## THE ASIAN AGE

7 DECEMBER 2024

## Fadnavis govt must follow coalition dharma in Maha

t is a fresh start for Devendra Fadnavis in his third term as chief minister of Maharashtra when he can look forward to a longer "innings" than in his short-lived second term which began under a cloud of manipulation and midnight manocuving and ended swiftly, it is with an absolute mandate of the people that his government starts afresh with the BJP alliance having swept 200 of 288 seats with his party the dominant partner among the triumvirate of BJP, Eknath Shinde's Shiv Sena and Ajit Pawar's NCP.

The signs of stability are solid this time than in a preceding period of about flow waves of tenses in the signs of the start of the signs of stability are solid this time than in a preceding period of

partner among the triumvirate of BJF, Eknath Shinde's Shiv Sena and Ajir Pawar's NCP.

The stability are solid this time than in a preceding period of most they ware of uncertain alliance politics, opportunistic coalitions and parties splitting. The swearing in of the chiefs of the new government also came after a period of ambiguity with Mr Shinde said to be reluctant to take the step down from CM to deputy CM, but which he had to accept to take the step down from CM to deputy CM, but which he had to accept the came after a few form of the came after a few from the pulse of Maharashira politics after having personally brought down the Uddhav Thackeray regime and then stolen a march very his part yet in the recent Assembly polls.

The management team, ushered in the presence of business and Bollywood celevities, is the same at the top with Mr Fadnavis as CM boined by Mr Shinde and Ajit Pawar as deputy of the coalition of the stolen and the accept the coalition of the stolen and the accept the coalition of the stolen and the coalition of the parties of the coalition of the parties of

government.

In a state of clashing caste and community interests, Mr Shinde may have played his hand eleverly when he was at the helm. However, the challenge of dealing with a demand for reservation for Marathas that may never die down and other pressures that are bound to come up after the latest election cycle brought up issues like a demand for a caste census and rations there.

Cash handout under the popular Laddi Bahin Yojana, which is to go up to \$2,400 from \$0.500 amonth, will not come without stretching the exchequer. Mr Fadnavis has already assured that the resources would be found for the raise in stipend for underprivileged women. This is the new reality for the BJP which may have liked to believe it is one party that does not do freebles as liberally as the others who promise loads of them at poll time but discovered the pain of delivery only when they gained power.

## RBI still cautious, but cuts CRR

RBI STIII CAUTIOUS, DUT CUTS CKR

The RBI-led Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) continued its cautious approach by keeping the repor rate unchanged for the 11th time. However, it did try to give a boost to the economy through increasing liquidity in the bankin system.

The RBI has slashed Cash Reserve Ratio — a percentage of deposits that the banks have to keep in the form of cash or cash equivalents — by 0.5 percent, infusing Rs 1.16 lakh erores into the economy. The banks could lend this money to companies or the general public. The fresh lending will increase private consumption, which of late was seen under stress.

It has also raised the limit for collateral-free agriculture leans from Rs 1.5 lakh to Rs 2 lakh per borrower. The move will enhance credit availability or small and marginal farmers and boost spending in the rural economy, for small and marginal farmers and boost spending in the rural economy. The content of the rural economy, the rural economy. The content of the rural economy. The rural economy is the rural economy is the rural economy in the rural economy is the rural e

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# Women in command: Key for Army is how to adapt



Syed Ata Hasnain

ender issues in the Army must be seen as a constant work in progress without attaching sensitivity to them. I consciously avoided atopping in with any ment recently exploded around the contents of the leaked demi-official (DO) letter of the GCC IT corps of the Indian Army addressed to his superior officer. In the last few days, advice, opinion, critique and more have all been extended by relatively less informed people and that too with unnocessary emotion and lack of sensitivity. Firstly, the general officer is the sense of the content of the property of the sense o

place thereafter. So, nothing is going to happen in a hurry without a full run of the policy through one or two command tenures of the incumbent and subse-

the point and authorized the command turn of the command and turn of the command and turn of the command turn of the command and the command and turn of the comma

mand and bandling of offin policies at both the functional and directional levels. My experience tells me that there will be extensive differences of opinion based upon perception. I, for one, have had a very positive experience, but earlier generations like mine never looked upon women officers in command positions of units. We groomed the male officers and did their appraisal based upon their potential based upon their p

The general officer is entirely within his rights and responsibility to pen down his personal thoughts on the subject after the the subject after the passage of a reasonable span of time after the adoption of the policy on command by women officers

Command does not come very easily and is a heady responsibility. The public must know that almost 50 must know mist aumost as per cent or a higher number of the officers of a calendar hatch do not make under health of the control of the contr

der in Jammu and Kashmir, the Army had managed to reduce the service profile of these COs to reduce the service profile of these COs to efficient with the control of the cost of the cost

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

#### LETTERS

#### DOG AND BONE

some kind of villain in a Bond movie orchestrating events that would spell doom for India. What is his beef with India is yet unclear. Soros is now 94 years old. The BJP is calling Rahul Gandhi a traitor for being a lackey of Soros in bringing economic devasta-tion to a fast growing India. Is it mere coincidence that anybody pointing fingers at Gautam Adani is made to face the music? Think of Rahul Gandhi, Mahua Moltra, Sanjay Singh and Arvind Kejriwal. The government and Opposition seems to playing a game of dog and the bone, the bone being Adani, while the people can only watch helplessly from

**Anthony Henriques** Mumbai

#### TEMPLE AT RISK

THE ATTACK on SAD chief sukhbir Singh Badal at Golden Temple is shocking to say the least. It is not only a breach of security but raises serious questions over safety of the Swarn Mandir complex which receives on an average 1,00,000 pig-gimages every day. Thanks to the prumpt action of the police personnel deployed on 2 plus security for Badal, his life was saved, but a thorough and time bound investigation must take place and the whole complex should be theroughly santitised and checked for any security loopholes. The Punjab government can not be lax on such a sensitive matter.

Bal Govind.

#### **BILLS IN HINDI**

THE HABIT of the current usquention to christen bills in Hindi is unwarranted. Non-Hindi speaking states have rightly raised objections as such names can be quite a mouthful even for Hindi speakers. The government ought not to use this as a tactic to thrust Hindi on non-Hindi speakers either and thus widen the linguistic faullines between communities. It is advisable that the primary medium of naming bills remain English while Hindi can be used as the secondary medium. The Central government need not open this can of worms and should instead start working on pressing issues.

Annya Singhal Nolda, UP THE HABIT of the current dispensa-tion to christen bills in Hindi is unwar



"An 'Aunty' who lived in Mumbai Cultivated a romantic sigh Thinking to seduce Young men on the loose Who rejected her, saying "nice try"! no rejected her, saying more try ; ut this 'Aunty' recovered apace like the tortoise and hare in the race er romantic sights poesied to miture guys 'ho offered her all shades of embrace."

From The Diary of Rosemary Marlowe, by Bachchoo

n my recent sejourn of several Indian cities — Mumbai, Bengaluru, Goa, Delhi and the city of eternal selfes; absences — pause and cause for thought. The first notable absence in all these cities is that of graffiti on vacant spaces. None, Yes, there were commissioned pictures on the city walls, some possibly attempting to give pictorial expression to the supposed soil of the city, others historically or simply decoratively striking.

the city, others initorically or simply decor-icively striking. Try London, Berlin or any Western city where very inch of available space, even the sides of bridges which one would imagine were impossi-ble to access, plastered with names, abuse, crude slogans, undecipherable (to me and other non-members of some fratternity) codes and mes-members of some fratternity) codes and mes-

ages. They are all assertive in one sense or the

sages. They are all assertive in one sense or the other. It was Norman Mailer who first wrote a paean to graffit in the magazine Esquire, calling it a tide of urban art.

Mailer calls himself the Aesthetic Investigator (A-1) and his second paragraph reads thus:

"A-1 is talking to CAY 181. That is the famous CAY from 161 Street, there at the beginning with TAKI 183 and JUNIOR 161, as famous in the world of wall and subway graffit as Giotto may have been when his name first circulated through the circuits of those workshops which led through Masaccio to Piera Della Francesca to Botticelli, Michelangelo, Lecnardo and Raphael, the Whew! In such company CAY loses all name although he will not necessarily see it that way..."

grows up? It is of course said that CAY and perhaps all the

others who put their imprimatur on walls, on gravestones, on railway carriages parked in the stidings of militroid etrilory, on the sides of electronic and the stidings of silical derivative, on the sides of electronic and the sides of the stidings of the sides of

Perhaps the profits from selling Ganja, or even doctored cocaine, which has been smuggled into the country in cendoms showed up the smug-glers' backside, hasn't caused the sort of territorial gang-murder that one sees in London, Manchester or New York.

Or perhaps the Indian youth regard going out at night and expending the effort on painting graffiti to assert that they were there as unpaid hard work?

The professional, commissioned artist graffitos

graffiti to assert that they were there as unpaid hard work?

The professional, commissioned artist grafflood don't do any writing. Even the notices that 1900 to do to see in my youth no longer exist. I recall the most prominent in Pune and Chennal (then Poona and Madras) were signs saying COMMIT NO NUISANCE, which didn't mean don't play drums on this spot or paint "Harish loves Ramaswamy" on these walls, but it clearly meant "do not urinate" here.

Ramaswamy" on the walls, but it clearly meant "do not urinate" here.

The state of the state of the state of the state of the miniature paintings gallery, there were perhaps just one or two of the dominant miniature style of the Mughal period, originals of which doubt do seen in all history books. A gap in history is a gap in national identity?

Some erasures, such as remaining The Mall, as the Raj named it, as Mahattma Gandhi Road appear to be just. But prevending that the Brits or the Mughals were never there doesn't.

and a remarkable absence of graffiti in India's big cities

Of gaps in history;





#### FARMERS' WELFARE

Union agriculture minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan

We believe in increasing income. I will utilise all my strength and capabilities to serve our farmers and improve the agricultural landscape

## Same old story

RBI seems to be willing to allow growth to stay slower for longer

HE RESERVE BANK of India's (RBI) commitment to taming inflation and lowering it closer to the 4% mark is creditable, but its optimism on growth is befuddling. The RBI has had to pare its gross domestic product (GDP) growth forecast for pare its gross domestic product (JDP) growin rerecast tor FY25 by a good 60 basis points to 6.6% after the underwhelming 5.4% year-on-year (y-o-y) growth in Q2. The expected 7% rebound in the second half could be missed given that credit flows to the economy especially consumer loans — have slowed sharply; consumption by middle-income households in urban India remains weak and a delayed middle-income households in urban India remains weak and a delayed rabi sowing could hurt the rural recovery. Also, to what extent government spending will pick up is not clear as tax collections are slowing. Even otherwise, the fiscal impulse in the FY25 Budget was not very strong to begin with. The fact is that private consumption, which is 56% of the GDP, continues to be sluggish having risen by 6% y-o-y in the second quarter on an anaemic base of 2.6%. While inflation may be one reason for the subdued spending, it is a fact that not enough jobs a being exacted because commanies can not adduct conscitution.

one reason for the subdued spending, it is a fact that not enough jobs are being created because companies are not adding capacity in the absence of visibility on demand.

However, the central bank has chosen to leave the repo rate unchanged at 6%, indicating it is willing to allow growth to stay slower for longer and will stay focused on targeting inflation. The consumer price index forecast for FY25 has been raised to 4.8% from 4.5% earlier — thanks to sticky food inflation. At the same time, the 4% inflation projection for the June 2025 quarter suggests a repo rate cut is possible in February. There is clearly much concern, although not articulated, on the possibility of the rupee weakening further if the dollar becomes stronger once the Trump administration is in place and if we see sales of equities and bonds by foreign portfolio investors pick up pace.

That is possibly why the RBI has chosen to cut the cash reserve ratio (CRR) by 50 basis points to 4%. The 11.2 lakh crore of funds that will be freed up will come in handy as liquidity becomes tight in the coming months on the back of tax outflows, the RBI's forex intervention, and possible high cash in circulation. The higher ceilings for interest rates on Foreign Currency Non-Resident deposits, experts say, would not help attract

eign Currency Non-Resident deposits, experts say, would not help attract dollar deposits because the rates being offered now are already below the current cap. Nonetheless, more liquidity should help keep interest rates at the shorter end of the curve in check although yields on the benchmark

at the shorter end of the curve in check although yields on the benchmark went up by 6 basis points on Friday.

However, it's possible deposit rates might have peaked for now. It appears that the central bank will continue to resort to infusing more liquidity into the system to keep rates in check rather than cutting the policy rate. This means lending rates linked to the external benchmarks will not come down just yet, though the rates based on the cost of funds might. With the bulk of the loan book linked to the external benchmark lending rate, however, there's no relief for borrowers just as such it's hard to see credit growth nicking un too much from yet. As such, it's hard to see credit growth picking up too much from the current levels of a little over 11%. Also, there is a need for adequate durable liquidity in the system to keep money easier, and ensure smooth transmission of any rate cuts in the future.

## South Korea's tribulation amid regional flux

ON DECEMBER 3, South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol surprised the nation by declaring martial law. The announcement sent shock waves across the globe as airborne troops entered the premises of the National Assembly. Although South Korea has a history of martial law — 13 emergency ones and four security martial laws — this was the first time it had been declared after the 1981 revision of the National Assembly Act. Nonetheless, a proactive opposition voted in the assembly against the martial law, forcing the President to lift it.

The political drama is over, but rumours about the president's complicated decision are rife. The secenario may appear unexpected from a distance, but it has been building for a while. Since he assumed office in 20.22, the President and the opposition have been embroided in a political battle that has been exacerbated by incidents such as a doctors' protest and the Itaewon mob crush. However, the Democratic Party opposition is alradislide win in the April partiamentary elections gave them a majority in the National Assembly. This made it possible for the opposition to confront the President directly in the Assembly. The opposition has repeatedly tried cornering the President on manifold issues. One sensitive issue that has pricked the President directly in the Assembly. The opposition has repeatedly tried cornering the President membrane and the president substitution of the president them not is corruption allegations against the first to investigate the first lady, which the President substitution to save his impacted his administration, as the assembly remained stalled. It has also created fis issured between the ruling party hinting at supporting the opposition, the president saw martial law as the only option to save his president, and the president saw martial law as the only option to save his my continue in other ways, which will have implications on the country's domestic stability and asceuting the president class. But even after Yoon's removal, the political dissension betwe

Co-authored with Abhishek Sharma, research assistant-Northeast Asia, ORF

#### TEMPERED GROWTH

IT IS LIKELY GROWTH WILL SETTLE AROUND 6.5%, WHICH IS BELOW POTENTIAL & THUS CALLS FOR LOWER RATES

# Room for a shallow rate cut

FTER CHANGING ITS stance in October from Michaeval accommodation to neutral, the Response (RBI) has followed it up with a 50-basis point (bps) reduction in the cash reserve ratio (CRR). This is a positive step given liquidity conditions have seen a substantial change from large surplus a few months back to a deficit now. The repo rate was unchanged in this policy as expected by most of us in the market, but the governor has attempted to provide as much forward guidance as he could have given the current macro balance. In the October policy, growth and inflation were

guidance as he could have given the current macro balance. In the October policy, growth and inflation were stated to be "well poised", which has now changed to an emphasis on restoring balance" between inflation and growth. What does this mean?

The RBI has had to revise its growth projections lower over the course of the last few policies. The trend of downward revision of growth started in August when Q1 growth was revised lower to 7.1% and actual outcome was 6.7%. In October, Q2 growth projection was revised own to 7% as against an actual outcome of only 5.4%. Even in December, Q2 growth projection was revised down to 7% as against an actual outcome of only 5.4%. Even in December, Q2 growth projection was revised down to 7% as against an actual outcome of only 5.4%. Even in December, Q2 growth has been revised to 6.8% as against 7.4% earlier. While downward revision is much higher now and economic activity is picking up as seen in a number of high-frequency Indicators, we expect growth to settle below potential at around 6.5% in H2 as against the RBI's projection of 7%.

The RBI governor emphasised maintaining the credibility of a flexible inflation targeting framework, implying that when inflation is above the upper tolerance band it is difficult for the central bank to ease policy rates. In fact, actual inflation outcome in the

**B PRASANNA** SAMEER NARANG

Respectively head-treasury and head economics research group, ICICI Bank

last few months has been higher than the RBI's projections and led by higher food inflation. The last inflation read-ing at 6.2% has driven the RBI to revise its Q3 inflation estimate to 5.7% from 4.8% earlier, and even the Q4 projection has been revised higher to 4.5% from 4.2%. The H1FY2026 inflation

from 4.2%. The H1FY2026 inflation estimate also has been revised higher to 4.3% from 4.0% earlier. But the current inflation trajectory seems much hears the possibility of a downward blas as seen in the recent decline in vegetable prices and lower global commodity and energy prices although there may not be pass-through into retail prices. The governor also spoke on the timing of policy actions. It is in this light that one should see

light that one should see the need for a CRR cut that would inject ₹1.16 lakh crore of durable liquidity.

₹1.16 lakh crore of durable liquidity. The liquidity scenarioh as changed dramatically over the last few months. At its peak, the system and durable liquiditywas in surplus of ₹2.7 lakh crore and ₹4.9 lakh crore respectively, which at present stand at a surplus of only around ₹500 billion each. During this intervening period there has been a sharp drain on liquidity because of foreign outflows, India has seen foreign portfolio investment (FPI) outflows of

\$14 billion between Octob \$14 billion between October and November. The RBI has been providing dollars from its reserves, which implies an equivalent drain on liquidity. Hence, the timing of injecting durable liquid-ity is very important given there would be demand for currency in the March quarter upwards of ₹1 lakh crore and thus lead to tight liquidity conditions when the stance is neutral. n the stance is neutral

Is this injection enough? The RBI may have to do more on

domestic
inflation
calls for a
February,
factors
dverse as
the last
onths

durable liquidity front since
it is sitting on a very
large short position in
forwards and futures to
the tune of \$49 billion
backdrop is not very
favourable unless forfavourable unless forgign inflows restart and
sustain. Hence, we do
expect the RBI to inject
durable liquidity even next year, either
via FX swaps or open-market operations. While the domestic growth inflation backdrop calls for a rate cut in February, external factors can turn adverse as seen in the last few months

tions.
This should ensure liquidity in This should ensure liquidity in March is not at tight as it would have been otherwise, and thus is positive for wholesale rates to that extent given that credit off-take is also weak. In Decemberafter the advance tax collections, money market rates should be elevated for which the RBI would have to inject liquidity via term and overnight repos. But for the economy, it is the repo rate which matters since housing and micro, small and medium enterprise loans are linked to the external benchmark which in most cases is the repo rate. The governor's statements are far more supportive growth now. The current inflation trajectory is far more achievable and implies real rates of 2% during lanuary-September even after upward revisions. As against this, the RBF growth projection seems to be on the higher side considering multiple headwinds: weaker global growth, higher US interest rates, weaker emerging market (EM) currencles, subdued urban demand, and moderating wage growth. Hence, it is likely growth will settle around 6.5%, which is slightly below potential and thus calls for lower interest rates to support growth when seal rates are observed. lower interest rates to support growth when real rates are elevated.

lower interest rates to support growth when real rates are elevated. While the domestic growth inflation backdrop calls for a rate cut in February, external factors can turn adverse as seen in the last few months when US yields have gone up factoring in incoming President Trump's policies of higher tariffs, lower taxes, and higher fiscal deficits. Dollar has emerged stronger and FPI outflows have been seen from a majority of EMs. The US Federal Open Market Committee is expected to change its rate cut trajectory in the December dot plot with several Fed members including the chair speaking about it. But given India's growth inflation dynamics and manageable current account deficit (less than 19 of CDP), there is room for a shallow rate cut cycle starting February. A number of global central banks have been front-loading rate cuts and the RBI is waiting for the right time to do the same. We believe the window opens up in February for a shallow cycle (50 bps) to begin.

# No surprises

The CRR cut would provide a cushion

against any potential stress to systemic liquidity emanating



THE MONETARY POLICY Committee's

**ADITI NAYAR** 

nist, head-research & outreach, ICRA

FY25 as compared to 4.8% earlier, while FY25 as compared to 4.8% earlier, while the projections for Q4 FY25 and Q1 FY26 have been raised by 30 bps each to 4.5% and 4.6% respectively. Finis brings the average number for FY25 to 4.8%, up from 4.5% in the previous meeting. Thereafter, inflation is expected to ease to 4% in Q2 FY26, which will offer much relief, the broadly concur with the com-mittee's revised growth and inflation projections for H2 FY25.

Overall, we believe the MPC's decision

Overal, we believe the MPC's decision is appropriate at this juncture and agree with its assessment that strong foundations for high growth can be secured only with durable price stability. Sustained high food inflation has adversely impacted the budgets of low-income and lower middle-income households, constraining their demand for low-ticket items, including fast-moving consumer goods, and discretionary consumption. This is reflected in the commentary by companies as well as the available data on consumer non-durables and durables output from the

durables and durables output from the index of industrial production.

While tailwinds owing to the recovery in rural demand, aided by the robust kharif output and upbeat outlook for rabi crops, and the anticipated uptick in government capex growth, would push up growth in H2 FY25, a dip in food inflation remains key to reinvigorate consumption demand, particularly in

consumption demand, particularly in urban areas. This would attomatically boost GDP growth prospects, and could also provide an impetus to private capamid the tepid and uncertain outlook for external demand. We expect the CPI inflation to moderate to 5.5% in November and thereafter to 5.5% in November and thereafter to 5.5% in November and thereafter to 5.5% in Common prints. While no additional quarterly CDP growth daw will be available by the February meeting, we will have sufficient high-frequency data to rea-

high-frequencydatatorea-sonably assess the growth outcome for Q3 FY25.

from continued capital outflows

potential outcome for Q3 FY25.

Overall, we believe there is a high chance of a rate cut in February, and there are no negative surprises on the next couper inflation trajectory, the rate cut could just as easily be pushed forward to the April 2025 meeting.

The durable liquidity surplus in the banking system had more than halved to of ret demand and time liabilities, NDT1, from ₹4.1 glak core on November 15 (0.8% of net demand and time liabilities, NDT1). of net demand and time liabilities, NDTL) from ₹4.2 lahk crore on September 20 (+1.9% of NDTL), amid sizeable foreign portfolio investment (FPI) outflows and the increase in the currency in circula-tion (CIC) owing to seasonal factors. Following this, the RBI cut the cash reserve ratio (CRR) by 50 bps, in a stag-

red manner, restoring it to 4% of NDTI

A rate cut is in the offing in the February

2025 meeting if CPI prints move in sync

with the MPC's estimates

gered manner, restoring ltt o.4% of NDTL by end. December. This would boost the durable liquidity in the banking system by ₹1.16 lakh crore by December-end, and signals the RBI's readiness to move to a monetary easing cycle in the near term. The CRR cut would provide a cushion against any potential stress to systemic liquidity emananting from continued capital outflows and increase in CIC, as well inguidity emananting from continued capital outflows and increase in CIC, as well expected to the control of the co

quent liquidity management is likely to chiefly be through variable rate repo and variable rate reverse repo auctions. Additionally, the RBI increased the interest rate ceiling on Foreign Currency Mon-Resident Bank deposits to attract NRI deposit inflows, although the appetite of the banks remains to be seen. This provides a positive signal amid the continued FPI outflows and the sharp fall in India's foreign exchange reserves over the last several weeks.

The G-secylelds did not react much to today's policy outcomes, as there weern't any sumprises. Looking ahead, the domestic CPI inflation prints and their implications for the MPC's rate decisions, and global cues such as the quantum of easing signalled by the US Federal Reserve for 2025 and news on tariffs imposed by the US on various countries including India, would influence the direction of yields and the steepness of the curve.

# jections for Q3 and Q4 FY25 by 60 and 20 basis points (bpp) respectively, and for Q1 FY26 by 40 bps. The APC also issued a fresh forecast for Q2 FY26, at 7.3%, on the lowbase of Q2 FY25. Contrastingly, projections for the CPI inflation were raised significantly, fol-lowing the higher-than-expected read-ring for October. The headfilm number is now forecasted to average at 5.7% in Q3

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Treading with caution Apropos of "Back to governance (FE, December 7), how the Indian (FE, December 7), how the Indian economy fares is directly linked with how India's largest state by GDP takes care of its economic growth. So, Devendra Fadnavis has his task clearly cut out for him. Since Mahayuti has promised many freebles, Fadnavis will not only have to fulfill all those promised snon, but also ensure that he learns from the poor financial position of Himachal Pradesh and Punjab and treads carefully without going overboard. —Bal Govind, Noida

#### Calling a spade a spade

Just last year, South Africa fled a case against Israel in the International Court of Justice for "genocide against Palestinians". After a long probe, hearing all the parties and studying the evidence and proofs, the court said in its order that Israel had

committed genocide against
Palestinians in the Gaza Strip. Earlier,
the United Nations had also said in the
same manner that "it is important to
call genocide as genocide". Amnesty
international issued a statement
saying: "This report shows that Israel
has committed acts prohibited under
the Genocide Convention, with the
specific aim of destroying Palestrians
in Gaza...These acts include delillings,
causing serious physical or mental
harm and deliberately imposing such

living conditions on Palestinians in Gaza that lead to their physical destruction. Month after month, Israel has treated Palestinians in Gaza as a subhuman group unworthy of human rights and dignity, demonstrating its intent to physically destroy them." However, any punitive action will not be taken against Israel as long as it has the support of the White House. — Jang Bahadur Singh, Jamshedpur

Write to us at feletters@expressindia.com

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## THE ECONOMIC TIMES The Edit Page

## This is Also Service To the Nation, So...

... grievance redressal has to get serious

Earlier this week, Delhi State Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission ruled that Uber pay a customer ₹54kg as compensation for one of their hailed taxis not turning up and the customer missing his flight as a result, as well as for 'mental distress and legal costs'. This should make all service companies sit up. Consumer courts are going into the issue of the extent of control ride-hailing apps have in arriving at the fare and incidental charges. They are also looking at the payment mechanism to distingu-ish the degree of intermediation. Consumer protections available through the grievance redressal mechanism fall within the ambit of service delivery and can certainly constitute a deficiency.

Indian law allows immunity to agents for the action of



challenged in court is the promotion of product quality liabili-merce marketplaces that extends product quality liabili-ty to the not-so-passive intermediary. Tech platforms are facing twin legal assaults on the distance they are trying to keep from service delivery partners as well as the goods and services they facilitate. Separately, as the gig econo-my expands, pressure is mounting on tech companies to contribute more towards social security. This pulls ecom-mence area closer to conventional employment structu. merce apps closer to conventional employment structu-res with a higher bar for consumer satisfaction. Convergence of consumer and labour protections could arguably stifle tech innovation. But some degree of regula-

tory creep is welcome as the digital economy matures. Courts in other countries have blurred employment distinctions for User drivers. India will not remain isolated from the legal evolution that tries to keep pace with technology.

#### **MACROECONOMICS**

## RBI's Not Too Much Behind the Curve

RBI needs more evidence of inflation softening before it can start lowering rates. But the central bank has begun work on propping up growth by increasing liquidity A review of the growth-inflation dynamic by the MPC places a bigger downside risk on the former, which calls for a tactical response where a strategic one is not immediately available. Hence, the lowering of cash reserve ratio (CRR) to pull interbank rates down closer to the policy rate, and higher interest rate cellings for foreign currency deposits to ease pressure of the dollar's rise and capital outflows on the rupee. This keeps a policy rate cut in playasearly as this coming Rebruary—//the recent spike in food prices subsides as anticipated by the end of the year. Any overempt hasis of the growth slowdown will create room for RBI to pace monetary easing. India is headed for a shallow interestrate adjustment that needs to pack enough punch to deliver a growth impetus. Lastmille disinflation may become easier with the global economy entering an energy strategic one is not immediately available. Hence, the lowering



the global economy entering an energy market downcycle, while the growth sce-

market downcycle, while the growth see-nario becomes more uncertain over geopolitics and protectio-nism. RBI can be relied upon to address the effect of inflation on domestic consumption. But supportive fiscal policy will be required to speed up real wage growth. Structural adjust-ments are needed to sustain India's growth spurt, chiefly to av-ert a stall in consumption and knock-on effects on investment.

ert a stall in consumption and knock-on effects on investment. Some degree of leeway over fiscal consolidation may be war-ranted as countercyclical policy. RBI has not fallen too much behind the curve considering the distance monetary policy needs to travel. Ancillary policy support, both cyclical and structural, needs to catch up to rest-rict the slide in growth.

# JUST IN JEST International supermarket tourism is true cultural immersion

## Your Aisle-Land Destinations Await

Life on this planet is a proper conundrum. On the one hand, it thrives on maddening speed, years vanishing before you can count the seasons. Conversely, it's embracing the art of slowing down. Enter the latest trend in leisure travel: supercan count me seasons. Converses, it is such a classification and control and c



ndia, the land of Vedas, an

Who needs spiritual enlightenment
Who needs spiritual enlightenment
who you have Orhan Awatramani,
a.k.a. high priest of selfies and paidapearance? His instagram englorsequal part-enigmatic and grammatically adventurous—are the modernday Bhagawal Gita for Gen Z. Het seaches us that the tree meaning of life lies
in jet setting to obscure fashion weeds
in jet setting to obscure fashion weeds
to be considered to the control of the

hasing his follipop.

An Orry bunch Orry is the friend call need, but don't deserve: he never moenlighting and burnout, the ultima-te career goal is... having no career at all. Forget Narayana Murthy with his 70 hr work week. Orry has shown us a smarter path to success. Why do the dai-



cornerstones of Indian society and pop culture

lessambition.

For the ownworked Indian, it supports from the ownworked Indian, it supports from the first f

For millennials seeking purpose without commitment, being spotted at a Passi event is akin to achieving akin to achieving alari for dramament monolosuse.

Inspiration. In a world where hard work doesn't guarunitee success, these leons represent an alterative path—one paxed with networking, nepotism and sheer audacity Cirry teaches uts Officia it fill youndoo't. Passivemins sus that perception is reality caches uts official it fill youndoo't. And high Bose conteinants prove that Moreover, these personalities embody democratisation of fame. You no longer need talent or expertise. All you need is virality and the right quest list. It's the Indian Dream 2.0 — loader, shiner and inflittly and the right quest list. It's the Indian Dream 2.0 — loader, shiner and inflittly more netertaining. In a country grapping with inflatier and inflittly more the change, why bother with solutions when you can seroll through Cirry's Madilves highlights, debate if Passi is very amart or shallow, or argue over who's most toxic in the Bigg Boss house? These cultural load early distract in from our problems — they are the solution.

So, hen's to Cirry Shallin Passi and the gigg Boss alumnic, contemporary India's true spiritual leaders. Namaste — and don'florget to like, share and subscribe.

# Cat Bonds to Tackle Catastrophes



Unpredictability and increase in frequency of disasters like earthquakes and extreme weather event like cyclones have increased india's exposure to disaster risk. So, it needs for ring force its public finances for post disaster risk. So, it needs for ring force its public finances for post disaster risk. So, it needs for ring force its product recently introduced in global markets – natural catastrople bonds, unique hybrid insutrance-cum-secturities of financial product transfers hazard risk from the victim nation to global financial markets. Cat bonds can lower the risk curve for low frequency, high impact hazards of the control of the contr

leveloped for s like Chile, 20 countries .... Colombia, Mexico Philippines. As the

count, Gol is far ahead, h

Asian cat bood, given that the regional bazard marks events an interesting variety of hazards, some common, but bazard marks fisc curve and different flavour of history, vulnerability and exposure. We most such regional risks remain unhedged. Imagine a regional eat bond for high-impact hozards like GLD-For Bhutan. Nepal and India, or for a supra eyelone for India and Baugladesh, A combined South Asia out bond coulder-hance competition among issuers, lower the government's premium

#### CAPTAINS OF INDIA GHANSHYAM DAS BIRLA

# Original Startup'n'Nation-Builder



Omkar Goswami

In 1919, India's factory sector consists primarily of cotton mills in western India and jute mills around Calcutta All jute mills were controlled by Bri-I jute mills were controlled by Bri-oh managing agencies. These agen-os needed intermediaries, and non-tter served that purpose than Mar-aris. By 1919, buying raw jute throu-out undivided Bengal and export of unny bags and cloth was interceded

Fed up with the British controlled Bengal Chamber of Commerce, Bir



Biria located the plant at Remukoo i UP Set up in 18 months, the plant be an commercial production in close 1942. The next two expansions requir red setting up a captive power suth that Biria oversaw as well. By the early 1970s, Birla represente the second-largest business group at ter the Table 1970s, Birla represente the second-largest business group at ter the Table. Together, they collected led a fifth of India's private corporat sector assets.

This placed life is to solve the temps with a post-lab insolutable Merri, who was a social-last in belief. Initially life in eligible in belief. Initially life in eligible in belief. Initially life in eligible in the belief. Initially life in eligible in eli



#### Learn From Regrets

Regrets are a fact of life. Very few would be as fortunate as Frank Sinatra, who had only a few reg-rets as he spent his life doing th-ings "My Way". Living in the fast lane lower little (time for regrets) lane leaves little time for regret when we are young. When we turn old, with the pace of life slowing down, we tend to reflect more on things we did and those we could n't do. However, Bronnie War palliative nurse, writes that m palliative nurse, writes that most people on their deathbeds have regrets invariably only for things not done. And if regrets are a fact of life, should we wallow in self-

whether to leave the common or a hedge fund and venture into the uncertain world of a startup, whi ch went on to become Amazon. Kierkegaard said that life can



#### 'Do You Know Who I Am?'



Mumbai'.
The next day the largest restaurant on the block put up a larger sign: The Best Restaurant in India'.
On the third day the smallest restaurant put up a small sign: The Best Restaurant on this block'.

#### Chat Room

#### Death Kills in the Race to Kill Death

Apropos the Edit, 'Joie De Vivre, Being Truly Deuth-Delying', and Bryan Johnson's interview, 'The Hitchibker's Guide to Immortal-ity' (Doc 6), the fact of the matter is that in order to not die, we are dying every moment. The cons-tant thought of inevitable death in the desired to the constant thought of inevitable death. tant thought of inevitable death simply destroys the very idea of living. This 'dislike' of death kills our very' like' of living. If we think of life as moment to-moment living, where does the question of death arise? Mom-entary dynamies teaches us that if we are highly scared of physi-cal death, then psychological dee-th leads to us dying every mom-ent, despite the fact that we are physically alive in our frame whi-le walking, taiking and under-taking all daily activities. So, in order to eschew psychological

SATURDAY, 7 DECEMBER 2024 NEW DELHI STORY

# 



newsflash on TV: PM2.5 monitors had "broken" in Delhi, "The air quality index had hit 999 (micro-grams per cubic metrei, the highest limit, for the first time ever. This was around the time the yearly stub-ble burning had started in Punjab. Farmers in Punjab and Haryana have long burnt crops tubble. but starting 2009, groundwater-con-servation policies in Punjab mandated a delay of rice transplantation to mid-late June to coincide with the advent of the morsoon, for groundwater replenish-ment. Consequently, the harvest period moved to early November, shrinking the time they had before planting the next crop.

early November, shrinking the time they had before planting the next croy. This compelled the farmers to practise wide-spread stubble burning in early November for the quick and easy disposal of crop residue. Unfortunately, this short window coincides with the change of seasonsover northern India, "says a 2023 research paper co-authored by Prof. Tripathi and published in the journal Environmental Science & Technology Letters. This is when the air turns denser and chillier over northern India.

