed by India

as faith in the self-renewing power of the

democratic

Sayanta Ghosh Associate Fellow Land Resources, The Energy and Resources Instit



Jitendra Vir

Senior Directo

The Energy and

International carbon finance platforms must revise their standards to better align with the realities of agriculture

the additionality criteria set by current carbon standards because they are perceived as "common" within the Indian context. This presents a significant challenge, as it effectively excludes a large number of Indian farmers from participating in ARR carbon finance projects, thereby denying them the opportunity to earn additional income from carbon credits.

Need for India-centric approaches

Given India's unique agricultural landscape, there is an urgent need to redefine and consider the common practice criterion to better reflect the specific challenges and opportunities within the specinc challenges and opportunities within Indian agroforestry sector. An India-centric approach would recognise that even small, incremental changes in land management practices such as adopting more systematic agroforestry techniques or utilising carbon finance to maintain tree cover can be

transformative.
Revising and consideration of the common Revising and consideration of the common practice standards to accommodate the fragmented, small-holder model prevalent in India would unlock the vast potential for carbon sequestration. This would enable a greater number of farmers to participate in carbon finance projects, providing them with additional income streams while contributing to India's climate goals. Further, by acknowledging the fragmented nature of Indian particulture, carbon fragmented nature of Indian agriculture, carbon credit platforms could design incentives that encourage systematic agroforestry, thereby enhancing both environmental sustainability and rural livelihoods.

Agroforestry, when integrated with ARR initiatives, offers a viable solution to the various challenges faced by India's agricultural sector. By promoting alternative livelihoods and providing additional income streams for farmers, these projects can help address issues such as low productivity, dependence on monsoons, and environmental degradation. The carbon finance provided by ARR projects enables a more systematic and sustained approach to agroforestry, which would otherwise be difficult to achieve given the financial pressures and

market constraints faced by many Indian farmers For farmers grappling with unpredictable weather patterns and fluctuating crop yields, participating in ARR projects presents a pathw participating in Ame Projects presents a patrivose to income diversification. By integrating trees into their agricultural landscapes or restoring degraded forest areas on their land, farmers can tap into additional revenue streams through carbon sequestration. Beyond economic gains, ARR projects deliver crucial environmental benefits, such as enhancing soil fertility, improving water retention, and mitigating erosion, thereby bolstering agricultural productivity and ensuring long-term

Help small and marginal farmers

Help small and marginal farmers Research institutes such as The Energy and Resources Institute (TERI) have already demonstrated the potential of ARR projects in India, spearheading 19 projects across seven States, benefiting over 56,600 farmers. However, for such initiatives to scale up, it is imperative that international carbon finance platforms revise their standards to better align with the realities of Indian agriculture. Indian agriculture.
As India looks to expand its agroforestry sector

and leverage the benefits of carbon finance it is crucial that international standards evolve to reflect the specific conditions of the Indian senect me specinic conditions of the Indian subcontinent. Revising the "Common Practice" guidelines to be more inclusive of Indian agroforestry practices will enable millions of small and marginal farmers to participate in ARR projects. This would not only drive sustainable development but also provide a much-needed boost to the incomes of millions of rural households, utilizingly contributions to the committee of the committee households, ultimately contributing to the overall economic and environmental resilience of the

country.

It is imperative that carbon credit platforms such as Verra and Gold Standard recognise the need for India-centric standards. Only then can the full potential of agroforestry and Africa. Reinitiatives be realised, paying the way for a greener, more sustainable, and economically prosperous future for India's farmers.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

A word of advice
Pakistan has made its speeches in the United Nations take the form of a ritualistic spewing of venom against India, even as it continues to practise its undeclared state policy of abetting cross-border terrorism to create disturbances in Jammu and Kashmir and across the rest of India (Page 1, September 29), Instead of spending its energies on nurturing terrorism on its soil and

fulminating against India at international fora, it should concentrate its energies or setting right its economy, which is in a shambles. Pakistan must realise the futility of nurturing cross-border terrorism, so cross-border terroris that a peaceful and conducive atmosph ism. so nor the normalisation of ties with India. It will also usher peace in South Asia. Kosaraju Chandramouli, Hyderabad prevails for the

Son rise
It is amusing that many
politicians who hail from
political families in India
swear by the Constitution
and pose as the champions
of democracy while
unabashedly promoting
dynastic politics.
("Udhayanidhi is Deputy
CM; Senthilibalji back in
Cabinet", September 29).
Strangely, the public takes
such hypocriy for granted.
Is there an unconscious
yearning for kings and

maharajas in the Indian psyche? Manohar Alembath, Kannur, Kerala

Antibiotics use The inappropriate use of antibiotics and the unrestricted over-the-counter sale of over-the-counter sale of antibiotics has led to increased antimicrobial resistance ("Science" page, "Can Kerala's policy to limit antibiotics misuse reduce AMR?", September 29).

Antimicrobial resistance is one of the top public health and global threats, putting many of the gains of modern medicine at risk.

Kerala became the first State to ban over-the-counter sale of over-the-counter sale of antibiotics without a prescription, but much needs to be done in terms of regulation and the antibiotic policy to prevent the deaths due to AMR. Dr. Thomas Palocaren, Vellore, Tamil Nadu

Mark of an era In the passing of 108-year-old Pappammal on September 77, India has lost a pioneer in the field of agriculture. The centenarian Tamil Nadu-based farmers life was a testament to the life was a testament to the power of passion in agriculture, and it is unimaginable that a womar could toil in this tough and unpredictable field every day even at that ripe age. R. Sivakumar, Chennal









:::



Opinion

Bridging the chasm of global inequality

fundamental questions on global governance focus be on great po should the foc should the focus be on great power competition or continuing imbalance in the institutions, agenda setting, and global inequality? The former looks at the means and not the ends with a continuing debate on the meaning of justice. Global enals do not resolve

Global goals do not resolve challenges; they support new forms of cooperation. The Summit resulted in a Global Digital Impact initiative and a Declaration on Future Generations, an inspirational call for national action. The concrete impact is an International Scientific Panel and a Global Dialogue on Al. An implementation map and intergovernmental consultations mirror how climate change came onto the global agenda 30 years ago. Climate change is now relegated to scaling up adaptation finance, and GDP will include sustainability. Developed countries continue to have the capacity to initiative and a Declaration on continue to have the capacity to shape the global agenda. The Summit did not agree to a

clear pathway for Security Council reform and has called for categories of members. Reform of governance of global financial institutions is limited to a pledge to give developing countries a greate say in decision making and review of sovereign debt has been

of sovereign debt has been reiterated. Concerns of developing countries have got a short shift.

The problem here is one of definitions. Should the 67, which continues to set the global agenda, be described as a club of victors of the Second World War or a group of former colonial powers? The of former colonial powers? The U.S. established the G-7 in 1973 to set the global agenda in the United Nations (UN) as an anti-developing country body. The clash between Western capitalism and Soviet communism provided the former colonies who became the world's colonies who oceanie the words poor more space and voice. While the world's political geography wa reshaped, the 'poor' remained trapped at the bottom of the



Mukul Sanwal

served as policy adviser to the Executive Director of UNEP and later to the Executive Secretary of the UNFCCC and was closely associated with Inter-Agency Relations in the Chief wider world is reflected in the UN.

For example, recent figures from the UN show that only 17% of from the UN show that only 17% o the Sustainable Development Goals are on track. Developing countries hold \$29 trillion in public debt, with \$847 billion in net interest payments, and experienced a negative net resource transfer in 2022. In July, the first joint declaration by G-20 finance leaders on international lax cooperation ended with tax cooperation ended with disagreement over whether the UN or the OECD is the right forum to advance the agenda.

Real change began with the re-emergence of China and India

re-emergence of China and India and their BRICS grouping, in 2009, but it still awaits the reversal of colonial imbalances in key areas. In 1950, the U.S. used 40% of the world's natural resources having hegemonic power to set up multilateralism in a unilateral manner. With the reconstruction of Europe by 1970, their share had come down to 26%. Multilateralism evolved into treaties, having the authority to impact national policies. The G7 share decreased to one-fifth in re decreased to one-fifth in 2010, when Asia used half of global resource use. In a more equa world, the interests of the Global South gained a voice but not the ability to set the agenda. South Africa in 2023 had to file a case of determine obligations under the determine obligations under the climate regime and this is a severe indictment of conference diplomacy.

Foundations of power The foundations of power will remain with the West for a few decades even as the global trend is in favour of the Global South. In 1800, Asia consumed more energy than the rest of the world. In 1850, it consumed as much energy as the West. In 1950, the West's consumption was three times the rest of the world. In 2000, the West consumed as much energy as the rest of the world. The imbalance in the sphere of technology and endogenous

becoming global leaders only in certain areas. The trend is towar certain areas. The trend is to a more equal world in all its a more equal world in all its dimensions. In 2000, 4.6 billion people lived in countries whose combined GDP was just 20% of the 755 million people who lived in the G-7. By 2016, the GDP share of 17 developing countries as a percentage of the G-7 countries tripled to 63%. The Summit accepts this imbalance but focuses on how propress is measured on how progress is measured rather than on measures to bridge

the gaps.
The Summit recognises that GDP focuses on the economic performance of societies but seeks performance of societies but seeks to link it to sustainability. A broader understanding of prosperity considers non-monetary factors such as infrastructure, municipal services, affordable energy, educational opportunities, health care, and access to drinking water that better represent the urban living standards in a country. A focus on comparable levels of well-being is overdue.

overdue.

The big lesson from the Summit is that developing countries have yet to exploit the opportunities presented by the UN system. While the international political process is open in procedural terms, it has en informed by consensual ence developed by 'official perts', and this will be the ca experts', and this will be the case for global governance of Artificial intelligence (AI) and modification of GDP. Experts frame issues in a manner that determines the "problem" and how it should be "streethers".

esolved". As global power shifts back to Asia, both giants are conscious that their ideas are different from the dominant view espoused by the West on how societies work, change, and can be influenced. In a nod to geopolitics, Asia needs to a nod to geopolitics, Asia needs to be involved more deeply from the very beginning in expert bodies on AI and GDP to shape global governance by defining global priorities, cooperation, and justice.

Cash transfers in A.P.: lifeline with gaps

Government must ensure that cash transfers reach all marginalised populations

STATE OF PLAY

Diego Maiorano Upasak Das Chakradhar Buddha

Andhra Pradesh, the current and previous re-gimes have relied heavily on cash transfers to support vulnerable citizens. These transfers reflect a global trend favouring direct cash assis-tance over traditional aid based on the belief that recibased on the belief that reci-pients can meet their needs more effectively. However, while the State's cash transfer schemes, such as YSR Rythu Bharosa (RB) and Jagananna Amma Wodi (AMV), are ambi-tious, our recent study shows that these programmes are not reaching many of those they seek to help, particularly in tri-bal communities.

bal communities. Unlike in kind support, which involves complex sup-ply chains, cash transfers deliv-er funds directly to beneficiaries, allowing them to make their own choices. In Andhra Pradesh, cash transfers form the backbone of the govern-ment's welfare agenda, providment's welfare agenda, provid-ing financial aid across various sectors. Between 2019 and 2024, the government claims to have spent nearly two lakh crores in cash transfer schemes.

The RB scheme, launched in 2019, provides annual financial assistance of 183,500 to farmer families. Meanwhile, the AMV programme offers \$15,000 per year to mothers or guardians

year to mothers or guardians of school-going children.

However, our December 2022 survey of over 1,100 hou-seholds in the Integrated Tribal seholds in the Integrated Tribal Development Agency regions of the State revealed that ap-proximately 24% of eligible RB beneficiaries and 15% of AMV beneficiaries did not receive any benefits. These figures are



particularly alarming as they highlight a failure to reach the

most vulnerable. Administrative and technical barriers largely account for these exclusions. Our research identified issues like unlinked Aadhaar numbers, errors in bank account mapping, and unresolved technical glitches. unresolved technical glitches, buch as swapped village names, led to payment denials for eligible farmers. The bu-reaucratic challenges in resolv-ing these issues are often over-whelming, especially for those with limited literacy and access to support. to support. Research by Silvia Masiero

and Chakradhar Buddha on the RB scheme highlights three main issues. Many beneficiaries remain unaware of their ex-clusion, and grievance redress mechanisms are often ineffec-tive. The design flaws block ac-cess to subsidies. Information-al barriers occur when beneficiaries are no informed about benefit denials or solu-tions. Structural challenges, in-cluding difficulties in updating incorrect records, exacerbate exclusions. These issues un-derscore the need for more inies remain unaware of their exderscore the need for more inclusive welfare systems.

The poorest are often ex-cluded due to glitches and complex error-resolution pro-cesses. For tribal communities, cesses. For tribat communities, especially women, accessing help is even harder due to long travel times and cultural biases in public services.

These challenges raise fundamental questions about the

effectiveness of digital infras-tructure in delivering welfare. The technological shift has in-creased the burden on already strained administrative sys-tems and the most vulnerable beneficiaries, for whom "a glitch" can mean missing vital financial help. Instead of sim-plifying, digital public infras-tructure has, in some cases, added layers of complexity. To address this, the govern-ment needs to go beyond the effectiveness of digital infras

ment needs to go beyond the current digital-first approach. A concerted effort is necessary to simplify administrative pro-cedures, enhance ground-level support services, and improve outreach to raise awareness of eligibility criteria and enroll-ment processes. Investing in local help centres, deploying more mobile support teams, and offering guidance in local languages can bridge the ac-cessibility gap. A concerted effort is necessary cessibility gap. The lessons are clear, tech

nology can make welfare deliv-ery easier for the administran, but it cannot substitute the need for transparent, hu man-centred support systems. Information gaps, such as un-clear reasons for benefit exclusions and ineffective grievance sions and ineffective grievance redressal mechanisms, must be addressed to ensure these programmes truly reach and uplift the marginalised. The State must ensure that the pro-mise of cash transfers does not end at the click of a button but reaches every eligible benefici-ary. Only then can these ambi-tious welfare programmes betious welfare programmes be-come effective lifelines for the

at the University of Naples L'Orientale

sak Das is Senior Lecturer at the evelopment Institute a University of Manch

What has Make in India achieved?

Ten years later, manufacturing growth has slowed to 55%, its GDP share remains stagnant at 15-17%, and employment in the sector has decreased

DATA POINT

n September 25, 2014, the newly elected Union go-vernment initiated the Make in India (MI) policy with two objectives: (3) to raise the manufac-turing sector's share in GDP to 25% (from 41%-15%), and (ii) to create 100 million additional industrial jobs (from about 60 million) by 2025. The policy was similar to the 2025. The policy was similar to the New Manufacturing Policy 2012, New Manufacturing Policy 2012, formulated but not implemented. The policy context: though India's annual real (net of inflation) CDI growth rate had accelerated to 7%-8% during the previous decade with rising export share, especially during 2003-08, manufacturing sector performance was modest, with increasing net imports and modest employment expansion. Ten years on, what are the poli-

Ten years on, what are the poli-cy outcomes? According to the Na-tional Accounts Statistics (NAS), the manufacturing real gross value added (GVA) growth rate has slowed down from 8.1 during 2001 12 to 5.5% during 2012-23 (Chart 1). The sector's GDP share has stagnat-

The sector's GDP share has stagnated at 1594-175, over the last three decades, though it is slightly higher in the latest GDP series due to methodological changes (Chart 2).

As per the NSSO sample surveys, manufacturing employment has declined from 12.6% in 2011-12 to 11.4% in 2022-23. Unorganised or informal sector manufacturing accounts for most employment, declining by 8.2 million, from 38.8 million in 2015-16 to 3.05 million in 2015-16 to 3.05 million 2022-23, sep surveys of unincor-2022-23, as per surveys of uninco porated sector enterprises. Agri-culture's share in the workforce in-creased from 42.5% in 2018-19 to 45.8% in 2022-23 (Chart 3).

45.8% in 2022-23 (Chart 3).

The proceding reversal of structural transformation from a higher to a lower productivity sector is unprecedented in post-independent India. It is the clearest sign yet of premature de-industrialisation, that is, before attaining industrial

CM (IIII

maturity as in the advanced coun tries.
Why is India deindustrialising?

The big lesson

Summit is that

countries have

yet to exploit

opportunities presented by the UN system

developing

from the

Why is India deindustrialising? Why did industrial production growth plummet despite the offi-cial real GDP growth rate of 6%-7% annually? Fixed investment growth practically collapsed. Chart 4 shows the annual growth rate in GVA and gross fixed capital forma-tion (GPCF) from 2012-13 to 2019-20 as per National Accounts Statis-20 as per National Accounts Statis-tics (NAS) and Annual Survey of In-dustries (ASI). We focus on time-tested ASI figures as the NAS figures are overestimated due to methodological problems. The in dustrial output growth rate is much lower than the official NAS much lower than the official NAS-based estimates. The GFCF growth rate during the period is practically zero. Unsurprisingly, booming im-ports, mainly from China, have met the demand (Chart 5).

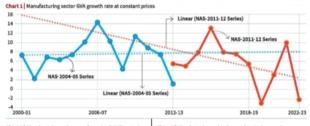
Why did not domestic invest-ments grow under Mi, despite In-dia's rank in the World Bank's Ease of Doing Business (EDB) index, im-

of Doing Business (EDB) index, im-proving from 142 in 2014-15 to 63 in 2019-20? Because EDB is a bogus, politically motivated index with lit-tle analytical or empirical founda-tions. With hindsight, the govern-ment squandered away six precious years chasing a dubious index.

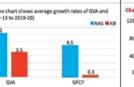
The key to reversing de-indus ialisation is re-imagining indus The key to reversing de-indus-trialisation is re-imagining indus-trial policy to align trade and in-dustrial policies to promote domestic value addition and learn-ing. Protection policies must pro-mote securing a dynamic compara-tive advantage, not offer cash subsidies to gain a static compara-tive advantage. India must aim at tive advantage. India must aim at tive advantage. India must aim at investment-led growth and technological catching up. They must be supported by domestic R&D to promote adaptive research and the promote adaptive research and the indigenisation of imported tech-nology. Publicly funded develop-ment finance institutions or "poli-cy banks" are needed to provide affordable long-term credit for so-cialising the risks of learning and catching up with the technological frontier.

Make in India report card

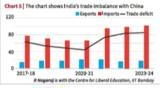












FROM THE ARCHIVES The MAR Trindu.

FIFTY YEARS AGO SEPTEMBER 30, 1974

HMT Sales to go up in three years

NEW DELHI, Sept. 29: The Hindustan Machine Tools Limited would increase its turnover from Rs. 43 crores to Rs. 100 crores in the next three years when it completes its expansion and diversification programme, Dr. S. M. Patil, Chairman of the Company, told a press conference here today.

Dr. Patil said this would however push up the capital outlay of the company to Rs. 100 crores from about Rs. 70 crores at present.