In 2012. Nasa released a satellite image of stubble-burning fires that caught the world's attention—the cropfiers resembled forest fires that had raged in the US and Australia. Various studies by Indian scientists followed, stating the crop burning was exposing

tists followed, stating the crop burning was exposing people in the densely populated plains to high levels of air pollution.

Air pollution is not an issue

only for Delhi. It's a matter of

national emergency. We are breathing bad air 365 days

around the country, and the quality is declining every year

DR HARSH VARDHAN PURI SENIOR CONSULTANT (THORACIC) AND LUNG TRANS-PLANT SURGEON AT MEDANTA THE MEDICITY

of air pollution.

Air pollution finally garnered enough attention for the Central Pollution Control Board to start regular monitoring of air quality levels in 2016, At present, Delhi has about 44 air quality monitoring stations; in 2016, there were 20, Over 550 similar stations exist across the country.

the country.
Kartiki Negi, lead (climate impacts), at research-based consulting and capacity build-ing initiative Climate Trends,

impacts), at research-based consulting and capacity building intitative Climate Trends, has been studying the pollution levels across the country since 2016. "We are making now records every year," she says. "The pollution levels peaked from 2016-19. During covid, there was a steady decline between 2020-21 (since most activity had stopped), but 2022 onwards it started rising again. 2023 was worse than 2022. "With Delhi AQI crossing 1,100 past month, the 2024 readings have already made a record.

When it comesto the causes, the culprits are vehicle exhaust, construction, crop burning, household fires, industrial emissions, among others. The other big but lesser talked about factor is climate change. IQAIr's 2023 World Air Quality Report makes it clear: "Climate change, primarily driven by greenhouse gas emissions, plays a pivotal role in influencing concentrations of PM2.5 air pollutants through various pathways, including the impact of wildfire smoke and pollen-based aeroallergens, Fossif fuel emissions account for 65% of global CO2 emissions and are the primary cause of majority of PM2.5-related deaths, highlighting the interconnected relationship between air quality and climate change. "The climate change in the interconnected relationship between air quality and climate change." The climate change in the interconnected relationship between air quality and climate change. "The climate change in the interconnected relationship between air quality and climate change." The climate change in the interconnected relationship between of the subcontinent, gets a few spells of winter rain and snowfall. "But due to the absence of any strong western disturbance in the Himalayas (owing to rising temperature), rains have been evad-

ing the plains," explains Negi. "There has been almost no winter rain so far this year." Given the way climate change is hampering the environment, Negi predicts days with 1,000 AQI to become more common in the future unless strict measures are taken.

measures are taken.

BEYOND THE CITIES

Even in hilly places like Himachal Pradesh or Ultarakhand, the air is not what it used to be. Delhi-based
Madhukar Varshney, founder of Rise Foundation,
which is working towards building a zero waste society in the country, was recently in his hometown of
Rishikesh. "The AQI there is reaching 200," he says,
'It was unthinkable five years ago, but tourism, city
dwellers settling here, increasing population, construction work, the whole concretisation has
impacted Rishikesh."

Since starting Rise, Varshney and team have
planted, incollaboration with corporates and other
organisations, over 50,000 native trees in Delhi and
neighbouring cities, and in Bengaluru, using the
Japanese system of mini-forests in urban spaces,
commonly known as Miyawaki forests, to help in
carbon sequestration, reduce temperatures within
urban heat islands and support local wildlife, "You
can't just blame winter months, firecrackers or stubbe burning for the air pollution rise," he says.
"Clearly, we are doing something very wrong that
the air is had everywhere throughout the year."

Even cities like Mumbai with the benefit of a
casatline, where the sea breeze helps disperse pollutants, are recording AQI over 200.

Writer Akriti Mundaiah, 26, finds herself in a bit
October, but the construction work in her locality is
making the air unbreathable. "It's not a shad as
Delhi," she says, "but leep my windows closed most
of the time to avoid breathable. "It's not a shad as
Delhi," she says, "but leep my windows closed most
of the time to avoid breathable." It's not a shad as
Delhi," she says, "but leep my windows closed most
of the time to avoid breathable."

making the air unbreathable. "It's not as bad as Delha', sheasy, 'but Heepiny windows closed most of the time to avoid breathing in the dust." So does Rutuja Pardeshi, a 'Zz'-year-old journalist. Since moving to Mumbai from Mashkin June, she's almost stopped going out unless it's related to work. 'The first month, I had asevere cough,' says Pardeshi, who suffers from bronchitis. "It I don't wear mask during peak traffic hours, I immediately have breathing and throat issues." Her monthly spend on cabs is \$5,000-6,000, which she says, "is too high on a journalist's salary'.

ajournalist's salary'.
Life in the garden city of Bengaluru isn't much better. For the past six months, Sameer Rathod, 24, a software engineer, has been trying to grow plants in his balcony in the hope of surrounding himself with some fresh air.

Attrisome tresh air.

Three months ago, he was coughing non-stop for week. The doctor told him that bad air was affecting his health—he lives in an area with heavy traffic

awees. The oscolor four limit hat soal area was necting his health—he lives in an area with heavy traffic and multiple construction sites.

"Lan't change my house; I don't make enough money to move to a greener area. So, this is my solution," he says over a video call, showing the 15 plants he's trying to grow in his veranda. "Lan known to be a plant killer among my friends," he laughs. "But now, for sake of my health, I am trying to be a good plant parnet."

While there are no specific numbers, such air pol-tution-related health cases are rising in Bengaluru, says Dr Rajani Surendar Bhat, consultant fintervenional palmonology and pallative medicine), at SPARSH hospitals in Rajarajeshwari Nagar. Bengaluru, "There's definitely a spike in respiratory problems," she says. "We have seen more people come with airway diseases in the past five years. Our general advice is not to step out too much in highly pol-tuted areas and wear a mask as much as possible."

These are stop-gap solutions, though, As is Barbod's decision to orany eloster. Phieses Moste.

These are stop-gap solutions, though. As is Rathod's decision to grow plants, Phiroze Mehro-tra's "air bubble", Kumar's handkerchief, or Gulati's

plan to relocate. Ditto for the government's decision to shift school classes online, or demand offices to shift to work from home, and halt construc-tion work for short periods of

time.
Phiroze Mehrotra under-stands that his isn't a solution, "I have the hope that my children are breathing clean air. That gives me some peace of mind."
What is really needed, how-

are breathing clean air. That gives me some peace of mind."

What is really needed, how-vever, are drastis etsps. For starters, there needs to be more account of the starters. There needs to be more account of the starters. There needs to be more account of the starters and the starters. The starters are starters and the starters are starters and the starters are starters and the starters and the starters are starters and the starters and the starters are starters and the starters



# **How climate change** impacts Indian cities

While Delhi is in the news for its soaring pollution levels, no big city in India is safe from the future impacts of climate change

The National Capital Region (NCR) is beset by problems, with the unbearable amounts of atmospheric pollution being the most acute. But the crisis of livability that the city laces in 'just confined to this. There's the annual heatwaves, the severe monsoon flooding, the horribly polluted Yamuna, and a brewing groundwater crisis. Defhi isn't a pleas ant place to live in—to put it middly—for much of the year.

Insome ways, however, Delhi is a microcosm of the threats facing India as a whole. As multiple studies have pointed out over the years, India faces multiple imminent threats due to the climate crisis. Heatwaves, supercharged storas, cloudbursts, drought, melting Himalayan glaciers, a falling water table, daying rivers, increasing aridity, sea level rise. There isn't a climate impact that India isn't already suffering from. And with every passing year, the magnitude of these impacts is only going to get more acute.

And with every passing year, the magnitude of these impacts is only going to get more acute.

URBAN HEAT: DELHI, MUMBAI, KOLKATA, BENGALURU

Climate change places additional pressures on cities, especially since India is one of the fissest urbanising countries in the world. According to the United Nations World Urbanization Prospects report from a few years ago, the number of Indians living in cities is expected to grow to 871 million by 2050. In the next six years, Ahmedadad and Hyderabad are set to join Delhi, Mumbai, Kolkata, Chennai and Bengaluru as cities with populations of over 10 million.

While this massive rise in urban migration raises the spectre of Passic infastructure-lealted problems, what may actually be of greater worry is heat stress. Cities typically are hotter because of the externsive heat is lained effect, and good urban planning—which can alleviate some of the problems—is sorely lacking in India.

A study titled Cities, Climate Change and Chronic Heat Exposurs—found that Indian cities are a magnet for the most lethal form of heat humid heat. Extreme high temperatures plus high humidity is a lethal cocktail which the human body just cannot stand. Measured as wet-bulb globe temperature (WBGT), anything above 30 depresses Celsius while accounting for temperature, humidity, wind speed, solar radiation and sun angle is lethal.

The study found that Delhi, Kolkata and Mumbai are already on the threshold of this limit. These three cities were classed as "Very Hot (Danger)", while a fourth city, Bengaluru, fell into the "Warm (Caution)" range. The worry is that as global temperatures continue to sour—2024 Howarn Caution') range. The worry is that as global temperatures continue to sour—2024 Howarn Caution') range. The worry is that as global temperatures becaming the hottest year ever recorded, with an average heating of over 1.5 degrees Celsius since pre-industrial times—Indian heatwaves will get stronger and last longer. These will be felt even more intensely in cities.

## SEA LEVEL RISE AND EXTREME STOR MUMBAI, KOLKATA, CHENNAI

ough our understanding of climate change acts is formed purely by what we experience

on land, the real story of global heating lies in the ocean. According to the World Meteorological Organization's 2023 State of the Climate report that was released last month, over the past 50-years, 90% of the extra heat trapped by excessive greenhouse gases (GHGs) in the atmosphere has been absorbed by the ocean. Since 1960, the ocean has been heating up, and this process has only accelerated in the past 20 years. From -300 zettajoules (ZT) in 1960 to 1337T in 2023 is a massive jump.

What is the effect of this overheated ocean? If s causing longer and more severe marine heatwaves that bleaches and kills coral reefs, which sustain 25% of the global ocean ecosystem. This, along with increased ocean acidification will put a greater strain on seafood catho. But for human beings, the biggest effect of excess ocean heats is that Indian Ocean cylones are becoming stronger every year.
Megacities like Kalstat, Chennai and Mumbail in their path. The recent Cyclone Fengal may have missed Chennai by a whisker when it made landfall on 30 November, but it was neighbouring Puducherry that faced the brunt. As of the time of witting, some 19 people had lost their lives in India and Sri Lanka, while Puducherry experienced its heaviest rainfall in 24

hours in 30 years, When Cyclone Dana made landfall in Odisha in late October, Kolkata was paralysed with flooding, In each case—the most infamous being that of Cyclone Amphan in 2020—the storms became intensely strong in just a few hours because of high sea surface tem-

peratures.

Connected to this annual hazard is the fact that with the gradual collapse of the Arctic permafrost and summer sea i.e., along with rapidly melting Greenland and Antarctic ice sheets, global sea levels arreising in an alarming manier. Since 1993, satellites have been monitoring

global sea levels are rising in an alarming manner. Since 1993, selflites have been monitoring
hisrise, and in the past 30 years, global sea level
has risen by over HOmm, and rose twice as fast in
he past decade than it had in the first decade. In
certain coastal regions, like around India, the
rate of sea level rise is higher than the global rate.
Not only does this spell trouble for coastal cities in the long term, even in the short term,
higher sea levels can spell disaster when
cyclones make landfall. Whenever the latter
happens, there's something called a storm
surge, where the force of the storm carries sea
water inland in huge waves. During Cyclone
Amphan, there was a storm surge of about 14th.
It was the Sunderbans mangroves that prevented the storm surge of being even higher, as
sunch as 25th. If the time a cyclone makes landfall coincides with high tide and higher sea levels, storm surges would be higher and lead to
greater flooding. As cities like Mumbal, Kollata
and Chennia systematically destroy their mangroves and wetlands, they are increasingly without defences for the climate change future.
So while Delhi has been in the news recently
due to its unmanageable pollution levels, there's
hardly any city in the country that isn't facing
environmental or climate-related threats of
some kind or the other. And as India continues
to urbanise at a rapid pace, the pressure is going
to only increase.

The biggest effect of excess ocean heat is that Indian Ocean cyclones are becoming stronger every year. And cities like Kolkata, Chennai and Mumbai lie in their oath



Choppy seas in Chennal before the landfall of Cyclone Fengal



#### A thought for today

Elon has tonnes of money...so I don't worry that his Bitcoin will randomly go up or down. If you have less money than Elon. you should probably watch out BILL GATES

# Top 10 Of...

Why we love to list: it's a lifeline out of chaos

A nother year turns, and stock-taking lists are popping up
everywhere: best of, worst of, top tens, wraps, roundups and
highlight reels. What's with this list-manin? What explains
the irresistible urge to compile and rank? Because it's how we have
always tried to understand anything. It's only human to try and
make sense of the terrifying feeling of time rolling on, or to impose
pattern on chaos. We make lists 'to make infinity comprehensible',
said Umberto Eco.

Lists are intuitive and useful. A mess of information? We would be the control of the c

Lists are intuitive and useful. A mess of information? We can sort



Lists are intuitive and useful. A mess of information? We can sort the mess into buckets, it's easier to take in, too -chunks of information are better transmitted than run-on text. To-do lists are used to focus the mind. To externalise our tasks and tick them off reduces stress. Bullet-points, listicles and easy bites have taken over much of the news and information around us. We know it's a fiction, an artefact: a complex issue in the world does not conveniently break down into ten points as it does in the news primers. But the clickbait still works. Whether it's tech tips or packing lists, self-improvement manuals or lists of the richest, sexiest and most powerful, our minds are compelled tog odown each tiem.

And then, of course, there's assessment: the need to classify, to rank as greater than or less than. With lists like top films of the century or the canon of great books or essential songs, it's reassuring to submit to someone else's better judgment. We're relieved that a trusted tastemaker or expert has scoured everything and selected the best, saving us the bother. But even while media list-making creates conventional wisdom, there's nothing definitive about the picks or the ranks. They're just the list-maker's preferences, and quibbling over them is the whole point.

#### Note This, Note-Makers

Put flowers, animals on currency, not political figures

Those of us who haven't whole-soul jumped over to digital payments, always have Mahatma for company. He is on all of India's currency notes. So he's part of all our activities from buying samosas to commuting to paying school fees. But he only took this spot in 1969, his birth centenary. He replaced a diversity, including tiger and deer, and recent years have seen campaigns to displace him in turn. Nations tell their stories through such image selection. And sometimes, they can decide to change their story, and selection. And sometimes, they can decide to change their story, and selection. And sometimes, they can decide to change their story, and with a new regime. Bangladesh is looking to oust Shelkh Mujibur Rahman from its currency. With a new king. UK replaced his mum's image on its notes. But Turing, Churchill, Justien, Turner stand beside Charles III just the same as with Elizabeth II. When Europeans entered the EU project with a common currency, they went with an 'ages and styles' theme, which very consciously side-stepped all politics.

Because the images on currencies are understood as conveying important statements about national identity, changing these can hurt many citizens' sentiments even as others feel happy or gratified. But what if these images were not overwhelmingly about men and their archievements'? If these instead celebrated flora and fauna—so much of which humanity is pell-mell running off the planet – that would be more zen. A stronger push to nourish Nature's harmony would surely be good for social harmony too.



## **Death's Certain, Its** Fear Avoidable

Sage advice to future corpses The book explores the myths of descent into an underworld, and return. The draft might of the soul' is a metaphor for these painful shifts that occur in life. Ritual andmythology encouraged an understanding of death—Catholics and Buddhists seek awe and enlightenment from decomposing corpaes and charrel houses.

versus to the terms of the term

horrific and awe inspiring.

We're living in the proverbial interesting times' with wars, mass violence, global intolerance and cost of living crises, and climate change effects. But our culture of consumer capitalism gives us little assistance in tolerating this sense of vulnerability and the unknown, Events are just meaning-less mayhem.

The psychiatrist Carl June theauter.

unknown. Events are just meaning-less mayhem.

The psychiatrist Carl Jung thought that the second half of life was about preparing for death with our own chosen, conscious myths. The book provides worksheets to clarify these values, toprobe exactly what we four, to confront the inevitable loss of love.

The vast majority of our ancestors saw the world as ensouled or enspirited, creation and destruction as necessary and cyclical. Many religions and mythe cast death as a journey, a transformation into other forms of energy.





ranis-futural future. Tees. But many cultures. But many cultures have a servenily in face of death. In Hawaii, when the Mt Kilatea volcano erupted in 20th, many indigenous people saw it as a manifestation of the goddees Peic, and welcomed her, accepting the danger.

Looking squarely at death clarifies the question of what you want to do with your time on of what you want to do with your time on of what powers to a sammaine purspective, each of via has a unique purspess and special gifts, and it sour aim to pipe out this purspess, for ourselves and the world. This is why we feel most alive when we do certain things or spend time with certain people. This passed in leads us to what we're curfous about, and lets us liveauthentically willhout fear or regret. To live a good life is to have a good death.

# Old Men Plot Young Men's Death

Before we commemorate fallen soldiers, let's remember wars mostly happen because the ambitious and powerful are driven by some evil logic



The buyler plays taps as if signalling the heavens to open up and welcome brave souls plucked fresh from the battlefield. So many, in their brief mortal lives, were far too young to even have facial hair. Others had children far too young to set off to school alone. Now mone of this matters; it is all too late. They had gone to war and that's where luck betrayed them. That one stray bullet instantly turned awarm body cold. In war memorial ceremonies, the heraldry of martyriom overwhelms us. Rarely do far they have been always to the stray bullet instantly turned awarm body cold for far for for martyriom overwhelms us. Rarely do faulfill the ambitions of old men. On Nov II. Remembrance Day, we recall fallen braves in grateful dirges, but there's not a word of scorn for those wizened schemers who sent the young to die. Our hearts swell as we recall the glow of soldiery, forgetting the evil that schemed ground up to kill the young.

Nov II is fittingly commemorated as Remembrance Day across the globe for on that date in 1918, World War I hostilities same to an end. It was then the state of the st

written on those inconspicuous mounds, those un-remarkable slopes, where thousands died to the ratuat of machine guiss for somebody else's honour. If there ever was a just war it must have been in a bygone era when miracles happened and Gods adjudicated. In recent centuries there has never been a war where at least one side was not truly evil. Nazi Germany tried to humiliate Europe and the world, US soldiers died and killed in distant Vietnam for a cause that only moved the Pentagon, Pakistanis cited



religion to attack India, but it was really for foolish territorial pride.

Closer to real time, Ukraine and Russia are fighting a meaningless war to build a defence against future, imagined wars. This ambition was born in the twisted minds of old men and the young fell for it. People of Gaza and Lebanon have died a thousand deaths a hundred times because their leaders felt strife was politically more rewarding than peace. Once guns begin to thunder, ideologies quickly multiply.

In the peak, wars were a way of life. Feudals had to

gight to survive. Capturing territory and booty was what monarchies and principalities had to do, or else they'd be overurn by others who were better at the job. The modern equivalent is economic enterprise where, again, he rule is to wallowed. The swallowed. The promoter competition or breaten by another.

Medieval wars had one saving grace that modern wars lack. Rulers in those times fought for wealth and pell too, but they battled alongside soldiers and died with them. They didn't just drive young men to war as politicians do today. Examples abound in Europe, from England's Richard I, to Austria's Leopeld III, to King James of Scotland, and many in between. In India too, several rulers died fighting and it was not just the young who were casualties of war Examples are many, from Rajadhiraja Chola, to Maharana Sangran Singh, to Urahim and the World War II began sugaran Singh, to Urahim cheeven, and the word war it was simply because their brees were not just willing to kill for their cause but also die for it. This is probably why in those days, several monarchs were known for their heroism. In warfare today, favery awards got osoidiers who die in battle, but the spols of war go to the plotters. Heroism in warfare vold, bravery awards got osoidiers who die in battle, but the spols of war got to the plotters. The calculations.

The next time we memorialise martyred soldiers tent the druws, the trampers, and the sharp salutes, in the strength and the strength of the calculations.

bowed, poring over sinister and dark calculations.

The next time we memorialise martyred soldiers let not the drums, the trumpers, and the sharp salutes, distract us from the fact that these young men died needlessly to further other people's rotten ambitions. A needless death can never be recompensed; a devastated family can never shake away that grief. This truth must be told, for the hurrah of war comes at trugle period.

Every silver lining has a dark cloud!

The write is a sociologith.

## Bitcoin's Riding Trump Wagon, Wait For Dust To Settle

Dutch tulips or crypto on steroids - Bitcoin breached \$100,000 - what goes up must come down. Given its decentralised, privacy-first nature, crypto is not about to supplant traditional currencies



Holland's tulip mania lasted three years. Bitcoin's roller-coaster is in its list and manifer in the reaches of the coaster is in the last and manifer in the reaches of Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC), which regulates cryptocurrency among other things. And Bitcoin's not alone, the total crypto market has crossed \$3m. While Trump's embrace of crypto in his campaign has made investors hopeful that his administration will be crypto-friendly, his endorsement by Elon Musk strengthens the tailwind.

Elon Musk strengthens the tailwind.

How Tump has fuelled crypto mania

Trump projected himself asa "crypto president" in his campaign and pledged to make America worlds "crypto capital". His claim that Bitcoin's price would eclipse that of gold and it could be used to pay off US's \$350 nd bels suggests he might establish a US strategic reserve for Bitcoin.

Bloomberg reported that, besides discussing crypto policy with Musk, Trump attended a Bitcoin conference in July and his campaign received crypte donations — crypto tycoons Tyler and Cameron Winklewoxs donated Sime ach. In late Sep. Trump and his three sons announced World Liberty Financial, a decentralised finance (DeF) monoy market platform with a proprietary crypto called \$WLFI.

Musk and others have primed market
Trump is also backed by the crypto lobby. In a July
2024 Time magazine article, Andrew R Chow explained
the crypto world learned to love Trump, his ardently
procrypto vege perandidate 1D Vance, and Project 2025. a
comprehensive conservative biteprint spearheaded by
hink tank The Herittage Poundation. Although Trump
distanced himself from it, Project 2025's use of terms
connected with crypto assets electrified the industry.
With Musk as an adviser, many see Trump using
crypto to boost economic growth. Musk has made no
secret of his passion for crypto, especially Dogecoin,

whose price has soared over since Trump appointed Musk and biotech entrepreneur Vivek Ramaswamy to stim down govt expenditure under the newly coined Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE).

Trump used to be a crypto sceptic though
Crypto assets are widely seen as a digital alternative
to traditional money, but they have historically been
extremely volatile. Perhaps no more than Trump who,
just five years ago, wrote on X. "I am not a fan of Bitcoin
and other cryptocarrencies, which are not money of
the cryptocarrencies on facilitate unlawful



behaviour, including drug trade and other illegal activity. He had also called Bitcoin a "scam against the dollar".

Gort narrative drives price expectations
Price is undoubtedly drives by narrative. While Biden
hardly discussed crypto in public, his administration
backed tougher regulations aimed at safeguarding
investors. Now that Trumphasopenly endorsed crypto,
it's likely to flourish. Smaller digital currencies have
also gained from expectations of a pro-crypto White
House and like minded Congress members. Trump's
fedical in the boosted orypto-related companies, including Rior Platforms, MARA Holdings, Combase and

Microstrategy: Besides, he is expected to dismiss current SEC chief Gary Gensler, a strong opponent of digital currencies, to make way for Atkins.

Useful takeaway from Dutch tulip mania
Former Dutch Central Bank president Nout Wellink said in 2013 that the fervour surrounding Bitcoin was worse than his country's tulip mania of the 1630s, when tulips became a status symbol for Holland's newly affluent merchant class. In 1637, tulip bulbs briefly became world's most expensive objects, sometimes worth 10 times the yearly salary of a skilled artisan or 12 acres of land. But when the bubble burst in Feb that year due to a bubonic plague outbreak in feb that year due to a bubonic plague outbreak in the Dutch town of Haarlem, prices crashed.

#### Will India change its stance on crypto?

will india change its stance on crypto?

India is sceptical about crypto, Govt fears it can fund illegal activities and create financial instability. Since crypto assests are transantional, GOI advocates as global approach for their regulation, which currently essems impossible Also, help taxes and open create increase impossible Also, help taxes and open create uncertainties for India's crypto market.

seems impossible. Also, herly taxes and opaque regulations create uncertainties for India's crypto market.

Will Trump's return to White House and America's pro-crypto till nudge India to re-evaluate its stance? Would this open up new opportunities for growth, impossible of the cross-border partnerships, making and enticing drove appealing to foreign pileyers and enticing drove appealing to foreign pileyers and enticing drove appealing to the control of the control o

#### Calvin & Hobbes







#### Sacredspace



## Science And Spirit Are Paths To Infinite Exploration

olfactory capacity, we may smell it once the mind is consolidated through medit tion. One of the most beautiful feelings one encounters is about an ethereal low

limited by a number of factors perceive as change may not be rather, perfect stability is in existence. And because there is no second existence, is no second existence, what exists is unique. On a scriptural plane, we may recall the war between the goddess and demon brothers, Nisumbha and Shumbha. The latter, in anger comment that she is using the help anger comment that she is using the help arger comment that she is using the help arger comments that she is used to the help arger comments that she is used to the help arger comments that she is used to the help arger comments that she is used to the help arger comments that she is used to the help arger comments that sh

when science arrives at the border, philosophy must come forward to expand its horizons, setting a bigger goal to be pursued. This is the only way to awoid saturation and escape the falleay of limited understanding and artificial intelligence. All in various facets of learning. Nowadays, we are talking about the application of artificial intelligence. (A) in various facets of learning. Nowadays, we are talking about the application of artificial intelligence. (A) in various facets of learning, the application of artificial intelligence. (A) in various facets of learning the application of artificial intelligence. (A) in various facets of learning. The application of artificial intelligence. (A) in various facets of learning the application of artificial intelligence. (A) in various facets of learning the application of artificial intelligence. (A) in various facets of learning the application of artificial intelligence. (A) in various facets of learning the application of artificial intelligence. (A) in various facets of learning the application of artificial intelligence. (A) in various facets of learning the application of artificial intelligence. (A) in various facets of learning the application of artificial intelligence. (A) in various facets of learning the application of artificial intelligence. (A) in various facets of learning the application of artificial intelligence. (A) in various facets of learning the application of artificial intelligence. (A) in various facets of learning the application of artificial intelligence. (A) in various facets of learning the application of artificial intelligence. (A) in various facets of learning the application of artificial intelligence. (A) in various facets of learning the application of artificial intelligence. (A) in various facets of learning the application of artificial intelligence. (A) in various facets of learning the application of artificial intelligence. (A) in various facets of learning the application of artificial intelligence. (A) in various facet

Arup Mitra

Our understanding, perception, and knowledge base originate from a small domain and remain confined within its limits. Even what we call scientific research cannot go beyond it.

This is the context in which our spiritual pursuits become important. They ought to be the guides to our spiritual pursuits become important. They ought to be the guides to our context in the context of th

at encompasses entire existence.
Our perception of our existence

anger, comments that she is using the he of so many powers while they are dealin single-handedly. How is it justified that many would be fighting with one? There she declares, 'ekahaham jagammurti diliya ka mamapara' - I am the only one universe, where is a second reality?

must for practical probing. Conjectural evolutions are not innovative if they remain confined todomains of a specific discipline. Insights developed from spiritual realisations can be the most effective monitor for advancing theoretical configuration in science, escouraging turther probing with help of Al. As foamed and appropriate of the probing the control of th

# How to decongest the City Beautiful and why



RAJNISH WATTAS EX-PRINCIPAL, CHANDIGARI COLLEGE OF ARCHITECTURI

the unthinkable happened. Fly-ing back to Chandigarh from the smog-laden dystopia of Delhi, I looked

dystopia of Delhi, I looked forward to getting back to the blue skies of my Garden City hometown. But as the plane descended for handing, the erstwhile panorama of green fields and the azureblue Shivalik mountain range was cloaked in a gloomy shawl of grey.

Media reports raised serious concerns about the unprecedented rise in the AQI levels of the city. The figures were matching those of Delhi and were even werse at times. The usual suspects were being blamed; western were being blamed: 'western disturbances, farm fires, poor wind speed, dust, construction. But the elephant in the

tion. But the elephant in the room was the increase in vehicular emissions. Chandigarh not only has the distinction of the highest per capita income but also the highest number of cars per person in the country. From being a pedestrians paradise, its roads are crammed with automobiles today. In 2023, Chandigarh registered a record-breaking 53,220 vehicles, much above the average 45,897 vehicles registered per year over the last decade. The oxygen capital of India' has now among the highest AQI figures in the country. ures in the country.

ures in the country.

Another development —
about Haryana wanting to
build its own Assembly compose in Chandigarh to
accommodate its growing
spatial needs — also reflects
the congestion and paucity
of space occurring in the city. of space occurring in the city and specially in the Capitol Complex, which is listed as a Complex, which is fisted as a UNESCO property. The other edifices of the Capitol—the Secretariat and high court—face similar constraints. Perhaps, all three need to shift some of their functions to other locations. The constant struegle to

The constant struggle to balance the two forces - the ever-expanding needs of a living heritage city and sav ing the work of genius architect and planner Le Cor busier — needs a nuanced approach. With unplanned pansions will come threats to its authenticity that could jeopardise its UNESCO tag.

jeopardise is UNESCO tag.

Designed for a population
of half a million, today the
city is home to nearly 1.3
million. The Chandigarh
Master Plan 2031 has estimated that the projected
population of Chandigarh
could touch between 16 and
20 lable by 2030 and that of 20 lakh by 2030 and that of the entire Tricity region



The satellite towns

should be no more

viewed as the 'poor

cousins of

Chandigarh but as its safety valves to let off the built-up pressures in the

main city.

could shoot up to 45 lakh

And only seven decades ago, when the new capital project of Chandigarh was launched by the Government of Punjab, there were some appre-hensions that India's first herisions that India's first planned city would never be inhabited; it would be like the historic follies of Daulatabad and Fatehpur Sikri. The success story of Chandigath has now, quite inoxically become its rech-

ironically, become its prob-lem. 'Brand Chandigarh' as sem. Brand Chandigari as an urban product has not been bettered or even matched by the new satellite towns or other capital cities in the post-Independence India. The trifurcation of Chandi-garh in 1966 made it not only the joint capital of Purisia

the joint capital of Punjab and Haryana but also a centrally administered city. With three governments function

ing out of a 114-sq km Unior Territory (out of which only 70-sq km constitute the planned urban grid), it leaves it open for encroachments and violations. As such, the city needs to

As such, the city needs to decompress and decen-tralise some facilities to the adjoining satellite towns to its advantage. A larger Chandigarh Urban Com-plex (CUC), on the lines of the National Capital Region (NCB) of Delbi needs to be the National Capital Region (NCR) of Delhi needs to be considered. Like the NCR Planning Board, there ought to be a well-empow-ered CUC to undertake common interlinked infra-structure projects. All congestion points in Chandigarh need to be decongested. Instead of per-mitting mega shopping

mitting mega shopping malls in its industrial area,

which are leading to traffic jams, the sub city centre of Sector 34 should be made more attractive for invest-ment as it has more space. Similarly, the urban vil-lages' in Chandigarh are no more traditional villages engaged in agricultural activities but hubs for low activities but hubs for low rental accommodation or low tariff hotels. With very little control over their expansion and an absence of bye-laws, they are growing in a chaotic manner. Besides this, the most important point towards retaining the green city to

retaining the green city tag is reducing dependence or private vehicles for intra

private vehicles for intra-city movement.

Recently, the Chandigarh Administration revived the Tricity metro project which had been shelved in 2017. It is projected to connect the city, with the adjection city with the adjoining townships of Mohali, New Chandigarh and Panchkula. Chandigari and Panchkula.

The revival is warranted as
the Tricity now has a combined population of around
three million, leading to
traffic jams and frequent
congestions. In March,
2023, the project was given
an in principle anymosal by 2023, the project was given an in-principle approval by the Centre. What compo-nents would be under-ground and overhead are yet to be settled. Its planning emphasis will have to shift to public trans-port systems, including

port systems, including slow-moving trams, electric buses and trolley cars. Some congested areas should be declared as 'no vehicular zones', allowing only electric carts, walking and cycling. European cities like Zurich, Vienna, Istanbul and Barcelona are doing very well with these hybrid modes of transport. The visionary city plan of

modes of transport.
The visionary city plan of Chandigarh embedded a hierarchical system of movement, providing for eight types of roads and paths. The V7 roads were meant for cycliats. Unfortunately, they were never fully built, though cycle paths have been recently constructed at an impressive speed.

been recently constructed at an impressive speed.

Boday, for a person to walk from his doomtep to the neighbourhood market to do simple everyday domestic errands—which ought to be a pleasure— is a risky night-mare. Pedestrian pavements must be mended by removing memorahments and inverso. encroachments and improv ing road infrastructure

algroad intrastructure.

Along with these measures to decongest the city, the satellite towns should be no more viewed as the 'poor cousing' of Chandigarh but as its safety valves to let off the pressures on the main city. Chandigarh should be seen Chandigarh should be seen in the larger context, somewhat like Edwin Lutyens' New Delhi, all around which are structures from the past as well as for the future. An integrated Chandigarh Urban Complex could be the engine of economic growth as well as the best bet to preserve its bitterie bestimen.

its historic heritage.

# The idea of Viksit Bharat is facing huge challenges



LAKHWINDER SINGH OFESSOR, INSTITUTE FOR HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

NDIA is dreaming of becoming a developed country by 2047. Recently, the CEO of NITI Aayog BVR Subrahmanyam predicted that India was on track to achievinda was on trace to acnieving the targeted \$30-trillion economy by 2047. Arvind Subramanian, former chief economic adviser, has projected that even a \$50-trillion economy is well within India's reach.

The claims are supplement-

The claims are supplemented by various global governance institutions and corporate think tank organisat that have thrown up a variety of arguments and presump-tions. It seems that India is poised to become a devel-oped country by the stipulated date. This projection is reinforced by the media, warding off critics.

warding off critics.

However, some business leaders and policymakers have started questioning the current model of governance and fixing long-term targets without facing the real challenges. Infraver. real challenges. Infosys founder Narayana Murthy recently said that India's

failed to be innovative. Probfailed to be innovative. Prob-lems are recurring with no viable and sustainable solu-tions in sight. Murthy used Delhi's pollution to vindi-cate his point. He urged the government to change its system of management and take the challenges of the Indian economy head on.

Indian economy bead on.

As the Indian rupee, in comparison to the US dollar, has depreciated and the growth rate in the second quarter of 2024-25 nose-dived, Chief Economic Advisor, V. Angatha, Nagestrana, V. Angatha, Nagestrana er V Anantha Nageswaran has warned businessmen has warned businessmen against being complacent. He has cautioned them to not take advantage of the depre-ciation of the rupee in increasing their exports. Rather, they should concen-trate on increasing recolutrate on increasing produc-tivity and innovations to be competitive in the interna-tional markets.

tional markets.

He also proposed some structural reforms, especially at the state and local levels of governance, to make India's growth rate sustainable. Pertinently, the Minister of Commerce and Industrial Commerce and Induster of Commerce and Induster of Commerce and Industry has proposed to dismantle the facility of ease-of-doing business's single-window system because captains of the Indian industry have not shown much interest in this policy instrument. This clearly brings out the fact that the idea of a developed India (Viksit Bharat) is fac-



INDUSTRIOUS: A dynamic industrial sector has been at the centre of transformation of

rate sustainable.

ing gigantic challenges. There is need to clear the long bumpy road ahead. The first and foremost chal-

lenge lies in the evolution of the economic structure and the economic structure and its disconnect among the three sectors of economy. One must keep in view the devel-opment experience of the developed countries, includ-ing East Asian countries, which have had a dynamic and leading industrial sector. and leading industrial sector at the centre of transforma tion of their economies. The tion of their economies. The industry, as an engine of growth and transformation of these economies, had pro-vided new products to the world, raising productivity and was the main source of

employment. It is the services sector

that has remained predomi-nant for generating income. But the largest proportion of the workforce continues to derive livelihood from to derive livelihood from the agriculture sector. The agriculture sector, during the last three decades of economic reforms, has borne the burden of the promised transformation of the Indian economy. The workforce currently workforce currently employed in this sector is as Structural reforms. high as 45 per cent. This high as 45 per cent, This work engagement comprises low productivity and sub-sistence wage income, mak-ing the agriculture sector as one in distress. Another feature of the developed countries' experi-ence has been the strong intersectoral linkages during especially at the state and local levels of governance, can make India's growth

transformation, including the agriculture, industry and services sectors. Studies examining the sectoral link-ages of the developed economies and the Indian economy show that weak intersectoral linkages have prevented the Indian indus-tion for the control of the control of the terror of the control of the control of the terror of the control of the control of the terror of the control of the control of the terror of the control of the from realising the somies of scale.

The services sector of India, nstead, has remained pre-lominant, standalone, adding low value and not much employment opportu-nities. Instead of providing new products to the world, it has remained a subservient

has remained a subservient service office of the western developed countries. These structural weak-nesses have resulted in a long-term chronic deficit in the balance of trade and a stressed foreign exchange rate. This deficit has forced for the compensation to be for the compensation to be derived from the capital account. This has further account. This has further burdened the economy with a rising debt-GDP ratio. These challenges are formi-dable and can act as a stum-bling block in the realisa-tion of India's goal of

non of India's goal of becoming developed. The recently published World Development Report 2024 has examined the caus-es of why countries fall in low-or middle-income traps. The report has also attempt-ed to provide some way fored to provide some way for-ward. The most important factor that allowed the

smooth transition of a coun-try to become developed has been the discipline on 'capi-tal'. The second most impor-tant factor has been invest-ment in research and development and become a leader in procestion. leader in innovation.
On both counts, India has

remained not only deficit remained not only denict but also logging. A large number of billionaires has emerged in India in a short span of time, but their con-tribution in introducing new products in the world is almost nil. Low investment in innovation is a violation in innovation is a violation of the expected ethics/code of conduct of capital for a

of conduct of capital for a developed country. Studies on domestic inno-vations since the July 1991 economic reforms show a decline in domestic share of innovations. This supports the fact that the Indian poli-ty and policymakers base. ty and policymakers have failed to make the Indian capitalists to invest in inno vations to become a leader

vations to become a leader in high productivity and competitive globally. If the dynamics are changed, they can generate higher job opportunities and more income in the hands of the workforce. This will ensure upward mobility of the workers and This will ensure upward mobility of the workers and generate adequate demand for goods and services. This multiplier impact is needed for the business as an incentive to be innovative for contribute for contribute for the contribute for the service of the contribute for the cont tive for a sustained eco nomic activity.

# OUICK CROSSWORD

- (3,3,4) Wide open container (5) Portuguese Atlantic island (7)

- island (7)
  10 Unlawful (7)
  11 Race run by teams (5)
  12 Compulsion by threat (6)
  14 Oppressive ruler (6)
  17 Place in a category (5)
  19 In moderately slow tempo (7)
  21 Even-tempered (7)
  22 The beginning (5)
  23 Feel able and willing (3,4,3)

#### Yesterday's solution

resteracy's souton Across: 1 Decamp, 4 Shrewd, 9 Formula, 10 Amiss, 11 Afoot, 12 Endgame, 13 See daylight, 18 Upright, 20 Tower, 22 Pause, 23 Routine, 24 Sleuth, 25 Cheery. Down: 1 Defray, 2 Curio, 3 Mounted, 5 Hoard, 6 Epitaph, 7 Dis-pel, 8 Take by storm, 14 En route, 15 In touch, 16 Rumpus, 17 Freely, 19 Great, 21 Whine.

						UUU	- Ku
DOWN 2 Narrow-minded (7) 3 Restorative (5)		4	9		7	2	
3 Restorative (5) 4 Antagonism (6) 5 Methodically arranged (7)		6				8	
6 Military training exercise (5) 7 Comfortable circumstances (4,6) 8 Cul-de-sac (5,5)	7			5			1
	4	3				7	8
13 That can be explained (7) 15 Loss of memory (7)			2		4		
16 Inn (6) 18 Bout of depression (5)	1	5				3	4
20 Impurities (5)	3			6			5
ormula, 10 Amiss, 11 Afoot, 12 pright, 20 Tower, 22 Pause, 23		8				9	
ted, 5 Hoard, 6 Epitaph, 7 Dis- e, 15 In touch, 16 Rumpus, 17		1	7		5	6	
	V. HARD						

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

■ Vyagatha Yoga up to 8,42 am ■ Harshana Yoga up to 6.28 am ■ Dhanishtha Nakshatra up to 4.51 pm ■ Moon in Aquarius sign

SUMPET: SATU	-	1723 WRS 07:04 WRS
СПУ	MAX	MIN
Chandigarh	23	08
New Delhi	25	07
Amritsar	23	06
Bathinda	25	06
Jalandhar	23	06
Ludhiana	24	07
Bhlwani	25	08
Hisar	25	05
Sirsa	26	09
Dharamsala.	19	04
Manali	13	0
Shimta	16	03
Srinagar	13	-03
Jammu	23	08
Kargil	06	-09
Leh	04	-11
Debradun	22	08
Mussoorie	17	06

FORECAST



#### ◆ FARMERS' WELFARE

Union agriculture minister Shivraj Singh Chouha

We believe in increasing income. I will util all my strength and capabilities to serve o farmers and improve the agricultural landscape

## Same old story

RBI seems to be willing to allow growth to stay slower for longer

HE RESERVE BANK of India's (RBI) commitment to taming inflation and lowering it closer to the 4% mark is creditable, but its optimism on growth is befuddling. The RBI has had to pare its gross domestic product (GDP) growth forecast for by a good 60 basis points to 6.6% after the underwhelming 5.4% on-year (y-o-y) growth in Q2. The expected 7% rebound in the dhalf could be missed given that credit flows to the economy—tally consumer loans — have slowed sharply; consumption by le-income households in urban India remains weak and a delayed or prince could but the trust growers. owing could hurt the rural recovery. Also, to what extent govern-spending will pick up is not clear as tax collections are slowing, otherwise, the fiscal impulse in the FY25 Budget was not very g to begin with. The fact is that private consumption, which is of the GDP, continues to be sluggish having risen by 6% y.o. y in cond quarter on ananemic base of 2.6%. While inflation may be eason for the subdued spending, it is a fact that not enough jobs

eason for the subdued spending, it is a fact that not enough jobs sing created because companies are not adding capacity in the cc of visibility on demand. wever, the central bank has chosen to leave the reporate unchanged indicating it is willing to allow growth to stay slower for longer and ay focused on targeting inflation. The consumer price index forecast 25 has been raised to 4.8% from 4.5% earlier — thanks to sticky inflation. At the same time, the 4% inflation projection for the June quarter suggests a reporate cut is possible in February. There is y much concern, although not articulated, on the possibility of the weakening further if the dollar becomes stronger once the Trump instration is in place and if we see sales of equities and bondsby for-torffolio investors pick up pace. at is possibly why the RBI has chosen to cut the cash reserve ratio by 50 basis points to 4%. The ₹1.2 lakh crore of funds that will be up will come in handy as liquidity becomes tight in the coming

by 50 basis points to 4%. The ₹1.2 lakh crore of funds that will be up will come in handy as liquidity becomes tight in the coming has on the back of taxoutflows, the RH's force intervention, and possingh cash in circulation. The higher ceilings for interest rates on Forturrency Non-Resident deposits, experts say, would not helpattract deposits because the rates being offered now are already below the nt cap. Nonetheless, more liquidity should help keep interest rates shorter end of the curve in check although yields on the benchmark up by 6 basis points on Friday.

wever, it's possible deposit rates might have peaked for now. It as that the central bank will continue to resort to infusing more lity into the system to keep rates in check rather than cutting they rate. This means lending rates linked to the external benchs will not come down just yet, though the rates based on the cost dos might. With the bulk of the loan book linked to the external mark lending rate, however, there's no relief for borrowers just a such, it's hard to see credit growth picking up too much from strent levels of a little over 11%. Also, there is a need for adequate ole liquidity in the system to keep money easier, and ensure th transmission of any rate cuts in the future. th transmission of any rate cuts in the future.

## outh Korea's tribulation amid regional flux

CEMBER 3, South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol surprised the nation by ing martial law. The announcement sent shock was

CEMBER 3, South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol surprised the nation by ing martial law. The announcement sent shock waves scross the globe as ne troops entered the premises of the National Assembly. Although South has a history of martial law — 13 emergency ones and four security martial this was the first time it had been declared after the 1981 revision of the all Assembly Act Nonetheless, a proactive opposition-voised in the assembly the martial law, forcing the President to lift it.

Political drama is over, but rumours about the president's complicated on are rife. The scenario may appear unexpected from a distance, but it has usliding for a while. Since he assumed office is 20.21, the President and the titon have been embroiled in a political battle that has been exacerbated by not such as a doctors' protest and the Itaewon mob crush. However, the cratic Party opposition's landslide win in the April parliamentary elections term a majority in the National Assembly. This made it possible for the opposition from the President directly in the Assembly. The opposition has edily tried comering the President of manifold issues. One sensitive issue as pricked the President them ends is corruption allegations against the first lady. The opposition has edily tried comering the President on manifold issues. One sensitive issue has impacted his administration, as the assembly remained stalled. It has also created fissues the breadenth and support calls for suspension. With the ruling party chief and the President subsequently evoch, highlighting his frustration. The issue has impacted his administration, as the assembly remained stalled. It has also created fissues between the ruling party chief and the President.

Redling cornered by his party and the opposition, the political strife will likely end sooner, making removing the president easy. But even after Yoon's removal, the political dissues in line and rule in modernising and enhancing that several had have a common vision and future for the Indo-Pacific, outing

authored with Abhishek Sharma, research assistant-Northeast Asia, ORI

#### TEMPERED GROWTH

IT IS LIKELY GROWTH WILL SETTLE AROUND 6.5%, WHICH IS BELOW POTENTIAL & THUS CALLS FOR LOWER RATI

# Room for a shallow rate cut

FTER CHANGING ITS stance in October fro withdrawal of accomm withdrawal of accommodation to neutral, the Reserve Bank of India diation to neutral, the Reserve Bank of India diation to the property of the dation to neutral, the Reserve Bank of India

inflation targeting framework, imply-ing that when inflation is above the upper tolerance band it is difficult for the central bank to ease policy rates. In fact, actual inflation outcome in the



last few months has been higher than the RBI's projections and led by higher food inflation. The last inflation read-ing at 6.2% has driven the RBI to revise its Q3 inflation estimate to 5.7% from 4.8% earlier, and even the Q4 projec-tion has been revised higher to 4.5% from 4.2%. The H1FY2026 inflation

from 4.2%. The H1FY026 inflation estimate also has been revised higher to 4.3% from 4.0% earlier. But the current inflation trajectory seems much more achievable and bears the possibility of a downward bas as seen in the recent decline in vegetable prices and lower global commodity and energy prices although there may not be pass-through into retail prices. The governor also

can turn
through into retail prices.
The governor also spoke on the timing of policy actions. It is in this light that one should see the need for a CRR cut that would inject £1.16 lake rore of durable liquidity. The liquidity acenario has changeddramatically over the last few months. At tip peak, the system and durable liquiditywas in surplus of ₹2.7 lakh crore and £9.9 lakh crore respectively, which at present stand at a surplus of only around ₹500 billion each. During this intervening period there has been a sharp drain on liquidity because of foreign outflows. India has seen foreign portfolio investment (FPI) outflows of

\$14 billion between October and November, The RBI has been providing oldsars from its reserve, which implies an equivalent drain on liquidity. Hence, the timing of injecting durable liquidity is wery important given there would be demand for currency in the March quarter upwards of ₹ 1 lake crore and thus lead to tight liquidity conditions when the starce is neutral.

while the domestic growth inflation backdrop calls for a rate cut in February, external factors. external factors seen in the last

February, factors as of end-October. This implies the liquidity backdrop is not very sustain. Hence, we do expect the RBI to inject durable liquidity even next year, either via FX swaps or open-market operations.

This should ensure liquidity in March is not as tight as it would have been otherwise, and thus is positive for wholesale rates to that extent given that credit off-take is also weak. In December after the advance tax collec-tions, money market rates should be elevated forwhich the RBI would have to inject liquidity via term and overnight repos. But for the economy, it is the repo rate which matters housing and micro, small and me enterprise loans are linked to external benchmark which in cases is the repo rate. The gover statements are far more support growth now the current inflatio lectory is far more achievable implies real rates of 2% during ary-September even after upward sions. As against this, the RB's grojection seems to be on the hade considering multiple headwweaker global growth, higher US1 est rates, weaker emerging me (fM) currencies, subdued u demand, and moderating growth, Hence, it is likely growt settle around 6.5%, which is slip below potential and thus call lower interest rates to support growthen real rates are elevated.

While the domestic growth it in considering multiple rates as seen in the last few me when US1 yields have gone up fact in incoming President Trump's cies of higher tariffs, lower taxes higher fiscal deficits. Dollar emerged stronger and FPI out have been seen from a majority of the US Federal Open Market Con tee is expected to change its ratigectory in the December of owith several Fed members included he had to the chair spanking about it. But, India's growth inflatios dynamic manageable current account de (less than 1 % of CDP), there is si

(less than 1% of GDP), there is : for a shallow rate cut cycle sta February. A number of global ce banks have been front-loading cuts and the RBI is waiting for the time to do the same. We believe window opens up in February shallow cycle (50 bps) to begin.

# No surprises

stress to systemic liquidity emanating



**ADITI NAYAR** 

A rate cut is in the offing in the February 2025 meeting if CPI prints move in sync with the MPC's estimates

THE MONETARY POLICY Committee's to surprises, with a status quo on the pol-cy rates and the stance. However, there was a shift in the voting pattern to 4:2 on the former, with one additional external

icy rates and the stance. However, there was a shift in the voting pattern to 4.2 on the former, with one additional external member opting for a rate out as compared to the previous meeting. This was also not unexpected, given the sharp undershooting in the Q2F725 GDP growth prints.

The tone of the policy document as well as the Reserve Bank of India (RRI) governor's statement was rather mixed, with the unfavourable trends in the recent consumer price index (CPI) inflation and GDP growth numbers complicating the situation. This raises the importance of the incoming data over the next few months, until the next MPC creeting in early February 2025.

As was largely expected, the committee cut back the GDP growth projections for FY25 quits sharply to 6.69 for from 7.2% earlier, with the sizeable undershooting in the Q2 FY25 GDP print weighing on the forecast. While the policy document highlighted that the outlook is favourable, its caled back its growth projections for Q3 and Q4 FY25 by Go and 20 basis points (hps) respectively, and for 18 Y26 Py 40 bps. The MPC also issued

jections for Q3 and Q4 FY25 by 60 and Qbasia points lippl respectively, and for Q1 FY26 by 40 bps. The APC also issued a fresh forecast for Q2 FY26, at 7.3%, on the low base of Q2 FY25. Contrastingly, projections for the CPI inflation were raised significantly, fol-lowing the higher-than expected mad-ing for October. The headfilm number is now forecasted to average at 5.7% in Q3

FY25 as compared to 4.8% earlier, while the projections for Q4 FY25 and Q1 FY26 have been raised by 30 bps each to 4.5% and 4.5% in expectively. This brings the average number for FY25 to 4.8%, up from 4.5% in the previous meeting. Thereafter, inflation is expected to ease to 4% in Q2 FY26, which will offermuch relief. We breadly concur with the committee's revised growth and inflation projections for H2 FY25.

Overall, we believe the MPC's decision is appropriated this juncture and agree with its assessment that strong foundations for high growth can be secured only with durable price stability. Sutained high food inflation has favoured by the support of the badgets of low-income and lower middle-income households, constraining their demand forlow-ticket terms, induding fast-moving consumer goods, and discretionary consumers of the first provided the properties of the provided the provided the provided that the provided the provided that the p

ing fast-moving consumer goods, and dis-cretionary consumption. This is reflected in the commentary by companies as well in the commentary by companies as well as the available data on consumer non-

as the available data on consumer non-durables and curables output from the index of industrial production.

While taliwinds owing to the recov-ery in rural demand, alded by the robust kharif output and upbeat outlook for rable crops, and the anticpated uptick in government capex growth, would push up growth in RL FY252, a dip in food inflation remains key to reinvigorate

consumption demand, particularly in urban areas. This would automatically boost GDP growth prospects, and could also provide an impetus to private capex, amid the tepid and uncertain outlook

amid the tepid and uncertain outlook
for external demand.
Weexpect the CPI inflation to moderate to 5.95th is November and thereafter
to 5.95th is November and the case of the case

The CRR cut would provide a cushion against any potential

from continued capital outflows

overall, we besieve the same of the same of a rate cut in February, if are are no negative surprises on the next couple inflation trajectory, the rate cut could just as easily be pushed forward to the April 20.25 meeting.

The durable liquidity surplus in the banking system had more than halved to the same of the sam

gred manner, restoring it to 4% of by end - December. This would boo durable liquidity in the banking syst \$1.16 lakh crore by December sent signals the RBF's readiness to move monetary easing cycle in the nearter. The CRR cut would provide a cut against any potential atwest to syst liquidity emanating from continues the system of the s

#### LETTERS TO THE EDITOR Treading with caution

Apropos of "Back to governance" (FE, December 7), how the Indian economy fares is directly linked with how India's largest state by GDP takes care of its economic growth. So Devendra Fadnavis has his task clearly cut out for him. Since Mahayuti has promised many farelyke. Esthowie promised many freebies, Fadnavis will not only have to fulfill all those promises soon, but also ensure that he learns from the poor financial

position of Himachal Pradesh and Punjab and treads carefully without going overboard. —Bal Govind, Noida

## Calling a spade a spade

Just last year, South Africa filed a case against Israel in the International Court against srae in the international of of Justice for "genocide against Palestinians". After a long probe, hearing all the parties and studying the evidence and proofs, the court said in its order that Israel had

committed genocide against Palestinians in the Gaza Strip. Earlier, the United Nations had also said in the same manner that "it is important to call genocide as genocide". Annesty international issued a statement saying: "This report shows that Israel has committed acts prohibited under the Genocide Convention, with the reactiffs aim of fleetrosion Selectricies." specific aim of destroying Palestinians in Gaza...These acts include killings, causing serious physical or mental harm and deliberately imposing such

living conditions on Palestinians in Gaza that lead to their physical destruction. Month after month, it has treated Palestinians in Gaza as subhuman group unverthy of hu rights and dignity, demonstrating intent to physically destroy them. However, any punitive action will be taken against Israel as long as is the support of the White House. —Jang Bahadur Singh, Jamshedpu

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# RBI's balanced approach to manage growth, inflation

A MIDST recessionary trends in the economy and persis-tently high retail inflation rates, fuelled by food prices, the Re-serve Bank of India has acted prudently and avoided "any knee-jerk reactions," in the words of its Governor Shaktikanta Das. The central bank's Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) has decided to keep key benchmark inter-Committee (MPC) has decided to keep key benchmark inter-est rates unchanged. In doing so, the RBI has not heeded calls for Repo rate cut from public as well as key figures in the government. There have been calls from Chief Economic Advisor V Anautha Nageswaran, Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal and the Finance Minister herself, Nirmala Sitharaman for reducing borrowant for businesses. The CEA even demanded that food items

report on Israel's genocide in Gaza

Amnesty International found through its research and legal analysis "sufficient basis to conclude that Israel committed

during the nine-month period under review, prohibited acts under Articles II (a), (b), and (c) of the Genocide Convention, namely killing, causing serious bodily or mental harm, and deliberately inflicting on Palestinians in Gaza conditions of life calculated to bring about their physical destruction in whole or in part

A U.S. State Department spokesperson told reporters on Thursday that the United States disagrees with Amnesty International's new report accusing Israel of carrying out genocide in the Gaza Strip.
"We disagree with the conclusions of such a re-

we disagree with the conclusions of such a re-port," spokesperson Ved-ant Patel said a day after the human rights group re-leased the document. "We have said previously and continue to find that the allegations of genocide are unfounded."

unfounded."
The Israeli government has vehemently rejected the findings in the report.
"The deplorable and fanatical organization Amnesty International

Amnesty International has once again produced a fabricated report that is entirely false and based on

lies. The genocidal mas-sacre on October 7, 2023, was carried out by the Hamas terrorist organiza-tion against Israeli citizens. Since then, Israeli citizens

Since then, Israelli citizens have been subjected to daily attacks from seven different fronts. Israel is defending itself against these attacks acting fully in accordance with international law, wrote the Israel Foreign Ministry in a post on X.

Foreign Ministry in a post on X.

In a statement, the Israeli branch of the organization—which reportedly did not take part in the funding, research, or writing of the report—said that "the scale of the killing and destruction carried out by Israel in Gaza has reached horrific proportions and must be stopped immediately," per If I imme of Israel. However, the groups does not believe the events "meet the definition of genocide as strictly laid out in the Convention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide."

In the 296-page report

destruction in part."

In order for a conflict to be considered genocide under international law, there must be both evidence of specific criminal acts—such as killing mem—st a elven group—as

dence of specific criminal acts—such as killing members of a given group—as well as "intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group, as such."

In its report, Amnesty International concluded that "these acts were committed with the specific, in

mitted with the specific in-tent to destroy Palestinians in Gaza." Intent also came up during the State De-

proming the state Department press conference Thursday when journalist Said Arikat of the Palestinian paper Al-Quds asked Patel a follow-up question about the report.

"I know that genocide depends a great deal on intent... And (the report) bases its conclusions on the statements, time and time again, by Israeli commanders, by Israeli efficials," he said.

"What is it going to take for you, for the United States of America... to say what is happening is genocide?" Patel responded, "That's an opinion, and you're certainly welcome and you are entitled to it, so are all the organizations."

Israel faces an ongoing genocide case, led by South Africa, at the International Court of Jourtice and the International Court for entities of the International Court for entities of the International Court from the International Court free many lissued arrest warrants for Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyalu, former Israeli Defense Minister Yow Gallant, and Hamas leader

be taken off retail inflation basket, contending that monetary policy does not impinge on them. How-ever, the central bank feels otherwise. It acted strictly as per its legal mandate, said Das on Friday.

regai mandate, said Das on Friday.

The repo rate is retained at
6.5% for the 10th consecutive
time since February 2023. Repo
is the rate at which commercial
banks borrow money from the
central bank.

central bank.

A lower repo rate brings down the cost of borrowing for them, thereby inducing them to lend more. Though lower rate trigger more spending, and greater economic activity for businesses, it can potentially exacerbate inflationary pressures. A high inflation will eat into purchasing power of consumers, slowing spending on non-essential goods,

which could in turn drag down economy growth. Central banks will tend to raise rates to rein in inflation, which can further depress consumer spending, while making borrowing more expen-sive for both businesses and in-

sive for both businesses and in-dividuals. This factor seems to weigh on the RBI MPC.
However, taking cognisance of the liquidity tightening in the sys-tem, the cash reserve ratio (CRR) - the percentage of cash require to be kept in reserves as against the bank's total deposits - has been cut by 50 basis points to 4%. This may inject R 1.16 lakh crore liquidity into the financial system. Why is there liquidity tightening in the financial system, one may wonder. In the quarter ended June 2024, bank deposits gew at 11.7%, credit expanded by 15%.

This wide gap has been seen to be causing asset-liability mismatch at the banks end.

The RBI will now wait for the

high food prices to cool before deciding on any rate cut in the future at its next MPC meeting in February. The inflation surged to a 14-month high of 6,21% in October as against the RBI's upper tolerance band of 6%. The Q2 GDP figures show that

The Q2 GDP figures show that sluggishness is plaguing manufacturing and mining sectors. With the urban demand stagnating, the rural demand is not simply enough to offset the imbalance. Unless, the government takes remedial measures, analysts fear the exonomy could be heading for a cyclical slowdown. High inflation will deter investment inflation will deter investments by industrialists and investors. Keep

in mind that the inflation forecast has just been revised upward to 4.8% for this fiscal with the likeli-hood of 4% in the second quarter

of FY26.
The RBI's downward revision of PY26.

The RBI's downward revision of its GDP forecast by 60 basis points to 6.6% points to head-winds for the economy in the second half. As Das said, a growth slowdown – if it lingers beyond a point – may need policy support. Add to the government measures, a healthy rise in agricultural output should ease inflation, facilitating a rate cut in February. In all, the central bank has taken a decision in the long-term interests of the country, even as it tweaked CRR to address the short term liguidity mismatch, it is heartening that the RBI is alive to the challenges.

Though Revanth had no administrative experience, he

knew that he had a difficult path ahead and had been working out his strategies carefully and succeeded in winning the

people's confidence who brought

the party to power. He also knew that it would not be easy to

prove his mettle and that the six guarantees that were announced

before elections would pose a

real challenge to him

#### LETTERS Recall supreme sacrifices

## of armed forces

Recall supreme sacrifices
of armed forces
The Armed Forces Flag Day is an annual event organfised on 07 December in India to honour the brave uniform soldiers, veterans, and paying homage to martyrs of
the Indian Armed Forces. It is a day of gratitude, respect,
and support for the armed forces personnel who selllessly
protecting the nation round the corner. Initiated in 1949, it
is celebrated nationwide with activities that foster a sense
of unity, patriotism and gratitude towards soldiers by collecting contributions by selling small flags, sickers, and tokens. It will also bridge the gap between civilian population
and defence forces, who work tirelessly to keep the nation
secure and prosperous. Flag Day brings to the forefront
our commitment of looking after our war disabled soldiers,
brave women and families of martyrs who have sacrificed
their lives for the country. War is not just a shower of bludlets and bombs from both sides but also a shower of bload
and bones on both sides. Let's salute those soldiers because
of whom Indian population are breathing fresh air and
peaceful living.

Capt Dr Burra Madhusudan Reddy, Karimnagar

#### What does explain our mediocrity?

Are we under achievers? No, not at all. There are ex-cellent educational institutions across our country. The meritorious students have been proving their excel-lence. Unfortunately our country has the highest number of illiterates. Many educated youth are yet to enter their career path. All their parents irrespective of their earnings provide consistent support for the best possible education. Our Prime Minister often focusses on "VIKSIT BHARAT @ 2047.1 Request his kindness to rename it as "VIKSIT."

THE article raises a crucial question that warrants introspection and discussion among citizens, policymakers,
and educators. It rightly points out that despite having a
large pool of telented individuals, we often fail to translate this talent into tangible achievements. One of the primary reasons for this underachievement is our education
system, which often focuses on rote learning rather than
encouraging critical thinking and innovation. Moreover,
lack of adequate infrastructure, resources, and opportunities in many parts of the country hinders the growth and
development of our youth. However, if so nal dloom and
gloom. To unlock our true potential, we need to work collectively to address the systemic issues that hold us back.
This includes reforming our education system, investing
in infrastructure and resources, and creating opportunities
for our youth to grow and develop.

Raju Kolluru, Kakinada

#### India's stature soars in space sector

India's stature soars in space sector

ISRO successfully launched ESA's Proba-3 mission from
Sribarikota, marking a major collaboration. The twosatellite system will study the Sun's corona from a highly
elliptical orbit, enabling advanced solar observation and
crucial space weather research. Notably this is the first time
ESA (European Space Agency) has partnered with ISRO for
a satellite launch in 23 years after launch of Probs in 2001.
India's contribution to this ambitious project underscores
its rising stature as a global leader in space exploration. The
joint efforts between ESA and ISRO not only promise to
unlock new discoveries about the sun but also reinforce the
importance of global partnerships in pushing the boundaries of human knowledge. The Proba 3 is a technological
marvel. Its successful launch highlights India's growing reputation as a reliable partner for cutting edge Space mission.

P Victor Schurul, Tirunelveli

@ 2047'. I request his kindness to rename it as 'VIKSIT BHARAT FROM 2024'. He and all Chief Ministers are requested to fill up all pending vacancies. Similarly there are several pending projects. Completing them will create

G Murali Mohan Rao, Secunderabad

What does explain our mediocrity?

A PROPOS 'Are we a nation of under achievers'. The obsession with the past is nothing but an attempt to bask in the reflected glory of our ancestors who made huge contribution in all fields. Is there a single achievement of which we can be proud of in the last few centuries? A bronze medal in the Olympics can have us screaming from the rooftops. This only goes to show our lack of glory in the sports disciplines. Maybe we have had a few artistes and painters of note, but in the madness of religion have persecuted them. In the olden days, kings would patronise painters and sculptors so they could concentrate on their art without bothering too much about their daily needs. This is no longer the case. While the world of science is exploding with new ideas and theories, our attitude is "we have everything we need in our ancient texts." Indians who live in the West perform better. Is there something in the air which produces nothing but mediocrity mostly?

Anthony Henriques, Mumbai

thehansreader@gmail.com

# US rejects Amnesty Revanth carves out a niche as CM of Telangana



Pacing several chal-lenges from deep fi-nancial crisis to severe

I lenges from deep financial crisis to severe
attempts to unsettle him
not by his partymen but by
the opposition BRS and BJP.
Chief Minister A Revanth
Reddy has successfully completed one year in office.

His biggest achievement
was that he had been able
to carry along all the senior leaders and many of
them who were CM aspirants along with him. How
he managed it and what is
the working understanding
within the party is a different story. Whatever it may
be, he has proved to be the
captain of the ship and is
in full command. He also
does not claim that he has
achieved everything like his
predecessors. He gives due
credit to his Deputy CM and
other Ministers.

Though Revanth had no

credit to his Deputy CM and other Ministers.

Though Revanth had no administrative experience, he knew that he has a difficult path ahead and had been working out his strategies carefully and succeeded in winning the people's confidence who brought the party to power. He also knew that it would not be easy to prove his mettle and that the six guarantees that were announced before elections would pose a real challenge to him.

He started his journey in a

rever aggressive manner and brought out various alleged scams like the phone tapping issue, corruption in Kaleshwaram project, released white paper on states critical financial situation and was unsparing in his criticism of the previous regime and the BJP as well.

All his speeches whether they be from any public platform or in the Assembly, were full of caustic remarks which made one feel that he was speaking more like a PCC president than as a CM. But then he himself said that he had no option because be had a formidable opposition party which had polluted the pollitical language in last ten years and they do not understand soft words. Maybe he is true to certain extent as the BRS leaders themselves felt that Revanths remarks were indeed very caustic and they started talking about decency in public speaking though from their side there is still no change in usage of the words against Congress and Revanth. Comparatively, the sting in the BJPS criticism is less.

Now that the honeymoon period is over, during past 15 days, there has been a sudden change in Revanth Reddy's speechs, his style of public address and the lan-

He knows that he has many challenges to face in the next four years. He must prove himself in the local body elections and the GHMC polls and implement over 400 promises made as part of six guarantees. He has toned down his sharp criticism of the BRS and BIP and is talking more about what is talking more about what

is talking more about what his government had achieved and is giving due credit to his cabinet colleagues. He also has been able to showcase his achievements like bringing Skill University, laying foundation for fourth

like bringing skill University, laying foundation for fourth city, a major partnership with Google to establish funda's first Google to fundation of the control of the contro implementing its promises, it did not have any impact.

it did not have any impact.
The main opposition in
Andhra Pradesh is also fol-lowing the BRS style. Nei-ther KCR has attended the
Assembly as leader of op-position nor did Jagan and
his team of ten had gone to his team of ten had gone to Assembly. Now Jagan also wants to hold meetings in districts with the slogan al-liance government has failed just like BRS. He still feels giving cash doles to women would do wonders. If the mood of the people of AP is any indication, the opposi-tion YSRCP is in for disap-pointment.

tion 1 SNCP is in for disap-pointment.
Interestingly, the one year of Revanth Government certainly has something the AICC particularly the leader of opposition Rahul Gan-dhi too should think about. Revanth knows that politics is dynamic. He is adapting himself to the changing situ-ation.

ation.

But unfortunately, in Delhi we are seeing that the Congress is not able to come out of its mould which has not only failed to get votes but is also resulting in alliance partners distancing themselves from the grand old party.

old party.

Rahul's refuses to come out of two phobias. Adani and Constitution. He refuses to raise the issue of Sambhal violence in Parliament but enacts drama by wanting to go there. This attitude of Congress had angered the alliance partner Samajwadi Party who criticised the LoP for not speaking in Parliament and tear into the Government. Rahul was seen holding the copy of the Constitution when he was stopped at the borders and said it was his Constitutional right to go to Sambhal. The unfortunate aspect is everyone speaks of Constitutional rights, but no one refers to the Constitutional duties which are mentioned in it. I wonder if anyone of them even knows the intricaces of the Constitution.

All the so-called big leaders whether it be Rahul Gandhi or the top leaders of Congress or other parties including the AAP which is in power in Delhi sin not bothered on how to after the dangerous polition levels of Air and Water in Lutyens Delhi which was once considered to be the best green and most livable city.

Unfortunately, the political myopia of the leaders of all parties and BIP is no exception has led to converting Delhi into a city where people dread to live. In fact, recently one of the NRIs

recently one of the NRIs who wanted to go there for holidays to meet his parents commented, "I grew up there but I am scared to go to Delhi. I have a small kid and I can't take the risk of exposing him to the danger-ous levels of pollution," he said.

The question is, does not Constitution guarantee healthy life? Then why is it that all the law makers, the

MPs, the Ministers and the bureaucracy do not discuss this as the most important issue. Why does the INDIA bloc not question the Government about it? Why do they not stall the house on this issue. Is Adami more important or the lives of the people of Delhi and the brand image of national capital?

Why is the Congress not bothered about growing cybercrime and drug menace? These days anyone who has a mobile is getting not only fraud calls, but the true caller shows some calls as "Super Fraud." We have seen how digital arrests had played havoc with some people. Why no law maker speaks about such issues. Why is it that they do not see the initiatives taken by small groups of people in states like Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, harkhand et where parched lands had turned green, and villages had become prosperous.

Certainly, such is sues sometimes makes the com-

mon think seriously about the need for One Nation, One Election so that the political parties can focus more on development than on winning elections and indulging in theatrics.



#### JD(S) to counter Congress with huge convention in Mandya

huge convention in Mandya

MANDYA: Following Congress' massive convention in
Hassan, the home district of former Prime Minister HD
Deve Gowda, where the party demonstrated its polikical
strength, the Janata Dal (Secular) (IDGS) is planning to
stage a counter-offensive. The [D(S), which woke up to the
Congress' daplay of power, is now gearing up to organise a
massive convention in Mandya on December 15, coinciding with the felicitation program for Union Minister HD
Kumaraswamy. December 16 marks the birthday of Union
Minister HD Kumaraswamy, and the [D(S) plans to capitalize on this occasion by holding the felicitation event at
Sir M.V. Stadium in Mandya, Party leaden are aiming for
a turnout of over one laksh workers at the event. Sources
close to the [D(S) suggest that this large-scale gathering is
aimed at boosting the morale of workers, particularly after
the party's defeat in Channapatna. The convention is also
expected to include BP leaders and workers, signalling the
pD(S)'s intention to solidify its position in the Old Mysore
region and maintain its dominance in the area.