Dr. Patil said the recognition that HMT had won in the sophisticated international machine tool markets could be seen from the agreement

won in the sophisticated international machine tool markets could be seen from the agreement it had signed last year with Kearney and Trecker Marvin of U.K. under which it would supply the basic machines for the numerical controls for sale abroad. HMT would gradually take on more and more of the numerical controls part of the work to make the entire product in India. HMT had already secured orders worth £1.5 millions (Rs. 2.8 croses) for the next three years. HMT also signed another agreement with Machine Tool Works Buchre and Co. Oerlikon, Switzerland, for the export of engineering documentation and equipment to the Swiss company and the contract was worth 4.5 million company and the contract was worth 4.5 million

company and the contract was worth 4.5 million Swiss francs (Rs. 2.8 crores).

A HUNDRED YEARS AGO SEPTEMBER 30, 1924

Madras Scavengers' Union.

The Madras Corporation and City Scavengers' Union has represented, by the Corporation Health Officer, the grievances of the scavengers and the great hardships they are subject to for consideration and remedy. Some of the grievances are thus: (1) the scavengers are not given 15 days' leave on full pay as they are entitled to; (2) that they are overworked as Night Soil Depot coolies in digging grounds; (3) the might drivers who work heart the whole night tree in the tripers. Soil Depot coolies in digging grounds; (3) the night drivers who work hard the whole night are required to present themselves at 8:30 a.m. to answer the Muster Roll call, to work till 12 noon and again turn up at 4 p.m. and work till 12 noon and again turn up at 4 p.m. and work till 6 p.m. and run up again for night duty, wages being paid for work in the nights only; (4) that the men should be paid their monthly wages not later than the 5th of every month; and (5) that the motor lorry coolies who work from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. without any rest every day should be given at least a half holiday on Saturdays.

Text&Context

THE

NEWS IN NUMBERS

Number of complaints to NRI cell regarding domestic violence

The government's NRI cell, which handles cases related to NRI marriages of women both in India and abroad, received 481 complaints from women in 2022, on issues ranging from domestic violence, confiscation of passports etc. PTI

The death toll from the Nepal floods and landslides

Nepal's National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Authority said 148 people had been killed across the country with another 59 still missing. At least 36 of those killed were aboard three vehicles and were buried alive. An

Amount earmarked for infra upgrades for Kumbh Mela

in ₹ crore. The Railway
Ministry has been
working on making
elaborate arrangements for the Kumbh
Mela and has plans to run 992 special trains for the mega religious congregation to be held in Prayagraj in January. PTI

The number of Ukranian drones shot down by Russia

125 The shooting down of drones sparked a wildfire and set an apartment block alight in one of the largest barrages seen over Russian skies since Moscow invaded Ukraine in February 2022, Sixteen

The death toll in the Gaza Strip since October 7, 2023

41,595 The toll includes nine dea nine deaths in the last 24 hours, as per the ministry, which said that 96,251 people have been wounded in Gaza since the war began. COMPILED BY THE HINDU DATA TEAM

Follow us 🚺 facebook.com/thehindu 🔘 twitter.com/the_hindu 💿 instagram.com/the_hindu

Why are law students at RGNUL protesting?

Is this the first such students' protest at the Rajiv Gandhi National University of Law? What are the various allegations against the Vice-Chancellor Professor Jai Shankar Singh? Where do talks between the administration and students stand?

EXPLAINER

The story so far:

Student-led protests have marred activity at the Rajiv Gandhi National University of Law (RGNUL) after Vice-Chancellor (VC) Professor Jai Shankar Singh allegedly entered the girls' hostel without prior notice, violating their privacy. Students regard this incident as the last straw in a series of grievances that, in their view, have caused the VC to lose "their mandate" — leading to an indefinite sit-in mandate" – leading to an indefinite sit-in protest that began on September 22, 2024. Their demands include strengthened campus security, the establishment of a students' associa for improved representation, and the implementation of comprehensive academic reform

What happened?
Denying the allegations, Mr. Singh told The Hindu that his visit to the first-year female students! rooms was "at their invitation." He claimed that an influx of female students this academic year had led to overcrowding in the girls' hostel, with first-year students being placed in double-occupancy rooms. "These are baseless accusations. I visited the first-year students being place the storage of space. I was accompanied by the chief warden and a female security guard," he said. guard," he said.

Refuting Mr. Singh's claim, a fourth-year female student told The Hindu that Mr. Singh failed to give either the students or the hostel warden any prior notice of his visit. "According to hostel regulations, access to the girls' hostel is restricted for male members of the university, and even parents are denied entry unless explicitly authorised. This unannounced visit constitutes a grave breach of our privacy, especially since this is our personal space," she said. Students further claimed that the chief warden and a female security guard only arrived to accompany Mr. Singh only after being summoned by the students. "The VC didn't just visit the first-year students; he also entered the rooms of third-year Refuting Mr. Singh's claim, a

he also er e also entered the rooms of third-year udents. If his intention was solely to address the space issues affecting first-year students, why did he feel the need to enter the rooms of third-year

need to enter the rooms of third-year students, who reside in an entirely separate block?" a third-year female student questioned. However, this is purportedly not the first instance of inappropriate behaviour exhibited by Mr. Singh.

Several students, speaking on the condition of anonymity, alleged that since his appointment in March, he has made sexist and insensitive remarks on multiple occasions. A written representation submitted by the students to the Chief Justice of the Punjab and Haryana High Court – who also serves as the ex-officio Court – who also serves as the ex-officio Chancellor of the University – attributes numerous instances of moral policing to

"Ladki ho. domestic violence va "Ladki ho, domestic violence ya marriage jaisa Act uthao aur aaram se ghar par course karo. Kyu lina complicated aur nayu topic leti ho (You are a girl, pick a law like domestic violence or marriage and stay back at home and pursue the course. Why do you opt for new and complicated topics)," Mr. Singh allegedly told some female students, as per the representation accessed by The Hindu. Additionally, he reportedly questioned the attire of some female students on one occasion.



In rage: A group of students protesting at the Rajiv G.

Negotiations between the protesting students and the University administration have repeatedly failed to reach a consensus. Moreover, three faculty members of the nine-member committee constituted to facilitate discussions with the students resigned without explanation.

resigned without explanation. Several students reported to The Hindu that they have been protesting in sweltering heat and adverse weather conditions, with some even losing consciousness and requiring medical attention. "We tried to arrange for tents, but the university administration intervened and directed suppliers not to honour our requests," claimed a third-year student. Students also claimed that the administration contacted their parents to

students also claimed that the administration contacted their parents to stifle the protests, warning them that that their children could face expulsion if they continued to agitate. Mr. Singh, however, denied the allegations and told The Hindu, "No calls were made. These are just lies and false accusations."

Are there other grievances?
This is not the first student-led protest that RGNUL has witnessed. In 2019, approximately 400 students agreed to end a five-day indefinite sit-in only after the administration committed to revoking the suspension of six students who had advocated for improved hostel food, enhanced library access for women, and the removal of discriminatory curfew restrictions in the girls' hostel. "Our

ors had protested for the establishment of an official students' association nearly four years ago, yet no progress has been made on that front. It is incredibly difficult to voice our grievances without an official representative body," a fourth-year student said.

without an omclair representative body, a fourth-year student said.
Female students have also voiced concerns regarding inadequate security measures. "Since the university is located on the outskirts of Patiala, the road in front of the campus remains deserted. We have repeatedly urged the administration to install street lights, CCTV cameras, and set up a police outpost near the main gate. But our grievances have been dismissed citing a lack of requisite funds," a student told The Hindu.
In recent times, Ni,Us – once hailed as "islands of excellence" by former Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh – have witnessed a wave of student protests fuelled by a range of factors such as

fuelled by a range of factors such as exorbitant fees, inadequate infrastructure, and administrative apathy. According to Prof. (Dr.) Faizan Mustafa, noted academic and VC of Chanakya National Law University (CNLU), Patna NLUs witness significantly fewer studer protests compared to other universities Protests compared to other universities.
"Students in NLUs generally exhibit far greater restraint and refrain from engaging in any form of violence. They exercise their right to protest peaceably without arms. I do not see any problem with it," he told The Hindu.

Dr. Mustafa further opined that students, as primary stakeholders, should play an active role in administrative

THE GIST

Student-led protests have marred activity at the Rajiv Gandhi National University of Law (RGNUL) after Vice-Chancellor (VC) Professor Jai Shankar Singh allegedly entered the girs' hostel without prior notice, violating their privacy.

Denying the allegations, Mr. Singh told *The Hindu* that his visit to the first-year female students' rooms was "at their invitation."

Raj Lali Gill, the Chairperson of the Punjab State Women Commission, has written to President Drougad Numru and Prime Minister Narendra Modi recommending the "immediate removal" of Mr. Singh "to restore a safe and respectful environment on the university campus."

conflict resolution, I believe the responsibility lies with the head of the institution to take the initiative. Throughout my 15-year tenure as the VC of various NLUs, I have never subscribed to the 'control model' of university administration. Involving students meaningfully in administrative decisions fosters trust between them and the administration. Ultimately, universi are better run from classro the VC's office," he added. ms than from

What happens next?

Raj Lali Gill, the Chairperson of the Punjab State Women Commission, has written to President Drougaid Murmu and Prime Minister Narendra Modi recommending the "immediate removal" of Mr. Singh "to restore a safe and respectful environment on the university campus." The recommendation follows campus." The recommendation follows her visit to the university, where she met with protesting students and instructed the administration to form a "neutral committee" with student representatives

committee" with student representative to engage in dialogue.

Additionally, Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann has reportedly taken cognisance of the students' grievances and assured them of prompt action. Despite Dr. Naresh Vats, the officiating Registrar of the varsity, announcing that classes would resume on September 27, 2024, students have so far unanimously boycotted them. The University was earlier shut down on account of the earlier shut down on account of the ongoing protests.

CM C

...

M ND-NOE

THE HINDU Text&Context

CACHE



The Mullenweg-WP Engine dispute and how WordPress users are affected

WordPress is software that people can use to build a website, blog or e-commerce portal on the internet. While WP Engine is a company that offers managed hosting services for WordPress websites, Matt Mullenweg is the founder and CEO of Automattic, the company that owns WordPress.com

ince September 21, a dispute between Matt Mullenweg, the between Matt Mullenweg, the technologist at the centre of the wordfress community, and a company called WP Engine has snowballed rapidly into a crisis for lakhs of Wordfress users around the world. Wordfress reputedly powers more than 40% of all websites on the internet, so policies that affect users' ability to access the software's features could have a wide-ranging impact.

wide-ranging impact.

WordPress and Mullenweg
WordPress is a piece of software people
can use to build a website, blog or
e-commerce portal on the internet. As
open-source software, it's built, tested,
deployed, and popularised by a
community of thousands of volunteer
developers located around the world. It is
available under a GPL licence, which
allows others to modify the software
while obligating them to distribute the
new version under the same licence.
A WordPress website can be
self-hosted; you can download a copy of
WordPress for free from WordPress.org to
use for websites hosted on your own
server. In the hosted version, you pay a
fee to a third party to manage your
website's WordPress setup and
infrastructure. WP Engine is one such
third party.
Matt Mullenweer is the founder and

infrastructure. We ruggine as the activity party.

Matt Mullenweg is the founder and CEO of Automattic, a for-profit company that owns many digital products. One of them is WordPress.com, a hosted WordPress defering, Mullenweg also personally owns WordPress.org, which dispenses the open-source WordPress for

download. This said, Automattic isn't directly affiliated with WordPress.org or the WordPress Foundation. It contrib nearly 3,988 hours per week towards WordPress development, however.

The trademark dispute

WordPress development, however.

The trademark dispute
On September 21, Mullenweg accused WP
Engine of being a "cancer" to the
WordPress community. His rie was
directed at WP Engine's decision to
disable the ability of WordPress installed
on sites it hosts to record changes made
to content composed using the system.
WP Engine's stated reason was that this
feature led to bloated databases that
eventually slowed websites, Mullenweg
also alleged WP Engine was profiting from
free access to WordPress without itself
contributing to WordPress's development.
After the post appeared, WP Engine
shot off a cease-and-desist (C&D) letter to
Automattic on September 23 asking
Mullenweg to stop disparaging WP
Engine. Automatic's lawyers responded
with a C&D letter to WP Engine alleging
the latter had violated a trademark.
According to Automattic's letter, WP
Engine's use of the label "WP" in its name
has confused consumers into equating
WP Engine with WordPress Itself. WP
Engine rebutted by quoting a line from
the WordPress Foundation website's page
on "Trademark Policy": "The
abbreviation "WP" is not covered by the
WordPress trademarks and you are free to
use it in any way you see fit." But at some
point after Spetember 21 the line was
edited to: "The abbreviation "WP" is not
covered by the WordPress trademarks,
but please don't use it in a way that
confuses people."
WP Engine also said it had been using

nfuses people." WP Engine also said it had been using

the label "WP" for "more than a decade". Trademark law in the U.S. expects Trademark law in the U.S. expects trademark owners to act to sanction potentially infringing uses. If they don't, they are liable to lose the trademark. WE Engine's argument is thus that it has bee able to use the "WP" label for many year us that it has been without inviting punitive action.

without inviting punitive action.

An unprecedented ban
On September 24, Mullenweg wrote in a
Reddit post that WP Engine "had the
option to license the WordPress
rademark for 8% of their revenue, which
could be delivered either as payments,
people... or any combination of the
above." The 8% figure, which would have
amounted to \$40 million a year from WP
Engine, has not been specified anywhere
else. The next day, Mullenweg banned WP
Engine from directly accessing updates
and plugins hosted on WordPress.org,
abruptly breaking the normal function of
several lakh WordPress websites (the
updates are essential for WordPress
websites to remain secure). This action
greatly exacerbated negative sentiments
towards Mullenweg in the WordPress
community that had erupted after his
"cancer" comment.
One point of contention among

community that had erupted after his "cancer" comment.

One point of contention among community members centred on WP Engine's decision to disable revision control, which Mullenweg had translated to WP Engine's private equity ownership "butchering" WordPress in order to cut costs. Members also highlighted the confusion surrounding Mullenweg's role vis-à-vis WordPress. According to the WordPress Foundation, Automattic has a licence to use the "WP" for commercial activities.

activities. Should WP Engine be liable to pay a

trademark licence fee, it will be to the Foundation – yet the C&D letter alleging trademark misuse came from Automattic, not the Foundation.

not the Foundation.

Many developers have also construed Mullenweg's decision to ban WP Engine's access to WordPress.org to be a subversion of the WordPress open-source community's equal-opportunity structure in favour of an Automattic CEO's bid to resolve a dispute driven by himself. They have also alleged Mullenweg has a conflict of interest since WP Engine competes directly with Automattic's WordPress.com.

An uncertain future
Despite WP Engine not being obligated to
contribute to WordPress development,
Mullenweg has maintained it isn't entitled
to access WordPress.org because such
access is vouchsafed for services that
benefit the WordPress community. He
told The Verge his actions erect "an
expectation that any business making
hundreds of millions of oldars off of an
open source project ought to give back".
On September 27, Mullenweg
temporarily restored WP Engine's access
to resources on WordPress.org until
October 1 while asking stakeholders to
blame WP Engine's leaders, not him, for
the disruption.
The WordPress Foundation filed an
application in July with the U.S. Patent
and Trademark Office to trademark the
terms "Managed WordPress" and "Hosted
WordPress".
In the present context, this has sowed

WordPress". In the present context, this has sowed more uncertainty amid independent hosting providers, who are seeking clarity from Automattic and keep legal action against their businesses at bay.



KNOW YOUR ENGLISH

I got the entire six-course meal for free!

You should store the money you saved on the meal in your piggy bank for a rainy day

S. Upendran

What is the meaning of 'The opposition skunked our team'? When used as a noun, the word 'skunk' is mostly used to refer to the animal which When used as a noun, the word 'skunk' is mostly used to refer to the animal which squirts or sprays a foul-smelling liquid on its attacker. The smell is so bad that the attacker flees. The word is sometimes used with human beings as well. When you refer to an individual as a 'skunk', what you are suggesting is that he is rather umpleasmt; he is disliked and not trusted by those around him.

There's no way I'm inviting that skunk to the party.

Unlike in British English, Americans frequently use the word 'skunk' as a verb as well. When you say that he rival team 'skunked' you, what you mean is that they defeated you quite badly; it was an easy victory for them. In a game like football, it also suggests that your team failed to score a single goal.

Nobody expected Harish to skunk Sanjay in straight sets.

The expression 'drunk as a skunk' is used informally to mean 'very drunk'.

Which is correct? "Lovi it for free" or

used mormany to mean 'very drunk'.

Which is correct? "I got it for free" or
"I got it free"? (Amar, Bengaluru)
If you love your grammar, and strongly
believe that all rules should be followed
blindly, then you would argue that 'for
free' is grammatically incorrect. You
would maintain that the word 'free' is an
adjective and not a noun; therefore, a
preposition like 'for' should not precede
it. We cannot, therefore, say 'for free'. But
as we know, rules are meant to be broken.
It has become common nowadays, even
among native speakers of English, to say
'for free'. In informal contexts, we hear
sentences like 'I got it for free'.

What is the origin of the term 'piggy bank'? (K. George, Cochin) Nowadays, when you hear the word 'piggy bank', you immediately think of an object shaped like a pig, which parents give their children in order to encourage them to save money. Whenever a child receives money from the parents or relatives, they are expected to put it in the little bank. The curious among you may wonder why this 'bank' is shaped like a 'pig' – after all, this animal, is not know

pig — after air, im animai, is not known for its ability to save — it never stores food for winter. The only thing it does is eat. As you are probably aware, several centuries ago the dishes and utensils that we make use of today were made of clay, and not metal. In England, the clay that was used to make jugs, jars, plates, etc. was called 'pygg'. Whenever a housewife managed to save some money, she used to put it in a 'pygg jar' which she called 'pygg bank' – meaning 'clay bank'. Around the 18th century the spelling of the clay was changed to 'pig', and by the time the 19th century arrived, most people had forgotten that the word 'pig' in 'pig bank' referred to a type of clay and not the animal.

k the animai. upendrankye@gmail.com

THE DAILY QUIZ

Please send in your answe

A quiz on Dame Maggie Smith, one of the most acclaimed and loved actors of our time, who passed away recently

OUESTION 1

Maggie Smith was one of the few actresses to earn the Tri actresses to earn the 'Tripl on of Acting', Name the series for which she got the Emmy that helped her complete the honour.

OUESTION 2

Maggie Smith won her first Oscar for playing the titular character in which 1969 flick?

QUESTION 3

Which character did she play in teven Spielberg's Hook, a take n Peter Pan?

QUESTION 4

CM CM

legendary Prof. McGonagall. Her face-off with another popular character nearly did ot make it to film but for author J.K. Rowling insistir should be included. Which

QUESTION 5

With My Aunt, whom she married and had two sons with.

OUESTION 6

reen with Smith's son in Die nother Day. Name the fellow



character played by Maggie Smith in Do

edition of the daily quiz: 1. The school Bhagat Singh attended in his boyhood. Ans: Dayanand Anglo-Vedic School in Lahore
2. The word Singh and his comrades added to

HRA thus changing it to HSRA. Ans: Socialist 3. The name of the British officer assassinated by Bhagat Singh and Rajguru. Ans: John P.