Read more at https://epaper.thehansindia.com

#### Genocide." In the 296-page report released Wednesday—ti-tled, "You Feel Like You Are Subhuman": Israel's Genocide Against Palestinians in Gaza—Am-Mohammed Diab Ibrahim Al-Masri. through its research and legal analysis "sufficient

1000

THE GOAN & THINK



Leadership is influence

# Goa can't afford to ignore the vexed stray dog issue

n recent years, cases of stray dogs attacking visitors and tourists along the beach belts have surfaced with several questions being raised on the safety of those frequenting the beaches on one side and ways to address the issue on the other. In the past week alone, three senior citizens, including two foreigners, were attacked along the beaches of South Goa, according to a press release by Drishti Marine. In another case, a Karnataka tourist was attacked

by three dogs while he was entering a shack.

The problem of stray dog attacks is not new, having intensified since the pandemic began. The reasons for dog attacks have been long identified. One of the primary reasons cited for dogs turning violent or aggressive is due to lack of food. Very often, stray dogs roam along roads and beach stretches, uninitiated by human presence, in search of food. While much has been spoken of the effect of these at-tacks on tourism and tourists visiting popular beaches, not much has been done to address the root cause of the issue.

There is no denying that such incidents not only endanger public safety but could have serious implications on the tourism economy and its reputation as a welcoming destination for global travellers. People have witnessed some of the most vicious attacks that have left tourists mauled and bleeding with multiple bites. Interestingly, the issue figured prominently in the Legislative Assembly with local rep-resentatives seeking help from the govern-

Governments and stakeholders can work collaboratively to create safe environments by implementing proactive animal welfare programmes alongside community safety initiatives

ment to remedy the situation. In turn, the government had assured to explore solutions after consultations with stakehold ers and local bodies.

While the government has recently initiated a dog census to take stock of the ferocious dos or foreign breeds in the State against the backdrop of a series of lethal attacks by Rottweilers and Pitbull breeds, very little has been done to address the issue of stray dogs. In fact, a solution to the stray dog issue should have

been the priority because it is a more pressing issue. We can under stand that the government alone may be unable to address this prob-lem, but then, somewhere it has to be initiated. A concerted effort involving local authorities, animal welfare organisations, and communities is essential. Instead, we often witness sporadic initiatives that lack the necessary resources or follow-through.

We must understand it is not only about stray dogs; it is an intertwined issue involving environmental responsibility and animal welfare. We cannot ignore the well-being of these strays-many of whom are homeless, suffering and have nothing to feed on. Solutions must take a humane approach that benefits both humans and animals. Governments and stakeholders can work collaboratively to create safe environments by implementing proactive animal welfare pro-grammes alongside community safety initiatives.

The recent incidents of stray dog attacks in coastal Goa are a grim reminder that we cannot ignore the issue. The longer we wait to ad-dress this issue, the more we will prolong the agony. It is evident that discussions and consultations, while necessary, are insufficient on their own. The local government must prioritize this emerging crisis, develop a comprehensive strategy, and invest in its implementation. Pending any substantial progress, we risk conditioning both residents and tourists to visit our famed beaches through a cloud of fear—a dire outcome for a state renowned for its warmth and hospitality.

### OPEN SPACE >>



#### Tackling stray dog menace on Goan beaches

The news report 'Stray dog menace continues to plague south Goa beaches' (TGE, Dec 6) adequately testifies to the fact that stray dogs are once again on the prowl on Goa beaches. Only last week, three senior citizens, including two foreign nationals, were badly bitten on Mobor beach by a pack of stray dogs. Earlier, there was the case of two foreign tourists, a French woman and a Russian woman, who were attacked by a pack of 10-12 dogs on Benaulim beach while walking and cycling. All this goes to prove that the Goa government has failed miserably to make our beaches safe and free of stray dogs. What memories will the foreigners take back when they return to their country in such a frightful scenario?

Inginitis scenario?

I wonder what has happened to the earlier plans to provide dog shelters on the beaches to feed and house the stray dogs. Or has the experiment falled due to lack of support from NGOs, dog lovers, and the Animal Welfare Board? It is time to get our priorities right and take urgent steps to rectify the situation before more people are bitten, and Goa's image as a safe tourist destination becomes further tarnished.

AF NAZARETH, Alto Parvorim

# Can we convert crisis into opportunity?

India has a robust and vibrant democracy. We don't have to be defensive about our governance challenges



for Democratic

DR JAYAPRAKASH NARAYAN

The Charges levelled against the Adami group of Companies by the US federal prosecutors and the Security Exchange Commission pose a formidable challenge to the Indian establishment. India's large corporate groups — Ambani, Adami and fair — are our national champions, critical for India's growth ambitions over the next three decades. India needs a massive infrastructure push, and these three groups alone have committed over \$290 billion investment in the coming years.

The license-permit-quota raj institutionalised until 1991 fed a system of massive corruption and rent seeking. In the post-1991 era, with economic liberalisation, competition among producers and choice for consumers became the norm. However, the Indian state failed to dismandte the political economy of rent seeking. Corruption is fuelled by greed for personal gain through abuse of power. The vast, unaccountable bureaucracy used the political voluntability to extort money from businesses, as well as hapleses citizens.

Payment of bills due to a supplier, power purches a greeners and con-

used the political vulnerability to extort money from businesses, as well as hap-less citizens.

Payment of bills due to a supplier, power purchase agreements and contracts even after competitive bidding, allocation of natural resources like land and mines, the myriad of regulatory powers, routine service delivery to which citizens are entitled, release of subsidies, registration of property transfer, tax assessments and many other business government and citizen-government interactions are mediated by corruption. Surveys indicate that over half of the households of India are forced to pay a bribe for some service or other in a given year. Corrupt politicians and extortionary bureaucracy are in cahootis in this system of rent seeking.

Many politicians and civil servants are personally honest and incorruptible. But politicians preside over an electoral system that increasingly depends on vast, unaccounted, illegitimate expenditure for voter inducements, and even honest politicians are victims of this systemic imperative. If honest civil servants resist corruption too aggressively, they are quickly sidelined, or are neutralised by their peers and lower bureaucracy. Given this background, proplictal system now has to confront the challenge posed by the Adani indictment. The ear-



Surveys indicate that over half of the households of India are forced to pay a bribe for some service or other in a given year. Corrupt politicians and extortionary bureaucracy are in cahoots in this system



ller socialist era bred a culture of vilifi-cation of entrepreneurship and wealth creation. If we destroy the few indaxia al houses who are more often victims of extortion than vilianis, we will lost irreparable harm to our growth pros-pects. But if we continue with a busi-ness-sa-susual approach, there could be real harm to growth prospects. The central question is, can we con-vert the crisis into an opportunity and pave the way for probity in public life, genuine competition and ethical corpo-rate governance, and transformation of our political culture? The Adani crisis exposes some of our vulnerabilities. Already the nega-tive failout of this case is apparent. The Adanis had to suspend bond sales of \$600 million. TotalEnergies, a French multinational energy company, has announced freeze on further invest-ment in energy sector in India. Kenya revoked the projects worth about \$2.6 billion for redevelopment of Nairo-billion for redevelopment of Nairo-bilion for redevelopme

strong signal to the country and global community.
India has a robust and vibrant democracy. We are proud of our political freedoms, fierce electoral competition, fair regular, and periodic elections, peaceful transfer of power, genuine federalism, independent judiciary and many other democratic institutions and practices. We defied all prophets of doom and preserved our liberty and democracy.

of doom and preserved our morely modemocracy.

We also have several unfinished tasks, Mass poverty, low citizen awareness, weak local governments, poor bureaucratic accountability and first-past-the-post system make an explosive combination. We don't have to be defensive about our governance challenness.

riges.

The UK had terrible corruption and actioning of public offices in the

mid-nineteenth century. Gladstone and other leaders understood the political malaise and reformed the British system by the end of 19th century. The US had Tammany Hall politics in New York, machine politics in many states and clientelism, and jim Crow laves of segregation well into the twentieth century. The US establishment confronted these challenges and systematically reformed their party system, elections and segregation practices over decades. Now the time has come for India to reform its politics and rule of law. Two years ago in these columns (October 32, 2022) I raised a provocative question - can spik entury politics and 21st century economy coexist? We need to investigate the allegations of corruption energetically both by the CBI and state anti-corruption agencies.

SEBI must act speedily and firmly to penalise the violations of law including disclosure norms. Let due process prevail in a transparent and verifiable manner, and let all recipients of bribes be awarded exemplary punishments in special courts constituted for the purpose.

The Parliament, under Article 253,

The Parliament, under Article 253, should swiftly create strong Lokayuktas in states on par with the Lokpal. Lokpal and Lokayuktas must be given the personnel and resources, and CBI and State anticorruption bureaus must be brought under them. This will send a strong signal to the country and the world.

The Prime Minister should take the initiative to generate a debate and build a consensus on electoral reforms needed to eliminate the need for unaccounted, illegitimate expenditure for

needed to eliminate the need for unac-counted, illegifimate expenditure for voter inducements. There are many op-tions we can consider. But only a strong leader with incorruptible personal im-age like Narendra Modi can lead this process. Sustained, rapid economic growth is well within our reach. But In-dia must bring our politics and govern-ance in alignment with our economic aspirations. India awaits the second set of reforms after 1991.

#### THE INBOX >>

#### **Tourism Dept should promote** rock concerts instead of EDMs

rock concerts instead of EDMs
This refers to Adelmo Femandes' letter in your column titled "Promote rock concerts instead of EDMs' dated 5th December. I fully agree with the views expressed on the topic. Today, even smaller states like Meghataya are inviting legendary rock bands such as Europe and Mr Big to perform live in front of packed audiences. Why can't Goa do the same, especially when so many Goans have grown up listening to iconic rock artists and bands like Robble Williams, Bon Jovi, Pink Floyd, Guns N' Roses, Scorpions, Metallica, Iron Maiden, and Judas Priest?

The only bright spot this month is that

Scorpions, Metallica, ron manners, Judas Priest?
The only bright spot this month is that the lependary Canadian rock star Bryan Adams is set of delight Goan audiences with his classic hits and his new album '50 Happy it Nurt's at the Bambolim Athelic Stadium on 17th December 2024, Considering the low Goans have for international music, I believe the Tourism Department should focus on promoting mck concerts by international ism Department should focus on pro-moting rock concerts by international artists and bands. These events would genuinely entertain both international tourists and Goa's live music enthu-siasts. It would be far better than fully supporting controversial, drug-fuelled EDM festivals, which mainly attract fake music lovers and drug addicts from neighbouring states.

JERRY FERNANDES, Saligao

#### Submarine-boat collision: Some pertinent questions

Recently a tragic collision between the Indian Navy submarine INS Karanj and a fishing boat left two fishermen dead, while 11 others survived. The crash reportedly caused Rs 10 crore worth of damage to the submarine, and the fallout has raised some big questions.

#### Was action against traffic cops justified?

Was action against traffic cops justified?

I refer to your December s report about traffic police officers being transferred and facing action after issuing challans to influential tourists in Anjuna. Politicians and influential individuals should avoid interference in minor traffic Volations, as such interference can lead to accidents and loss of life.

Tourists and motorists with rented or out-of-state vehicles often complain about harassment by traffic police, tamishing Goa's reputation. Meanwhile, serious issues like traffic congestion, tillegal parking, and reckless driving are frequently ignored. Some believe officers face pressure to meet fine targets, leading to overzealous enforcement. There are also allegations of officers accepting bribes to let violators off without official challans, reportedly demanding even more money in some cases. Reports suggest that the Anjuna incident may have involved such bibery, prompting senior authorities to act. If true, this action is commendable and should deter others, it appears the officers did not realise sential to maintaining trust in the traffic police.

JOSE MARIA MIRANDA vio email

JOSE MARIA MIRANDA via email

The fishing vessel, which had a crew of 13, collided about 70 nautical miles northwest of Goa, near Malvan. The families of the two fishermen who died blamed Navy's negligence, and demanded compensation for the families of the deceased fishermen and a government ich for a member of a member of a member of the service of families of the deceased fishermen and a government job for a member of the family. Be that as it may, it is learn that an FiR has been registered and the Tandel (captain) of the fishing boat was booked in commection with the death of the two fishermen. The question that arises is why did the Navy file an FiR against the fishing boat's captain? Only a thorough investigation will throw light on the accident. But the incident raises some pertinent questions.

the incident raises some personal questions. How did the submarine with all the sophisticated modern technology not detect the fishing boat on its radar? How could a submarine, which is capable of



Send your letters to us at editor@ thegoan.net. Letters must be 150-200 words and mention the writer's name detecting a warship several miles away, not prevent a collision with a fishing boat? A submarine operates below water level and cannot be seen on the surface by the fishing boats. The big question is house an a collision with a more fishing how can a collision with a mere fishing boat cause Rs 10 crore worth of damage to the submarine?

ADELMO FERNANDES, Vasco

#### Better to be an ant & enjoy sugar

& enjoy sugar
The BJP believes its allies should follow
Its lead, Eknath Shinde wanted the Home
Minister's post, but the BJP did not grave
Ito him. This seems to have caused
some tension between the BJP and
Shinde, which is evident from his body
language. In contrast, Ajit Pawar appears
content with the roles he has been given,
as reflected in his cheeful demeanour.
This situation shows it is often wiver to as renected in his cheerful demeanour. This situation shows it is often wiser to be like an ant and enjoy the sugar, as Ajit Pawar has done, rather than take on heavy burdens like an elephant breaking wood.

SUDHIR KANGUTKAR, Thank

#### Difficult task ahead for Fadnavis

for Fadnavis

Devendra Fadnavis' return as the Chief
Minister of Maharashtra signals the end
of one chapter and the start of a new one
in the state's politics. In his first major
test, he successfully persuaded Eknath
Shinde and All Pawart of accept the positions of Deputy Chief Ministers.
However, the new government faces significant governance challenges. Issues
like unemployment, the rural crisis, rising
food prices, and falling crop rates are expected to resurface. Early attention is crucula for addressing agricultural distress
and promoting industrial growth.

GREGGIN FERRANDES. Alembol

GREGORY FERNANDES, Mumbo



#### Staving the course

The RBI has done well to stay focused on inflation amid rate cut clamour

on inflation amid rate cut clamour

he Reserve Bank of India's Monetary Policy Committee (MPC), in its latest bimonthly review, has decided to maintain
status quo on the benchmark interest rate of
6.50% for the eleventh consecutive time. As the
panel's chairman RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das
emphasised, the last mile of disinflation is turning out to be prolonged and ardous for emerging and developed economies. India's retail inflation, after trending below the median 4% target,
for the first time in five years, for two months,
spiked over September and October, with food
prices leading the price pinch. At its October
meet, the six-member MPC had voted 51 to hold
interest rates, stating the inflation-growth balance was "well-poised." That poise has been shattered, with the economic ground shifting dramattered, with the economic ground shifting dramat-ically in the intervening period – while inflation has surged, the deleterious growth numbers for the second quarter have compounded the mix with GDP rising just 5.4% as opposed to the 7% eswith GDP rising just 5-4% as opposed to the 7% es-timated by the RBI. The government has sought to paint the growth blip as a transient occurrence rather than as a sign of an enduring slowdown, but Ministers had called for interest rate cuts from Mint Street even before the GDP print.

It is, perhaps, not a surprise then that the vote of the MPC, which includes three external members, on holding interest rates this time around, has changed to 4:2. Governor Das acknowledged that the near-term inflation and growth outhas changed to 4:2. Governor Das acknowledged that the near-term inflation and growth outcomes have turned somewhat adverse. He also effectively scotched the clamour for the MPC to look through food inflation, noting that the RBI is bound by the flexible inflation targeting framework laid down in the law that requires headline inflation to be addressed. The central bank's mandate is to maintain price stability while supporting growth but growth is also impacted by persistently high inflation that cramps households' spending power, as he pointed out, and this is already visible in urban spends. Both the trajectories warrant closer monitoring for now, and it is not as if a 0.25 percentage point rate cut would tangloby shift consumption or investment impulses in the short run. The RBI remains hopeful of GDP growth recovering and inflation cooling in the second half of the year, even as it revised its 2024-25 projections for the former to 6.6% from 7.2%, and for the latter to 4.8% from 4.5%. Some consider even these downgraded projections as optimistic, but if the Centre takes some fresh steps to cool prices, such as rolling back the import duty hiles on edible oils, and spur consumption, it would be able to hasten the interest rate cuts it desires.

#### Silica scars

Mine workers need early diagnosis and treatment of silicosis

ndia's growth aspirations have spurred the national mining industry to extract more minerals for use in construction. One such minerals for use in construction. One such mineral is silicon dioxide, or silica, an important component of sand and stone. Mine workers ex-posed to silica dust for many years have a height-need risk of developing silicosis, wherein micro-scopic silica particles are lodged in lung tissue. ened risk of developing silicosis, wherein microscopic silica particles are lodged in lung tissue, hampering their normal function. The risk of silicosis is age-agnostic and determined by exposure, and is chronic after onset. Thus it threatens millions of workers, many of them young. In 1999, the Indian Council of Medical Research reported that more than eight million people in the country were highly exposed to silica dust; this population could only have increased since the national government has opened new mines and expanded old ones. On November 29, the National Green Tribunal (NGT) directed the Central Pollution Control Board to draft new guidelines visid-visi "granting permission for [silical mining and washing plants", and the Uttar Pradesh government and Pollution Control Board to set up health-care facilities in areas with silica mines. The NGT is well-intentioned but mine workers are desperate for action.

The Occupational Safety, Health and Working Conditions Code 2020 requires mine workers' employers to notify threats of bodily harm to workers and workers developing specific diseases, including sliciosis. But operators often do not notify the Directorate General of Mines Safety, Preventing the state from developing an actional-

es, including suicosis. But operators often do not notify the Directorate General of Mines Safety, preventing the state from developing an actiona-ble awareness of mine operators' workplace practices; nor have States of their own initiative strived to collect this data. The potential for special hospitals to ameliorate this situation is also unclear: the Code obligates qualified medical practitioners to notify silicosis cases to the Chief Inspector-cum-Facilitator, yet it already required operators to provide free annual health check-ups, which have failed to reveal silicosis cases. operators to provide free annual neath cneckups, which have failed to reveal silicosis cases.
Health-care providers have even been known to
misrecord silicosis as tuberculosis. The NGT also
noted that "concerned authorities" are not living
up to the law. The state's passivity is thus the
principal roadblock to mine workers' welfare,
which guidelines are unlikely to surmount. The
passivity also files in the face of climate justice, an
idea India has ironically wielded in multilateral
fora to demand concessions on emissions and
adaptation financing. The nation's mineral resources are concentrated in 'resource frontier'
States that have low literacy and health-care coverage, a disorganised labour force, and where
mining provides crucial revenue. When the state
diverts the concessions to suppliers of cheap silica, workers tolerate bad working conditions and
delay seeking medical or legal recourse until the
silicosis has become life-threatening.

# Public health — insights from the 1896 Bombay Plague

nderstanding how public health crises intersect with surveillance, control, intersect with surveillance, control, and governance is crucial for addressing modern challenges. Historical epidemics, such as the 1896 Bombay Plague, reveal how authorities have navigated these issues. In colonial India, mapping and policing were not just disease management tools; they served as instruments of surveillance and control. Examining these strategies offers insights relevant to contemporary public health policy and practice.

The colonial state's response
The Bombay Plague of 1896-97 devastated
colonial India. Introduced into Bombay through
Far Eastern trade networks, it quickly spread
throughout the subcontinent, causing hundreds
of thousands of deaths by 1899. It exposed the
inadequacies of the existing public health
infrastructure. In response, the colonial
administration created the Indian Plague
Commission in 1898, led by T.R. Fraser of the
University of Edinburgh, to investigate the University of Edinburgh, to investigate the outbreak. The Commission conducted exte outbreak. The Commission conducted extensive inquiries, recording testimonies and producing voluminous documentation. Yet, it struggled to identify the plague's precise origin or the nature of its transmission. This difficulty emerged partly because the colonial authorities saw the plague less as a communal health issue and more as a problem of maintaining order through urveillance and control.

Unlike John Snow's 1854 cholera map in consort ust pupointed affected individuals and led to epidemiological breathroughs, the Indian Plague Commission's maps focused on railways, inspection points, camps, and police cordons rather than the homes of plague victims. These maps highlighted where people could be stopped, inspected, or confined. They used unusual colour and detail, suggesting a desire to project efficiency and obscure the epidemic's severity. By emphasising where the disease could infiltrate rather than who was affected, these maps reframed the epidemic. Instead of illuminating the distribution of cases, they underscored the colonial state's need to monitor and restrict movement, reflecting the belief that control of mobility equalled control of the disease.

Policing lay at the heart of plagues. London that pinpointed affected individuals and led to epidemiological breakthroughs, the Indian

Policing lay at the heart of plague

a researcher based in

King's College Lond Sarah Hodges

Vignesh Karthik K.R.

a postdoctoral researcher based in KITLV-Leiden and a Research Affiliate at the King's India Institute, King's College London

#### Rakhal Gaitonde

teaches at the Sree Chitra Tirunal Institute for Medical Sciences and Technology (SCTIMST)

S. Anandhi

This historical episode offers insights for the present as contemporary public health strategies should be empathy. equity, and evidence

management. Quarantine measures, inspections, and confinements relied on police enforcement rather than on community trust or public health education. Observation camps near railway stations became key sites where populations were scrutinised. Military ward orderlies were introduced into hospitals and municipalities, legitimising the idea that force would curb disease.

Police stations, not just medical Police stations, not just medical establishments, were primary data nodes, with local watchmen reporting deaths to the police, who then relayed them to higher authorities. This integration of policing into the health apparatus solidified the notion that health crises demanded a top-down, coercive response. Over time, professionalisation gradually shifted such duties toward medical professionals, but the historical precedent reminds us how policing once defined the architecture of disease surveillance.

Plague maps and power dynamics The design of the plague maps and their The design of the piague maps and their emphasis on railway lines, inspection stations, and cordons influenced both perception and action. Vibrant colours and meticulous detail conveyed a sense of order and efficacy, directing attention to the state's interventions rather than the epidemic's victims. The maps downplayed the suffering of communities and masked the real scale of the crisis by focusing on surveillance infrastructure. They thus reinforced power dynamics, showing how data and its representation can serve dominant interests. Instead of illustrating the human toll, the maps suggested that proper control would triumph over chaos, reinforcing the colonial narrative disease was best managed through discipline

disease was best managed through discipline rather than empathy.

This historical episode offers insights for the present. The legacy of integrating policing and surveillance into public health efforts persists, though it now takes different forms. Modern systems often rely on medical professionals for data collection and patient tracking, reflecting shifting ethical standards and professional practices.

Yet, the question remains of how public health measures are framed. The 1896 plague response

ret, the question remains or now public nearth measures are framed. The 1896 plague response shows that framing can reshape policy, determining whether the emphasis lies on caring for individuals or exercising authority over them.

Recognising this dynamic helps ensure that today's health policies do not uncritically reproduce the inequities or heavy-handed tactics of the past.

of the past.

The issue of oversight and ethics
Ethical considerations arise when public health
responses privilege control over community
well-being. The history of the Bombay Plague
exemplifies how data collection and mapping
techniques, if guided by oppressive frameworks,
can become tools for enforcing power rather than
improving health. The past invites us to consider
more humane and participatory approaches,
ensuring transparency and respect for individual
rights. Authorities must resist the temptation to
treat populations as objects of surveillance rather
than partners in safeguarding public health.
Balancing effective oversight with ethical
obligations remains a core challenge, as does
acknowledging that representation – be it in
maps or databases – shapes how problems are
understood and addressed.

This episode also signals that while
surveillance mechanisms have evolved, their
underlying logic may still influence
decision-making. Today, advanced data collection
methods can render entire populations visible to
the state, raising critical questions about privacy,
trust, and the fair distribution of resources.

the state, raising critical questions about privacy, trust, and the fair distribution of resources. Reflecting on the colonial response to the plague helps us understand that data should be a means to enhance health and safety rather than to reinforce existing hierarchies or curtail freedoms We must remain vigilant that new technologies and methodologies serve the collective good

and methodologies serve the collective good.

In learning from the Bombay Plague's history, we see that health crises often lay bare existing power structures. The authorities in the late 19th century chose to rely on policing and surveillance, shaping the way the epidemic was understood and managed. By studying these choices, we can recognise the importance of framing health challenges in ways that affirm human dignity, We can strive to ensure that contemporary public health strategies, while leveraging sophisticated tools, remain rooted in empathy, equity, and evidence. Awareness of past missteps can guide future governance, inspiring policies that foster cooperation rather than fear, and that earn the trust and collaboration of the communities they are meant to protect.

# Building on the revival of the manufacturing sector

ndia's journey to becoming a global manufacturing hub has gained momentum with the government's strategic policy initiatives, particularly the Production Linked Incentive (PLI) scheme. This scheme has been instrumental in transforming the manufacturing landscape in sectors such as mobile manufacturing, electronics, pharmaceuticals, automobile, and testiles among others, through

manuacturing, electronics, pharmaceuticals, automobile, and textiles, among others, through enhanced production, exports and job creation. The scheme's impressive performance has been mirrored by the results of the Annual Survey of Industries (ASI) for 2022-23, released recently, which reveals a positive correlation between PLI scheme incentives and sectoral performance. In the ASI data, manufacturing performance. In the ASI data, manufacturing output registered a robust growth rate of 21.5%, while gross value added (GVA) grew by 7.3%. This expansion comes on the back of the PLI scheme's success, showcasing that many sectors benefiting from the scheme have performed particularly well. Basic metal manufacturing, coke and refined petroleum products, food products, chemicals and chemical products, and motor vehicles — many of which are covered under the PLI scheme — collectively contributed SS% to the total manufacturing output and registered an output growth of 24.5% in 2022-23.

Recovery of the manufacturing sector ASI surveys are a vital source of data on the registered, organised manufacturing sector in the economy. They include factories with 10 or more workers using power, and those with 20 or more workers, without power. The results of the ASI 2022:23 show a healthy double-digit expansion in the growth rate of manufacturing sector contout. 2022-23 show a nearity double-digit expansion in the growth rate of manufacturing sector output— at 21.5%— despite a high base of 2021-22 which saw a sharp rebound as the economy emerged from the COVID-19 pandemic-induced slump. The impressive growth in output and value added in 2022-23, as compared to the pre-pandemic period, indicates that the manufacturing sector is slowly but steadily turning the corner after the disruttions in preent ware.

disruptions in recent years.

The performance of the manufacturing sector shows that the stage is set for India to become a



Banerice

Strong reforms

India to fully capitalise on its

potential

global manufacturing powerhouse. However, strong reforms are needed to fully capitalise on the manufacturing potential. The success of the PLI scheme underscores the need to expand its scope beyond the traditional industries where manufacturing activity is concentrated. Extending PLI incentives to labour-intensive sectors such as apparel, leather, footwear and furniture, as well as sunrise industries what as represence, sware technology.

concentrates. Extending PLI internives to labour-intensive sectors such as apparel, leather, footwear and furniture, as well as sunrise industries such as aerospace, space technology and MRO could unlock new growth frontiers. There are also sectors with high import dependency but untapped domestic capabilities such as capital goods. This can help in reducing vulnerability to global demand fluctuations and supply chain disruptions. Promoting green manufacturing and incentivising research and development in advanced manufacturing technologies can further enhance India's manufacturing competitiveness.

The striking gap between manufacturing output growth (21.5%) and GVA growth (7.3%) – as the ASI data show – is largely driven by soaring input prices, which surged by 24.4% in 2022-23. This divergence suggests that while production volumes are rising, industries are grappling with elevated input prices, which have eroded their value addition. With bulk of the inputs being imported, it is pivotal to bring down their landing costs in the country. To bring this to fruition, a more streamlined import regime that simplifies tariffs into a three-tier system, with 0 - 2.5% for raw materials, 25% - 5% for intermediates, and 5% - 7.5% for finished goods, could help mitigate these input costs, enhance competitiveness, and improve India's integration into global value chains.

The regional imbalance in manufacturing activity, with Maharashtra, Gujarat, Tamil Nadu, with Maharasinra, Gajgarat, Tamii Nadu, Karnataka, and Uttar Pradesh, collectively accounting for over 54% of total manufacturing GVA and 55% of employment, highlights the concentration of industrial activity in a few States. This regional imbalance not only hinders equitable development across the country but

also limits the sector's overall growth potential. For India to fully capitalise on its manufacturing capacity, it is essential for States to be an active participant in India's growth story by implementing the fundamental factor market reforms in areas such as land, labour and power in addition to developing infrastructure, and promoting investments.

Focus must move to MSMEs and women For manufacturing to serve as a rue catalyst for inclusive growth, special attention must be given to micro, small and medium enterprises (MSME) and increasing women's participation in the workforce. MSMEs contribute around 45% of India's manufacturing GDP and employ about 60 million people. Tailoring PLI incentives to accommodate MSMEs, by lowering capital investment thresholds and reducing production targets, would empower these enterprises to scale up, innovate and integrate more effectively into value chains.

Enhancing female workforce participation is an untapped opportunity for boosting manufacturing growth. The World Bank's latest South Asia Development Update estimates that India's manufacturing output could rise by 9% in more women join the workforce. Developing supportive infrastructure such as hostels, dormitories, and childcare facilities near factories could significantly boost women's participation in manufacturing, driving output and inclusive development.

To transform the Indian economy into a Focus must move to MSMEs and women

manufacturing, driving output and inclusive development.
To transform the Indian economy into a developed economy by 20-47, the manufacturing sector ought to play a critical role. As in the CII's own estimations, its share in the GVA has a potential to rise from the current 17% to over 25% by 2030-31, and to 27% by 2047-48 if sustained efforts to boost domestic manufacturing capabilities and domestic value addition continue. Anart from boosting its connectitiveness capasinees and domestic value adouthoft continue. Apart from boosting its competitiveness by improving ease of doing business and bringing down cost of doing business, seizing the current moment by leveraging on the slew of policy measures will be imperative for the manufacturity easter.

#### LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Bills and their names

given to new laws and central government sponsored programmes, the sponsored programmes, the BJP-led government at the Centre appears to be totally insensitive to the impact in non-Hindi speaking States ("Uproar in House over Hindi names for Bills", December 6). Proceedings in Parliament are conducted as if the south does not exist. The government would do well to understand that it could be sowing the seeds of alienation with its Manohar Alembath,

The knack of the current dispensation to christen Billis in Hindi is unwarranted and misplaced. The non-Hindi speaking States have rightly raised their opposition, when such names are difficult to pronounce for even a Hindi speaker. The government ought not to use this as a subterfuge to aggravate the linguistic divide. It is advisable that the primary

The knack of the current

medium of naming Bills be in English for easier understanding across the country. Hindi can be used as the secondary medium.

The Centre's language push is nothing but imposition. It is bizarre to be having the Centre defending the move as a "reflection of indian culture and legacy". Bona fide Indian culture and legacy lie on unity in diversity and inclusiveness.

3. Seshadri, Chemia

The government of the day is an alliance government. It is baffling how its allies have agreed to "Hindi imposition", which is violative of constitution

'Traiter' barb
The BJP draws a false
equivalence between the
Opposition's demand for a
JPC probe into the Adani
issue as derailing India's
growth story. Does it mean
to say that it is okay having

unethical and illegal business practices as a driver of the economy? oned in the na "wealth creation" or "infrastructural development" by a tycoc The BJP is trying the use ploys such as "India-baiters" and the "foreign hand" to deflect attention from the Adani

manufacturing sector.

sue. . **David Milton,** arutharicode, Tamii Nadu

E-pass issuance

Government can fix a rate for this pass to be issued. It for this pass to be issued, it was exasperating to pay ₹130 for an e-pass recently. There are mayams that charge the pass holder between ₹30-₹50 for the pass and printout. Vilvek Vincent John, Coimbatore

mayams (centres) in Coimbatore that are charging exorbitant rates to

issue an e-pass for travel to the Nilgiris and other places. The Tamil Nadu

Letters emailed to letters@thehindu.co.in must carry the postal address.

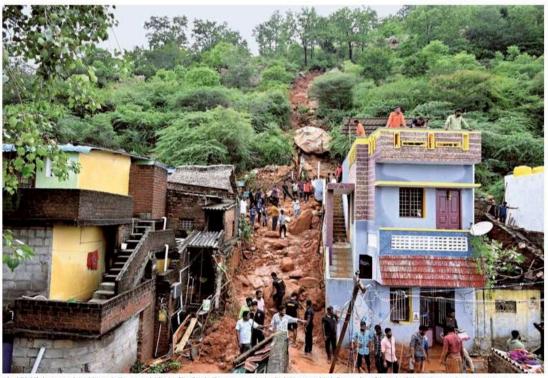






MADADE 

# **GROUND ZERO**



# The cyclone that battered Tamil Nadu

Cyclone Fengal has wreaked havoc in Puducherry and Tamil Nadu, claiming 12 lives and affecting 14 districts. While the Tamil Nadu government says it was prepared for heavy rainfall, the complex and slow-moving cyclone posed a challenge to weather experts and the administration alike. K. Lakshmi and D. Madhavan report on how the cyclone changed course, leaving a trail of destruction

n the evening of December 1, a family

n the evening of December I, a family of four and three of their neighbours huddled together under a metal gar, a residential area at the foot of the Arunachain lill in Turvannamala district. They listened as torrential rains brought by Cyclone Fengal pounded the district in interior Tamil Nadu.

S. Meenakshi, 27, who lives opposite the house, recalls the tragedy that occurred shortly after. Her sister, R. Meena, 28, and Meena's husband, N. Rajkumar, 32, both brick kiln workers, had returned home the previous evening as their workplace, located 20 kilometres from the temple town, had flooded. Meenakshi says the couple had been working in the brick kiln for a few years and had often stayed there for weeks to complete tasks before returning to VOC Nagar. That Sunday was special for Rajkumar as he had come back to his children – 9-year-old Goutham and 7-year-old Iniya – after working tirelessly for a month at the kiln, she says. Meenakshi's daughter, Ramya, 13, had aiso gone to Rajkumar's house along with two neighbours – Vinothini, 14, and Maha, 10. "Around 4.30 p.m., we heard a deafening sound. Meena called out to me and I rushed out," says Meenakshi. "The next few moments of the presence a blur. A heap of mud, boulders, and debris came rolling down the hill. Meena rushed inside to bring the children out but it was too late. My

were a blur. A heap of mud, boulders, and debris came rolling down the hill. Meena rushed insict to bring the children out but it was too late. My sister's home was buried," she says, sobbing.

All the seven occupants were instantly killed. Other houses in the neighbourhood were completely or partially destroyed. Relatives searched for loved ones in the slush amid relentless rains until a rescue team, led by Tiruvannamalai Collector D. Baskara Pandian, reached the site. They evacuated nearly 250 families from the hills, moved them to community halls in Tiruvannamalai town, and gave them food and medicines. The seven bodies were recovered after a nearly 20-hour operation by a 170-member team, in-

10 to seven bottoms were recovered after a hear-by 20-hour operation by a 170-member team, in-cluding 35 personnel of the National Disaster Res-ponse Force, and a sniffer dog the next evening. "When the team retrieved two bodies from the spot, they saw that Rajkumar had been holding Iniya tightly," recalls a senior official.

#### A trail of destruction

A trail of destruction
While heavy rainfall during the northeast monsoon is common at this time of the year in Tamil
Nadu, the State and the Union Territory of Puducherry did not expect Cyclone Fengal to cause
such widespread devastation when it crossed the eastern coast on the night of November 30. On December 1, unusually heavy rainfall (40 cm to 50 cm) was recorded in many places in Pudu-cherry and the northern and northwestern parts cherry and the nomern and northwestern parts of Tamil Nadu. Among the coastal districts, Chennai was less affected. The cyclone then slowly drifted westward, dumping rains, causing floods, submerging acres

We need to map landslide susceptibility in all the districts so that we are better prepared for such disasters

of crops, damaging civic infrastructure, and disof crops, damaging civic infrastructure, and dis-placing thousands of people. When it later moved inland, it pummelled several districts. Mailam in Villupuram district received 51 cm of rainfall on December 1 and Utbangarai in Krish-nagiri district received 50 cm on December 2. Some areas of Villupuram such as Kedar and Soorapattu received more than 33 cm of rainfall on a single day.

on a single day.

D. Vasanthkumar, St, of Muthu Nagar in Nelli-kuppam, Cuddalore district, spent an entire night on the stairway leading to his terrace as floodwater had entered his house. "Local offi-

floodwater had entered his house. "Local offi-cials gave us flood alerts at 8 p.m. asking us to evacuate the street. But the water level rose ra-pidly in the area and a few of us were stranded. It took two days for the floodwater to recede," he says. While Vasanthkumar managed to salvage important documents that were lying in his loft, he lost most of his electronic devices. In his letter to Prime Minister Narendra Modi this week, Chief Minister M.K. Stalin said 12 lives were lost in the cyclonic storm that had wreaked havo in 14 districts. Villupuram, Truvannamal, and Kallakurichi received more than 50 cm of rainfall in a single day, which was equal to an en-tire season's share. He noted that more than 2.11 lakh hectares of agricultural and horticultural land had been inundated and nearly 963 cattle had died. About 9,500 km of roads, 1,847 culland had been inumdated and nearly 963 cattle had died. About 9,500 km of roads, 1,847 culverts, and 417 tanks had been damaged. Stalin said that the cyclone had overwhelmed the State's resources and requested the Centre to release 22,000 crore from the National Disaster Response Fund to assist rehabilitation efforts.

Besides compensation for damaged crops, the Tamil Nadu government announced relief 22,000 per family in the districts of Villupuram, Cuddalore, and Kallakurichi on December 3. Sta-

in also donated one month's salary towards the lin also donated one month's salary towards the Chief Minister's Relief Fund to execute relief measures in the six worst-affected districts. On December 6, the Union Home Ministry approved the release of 7944.80 crore to the Tamil Nadu government as the Central share from the State Disaster Response Fund to help the people affected by the cyclone.

Puducherry Chief Minister N. Rangaswamy announced relief assistance of ₹5,000 to all ration cardholders affected by the cyclone in the UT and ₹30,000 per hectare to affected farmers.

Four days after the rains subsided, Villupuram, a predominant agricultural district, is struggling to return to regular life. Nearly 80,520 hectares of crops are damaged, many lakes have breached their banks, and the Malattaru and Then Pennai

their banks, and the Malattaru and Then Pennai rivers are brimming with floodwater. V. Tamilarasi, 64, of Pillur village in Villupu-ram taluk, is searching for someone to help her clear the deposits of sludge that cover her agricul-tural land. Flash floods in the Then Pennai river submerged crops. She has also lost two goats. "I cultivated black gram and casuarina planta-tions in three acres. The crop is submerged un-der six feet of water. I spent \$2\$ lakh for cultiva-tion. I don't know how I am going to manage the loss," she worries.

loss," she worries.
Villages such as Pillaiyarkuppam and Arasa-mangalam have become small islands. They did not have power and communication networks for three days, which left many stranded or con-fined to their houses without water or food.

fined to their houses without water or food.

"The district previously experienced such large scale floods in 1972. This time, I was caught unawares. While village administrative officers helped us, officials and elected representatives came much later," Tamillarusi says.

The situation was no different in the urban stretches of Villupuram. S. Neela, 55, of Ashakulam, spent nearly a day cleaning the muck and waste that floodwater had brought into her house on December 1.

"Our street had waist-deep water. My family of four managed with 20 litres of packaged water for three days. We had to put up with the sewage

for three days. We had to put up with the sewage that had mixed with the stagnant water for three days. We all worked together to drain the water as we didn't get immediate help; she says. R.T. Murugan, district secretary, Tamil Nadu Vivasayigal Sangam (All India Kisan Sabha), says, "Crops in various parts were on the verge of drying for want of water until the downpour. We have not seen such water flow in the Malattaru and Then Pennai rivers in December. I was preparing for paddy harvest for Pongal and recently



Flood warnings did not reach the villages close to the riverbanks. Residents assumed it would be another normal rain spell. Many left behind their belongings and cattle to save their lives

G. JAYAKUMAR

sowed black gram in an acre. I face a loss of ₹50,000 as floodwater marooned my land. Poor-ly maintained water bodies in villages too led to quick damage." Several residents say they want Villupuram to be declared as a disaster-affected district.

Floodwaters in Puducherry
Puducherry heaved a sigh of relief after the storm
passed through the region on December 1, but
was hit by another disaster when water was dischanged from the brimming dams of Tamil Nadu,

charged from the brimming dams of Tamil Nadu, particularly the Sathanur dam in Tinvannamalai on December 2.

The discharge of 1.68 lath cubic feet per second (cusecs) of floodwater from the Sathanur dam sparked a political debate. The Opposition parties blamed the ruling Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam government for the deluge in the northern districts without prior notice. Refuting the claims of a self-created disaster, Water Resources Minister Duraimurugan noted that sufficient flood warnings had been given and flood discharge was planned considering the safety of the dam and the lives of the people.

The Water Resources Department noted that

The Water Resources Department noted that uncontrolled Then Pennai river catchment worened the flood situation. Record-breaking rain fall in Krishnagiri and flash flood in tributaries such as Koraiyar and Kallar accelerated flow in

such as Koralyar and Kallar accelerated flow in the river that was already in spate. There is no mechanism to gauge rainfall or the floodwater generated in the Then Pennai's tributaries. A senior Water Resources Department official says Sathanur reservoir received an inflow of 40,000 cusecs within four hours from December 1 night. The reservoir did not have sufficient storage capacity to store the entire inflow, the official adds. "We adhered to the rules and there was no lag in flood warning. After 1972, when the dam discharged nearly 2.57 lakh cusecs, this is the second time that such a high quantum of surplus water was released," the official says.

However, G. Jayakumar of Pananhuppam, Vil-

water was released," the official says.

However, G. Jayakumar of Pananhuppam, Villupuram district, who helped people reach relief camps, says, "Flood warnings did not reach the villages (A.K. Kuchipalayam and Kalipatriù close to the riverbanks. Residents assumed it would be another normal rain spell. Many left behind their belongings and cattle to save their lives."

When the Water Resources Department team visited Villupuram, they were aghast at the damage. "We could not identify boundaries of water bodies and roads. The district is generally mostly dry in December. The teams are now assessing

dry in December. The teams are now assessing the damage," the official says.

In Sathant village, S. Arul, president of the village panchayat, rescued several elderly resi-dents from huts that were submerged in floodwa-ter and shifted them to a school. "They also lost important documents in the floods," he says.

Predicting the path of a cyclone
Many officials say it is difficult to be fully prepared for a cyclone that causes such extensive
damage. This is especially because it is difficult
for weather models to pick up extreme weather
events at a particular place, according to
meteorologists.
Cyclone Fenral remained a low-pressure sys-

Cyclone Fengal remained a low-pressure sys-tem after forming in the far eastern Indian Ocean on November 14 and became a depression in the Bay of Bengal only after 10 days. It moved rela-tively slowly for another week before the India tively slowly for another week before the India Meteorological Department (MD) said is had become a cyclone. On November 28, the IMD anounced that Cyclone Fengal would cross the north Tamil Nadu-Puducherry coasts on the morning of November 30. The cyclone moved at elisarrely pace. While fast-moving cyclones tend to retreat quickly, slow-moving ones weaken into a deep depression, dumping unprecedented amounts of rainfall.

S. Balcahardran. Additional Director General

S. Balachandran, Additional Director General of Meteorology, Regional Meteorological Centre, Chennai, says the cyclone had undergone chang-es in its intensity over the ocean due to multiple factors. "The Regional Meteorological Centre had given sufficient forecasts and rainfall alerts for north Tamil Nadu on November 30 and Decem-

north Tamil Nadu on November 30 and December 1. Most of the forecasts were accurate. But in Krishnagiri and Dharmapuri, the prediction on rainfall intensity went off the mark," he says. The storm remained stalled over the occan for six hours. It moved slowly towards the north and then slightly towards the east before moving towards the west and crossing the coast.

"The reason for the cyclone remaining stationary is a bit obscure and there are no lummediate explanations for it," says Y.E.A. Raj, former Deputy Director General of Meteorology, Chennai. "Though the clouds associated with the cyclonic storm were floating over the land, the centre of "Trough the clouds associated with the cyclonic storm were floating over the land, the centre of the cyclonic storm was close to the ocean and was able to draw a lot of moisture from the ocean. Since it got fed with all that moisture, it re-tained its intensity. This triggered a high amount of rainfall."

of rainfall."

Pointing out that the global warming and climate variability are likely to increase such unpredictable local weather patterns, G. Sundararajan of Poovulangin Naribargal, a group advocating environmental protection in Tamil Nadu, says, "There is an urgent need to bridge gaps in last mile communication on flood warnings and weather alerts. We also need to man ings and weather alerts. We also need to map landslide susceptibility in all the districts so that we are better prepared for such disasters.



#### #ExpressExplained

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

# What the collapse of France's govt means, what happens now

RISHIKA SINGH NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 6

PRESIDENT EMMANUEL MACRON IS PRESIDENT EMMANUEL MACKON has vowed to stay in office until the end of his term in 2027, defying calls for his resignation after the minority government of Prime Minister Michel Barnier collapsed in dramatic fashion in a historic vote in France's National

After the minority government of Prime Minister Michel Bamier collapsed in dramatic Minister Michel Bamier collapsed in dramatic fashion in a historic-vote in France's National Kasembly on Wednesday.

Barnier, aveteran-conservative who was appointed to the post by Macron only in September, has become the post by Macron only in September, has become the shortest-serving prime minister of the post by Macron only in September, has become the shortest-serving prime minister of the post by Macron only in September, has become the shortest-serving prime minister of the post by Macron only in September, has become the shortest-serving prime minister of the post of

Vote of no-confidence

Vote of no-confidence

The no-confidence vote was meant to convey parliament's rejection of the government's budget proposals. The draft aimed to cut government spending by measures including reining in persions, and save around 660 billion through austerity measures. However, it was unpopular among parties on both the left and the right. Support from either of these two parliamentary resums was resential for the



against the government, This is what they did, and succeeded.

Problem of cohabitation

Much of the current instability stems from Macron's decision to dissolve the National Assembly and call snap polls in June after right-wing parties won a significant

number of votes in the EU Parliament elections that month.

The President took a political gamble, believing that voters would be less inclined to support those parties in national polls. At that time, Macron's centre-right Ensemble coalition was the largest alliance in parliament, but no group held a majority.

But instead of galvanising in favour of Ensemble, voters favoured left-wing parties, which won the largest number of seats. Farright parties, including Marine Le Pen's National Rally, made gains at the cost of Macron's coalition.

National Rally, made gains at the cost of Macron's coalition. In France's semi-presidential, represen-tative parliamentary democracy, the presi-dent is empowered to appoint the prime minister. After some delay, Macron cobbled together a coalition with Barnier's conserva-tion—The Benaliscans party.

together a coalition with Barnier's conserva-tive The Republicans party.

This enraged the parties on the left, who believed they had the people's mandate as the largest bloc. While there is no legal obli-gation on the president to appoint the leader of the largest party in parliament, leaders of

parties with popular support are generally appointed to avoid public backlash. Barnier's appointment led to a situation known as "cohabitation" in France —one in which the prime minister and the president belong to different parties. Periods of Cohabitation are unusual, but not unheard of in France — and because the two leaders represent different political agendas and views, such periods have typically witnessed a tussieb between parlament and the president in the passage of legislation.

#### What comes next?

EXPLAINED LAW

How the SC hears cases

India's top court carries an enormous burden of cases. How does it decide which cases to hear and

prioritise? What informs the policy of Chief Justices of India to tackle pendency?

Macron has said a new prime minister will be named in the coming days. A few names, mostly of centrist and centre-right leaders such as Sébastien Lecornu, François Bayrou, and Xavier Bertrand have beer floated in the French media as possible candidates. didates for the post. Until then, Barnier will head a caretaker

government. A special law will be presented by mid-December to enable the state to levy taxes from next year, based on existing rules,

and avoid a government shutdown. The new government will then prepare a budget law

government will than perfor 2025.

Given the deep divisions in parliamenthere is no guarantee the new PM will in face similar challenges. However, according to rules under the French Constitution, it next parliamentary elections cannot be held that 2025.

until July 2025. Marta Lorimer, a lecturer in politics at th Marta Lorimer, a lecturer in politics at the UK's Cardiff University, told Frunce 24, "What is at stake is France's financial stability.- France is effectively going into the new year without a budget and no clear majority to pass one. Although it will be possible to estend the 2024 budget to avoid a government shutdown, this does mean that no new measures can be introduced, be it cuts or expenditures, and it is unclear how — or when — a new budget could be passed." Concerns have been raised for France's economy and high debt as well. Rating agency Moody's said the government's fall on Wednesday "reduces the likelihood of consolidating public finances".

#### EXPLAINED SCIENCE

#### WHY LOW-INTENSITY CYCLONE FENGAL CAUSED LARGE-SCALE DESTRUCTION

#### ANJALIMARAR

CEMBERS

CYCLONE FENGAL, which made landfall CYCLONE FENCAL, which made landfall mean Puducherry on November 30, was a low-intensity storm as it maintained a wind speed of about 75-95 kmpt However, the cyclone left a trail of de-struction in its wake. At least 12 people ided, mostly in Tamil Nadu, numerous properties were damaged, and standing crops were destroyed over large areas. Why did Cyclone Fengal cause wide-spread destruction despite being a low-intensity storm intensity storm.

#### First, what are the different categories of cyclones? The India Meteorologic

categories of cyclones?

(bMD) categories cyclones based on the associated wind speeds. These categories are: low pression (31 kmph), depression (31-49 kmph), deperession (31-49 kmph), deperession (31-49 kmph), deperession (51-kmph), cyclonic storm (62-88 kmph), severe cyclonic storm (89-117 kmph), very severe cyclonic storm (18-21 kmph), and super cyclonic (> 222 kmph).

How did Fengal compare to past cyclones?

Over the years, Indian coasts have witnessed several severe storms which led to large-scale devastation. Associated maximum wind speeds went up to 260 kmph (Odisha super cyclone, October 1999), 215 kmph (Cyclone Phailin, May 2013), and 185 kmph (Cyclone Amphan. May 2020) Therefore compared to many witnessed to the professed of the past of the past of the professed of the past of the pa May 2020). Therefore, compared to many earlier storms, Cyclone Fengal was a low-intensity storm.

What was the impact of Fengal? Fengal triggered exceptionally heavy rain and flooding in Tamil Nadu and Puducherry. Krishnagiri and Villupuram in north Tamil Nadu, close to where Fengal made



landfall, were among the worst affected landfall, were among the worst affected areas between November 29 and December I. Mailam village in Villupuram received 510 mm of rainfall in 24 hours. Puducherry received 490 mm of rainfall in a day, breaking the previous record of 211 mm set on October 31, 2004. Air, rail and road transport took a hit, highways were inundated, and lakes and rivers overflowed.

Why was Fengal so destructive?
According to the IMD, this happened primarily due to the movement of Cyclone Fengal. From its genesis to landfall, Fengal moved at a slow pace. On occasions, it moved at speeds slower than 6 imph while at sea. Fengal also remained stationary for nearly 12 hours soon after making landfall close to Puducherry. Maintaining its intensity as a syclene, the storm caused heavy rainfall and rough windy conditions over the region.
Usually, after landfall, cyclones weaken as they hit obstructions and experience friction from belidings and trees.

weasen as they fit to obstitutions and ex-perience friction from buildings and trees. In the case of Fengal, as the storm stayed stationary, the destruction was far more pronounced, leading to numerous deaths. Notably, during recent cyclones (such as Dana in October this year,) which were more intense than Fengal, human casual-

ties were either nil or limited to single digits.



the Supreme Court every year, even as thou-sands of other cases are already pending. How does the Supreme Court decide which cases to prioritise?

AJOY SINHA KARPURAM

sanus or other cases are aiready pending. How does the Supreme Court decide which cases to prioritise? Over the last month, the SC has been pri-oritising special leave petitions (SLPs). These are cases where the court would have issued notice to the parties over the last few years, but is yet to admit (grant leave or permission to appeal) them. The court has been hearing these cases: for three days of the workweek, and has kept only Mondays and Fridays for fresh cases. In effect, the SC is limiting the listing of cases in which a detailed hearing is required. This is part of Chief Justice of India (CJI) Sanjiv Khanna's plan to address the large backlog of cases in the top court. As master of the noster, successive CJIs have attempted to tackle the problem of pendency in vari-

#### Weekly case schedule

On November 16, five days after Justice Khanna took office as the 51st CJI, the SC on the administrative side issued a circular saying "after notice miscellaneous matters" would be heard on Tuesdays, Wednesdays,

would be heard on Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays, "no regular hearing matter shall be listed till further orders", the circular said.

"After notice miscellaneous matters" are cases in which the court issues "notice" to the other party in a "fresh matter". Acase becomes a "regular hearing matter" after it has been "admitted". (More on this later.). This projection for faces that can be eit.

been "admitted". (More on this later.)
This prioritising of cases that can be either admitted or rejected quickly over those that require full-englar arguments from both sides seeks to tackle the ever-increasing backlog of cases at the court. As per the National Judicial Data Grid, more than 82,000 cases are pending in the SC currently. "After notice miscellaneous matters" require the court to simply decide whether to admit or dismiss an appeal. This is often done quickly, in brief hearings.

#### Case types and numbers

According to the book Court on Trial: A Data-Driven Account of the Supreme Court of



eave" for them to be heard. Dismi these cases means an immediate reduction

in pendency.

However, according to data in the book, in the four years from 2010 to 2014, the SC heard more than 60,000 such cases every year on average before deciding whether to admit them.

admit them.

Appeals, the bulk of which are SLPs, comprise approximately 92.4% of the court's docket, and a typical hearing on whether to admit an SLP lasts for just 1 minute and 33 seconds on average, says the book.

But once a case is taken up for full hearing by the court, it takes more than four years on average before the judgment is passed, with many cases taking "twice as long or longer", On the other hand, regular hearing matters are often already pending for years, and this approach only extends the pendency.

Other CIIs' approaches

#### Other CJIs' approaches

CJI Khanna's predecessors in the office approached the issue of pendency differ-ently. While CJI Khanna has prioritised ad-mission-stage cases, his predecessors fo-

cussed on tackling cases that need regular hearings and Constitution Bench hearings. From February 2023 to the end of for-mer CJI D Y Chandrachud's tenure, the SC heard only regular hearing matters on Wednesdays and Thursdays, No "after no-tice miscellaneous matters" were listed on these the olds. these two days.

these two days.

Both Justice Chandrachud and his predecessor CJI U Lalit (who had a short tenure of just three months) focused on hearing long-pending constitutional matters. In his farewell speech, Justice Chandrachud said that during his tenure (November 2022 to November 2024), pendency of regular cases fell from 28,682 to 22,000.

However, CJI Chandrachud's tenure also saw throngs of lawyers "mentioning" their cases for urgent hearings before the CJI's court.

#### Journey of cases in SC

Durney of Cases in SC
Behind the public-facing functions of the
C—which include conducting hearings,
riting (and delivering) judgments, and
aking public appearances—is the admin-trative machine of the court, the "Registry".
The SC Resistry has two, wines—the admin-

The SC Registry has two wings — the ad-ministration and the judicial. Each of these wings is divided into various divisions, with m administrative responsibilities such as case listing, technology, issues related to the

ach division is headed by a Registrar,

Each division is headed by a Registrar, and the Registry as a whole is led by the Secretary General, who is the highest administrative officer in the Supreme Court, and reports to the CJI.

Typically, an Advocate-on-Record (AoR).

— a lawyer who is authorised to represent clients at the SC affer passing a certification exam—files a case along with the required supporting documents, either at the filing counter, or through the court'se-filing portal.

The case goes to a 'dealing assistant' in a part of the court that is known to advo-

a part or the court that is known to advo-cates as "Section 1B". The assistant verifies the identity of the AOR and whether they have been granted power of attorney by the client through a signed wakalatnama, and generates a permanent "diary number" for the case. a part of the court that is known to advo

the case.

The petition and supporting documents are scrutinised for any defects such as incorrect party information, absence of signatures, or wrong format. According to a 2018 circular issued by the Registry, defects must be cured within 90 days. In such cases, both the assistant and a superior officer of the Registry checks the re-filed case to ensure the defects have been curred.

Following the verification, the case is registered and sent to the listing department, which lists it for hearing on a date that is, in normal circumstances, allotted

that is, in normal circumstances, allotte

utomatically. Once a case is "listed", it comes up before

Once a case is "listed", it comes up before a Bench as a "fresh" matter. As per SC rules, these cases have been heard on Mondays and Fridays for decades now, which are known as "Miscellanous days".

If the court does not immediately dismiss the case, it sends a "notice" to the other party seeking a reply to the case against them. The case is then known as an "after notice miscellaneous matter". Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays are also referred to as "non-miscellaneous days" or NMDs.

On these days, the court lists cases that need both parties to be heard, and written submissions considered before it is decided whether to admit the case.

After admission, another schedule of dealed "final hearing" takes place, after which a verdict is delivered.

Depending on how pendency has piled

Depending on how pendency has piled up, these are the cases where the court exnents with what kind of cases are to b

# What is the debate over alcohol sale at Nagaland's famed Hornbill Festival?

INFLUENTIAL CHURCH bodies in Nagaland a dry state — have criticised the state government's decision to permit the sale of liquor at the 25th Hornbill Festival, which is being held at Kisama Heritage Village in

unifying force within the state.

There are 14 recognised Naga tribes in Nagaland, each with its own traditions, practices, and major festivals. The Hornbill Festival is supposed to act as an unbrella festival for all tribes to celebrate together.

The festival is the state's biggest tourist Arwak (n 2023, the 10-day festival saw a footfall of more than 1.54 lakh.

Is being neld at Kisama Heritage Village in Khimia district.

The sale of alcohol, including the so-called Indian-made foreign Riquor (IMFL) and the traditional rice beer, at the feetival has long been a contested issue. The state government has been mulling a review of the Nagaland Liquor Total Prohibition (NLTP) Act of 1989.

What is Nagaland's Horibill Festival?

The Hombill Festival, which is organised by the state government, is Nagaland's normal room to the Church and the state's pox women's organisation, the Naga Morters' Association (NMA). While brewing rice beer is an old culture area to the consumption of alcohol was painted as sinamual tradition, with the stated purpose following the state government, is Nagaland's norman annual tradition, with the stated purpose following the room of the state of the state government, is Nagaland's norman annual tradition, with the stated purpose following the room of the state of t



The annual Hornbill Festival is a major tourist draw in Nagaland. Archive

nite proscriptions and prohibition — Despite proscriptions and prohibition— and the fact that 87% of the population is Christian, a majority of whom are Baptists— the preparation and consumption of rice beer has continued. The efficacy of the pro-hibition law has also long been under ques-tion, as is the case in other dry states.

Why is the sale of alcohol at the

#### Hornbill Festival a contested issue?

Hornbill Festival a contested issue? In her paper Probibition and Nago Cultural Identity. Cultural Politics of Hornbill Festival, Nagoland, academic Theyeismous Reditsu wrote. "This fith Florabill Festival] Is the only time in this dry state that Thutse or local rice beer is openly sold and liberally consumed with the consent of the government." The Church and the organisers have

locked horns over the sale of alcohol, maling it a debate on Naga identity itself — "on Naga ethnic identity vis-a-vis Christian identity," according to Keditsu.

"The organisers of the Hornbill Festival defended their decision to allow the sale and consumption of local rice beer on the grounds that any "authentic representation of traditional ethnic life, and in particular festivals, required it. While the response to the cultural revival it set off has met with the approval of Naga society, the repercussions of permitting alcohol have led to vehement protests," she wrote.

While this debate is about the local rice beer, the relaxation for the sale of IMFL has been supported by Tourism Minister Temjen Imna Along as a provision for tourists to the state.

The Nagaland Baptist Church Council

The Nagaland Baptist Church Council The Nagaland Baptist Church Councu (NBCC), the apex body of Baptist Churches in the state, has criticised this rationale, stat-ing that "tourists are not visiting our state because there is a provision for visitors to drink liquor in Nagaland", but to "experi-ence our culture and our heritage and our

tribal way of life".

Why is the government considering a rethink on the state's prohibition law?

During the last state Assembly session in August, a discussion on reviewing the NTLP Act took place. The discussion was framed as one on "Health Hazards of Spurious Alcohol".

The government's Advisor on Excise Moatoshi Longkumer initiated the discussion by saying the "intended objectives" of the Act had not been met, and that there should be regulations instead of prohibition. The state sees large-scale smuggling of liquor from neighbouring Assam, which the state's 336 excise personnel are unable to check, Longkumer said. He also pointed to check longkumer said. He also pointed to check longkumer said. He also pointed to the check of the said of the said

## A fiscally low-cost solution to China's economic challenges



he Chinese stock market has rallied recently in anticipation of another round of government stimulus. s understandable, as the authorities olled out multiple recently. This is understandable, as the authorities have rolled out multiple monetury and fis-cal stimulus packages to stave off deflation and boost gross domestic product (GDP) growth. But with public debt already well above historical norms, there is limited room for further fiscal intervention withGiven this constraint, China should focus on policies that stimulate entre-preneurship, investment, and economic growth without adding to the govern-ment's debt burden. Policymakers could take several steps to bolster investor and consumer confidence while maintaining fiscal discipline. First, adopting a more liberal capital-market regime that makes it easier for pri-

rins, adopting a mote insert capital-market regime that makes it easter for pri-vate-sector firms to be listed on domestic stock exchanges can boost investment beyond those waiting to launch an initial public offering. Currently, Chinese secu-rities regulators follow a paternalistic model, selecting firms they deen "suit-able" for investors. This approach often excludes firms that are not yet profitable— a standard that would have disqualified clobal clarks. Iles Alibaba. Tencent global glants like Alibaba, Tencent, Amazon, and Tesla from going public in China at the time of their IPOs. Shifting to an IPO system like that in the United States, where regulatory oversight emphasises accurate and complete disclosures rather than picking winners, could remove these barriers, enabling dynamic com-panies to access the funding they need to expand their pand their workforce and increase restment. By facilitating public listings, policymakes acutation puniciamings, policymakes could create valuable exit opportunities for early-stage investors, attracting more capital from domestic and international private equity and venture capital funds. This would help to cultivate firms that could become future giants.

firms that could become future giants. Moreover, allowing prominent private-sector firms such as Ant Group, JD.com, and ByteDance to go public — even on overseas stock exchanges — would send a powerful signal that the Chinese government values private-sector entrepreneurs. This could inspire a new generation of innovators, helping China reclaim its position as a global leader in entrepreneurship. Second, introducing a statute of limitations on financial crimes could significant.

Far from encouraging or condoning cor ruption or tax evasion, setting a clea

ruption or tax evasions, setting a clear time frame for prosecuting crimes or fil-ing lawsuits would strike a necessary bal-ance between ensuring accountability and maintaining economic stability. This imperative is especially relevant in China, where, decades ago, it was nearly impossible to obtain permits, land, or funding without resorting to bribery. or funding without resorting to bribery. While statutes of limitations already exist within the Chinese legal system, local governments often prosecute infractions committed 20 or even 30 years ago, dis-couraging entrepreneurship and causing uraging entrepreneurship and causing uccessful businesspeople to consider nigration. Establishing a reasonate atute of limitations would foster a fairer ore predictable business environment and encourage entrepreneurs to remain

investors. China's ban on after-schoo tutoring serves as a cautionary tale. Before tutoring serves as a cautonary tase. Before the ban was announced during the summer of 2021, the Chinese etlech sector had established itself as a global leader, eleveraging information technology to children and adults. Many companies in the sector were publicly traded unicorns with valuations above 81 billion. But the unconsented notice with deal work of the sector were above the sector were unexpected policy shift dealt a major blow

unexpected pointy shart deat a major now to the industry. To be clear, the reasoning behind the ban was not without merit, as authorities raised legitimate concerns that children were spending too much time in after-school learning programmes narrowly focused on improving grades at the expense of creativity, sports, and leisure. Yet despite these good intentions, the pol-icy's abrupt implementation led to wide-

potentially deterring would-be innovators. Lastly, although Chinese laws osten-sibly protect private property and pri-vate firms, entrepreneurs often view the playing field as heavily tilted in favour of majority state-owned enterprises, especially when it comes to funding especially when it comes to funding access, government procurement, licen-sing, and regulation, Correcting these imbalances could unlock the potential of China's private sector to drive growth and innovation. None of this is to say that large-scale fiscal and monetary interventions are unnecessary. But the institutional reforms prosposed here could stimulate

reforms proposed here could stimulate investment, job creation, and innovation without imposing a higher burden on taxpayers or increasing government debt, thereby steering the Chinese econ-omy onto a healthier and more sustain-able growth trajectory.

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# Roughhousing in Karnataka



PLAIN POLITICS

ADITI PHADNIS

'n more than half a dozen states

In more than half a dozen states, the Bharadya Janata Party (BHP) is in the Opposition, in Jharkhand it has been out of power for five years, but it robustly criticises the Jharkhand Mukit Morcha, the ruling party, regularly, focusing on deficiencies in governance and delivery. In West Bengal, despite periodic internal differences among leaders on how the Mamata Baneriee-led Trinamool Congress government should be targeted, the Opposition is fierce. In Punjab, it is yet to emerge as a significant Opposition voice. It rules in Delhi. But wherever it is in elih. But wherever it is in elih. Sur wherever it is in disk matter is much at odds with itself as it is in Karnataka, Internal squabbling smith of the opposition, nowhere is the party as much at odds with itself as it is in Karnataka, Internal squabbling collider our into the open after the

as much at odds with itself as it is in Karnataka. Internal squabbling spilled out into the open after the results of the by-elections last month, all of which the BJP lost. Three Assembly seats — Shiggaon. Sandur, and Channaparna — Fel vacant after their representatives resigned on being elected to the Lox Sabba. The Shiggarn seat was Lok Sabha. The Shiggaon seat was held by BJP leader and former chief minister Basavaraj Bommai, who was elected to the Haveri Lok Sabba seat

Channapatna was earlier rep-sented by H D Kumaraswamy who had defeated the BJP in the previous election when his party, the Janata Dal (Secular), was in alli-ance with the Congress, Now he is a Union minister and a BJP ally. The Congress retained the

Sandur constituency, where E Tukaram had won in the previous election, defeating the BJP. Although in regionally dispa-rate areas, the losses had one thing in common. A section of the BJP blamed it all on the state party pres-ident, BY Vijayendra, whose father,

B S Yediyurappa, is among the Karnataka BJP's towering leaders. This is not the first internal spat the party has faced in the state. The current tussle is between Mr The current tussle is between Mr Vijayendra and the team headed by former Union minister and MLA Basanagouda Patil Yatnal. Mr Yatnal and his team — cur-

Mr Yatnal and his team — cur-rently in New Delhi to petition the BJP's leadership — say the pres-ident's performance is suboptimal. They argue that Mr Vilyavendra's only credentials are that he is his father's son. This is not quite true. His contribution in growing the BJP in areas where it never had a rescence like South Kernarian has BY Controllation in glowing the presence, like South Kamataka, has been impressive. His appointment, seven months after the BIP's dis-actions performance in the Assembly elections, suggested the party's central leadership had thought long and hard before giv-ing him the job: A leader was needed who was acceptable all over the state. The Lok Subha election results showed it was the right deci-sion. The BIP's national numbers came down in the Lok Sabha polis soin. The BIP's national numbers came down in the Lok Sabha polis but in Karnataka of the 28 Lok Sabha seats, the BIP won 19. But M' Yatnal and co feels Mr Vijayendra should be sent home.

So much so that on the Waqfland-encroachment issue, Mr Yatnal ignored the state party's cam paign, launching his own paday atra from Bidar with banners tha arra from Bidar with cambers that featured images of Prime Minister Narendra Modi but none of Mr Vijayendra. The Bidar unit of the BJP filed police reports against Mr Yatnal. The group got implicit backing from the B L Santhosh faction as C T Ravi, member of the Legislative Council and consid-

ered a Santhosh acolyte, joined the padayatra. Assembly elections in Karnataka are due in May 2028 But Mr Yatnal's ambitions are undisguised, "I am not a selfless in the common account and the common account and the common account politician or a saint. I will become Karnataka's no 1 politician in the coming days. The media will come to me after I become chief

coming days. The media will come to me after 1 become chief minister." he told local media in Belagavi last week. Karnataka is one of the states that triggered Hindu mobilisation in 1992 following the Idgah Maidan controversy in Hubbali and contributed the largest complement of activists during the Ram Mandir rath yatra. It is not known for indiscipline, And so the ordinary BJP worker is confused. He would like to see action against dissidence, while acknowledging that the issues raised by Mr Yatnal are ideologically powerful.

Mr Vijayendra and his supporter bear with the contract of the contract o

Mr Vijayendra and his sup-porters have said they would be happy to talk to Mr Yatnal. They also feel this kind of activity deralls the BJP's primary duty as

Opposition.
But there are wheels within But there are wheels within wheels in the past, Siddaramaiah, chief minister and Congress leader, has had cordial relations with Mr Yediyurappa, Art his birth-day celebrations four years ago, when Mr Yediyurappa was chief minister, Mr Siddaramaiah on only attended the function but complimented him on his commitment and sincertity, Many in the Varial georges as a consultant of the part of the Yatnai group see a conspiracy between the Siddaramaiah-led

Congress group struggling to stave off covert attacks from within, and the Vijayendra-led BJP. This is only a suspicion: There is no factual basis for it. Mr Vijayendra is conscious that he has to show his mettle and reestablish the BJP's primacy in Karnataka. But his supporters say he cannot do so with one hand tied behind his back,

# Return of bad ideas & missing reformers

There are three perfectly timed triggers for this week's column: Old, povertarian instincts are back; the steel industry lobbying for more import duties; and the absence of reformers like AD Shroft

There are three perfectly timed triggers for this week's National Interest. First, the easy virality of a social media post mixing up India's gross domestic product (GDP) with the wealth (as determined by market capitalisation) of its billionaires and talking about how it exposes the stark inequalities in our society.

Some really, really smart people fell for it.
All good people, after all, have their hearts in
the right place. India's inequalities are deep,
wide, and in many ways getting worse. So, what
is the argument?

It is just that GDP is the sum of all nation come in a year, whereas wealth is what you income in a year, whereas wearth is what you've saved up and built over your past incomes, the market value or capitalisation of your equity holdings and your assets. Wealth is not income

and vice versa.