Saunders
4. Bhagat Singh and Batukeshwar Dutt threw mbs in the Central Legislative Assembly in opposition to the introduction of these sets o laws. Ans: Public Safety Bill and the Trade

5. The number of days of hunger strike Bhagat Singh underwent in protest of the treatment of political prisoners. **Ans: 116 days** Visual: The period for which Bhagat Singh was detained in connection with the Lahore nb case of 1926. Ans: May 29 to July 4, 1927

Early Birds: Anwesha Mandal| C. Saravanan| Arvind Tillway| Piyali Tuli| Vivek Raj

Word of the day Illusory: based on or having the nature of an illusion.

Usage: His hopes would soon prove to be

Pronunciation: newsth.live/illusorypro

International Phonetic Alphabet: /rlu:s(ə).i/, /rlu:z(ə).i/

> For feedback and suggestions for Text & Context, plea letters@thehindu.co.in with the subject 'Text & Context

> > M NO HOE

Not just nothing, dark matter quests close in on dire 'neutrino fog'

Scientists have placed the tightest restrictions yet on the identity of the particles that make up dark matter. It was a null result: it didn't say what the particle's identity was but suggested which identities the particle couldn't have. It prompted a sense of resignation. Similar experiments have been turning up empty-handed for decades

n August 28, two members of an experiment at conferences in Chicago and São Paulo had an announcement to make.

They were representing about 200 of their colleagues involved in the design, building, and operation of the LUX-ZEPLIN (LZ) experiment located 1.5km below the earth's surface at the Sanford Underground Research Facility in South Dakota, U.S. Their news: their band of scientists had placed the tightest

of scientists had placed the tightest restrictions yet on the identity of the particles that made up dark matter. It was a null result: it didn't say what the particle's identity was but suggeste which identities the particle couldn't have. And it didn't prompt disappointment from the physics community. Instead, it prompted resignation.

community. Instead, it promposer resignation.

Experiments similar to LZ – such as XENON-nT in Italy, PandaX-4T in China, and dozens of others around the world-have been turning up empty-handed for have been turning up empty-hande decades now despite heroic efforts.

Dark matter and its handshake

Dark matter is the invisible stuff making up most of the mass in the universe, responsible for giving the cosmos its current looks. Stars, gas, and planets contribute only 15% to the universe's

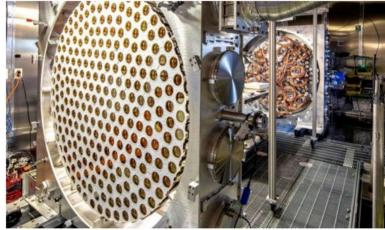
The simplest contender for the make up of dark matter is a previously unknown type of particle that doesn't interact with photons and lives –i.e. without disintegrating, unlike most particles – for at least the age of the universe, about 14 billion years. This raises a question: does dark matter ever touch us? More precisely, can atomic nuclei and electrons exatter dark matter particles when they come close? Several theories of dark matter indeed predict this handshake between the The simplest contender for the

predict this handshake between the visible and invisible. The issue is how we can detect it.

A sail to catch the wind

In 1985, physicists Mark Goodman and Ed Witten proposed a new strategy that has since mushroomed into an entire since mushroomed into an entire sub-field of experimental physics. (This is the same Witten of string theory fame. Thus the most theoretical of physicists has spawned an industry of experiments, proving the artificiality of divisions within physics. It is roinel that if dark matter is discovered in an underground laboratory, Witten will be awarded the Nobel Prize for something he has spent the least time on.)

We are all familiar with the pancake shape of the Milky Way galaxy. This disk



of stars is embedded in a ball of dark matter about 100,000 lightyears across. In the Solar System, every teaspoon of space contains about two protons' weight of dark particles. These particles blow as a wind into us from all directions at one-thousandth the speed of light. Goodman's and Witten's (GW) idea was to catch this wind in a "sail" – a chunk of metal placed deep underground to shield against other radiation from space. If a nucleus in the metal were seen to recoil spontaneously, it must be the invisible bump of dark matter.

In Ernest Rutherford's gold foil experiment, his team shone a well-understood beam at a mysterious target. GW's idea was the reverse: an enigmatic beam on a familiar target. The goal of the experiment to measure two of stars is embedded in a ball of dark

goal of the experiment is to measure two quantities: the unknown mass of the dark particle and the unknown rate at which nic nuclei scatter dark matter particles. Physicists track this rate using a variable called the cross-section.

variable called the cross-section.

Consider the passage of light in a vacuum, in glass, and in a piece of rock. In the first case, a photon travels unimpeded, in the second, it travels a good distance before being scattered by an atom; and in the third, it immediately stopped. We then say, for these three cases respectively, that the scattering cross-section is zero, small, and enormous.

Transparency needn't apply to light alone: any medium can be quantifiably

Scientists are actively pursuing other avenues of research, too. One is to detect dark particles that are lighter than atomic nuclei, for these would scatter feebly off the target nucleus

transparent or opaque to any particle type. GW's proposal would have measured the cross section for dark matter to scatter on nuclei down to 10-3s cm², already a staggeringly tiny quantity. It would imply that dark matter would have to traverse 10 billion km of rock before being stopped.

"The neutrino fog" These mousetraps for dark matter have since come a long way. Where GW proposed the use of a kilogramme of proposed the use of a kilogramme of metal for a day, today scientists expose tonnes of liquid xenon and argon to the dark-matter wind for years. The advantage of going bigger and running longer is that one can catch dark matter that is ghostlier, i.e., with a smaller cross section. As a result, we can now say with a straight face that we have ruled out dark matter-nucleus cross sections of 10-4 cm², a million times smaller than the GW limit. This is just the announcement LZ made in August.

Could we go on making our detectors bigger and probe arbitrarily smaller cross sections? Not quite. Future detectors that will weigh tens to hundreds of tonnes will

THE GIST

Dark matter is the invisible stuff making up most of the mass in the universe, responsible for giving the cosmos its current looks. Stars, gas, and planets contribute only 15% to the universe's mass

The simplest contender for the make-up of dark matter is a previously unknown type of particle that doesn't interact with photons and lives for at least the age of the universe about 14 billion years

The researchers' plan is to catch the dark matter in a 'sail' — a detector placed deep underground to shield against other radiation from space. If a nucleus in the detector were seen to recoil, it must be the invisible bump

unknown mass of the dark particle and the unknown rate at which atomic nuclei a variable called the

scatters of other ghostly particles, especially neutrinos forged in the Sun's interior and in the earth's atmosphere. interior and in the earth's atmosphere. In fact, PandaX-4T and XENONnT are already reporting this issue. The resignation following LZ's announcement is partly for this reasons scientists had hoped to reveal dark matter's identity before facing this "neurino fogg." Telling dark matter and neutrino signals apart in future searches is a challenge that drives a great deal of research.

also register much more noise from the

Every last drop Scientists are actively pursuing other avenues of research, too. One is to detect dark particles that are lighter than atomic nuclei, for these would scatter feebly off the target nucleus.

Picture a bug hitting a truck, which Picture a bug hitting a truck, which would hardly move the vehicle. The goal is to develop technology to perceive the slightest of energy transfers, which involves building detectors using special materials that are currently restricted to the realm of condensed matter physics.

Thus the hunt for dark matter, like that of the Calydonian boar, unites many talents. That is not surprising: the effort to decipher the natural world has always drawn every last drop of human ingenuity.

ingenuity.
(Nirmal Raj is an assistant professor of theoretical physics at the Centre for High Energy Physics in the Indian Institute of Science, Bengaluru. nraj@iisc.ac.in)

BIG SHOT

CM C



A river that overflowed its banks after the passage of Tropical Storm John in Chilpancingo, Mexico, on Friday. The head of Mexico's national meteor Mendez, said John had soaked Guerrero with more than 95 cm of rain since September 23, while Otis, a Category 5 hurricane, had brought 35 cm of rain. REUTERS

WHAT IS IT?

Pollen: a mammoth killer?

Vasudevan Mukunth

Pollen is an important substance

Pollen is an important substance many plants use to reproduce. It is a gametophyte, a multicellular organism of sorts that delivers the male gamete of a seed-producing plant to the stigma of another such plant. Each pollen particle consists of reproductive and non-reproductive cells. When the pollen lands on a compatible plant, the non-reproductive cells multiply to produce the pollen tube while the reproductive cells multiply to produce the nuclei of sperm cells. The sperm travels through cells. The sperm travels through the tube to the base of the pistil, the tube to the base of the pisti starting the process that eventually produces fruits filled with seeds. When many pollen particles are collected together, they resemble a powder. A natural polymer called sporopollenin surrounds the

sporopollenin surrounds the pollen cells to protect them during their journey through the air and from inclement elements Many people are allergic to pollen — this pollen usually comes from anemophilous plants (including birch and hickory); an allergic reaction from grass pollen is called hay fever. The study of pollen is called palynology. A study called palynology. A study published in the September 2024 issue of Earth History and

...



Pollen may have played a part in the extinction mammoths. The emergence of plants towards the end of the last ice age could have disrupted their sense of smell. GETTY IMAGES, ISTOCKPHOTO

Biodiversity reported that pollen may have played a part in pushing the mammoths to extinction. Based on genetic analyses, they said the emergence of plants towards the end of the last ice age could have disrupted the megafauma's sense of smell and circumstants. signalling pathways based on their olfactory system, including locating their group-mates and food sources. However, independent researchers have asked for more proof of the idea before they say it can be accepted.

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

S NO NOE

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

EXPLAINED SPACE

HOW MARS' ATMOSPHERE WENT MISSING: NEW STUDY OFFERS CLUES

MARS TODAY is a cold and barren desert. but this was not always the case. Increasingly, new evidence suggests that water flowed on the Martian surface once upon a time. This means that a thick at

upon a time. This means that a thick at-mosphere would have had to envelope the planet, to keep this water from freezing. Then, some 3.5 billion years ago, the water dried up as the carbon dioxide-rich atmosphere dramatically thinned. Just why this happened is the central ques-tion for scientists seeking to under-stand the history of the Red Planet. A new study pub-lished in the journal Science Advances on September 24 might have some answers to

ve some answers to

this question. Geologists Joshua Geologists Joshua Murray and Oliver Jagoutz from the Massachussets Institute o Technology suggest that water trickled through certain rock types on the Martian surface, and set off a slow chain of reac-

tions that progressively drew carbon dioxide out of the planet's atmosphere and converted it into methane. Methane is a form of carbon that can theoretically be stored for aeons on the Red Planet's clay surface.

Trapped in folds

Trapped in Tolds
The two goologists formulated this theory based on their research on Earth. In
2023, they were working on a type of Civil
material known as smectite, which is
known to be a highly effective carbon trap,
cains of smectice each comprise a number
of folds, within which carbon can sit for bil lions of years. The MIT researchers found that if left exposed to the atmosphere on Earth, smectite can draw and store atmos-pheric carbon dioxide over millions of years, enough to cool down the planet. Soon after this finding, Jagoutz hap-

pened to look at a magnified map of the Martian surface, and found the same smectite clay he was studying. Except, he was not sure how it got there. On Earth smectite is a product of tectonic activity. but it is well-established that Mars does not see such activity.

Role of water

The two scientists thus began to re ch alternative ways in which smectite could have formed. The answer to this question lies in how Martian water reacted with olivine, a ferrous rock known to be abundant on the planet's

surface. Using available data on the existence of olivine and the presence of water, as the existence of a thick CO2-heavy at-

or a trick CO2-neavy at-mosphere, the scientists came up with a computer todel to simulate how the three would react with each other, over a billion years.

They found that in Mars is the fourth planet

this vast time frame, oxygen atoms in water would slowly have bound to the iron in the olivine (this is also what gives the planet its red colour), freeing the hydrogen which would then have combined with the car-bon dioxide to form methane. Over time

bon diodes to form mechanic. Over time, the reaction with water would lead the olivine to turn into smectite which, in turn, absorbed the methane.

This knowledge has utility beyond scientists and researchers. With humanity looking to send missions, and perhaps eventually colonise the Red Planet, each teat spend in the Mexico surface.

eventually colonise the Red Planet, methane trapped in the Martian surface can potentially be an invaluable resource. "This methane may even be used as an energy source on Mars in the future," the researchers suggest.

HOW SCIENTISTS USED STEM CELLS TO 'REVERSE' DIABETES FOR FIRST TIME

betes – an autoimmune disease that de-stroys the insulin-producing cells in the pancreas, called islets – began to produce her own insulin in less than three months after a transplant of reprogrammed stem

after a transplant of reprograt cells, according to a new study. This is the first successful treatment for the disease us-ing stem cells, which can be used to grow any tissue in the body and can be cultured in-definitely in the laboratory. Researchers hope that the treatment will help patients avoid the need for immuno-sumpressants.

The study, which was led

The study, which was sed by scientists based in China, was published in the journal Cell last week. For the treatment, the researchers ex-tracted cells from three people with type I diabetes and reverted them into a pluripo-tent state, meaning the cells were turned into blank slates with no predetermined

body.
The researchers then used the chemi-

cally induced pluripotent stem (iPS) cells to generate 3D clusters of islets.

ate 3D clusters of islets. Subsequently, they injected the equivalent of roughly 1.5 million islets into the woman's abdominal muscles. Two-and-a-half months later, the woman was produc-ing enough insulin to live without needing top-ups, and she has sustained that level of reconstriction for more than roduction for more than a

NEW RESEARCH

year. The results are intriguing.

but they need to be replicated in more people, says Jay Skjer, an endocri-nologist at the University of Miami, Florida who studies type 1 diabetes. Skyler also wants to see that the woman's cells con-tinue to produce insulin for up to five years before considering her 'cured'. NATURE



EXPLAINED ECONOMICS

A rice variety to curb farm fires

Pusa-2090 yields nearly as much as Pusa-44, the first choice of farmers. But it can be harvested by early to mid-October, eliminating the need for stubble burning before the sowing of wheat



HARISH DAMODARAN

HARPREET SINGH has been cultivating Pusa-44 paddy since 2000, if not earlier, "Why not

44 paddy since 2000, if not earlier. "Myn not, when it yields 35-36 quintals of grain per acre, and in some of my land, even 40 quintals?" the 39-year-old from Bourhat Kalan village in Punjab's Malerkottal district said.

Bred by the Indian Agricultural Research Institute (LARI) at New Delhi, and released for large-scale cultivation in 1993, Pusa-44 takes 155-160 days to grow, from the time of sowing its seeds in nurseries to harvesting the grain.

the grain.

The high yields — more than the 30-32 quintals per acre that its nearest competitor, the Punjab Agricultural University's PR-126, gives over 123-125 days — is Pusa-44's main attraction for farmers. Although taking 30-35 days more to mature, the extra 4-5 quin-tals yield is worth Rs 9,280-11,600 (per acre) at the Centre's minimum support price of Rs 2,320 per quintal for 'Grade A' paddy.

Pusa-44's environmental cost

But there is a cost to the high yields. The Pusa-44 paddy, transplanted in mid-June af-ter nursery-sowing a month before, can be harvested only towards end-October. This leaves little time for field preparation to sow the winter wheat crop, which should ideally be done before mid-November. Most farmers, then, resort to burning the straw and stubble that remains after harvesting using

combines.

The narrow turnaround window between paddy harvesting and the optimal sowing of wheat is at the root of farm fires in Punjab and Haryana — and the severe air pollution it contributes to in much of northern India — from late-October to mid-November.

The problem is more with the cultivation Pusa-44, which covered an estimated .8% of Punjab's total non-basmati paddy 14.8% of Pt area in 2023. That was lower than the 22% of 2022 and 39% in 2012, and even PR-126's 33% share last year. Yet, it remains the farmer's first choice, especially in the south-central districts of Sangrur, Malerkotla, Barnala,



Farmer Vikas Chaudhary at his Pusa-2090 paddy field in Taraori village in Harvana's Karnal district, Harish I

Ludhiana and Moga. While the Punjab govcomment has barned Pusa-44 from this crop year, with the IARI also not supplying breeder material for multiplication after 2021, farm-ers are still growing it — using saved grains from the previous crops as seed. In the current season, Harpreet Singh has sown Pusa-44 on 90 out of his 100-acre hold-ing translations the has been been 10 and 10 and the current season.

sown Pusa-44 on 90 out of his 100-acre hold-ing, transplanting these between June 10 and June 24 for harvesting from around October 20 to November 2. Singh does not burn the stubble: "I) bought it not he soil using a Super Seeder, which also sows the wheat seeds in winds and the sound of the sound of the sound of the sound of the seeder and the sound of the sound of

a single pass". Not all farmers, though, can afford such pensive tractor-drawn machines

A viable replacement?

A Viable replacement?

IARI has bred a new, improved shorterduration variety, Pusa-2090.

A selection from a cross between Pusa44 and CB-501, an early-maturing Japonica
rice line, it has a seed-to-grain maturity of
120-125 days. That's the same as PR-126, but Pusa-2090's paddy vield of 34-35 quintals asa-2503 spaces yield of partials er acre—now being tested in farmers' fields is closer to Pusa-44's.

Agricultural scientists have, for ong, worked at introducing genes from

Japonica (a rice subspecies of East Asia) to Japonica (a rice subspecies of East Asia) to the Indica varieties (grown in India and other tropical/subtropical regions) for improving yields and disease resistance. In this case, CB-501 was identified as a male parent line pri-marily for contributing to earliness (50% of its plants flower in 80 days, as against 120 days for Pusa-44). The resultant cross, thus, combined Pusa-449; high yields with CB-501's lower duration. "Yields are a function of the number of

"Yields are a function of the number of tillers (branches with grain-bearing ear-heads or panicles) that each plant produces; the number of grains per panicle; and the weight of every 100 grains. The number of tillers per plant and filled grains per panicle are roughly the same in Pusa-44 and Pusa-2090 (around 30 and 260 respectively), while more than that for PR-126 (20 and 200)" AK Singh, former director of IARI, told The Indian Express.

Singh, former director of IARL, total The Indian Express.
Given the lower yield penalty and dura-tion, farmers may find it viable to cultivate Pusa-2090. The new variety also has a strong culm (main stem) that makes it less prone to lodging (bending over or falling due to heavy winds and rains) than PR-126. It is highly responsive to the application of nitrogen (urea again a trait shared with Pusa-44. And its ma

turing some 35 days earlier translates into significant water savings, with at least 5-6 fewer irrigations required against the nor-mal 29-30 for Pusa-44.

What farmers think

Harpreet Singh last year planted Pusa-44 on 90 and PR-126 on 10 acres. This time, he has grown Pusa-2090 in place of PR-126 on the same 10 acres.

"I sowed my nursery on June 2 and trans-planted on June 28-July 2. As of now, I am ex-

planted on June 28-July 2. As of now, I am expecting agrain yield of 35 quintals, but we will really know only after the crop is harvested by October 4-5 and weighed." Singh said.