The total capitalisation of Indian markets, closing in on \$6 trillion, is way more than the country's GDP. Ambani, Adami, Birla, Tata, and all of India's billionaries will draw their wealth mostly from it. Most of the

wealth mostly from it. Most of the rest of us 14.2 billion will contribute a humble share to the GDP. How could a mythology like this, however romantic, find such currency 33 years after the 1991 reforms? This gives us the first trigger: That old, powertarian instincts are back, assailing the hearts and minds of the smarter.

assailing the hearts and minus of the smartest. Zeel indusThe second is the seel indusThe second is the seel indusThe second is the seel industy doubling down on lobbying for even more duties on imports, making India's steel among the most expensive anywhere. The price is paid by the domestic user—you and me—who builds homes and buys automobiles; it's passed on to the gig worker's scooty, the farmer's tractor or plough, the sadhal wook, and humble chamcha (spoon) in your kitchen. This, when micro, small, and workium enterories are criving about steel prices dium enterprises are crying about steel prices ving them to bankruptcy, and when the bigger bys", the automakers, whisper to you — looking oys", the automakers, whisper to you — looking t and right to make sure nobody is watching — oout shipping containers sitting in our ports rever, awaiting clearance, Their issue isn't just the price. About 20 per

SHEKHAR GUPTA

cent of the steel needed by the auto industry is of the kind not yet made in India. The government, however, doesn't care, having gone full protection-ist. Surjit Bhalla and Karan Bhasin highlight some

"Treams of Vikisi Bhanta stumble over Nehruvi impulses". This shows how the old defenders economic reform, supporters of the Narend Modi government, are also hurting. The yea GDP growth has been cut by the Reserve Bank India to 66 per cent. Our foreign direct investme metables to be a second of the control of the cont

India to 66 per cent. Our foreign direct investment more than halved from \$56 billion in 2019-20 to \$26.6 billion in 2019-20 to \$26.6 billion in 2018-24, and trending towards that much at best this year. Trade is stalled.

And the third was pure serendipity. Earlier this week, I had the honour of being invited to speak at the annual event of the Forum of Free Enterprises (FFE) in Mumbal. The FFE was set up the control of the process of t Enterprises (FFE) in Mumbal. The FFE was set up in July 1956 by Ardeshir Darabshaw (AD) Shroff as an intellectual and philosophical counter to Jawaharial Nehuris had drive to the Left following the Congress Party's Industrial Policy Resolution that April, which strangled Indian entrepreneurship for three and a half decades, until P V Narasimha Rao broke the shackles in 1991.

This policy divided Indian

This policy divided Indian industry into categories A, B and C. The first, the commanding heights, belonged entirely to the government (PSUs), category B could have the private sector in some areas where it already existsome areas where it already existd, and Cwas open, but only with
licensing. It had much appeal and
the Congress continued to be reelected in spite of the so-called
Hindu rate of growth. Indita
Gandhi completed her father?
clalist putsch with mass nationalisations
tween 1969 and 37. These included New India
surance and Bank of India, both of which Shroff
d helmed.

roff had been a member of the eight-member Bombay Plan for India's economy in 1944. He was also a non-official member at the first Brettor Woods gathering. He and the Bombay Plan lost the philosophical battle for the direction of our post-independence economy. The fighter and free spirit in him responded by building the FFE, an institution that would teach Indians the virtues of unfettered entrepreneurship and the evils of gov-ernment controls. You can read more about him

in an excellent biography written by Sucheta Dalai. Here is the irony. His institution fought Mrs Gandhi's Socialist surge at her peak. Its supporters included Nani Palkhivala and Minoo Masani of

the Swatantra Party (read his prescient interventions in the Rajya Sabha debate on bank nationa lisation). H T Parekh (former CMD of ICICI and later founder of HDFC) became a backer too. The Emergency did not deter him. There is a personal story in this.

In January 1976, at the peak of Management.

Emergency did not deter him. There is a personal story in this.

In January 1976, at the peak of Mrs Gandh's Emergency power, I was a journalism student. As part of my curriculum. I was interning for six weeks at The Times of India newsroom in New Delhi. I'd come dutifully, walking from my favouriea unit's place in Iold Delhi Sazar Sitaram, and sit all day waiting for work. The chief reporter, the late B X Joshi, would give me none. He won't even look at me. Once I gathered the courage to ask him why. He said, "You've graduated in science with very good marks. I don't want you wasted in journalism. Go back, enrol in the chemical engineering department at your Panjab University. Then I will help you get alicence to set up a factory to make paints or tyres." He said he just couldn't see a "bright young fellow" ruined by journalism. e a "bright young fellow" rulned by journalism. his was peak Emergency. No freedom, no news, o jobs and full censorship. Because I was persistent, one day, his face wisted in that "you are so self-destructive" smirk,

Because I was persistent, one day, his face twisted in that "you are so self-destructive" smirk, he bent and fished out an invite from his trash basket. "Go cover this," he said, "and don't think we'll publish it." It was to get me off his back. I took a bus ride to the YMCA on New Delhi's Jai Singli Road where M R Pai (then secretary of FFE) was delivering a message on free markets, and eviscerating Mrs Gandhi's ilcence-quota raj and mai-banp surkar. He was also distributing lit-te booklets, each discussing such specific issues in great detail. There was a register for you to enter your mailing address if you wanted to keep recelv-ing these. How my own views on the economy, or more specifically political economy, evolved subore specifically political economy, evolved sub-quently is owed to that encounter with FFE in

sequently is owed to that encounter with FFE in no small measure.

It is possible that the 1991 reform took the energy out of FFE. As if, with the philosophical victory, that cause had been achieved. The forum does live on with eminent lawyer HP Banina as president. But it's no longer an intellectual powerhouse that will reach out to people young and old in all parts of the country to counter the relentiess return of bad old ideas: Import substitution, government-mandated incertives (PLI, for example), retrospective taxation, protectionism, the return of the big state, goodlye to privatisation.

For those who might say it is risky to speak up given how powerful the establishment is, remember A D Shroff took on Nehru even on his central argument. Capitalism, Nehru said, was bad

remember A D Shroff took on Nehru even on his central augument. Capitalism, Nehru said, was bad for democracy and political freedoms; Shroff said is was his kind of socialism that came loaded with that venom, and that economic and political freedoms must go hand in hand. India's economic reform has lost steam, is siding backwards in some areas, and an institution like the Foreum of Free Enterprise is missing just when it's most needed—to protect our hard-won economic freedoms in 1991. Now, you can see why this was the third and the most troubling of these triggers.

## The Matrix, reality and simulation Does the captain still take it all?

EYE CULTURE

ATANU BISWAS

T's 25 years of Keanu Reeves starrer The Matrix, where Neo, the protagonist, lives in the year 21999 and, more significantly, in a simulated world that is a fake-out version of the late 20th century, created by 21st-century artificial intelligence (Al) to enslave humanity. The film popularised the notion that we are all actually lying in fluid pods, acting as feedstock for mechicies, and that reality is an for machines, and that reality is an illusion. The concept is as old as

musion. The concept is so to as Plato's Republic and as modern as Elon Music's Twitter feed. Formany years, sci-fihas emphasised topics like computer gaming, virtual reality, and Al. For instance, Daniel F Galouye's novel Simulacron-3(1964) describes a virtual science of the science of

Simulacron-3(96-d) describes a virtual city created as a computer simulation for market research, where the simulated inhabitants possess consciousness, with all but one unaware of their unare of their surroundings. Furthermore, it's commonly held that a speech novelles Thill for Dick gave in France in 1977 provided the structural inspiration for The Martrix, highlighting the modest origins from which s'dimp heaven' in triallar heaven' in triallar heaven' in the said or the size of migragining the molest origins round which "sim-theory" initially gained popularity. A few years after the film's release, "simulation theory" was formally developed, proposing that people are likely preset, coded constructs within a digital world, and that we are probably living in a computer simulation rather than as "real" and substantial individuals. I his 2003 paper "Are You Living in a Computer Simulation?" Swedish

philosopher Nick Bostrom argued that posthumans might possess supercomputers capable of running intricate simulations of their ancestors where the simulated entities exhibit a form of artificial consciousness. In essence, it would be similar to us simulating ancient Athens or Ujjain.

Bostrom's argument presents a trilemma: Either such simulations at not created due to technological constraints or self-destruction, advanced civilisations choose not to develop them, or we are almost certainly living in one. Bostrom concluded that "we would be rational concluded that" we would be rational to think that we are likely among the simulated minds rather than among the original biological ones. "The tots, or "Sims," would far outnumber the total number of simulated ancestors is even a small portion of them performed "ancestor simulations." Bostrom asserted that "unless we are now living in a simulation, our descendants will almost certainly never run an ancestor simulation." The depth of the rabbit hole was demonstrated by MT computer scientist Ricwan Virk, author of The Simulation Hypothesis (2019).

Simulation Hypothesis (2019). According to Virk, this indicates that According to Virk, in sindicates that there is just one "base reality" and numerous "simulated realities." So, which reality — the one base reality or the 99 simulated realities — are you most likely to be in? Your chances of being in the 99 are certainly higher. In Rodney Ascher-directed 2021

documentary A Glitch in the Matrix, people with varying perspectives, including journalists, philosophers, and likeable kooks who strongly think they

live in a simulacrum, were interviewed. Indeed, there have been numerous notable proposents and debaters of the simulation idea. By proposing that the entire universe might be a massive quantum computer, MTT physicist Seth quantum computer, MIT physicist Seth Lloyd took the simulation theory to the next level, And Elon Musik claimed in 2016 that the likelihood that we are truly living in the physical universe, or "base reality," ison ein abillion. This concept is thoroughly examined in David Chalmers' most recent book, Reality's: Virtual Worlds and the Problems of Philosonhov 2023).

Philosophy (2022). And can we hack it if we're living in a computer simulation? David Anderson, a computer scientist at the University of California, Berkeley, asked this question. In reality, *The* Matrix and the "simulation theory" therein appear more relevant than ever in this AI era. Mark Zuckerberg ever in this A term, Mark Zilckerberg, who aimed to create a fully immersive virtual reality environment akin to The Marrix, may attest to that. With the state of Knowledge and technology today, the simulation hypothesis can't be conclusively demonstrated or disproven, for sure. However, wouldn't everything be pointless if we were really living in a computer simulation? But who cares! Isn't Musk, a fervent

supporter of the theory, the world's most capitalistic person? Regardless of *The Matrix*, Nick Bostrom, Elon Musk, or the Bostrom, Elon Musk, or the peculiarities of quantum physics, we might still be living in "base reality." Or perhaps the world we inhabit is the truest definition of "base reality."

The author is professor of statistics, Indian Statistical Institute, Kolkata



YES, BUT... SANDEEP GOYAL

ver the past four decades since brands began hir

Sunil Gavaskar, India cap-tain in most of the Indian tain in most or the indian cricket team's outings from 1978 to 1985, was amongst the first to feature in commercials — his Dinesh suitings campaign and his Thums Up ads were trend-setters of the 1970s and '80s. None of the famous spin quar-tet — Bishan Singh Bedi, EAS Prasanna, B S Chandrashekhar, or Srinivas Venkataraghavan, all Gavaskar's contemporaries — were featured in commercials, despite their equally impressive re featured in commercial, spite their equally impressive icketing achievements. The 1983 World Cup winning

India captain, Kapil Dev, first appeared as brand ambassador for Boost in 1986 or 1987. He then featured in the famous

Man of the Match in both the semis and the final of the 1983 World Cup, however, got no endorsement contracts.

nuorsement contracts.

In later years, captains Dilip
lengsarkar, K Srikkanth, and
zharuddin did not capture the
terest of the marketing world,
or did any other cricketers. But
ten, Captain Sachin Tendulkar
rived and consent the arrived and opened the endorse-ment floodgates. He took the on from Kapil Dev with the nic "Boost is the secret of my

iconic "Boost is the secret of my energy" campaign and went on to appear in ads for MRF. Pepsi, Adidas, and many more. No other cricketer during his reign received as much attention. Tendulkar, despite being retired for almost a decade, continues to be woosed by brands.

Captains Sourav Ganguly (starting with Parry's, Hero Honda and more) and Rahul Dravid (Bicking off with Kissan, Palmolive, Pepsi, Castrol....) followed in Tendulkar's footsteps with blistering knocks on the endosements front during their endorsements front during their innings, and continue to be sought after even today. Much the same happened with captain M S Dhoni. His teammates Yuvraj Singh and Virender Sehwag got a few endorsements, too, but the captain outscored them by miles. And then came Virat Kohli, who nearly hit a cen-tury in brand endorsements,

Rohit Sharma, despite beti team's hit-man, had a luke run with brands till he do the mantle of captaincy. After his elevation, his endorsements

nis elevation, nis endorsements suddenly more than doubled, in count and in value.

Has the axiom that the captain-takes-all started to wane somewhat in the past few years?

After the longish reign of captain Kohli (68 Tests + 95 ODIs + 50 T20s) and the continuing innings of captain Robit Sharma (2) Tests T20s) and the continuing innings of captain Robit Sharma (21 Tests + 48 ODIs + 62 T20s), we sud-denly have a number of India captains, across different for-mats, in our midst; Ajinkya Rahane (6 Tests + 3 ODIs + 2 T20s), K L Rahul (3 Tests + 12 T20s), K L Rahul (3 Tests + 12 Tests + 2 T20s), Shikhar Dhawan (12 CDIs + 1 T20s), Hardik Pancke Obis v 120), Jaspia Buffriatty Tests v 2 T205), Shikhar Dhawan (12 ODIs v 3 T205), Hardik Pandya (3 CDIs v 16 T205), Shishahi Pant (5 T205), Surural Galkwad (3 T206), Surural Galkwad (3 T206), Surya Kumar Yadav (13 T206), Surya Kumar Yadav (13 T206), and Shubman Gill (5 T205). Ball a dozen others are probable claimants to the capitain's crown. This has truly opened up the endorsement market, which has become more fragmented than ever before. However, it is still the capitains who dominate brand endorsements. Virat Kohil and Kohit Sharma remain hot brand favourites, for sure. But SKY (Surya Kumar Yadav)

But SKY (Surya Kumar Yadav) also endorses over 20 brands — UniScholars, Maxima, Boult, SS Cricket, JioCinema, Royal Stag

and Reebok, among others. Pai has at least 15 brands that I sells: Adidas, JSW, Realm Cadbury, and Zomato beir some of them. Pandya, too, h some of them. Pandya, too, has more than 20 ambassadorships

 Gatorade, BigMuscles, Hyundai Exter, Souled Store and Francode Shop being some of them, Gill is a sizzling hot favou-rite with brands, especially those targeting Gen Z. He is today the face of Coca-Cola, G-Shock, Bajaj Allianz, Tata Capital, Ceal and ITC Fiama, besides others. Bumrah and Rahul are also

Bumrah and Rahul are also somewhat in deman.

The spoils of the advertising war seem to have got more evenly democratised and distributed amongst the very many captains today — the recognition of being named the top gun seems to automatically attract brands. Broadening the captaincy has browned to the control of the control of the control of the captaincy has browned to the control of the captaincy has browned to the control of the captains. It has substantially enhanced their brand value. Non-captains still face resistance.

I was reading the proposed contract of one of the younger contract of one of the younger turks the other day — it said that if the player were to be named captain in any format, his endorsement fees would get boosted by 50 per cent instantly. Obviously, being cap-tain, even today, counts for much more than just leading the India XI on the field.



OUR TAKE 1

## Stalled demand, sluggish growth

There is no crisis in the Indian economy, but structural drivers of growth must be reinvented

arkets got the September quarter GDP number wrong when it came in at 5.4% instead of the widely expected 6.5%. But they were mostly right about the outcome of the Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) meeting which ended on Friday. RBI has kept interest rates unchanged as expected and also accepted that it was unwarrantedly bullish about growth. The annual growth forecast for 2024-25 has now been brought down to 6.6% instead of 7.2% in the October resolution of MPC. What is noteworthy is that Friday's downward revision to growth is not just on account of a subpar performance in the September quarter. Growth forecasts for quarters ending December 2024 and March 2025 now stand at 6.8% and 7.2%, respectively, instead of the 7.4% for both these quarters in the October resolution.

To be sure, RBI's latest growth projection is still in the ballpark of 6.5-7%, which is what the 2023-24 Economic Survey projected in July this year. The current team in the finance ministry has been known to be conservative in its growth projections; they are a critical premise behind budgetary calculations. This means RBFs

oenina ouageauy accusations. Into theans tost s' downgrading of growth projections should not have any adverse fiscal implications. This is good news. To be sure, not everything is hunky-dory on the macroeconomic front. While there are the usual upsides such as prospect of revival in rural demand thanks to a good cropping season, there are enough indications that the roots of the current slowdown are to be found in a demand-side problem—a legacy of the post-pandemic recovery. It is not without reason that the post-pandemic recovery. It is not without reason that the chief economic advisor, while speaking in an Assocham event on Thursday, had to reprimand corporates about using recently earned profits to deleverage rather than passing the gains to employees in better salaries, which would have supported aggregate demand. It is a wealeness in the latter which has kept a sustained recovery in private investment cycle an elusive goal. Can economic policy do anything else to break this videous exists a part from unity measure control to change.

vicious cycle apart from urging private capital to change the class distribution of the value it creates? Fiscal policy would like monetary policy to take on the baton now. The former has already entered

consolidation mode and it must continue to do so to align deficit and debt levels to stated goals. Given the fact that 2025 is a low-risk year with only two state elections (Delhi and Bihar), even the political incentives for a fiscal splurge would be pretty low. Monetary policy, at the moment, seems to be more committed to making sure that inflation aligns with the 4% target on a durable basis. RBI has made it more than clear that irrespective of whether inflation is inching up because of just potatoes and onions or a general overheating in the larger economy, it will focus only on the headline.

Right now, it is the former which is driving inflation. To be fair to RBI, it is only doing what it has been asked to do under India's inflation targeting framework which treats benchmark inflation as the target. It is up to the government, not RBI, to tweak this mandate. While the central bank could begin reducing rates if

while the central counts could organ reducing rates in prices soften by February, nothing is a given. There are already reports of potato crop yields being adversely affected because of the unusually warm early winter. Is there a larger takeaway? There is no crisis in the ladian economy at the moment. Both fiscal and monetary policy can afford to be hawkish in their cyclical outlook. But there must be a rethink on reinventing the structural drivers of growth for the Indian economy.

# Left-Right tango leaves France in governance limbo

The political crisis in Paris could not have come at a more inopportune moment for the country and Europe

The president propose of the French President. Emmanuel Macron, took a huge gamble in calling for snap parliamentary polis in July this year. That act of political folly has undeashed a train of events which so were nearly beyond his country. The superment only is that it is to precede the total propose of the propose



Motival uses (see present and call for fresh president) pressure to resign and call for fresh presidential elections. His preferred option, therefore, will be to hang on somehow, even with a technical government, till, bly next year, when he can again call for legislative elections. Why is the budget such a long deal in France? Why is the budget such as long deal in France? Why is the budget such as degree of entitlement and expectation from the government that it unparalleled in Europe. They get generous pensions, retire earlier than most others in Europe and are entitled to an annual

PRESIDENT MACRON FINDS PRISIDENT MACRON FINDS HIMSELF IN A SOUP, HE HAS RULED OUT RESIGNING, SAYING HE WAS VOTED IN BY THE FRENCH TILL 2027. THE MOST PROBABLE THING HE WILL DO, THEREFORE, IS TO FIND A REPLACEMENT FOR MICHEL BARNIER

secution which is the envy of all. Above all, they expect the government of the day to reain in inflation, keep unemployment in check and provide free health care and education. To say this is a tall order for any government in the world today would be an understatement. In terms of geopolitics, the political crisis in France could not have come at a worse time. For one thing, it comes close on the heets of the crisis in Germany France and Germany are really the focomotive of the EU and the fact that they are both in a state of crisis does not bade well. This comes at a time when the conflict in Ularian he dated to the conflict in Ularian he dated to the conflict in Ularian is defeated posted. There is the complete in Ularian dated to the conflict in Ularian dated to the conflict in Ularian are successful to the conflict in Ularian as a constant of the conflict of the conflict as seen at a crucial juncture for the goloal order.

France has a reputation for being ungoverning.

the global order. France has a reputation for being ungovernable. French politicians seem to be doing everything they can to ensure that their country lives up to that reputation.

## Case for a quiet, well-lit, free space to read, reflect

be Khiril branch of Delhi's Community
Library Project is filled with books for
people of all ages, provides computers
with internet for those who lack access
at home, offers story time and literacy programmes for children, and offers eveningform of the children and offers eveninghour operations to working people
who need a quiet place to read and
work when homes are loud and
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crowded. Libra many public libraries
in the United States (US), Khifid also
responds to material needs being
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arveitment in the geopie of yie governments we elect.

All this good work is underpinned by a singular structural commitment — the library is free. It is free to size and free to join, flook borowing is recomputer use in the six of the six of

When libraries are impossible to access due to distance or discipate, only the people who live served. In each case, a public good — the library — is privatived, limiting its use only to those who can afford it.

When we call a library public, we mean that the library belongs to the people, all of the people. If it is to belong to all of the people, and of the people, all of the people, all of the people, all of the people is all of the people, a



cost is an exclusionary barrier:

app for library service, some say that they will take greater care of the books they borrow. Such an argument imagines that monetary exchange is what produces a sense of commitment to us and each other, when it is the opposite that is true. We value and care for what belongs to us, what we understand to be our own. Our children receive our best attention not because of what we pay for their food and who we are. The public library belongs to those who are invited and welcomed through their door. It such libraries are to be valued by everyone, they must be open to everyone. This requires abolishing exclusionary measures, including fees for service.

Since the late 19th century, libraries in the US have enjoyed broad support for their public mission. Very leve charge fees for service, and the vast majority work every day to expand

their offerings to the public. In New Lebanou, New Hampshire, a library circulates garden beds each growing session and a seed library that ensures public access to food and flowers. In Donnelly, Idaho, a library circulates a cot-ton candy machine — an example of decom-modification, the making public of a com-rounly private good — so that every child in dits community that laces ever-deepening this community that public of a com-tist community that public of a com-tist community that public of a com-rounly that public of a com-tist community that public or the community of the com-tistion of the com-tistion of the com-lete of the community of the com-tistion o

for people returning from incarceration, pro-viding free access not just to food but no fel-lowship.

But, as Angela Davis, the great American activit and author, reminds us, freedom is a constant straight of the control of the con-trol of the control of the control of the con-trol of the control of the control of the con-trol of the control of the control of the con-trol of the control of the control of the con-trol of the control of the control of the con-trol of the control of the control of the con-trol of the control of the control of the con-trol of the control of the control of the con-trol of the control of the control of the con-trol of the control of the control of the con-trol of the control of the con-trol of the control of the control of the con-trol of the control of the control of the con-trol of the control of the control of the con-trol of the control of the control of the con-trol of the control of the control of the con-trol of the control of the control of the con-trol of the control of the control of the con-trol of the control of the control of the con-trol of the control of the control of the con-trol of the control of the control of the con-trol of the control of the control of the con-trol of the control of the control of the con-trol of the control of the control of the con-trol of the control of the control of the con-trol of the control of the control of the con-trol of the control of the control of the con-trol of the con-trol of the control of the con-trol of the

[ ANOTHER DAY ] Namita Bhandare



# The misguided debate over declining fertility

in his concern over declining fertillity and prescription for women to have more children—at host three please—Rash—irps Swayamewsk Sangh (1855) child holom Bhagwat Joins the chief ministers—(CM) of Andhra Pradech and Tamil Nadu.

If Bhagwat's stated apprehension is the falling away of languages and culture with dwinding populations, the CMs know a smaller population could impact both budgetary allocations and parliamentary representation.

estation.

The angst might seem premature in the

world's most populous ration of 1.4 billion people. Yet, around the world, from South Korea, which has the world's lowest fertility rate at 0.78; to the European Union, where the number of births in the 27 member the number of births in the 27 member States has fallen to its lowest since comparable data was first collected in 1961, alarm belds are ringing. Women are simply not having enough children. About a year gap, I speks to women who had chosen to be what they called child-free? Some told me the what they called child-free? Some told me the what they called the states of the sta

balsy? All over the world but much more so in India, the division of responsibilities between parents is logisded, looding to between parents is logisded, looding to economists call a "motherhood pensily" that leads women to drup out of paid word. Other womens spoke about the cost of Ilving where raising even one child was a serious consideration. And still others lamened about the state of politics, global affairs, and, even, the climate crisis. Whis I fair to bring a child into such a world?

Urban women, says Amrita Nandy, suther of Motherhood and Cholete, are typically locosing to have fewer children, or none at all. These women are discovering non-traditional deaso of fullifilment. Children and family are not all that they derive happiness from:

from."
There is a positive correlation between lower fertility and education, economic and political participation, and better health occurses. Those who've witnessed generational struggle, seen their grandmothers and mother fight for education, the right ho work, to have a greater say in households, might not want to give up their hard-sement freedoms. We're nearly at 2025 but women's fertility

continues to be a preserve of patriarchy with make politicians determining policies to either curb it or spur it. China is now pushing the message for women to have more bables. Other countries are using a variety of bair from tax breaks (France) to subsidisted housing deposits (Singapore).

I understand the auxiety about the economic impact of devioding numbers. But had cross cannot be borne by women above. There is also the niggling suspicion that advice to have more claiders sistens from an impatise to control the bodies of women. If the concern was deeply left, rather than dictating to women on how many kids the control was more faintful conversation would have been on how the State plans to day to changing demographics.— Tassing retirement age for instance, albocating retirement age for instance, albocating retirement age for instance.

changing policy.

A good place to start? Equal paternity

#### I EDITOR'S PICK I

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

#### POLITICAL BRINKMANSHIP IN SEOUL

South Kernia memalices have began impreshment proceedings against President Yoon Saik Yeol after voting to reside his mattal also order. Impossibilities the individual members of the proceedings of the Parliament to vote for the motion before the country's Constitutional Court decides. South Korean deciators often reserved to mantal law, before democracy emerged in the country in 1897. This week, we recommend Said Korean & Democracy in Crisis. The books agrees South Korean democracy entered a state of regression in the past decide with the polarisation of society. In this new an apparaise of popular centred a state of regression in the past decide with the polarisation of society. In this new an apparaise of polarise in the polarisation of society. In this new an apparaise of polarise in the causiness symptoms of democratic decine—demonstration of political opposite in croation of democratic reasons, and the whitting away of palicical independence. It traces the sources of illiberation and examines how polarisation is plagaing the purp system. The volume shows how civil society and the courts have become politicistics and tooks at the roles of mequality, education, and social media in the democratic decline.



## The Tribune

ESTABLISHED IN 1881

## Just not sport

Use of stadia for concerts, rallies deplorable

in the national capital for non-sports events is a bad advertisement for a country that aspires a bad advertisement for a country that aspires to host the Olympic Games in 2036. The Sports Authority of India's (SAI) reply to an RT1 query has revealed that only 11 of the 131 events held at Jawahadal Nehru Stadium this year were related to sports; the rest included concerts and programmers organised by government organisations, NGOs and political parties. India Gandhi International Stadium hosted 48 events, of which but the prescription of the control.

India Gandhi Infernational Stadium hosted 48 events, of which just five pertained to sports.

The sorry state of affairs was glaringly highlighted when popular singer-actor Diljit Dosanjh's concert, held at John Jacobs and broken athletics equipment. The mess prompted Beant Singh, a Delhi-based runner, to went his anger on social media. Slamming the organisers for maki-ing the stading in processible for training for superal days. ing the stadium inaccessible for training for several days, he lamented the lack of respect and support for sportsper-sons in the country. His outburst has resonated with fellow players, but it seems to have left the authorities unmoved.

The SAI, set up 40 years ago with the objectives of pro-moting sports and achieving sporting excellence at the national and international levels, urgently needs to get its priorities right. Last year, in its performance audit report, the Comptroller & Auditor General of India had taken the premier sports body to task for focusing more on revenue generation and renting out stadiums for non-sports func-tions. The bitter truth is that India's consistent rise on the global geopolitical stage is in stark contrast to its laggard status in international sports. The below-par performance in this year's Olympics has shown that the nation has a very long way to go before it can become a sporting pow erhouse. The least that can be done is to ensure that sta-dia are not misused for commercial purposes.

## Reviving Aravallis

HE Aravalli Green Wall Project, an eco restoration initiative by the Union Environ-ment Ministry, promises to be a turning point in combating land degradation and desertification. Covering over 1.1 million hectares across Haryana, Rajasthan, Gajarat and Delhi, this 1,400 lcm-longand-8-lcm-wide green cerridor aims to restore the Aravalli hills' ecological vitality. Once a thriving ecosys-Arawali halis ecological vitality. Once a thriving ecosys-tem of hills, forests, fauna, equifers and natural drainage, the Arawallis now bear the unfortunate distinction of being the country's most degraded forest range. Over 30 hillocks have already vanished, particularly in Haryana's Gurugam. Pairidabad, Mewat, Mahendragarh and Rewari districts. Relentless urban expansion has replaced vertlant landscapes with orocrete jungles, disrupting the ecological balance. Within decades, habitats thriving for rullennia exercited to the barb of ordination. The cert millennia now teeter on the brink of extinction. The cost of this development has been immense, with the loss of indigenous species, widespread deforestation and drying up of critical groundwater recharge zones.

Inspired by Saudi Arabia's green initiatives, the Green Wall Project aims to reverse this destruction. Indigenous species and community engagement lie at its core. Harvana's proactive measures, such as reviving 75 water bodies and restoring 35,000 hectares of degraded land, exemplify the potential of collaborative efforts among states to tackle this environmental crisis. The World Bank is supporting the Aravalli project with funding for initiatives like

afforestation, water conservation and pollution control.

However, the project's success depends on enforcing conservation laws to prevent illegal mining and encroachments. Preserving legal safeguards, such as the Punjab Land Preservation Act, is crucial. The states must tran-scend political boundaries to protect these shared ecolog-cal treasures. The Green Wall Project is a fight to reclaim the Aravallis and reverse decades of destruction. With robust public private partnerships and community involvement, the initiative offers hope to revive these ancient hills.

ON THIS DAY...100 YEARS AGO

## The Tribune.

LA HORE, SUNDAY, DECEMBER 7, 1924

Reforms and the Lee report

Reforms and the Lee report

AT the time of writing, we do not have before us the official communication concerning the decision of His Majesty's Government on the Lee report, which was to be issued on Friday evening. But judging from the semi-official statements that have appeared on this subject in the English Press, and not forgetting what the present British Government might be expected to do in this matter, it is easy to anticipate that decision. It is practically certain that the Bill which is about to be introduced in Parliament will embody provisions to give effect to all the principal recommendations of the Lee Commission. The fact that many of those recommendations have been strongly and unequivocally condemned both in the Indian Press and the Legislative Assembly cannot possibly carry any weight with a government composed of Conservatives, reactionaries and die-hards. To all these elements in British politics, the contentment of the Services in India and the instruments of their policy have always been far more important than the contentment of the people themselves, and the present is essentially a matter in which the two are in conflict. We are not, indeed, sure, as we have said already, that even the Labour Government would have been substantially more responsive to Indian opinion in such a matter, though it is quite probable that in some minor details it would have made a show of deferring to Indian opinion as expressed in the Assembly. The present government can easily dispense with such a pretence. ily dispense with such a pretence

# Playing fast & loose with secularism

A communal frenzy that feeds off each other is alive and well in parts of India and Bangladesh



office consultations one second late in coming. Between Dhaka's arrest of the ISKOON-related Hindu monk, Chimnoy Krishna Das, on trumped-up sedition charges and Ultar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanshi's absurf cremarks on the "ame DNA" that connects the Mughal king Babur's destruction of temples in Ayodhya, Sambhal and today's Bangladesh, it's fair to say that a communal feeding frenzy that feeds off each other is alive and well in parts of both alive and well in parts of both India and Bangladesh.

India and Bangladesh.
Adityanath's remaints are handly unique. The RSS recently called on the "government of Bharat" to prevent atrocities on Hindus and other minorities in Bangladesh, while BIP leades in West Bengal Suvendu Adhikan has threatened a tude embargoi f Muhammad Yunus "government depend at tude with a tractice for the doesn't dee a tracker in Hindus. doesn't stop attacking Hindus

doesn't stop attacking Hindus.
Nor is Adityanath the first big
BJP leader to speak his mind.
Back in 2018, then BJP president and current Home Minister
Amit Shah described
Bangladeshi migrants into India
as "termites" — he used the Hindi word "demak" — and promdi word "demak" — and promdi word "deemak" - and prom-ised that each of them would be ised that each of them would be struck off the electoral rolls. It is another matter that 43 per cent of "foreigners" in Assam between 1971 and 2014 (20613/47,928 people), the Assam Government conceded this August, are Hindus. Shah's undiplomatic remarks

were probably made with the full force of foresight and are testimo-

Doing one's bit for

a noble cause

N recent decades, our society has become increasingly

N recent decades, our society has become increasingly materialistic. Ethical and moral values are on the decline. There is a mad race to accumulate money and possesions. A few years ago, I read a news report about a 'dying' mission hospital in Ferozepuz I recalled an incident that happened in my home town Jaitu (Bridkot district) when I was about nine years old. I rang up my Mumba-based elder brother to know the details. He told me that our mother had fallen ill at home and needed urgent attention. No medical help was available in the town at that time. Her condition was no critical that was hed no time to wait for a blocour!

help was available in the town at that time. Her condition was so critical that we had no time to wait for a bhoond, a three-wheeler that used to ply between the town and nearly places. So, she was carried in a handcart to the railway station, from where she was taken to the Ferozepur hospital. There, she was operated upon and was cured. It disturbed me that an institution that had saved my mother's life was on its deathbed. I wrote a letter to the hospital authorities, offering my assistance. In his reply, the medical superintendent said he and his wife had joined the hospital 26 years ago. The maintenance expenses and staff salaries had increased over the years. The hospital was surviving on the money paid by patients as OPD fee and indoor treatment charges.

I decided to visit the hospital. The opportunity arrived when I wentto Jaitu to attend a condolence ceremony. From there, I travelled to Ferozepur, which is about 60 Im away, and paid homage to Shaheed Bhagat Singh, Raiguru and Sukhdev at the Hussainiwala martyrs' memorial. The next morning, I met the doctors at the hospital and took stock of the situation. The 120-bedded hospital, spread over 11 acres.

Sukndev at the Hussainwaia martyrs memorial. The next morning, I met the doctors at the hospital and took stock of the situation. The 120-bedded hospital, spread over 11 acres, had an operation theatre, ICU, laboratory, X-ray and ultrasound machines and other facilities.

Things went from bad to worse after the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic. Moreover, the hospital was allowed to spend only 20 per cent of the money received from patients having Ayushman cards. Doctors told me that superspecialists and state-of-the-art equipment were required in every department of the institution. Amid the scarcity of funds, they were pinning their hopes on big donations. I promised tod only bif for giving the hospital a new lease of file. Recently, the medical superintendent provided a list of machines and other items that were needed urgently. I made the purchase and despatched the goods by courier.

It has given me great satisfaction to contribute to a noble cause. Money is not an issue for me since I am getting a handsome pension. Our society would regain its humane essence if more and more well-off people come forward to bail out those institutions which helped them become successful and prosperous.

become successful and prosperous.



ny to the unhealthy mixing of Hin-dutva politics with a strategic insensitivity, especially since India's all-important neighbourhood is in question. At the time, th Ministry of External Affairs held its peace, but it took a lot of effort

its pence, but it took a lot of effort to assuage then Bangladeshi Prime Minister Shekh Hasina that she shouldn't take the politican's remarks personally.