Harvesting paddy in early-October should give Singh plenty of time to sow wheat. But he plans to plant potato instead; the Diamond variety sown in mid-October would be ready for harvesting by mid-February. "After that, I will immediately plant Delails-9108 (a maize hybrid) for harvesting in 80-85 days towards mid-May." he added. Farmers wanting to only take wheat after paddy can transplant Pusa-2090 even in mid-July.

Sukhieet Singh Bhangu, a farmer with 20 acres of Iand in Kanakwal Bhanguan village of Sangrur's Suman teshii, who also grows and markets seeds under his 'A-One' brand, felt that Pua-2009 may replace Pusa-44 in the areas where it is still dominant: 'Most farmers will hesitate growing a banned variety, for fear of it not being prouced by government agencies. If busa-2009 gives 34-35 quintals, which is almost as much as Pusa-44 and above PR-126, they would go for it'. Vikas Chaudhary, a seed grower from Taraori village in Nilokheri teshis of Haryana's Karnal district, harvested 35 quintals of paddy from his one-acre trial plot under Pusa-2009 last year: 'That was good, as the grains had only 13% moisture (against the pormal 16-17% content). This year's crop acres of land in Kanakwal Bhanguan villag

grains had only 13% moisture (against the normal 16-17% content). This year's crop (nursery-sown on June 6 and transplanted on July 6) should also yield around that level! Farm yields apart, there is also the issue of milling quality. "PR-126 paddy sirt liked much by millers because the rice recovery from it is hardly 63%, whereas the govern-ment's required norm is 67%. If Puss-2000's grain quality matches that of Puss-44, there will be acceptability for it from the millers side too," Bhagwan Dass, secretary-genera of the Rakhra (Patiala)-based Young Farmer Association Punjab, pointed out.

LONGER VERSION ON

Cadaver donations: need, rules and challenges

ANONNA DUTT

NEW DELHI. SEPTEMBER 29

CPI (M) LEADER Sitaram Yechury, who died on September 12, donated his body to the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AlIMS).

This is not a decision that a lot of people in India make, but perhaps many more should. Here's why.

What are cadavers used for?
Cadaver donation sees a person donate their entire body (rather than individual or gans) to science after death.
Generally, cadavers are used to train doctors by helping them better understand hu

man anatomy and practice surgery. Although dummies can be used for training, cadavers provide the most realistic experience of per-forming surgery on a human being. Apart from training, cadavers can also be used for developing new medical devices, and study-ing the physiological impact of diseases.

legally consent to become a calaver donor, in case they are not registered as one at the time of death, their guardian or next of kin can still donate their body. nate their body. Although those who have died of

chronic illnesses are eligible donors, the bodies of those with infectious diseases such as tuberculosis, sepsis, or HIV are unlikely to be accepted. Same is the case with bodies of organ

donors.
Lastly, medical colleges may also refuse to accept bodies of persons who have died due to unnatural reasons, and are subjects of any medico-legal cases.

How to donate one's body?

There is no national organisation to track whole body donations (unlike organ dona-tion). Usually, anatomy departments of medical college hospitals are directly in-charge of the process. Thus, one has to go to the spec field department where one wants to donate one's body and sign requisite forms. After death, the donor's next of kin have to contact the department to process the donation.

Not enough. Although no consolidated estimates exist, medical institutes have of-

Currently, undergraduate medical col-leges require one cadaver for every 10 stu-dents they admit. The AlIMS Delhi, where

HIV are undenst they admit. The AllMS Delhi, where EXPLAINED SCIENCE
SCIENCE
SCIENCE
Situated right across the pjects of any road from the AllMS, the Safdaring Hospital and its affiliate Vardhaman Mahavir Medical College (VMMC) has received only 24 donated cadavers in the last five years. The Ram Annohar Lohis Hospital and its associated the sacrost the same of the same of the sacrost the same of th Manohar Lohia Hospital and its associated Manohar Lohia Hospital and its associated Atal Bihari Vajapayee Institute of Medical Sciences (ABVIMS) have received 18 cadav-ers since the inception of its MBBS course in 2019, VMMC has a UG batch size of 150(with 170 students permitted for the up-coming session). ABVIMS admits 100 MBBS students annually. Notably, both these institutes are located in

So, how do medical colleges make do?

So, how do medical colleges make do?
Given the shortages, medical colleges are forced to use unclaimed dead bodies, as per the provisions of their state's Anatomy Act. Although the specifics can vary, all these acts allow for the use of unclaimed bodies for science. Most laws state that the body of a decreased has to be claimed by relatives within 48 hours or "with least practicable delay".
A 2020 study published in the journal BMC Medical Ethics said that the rise in the number of medical institutes over the past 25 years, and exponential increase in the number of students studying medicine has led to the requirement of cadavers shooting up. Unclaimed bodies have traditionally been the major source of cadavers for medical institutes, the study further says.

struces, the study further says.

However, there are major ethical issues here as most unclaimed bodies are of the poor, destitute, and other marginalised people. Many countries require explicit consent for cadavers to be accepted, some even require wills signed in presence of lawyers.

A childhood in poverty to Hezbollah chief: the story of Hassan Nasrallah

ALIND CHAUHAN

HASSAN NASRALIAH, whom Israel killed in an air strike last week, led Hezbollah, the Iran-backed armed group and political party that has controlled much of southern Lebanon, for more than 32 years. Known for his charismatic oratory and strong organi-sational skills, Nasrallah transformed Hezbollah into Israel's most formidable non-state adversary. This is his story.

Musawi, Khomeini, Hezbollah

NUSAWI, KNOMEIII, HEZDOIIII
Nasrallah, the eldest of nine children,
was born in 1960 and grew up in Beirut's
eastern Bouryl Hammoud neighbourhood,
where impoverished Christian Armenians,
Druze, Palestinians, and Shaiaites lived. His
father Abdul Karim, a seller of fruits and
vegetables, came from Bazouriyeh, a small
Shia village in southern Lebanon.
The family was not particularly devout,

but Nasrallah became interested in religion as a teen. He was influenced by the teachings of Musa al-Sadr, an Iranian-Lebanese cleric revered by Lebanon's Shias, and the founder of a Shia party called Amal. Nasrallah said later that the spent long hours meditating before al-Sadr's portrait, and praying to God to "make him like Sayvid Musa some day", wrote Aurelie Daher in Hezbolich: Mobilization and Power (2014). In 1975, as civil was the Musa Some day in the Musa So In 1975, as civil war broke out in Lebanor Nasrallah, then 15, joined Amal, and starte

of Najaf in Iraq to study in its famous reli-gious seminaries, (Hezboliki - Short History (2007), Augustus Richard Norton) In Najaf, Nasrallah met the two people who would arguably have the most influ-ence on his life: the Lebanese cleric Abbas al-Musawi, acc-founder of Hezboliah, who became his mentor and friend, and Ayatollah Rubollah Khomeini, who would lead Iran's Islamic Revolution in 1979.

to organise members in Bazouriyeh. The fol-lowing year, he moved to the Shia holy city of Najaf in Iraq to study in its famous reli-

Following a crackdown on Shia Islamists by Iraq's Ra'ntists, Nasrallah and Musawi's returned to Lebanon in 1978, Nasrallah remained associated with Amal until 1982, when he left, convinced that the movement was "no longer up to the task" of resisting invading Israeli forces.

Nasrallah joined the paramilitary Islamic Amal, or-founded by Musawi and backed by Iran's Revolutionary Guards. Islamic Amal, the most prominent and effective of the Shia militias in Lebanon, carried

militias in Lebanon, carried out suicide bombings at the US Embassy in Beitrut and the barracks of American and French peace-keepers, At least 360 people, including 241 Addi's kil American service members, were killed. In the early 1980s, the Shia militias formed Hezbollah, the "Party of God". Nasrallah began as a fighter, and quickly rose to become the group's director. In 1985, Hezbollah announced its aims: fighting Israel and the West in Lebanon. At the s

Mrsawi's vehicle in southern Lebanon, killing him, his wife, and his son, Nasrallah succeeded him as the chief of Hezbollah at the age of 32. Nasrallah's retaliation included Hezbollah bomb attacks at Israel's em-bassies in Turkey and Argentina; 29 people were killed in the latter attack.

A charismatic leader The killing of Nasrallah's 18-year-old son Hadi by Israeli commandos in 1997 raised

members and supporters. The day after Hadi's killing. Nasrallah said: "We, Hezbollah's leadership, do not jealously guard our children."

Nasrallah's success in the low-intensity war against trasel that led to the Jewish state ending its 18-year occupation of southern Lebanon in 2000 cemented his reputation. At the same time, under Nasrallah,

Hezzoulan Workeet to develop a large wel-fare network in Lebanon, including health centres and schools. Hezbollah worked to become a political force (the pro-Hezbollah bloc has 62 of the 128 seats in Lebanon's parlament today), even as is built up a for-midable military arsenal with the help and backing of Iran. In 2006, Nasrallah led Hezbollah in an-

other war against Israel, triggered by the kidnapping of two Israeli soldiers. The 34day conflict resulted in large-scale destruc-tion and loss of life, but earned Hezbollah

tion and loss of life, but earmed Hezbollah admiration in the Arab world.

Thereafter, Nasrallah began to project immed fast be Ampion of all Mustims in the war against Israel. "Nasrallah is vainglorious... He sees himself as a unique, visionary figure, a revolutionary hero like Che Guevara," researcher Hussein Ibish said in a 2006 interview with the Council on Foreign Relations. As Israel focused on him, Nasrallah began to live largely underground, His frequent speeches were broadcast from un-

links to his followers. He was a charismatic speaker, holding his audiences captivated by a unique, light style that included crack-ion interes.

Near irreplaceable loss for Hezbollah

In more recent years, Nasrallah helped expand Hezbollah's influence well beyond expand Hezbollah's influence well beyond the borders of Lebanon. It supported the government of President Bashar al-Assad in Syria against a popular uprising that started in 2011. It also trained fighters from Hamas, as well as other members of Iran's so-called Axis of Resistance, including Iraq's Shia militias and Yemen's Houthis. It will be a daunting task for Hezbollah and its patrons in Tehran to find a replacement for Nasrallah. The group has lost several key leaders in Israeli strikes in recent weeks, and there does not appear to be anyone surviving who is close to Nasrallah's stature, experience or influence.

WORDLY WISE WAR IS ONLY A COWARDLY ESCAPE FROM THE PROBLEMS OF PEACE.

- THOMAS MANN

The Indian EXPRESS

The rankings trap RAMNATH GOENKA BECAUSE THE TRUTH INVOLVES US ALL

If we can't get away from them, we should set up parameters under which they are sensibly used



SONALDE DESAL

A DANGEROUS EDGE

Killing of Hezbollah's Nasrallah brings an inflection point in West Asia conflict. Israel and others must step back, let diplomacy in

REGION BATTERED by violent conflict since the brutal October 7 attack on Israel by Hamas last year now holds its breath following the killing of Hassan Nasrallah, leader of the Shiite militant group Hezbollah, in Beirut Hassan Nasrallah, leader of the Shitte militant group Hezboltah, in Beirut in an Israeli airstrike. Will the incident, which has essentially left one of Israel's most powerful foes in the region leaderless — the Lebanon-based group is in acute crisis, with the near-decimation of its senior ranks in recent weeks — push it to an even deadlier retaliation? Will it expand the theatre of conflict, drawing reprisals from Lebanon and Hezboltlah's main backer, Iran? Or will it offer a desperately needed pause in an embattled region, in which diplomacy can find and seize a vital opening?

What is already clear is that, with the death of Nasrallah, geopolitical equations in the region will shift considerably, Iran, which has armed and supported Hezbollah as part of its "Akis of Resistance" has vowed vengeance for the death of a man it describes as a "martyr". Yet, its bluster belies a slowness to action, a seeming reluctance to retallate against Israel's maximalist tactics — including the deadly pager attacks less than a fort-night ago, which also injured the Iranian ambassador to Beirut. Even as it moves its Supreme Leader Ayatollah Khamenei to a safe location, the prospect of prolonged en-gagement with Israel — which is bound to draw in the US as well, with all its military might — may well stay Iran's hand. It is also a fact that while Navatallah's death military be mourned in Shia-dominated regions, few tears are being shed in the Sunni Arab world. States like Saudi Arabia and the UAE will be watching Iran and Israel's next moves carefully and closely, weighing the gains to be potentially made in a more stable region, in-cluding through the expansion of economic opportunities beyond oil, against the mount-ing losses inflicted by greater escalation.

Since the conflict began nearly 12 months ago, red lines have been crossed, including

and especially by Israel, which has consistently ignored any attempts, including by the US, to temper its aggression. The official death toll put out by authorities in Gaza crossed 41,000 this month. The already horrifying scale of the humanitarian crisis, with large-scale displacement of people and the spectre of famine, cannot be allowed to engulf the entire region. As the one-year anniversary of the conflict approaches, it is in the interest of not just the people of the region, but states around the world, including India— with his large Official including and the proposal in the proposal the lives of 9 million Indians working in the region at risk, as well as strategic and economic interests - that work towards de-escalation begins

A TIRUPATI LESSON

Milk fat is already costly. Taxing it higher makes it more vulnerable to adulteration

IRSTIT WAS Baba Ramdev who sought to create a niche market for cow ghee and also helped unlock the real value of milk fat, so to speak. The row over the alleged supply of adulterated ghee for making the iconic Tirupati laddus, distinctive and practice of the properties of the supplies of the properties of the propert 85-90/kg. Not surprising that ghee or melted milk fat is prone to adulteration by "foreign 85-90/Rg. Not surprising that ghee or melted milk fat is prone to adulteration by "foreign fats", but of vegetable and animal origin. The relative expensiveness also explains why a lot of what sells as ice-cream is actually frozen dessert: Both contain minimum 10 per cent fat, but the source of that is vegetable oil, not milk, in the latter. Premiumense has largely to do with availability, India imports 150-160 lakhtonnes (It) of vegetable oil every year, over and above its domestic output of 100-105 It. As against

or vegetable on every year, over and output of tool output or 100-101. As against that, organised dairies produce hardly 4 it of mill fat annually, much of which goes for their own reconstitution/rebalancing use or for ice cream, butter and ghee sales in consumer packs. It leaves not much for marketing as a bulk commodity, whether in 15-kg tins or 15,000-litre tankers. Households may meet their given eedes ubstantially from the cream skimmed off the daily milk they consume. But this cannot be so with sweetmeat shops, hotels and other buyers who claim their product to be made from pure desig ghee. The notes and other buyers who claim their product to be made from pure oes give. In Frumala Tirupatai Devasthanamis own annual gibe requirement is about 5,000 tonnes. That's the equivalent of 12.2 crore litres of cow milk with 4 per cent fat — not small at all. The probability and temptation of lacing ghee with foreign fats is more when it comes to supplying such large quantities. The Tirupati laddu saga may lead to consumers becoming more conscious of ghee

The irrupan ladou saga may lead to consumers becoming more conscious or gnee quality and switching from loose or local to repute brands. That, together with crack-downs by the authorities and overall reduced supply of adulterated material, could fur-ther push up milk fat prices in the short run. The government can help by cutting the goods and services tax on ghee, butter and other milk fat from the current 12 per cent. It makes no sense when vegetable fat and milk powder are taxed at 5 per cent. Milk fat is already costly. Taxing it higher makes it costlier and even more vulnerable to adulter-ration. Therefore host residuals to the host powder that the residual to the constitution of the c ation. There's no better time to fix the anomaly than now

FREEZE FRAME

EPUNNY



DMK's Rising Sun symbol -refreshed from time to time.

DEVELOPING GLOBAL INDICES and rankings has turned into a minor industry. The Global Competitiveness Index, Global Happiness Index, Global Hunger Index, Ease of Doing Business Index, Corruption Perception Index, Global Go-To Think Tanks rankings, you name it. Think tanks specialise in creating these indices; they are good for increased funding and publicity. Some governments boast of improved rankings, while others rant about the methodology. Life goes on until the following year when the cycle begins again. Every time these indices appear, I wonder why some countries are where they are. Apparently, young people in Lithuania and Israel are the happies in the world. Why are they happier than theyouth in Australia, New Zealand, or Sweden? Is Gallup just counting the Jewish population of Israel, or do Arabs count? Unfortunately, these questions rarely get asked and answered.

Sometimes, we get to see strange anom-

ger asked and answered.

Sometimes, we get to see strange anomalies. Take, for example, the Global Gender Gap Index. India ranked 26th on educational atindex, india raince; 25th on educational at-tainment in 2023 but mysteriously dropped to 112th rank in 2024. As far as I know, no Taliban-style attacks on Indian girls' educa-tion have taken place. This rapid descent re-mains inexplicable. Could there be some anomalies in the data?

mains inexplicable. Could there be some anomalies in the data? All global rankings are not equivalent. Some, like the Human Development Index, are well thought out and carefully constructed, although they also face challenges in getting accurate country-level data. Others seem to be hastily put together, othen excluding perspectives from the Global South. For example, the now-aban-doned World Bank Ease of Doing Business Index focused on limited liability companies, covering only 14 per cent of Indian businesses and excluding sole proprietorships, the main-stay of Indian businesses. The Global Gender Gap Indian focuses on the gender gap in earn-ings but not in poverty—an indicator on which

All global rankings are not equivalent. Some, like the Human Development Index, are well thought out and carefully constructed, although they also face challenges in getting accurate country-level data. Others seem to be hastily put together, often excluding perspectives from the Global South. For example, the now-abandoned World Bank Ease of Doing Business Index focused on limited liability companies, covering only 14 per cent of Indian businesses and excluding sole proprietorships, the mainstay of Indian businesses.

the United States might do poorly due to a large number of mother-only families, but where South Asian countries might fare better. Nonetheless, given how much international organisations and foundations that fund them lover and indige countries and are convinced these are effective tools in holding countries accountable its unlikely that any criticism will vanguish this industry. However, it is possible to hold it accountable through simple steps. First, we must expect that any index will contain amethodological appendix that justifies will specific indicators were chosen to be part of the indicators of the contain anethodological appendix that justifies will specify the specific indicators were chosen to be part of the indicators of the contain underlying the differential weights given to these indicators. The publications must include links to source data. The lazy approach of citing the World Bank indicators or the Food and Agriculture Organisation's indicators is insufficient. Index authors must cite the original sources for each indicator for each country. As it stands, data errors in index construction are impossible to decipher, even when we see abimpossible to decipher, even when we see ab-surd results like India's descent from rank 26 to

impossible to decipher, even when we see absurd results like India's descent from rank 250 to 112 in educational attainment in the Gender Gaplridex in a year. This does involve a considerable amount of work, but hard work is what research is all about, what the public and policymakers deserve. Where primary data is presented, sample sizes, sampling methodology and confidence intervals must be presented. Second, those who cover the release of various indices must find a way of fact-checking the results. An editorial moratorium of coverage for 48 hours after the release of the index will give time to critically examine the results and consult experts. The rush to be the first to report that India is below wan-torn Sudan on the Global Hunger Index without a critical examination does not serve the public. In particular, the rankings that do not provide citations to source data and methodology should not be covered.

Third, governments must stop taking

these results seriously, Countries are well aware of their priorities and hopefully try to ensure that appropriate data are available to monitor their progress. However, these efforts have little to do with how a country is ranked globally, Take, for example, the Global Hunger Index (GHI), India's child mortality fell from 51 at the turn of the century to 3.1 in two decades, and stunting, defined as low height-for-age, fell from 51 per cent to 36 per cent. Where India is lagging is in caloric intake and low weight-for-leght resulting in it being ranked at 117 on GHI. Data Challenges for these two indicators are well recognised. Caloric intake is estimated from consumption expenditure data, which is a poor approximation at best. Moreover, the underlying figures for undernourishment. These models deserve greater scrutiny for external validity. Similarly, the wasting data for india is affected by most of the fifth National Family Health Survey interviews being conducted during the monsoon due to the pandemic-related delays. Greater intestinal infections during the monsoons are associated with velvel-recognised shortcomings, recognising achievements and refining goals consistent with hational priorities will be a more fruitful approach.

Amartya Sen, one of the originators of the Human Development Index, has suggested it may be time to move beyond rankings, with well-recognised shortcomings, recognising achievements and refining goals consistent with hational priorities will be a more fruitful approach.

Amartya Sen, one of the originators of the Human Development Index, has suggested it may be time to move beyond rankings, with well-recognised shortcomings, recognising achievements and refining goals consistent with national priorities will be a more fruitful approach.

Amartya Sen, one of the originators of the Human Development Index, has suggested it may be time to move beyond rankings, at a minimum, we should set up parameters under which they are accurate and sensibly used.

The writer is Professor and Centre Directo NCAER National Data Innovation Centre and Professor Emerita, University of Maryland Views are persona

UNLOCKING THE RETAIL ADVANTAGE

Logistics, supply chain infrastructure are backbone of e-commerce boom that is key

ABHINAV SINGH

ABHINAV SINGH

INDIASTANDS AT the threshold of a transformation. With a burgeoning middle class, increasing disposable incomes, and a young population, the country is poised for a retail revolution. Projections indicate a leap to an impressive \$2 trillion by 2033, from \$820 billion in 2023. E-commerce has a crucial role in this transformation, With rapid digitalisation and growing internet penetration, the Indian e-commerce market is expected to reach \$325 billion by 2030.

The retail and e-commerce boom stands on the backbone of logistics and supply chain infrastructure in the country. As we target a \$5 trillion comornly by 2030 the seamles and efficient movement of goods is essential to meet demand and drive the growth of this sector. This growth, however, hinges on the ability to manage and reduce logistics costs, which currently account for a helty 11-14 per cent of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in comparison, the global average is around \$5 per cent of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in comparison, the global average is around \$5 per cent of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in comparison, the global average is around \$5 per cent of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in comparison, the global average is around \$5 per cent of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in comparison, the global average is around \$5 per cent of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in comparison, the global average is around \$5 per cent of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in comparison, the global average is around \$5 per cent of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in comparison, the global average is around \$5 per cent of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in comparison, the global average in the g

ton and reduction, and change ing consumer behaviours, the logistics indus-try is predicted to grow 8.8 per cent annually to \$484.43 billion by 2029, India has moved up six places in the World Bank's Logistics

The logistics sector also requires a skilled workforce capable of managing sophisticated systems and technologies. As envisaged in the Gati Shakti National Master Plan, investing in training and development programs for logistics professionals can create a pool of skilled labour that can drive the sector forward. Partnerships with educational institutions and industry bodies can facilitate this skill development. Performance Index to 38th in 2023, out of 139 countries. A significant catalyst for transforming the logistics landscape is the government's National Logistics Policy (NRI), which works towards a comprehensive framework to improve the logistics performance index, reduce cost and create data-driven decision support mechanisms for an efficient logistics ecosystem by promoting standardisation, encouraging investments and fostering innovation. The NIP also focuses on the digitisation of processes. Digital platforms for real-time tracking, e-documentation, and seamless information exchange can eliminate inefficiencies and reduce delays. Moreover, the policy envisages the development of a Unified Logistics Interface/Patform (LUP) to bring all stakeholders onto a single platform, facilitating better coordination and collaboration.

The emphasis on sustainability is another crucial aspect. By promoting eco-friendly

crucial aspect. By promoting eco-friendly practices such as the use of electric vehicles

practices such as the use of electric vehicles, energy-efficient warehousing, and sustain-able packaging, we can also minimise our en-vironmental footprint. Countries like Germany offer valuable les-sons — is logistic sector is renowned for itsef-ficiency and reliability, supported by advanced infrastructure, technology integration, and a skilled worldorce. The German model empha-tices the non-delivership skilled workforce. The German model emphasises the seamless integration of various transportation models, robust warehousing facilities and efficient inventory management systems. For instance, the use of digital technologies such as Internet of Things (16T), Artificial Intelligence (Al), and data analytics has significantly enhanced the predictability and reliability of logistics operations.

We can take a leaf out of Germany's book by investing in technology and infrastructure. We began this journey with the Gait Shakit National Master Plan, which focuses on pro-

viding formal education and skilling. Additionally, improving warehousing standards and practices is essential as a modern, tech-enabled warehouse can streamline inventory management, reduce storage costs, and minimise wastage. Implementing warehouse, automation technologies such as robotics, Al, and for can optimise operations and enhance efficiency. This is particularly crucial for the e-commerce sector, where efficient warehousing can lead to faster delivery times and improved customer satisfaction.

The logistics sector also requires a skilled workforce apable of managing sophisticated systems and technologies. As envisaged in the Gati Shadit National Master Plan, investing in training and development programmes for

training and development programmes for logistics professionals can create a pool of skilled labour that can drive the sector for-ward. Partnerships with educational institu-tions and industry bodies can facilitate this

tions and industry bodies can facilitate this skill development. A robust logistics cosystem is nor merely an economic imperative but a vital step to-wards achieving holistic development that can enhance the competitiveness of Indian businesses, create job opportunities and im-prove the standard of living for millions. That will also enable us to leverage our strategic-lo-cation, connecting fast and West, and become a hulb for international trade. By adontine offshal best practices, invest-

a hulb for international trade. By adopting global best practices, invest-ing in infrastructure and skilled labour, and leveraging technological innovations, India can fully unlock its retail sector's po-tential. This will propel the country towards a Vikisti Bharat 2047, where the logistics in-dustry is a catalyst for sustainable growth and economic prosperity.

The writer is Vice President (Operations), Amazon India



SEPTEMBER 30, 1984, FORTY YEARS AGO

GOLDEN TEMPLE OPEN

COLIDENT ENPIRED OF LEST THE GOLDENTEMPLE COMPLEX WAS thrown open to the public as the security forces which occupied it in June withdrew from the complex. Unrestricted entry into the Golden Temple was permitted after 117 days. The process of handing over the complex began after the Nihang leader, Babs Santa Singh, who along with around 1,000 Nihangs performed "ardas" in the Akal Tablit to mark completion of its repair, waated the temple at 10.30am.

AKALI LEADERS' RELEASE THE RELEASE OF detained Akali Dal leaders and installation of a popular government in Punjab are reportedly underway as a part of the process of normalisation of the situation in the state. Orders for the release of Alcali Dal president Samt Harchand Singh Longowal and other senior Dal leaders are likely only after a political decision in this regard is taken by the Centre.

ON ARMY IN TRIPURA

THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN Prime Minister Indira Candhi and the state Chief Minister over the deployment of Army in Tripura to control extremists are rather marked, with both hold-ing opposite views on the matter. While Mrs. Gandhi at her press conference at Guwahati

was critical of the Left government for oppos-ing the deployment of Army to control the sit-uation, Nripen Chakravorthy disagreed with her assessment of the situation.

RAM BHOOMI MARCH

IRAM DHOOMI MARCH
THEUTTAR PRADESH government is keeping
its fingers crossed over the proposed march
of large numbers of people from Ayodhya on
Cotober 8 to 'liberate' Ram Janam Bhoomi
(birth place of Lord Rama) in Lucknow. The
march, organised by the Vishwa Hindu
Parishad, will start with volunteers of the
"Bajarag Dal" and others pledging on October
7 with Saryu water in their hands.

epaper.indianexpress.com

THE IDEAS PAGE

Food that doesn't feed

Lowering post-harvest losses and food waste is not just a matter of improving economic efficiency, but also providing nutrition, eliminating hunger and saving the environment



BY ASHOK GULATI AND RAYA DAS

RAYA DAS

THE UNITED NATIONS has designated September 29 as the International Day of Awareness of Food Loss and Waste (FLW). Events to mark the day are jointly convened by the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FMO) and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) because the issue has important implications for food security and saving our environment. An FAO, 2023 report estimates that food lost between harvest and retail amounts to 13.2 per cent of five global food production. Interestingly, UNEP estimates that 17 per cent of food is wasted between treatil and feeding people. Together, the food loss and waste (FBW), amounts to about 30 per cent of the global production. Even if half of this food is saved and used, it could easily feed all the hungry people in the world. Such savings could also help reduce at least eight to 10 per cent of the world's greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and 38 per cent of total energy usage, making our planet breathe better. Both these dreams remain unfulfilled. Therefore, it is important to be aware of these potential benefits and commit ourselves to reducing FLW by at least 50 per cent, thus contributing to the Sustainable Development Goals (SGCs) of the United Nations.

Where does India stand in this global picture of FLW and how can the country help eliminate hunger and save the environment?

ture of FLW and how can the country help eliminate hunger and save the environment

wheel custs maken in usual goods pluture of FLW and how can the country help eliminate hunger and sase the environment? The all-India post-harvest loss survey by NBECNS, 2022, reveals that the country sufferest stagegring food losses worth Rs. L3s million (S18.5 billion) with a loss of 12.5 million metric tons (MMT) of creats, 2.11 MMT of oilseeds and 1.37 MMT of pulses. Around 43.9 MMT of proticultural crops are lost an expenditure of the control of the country of t sation and inadequate logistics infrastructure.

Farmers who use combine harvesters for instance, see a marked reduction in paddy losses compared to those relying on traditional manual methods. The study re-



weals that overall loss in paddy drops to just 2,84 per cent if mechanisation in harvesting and drying is adopted at the farm. According to the All-India Debt and Investment Survey (AIDIS) in 2019, only 4.4 per cent of cultivator households in India owned tractors, and a mere 5.3 per cent owned either power tillers, combine harvesters, or threshers. Small and marginal farmers, who constitute over 86 per cent of Indian agricultural households, often cannot afford to buy costly machines. For paddy, 97 per cent households, use combine harvesters in Punjab, whereas in Bihar only 10 per cent paddy paddy-producing households use combine harvesters. To promote farm mechanisation, Farmer Producer Organisations (FPOs) and Custom Hiring Organisations (FPOs) and Custom Hiring farm mechanisation, Farmer Producer Organisations (FPOs) and Custom Hiring Centres (CHCs) can play a crucial role through group leasing arrangements and the "uberisation" of farm machinery. The availability of proper drying and storage infrastructure also plays an important role in reducing food losses. Traditional sun drying methods are fraught with risks, in-

drying methods are fraught with risks, in-cluding the addition of foreign matters, un-even drying, and exposure to moisture, which can lead to mycotoxin contamination. Solar dryers and dehydrators offer a solution to reduce losses and extend the shelf-life for perishables. These green technologies are cost-effective for small-scale farmers, they are climate-friendly and need to be encour-sed to the cost of t

aged by appropriate policy formulation. Furthermore, storage infrastructure re-mains inadequate in India. As per (IGSMRI, 2021), post-harvest losses account for ap-proximately 10 per cent of total food grain

Small and marginal farmers, who constitute over 86 per cent of Indian agricultural households, often cannot afford to buy costly machines. For paddy, 97 per cent households use combine harvesters in Punjab, whereas in Bihar

only 10 per cent paddy paddy-producing households use combine harvesters. To promote farm mechanisation, Farmer Producer Organisations (FPOs) and Custom Hiring Centres (CHCs) can play a crucial role through group leasing arrangements and the 'uberisation' of farm machinery.

production due to poor and inadequate storage infrastructure. Recently, the Government of India has launched a major grain storage plan. This initiative is part of a broader strategy aimed at modernising the agricultural system of India. The plan entails the expansion of storage capacity by 70 MMT over the next five years. If implemented properly, it holds the potential to reduce post-harvest losses at the storage level.

Mechanisation, enhanced storage, and efficient transportation systems are key areas where technology can make a difference. Yet, beyond technological solutions, policy support is critical to ensure that small and marginal farmers can access these technological

ginal larmers can access these technological changes. The Jule Packaging Material Act (JPMA, 1987) talks of using jute bags for pack-agin rice, and wheat grains. Even though jute is biodegradable, it is a water guzzler and a labour-intensive crop, and its use leads to frequent rodent attacks and pillerage in trop-ical climates. There is a need, therefore, to revisit the IPMA for an expansion in the use of airtight bags which can lower storage and

transit losses. In a country where climate change and malnutrition still pose a major challenge, it would be only wise to focus on reducing FLW. Reducing post-harvest losses is not just a matter of improving economic efficiency, but also providing food security to people while building resilience in our food systems. Thus, save people and save the planet.

Gulati is Distinguished Professor and Das is a Research Fellow at ICRIER. Views are personal

WHAT THE OTHERS SAY

"None of the candidates has said anything of substance about public services -why they matter, how they should be financed. None has dared to be contrite about failures in office and the succession of Tory prime ministers who were egregiously unfit for the role." -THE GUARDIAN

One election is a win-win

Frequent polls have led to voter fatigue, financial burden on government, uncertain policy environment



GOURAV VALLABH

INDIA IS A modern-day exemplar of demo-cratic values. Elections are crucial to the cratic values. Elections are crucial to the democratic process. However, the country is always in election mode because of the existing staggered nature of polls. Politicians are diverted from their core duty of govern-ing, and the system is severely strained, fi-nancially and administratively. The pro-posed reform of One Nation, One Election (NNOS): saids to suspense the election. (ONOE) seeks to overcome these issues, drastically altering how elections are held

drastically altering how elections are held and how governance can be streamlined our country. This reform will not only reduce the financial burden on the government but also allow citizens to focus on their daily lives without the constant political upheaval. A critical problem with the current elec-toral system is the distraction it creates for the political class and the electroate leaders often prioritise short-term political gains overlong-term administration because elec-tions are held somewhere in the country particulaly every few months. This ongoing political focus takes attention away from the greater purpose of national development, particularly in a country like India, where long-term initiatives and policies are essen-tial for progress. tial for progress.

The relentless cycle of elections leaves

The retentness cycle of elections leaves little room for citizens to critically measess or evolve their political ideologies. Just as they settle back into their daily lives after a munic-ipal election, they are thrust into state as-sembly polls, followed soon after by Lok Sabha elections. This constant barrage keeps

Sabha-elections: This constant barrage fuepps them locked into familiar votin familiar to them locked into familiar so the sould be the solution to break this cycle and allow for greater political reflection. The financial strain of conducting multiple elections within a short time frame is a significant concern, with the overall election expenditure saving. From Rs 9,000 crore in 1998, it has increased sixfold to about Rs 55,000 crore in 2019. The total estimated overall rate for the 2014 elections is expected. 55,000 crore in 2019. He total estimated of-penditure for the 2024 election is expected to reach a staggering 8t 135 lakh crore, sur-passing the spending in the 2020 USE elections, which stood at 8t 12 lakh crore. In all state elections, the expected amount spent can go up to 8t, 17 lakh crore (assuming 40 per cent over the general election) for one election of-cla. This economic burden is a stark reminder of the peace for offern. The empaneeral alone. cle This economic burden is a stark reminder of the need for reform. The government alone had spent more than Rs 15,000 crore to conduct the 2019 Lok Sabba election, a sharp increase from Rs 3,800 crore in 2014. Such exorbitant costs heavily burden public finances, diverting funds from critical areas like infrastructure, healthcare, and education. Sudies suggest that by holding elections simultaneously, the government alone could significantly control of the superior support of the support of the support of the superior support of the support of cantly reduce these duplicate costs, poten-tially saving between Rs 7,500 and Rs 12,000

tially saving becomes crore per election cycle. The uncertainty caused by regular ele tions in the business climate is another often overlooked effect. Political unpredictability brought on by frequent elections shatters policy continuity, which makes companies hesitant to commit to long-term projects or expansion plans. Sectors that heavily depend on labour and supply networks are especially susceptible to these disruptions. Election syn-chronisation would give businesses the sta-bility they need to make long-term plans

chronisation would give businesses the sta-bility they need to make long-term plans more confidently. This, in turn, would en-hance economic growth and allow India to become a more attractive destination for both domestic and international investors. Regular elections also strain the nation's security and administrative agencies. Teachers, government workers, and secu-rity personnel are taken away from their pri-mary duties to oversee the election process during election seasons. Public services like education become inefficient since schools are frequently closed to make room for voi-ing booths. Additionally, law enforcement organisations are overburdened and con-centrating more on election-related tasks than upholding public safety and internal security. A synchronised election cycle would relieve this pressure. Another issue with the current electoral system is voter turnout. Voter turnout has decreased recently despite the significance of elections. Election turnout for the Lok Sabha in 2024 was 65.79 per cent, down from 67.40 per cent in 2019. Voter fatigue is evident in this reduction since residents are frequently asked to cast multiple ballots in state elections that are spaced out. Election

requently assect to cast multiple ballots in state elections that are spaced out. Election participation would probably increase if ONOE coordinated state and general elec-tions. According to historical data, election turnout tends to rise during simultaneous elections, as seen by the 1999 Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh elections, where turnout increased by 11.5 per cent. Aligning election would ensure that citizens are more en gaged in a single, unified electoral process

gaged in a single, unlined electroral process
A commonly expressed apprehensio
about ONOE is the possible exclusion of state
level concerns and groups. According to crit
ics, simultaneous elections might divert at
tention from regional issues and favou
national parties while marginalising loca national parties while marginalising local voices. Indian voters' previous voting patterns seem to indicate otherwise. In the 1989, 1991, and 1996 parallel elections in Tamil Madu, voters showed that they could tell the difference between national and state elections by selecting different parties for the Assembly and Lok Sabha elections. Since national parties would have to handle regional issues alongside their own, ONOE could prote matter processors and the countries of the countries matter processors with local lissues.

issues alongside their own, ONOE could pro-mote greater engagement with local issues instead of marginalising regional parties. The publishers and Honduras, have adopted some form of simultaneous elections, demonstrating that this model is practical and effective. These nations have simulta-neously seen the benefits of holding elec-tions at multiple levels, including reduced costs improved water turnear and more of tons at mumple evees, including reduced costs, improved voter turnout, and more efficient governance. With its sizable electroate and intrictae political structure, India stands to benefit much more from a system like this, Once put into practice, the improvements in budgetary discipline, political engagement, and governance would significantly exceed any practical difficulties. India base mortineus when with self in the contribution of the provided of the contribution of the contr

cantly exceed any practical difficulties.
India has continuously shown itself to be
a creative and adaptable democracy. By
adopting the revolutionary idea of ONOE,
India can take a steptoward becoming a fully
developed country and a "Visitsi Bhara",
where governance is effective, responsive,
and focused on the needs of the people rather
than the demands of the election calendar.