At the time, PM Modi had been fally involved in revamping India's relations with its eastern neighbour—Shah's comments constituted a great setback, Modi well understood that Bangladesh is certainly far too important a country to take for important a country to take for intry to take for

important a country to take for granted at any time. That's why Misri's visit to Dha-ka is so important. Ever since Hasina fled to Delhi in early August, bilateral ties have plum meted. The two countries have moted. The two countries have been at loggerheads over most things, including why the so-called revolution was allowed to reach a crescende of violence, which ended in Hasina's diamat-ic flight to safety. Drauka believes that India delberately refuses to understand Hasina's starring role in the downwhiten of Brandaskie. in the degradation of Bangladesh, while Delhi for the life of itself can

When Adityanath and Shah are seen as spokespersons of the ruling party, in this case by Bangladesh, the fallout escalates and often acquires a life of its own.

not comprehend why Bangladesh wants to wilfully erase today the memory of icons like Mujibur. Rahman and dump it in the igno-minious dustkin of history. The problem, of course, is far more confounded When Adityanath and Shah are seen as spokespressors of the nilm party.

spokespersons of the ruling party, in this case by Bangladesh, and when Delhi refuses to either pubwhen bein refuses to ettner pul-licly censure them or privately call upon them to refrain from making the statements they do, the fallout escalates and snowballs and often acquires a life of its own. Worse, when Indian politicians accuse Bangladeshi politicians of

doing what they often do at home for example, Adityanath's

"bulldozer justice" has often meant that houses owned by Mus-lims have been disproportionately demolished, as compared to hous-es owned by Hindus — or when Indian politicians openly call for the so-called "return" of disputed the so-caled "return" of disputed sites of worship, fore gin Viannasi and Mathum, even if it violates the Places of Worship Act, 1991, they sanction the communal pol-itics in neighbouring countries like Bangladesh.

The difference between the Indian secular state and the rest

Indian secular state and the rest of the neighbourhood has been plain to see for decades — in fact, the neighbourhood has often held the neighbourhood has often held up India's democratic sensibility as a role model. It is nobody's case that Indians of all political colours never wreaked vengeance on their minorities, or that justice was denied to these minorities, was denied to these minorities, often for long periods of time— both the Conguess and the BIP have been guilty of perpetrating riots. The difference is that India's judiciary more often than not spoke turth to power Democ-ncy was more than just a word. Even when compromises were finely wrought, as in the Barn Jan-melboroni, discrete which can

mabhoomi dispute which ended with a mediated Supreme Court

werdictin 2019—inwhisch the Mus-lim side gave up the claim to the sanctum sanctorum real estate on which the Ram temple had once been destroyed in 1529 and the Babin Masjid built by a lieutenart of Babur — it was hoped that the Hindu side wouldn't thump its cheat and flaunt its victory. That hasn't quite happened, of course. Instead of being satisfied with wrestling the Ram temple back, aggressive Hindu litigants have targeted more and more

have targeted more and more sites, from the Gyanvapi mosque to the Krishna Janmabmosque to the Krishna Janmab-hoomi to the Sambhal mosque. It's as if they are thirsting to wreak vengeance on past injus-tice, no matter they have no first-person experience of the injus-tion to continue.

tice in question.

Imagine how the playbook plays out in Bangladesh, already panys out in barganean, areasy seething with anger over the despotic Hasina fleeing to India. The Bangladeshi media rejects the charge that the Yanus gov-erment is not targeting minori-ties at home, but it is clear that the ISKCON monk is a lightning od He has become a fall sux. B. rod. He has become a fall guy. It will be easy to sacrifice him

will be easy to sacrifice him. Imagine, too, what the BJP's politics of Hindutva does to the BJP's own foreign policy — it undermines India, of course, but it also undermines Modi, who it is bird term certainly wants to leave a mark, even a legacy. The irony is that Modi has creditably ball his own elsewhere. He has held India steady eagainst Joe Biden's sarctions

where. He has held India steady against Joe Biden's sanctions against Russia, he is preparing to deal with Trump, he has agreed to swallow his pride vis-à-vis China and he has reached out even to the Taliban in an effort to stabilise the neighbourhood. And then thore is Foundedsh

And then there is Bangladesh a country that India helped midwife back in 1971 and assistmidwife back in 1971 and assist-ed with giving it an identity of its own. It would be truly tragic if India were to lose Bangladesh today because some short-sight-ed Indians are intent on playing fast and loose with one of the greatest ideas of our times -idea called secularism.

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

Bigotry is the disease of ignorance, of morbid minds. - Thomas Jefferson

#### LETTERS TO THE EDITOR Choose less water-intensive crops

Choose less water-intensive crops Apropos of 'Groundwater crisis'; Punjab and Haryana are facing a looming water crisis due to decades of over-extraction for irrigation, ineficient water management and a lack of awareness about sustainable panctices. The consequences of ignoring this crisis are diredepletion of aquifers, reduced agricultuml output and a potential collapse of rural livelihoods. Steps such as encouraging farmers to adopt less water-intensive crops, promoting micro-irrigation techniques and incentivising rainwater harvesting systems must be undertaken. Governments must ensure stricter implementation of groundwater regulations.

SANAY CHOPRA, MOHALI

Create awareness among masses

Create awareness among masses
Apropos of 'Groundwater crisis', water depletion has reached alamning proportions due to
scanty rainfall, sustained groundwater pumping to meet the growing population's needs,
urbanisation, pollution, destruction of vegetation and deforestation. From time to time,
experts have been giving suggestions to the
governments to check the callous misuse of
groundwater in agricultural, industrial and
domestic sectors, but to no avail. Micro-drigation, diversification of farming, curbing
wastage of water for industrial and domestic
use and spreading public awareness about
judicious harvesting and conservation of this
precious natural resource are a must to avoid precious natural resource are a must to avoid the adverse effects of the depletion of groundwater on the environment and the people.

DS KANG, HOSHIAR PUR

#### Choose rainwater harvesting

Refer to 'Groundwater risis', the depletion in the groundwater levels is a matter of concern for agriculturalists amid over-extraction for paddy farming. Sustainable agriculture practices like drip irrigation, crop rotation and agroforestry can lead to water-efficient practice. Merconcern officient intention techniques of the control agroforestry can lead to water-efficient prac-tices. Moreover, efficient irrigation technolo-gies, using supplemental irrigation through cunals is imperative for groundwater conser-vation. To curb overexploitation, a rational power supply scheme can be fruitful. Further-more, rainwater harvesting should be imple-mented to prevent water loss.

ARPITA AMBUG CHANDIGARH

ARPITA ANAND, CHANDIGARH

#### BJP reoriented its strategy

BJP reoriented its strategy
With reference to BJP all the way; the saffron party's emphatic win in Maharashtra
indicates that it's a force to reckon with. It
also shows that the Modi-Shah duo's magiie is going from strength to strength. The
BJP did not do very well in the Lok Sabha
elections. However, it was quick to learn
lessons, reoriented its electoral strategy
and made targeted endeavours to record
resounding wins in state elections. The
committed cadres of the RSS also played a
crucial role in the BJP's triumphs. The win
in Maharashtra bolds great significance for
the party that not only has a strategic edge
over its opponents but also the knack to
capitalise on their weaknesses. capitalise on their weaknesses.

RAVI SHARMA, DHARIWAL

#### New CM an asset to the party

New LW an asset to the party Refer to The importance of being Fad-navis' (Trysts and Turns); the picture show-ing Devendra Fadnavis in the driver's seat says it all. What he deserved has been restored to him. More than Eknath Shinde restored to him. More than Eknath Shinde realising the truth about his depleted bar-gaining power, it was the humility and heft of Fadhavis that persuaded the former to be the new CM's deputy for the good of the rul-ing coalition and Maharashtra. But he must be wary of the undercurrents as unlike him, former CMs have seldom reconciled to a junior role. In any case, the BJP can gainful-ly invest in juni in the long run. ly invest in him in the long run.

LALIT BHARADWAJ, PANCHKULA

#### Focus diverted from real issues

Focus diverted from real issues
Apropas of "Publics behind 'redress' of wagf
property rows," the resolution of waqf property disputes, often entangled with religious
and cultural sensitivities, has become a focal
point in the contemporary political discourse.
Claims about temples beneath historic
mosques and shrines are not new but have
gained momentum in recent years. Historically, India has been home to diversie cultures
and religions, where shared spaces evolved
through centuries of coesistence. This politicisation diverts focus from the actual issues of
preserving heritage and upholding legal and
constitutional principles.

MAHIMA KWATRA, DELHI

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

#### WORDLY WISE

EVEN THOUGH A NUMBER OF PEOPLE HAVE TRIED, NO ONE HAS YET FOUND A WAY TO

DRINK FOR A LIVING, - JEAN KERR

## The Indian EXPRESS

RAMNATH GOENKA

BECAUSE THE TRUTH INVOLVES US ALL

## INFLATION AT CENTRE

RBI resists pressure to lower interest rates. But expectations of cut early next year gather momentum

'N THE RUN-UP to the December meeting of the monetary policy committee, there was a debate over whether the sharp deceleration in growth should prompt a cut in interest rates, even as inflation remained above the upper threshold of the RBI's inflation targeting framework. The MPC, however, continued to attach primacy to inflation concerns. Resisting pressure from the government and the clambur for lower rates from sections of the market, it maintained the status quo, though two external members on the committee voted for a cut. The repo rate stands at 6.5 per cent. Alongside, the MPC chose to continue with its neutral policy stance. As RBIG Governor Shaktikanta Das reiterated, "price stability is essential for sustained growth."

The committee's decision to keep interest rates unchanged rests on its view that even as the economy slowed down in the second quarter, the outlook for growth is "resilient". That even as GDP growth declined to a multi-quarter low of 5.4 per cent, against the RBI's projection of 7 per cent, the momentum has picked up in the second half of the year, Das noted that high-frequency indicators indicate that the economic momentum has "recovered, aided by strong festive demand and pick up in rural activities". In other words, the central bank expects the slowdown to be transitory — it has projected GDP growth to bounce back to 6.8 per cent in the third quarter, and to 7.2 per cent in the fourth quarter. The central bank has, however, announced a cut in the cash reserve ratio which would increase the lendable resources of the banking system, supporting growth. On inflation, the RBI relendable resources of the banking system, supporting growth. On inflation, the RBI re-mains cautious, R expects food price pressures to continue in the third quarter, to ease only towards the end of the year. The moderation is expected to be "backed by seasonal correc-tion in vegetable prices, kharif harvest arrivals, likely good rabi output and adequate cereal buffer stocks". Retail inflation has now been pegged at 5.7 per cent in the third quarter, falling to 4.5 per cent in the fourth quarter. The central bank has now projected alignment with the 4 per cent target in the second quarter of the next financial year. But in an increasingly uncertain global environment, policy choices are not straight-forward. The election of Donald Trump, and the consequent threat of tariffs, have raised capability. Colon markers are now awaytine. Tumps first podicy stems after its insurers.

volatility. Global markets are now awaiting Trump's first policy steps after his inauguration on January 20 next year. On the domestic front, the Union budget will be tabled in Parliament on February 1, providing clarity on the stance of fiscal policy. The monetary policy committee is scheduled to meet a few days thereafter. By then, uncertainty over the trajectory of food prices should have also dissipated. If inflation trends in line with the central bank's expectations, it could then open the door to policy easing,

#### The Rabi warning

Likelihood of above-normal temperatures in winter casts onus on government. It must act through tariff policy

ABI (WINTER-SPRING) CROPS, especially wheat, have been vulnerable in recent times to mercury spikes in March, just when they are in the stage of final grain formation and filling. The last two years, however, have seen temperatures ruling well above average in October and November, during the time of sowing itself. Average minimum and mean temperatures over the country this October were the highest ever for the month, as per the records of the India Meteorological Department. November, too, registered the second and third highest maximum and mean temperatures respectively. All this has impacted overall rail plantings, which were lag-ging behind till mid-November. There has been a recovery since, with the winter finally setting in. But that's unlikely to help mustard or potato, whose sowing window shuts by

setting in. But that's unlikely to help mustard or potato, whose sowing window shuts by the first fortinght of November.

This raises concerns over the production of rabi crops, which require relatively low temperatures for proper germination and vegetative growth. While delayed sowing should-n't affect yields in wheat and most other crops (barring the two mentioned earlier), that is, nevertheless, conditional upon an extended winter and no "ides of March" heatwave causing premature ripening. The hope here is from a La Niña, which most global weather models are forecasting to develop by this month-end to persist through January-March. La Niña events usually bring copious rains and colder-than-normal winters to India. The IMD, on its part, is warning of above-normal minimum as well as maximum temperatures during the upcoming winter season (December-February) "over most parts of the country". It adds up to an uncertain picture. This was unlike till a couple of months ago, when

country. It adds up to an uncertain picture. This was unlike till a couple of months ago, when a bumper rabi on top of a good kharif harvest seemed likely — thanles to surplus monsoon rains that helped fill up major dam reservoirs and recharge groundwater aquifers. The uncertainty, with implications for already elevated retail food inflation (10.5 per cent year-on-year in October), is probably a major reason for the Reserve Bank of India's monetary policy committee deciding not to cut interest rates in its Friday meeting. There's little that the central bank can do, though, about food prices. The onus for supply man-agement in this case, if any, lies on the government. It should not lose time in abolishing the 40 per cent in proper duty on wheat and probably balasing the same one cut each and so seemed. the 40 per cent import duty on wheat and probably halving the same on crude palm, soy abean and sunflower oil (from the current 20 per cent). Vegetable inflation may ease with the normal winter season arrivals, but such self-correction cannot be expected in cere-als, edible oils and pulses. The government can and must act through tariff policy.

## TOAST TO SAKE

The Japanese alcohol's elevation to Unesco's intangible heritage list is an opportunity for its domestic revival

HERE IS A Japanese proverb that roughly translates to "Parents' words and chilled sake make an impression later." The first might indeed hold true but not so much the second, For a drink that's been around since the eighth cennot so much the second, For a drink that's been around since the eighth cen-tury and speaks for Japan's historical and cultural identity — it even found a brief mention in the third-century Chinese text, The Book of Wei, as the favoured funer-ary drink of the Japanese people — sake's celebrity-hood needs little iteration. Now, with Unesco putting it on its list of the "intangible cultural heritage of humanity", alongside Brazilian white cheese, Caribbean cassava bread and Palestinian olive oil soap, nihonshu or Japanese alcohol's moment of globalisation seems to have arrived. Unlike the Serbian Bjirovoica — plum brandy — or the Georgian qwevri, recent additions to the intangible heritane list for which the subsequent hose to commerce has been vital

to the intangible heritage list for which the subsequent boost to commerce has been vital, sake has followed a trajectory of its own. Its increasing popularity abroad has meant negotiating a precarious balance between maintaining authenticity and catering to a global palate. In Japan, however, the influx of international spirits, especially wine, has led to a de-

incline in sale consumption. The Unescohonour comes as an opportunity for domestic revival.

As food continues to traverse geographical boundaries, it also points to the importance of safeguarding cultural traditions in a world intent on homogenising. Like washoku, the traditional Japanese cuisine that made it to the Unesco list in 2013, the preparation of sake, too, speaks of Japan's deep connection with nature and craftsmanship. An intricate process involving rice, water, yeast, and koji mould, there was a time when sake was made sokely by women. Its centrality in Japanese rituals, festivals and celebrations meant that it soon became an industry involving the community. In a country where loneliness is an epidemic and where "hikkomori" or voluntary isolation have become a practice, anything that brings the community together, either to brew sake or to raise a toast, deserves a shout-out.

# Holding steady

High inflation, slowing growth weighed on MPC. Healthy farm output could drive a rate cut in February

Vegetable prices are likely to

correct sharply when the rabi, or winter, crop reaches

the market. Non-food

inflation is expected to remain benign amid stable non-food commodity

prices. All this could spur the MPC to begin cutting

rates during its review meeting in February.

Dharmakirti Joshi and Pankhuri Tandon

THE MONETARY POLICY Committee's (MPC) decision to leave the repo rate unchanged would have been a tough one. It is difficult to choose between rising inflation and a sudden slowdown in economic growth. Though the MPC did lower the cash reserve ratio (CRR) this time, we expect it to go further and take the knile to the repo rate during its next policy review meeting in February.

For 21 months now, the MPC has kept rates unchanged. It continues to wait for a durable easing in the Consumer Price Index (CPI)—based inflation. The gauge has been under pressure from food prices. Over the past three months, headline CPI inflation has been on the ascent, breaching the upper limit of the MPC's 4-6 per cent tolerance band in October.

of the MPC's 4-6 per cent tolerance band in October.

To complicate matters, India's growth is stackening, For July-September 2024, the country registered a GDP growth of 5.4 per cent, the slowest in seven quarters. While the second half should see a pick-up, the sharp fall in the second quarter has persuaded the RBI to revise its GDP growth forecast downward to 6.6 per cent for the current fiscal year from 7.2 per cent. Last fiscal, the MPC could afford to focus on inflation because GDP growth was a solid 8.2 per cent. But the recent slowing has increased the tradeoff with inflation. The CRR cut is an incremental step to support growth as it boosts systemic legicidity. Conductive conditions in the financial markets should support economic growth.

tions in the financial markets should sup-port economic growth. Monetary policies of major economies have become less restrictive in recent times. The US Fed and the European Central Bank ECB have cut 75 basis points (bps) each in 2024. But the pace of rate action has been slower than expected as tarning inflation is proving to be tough for them as well. The Fed's proving to be toggine it than a wear, in recess path to further rate cuts is unclear because in-coming President Donald Trump has spoken about imposing higher tariffs, which is likely to add to inflationary pressure. S&P Global sees fewer rate cuts by the Fed in 2025 compared to what it expected three months ago. While most emerging market central

banks are likely to cut rates in 2025, they would monitor the impact of policy changes in the US on their growth and financial markets. Put another way, the global environment is conducive to rate cuts, but their pace would be slower.

The MPC's cautious stance stems from the trends in the domestic economy, particularly as food prices remain stubbornly high. Despite a good monsoon, retail food inflation has averaged 8.3 per cent this fiscal through Cotober. That is a good 170 basis points (1pps) higher on-year.

True, retail inflation barring food has been much lower — at 25 per cent in April-October, a good 150 bps lower on-year.

True, retail inflation barring food has been much lower — at 25 per cent in April-October, a good 150 bps lower on-year. But it is food prices that typically dictate the trajectory of retail inflation in India, given its significant weight in the CPI index. Food prices also have the biggest impact on the cost of living. The higher they go, the bigger is the hole in the budgets of lower-income households. We estimate effective inflation in the rural areas was 5.4 per cent for the bottom 20 per cent and 4.2 per cent for the upper 20 per cent.

Food inflation has been accelerating above 6 per cent on average for almost three years pow. This has cumulatively and materially increased the average monthly food bill of households (USII. Research estimates the monthly cost of an average vegetarian thali in October was 20 per cent higher, while the monthly cost of an average vegetarian thali in October was 20 per cent higher, while the monthly cost of an average vegetarian thali in October was 20 per cent higher, while the monthly cost of an average vegetarian thali in October was 20 per cent higher, while the monthly cost of an average vegetarian thali in October was 20 per cent higher, while the tendenthy cast of a severage for the per cent.

monthly cost of an average vegetarian thali in October was 20 per cent higher, while the cost of non-vegetarian thali is up 5 per cent. Despite coming off a bit in November, it remains high

nains high. As food items are frequently purchased, the inflation expectation of consumers is im-pacted quickly by changes in their prices. Some foods are also critical inputs for sectors Some noots are abore intentinguis or sectors such as fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG) and restaurants. So, a rise in their prices adds to the cost pressures on such businesses. Typically, they try to pass it on to consumers, adding to the overall inflation, Rising food bills have also contributed to owing consumption in the second quarter sading FMCG companies have pointed this

slowing consumption in the second quarter. Leading FMCG companies have pointed this out repeatedly.

In the past two years, private consumption has slowed as food inflation rose. While it briefly surged to 7.4 per cent in the first quarter of the last fiscal, it slowed to 6 per cent in the second quarter. The urban economy faces additional headwinds from lower credit offlake and elevated interest rates. The rural economy, on the other hand, seems bester placed as agricultural output is expected to be better than last fiscal year after another normal monsoon. 50, while the driver of demand shifts from urban to rural, food inflation continues to be the pain point.

Healthy agriculture output this year could ease food inflation in the second half. Vegetable prices could correct sharply when her abi, or wither, crop reaches the market. Non-food inflation is expected to remain benign amid stable non-food commodity prices. All this could spur the MFC to begin cutting rates during its review meeting in February. That said, the cumulative reduction has been succeeded to remain healthy agriculturing cycle would be less than the 250 basis points hilled since May 2022 as domestic growth momentum is projected to remain healthy and the global rate cut cycle will also be shallower.

Given that food prices wonk the recalibration would decrease the weightage accorded to food in the CPI basker. Fiscal policy also needs to accelerate efforts to limit the structural and climate risks of food prices on headtine inflation.

the structural and climate risks of food

prices on headline inflation. Inflation remains a concern for the Indian economy. The RBI cannot ignore this given that price stability is its main mandate. Fiscal policy mitigating supply risks can help ease food inflation durably and aid the RBI in bal-ancing inflation with growth objectives.



# Another Step Against TB

The 100-day campaign to shore up battle against disease needs broad participation

#### I P NADDA

PRIME MINISTER NARENDRA Modi gave a clarion call for the elimination of TB from the country. Under his leadership, a new model of TB care was adopted and India pioneered several innovative approaches over the last few years to bring a paradigm shift in TB prevention, diagnosis and treatment. Findings from the WHO's Global TB Report 2024 acknowledged the efficacy of the approach, it noted a 17.7 per cent decline in TB incidence in India from 2015 to 2023 — double the rate of decline observed globally. Not just that, the country diagnosed 25.1 lakh patients, marking a significant rise in treatment coverage from 59 per cent in 2015 to 85 per cent in 2023.

On December 7, inspired by the PM's vi-PRIME MINISTER NARENDRA Modi gave a

85 per cent in 2023.
On December 7, inspired by the PM's vision, India will witness yet another transformative push ints TBe limination strategy. We are launching a 100-day campaign in 347 high TB burden districts across the country to accelerate our response to fight TB. Through this initiative, we will reinforce our resolve to identify every TB patient early and proactively reach out to vulnerable populations with timely and quality treatment. In the true spirit of Jan Bhagidari, all of us elected representatives, health practitioners, civil society, corporations, and communities — must collaborate to make this campaign a grand success.
To complement expanded diagnostic efforts and to support a complete recovery of TB patients, India conceptualised and operationalised a untritional support scheme, Nikshay Poshan Yojana (NPY), Since April 2018, we have disbursed Rs 3,295 crore to 1.16 On December 7, inspired by the PM's vi-

Taking a cue from the Make in India initiative, indigenous molecular tests have been field-tested and introduced. We have been able to not only reduce the time taken for TB diagnosis at district and block levels but have drastically reduced the costs of testing and treatment. Our indigenous molecular tests have received endorsement by the WHO. These initiatives have positioned India as a true leader in global TB response.

crore beneficiaries through Direct Benefit Transfer under NPY. In what is a major reinforcement of India's commitment to TB elimination, the monthly support under the scheme has been doubled from Rs 500 to Rs 1,000 per month from November 2024.

The Pradhan Mantri TB Mukt Bharat Abhiyaan (PMTBMBA) has not only helped address the challenge of nutrition but also enhanced community mobilisation. It has united various community stakeholders creating a mass movement to increase awareness and to provide nutritional, vocational. ating a mass inovement to increase aware-ness and to provide nutritional, vocational, and psychological support to TB patients. This government-citizen symphony anchored in the spirit of Jan Bhagidari has inspired 1,75 lakh Nilsihay Mitras to provide 21 lakh flood baskets to patients across the country. Over the years, India has introduced newer drugs such as Bedaquilline and Delamanid to improve treatment success rates. Considering the challenges in treatment completion for patients with drug-resistant variants, we have allowed a new shorter reg-

completion for patients with drug-resistant variants, we have allowed a new shorter regimen, BpalM, which is more effective than the existing regimens. While we have a shorter 9-11-month regimen awailable along-side the conventional 19-20-month regimen, with the BPaLM regimen, patients will now complete treatment in just six months! We have consistently strived to ensure that advanced tools are available at the grass-roots levels to find and treat all patients at the earliest. To enable this, we introduced more efficient and accurate diagnostic tools — molecular tests. From a few hundred machines in 2014-15, we now have 8,293 molecular diagnostic tools — well as the stream of the

nostic machines available in all districts.
In fact, taking a cue from the Make in India initiative, indigenous molecular tests have been field-tested and introduced. We have been able to not only reduce the time taken for 1B diagnosis at district and block levels but have drastically reduced the costs of testing and treatment. Our indigenous molecular tests have received endorsement by the WHO. These initiatives have positioned India as a true leader in global TB response.

We must also take great pride in the fact that the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) has consistently been among the top

that the indian Council of Medical Research (CMR) has consistently been among the top public funders of TB research worldwide since 2018. We will continue making investments to quickly develop and roll out newer tools, in-cluding more efficient PoC diagnostics.

India's journey toward TB elimination is a testament to its leadership. From pioneer-ing research that has led to advanced diag-nostics and treatments, to the introduction nostics and treatments, to the introduction of universal social support provisions, India stands at the forefront of the global TB response. The need of the hour is to ensure a massive Jan Bhagidari in the identification, diagnosis, treatment and prevention of TB. The intensified 100-day campaign is another testament to our collective commitment to eliminate TB, I am confident that under the PM's leadership and with the participation of all stakeholders, we will defeat this great enemy of humanity and create a healthier future for all.

> The writer is Union Minister of Health and Family Welfare

## DECEMBER 7, 1984, FORTY YEARS AGO

#### BHOPAL AIR SAFE

EIGHT LAKH CITIZENS of Bhopal, victir EIGHT LNGH CHIZENS of Bhopal, victims of the worst disaster in the chemical history of the workd, heaved a sigh of relief when tech-nical experts announced that the air they were breathing was "absolutely safe." The an-nouncement little there was "no trace of toxic material anywhere" in the atmosphere of Bhopal was made four days after the poison-ous gas leak at a Union Carbide plant,

INDIAN TRAWLER SINKS INDIA EXPRESSED "DEEP concern" over the tets and old the sit-althand government to take greater care in dealting with what Colombo considers to be incursions. Colombo was also told not to fire on unarmed fishing boats. Sri Lankan High Commissioner Bernard Tilakaratne was told that any arrested Indian nationals should be released forthwith and due compensation should be paid.

#### VAIPAYEE ATTACKED

BHARATIYA JANATA PARTY president Atal Bihari Vajpayee was injured on the head, right arm and leg in a stone-throwing at Nandasan in the Mehsana district. According BIP's A K Patel Vainavee's car was attack

when he stopped at Nandasan to inaugurate the election office of the party. Before he could get out of the car, it was stoned.

#### PM ON FOREIGN FORCES

PRIME MINISTER RAJIV Gandhi declared that ladia would not succumb to blackmail by any foreign power. He cautioned the people against designs of foreign forces to push the country towards dictatorial rule and censured the opposition for pushing ad divisive and anti-national propaganda. Gandhi said. "Countries around us are succumbing to such economic, political and military pressures" and that they "must present dictatorish in India." oust prevent dict:



# The Statesman

Incorporating and directly descended from THE FREND OF INDIA - Founded 1818

#### **Bitcoin's Moment**

Bitcoin's climb past the \$100,000 mark is a watershed moment in the evolution of crypto-currencies, symbolising their growing acceptance as a legitimate asset class. What was once dismissed as an experiment by a small community of technologists has now captured the attention of institutional investors, governments, and mainstream finance. Yet, while this achievement deserves recognition, it also raises critical questions about the future of nition, it also raises critical questions about the future of digital currencies and the challenges they face. The unprecedented surge in Bitcoin's value is driven by a confluence of factors. Institutional adoption has been pivotal, with major players pouring billions into the crypto-currency market. The approval of Bitcoin exchange-traded funds has made it easier for investors to gain exposure to digital assets, signalling a shift towards the normalisation of crypto-currencies. Moreover, the emergence of political support, including from influential policymakers and leaders, has provided a regulatory tailwind, fostering optimism about a more defined and supportive framework for crypto markets. However, Bitcoin's journey to six-figure valuations is not without its detractors. Critics argue that crypto-currencies remain highly speculative and volatile, with prices often detached from any intrinsic value. This volatility poses risks for retail and institutional investors alike, as Bitcoin's history includes dramatic price collapses alongside cedented surge in Bitcoin's value is driven by a confluence coin's history includes dramatic price collapses alongside meteoric rises. The narrative that crypto-currencies are a hedge against inflation or a store of value akin to gold has hedge against inflation or a store of value akin to gold has yet to be universally accepted, and questions about their long-term stability persist. Environmental concerns also cast a shadow over Bitcoin's success. The energy-intensist process of mining has been likened to the electricity consumption of entire countries, raising alarms about its sustainability in an era of heightened focus on climate change. Policymakers and environmentalists are increasingly scruinsing the ecological impact of crypto-currencies, which could lead to stricter regulations or shifts in public perception. Another issue is the misuse of crypto-currencies for illicit activities, including money laundering and sanctions evasion. While blockchain technology offers transparency, the pseudonymous nature of transactions makes it chalthe pseudonymous nature of transactions makes it chal-lenging to eliminate criminal misuse entirely. Efforts to curb these activities will need to strike a delicate balance curb these activities will need to strike a delicate balance between maintaining privacy and ensuring compliance with legal frameworks. Despite these challenges, Bitcoin's rise reflects a deeper shift toward decentralised finance and technological innovation. Its success has spurred advancements in blockchain applications beyond currency, including tokenised assets, smart contracts, and decentralised applications. These developments hint at a future where financial systems are more inclusive, efficient, and resilient. As Bitcoin basks in its historic achievement, its supporters must confront the broader implications of its mainstreaming. Will crypto-currencies usher in a more democratised financial ecosystem, or will they remain tools for speculation and disruption? The answer lies in how stakeholders address the risks and opportunities in this rapidly evolving space. Bitcoin is still in its early days and its true impact will be measured not by its price but by its ability to redefine the global financial landscape.

#### **Bid on Badal**

The attack on Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD) leader Sukhbir Singh Badal at the Golden Temple in Amrit-sar has sent shockwaves through Punjab's political and religious landscape. The accused, Narain Singh Chauand religious landscape. The accused, Narain Singh Chaura, is a 68-year-old with a long history of alleged ties to militant organisations, including the now-inactive Khalistan Liberation Army and Babbar Khalsa International. His background, which includes connections to the 2004 jail escape of Babbar Khalsa leader Jagtar Singh Hawara and multiple cases under the Explosives and Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Acts, underscores the persistent challenges posed by the remnants of Punjab's militancy era. At the time of the attack, Mr Badal was serving a religious sentence pronounced by Sri Akat Takht, related to unresolved allegations of sacrliege and fallures during his government's tenure from 2007 to 2017. These include the controversial pardon granted to Dera Sacha Sauda leader Gurmeet Ram Rahim Singh and the fallout from incidents like the Bargari sacrliege as well as the Kotkapura and Behbal Kalan police firings. These issues have long fuelled anger within the Sikh community and kept the political atmosphere in Punjab on edge. The attack, thwarted by quick action from security community and kept the political atmosphere in Punjab on edge. The attack, thwarted by quick action from security personnel and sewadars, raises critical questions about the law-and-order situation in Punjab. While Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann commended the police for their swift response, opposition leaders, including SAD and BJP figures, have criticised the government for intelligence lapses. BJP leader Fatehjung Singh Bajwa, for instance, questioned how someone with Chaura's record could roam freely near a Z+ security protectee like Mr Badal. The political ramifications of the attack are significant. SAD leaders have labeled it a conspiracy to destabilise Punjab, with possible links to Khalistani elements abroad and external actors, including Pakistan. They argue that such incidents are attempts to reignite the fires of militancy in the state. Congress leaders, while condemning the attack, have pointed to administrative failures under the Aam Aadmi Parry govgress leaders, while condemning the attack, have pointed to administrative failures under the Aam Aadmi Parry cormment. Former Punjab CM Captain Amarinder Singh has also weighed in, warning against allowing Punjab to slip back into its dark past and calling for collective vigilance to preserve peace. This incident also highlights the enduring impact of unresolved grievances within Punjab's society. Decades after the height of militancy, mistrust between different groups – religious, political, and administrative –continues to simmer. Addressing these divisions requires honest dialogue, meaningful action on long-standing issues like sacrilege and justice for past crimes along with a commitment to building trust among all stakeholders. Without this, sporadic acts of violence could escalate, threatening the state's hard-earned peace. The incident underscores the fragile state of Punjab's political and social stability. It highlights the need for robust intelligence mechanisms, proactive governance, and concerted efforts to address that out causes of discontent. The state cannot afford to let root causes of discontent. The state cannot afford to let historical wounds fester or allow extremist narratives to gain traction. Punjab's leaders must rise above partisan politics to ensure that peace and progress remain the cor-nerstones of its future.

# A sea in focus

The Malaysia-Vietnam upgrade sends a strong signal of shared priorities as both sides recognise that a fragmented Asean only benefits those who wish to dominate the South China Sea. The move to lift Malaysia to the top-tier of Vietnam's partnerships - an eight-strong group that also includes the US, Russia, India, Japan and France - fits well into Hanoi's broader diplomatic strategy



ountries across the globe have started recalibrating their foreign policy priorities ahead of a second Donald Trump administration in the US and the unpredictability that stems from his statements, many of which are controversial. This rebooting is manifested more in the Indo-Pacific region as there are many hotspots, necessitating the countries in the region to reposition their priorities.

The region that is destined to hog the limelight is the South China Sea. This is seen as a major flashpoint as there are many Asian countries which have considered the season of t

merved the similer Asian claiman rations.

See the similer Asian claiman rations.

See the similer Asian claiman rations and potential conflict, Vietnamese Communist Party chief To Lum chief visited Malaysia in late November 2024 during which both sides pledged to deepen their cooperation of the South China Sea amid rising maritime tensions between Beijing and Manila.

Both sides upgraded diplomatic ties and elevated bilateral itse to a comprehensive strategic partnership in a clear step lowards easing tensions over the competing territorial claims in the waterway.

The move also signals an accelerating realignment of power in South-east Asia. This could lead to a more united front from claimant countries in the overarching maritime dispute with China. Analysts speciale that Trump's return signals stormier waters for Beijing in the South China Sea.

Beijing has alleged that the SP-Philipping task force is fan-

Beijing has alleged that the US-Philippine task force is fan-ning the flames in the South China Sea. As tensions continue to rise in the area, Beijing calls

for friendly talks, which in effect means that others must accept its terms. China's envoy has told the Association for South East Asian Nations that alliances with the US mar peace and stability. The agreement between Vietnam and Malaysia makes

Vietnam and Malaysia makes the latter the first Aseam member state to become a top-tier diplomatic partner with Vietnam, a status it shares with China. In the joint statement, both sides pledged to work together to "maintain peace, security, stability, safety, and freedom of navigation" in the South China Sea, as well as "peaceful resolution of disputes

"peaceful resolu-tion of disputes without resorting to threats of use of force". They also "reaffirmed the importance for all parties concerned to exercise self-re-straint in the con-

straint in the con-duct of activities and to refrain from undertaking activities that could escalate ten-sion which in turn could affect peace and stability in the South China Sea".

China Sea".

At the joint press conference, Lam reiterated the call for restraint by "all relevant parties and committed to the early adoption of a "substantive and effective" South China Sea Code of Conduct (COC). The code should be in line with interna-

effective South China sea Case
of Conduct (COC). The code
should be in line with international law, including the 1982
United Nations Convention on
the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS).
The COC is an important
to cument that should prescribe
the parameters for all claimants
to follow and which can eliminate the room for any conflict.
Unfortunately, even though negotiations for a COC started in
the 1990s, it remains elusive.
Despite Asean and China having
agreed in 2023 to conclude talks
by 2026, the members remain
divided – including on whether
it should be legally binding.