The writer is a professor at XLRI and is with the BJF



The day I opted out

An Olympian quit table tennis, I did too, but many don't have the option

RAJAT KATHURIA

IT IS A story that I have been wanting to tell for at least the last 35 years, and with a mod-icum of humility I might add. The humility is justifiable. An apocryphal quote, some times attributed to Winston Churchill, is a times attributed to Winston Churchill, is a good beginning. It is said someone once remarked that Clement Attlee, one-time Prime Minister of Great Britain, was a modest man, to which Churchill is reported to have retorted, he had much to be modest about. My achievements in table tennis (TT) have been modest and I have understandably been diffident. The reason for being joiled out of this self-induced reticence is due to an insightful article ('Why foil Archana choose academic over TT? Because she could', IE, August 27). There is much to agree with the article based on my experience. But there is some disagreement as well. I begin with the latter, but before that, let me state why I may be considered qualified to react to this article. I spent a good part of my five years in Delhi spent a good part of my

considered qualified to react to this article. I spent a good part of my five years in Delhi University while pursuing a Bachelor's and Master's in Economics on the TT table rather than in class. The days were spent playing tournaments or attending coaching stints at the National Institute of Sports in Patiala. I played two national finals, won a few national tournaments and represented the country in the Asian championships, the Commonwealth games, among others. I was

also ranked the number one player in the country for a brief period. The year was 1987 and India was getting ready to host the World Table Tennis The year was 1987 and India was getting ready to host the World Table Tennis Championships at the Indira Gandhi Indoor Stadium in Delhi Lorompeted in the national tournament circuit in the run-upto the 1987 World Championships and finished the year as the number three player in the country. To my shock and horror, I was not selected to play the Championships in Delhi, my home at that time, perhaps because some felt that having finished a Master's degree while donning spectacles for myopia, I would unnecessarily consume a slot that could be given to a promising young player who prioritised TT over academics. I was all of 24. The pursuit of a Master's degree had signalled that TT was my hobby. Nothing could be further from the truth, but it was a convenient excuse. I was devastated and immediately retired from the sport. Indian newspapers on February 9, 1987, including this one, carried the story of my quitting. It was big news, estered the story of my quitting. It was big news, estered the story of my quitting. It was big news, estered the story of my quitting.

rebruary 9, 1987, including this one, carried the story of my quitting. It was lign ewes, especially since there was limited reportage on sports in those days.

Thirty-five years on, I am truly and humbly grateful that I was dropped from the Indian team and forced to choose an alternative career. I went on to do a PhD in Economics and have been engaged in teach-

ing and research following that red letter day in 1987. I made the choice not because I could, but because I was forced to. There have

The article in *The Indian Express* offers valu-The article in The Indian Express oners vau-able insights. If you have to make a choice be-tween academics and sport in India and if the prospects of your sporting ambition are chal-lenged either by the competition or by the ecosystem, chances are you will opt for a switch to academics. Olympian Archana Kamath quit TT because she could exercise an orisin but there are several who cannot and Kamath quit TT because she could exercise an option but there are several who cannot and are left to the mercy of the sport and the insidious system that governs it. The national sports federations that are not in the limelight, like cricket or badminton, continue to be run as personal fieldoms of their leaders, even after their terms are ower. The courts have had to intervene through a Committee of Administrators (CoA) mandated to clean up the system. But the culture of sporting federations is such that the system premuss business.

the system. But the culture of sporting feder-ations is such that the system returns to busi-ness as usual once the CoA demits office. The article also presents evidence that medal winners in India are largely under-ed-ucated. Sports demands full-time attention; talent or inspiration is only one per cent of the story, Even after 99 per cent perspiration, the outcome is not guaranteed. Those who can, therefore, choose alternative careers. The US,

which has dominated the Olympics in several sports, has a well-oiled sporting culture in uni-versities from where players go on to repre-sent and win medals for the country. I remember my PhD advisor in the US, himself a sport enthusiast, telling me that he preferred to entrussas, teining mer tiar ne preterren watch university games because the intensity of rivalries and the attendant competition was aheady mix. The National Collegiate Athletics Association (NCAA) that organises college sports events in the US is a happy hunting ground that routinely produces world champions. In India, who can forget the legendary St Stephen's versus Hindu cricket matches that produced rivality of levendary pronon-St stephen's versits influt cricker matches that produced rivalry of legendary proportions and many distinguished Indian cricketers to boot. The Rohinton Baria trophy for university cricket was coveted and would be the envy of the Khelo India system that has more or less replaced university-level concests. I'm not sure which one is better, but the lateral trails in the lateral trails and the lateral trails and the lateral trails are supported to the lateral trails. Khelo India has taken over the task of reviv-ing sports in India at all levels, Let's hope it doesn't ignore investing in a back-up for play-ers who can't or don't make it,

Kathuria is dean, School of Humanities and ocial Sciences and professor of Economics at Shiv Nadar University. He represented India in TT and has been a national selector. Views are personal

epaper.indianexpress.com

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

FOR DIGNITY OF ALL

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'The Shimla stain' (IE, September 28). Shopkeepers have loyal customers with whom they have developed trust through regular dealings. The display of names is unnecdealings. The display of names issunnec-essary and may create fissures among sections of society. Himachal Padesh has been and is a peaceful state. No flow should be made to disturb the prevailing peaceful and harmonious amosphere. Rahul Gandhi and the Congress high command must ensure that the bond of mutual respect is strengthened in the states they are niling and contribute might in other states too so that all citi-zens live a dismified life. zens live a dignified life. Subhash Vaid, New Delhi

DELHI'S AIR QUALITY

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'A last-minute plan' (IE, September 28), Come winter, millions in Delhi brace them-selves for the worst, as the city's air qual-ity plummets fastiscilly, It is reassuring that the government's initiatives to com-bat this problem have resulted in a 35 per cent fall in the city's average AQI since 2016. During the winter months, how-ever, when smoke from stubble burning

in surrounding states and the bursting of firecrackers around Diwali hover over the city's sloies, the AQI crashes dramatically. Without people's cooperation, the government's action plan to address its chronic problem will have only limited success. Lack of coordination among all leads of the obscinctions of contination among all leads of the obscinctions in such the continuation. levels of the administration is anothe levels of the days..... significant challenge. Kamal Laddha, Bengoluru

REAL LAND REFORM

REAL LAND REFORM

THIS REFERS TO the article, 'Some hard land questions' (IE, September 28). The nature of land holdings in India has long been a bone of contention. The Green Revolution had its main adversary in small and fragmented holdings. Added to this is the fact that landholders of vast tracts of land put their holding on lease. When compensation arrives for crop failure, it is credited to their account, leaving the actual cultivator at the mercy of the landhord Digitisation is beneficial in ing the actual cultivator at the mercy of the landlord. Digitisation is beneficial in the landlord, Digitisation is beneficial in making policy decisions easier. But ground change can happen only when cooperatives are strengthened and farmcooperatives are strengthened and farm-ers are educated. Women's participation and division of profits need to be the cat-alysts in the entire process. Ramanpreet, via email



War clouds all over West Asia

The international community must force a ceasefire before Israel does a Gaza in Lebanon

srael's actions in Lebanon, including the killing of veteran Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah, have taken West Asia well past the brink it has teetered on for almost a year since the brazen terrorist attacks by Hamas on October 7. Israeli PM Benjamin Netanyahu's threat to Iran, Iranian Supreme Leader Ayatollah Khamenei's pledge to avenge the killing of Nasrallah and the overall escalation in the region, including by Tehran-backed proxies, are all ominous developments. It is worrying that Netanyahu ordered the strike on Lebanon that killed Nasrallah while in New York to attend the United Nations General Assembly, where many countries have called for a cessaction of hostilities. Israel continues to thumb its nose at the world community while continuing on the reckless and wanton path of escalation and destruction chosen by Netanyahu, while its strongest backer in the West, the United States, has turned a complete the west, the United states, as turned a complete blind eye to the country's actions while supplying it with the weapons of mass destruction that have wreaked carnage in the Gaza Strip and Lebanon. The policy of assassinations targeting extremist groups in Lebanon and Gaza may lead to short-term

gains for the Israeli military but organisations such as Hezbollah and Hamas are not oriented around any one individual leader, and it is anybody's guess if killing one leader can truly make a difference in the long run. Israel's actions will lead to a hardening of attitudes among Arab States, even those who had signed on for the Abraham Accords, because of fears about these measures giving a boost to radical and extremist forces. These actions, especially the assassination of Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh in Tehran, also limit the options available to Iran, including its new reformist leadership, which may be forced to respond. The developments in Lebanon could even end up hampering efforts to revive the Iranian nuclear deal, on which there have been talks in recent days.

All this is happening when the UN General Assembly is meeting and days after the world body overwhelmingly passed a resolution demanding an end to Israel's occupation of Palestine within the next year. The consequences for the entire world will be catastrophic if Netanyahu's actions lead to the situation in West Asia spiralling further out of control. World leaders must intervene with Israel and force a ceasefire before Netanyahu does a Gaza

DMK fosters dynastic politics with son rise

he decision of Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK), the party in office in Tamil Nadu, to elevate Udhayanidhi Stalin, son of CM MK Stalin, as deputy CM, institutionalises the much-talked-about succession plan in the outfit. Udhayanidhi, 46, a first-time legislator entered active politics just four years ago after an indifferent career as an actor in Tamil cinema. His controversial remarks on Sanatana Dharma last year, interpreted as in line with the DMK's Johannia ass, year, interpreted as in time with the DMK's ideological orientation, had got him national attention. However, the fast-tracking of his political career smacks of dynastic politics in a party that claims to be the electoral vanguard of the Dravidian Movement. Udhayanidhi's anointment—a representative of the third generation of the M Karunanidhi clan—comes at the political political control of the M Karunanidhi clan—comes at

a time when the DMK is celebrating its 75th year. Under founder CN Annadurai, the party projected a collective leadership ideal. Annadurai's death in 1969, two years after he led the party to office, changed the intra-party dynamics and led to the concentration of intra-party dynamics and led to the concentration of power in the hands of Karunanidhi, who became CM by outsmarting other senior leaders. He encouraged his family to join politics: His preference for son Stalin to succeed him saw the marginalisation of Vaiko, then seen as best suited to lead after Karunanidhi, causing the DMK to split in 1994. The next challenge to Stalin's elevation came from elder brother, MK Alagiri, who was expelled from the party in 2014.

There seems to be little challenge to Udhayanidhi's rise within the DMK now — the extended Karunanidhi dynasty controls the party's finances and the party lacks pan-state leaders. However, the transition could face hiccups in the form of the DMK's allies insisting on a role in government and more electoral space — the

a role in government and more electoral space — the rumblings have started. The entry of popular actor Vijay — he has announced his decision to contest the 2026 assembly polls—could also reset political equations in Tamil Nadu.

Crime stats miss plight of West Bengal women

rate of decline in crimes against women and gender-sensitive policing, the picture is disconcerting

is disconcerting

It has now been more than a month since the rape-murder of a young doctor at her workplace. It is a workplace of the workplace of an entire nation. Investigation is still underway, but there is no doubt that the victim was subject to sexual violence. This has reserved debates about how safe West Bengal is for women and has led to widespread popular protests, patting the state government—led by the proposed popular protests, patting the state government—led by the proposed popular protests, patting the state government—led by the proposed popular workplace of the workplace of t

less extreme ones like assault of women, and even for all eaterparies of crime. In fact, the gap between Bengal and India is highest for rape.

But then, a closer look beyond average crime rates suggest that Bengalis far from being among the best-performing states. If we rank the 31 states for which we have the latest NCRB data (2023 from the best totte worst for rapes per capita. Bengal's rank is 19 (with Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, and Madhya Pradesh being the worst performers) and 24 for per capita murder.

More importantly, we should also lookat growth rates in crime, in stead of just their levels, to understand the true picture. After all, in a givenyear, a state's crime records reflect a number of factors that prevent these crimes from occurring and being reported. If a state is lower or higher than the national average in a particular crime. It is due to many factors, the credit or blame for which cannot be assigned to the present state of policing and governance alone. It reflects the effects of institutions and social norms which tend to change slowly—for example, Bengal has a distinguished history of social movements in support of women's rights going back well into the past.

In contrast the change in the rate of a specific crime is where one can make a more credible attribution of what is happening at present and where things are headed. For

down with respect to the national average, we can ask if this change is due to factors directly controlled by the government (like policing infrastructure) or driven by other trends affecting the likelihood of such crimes happening or being reported. Observing changes makes it possible to see how the situation shifted, no matter where it started.

Since 2017, more detailed NCRB data on different types of sex crimes became available.

Since then, India's crime rate relating to all crimes against women or severe crimes like murder and rape and murder) has been coming down and has continued the downward trend ill 2022. It is interesting to note that Bengal, too, displayed a downward trend nall these categories. Not just that, Bengal shows a sharper decline in twoof these three decline in two of these three categories. Guesse which is the category in which Bengal, alout 5.8%, is much worse than the national average of 5%. Could his be because India had much more room for improvement compared to West Bengal, to begin with? But then, West Bengal, to bogin with? But then, West Bengal, to bog in which But had been to be so that the province of the category in which Bengal, alous 1.8%, is much worse than the national average of 5%. Could with see because India had much more room for improvement compared to West Bengal, to be gim with? But then,

this be because India had much more room for improvement compared to West Bengal, to begin with? But then, West Bengal continues to look much better in handling gender-neutral crimes like murder during this period despite being much below the India wavrage six years ago. Clearly, the trend in crimes against women in Bengal is worrisome.

Now, while considering sex crimes



Not only is the superficial reading of NCRB data to suggest West Bengal is safe for women misleading, reporting bias in the state has worsened

against women, one cannot ignore the potential role of reporting bias. Many women hesitate to report sey and violence to male police officers, perhaps due to a combination of social sigma, humiliation, shame, or reluctance of male police officers to register crimes against women in patriarchal societies, Indeed, recent research shows that women police officers are much more likely to register FIRs in cases of gender-based violence compared to male police officers.

officers are much more away.

Inter PIRs in cases of gender-based violence compared to male police officers.

A large part of gender-based police reforms in the aftermath of the 2012 gangrape-murder in Delhi has been geared towards making police stations more accessible for women. It is in light of these possibilities that we should look at the reported number for sexual crimes in Bengal. At 9.522, the number of women in the civil police in the state today is half of that in Andhra Pradesh (18.599) and one-third of Maharashtra's (29.469) and more than 30% lower than even Bihar's (2.795.0 pper-capital metrics. Bengal is ranked 34th among 37 states, with one officer serving more than 5,000 women. And this is not just driven by a smaller size of the overall police force. Even within the existing force, the share of women is much lower in Bengal (19%) compared to the India average (12%). This is perhaps the reason why the prime accused in the current case carried on with his policing assignment despite an assault complaint from his former wife's fam-

While it is difficult to ascertain the actent of reporting bias, we compared information on crime against women reported in the National Family Health Surveys (NFHS) with that from NCHB. The NFHS reports "physical violence inflicted by people other than unbashad". If we compare this with NCBB numbers on crime against women, we expect that data from the two sources to roughly align. In 2005. Bengal was close to the India average in both NCBB and NFHS, in terms of per capita incidences By 2015. Bengal was close to the India average in both NCBB and NFHS. In terms of per capita incidences By 2015. Bengal was close to the India average in both NCBB and NFHS and the state of the India average in the Comparison not only suggests that Bengal is close to the India average. The comparison not only suggests that Bengal is close to the India average. The comparison not only suggests that Bengal has a high-reporting base in the Official records on crime against women, but also this bias has increased over time.

On top of our argument that the view based on a superficial reading of NCBB data suggesting Bengal as safe for women as misleading, evidence on extensive and worsening reporting bias in the state suggests that what NCBB data reveals could well be the tip of the icebery.

Maitreeth Chesis its professor of

Maitreeth Ghatak is professor of omics, Loradon School of Economics (LSE), and Tanika Chakraborty is associate professor of economics at IIM-Calcutta. The views expressors

It is too early to write Hezbollah's obituary

In ours after Israeli airstrikes in Beirut killed Hassan Nasrallah, the upper of the world's mot lethal non-state militia, Hezbollah, the organisation defiantly sowed to "continue the holy war against the enemy". The billion-dollar question is whether it can absorb the tremendous blow of the loss of its co-founder and undisputed leader for 32 years and maintain its stature as the deadliest menace on Israel's doorsteel cleader for 32 years and maintain its stature as the deadliest menace on Israel's doorsteel. So goes a off-cited maxim in warfare and counterterrorism discourse. The chessboard analogy, wherein if the king is checkmated, it means the end of the game and the defeat of the opponent, also points to the same logic. Eliminating the principal leader of the adversary has been implemented by larael and the United States (US). The same logic. Eliminating the principal leader of the adversary has been implemented by larael and the United States (US). The same logic has been implemented by larael and the United States (US) and the Islamic Steroritis grapes such as Hamas, Hezbollah, Al Qaeda, and the Islamic Steroritis grapes such as Hamas, Hezbollah, Al Qaeda, and the Islamic Steroritis grapes such as Hamas, Hezbollah, Al Qaeda, and the Islamic Steroritis grapes such as Hamas, Hezbollah, Al Qaeda, and the Islamic Steroritis grapes such as Hamas, Hezbollah, Al Qaeda, and the Islamic Steroritis grapes such as Hamas, Hezbollah, Al Qaeda, and the Ushave announced it with dramatic fanfare and declared it would significantly degrade the evil perpetrated by these organisations.

Yet, decapitation of jihadist organisations has not been decisive or very effective in terminating their violent "holy wars". The American scholar Jenna Jordan examined a database of 1,276 cases of leadership assassinations between 1970 and 2016 and found that Right-wing Islamist groups are among the most resilient terrorist outfits. Owing to certain inbullt characteristics, jibadist organisations survive what might be a coup de grâce for o

be a coup degrace for other types of terrorist groups.
Firstly, Islamist outflits tend to be bureaucratised" with diversified struc-tures, division of roles and responsibilities based on specialisation among fighters and commanders, and relatively decentralised in operations. In the case of Hamas and Hezbollah, even though they are hierarchi-cal and built around cuits of personality of their top leaders, they have autonomous reliular fighting units with well-defined mandates and independent decision-mak-ing authority.

amadates and independent decision-making authority.

Secondly, Islamist terrorist movements have legitimacy in their local communities and areas. Jordan argues that terrorist groups with greater communal support increase their chances of survival in the face of external shocks like leadership decapitation. Hezbollah is embedded into the daily lives of more than 1.6 million Lebanese Shias and draws from among them some 100,000 or more trained fighters. It is a cultural and social service provider as well as a political platform whose candidates compete in elections and wield considerable influence in Lebanon's national affairs. Such socially interwoven Islamist groups are not easy to vanquish through decapitation of leaders.

Thirdly, Jihadist terrorist outfits institu-

tionalise their ideologies among adherents and have fanatical belief structures that seep into generations of followers. In the case of Herbollah, the history of civil war, sectarian divisions and competition for resources and power in Lebanon, as well as the mythology of Shia and Muslim victims and the mythology of Shia and Shia was undoubtedly a charismatic deric and reinforcer of this ideology. But even after his death, Shias, mobilised along deeply held religious narratives about shared suffer in seat of the structure o

Sreeram Chaulia is dean, Jindal School of International Affairs. The views expresses are persons

[BV NAGARATHNA] JUDGE, SUPREME COURT V Rights of children living with disabilities must be given the widest possible realisation in theory and practice HI

STRAIGHTFORWARD }



Time to repose faith in ideals of the Mahatma

th African politician and anti-apartheid st of renown. Kathrada's ideas had taken

be part of a discussion with Ahmed Kathrada, a South African politician and anti-spartheid activist of renown. Kathrada's ideas had taken shape and matured during the apartheid days, I was eager to learn his views on the then fledgeling democracy, the condition of the Indian disspora in South Africa, and Mohandan Karamchand Candhr's work in that country. I asked Kathrada why the South Africans were occasionally opposed to Gandhr's ideals, Dort South Africans feel he is their friend?

Kathrada countered: "Tell me a place where Gandhi didn't encounter opposition. He was villade when he was alive and, even decades after his death, If people are making a career out of denouncing him. Te means he's still relevant."

According to Kathrada, with a rise in the chorus of opposition, the curlosity of the new generation to know more about Gandhi and his dieas will also grow. They will discover him in greater detail and will feel more inspired by him.' he said. Gandhi was considered the predecessor of Netson Mandels in South Africa till recently.

We are celebrating the Mahatma's birth anniversary the day after. Around this tiln over the past couple of years, there have been attempted in make long levels have been attempted on make long leve Rathrada was right, the reallience of Gandhi and his dees make him immortal. Godse is known solely for being Gandhi's seasastin and has no independent dischity. Gandhi is a global giant. On January 30, 1984, has been at towying global personality for what he achieved in 78-odd years of his life. It's not for nothing that every global leader voh wish india or our leaders who travel to foreign lands always invoke Gandhi and pp. where respects to the Mahatma.

Even least month when Prime Minister Nar-his Gandhi and pp. where respects to the Mahatma.

endra Modi visited Ukraine, he paid respects at the Gandhi statue in Kylv's Peace Park and wreo ns." The ideals of Bapu are universal and give hope to millions. May we all follow the path he showed humanity." Modf's Kyw tsit was aimed to bring the dis-strous Russia-Ukraine conflict now in its third west to an early

Modis Kyiv visit was aimed to bring the dis-astrous Bussia-Uraine conflict now in its third year to an end.

Brand Gandhi solidly represents India glo-bally. This is why voices of sanity in Bangla-desh invoked Gandhi when Hindus were being brutally targeted in their country. Bapu-holds a special place in the Bengali psyche. Noakhall in Bengal being torn by communal violence just before Independence. People who had lived together for centuries became bloodthirsty rivais overnight, On November 7, 1946, Gandhi arrived in Noakhali with a mes-sage of peace. Bis magic inspired the Muslims to contribute to restoring the temples they had damaged during the riots.

A couple of days later, Gandhi was in Koli-ata, when a mob surrounded him chanting, "Gandhi go back". Gandhi tod the crowd: "I have come to serve Hindus and Muslims alike. I am going to place myself under your protec-tion. You are welcome to turn against me. I have have the welcome to turn against me. I have first the serve of the server of the server. His efforts saved Kolkata and the newspa-pers gladly reported it as a "Calcutta miracle" and termed Gandhi as a "one-ma army."

However, an irony of our times is that while Bangladesh is involeing Gandhi, India is wit-nessing is reverse.

Bangladeeh is involsing Gandhi, India is win-nessing its reverse.

On May 19, people celebrated Godse's anni-versary in Gwallor. The news of the celebration grabbed headlines the next day. Whether it is a tragedy of our times, or some vested interess bent on exploiting fault lines, is anybody's guess. No matter how thick the ervelope of file-sity may be, human'l it synonymous with the referredses endowour towards the bright light of truth. Like Estilmade, I have firm faith in Gan-dhi's eleman I relevance.

R. N. I. No. 501/1957 • Postal Reg. No. 02/00/1957 09 Postal Reg. No. 02/00/195820708-19-20 \(\) Unimed to good without propownerf LCDCI No. 1(C)-10/2006-03. Am Sun connect: Raige and beyond by Rail or Read - Rs. 56'- (Amendand Surgaion, Combutter, Control, Co.), Hydradaid Shajuata, Sharbal, Swaptom, Valley Salar No. 2(1)-10/2006-03. Am Sun connection and the Salar No. 10/2006-03. Am Sun connection and the Sala





UNPRECEDENTED GROWTH

Vice president Jagdeep Dhankha

The country has seen historic exponential development, economic upsurge unknown to us...our opportunity basket is increasing day by day

Export crisis is real

There are no easy fixes besides productivity-enhancing reforms; Indian shippers must have a much larger share

NDIA'S MERCHANDISE EXPORTS are facing a serious slump, with no real prospect of a meaningful recovery in the medium term. Shipments shrank 3.1% in FY24, a rarity for an emerging economy like India. Export contraction can be understood only under extraordinary circumstances, like the Covid-19 pandemic. In April-August this year, goods exports grew just 1.1%, despite a very favourable base. The contraction in exportswas 9, 3% in August, the sharpest since July 2023, precipitating a 10-month high trade deficit of close to \$30 billion in the patch and except the exponence of the patch and exposure on the survey account for the patch and exposure on the survey account for the patch and exposure on the survey account for the patch and exposure on the survey account for the patch and exposure on the survey account for the patch and exposure on the survey account for the patch and exposure on the survey account for the patch and exposure on the survey account for the patch and exposure on the survey account for the patch and exposure on the patch and month, and causing worries on the current account front to re-emerge. A softer crude oil price cannot be blamed for low exports or high trade deficit, as this cuts both ways (by reducing both oil import bill and the value gains from export of petroleum products). To be sure, non-oil

value gains from export of petroleum products). To be sure, non-oil exports too were flat in August.

The fact is the export crisis has much to do with structural issues of the economy that have no quick fixes. Rising labour costs that aren't compensated through overall productivity gains, and logistical constraints, are also hampering shipments. To a certain extent, exporters have managed to cope with the loss of conventional export markets via market diversification. In the four years to FY24, India's goods exports to other Asian countries dropped from 4596 of its total exports to 40%, while that to Europe rose from 2096 to 24%. Obviously, exporters are in search of pricing power to make ends meet. Also, marked gains have been made in relatively high-tech products, like electronics, even though net value gains from foreign trade in these import-intensive products are very low.

Analysts foresee a prolonged period of lower oil prices, given that Openbus oil products are very low.

Analysts foresee a prolonged period of lower oil prices, given that Opecplus oil producers are reportedly planning to scale up output. This would
mean that India's export figures are unlikely to get a boost from the (lowvalue-addition) petroleum product exports in the short term. At the same
time, an influx of gold imports after the recent duty cuts on the yellow
metal, and a possible surge in imports of solar panels, steel, electronics, etc.
from China following imposition of higher tariffs by the US could widen
India's trade deficit. At a broader level and in long-term interest, reforms
aimed at productivity gains are the solution for the export slump. An
open-ended tax remission scheme that will ensure "zero rating" of exports
put he are rigary and research of these must be a primary and essential element of these.

must be a primary and essential element of these. However, at the moment, exporters are also struggling with immediate issues like rising freight cost, shipping delays, shortage of containers, and congestion at ports. The government has taken a few steps like asking the state-run shipping Corporation of India to acquire five new functional container ships and other agencies involved in export logistics like Concor and state-run ports to reduce their tariffs to help exporters tide over the crisis. But, for India to get a handle on its own export-import (exim) cargo, Indian shippers must raise their share in it. Vessels flying the Indian Reschouldhear regiment leates third of the country's export are governed. lag should be carrying at least a third of the country's exim cargo, up from a dismal 7-8% now. While major headway has been made in augmenting India's port capacities and port-related infrastructure, investments in shipbuilding and acquisition of vessels by domestic shipping companies have maintained a tardy pace. Larger domestic shipping/container capacities would give Indian shippers better access to global sea routes, trans-shipment ports, and control over freight rates and schedules.

Tapestry-Capri misses the point in luxury fight

WE'VE HAD TAYLOR Swift, Emily in Paris and more designer purses than Saks Fifth

WE'VE HAD TAYLOR Swift, Emily in Parls and more designer purses than Saks Fifth Avenue's handbag floor.

But there has been one \$400-billion elephant in cashnere in the Manhattan courtroom of US district judge Jennifer Rochon, who is deciding whether Tapestry Inc.'s

\$8.5-billion purchase of Capri floidings Lid can go alhead: the increasing power of a handful of glant European Luxury brands.

The US feedral Trade Commission is seeking to block Tapestry's acquisition of Capri on the grounds that their Coach, Kate Spade, and Michael Kors brands would dominate a part of the market — not cheap but not super-luxe — where working and middle-class American women shop. This would cut competition, enabling the combined company to raise prices to the detriment of these consumers.

But any narrow definition of how we buy bags misses the broader point. The luxury sector is in winner-takes-all mode. Some players such as LVMH Moet Hennessy Louis Vultion SE, with a market capitalisation of about \$390 billion, have the scale and financial firepower to keep its brands, including Louis Vultion and bloro, but also the cheaper Mar Jacobs, at the forefront of consumers' minds. Without smaller participants being able to thrive, shoppers could actually face less competition for their bag business.

It might seem a stretch to think that a Coach bag costing about \$500 would compete with a Chanel one costing \$5,000. But the reality is much more nuanced.

If accessible luxury is roughly between \$100 and \$1,000 — one possible way of thinking about if floated by the FTC — and women shop point which can be considerably over the past three years. This has put them out of reach for many shoppers and led to a slowdown in revenue growth. To regain these customers and stimulate sales, luxury behemother are required to the propers of a funct.

What's more, many top-end companies have raised prices considerably over the past three years. This has put them out of reach for many shoppers and led to a slowdown in revenue growth. To regain these cus

wiggle room is worth it.

Tapestry is acquiring Capri in an attempt to be the US equivalent of LVMH. It should
take a leaf out of CSO and founder Bernard Arnault's book, when he was buying Tiffany
& Co. four years ago and seek the best value for its shareholders.

FROM PLATE TO PLOUGH

IT IS NOT JUST A MATTER OF IMPROVING ECONOMIC EFFICIENCY, BUT ALSO PROVIDING FOOD SECURITY

Curb post-harvest losses

EPTEMBER 29 IS designated by the United Nations (UN) as the International Day of Awareness of Food Loss and Waste. It is jointly convened by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), as it has important implications for food security and saving our environment. An FAO Important implications for food security and saving our environment. A T8-0223 report estimates that food which is lost between the harvest and retail amounts to 13-2% of the global food production. Interestingly, UNEP estimates that 17% of food is wasted between the retail and consumer's stomates. The saving the savi

ple, and abolish hunger for all. Besides, it could help reduce at least 8 - 10% of the world's greenhouse gas emissions, and 38% of total energy usage, making our planet breathe better. But alas, both these dreams remain unfulfilled as of today. Therefore, it is important to be aware of the potential benefits, and commit ourselves to reduce FLW by at least 50%, thus contributing to the UN's sustainable development goals, for the people and for the planet.

Where does India stand in the global scenario of FLW and how can it help eliminate hunger and saw the environment? The all-India post-harvest loss survey by Nabard Consultancy Services (NABCONS) in 2022 reveals that the country suffers staggering food losses worth 61.53 lakh crore (\$18.5 billion) with a loss of 12.5 million metric tonnes (MMT) of cereals, 2.11 MMT of ollseeds, 1.37 MMT of pulses, etc. Around 49.9 MMT of horticultural crops are lost annually due to poor cold chain infrastructure, reducing both the availability of fresh produce and the income potential for farmers. The NABCONS survey of fresh produce and the income poten-tial for farmers. The NABCONS survey

ASHOK GULATI RAYA DAS

does not identify food waste at the con-sumer end, but that too is likely to be sig-nificant given the way Indians love lav-sish weddings and other feasts. While existing surveys primarily estimate quantitative losses, ICRIER-ADMI research ventured into estimat-ing quality losses also, besides the quan-tity losses. A comprehensive survey of 1,200 farmers was conducted across Punjab, Bihar, and Madhya Pradesh for key roops such

1,200 farmers was conducted across Punjab, Bihar, and Madhya Pradesh for key crops such as paddy, wheat, soya bean, and maize in 2022. The study revealed that soya bean has the highest post-harvest loss among the studied crops, at 15,3496, followed by wheat at 7,8796, paddy at 6,3796, and maize at 5,95% including quantity and quality losses. Such significant losses point to the urgent need for enhancing technological interventions across the value chain to prevent food loss between harvest and retail. The study shows that food loss largely occurs during harvesting, threshing, drying, and storage stages, predominantly due to low levels of mechanisation and inadequate infrastructure.

Rarmers who use combine harvesters, for instance, see a marked reduction in paddy losses compared to those relying on traditional manual methods. The overall loss in paddy drops to just 2,84% if the mechanisation in harvesting and Beyond technological solutions, policy support is critical to ensure that small and marginal farmers can access technological changes

drying have been adopted at the farm level (ICRIER-ADMI, 2022). According to the All-India Debt and Investment Survey in 2013), only 4-4% of Cultivator households in India owned tractors, and amer 5-3% owned either power tillers, combine harvesters, or threshers. Small and marginal farmers, who constitute over 86% of Indian agricultural households, often cannot afford to buy costly machines. For paddy, 97% on the combine of the combine o

harvesters in Punjab, whereasin Biharonly 10% paddy-producing house-holds use combine harvesters. To promote farm mechanisation, farmer producer organisations and custom hiring centres can play a crucial role through group leasing arrangements and "uberi-sation" of farm machinery, ability of proper drying and

sation of farm machinery. The availability of proper drying and storage infrastructure also plays an important role in reducing food losses. Traditional sun drying methods are fraught with risks, including the addition of foreign matters, uneven drying, and exposure to moisture, which called to mould and mycotoxin contamination. Solar dryers and dehydrators offer a solution to reduce losses and extend the shelf life for perishables. These green technologies are cost-effective for small-scale farmers, climateriendly, and need to be encouraged with friendly, and need to be encouraged with appropriate policy.

Furthermore, storage infrastructure remains inadequate in India. According to the Indian Grain Storage Management and Research Institute, in 2021, post-harvest losses accounted for approximately 10% of total food grain production due to poor and inadequate storage infrastructure. Recently, the government of India has launched a major grain storage plan. This initiative is part of a broader strategy aimed at modernising the agricultural system. The plan entails expansion of storage capacity by 70 MMT over the next five years. If implemented properly, it holds potential to reduce post-harvest losses at the storage level.

Mechanisation, enhanced storage, and efficient transportation systems are key areas where technological solutions, policy support is critical to ensure that small and marginal farmers can access these technological changes. To make enhanced use of hermetic bags in India a postility, there is fully indiance in India a postaging Material Act (IPMA), 1937. Even though jute is biodegradable, it is a water guazler, hydrophilic, and labourinensive crop, and the usage leads to frequent rodent attack, pilferage, and infestation due to the tropical climate. Hence, there is a need to revisit the IPMA for faster expansion of the use of hermetic bags, which has a potential to lower storage and transit losses is not just a matter of improving economic efficiency, but a shugh great for surface of sortering the people, we can save the planet.

Views are personal

Time to secure Bay of Bengal



CONSTANTINO XAVIER

THE SIXTH SUMMIT of the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (Bimstee) planned in Bangkoke earlier this month was, once again, postponed. The organisation now risks losing pace after its seven member-states agreed on a 2030 plan for a prosperous, resilient, and open Bay of Bengal. That vision of economic integration, bridging South Asia and Southeast Asia, is now endangered by a wave of political instability, internal conflicts, and security challenges. Except for India and Bhutan, all other member-states have been torn by political turbulence, from Nepal's 10 prime ministers in as many years to the violent cataclysm in Bangladesh. Myanmar remains engulied in a spiralling civil war, and Sri Lankis Political turmoll is far from over as the Island recovers from a financial collapse. Beyond unstable politics and fragile economies, the Bay of Bengal region also faces a growing number of non-traditional security challenges. These are weakening state institutions and increasing the risk of internal, bilateral, and regional conflicts. Climate change is disrupting livelihoods and displacing millions of people. Close to half abillion people are now deemed to be food-insecure, affected by sudden weather changes, depleting fish stocks, and devastating cyclones. From health to energy, policymakers are struggling to energy and be red wellowed to be food-insecure, affected by sudden weather changes, depleting fish stocks, and devastating cyclones. From health to energy, policymakers are struggling to energy and the red wellowed to be food-insecure, affected by sudden weather changes depleting fish stocks, and devastating cyclones. From health to energy, policymakers are struggling to energy and the red wellowed to be food-insecure, affected by sudden weather changes depleting fish stocks, and devastating cyclones. From health to energy, policymakers are struggling to energy and the policymakers are struggling to energy policymakers are struggling to energy and the policymakers are st deliver development solutions to a growing number of impatient, under employed youth.

Bimstec offers one possible solution to collectively address these challenges. Going beyond its original technical, trade, and economic focus, the organisation has begun to develop an important security track since 2016, when its leaders called for more cooperation among "law enforcement, intelligence, and security organisations" at their retreat in Goa. Progress has been significant since then.

icant since then. In 2017, the first National Security Chiefs' (NSC) meeting referred to the Bay

In 2017, the first National Security
Chiefs'(NSC) meeting referred to the Bay
of Bengal as a "common
security space". It has met
three more times since
then, most recently in
Myanmar in July. There
have been three editions
of a track 1.5 Security Dialogue and two editions of
the Think Tanks Dialogue
on Regional Security. Neva
areas of security cooperation now include the martitime and cyber domains.
Three Bimstee disaster management
exercises have been held, as well as one
of Bimstee's seven new priority sectors.
The slow but steady securitisation of
Bimstee's seven new priority sectors.
The slow but steady securitisation of
Bimstee brings with it new challenges as
the organisation seeks to find new relevance. Five its important to continue
attention from member-states.
First, it is important to continue

attention from member-states.
First, it is important to continue expanding the scope of "security" to new

domains. Sub-sectors under security include disaster management and energy, as well as a separate sector agriculture and food security. Health offers another opportunity, especially after Bimstee was found missing in action during the 2020-21 pandemic. Moving beyond energy from a resource perspective, there is also a scope for cooperation on climate security. A wider cooperation on climate security. A wider

Bimstec shouldn't further delay its sixth summit to

integration is threatened by instability in the region

avoid losing relevance at a time its vision of economic

cooperation on climate security. A wider range of humanitarian assistance and disaster relief exercises will help to build institutional capacity in the secretariat for future emergencies. Second, security cooperation needs to be sustained with more freation needs to be sustained with more frequent meetings. The expert group on space security and the home ministers' meeting have mot been held even once. More than ever before, the Bay of Bengal's road to economic interdependence and ministers' meeting have not been held even once And the NSC meeting saw prosperity hinges on political stability and

and the NSC meeting saw
a long hittus between
2019 and 2024. Meeting
perspectives through informations under
tions and set an agenda that is both
ambitious but feasible, especially on sensitive issues including cross-border conficts or regional security matters where
Chima's shadow always looms large.
Third, consistency is also necessary
when it comes to finalising agreements. For instance, the Bimstec Convention on Cooperation in Combating
international Ferrorism, Transational
Organised Crime and Illicit Drug Trafficking was signed in 2009, but only

came into force in 2021. The draft conventions on the transfer of sentenced persons and on extradition have both faced significant delays.

Fourth, member-states will also have to harmonise the different organisational entry points. Some variation is expected, but the NSC meetings reflect how member-states have differing persectives on security cooperation. While India has consistently been represented by its national security acobox. Srd Lanka sent its director of military intelligence in 2017 and 2018, Nepal its inspector general of police in 2019, and Bhutan its secretary of the ministry of home affairs. Finally, while India has served as the lead country for the security sector, it will have to tread with caution and deal with multiple sensitivities. Some smaller member-states are wary of the big neighbour or coming under pressure from political constituencies at home, or from china abroad, to engage in security cooperation with India.

More than ever before, the Bay of Bengal's road to economic interdependence and prosperity hinges on political stability and regional security. Bimstee's experiment with security cooperation holds promise but its still a work in progress. Any further delays on holding the sixth summit in Bangkot isk diminishing Bimstee's relevance.

Co-authored with Dirrus Banerjee.

Co-authored with Dhruv Banerjee, former intern at CSEP, New Delhi

Views are personal

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Stubble burning

While pollution from vehicles, construction dust, solid waste, management, etc. have been counted as key sources of emissions, the paddy stubble burning in Punjab and Haryana contributes as much as 40% of the poll

Minister's Office this week, both states committed to eliminate stubble burning, but it remains to be seen on ground. Punjab expects to manage 11.5 MT of its paddy straw through onfield crop residue management and Haryana will manage 3.3 MT. The remaining will be used by ex-situ methods. Additionally, 2 MT-would be used as a boiler fuel in 11 thermal power plants across the National Capital Region after turning the straw into pellets. The states and the Centre

must keep their differences aside and fight the cause together. —Sanjay Chopra, Mohali

Address unemployment

Apropos of "Employment crisis deepens" (FE, September 28), the much-touted claims of India being the fastest-growing economy is at variance with the unemployment situation in the country. Apologists for the government claim that whoever is willing to work is employed and those

who are unemployed simply don't want to work. Unless the government accepts there is a problem, there is no chance that it will take measures to counter it. With an ever increasing workforce unable to find suitable employment to its it of its above. workforce unable to find suitable employment, India is facing a huge crisis which could snowball into a social crisis that shakes the foundations of civil society. —Anthony Henriques, Maharashtra

Regd. No: DL - 2104#/03-05. R.N.L. No. 26750/76. Printed and Published by R.C. Malhotra on behalf of The Indian Express (P) Ltd and printed at The Indian Express (P) Ltd Press, A-8, Sector-7, Noida - 201301 and published at The Indian Express (P) Ltd, Mezzanine Floor, Express Building, 9 & 10, Bahadur Shah Zafar Marg, New Dehi-110002, Phone: 0120-6651500. (Cover price: Patrax: Mon-Fri 212, Sat & Sun 412; Raipur Mon-Fri 212, Sat & Su financialexp.epaprin

THE ASIAN AGE

Conflict may escalate as Israel stays on warpath

srael's pinpoint strike on a southern Beierut suburb killing the Hezbollah leader Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah in his underground command post to end his 32-year reign as secretary-general of the terrorist organisation with political wings has sparked fears of a far wider escalation of the Middle East war. The killing of the top leadership that shaped Hezbollah into rebuilding its military machine since wars in the early parts of the millennium against Israel to become the world's most heavily armed terror group may seem a huge setteck now.

The strike that followed months of intelligence may not, however, have knocked. The strike that followed months of intelligence may not, however, have knocked with scores of projectiles per day since the barbaric October 7 attack on Israel. Which it has been doing with scores of projectiles per day since the barbaric October 7 attack on Israel.

out the group's ability to keep firing missiles on Israel, which it has been doing with scores of projectiles per day since the barbaric October 7 attack on Israel by Hamas.

A tectonic shift may not come about in Iran's influence on its proxies in the region because of this strategically precise operation with powerful bunker buster obmobs to hit a major figure like Nasrallah. What Iran does now in the face of this pointed attack on Herbollah and one of its own revolutionary force commanders is what will define events in the war.

Having taken direct action against its sworn enemy, Israel, only in the softest posture of the conflict have aftered now with the elimination of the conflict have aftered now with the elimination of Nasrallah, likely making way for his cousin Hashem

Safieddine, another safeddine, another safeddine, another stafeddine, another stafe of the second designated as a global terrorist by the US

It is debatable whether Israel, with its claim of an installat threat hanging historically over it since formation, has the moral right to escalate its companies and the provided and the provided and the safe of the provided and the safe of the provided and the pro

Israelis and citizens of many other nauvualues, account in launching myriad missiles. Since Hezbollah had not stopped its military action in launching myriad missiles from October 8, the day after Hamas crossed the border into Israel to attack and from October 8, the day after Hamas crossed the border into Israel to attack and from October 8, the day after Hamas crossed the border into Israel to attack and from October 8, the day after Hamas crossed the border into Israel to attack and take hostages, Israel has been on the offensive, mostly in reducing Gaza to rubble before opening this second front recently against Hezbollah with heavy bombing runs over Lebanon.

before opening this second front recently against nezionian with neavy comming runs over Lebanon.

A feared ground invasion that may have stretched Israel's capabilities did not come about and the tactic of taking aim at the Hezhollah leader has worked well with regard to strategy, but Israelis are living in fear of counter-strikes from thezhollah with most settlers in northern Israel having moved out of range of the Lebanon border.

The dynamics of the conflict have altered now with the elimination of Nasrallah, likely making way for his cousin Hashem Safleddine, another persona designated as a global terrorist by the United States, who will be hoping to regroup his army of fighters who are far better equipped and trained than the Hamas of the Gaza Strip.

army of fighters who are tar usuas equipped and the Gaza Strip.

The world is aghast at the cost of war but the Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netamyahu, whose political stake in continuing to keep his country on the offensive is heavy, illustrated his defiance with a speech at the United Nations even as his bombers were taking off to strike Beirut. Where this will end and whether any major powers will be sucked into this Middle Eastern cauldron is open to question.

Disability: Welcome re-definition

Remember the time that we referred to someone as "physically handicaped" or "mentally retarded." Gone are those days. Thanks to not releaders and activists, society has evolved to become more understanding towards people who are unable to use their faculties like most others. The words, "physically handicapped", have given way to "physically challenged" with the phrase, "differently abled", arriving on its heels. Most other such terms, too, have undergone changes.

The Supreme Court of India now feels that even such changes are a bit condescending and there must be ways to describe these conditions in a more people-centric way. Hence it suggests that judges would henceforth refer to them as "persons with a disability". So it will be "a person with hearing disability," with the person coming first in plain words. And nothing else. The court even with the person coming first in plain words. And nothing else. The court even as "persons with a disability." So it will be "a person with hearing best more than as to be kind but correct. As Justice B.V. Nagarathna, who supervised the preparation of the handbook, noted. "The language used by judges in their judgments carries immense weight and has the power to shape societal perceptions and attitudes. When it comes to addressing matters involving persons with disabilities, the use of sensitive language is of paramount importance. Only last week the court barved the use of the words, 'child pornagraphy', 'Chily last week the court barved the use of the words, 'child pronggraphy', Chily last week the court barved the use of the words, 'child pronggraphy' can be understanding of a social crime and the impact it can have on people it is judges advising them to shun certain words while referring to women. It's time society at large, and especially the media, follow the suggestions and work on their vocabulary. The apex court, meanwhile, should have a mechanism to ensure that judges had especially the media, follow the suggestions and work on their vocabulary. The apex court,

THE ASIAN AGE

III) 22213126.

**Withhold and Privated on behalf of and for Decour Chemical Vosith Centre, 219 Deen Dayal Upathyay Marg, New John 1990 Central Riskock Lail, Co. Science III, North 201010.

**Landson Cardamanh Lail, Bh Hore, Block 2, Ellindoth House, 30 York Basel, London, SEI 7NQ. DR Magnetiatus annies: 7329944



Pride & politics: Netas toss the Tirupati laddu around



me deputy chief minister of Andhra Pradesh, Pawan Kalyan of the Jana Sena Party (JSF), was once an admirer of the Latin Americam Marxist hero and youth icon Che Guevara. He milked his porting a red angavastram and marching with the Communists, He has suddenly switched to a saf-fron angavastram and marching to the tune of a shankam, politicising a controversy around the adulteration of ghee at the Devasthnam (TTD). What ought to have been an issue of either sloppy supply management or deliberate corruption in the purchase of ghee has been turned into a politicism issue. Not to be diluteration of the community of the minister, has jumped onto the community of the

den state politics of the Andhras. The entire controversy revolves around a report that drew attention to the possibility of adulteration of gines supplied to TTD. This is not a new problem. In the past, if such adulter-ation of ghee with veg-etable oils was discovered. signments were rejected and returned. Over the bars sturred. Over the bars sturred, complaints were filed about such adulteration of ghee with vegetable oil. However, for the first time this year, when such adulteration was once again discovered, the Chandrababu Naidu government sent a sample of the ghee to the Gujarat-based National Dairy Development Board (NDDB) for further verification.

The NDDB analysis pointed to adulteration with vegetable oil. However, in an interesting new twist to the controversy, and an unusual move, it

and an unusual move, it that it was "possible" that there "may be traces of animal fair". Thus far no evidence has been presented to confirm that there indeed was any animal fat. To suggest that there is a possibility of such adulteration. Why the NDDB felt in necessary to flag this "possibility" evidence is a question waiting to be asked and answered. Why bother about such why in the post of communalism. If Chandrabablu Naidu was trying to get at his bete noire, Jagan Mohan Reddy, by accusing him of insulting Hindu senting Hindu senting trend to the Reddy's Christian credentals, Pawan Kalyan man to the Reddy's Christian credentals, Pawan Kalyan man was the such that the such that the such a such as a such a such a such a such as a such a such a such a such as a such a su

The Tirupati "laddu con-troversy" is the first sign of the entry of communal pol-itics into caste-ridden

power and wealth among the Telugu elites — Reddy, Kamma, Kapu, Velama and Velama and Raju — have contributed to the rise of caste as a factor in Telugu politics

Anthra politics. The erst-while state of Anthra Pradeshie reved than the rybooks as India's first lin-guistic state. Taking the cup from the Telugus, the Gujaratis, Maharash-trians, Kannadigas, Pun-jabis and other linguistic groups managed to get their own administrative on language. In the forma-tion of Andhra Pradesh on the basis of language, the Indian National Congress and the Communist Party of India, at the time the sin-gle largest Opposition polit-scal perty in India and in Indian National Congress and the Communist Party of India, at the time the sin-gle largest Opposition polit-scal perty in India and in Indian National Congress Years later, when the

cause.
Years later, when the nrst round of a movement for a separate state of Telangana dividing a got dissipated, N.T. Rama Rao tried to re-unite the Telugas based once again on linguistic sentiment by naming his party Telugu Desam Party (TDP). Telugu pride secured a national boost and recognition first loader of an all india political formation called the National Pront, and then found its expression once again when P.V. Narasimha Rao became India's first Prime Minister of South Indian origin. Both NTR and the National Prot. Narasimha Rao became India's first Prime Minister of South Indian origin. Both NTR and the National Prot. Narasimha Rao became India's first Prime Minister of South Indian origin. Both NTR and the National Prot. Narasimha Rao became India's first Prime Minister of South Indian origin. Both NTR and Couled the NTR and NTR

reamins, wan controlled the semilest program a Rashitz of the semilest process of the semilest process of the semilest process party. In truncated Andhra Pradesh, the political battle has been between the Reddy-dominated YSR Congress and the Kamma-controlled TDP.

Into this matrix of cases of the semilest process and the Kamma-controlled TDP.

Into this matrix of the BJP and communal politics. In BJP and communal politics, in Felangana, it secured easy entry given the history of Hindu-Muslim divisions dating back to the days of the feudal potentate, the Nizams of Hyderabed. The leadership of the Congress Party in united Andhra had exploited these undersafted the semilest provided the semilest pr

cism. It remains to be seen if this controversy is set to rest or ends up communal-ising Telugu politics.

The writer is an author, a former newspaper editor and adviser to Prime Minister Mammohan Singh. He has recently edited The Importance of Shinzo Abe: India, Japan and the Indo-Pacific.

LETTERS

The orders of a court to file an FIR against the finance minister over electoral bonds must come as an unwelcome surprise for her party. Most probably, nothing will come of it since the bonds have been discontinued, but it will give Opposition parties something to attack the BJP with. Nothing much has been heard about electoral bonds in quite a while and this move will bring them back under the spotlight Electoral funding is the big elephant in the room of de mocratic process and it's naive to expect big business to fund parties freely. Bonds are nothing but legalised bribes and since expenses are ever increasing greater will be the kickback

Anthony Henriques Mumbai

SHIA AXIS REGROUPS

SHIA AAIS KEURUUFS
THE KILLING of Hezbollah leader
Hassan Nasrallah by an Israeli
airstrike has significantly escalated
tensions between Israel and the militant group, threatening further instability in Lebanon and the broader
Middle East. Hezbollah, backed by
Iran, has vowed retaliation, which
could lead to a surge in violence and
deepen the ongoing conflict. This
development adds pressure to
deepen the ongoing conflict. This
development adds pressure with
the conflict of the conflict of the conflict of the
deepen the ongoing conflict. This
development adds pressure with expensive the
triangle of the conflict of the conflict of the
triangle of the conflict of the conflict of the
triangle of the conflict of the conflict of the
triangle of the conflict of the conflict of the
triangle of the conflict of the conflict of the
triangle of the conflict of the conflict of the
triangle of the conflict of the conflict of the
triangle of the conflict of the conflict of the
triangle of the conflict of the conflict of the
triangle of the conflict of the conflict of the
triangle of the conflict of the conflict of the
triangle of the conflict of the conflict of the
triangle of the conflict of the conflict of the
triangle of the conflict of the conflict of the
triangle of the conflict of the conflict of the
triangle of the conflict of the conflict of the
triangle of the conflict of the conflict of the
triangle of the conflict of the conflict of the
triangle of the conflict of the conflict of the
triangle of the conflict of the conflict of the
triangle of the conflict of the conflict of the
triangle of the conflict of the conflict of the
triangle of the conflict of the conflict of the
triangle of the conflict of the conflict of the
triangle of the conflict of the conflict of the
triangle of the conflict of the conflict of the
triangle of the conflict of the conflict of the
triangle of the conflict of the conflict of the
triangle of the conflict of the conflict of the
triangle of the conflict of the conflict of the
triangle

CONGRESS FREEBIES

THE MANIFESTO of the Congress Party in Haryana has something for every-body. However, measures like restoring the old pension scheme, \$2,000 to every woman and legal guarantee of MSP for every crop requires money and may put Haryana on the brink. As of novel that the second of the control o

D.B. Madan New Delhi ₹500 for the best letter of the week goes to D.B. Madan (Sep. 23). Email: asianage.letters⊕gmail.com.

Kishwar Desai



Labour MP quits, calls PM hypocrite; Oxford Street to be free of traffic?

There are very few British Prime unscathed from the daily grilling that and gots on in the British press. And this time it raises a question that has vexed many over the centuries: "Do clothes maketh the man"? Or woman, as the case may be and should a Prime Minister and his wife be be. And should a Prime Minister and his wife be with the man and the prime with the man and the word of the prime with the with the prime with

who like him. The alleged error is that Sir Keirwas given clothes to wear worth thousands of pounds plus spectacles costing more than two thousand pounds by a rich member of the Labour Party, Lord Ali.

MPs are supposed to declare gifts received but some of this happened during election when Parliament was not meeting and Sir Keir was a candidate but not an elected MP yet. However, the gifts are worth a six-figure sum. His statement about them got delayed, and that has ment about them got delayed, and that than Lord Ali had also helped Lady Starmer to buy thousands pounds worth of dresses as well as the Chancellor Rachel Reeves and the Deputy Leader Angela Rayner.

And to make matters worse, Sir Keir "bor-rowed "Lord Alli's apartment to film a scutually a crime, especially when obviously Sir Keir and his wife were badly advised about all these posh togs to swan around in, and a swanky apartment to get filmed in. For most, of usif would be a relief to have someone who said—"off worsy, old clap, just tell me your sizes—"and i will get you nicely turned out. And when-did it will get you nicely turned out. And when-

ever you need — my home is your castle."
But sometimes generous friends can be your undoing... Lady Starmer should just make a bonfire of the vanities and auction the clothes to give the money to charity. It might calm everyone down.

And now even more embarrassingly for the PM it has led to the resignation of one Labour MP — Rosie Duffield, who will now sit as an independent as she is embarrassed over how Sir Keir and his wife and indeed other members of his Cablinet have also accepted freebies from Lord Alli and others, accepted freebies from Lord Alli and others, does not agree with. She is the first to go, but the fact that she has been extremely vocal and called the PM hypocritical does not augur well at all...

Reanwhile apart from the political the-atre playing out, London continues to End. Currently we have the celebrated Samuel Becket classic Walting for Goldor getting rave reviews. At the National Theatre there is Shakespeare's rarely performed Coriolamus. And there is a musical based on a 1867 Ella Kazan film A Face in the Crowd. I am booking

tickets like there is no tomorrow.

adit, Khan, the mayor of London, re-elected once more, is planning to redesign Oxford Street is a triffic free some. Of course, it the heart of London's shopping area where you have Selfridges and Marks and Spencer and John Lewis. But there are buses and taxis and cars which he thinks create unwanted congestion. But making the most frequently visited stretch of Oxford Street traffic-free raises the worry that we may have to walk long distances carrying our shopping begs... hmmmmm... one more reason to shop online!

And... here we go again! It seems that soup has once more been thrown by climate bactivists at the "Sunflowers" painted by Vincent Van Gogh, at an exhibition at the National Gallery. What has astonished me is that those indulging in this vandalism are not sixty-year-old man and a seventy-seven-year-old woman. Anger knows no age!

Kishwar Desai is a an award winning author and columnist. She is also the Chair of the Partition Museums in Amritsar and Delhi.





