What has led to the slow what has led to the singular progress of the negotiations for a COC is that there are differen-ces among the Asean member states and China. This lack of unity among the member states, including over competing clai-ms with each other, and the role ms with each other, and the role of China has contributed to the slow pace of progress. Interest-ingly, despite the diplomatic up-grade between Kuala Lumpur and Hanoi, there are reports that Malaysia lod-

ged a rare protest over Vietnam's alleged expansion of a South China Sea reef in the Spr-atly Islands that is claimed by both countries. Intereclaimed by both countries. Intere-stingly, the claims by four members of the Asean bloc -Malaysia, Viet-nam, the Philip-pines and Brunei -overlap with Chi-na's expansive as-sertions of territosertions of territo-rial rights over

rial rights over much of the waterways. There is another dimension behind the Malaysia-Vietnam upgrade. Vietnam may be back-ing Malaysia because Malaysia ing Manaysia because Manaysia is going to assume the Asean chair in 2025, which Vietnam may be seeing as an opportuni-ty to push the maritime issue in concluding the legally binding COC as soon as possible. The timing of the under-tending buttern the coun-

standing between the two coun-tries is equally important. There are concerns that when Trump returns to the White House in January 2025, he may not be January 2025, he may not be willing to stand by the Asean members on the South China Sea issue and therefore there

inate the South China Sea. The inate the South China Sea. The move to lift Malaysia to the top-tier of Vietnam's partnerships – an eight-strong group that also includes the US, Russia, India, Japan and France – fits well into Hanoi's broader diplomatic stratery.

Japan and France - this well into Hanol's broader diplomatic strategy.

The Malaysia-Vietnam upgrade is likely to be trend-setter for other members of the Asean bloc to follow, to scale up their relationships. Having built a strong partnership with Malaysia, Hanol is likely to forge stronger bonds with Indonesia, Singapore and the Philippines, thereby quietly weaving a network of partnerships that could help South-seat Asian nations better coordinate their approach to maritime disputes.

Though no immediate impact on the South-China Sea dynamics may be expected following the growing coordination between claimant states, the momentum for a more cohesive regional response could be a move in the right direction.

Given the on-soing fights

Courd be a move in the right direction.

Given the on-going fights between the Philippines with China over the South China Sea, the Philippines might feel en-couraged to deepen its own par-tnership in light of Malaysia? Asean chairmanship in 2025 and

thership in light of Malaysia; Asean chairmanship in 2025 and feel emboldened for a resolute response to deal with Beijing.

Lam is more assertive on the South China Sea issue than his predecessor Nguyen Phu Trong, who died in July at the sea of 80.5 lice he came to possess. Trong, who died in July at the age of 80, Since he came to power in August 2024, Lam has tried to cultivate Vietnam for an understanding on maritime issues. Lam visited Bach Long Vi Island in the Gulf of Tronkin in mid-November and stressed the Island's strategic importance to Vietnam's national security and sovnam's national security and sov-ereignty. This was obviously simed at Beijing. China is best advised to

consider the sensitivities of the South-east Asian nations with interests in the South China Sea and craft its policies accordingly.



#### C ASIAN VOICES

#### **Human rights** begin at home

nce, human rights were understood as the simple principle that one person's rights should never extend beyond the tip of another's nose unless invited. On December 10 each year, the world comes together to observe Inter-national Human Rights Day, a day that underscores the inherent dignity and the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family. First the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family. First recognised in 1950 under the guidance of the United Nations, this day has evolved into a global call to action for the protection and promotion of human rights worldwide. Yet, despite decades of progress, violations persist across the globe, reminding us that the flight for human sights is far from over. The debate on human rights dates back, centuries, and two of the most prominent figures in this discourse Edmund Burke and Thomas Paine left a lasting legacy that continues to resonate today. Burke, a supporter of the monarchy, saw the preservation of tradition and hierarchy as essential to societal stability, while Paine, a revolutionary thinker, championed liberty, equality, and the rights of individuals. One of Palme's most famous lines, "We ply the plumage, but forget the dying bird," directly addressed the hypocrisy of focusing on superficial issues while ignoring the deeper, more urgent concerns. In modern times, these words still carry weight, highlighting how we often address surface-level concerns while systemic injustices persist, unnoticed or unchallenged. The observance

#### THE KATHMANDU POST

of Human Rights Day invites us to reflect on the progress made and the work still to be done. It is a reminder that the principles outlined in the versal Declaration of Human Ri

work still to be done. It is a reminder that the principles outlined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on 10 December 1948, remain crucial in shaping a more just and equitable world.

However, despite the groundbreaking achievements of the UDHR, widespread violations continue, and the fight for human dignity remains ongoing. Throughout history, the struggle for human rights has been a journey fraught with obstacles. One notable turning point in this struggle occurred in the United States during the 19th century. The abolition of slavery, a monumental achievement, came about through the tireless efforts of leaders like Abraham Lincoln, who, in 1863, led the nation to abolish the institution through the 13th Amendment to the Constitution. This was a transformative moment in the history of human rights. Despite the victory, however, African-Americans continued to face systemic discrimination and segregation for many years after. The 1954 landmark decision in Brown v. Board of Education, where the US supreme Court declared racial segregation in public schools unconstitutional, was another significant victory for human rights in America. But even after this, African-Americans were granted the right to ovice under the Voting Rights Act. These achievements were monumental, but they were hard-won, demonstrating the lengths to which marginalised communities had to go in order to claim their human rights, Internationally, the story tney were nard-won, demonstrating the lengths to which marginalised commu-nities had to go in order to claim their human rights. Internationally, the story of human rights has also been one of continuous struggle and progress.

Sea issue and therefore there is an urgent realisation to secure a binding COC as the best option.

Be that as it may be, the Malaysia-Vietnam upgrade sends a strong signal of shared priorities as both sides recognise.

that a fragmented Asean only benefits those who wish to dom-

takes, develop ideological clarit

## **UN MUST ACT**

UN MUST ACT

SIR. Bangladesh Hindu monk Chinmoy Krishna Das was denied bail and lost an opportunity to be heard before the Court as no lawyer appeared to represent him in fear. It is a very unusual happening in Bangladesh judiciary. The Court has indirectly made itself silent. Even the administration did not produce the monk before the court and thereby did not allow him to say a word in his defence in the absence of his lawyer. The minorities of Bangladesh are now not in a safe position.

The attack on minorities specially on Hundus reflects the previous situation of Bangladesh under Pakistani rule. The Muslims of Bangladesh have just forgotten the history of their Liberation War and the contributions of Hindus. These acts must be condemned and immediate steps should be taken by the UN by sending a peace force to control the situation.

Yours, etc., Manas Mukhopadhyay, Chinsurah, 4 December.

# takes, develop ideological clarity and improve the party's weak organisational structure. Instead of focusing on caste issues, the defence of the Constitution and vitrolic criticism of Mod. Adami and the EVMs, it should stem all friction within the INDIA bloc and focus on the pressing issues confronting the electorate. Yours, etc., D S Kang, Hoshiarpur, 2 December, ILL-WIND

SIR, Apropos your editorial, "Tar-iff woes" published today, misgiv-ings are bound to be heavy when a major consumer economy such as the US intends to weaponise trade and tariff for domestic com-pulsions. This is not the first im-minent tariff war in global trade.

Minent faint war global track We need to see the larger picture, bracketing US and China. Our trade with the U.S. reached \$120 bin in fiscal 2024, closely followed by China at \$118 blin, While we enjoyed a trade sur-plus of \$35.3 bin with the U.S. trade deficit with China surged to \$85.1 bln. Thus, we may well humour Trump 2.0 with tariff sops. That said, in the ongoing trade war with US, China's export

trade war with US, China's export prices have already suffered a 60 per cent drop, leaving it little elbow room.

The point of significance is, firstly how well can we leverage our exports to US at the cost of China and secondly, benefit from scaled down prices of imports from China.

The US tariff storm brines in

The US tariff storm brings in

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

#### Congress must shift focus

SIR, This has reference to your editorial "Priyanka ascends" (27 November). Priyanka Gandhi Vadra's spectacular maiden elec-toral win from Wayanad by a

huge margin marks a histori moment for the Gandhi family. Though Wayanad has been Congress bastion since its cre ation in 2008, her charismati ation in 2008, her charismatic personality, eloquence, organisa-tional and political skills, hectic campaigning, the ability to emo-tionally connect with the voters, especially women, and her assured commitment to the con-stituency's welfare ensured her victory.

victory.

Despite the BJP's constant Despite the BIF's constant criticism of the Congress for per-petuating dynastic politics. Ms Vadra's debut in electoral politics is very significant. It will tighten the hold of the Gandhi family the hold of the Gandhi family over the Congress and reshape the party sinternal dynamics and leadership debates. The presence of three Gandhi scions in Parlia-ment will boost Opposition mor-ale to question the government

and hold it accountable to the public on critical issues.

editor@thestatesman.com

on critical issues, ter Rahul Gandhi's Bharat After Rahul Gandhi's Bharat Jodo Yatra energised the party, the emergence of a strong Oppo-sition after the Congress-led INDIA bloc's performance in the 2024 parliamentary elections attered the dynamics of Indian democracy.

democracy.

But the Congress could not maintain its momentum and maintain its momentum and suffered serious setbacks in that suffered serious setbacks in the recent Haryana and Maharashtra assembly elections. As a star campaigner and backdoor strategist, Priyanka has been performing organisational responsibilities for quite some time. But amid the BP's entrenched dominance and electoral hegemony, she faces a Herculean task of revitalising the struggling Congress and offering a viable alternative to the ruling party. In order to be a transformative leader, she has to prove her political acumen.

her political acumen. It is time for the Congress to introspect and evolve. The lead-ership should mend past mis-



its wake an issue of no less con-cern. The US is bound to spawn inflation with high import tariffs

The ill-wind blowing out of an impulsive tariff fiat under Trump 2.0 would do no one any good. Hopefully, Trump will be the first one to get wise to it. Yours, etc., R Narayanan, Navi Mumbai, 2 December.

and the Fed will need to sustain

and the Fed will need to sustain high key rates. With our growth indices falling - the GDP plunged to 5.4 per cent - last quarter - any move by the RBI for a softer rate regime will be pushed back sub-stantially. The ill-wind blowing out of an impulsive tariff flat under

# 15 THE IDEAS PAGE

No place for

communalism

For South Asia to grow, its leaders must act against religious discrimination

WHAT THE OTHERS SAY

RAM RAJYA

BY RAM MADHAV

SOUTH ASIA, ACCORDING to the World

SOUTH ASIA, ACCORDING to the World Bank; son tracts to be the fastest growing region in the world. "supported by strong domestic demand in India and faster recoveries in most South Asian countries". The Bank projected that growth in the region will remain at a robust 6-4 per cent for the next couple of years. Instability is likely to slow down growth in Banglades into within the range of South as a couple of years. Instability is likely to slow down growth in Banglades in the alternative the state of the st

Bhutan is expected to grow at 7.2 per cent Maldives at 4.7 per cent, and Nepal at 5.1 per cent, Even Pakistan and Sri Lanka, struggling

with political and economic turmoil, are ex

cent. Even Pakistan and Sri Lanka, struggling with political and economic turnoll, are expected to recover well, riding on new commic intestates and the rebound of fourism and industrial activity in the coming years. The World Bank's outlook may sound fairytale-like to many. How is it possible that a region mirred in demographic complexities, political rivalies and communal conflicts should be the fastest-growing region in the world? The region has witnessed massive popular revolts in recent years in countries like Sri Lank, Paidstan and Bangaldesh. In Bangladesh, the mob succeeded in top-pling an elected government and replaced it with an ad hoc arrangement with no demoratic process in sight. In Pakistan, the most popular leader of the country is behind bars with his supporters taking to the streets in anjusic face-off with the country is behind bars with his supporters taking to the streets in anjusic face-off with the country is behind bars with his supporters taking to the streets in anjusic face-off with the country is behind bars with his supporters taking to the streets in anjusic face-off with the country is harvitine religious rivally thanks largely to the machinations of the British colonialists, but also due to the Indian leadership's pop of untry's partition in 1947.

largely to the machinations of the British colonialists, but also due to the Indian leadership's poorly thought-out decision to accept the country's partition in 1947. Strife between Hindus and Muslims became an everyday reality in the Indian Subcontinent since then. India sought to address this challenge through a robust and inclusive Constitution, determined government action and an independent judiciary. The inclusive and under the majority Hundu population too helped this process. Occasional incidents like sambal notwithstanding, this was country with 14 billion people, with almost 20 per cent minority population, has largely maintained stability and harmony. Where the decades, sometimes helping the over the decades, sometimes helping the communities in need, but often seeking to make political capital out of it.

But in its in ened, but often seeking to make political capital out of it.

make political capital out of it. But in its neighbourhood, the situation

remained precarious for minority Hindus Christians, Buddhists, Sikhs and even some

Muslim denominations, like Ismallis and Ahmadis, With Islam becoming the state re-ligion in both Pakistan and Bangladesh, mi-nority communities were subjected to many restrictions and denial of rights. Pakistan

"While the Trump transition team compiled with the Presidential Transition Act's requirement to lay out an ethics plan for its staff, the document notably provides no provision for Mr. Trump, whose business dealings pose ample ethical quandaries."

— THE WASHINGTON POST

# Platforms like PRAGATI

A digital ecosystem is transforming how India approaches infrastructure development



PARAMESWARAN IYER

AS NATIONS GRAPPLE with how to imple nent ambitious infrastructure agendas amid rising costs and complex regulatory environ-ments, India has quietly pioneered an inno-vative solution. While much recent attention has focused on the country's technological nas incused on the country's recumoningual advances in digital payments and identity systems, another digital transformation has been revolutionising how fluid manages its massive infrastructure projects. This week, Oxford University's Said Business School, in collaboration with the Gates Foundation, launched a case study ex-

amining India's PRAGATI platform

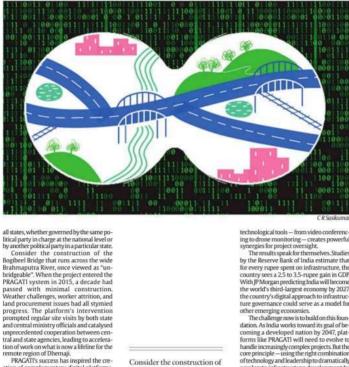
Gates Foundation, launched a case study examining India's PRACATI platform — a digital initiative that has helped accelerate more than 340 major infrastructure projects worth some \$205 stillion. The study, released at the Indian Institute of Management Bangalore earlier this week, reveals how digital governance under the highest level of political leadership can help nations overcome traditional bottlenecks in infrastructure development. PRACATI (Pro-Active Governance and Timely Implementation) was launched in 2015 by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and combines leadership with video conferencing, drone feeds, and data management to enable oversight of critical infrastructure. The platform's impact has helped omplete long-delayed projects like segments of National Highway 8 in Maharashtra, the Chenab Bridge in Jammu and Kashmir, which is now the world's highest fatal bridge, and the Bogitbeel Bridge in Assam, which had languished for more than a decade before being completed within three years of coming under review in PRACATI.

What makes PRACATI noteworthy is the way it leverages the impact of active leadership from the top. Based on SWAGATI, alight plant of the plast of the plast of a cityle leadership from the top. Based on SWAGATI, alight plant of the plast of the plast of the plast of a cityle leadership from the top. Based on SWAGATI, alight plant of the plast of the plant of the pl

What makes PRACATI noteworthy is the way it leverages the impact of active leader-ship from the top. Based on SWACAT, a dig-ital platform started by then Chief Minister Modi in Culparat to address people's griev-ances, PRACATI has enabled the prime min-ister to take a consistent, direct role in over-seeing complex infrastructure projects. In PRACATI meetings, he is joined by senior aides, the cabinet secretary, all chief secre-taries of states, and secretaries of the central ministries in dedicated video conference links. At these gatherings, the prime min-

tames of sates, and secretaries of tree child ministries in dedicated video conference links. At these gatherings, the prime minister asks detailed questions about problems and delays, sets specific deadlines, and proposes solutions.

The value of this high-level involvement can't be overstated. In a large country with a complex federal structure, it communicates the importance of infrastructure development as a top national priority and injects a sense of urgency and accountability into the bureaucratic process. When officials know their decisions are trackable, they are much more motivated to move quickly to resolve bettienecks. For Jevel leadership also inspires new enthusiasm for collaboration among stakeholders. Bridging the political divide. PRACATI has proven equally valuable in accelerating complex infrastructure projects in



technological tools — from video conferencing to drone monitoring — creates powerful synergies for project oversight.

The results speak for themselves. Studies by the Reserve Bank of India estimate that for every rupes spent on infrastructure, the country sees a 2.5 to 3.5-rupee gain in GDP. With JP Morgan predicting India will become the world's third-largest economy by 2027, the country's digital approach to infrastructure governance could serve as a model for other emerging economies.

The challenge now its to build on this foundation. As India works toward its goal of becoming a developed nation by 2047, platforms like PRACATI will need to evolve to handle increasingly complex projects. But the core principle – using the right combination of technology and leadership to dramatically accelerate infrastructure development by driving collaboration, accountability, and transparency — offers a powerful template for nations seeking to transform their approach to infrastructure development. The platform's approach could be particularly valuable for initiatives like the African Union's Programme for Infrastructure Development in Africa (PIDA), which aims to close the continent's infrastructure apput coronspile complex projects. PRACATI's approach could be particularly valuable for initiatives like the African Union's Programme for Infrastructure Development in Africa (PIDA), which aims to close the continent's infrastructure appathrough cross-border projects. PRACATI's accomplishments in managing complex accomplishments in managing complex and the programme for Infrastructure appathrough cross-border projects.

Dinois Programme for intrastructure Development in Africa (PIDA), which aims to close the continent's infrastructure gap through cross-border projects, PRAGAIT's accomplishments in managing complex multi-state infrastructure developments offer a time-tested template for handling such collaborations.

As countries across the Global South work to modernise their infrastructure and support rapidly growing populations and urbamisation, PRAGAITs combination of digital innovation and high-level coordination provides a valuable model for accelerating development while ensuring accountability and effective resource utilisation.

Dutta is Dean and Professor of Management at Said Business School, University of Oxford. Iyer is India's Executive Director at the World Bank, Views are personal

forcefully evacuated most of its minorities through oppressive state action, like blasphermy laws, coupled with aggressive behaviour of the religious leadership.

But what its worrying is that Bangladesh, a nation born out of a rejection of the politics of religion, should turn into an Islamins state. Hindus and other minorities, who sacrificed equally and enomously in the struggle for the creation of the Bengali nation five decades ago, are being subjected to atrocties in that very country today.

The unspeakable barbarism of the Pakistan Army during the liberation struggle of the Bengali rationalists during 1970-71 was well documented by authors such as eminent American academic Gary J Bass, who wrote the book The Blood Telegram. In one of the first major incidents, the Pakistan Army attacked Jagamanth 1stil, a Hindu dorintory in Dhaka University, on March 25, 1971. Killings, rapes and other atrocities against Hindus continued until the liberation of Bangladesh, leading to the deaths of millions of morels and a submoning 10 mil. tion of Bangladesh, leading to the deaths o millions of people and a whopping 10 mil

millions of people and a whopping 10 mil-lion refuges feeing to India. Ted Kennedy, a US Senator, who visited the refuges campsin 1971, described the war as a "systematic campaign of terror" by the Palistian army, "Fardersh it have been the members of the Hindu community, who have been robbed of their lands and shops, systematically slaughtered and in some pl-aces painted in yellow patches as H." he said. The India-Mujib Accord in 1972 include them that the promised the later are of the determents that rounsied the later are of the

The Indira-Mujib Accord in 1972 included terms that promised to take care of the minorities in Bangladesh. Many refugee Hindus returned home in that country. Sadly, despite some efforts by successive governents, Hindus continued to face persecution and violence on regular intervals, with major incidents occurring in 1992. 2001, and 2021. Under Sheikih Hasina, the Awami League government sought to extend protection to the minorities. It brought several Hindu MPs into Parliament and even ma a Hindu the chief justice of the Suprer Court. It provided support to the famou: Hindu shrine in Dhaka, the Dhakeshwar

Hindu shrine in Dhaka, the Dhakeshwan Temple, Yet, and Hindu violence persisted. As instability in the country continues he attacks on Hindus and Buddhists have again reached a crescendo. Even Muslim Bangladeshis, mostly leaders of the Awam League, are being subjected to many arroc-tics. As the episode of the arrest of lskcon priest Chimmoy Dax has proved, Hindus cannot even deepend on the country's judi-ciary for justice.

ry for justice. I talked about the economic growth in I talled about the economic growth in the region only to point out that with all this around us too, we may still grow. During World War II, the US Army, which went to Europe to crush the Nazis and their racial ha-tred, was itself at horoughly segregated into titution. Black and White sodiers did not live together, fight together, or even share the blood supples. Yet, they won the war. Racial discrimination continued until President ohn F Kennedy rose to proclaim that "rac has no place in American life or law".

Can the subcontinental leadership sim ilarly stand up and declare that communal ism has no place in the life or law of ou countries and, of course, act accordingly?

Consider the construction of the Bogibeel Bridge that runs across the wide Brahmaputra River, once viewed as 'unbridgeable'. When the project entered the PRAGATI system in 2015, a decade had passed with minimal construction. Weather challenges, worker attrition, and land procurement issues had all stymied progress. The platform's intervention prompted regular site visits by both state and central

ministry officials and catalysed unprecedented cooperation between central and state agencies, leading to acceleration of work on what

# Pause, not peace

Israel-Hezbollah ceasefire must be examined in the broader geopolitical context

is now a lifeline for the

THE 60-DAY DEAL between Hezbollah and Israel, brokered by the US and supported by France, which came into effect on November 27, seeks to enforce UN Resolution 1701. The resolution was adopted in 2006 to end hostilities between the two sides, maintain a buffer zone and report violations. The buffer zone stretches between the Blue Line, a temporary line of withdrawal for Israeli forces set by the UN in 2000 and the Litani River in southern Lebanon. The current deal envisages Hezbollah moving its infrastructure, weapons and fighters to the north of the Litani River and Israeli forces moving south to the Blue Line over 60 days.

The UN 1701 mechanism — the UN Interim Force in Lebanon (UNFI) and the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF) retaining control of the buffer zone — remains in principle, while the onus of implementing the deal and holding the 60-day ceasefire rests with the Lebanese and Israeli governments. Even though agreeing to the deal, both Hezbollah and Israel have warned they would act in "self-defence" should the other party violate the deal or ceasefire. Given the deep mutual suspicion and continuing war in Gaza, the deal's success appears doubtful.

The deal is predicated on the assumption that the Lebanese government can een Hezbollah and

cess appears doubtful.

The deal is predicated on the assumption that the Lebanese government can make commitments on behalf of Hezbollah, a political and armed group that has, for decades, resided as a "state within a state" within Lebanon. Hezbollah and its allies

have won more than 60 of the 128 parlia-mentary seats in the democratic elections nave won more tran 60 of the 1.28 parina-mentary seats in the democratic elections. For years, Hezbollah's presence in southern Lebanon has been viewed as a "security guarantee" against Israel, which has gone to war with Lebanon four times.

remote region of Dhemaji.

PRACATI'S success has inspired the creation of complementary digital platforms.

PM Gat if Shaki, launched in 2021, provides sophiaticated geospatial planning tools that help optimise infrastructure design and reduce adverse environmental impact.

PARIVESH has streamlined environmental clearances, leading to greater transparency and also reducing approval times, at times from 600 days earlier to just 70–75 days now.

Together, these platforms form a digital ecosystem that is transforming how India approaches infrastructure development.

The impact extends beyond physical in-frastructure. PRACATI has also accelerated social development programmes, from rural electrification to providing tap water connections to millions of households.

This digital transformation in infrastructure governance offers valuable lessons for other nations seeking to build sustainable infrastructure for the future, particularly in the developing world. First, technology alone isn't enough — success requires sustained leadership from the top to drive implementation. Second, digital platforms must be designed to facilitate collaboration across different levels of government while respecting local autonomy. Third, combining various

note region of Dhemaji. PRAGATI's success has inspired the cre

guarantee" against Israel, which has gone to war with Lebanon four times.

The agreement stipulates a temporary ceasefire and aims to create conditions leading to a permanent ceasefire between Hezboilah and Israel. The US has agreed to lead a monitoring mechanism. However, the agreement prohibits the US or any other country from bringing in troops to enforce the deal. In formal briefings, US officials have asserted that since Hezboilah has been weakened during the war with Israel, it is a great opportunity to build up the LAF as well as create collective political will in Lebanon to pass on security entirely to its army, diminishing Hezboilah's role in the country. Counting on help from other countries, especially France, the US wishes to change the course of history in Lebanon, including the trajectory of the country's relations with Israel and Iran. Achieving this goal in 60 days seems a fail order. It also remains to be seen as to what the state of affairs will be after 60 days, and whether the Trump administration would like to remain engaged, and if so, in what manner.

Within the Israeli government, the dominant far-right elements strongly advocate

main rengaged, and it 80, in what manner. Within the Israeli government, the dominant far-right elements strongly advocate the continuous undermining of Hezbollah. There is also hope of aggressive US military support under the Trump administration, especially against Iran. However, the Israeli

PM is known to have agreed to the deal because Israeli forces suffered significant losses since the ground offensive into southern Lebanon began on October 1. The country's media reported that within a month, ower 35 soldiers were killed and over 900 were wounded in northern front operations. The reports further indicated that top army leadership had assessed that military objectives with respect to Hezbollah and Hamas had been achieved to enable the political process. However, the threat of Iranian retaliation to the October 26 Israeli aerial attacks on Iran continues to Isom Irange. For the past Iew months, the Israeli media has been repeatedly pointing to the erosion of public superly political process.

tinues to loom large. For the past few months, the Israeli media has been repeatedly pointing to the crossion of public support for the wars, especially because of the 
failure to bring back the hostages home in 
about 14 months.

Credible US media inputs suggest that 
the Trump team too had indicated during 
the elections that Israel should complete its 
operations before the President-elect assumed office. This was in line with Trump's 
declared policy of "stopping wars" and not 
"starting wars". Moreover, his policy of 
demanding that NATO allies pay their share 
for the European security shield would also 
be applicable to Israel which has recently 
benefited from the deployment of the 
super-expensive US THAAD aerial defence 
system and 100 US military personnel. 
The US team has called for re-energising efforts for a Gaza ceasefire. However, 
there are sharp differences between the 
epaper.indian

Palestinian view — backed by key nations — of embarking on a roadmap to a two-state solution as part of the ceasefire deal on Gaza and far-right elements within the

on Gaza and far-fight elements within the Israeli government, who have been pushing for total control of security in Gaza. With far-fight elements taking an increasingly beligerent approach, the war in Gaza has expanded to multiple fronts for Israel as a result of which some in the country advocate the targeting of Iranian nuclear sites and effecting a regime change in Tehran. Though the Trump team has claimed success for the Lebanon deal as the Trump gramming administration would use Russialike sanctions rather than direct or indirect like sanctions rather than direct or indirect

like sanctions rather than direct or indirect military means to secure US security interests in the region. Lastly, the day the deal took effect, al-Qaeda linked jihadi groups of Syria, backed by regional actors, launched a massive attack on Syrian forces in northwestern parts taking over control of many pockets, including Aleppo city. The re-bootting of the Syrian conflict by regional state and non-state actors, after years of lying low, is expected to unleash serious violence in the region, whereby no single acroe would have means to re-establish security and stability in the years ahead. As a result, global security and commercial interests in the region too are likely to experience further distress.

The writer is a security analyst and former Director General of Police

epaper.indianexpress.com

#### LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

#### FOLLOW PROTOCOL

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'Fire traps' (IE, December 6). The fact that hospital fire incidents in the countries unickly fale into obscurity is sobering, Hospitals often compromise on fire safety regulations, allowing over-crowding, while the authorities turn a billing two for contentials or contentials or contentials areason. The crowding, while the authorities turnablind eye for ostensible reasons. The 2011 AMRI hospital fire tragedy in Kolkata revealed that despite the fire safety department's censure, the hospital had converted its basement parking area into a dump of highly flammable materials. The main causes of hospital fires are electrical malfunctions, inadequate equipment maintenance, and an array of human errors. Hospitals must undergo fire safety audits, where every infraction invites consequences. Kamal Laddha, Bengaluru

Kamal Laddha, Bengaluu

HIS REPERS TO the editorial, Fire traps'
(IE, December 6), It is distressing to see
people losing lives at the altar of healing.
Hospital fires are not new in India, occurring in facilities like AllMS, PGIMER
in Chandigard, and RM. Hospital in
Farrukhabad. Most hospital fires occur
due to short circuits emerging from
overloaded electrical points, improper
power supply, faulty batteries and irregular electrical wiring. Safety checks
are inadequate. Government facilities
are worse, with limited resources at
their disposal. It is high time the authortities fix hospital fires.

Valbhav Goyal, Chandigarh

#### PROTECT PUNJAB

PROTECT PUNJAB

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'What
Punjah needs' (IE, December 6). The assassination attempt on Punjab's former
Deputy Chief Minister Sukhbir Singh
Badal at the Golden Temple is disturbing. It exposes glaring inadequacies in
security protocol at one of India's most
revered religious sites. While CM
Bhagwant Mann has commended the
police for averting a tragedy, robust
measures are required to prevent such
incidents. The fact that the attacker was
allowed to enter the premises with a
weapon raises concerns, especially
given the tense conditions in the state.

Sankar Paul, Nizdir

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'What THIS REFERS TO the editorial, "What Punjah needs' (IP. December 6). The attempt on the life of Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD) leader Sukhbir Singh Badal must be condemneed by one and all, irrespective of their political and religious affiliations. The fact that this incident happened while he was performing "sewa" outside the Colden Temple makes it all the more reprehensible. The sensitive border state, which experienced period of militancy in the 1980s cannot afford to enter another dark era of violence. The onus is on the APP government and to enter another dark era of violence. The onus is on the AAP government and the Akalis – they must enforce the rule of law and regain the trust of the Sikh masses. The state's peace and prosper-ity must not be sacrificed at the altar of hatred and divisiveness. veness. Khokan Das, Kolkata

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-PAPER WITH PASSION-

## Plunging into instability

France's political instability and economic crisis deepens as Prime Minister Michel Barnier ousted in a rare no-confidence vote

n a dramatic turn of events. French Prime Minister Michel Barnier was ousted in a no-confidence vote on December 5, 2024, marking a rare political upheaval in France's post-war history. The motion, which garnered 331 votes, united far-right and left-wing lawmakers against Barnier's government, plunging France into political instability at a critical juncture. At the core of the crisis lies the contentious 2025 budget. Facing a mas-sive budget deficit, Barnier's government proposed a budget aimed at saving Euro 60 billion. The proposal included austerity measures that sparked widespread discontent across the political spectrum. Barnier's decision to bypass parliamentary approval for parts of the budget using special constitutional powers was a key trigger for his removal. Interestingly, both the Left and the Right united to oppose the budget. By forcing the no-confidence vote, opposition lawmakers saw an opportunity to challenge a government struggling to unite a fragmented parliament. The ouster is a significant blow to President

Emmanuel Macron, who now faces daunting chal lenges in appointing a successor capable of navigat-

ing a polarised parliament. Macron's leadership has been weakened, and his coalition has failed to maintain a majority, leaving his administration vulnerable to opposition maneuvers. France's political landscape is now marked by deep uncertainty. The immediate challenge is ensuring fiscal continuity, as the lack of an approved 2025 budget could further erode investor confidence. Right now Macron has limited options. Macron may try to quickly install a new leader, aiming for stability before symbolic events like the reopening of the Notre-Dame Cathedral.

However, finding someone who can secure cross-party support is a tall order. If the situation gets worse Macron could rely on emergency measures to extend the 2024 budget provisions or pass the 2025 budget by decree. However, such actions would carry significant political costs and might deepen the crisis. The turmoil comes at a pre-carlous time for France and the European Union. With Germany grappling with its coalition government's collapse and the return of Donald Trump to the US presidency, Europe's political stability is increasingly in question. France, as the EU's second-largest economy, plays a critical role in the bloc's cohesion. Domestically, the crisis is a test of resilience for Marine Le Pen, whose National Rally party supported the no-confidence motion. While Le Pen seeks to position her party as a stable alternative to Macron's government, prolonged instability could expose vulnerabilities in her leadership. France faces a soaring budget deficit, high inflation, and growing public dissatisfaction over austerity measures The fragmented parliament reflects a divided electorate, complicating governance and increasing the likelihood of legislative deadlock. The road ahead requires deft political maneuvering to restore stability and address the systemic challenges that threaten France's economic and social fabric



ourists on an elephant satari at the Kaziranga National Park, in Golapha

# India's maritime legacy: Lessons from history

Revisiting India's maritime legacy can drive advancements in naval strength, trade security and regional cooperation, paving the way for a strong maritime future

ndia has a rich maritime history dating back to the Indus Valley civilisation. People of ancient Indian People of ancient Indian empires such as Mauryas and Cholas were active seafarers who undertook long and ardnoss voyages for trade, cultural, relivingues and political causes. Various regional powers and rulers such as Marathas, Marakkars and even Mughals tried to contest the ascendancy of European naval supremacy in Indian Navy was born out of the Royal Indian Navy was born out of the Royal Indian Navy was british and the Indian Navy was initially a coastal force and protection of martitime trade. The Indian Navy proved its metitle during the liberation war of Bangladesh in 1971. The decisive and bold actions by the Navy in the 1971 war made the nation realise the potential of the silent, yet dynamic and effective element of the comprehensive national power. Commencing with the international humanitarian and disaster relief operations in the afternath of the 2004 Tsunami, the Indian Navy has significantly stepped up its operational tempo.

The recent successes of the Indian Navy in anti-piracy operations in the Guilf of Aden protecting martiners of various nationallities.

mariners of various nationalities, including Pakistanis, have been internationally appreciated. Indian Navy ships have evacuat-ed personnel of the Indian diaspora and citizens of friendly for-eign countries from conflict areas such as Lebanon (2006) and

Ancient Indian Maritime Culture As India strives for its rightful position on the global stage, we need to revive and study the historical and indigenous Indian maritime strategic thought. Our scriptures, treatises and literature reference the rich Indian maritime strategic culture. Other powers that arose in the Indian sub-continent such as Satavahanas, Pallavas, Pandyas, Cholas and many others continued the rich maritime traditions of the Indian civilisation well past the decline of the mighty



maritime and naval endeav-ours of the nation.

Shivaji's Maritime
Endeavours: The Marathas
were the only Indian power
between the 17th to early 19th
centuries who successfully
challenged the growing
European influence in Indian
waters.

European influence in Indian waters.
Shivaji, his son Sambhaji Maharaj and their able dadmirals such as Mayank Bhandari, Dautat Khan, Sidhoji Gajar and legendary Kanhoji Angre raised and maintained a strong Navy of over 5000 personnel comprise over 3000 personnel comprise over 3000 vessels at its peak. Noted historian Jadunath "Nothing proves Shivaji's genius as a born statesman more clearly than his creation of a navy and naval bases". The Maratha naval prowess was further consolidated under Maratha Admiral Kanhoji Angre from 1699 onwards. He British maritime power on the West coast from his base at Vijaydurg in Rathagiri. Vijaydurg in Ratnagiri. His tactics of attacking the



OTHER POWERS THAT AROSE IN THE INDIAN SUB-CONTINENT SUCH AS SATAVAHANAS. PALLAVAS, PANDYAS, CHOLAS AND MANY OTHERS CONTINUED THE RICH MARITIME TRADITIONS OF THE INDIAN CIVILISATION WELL PAST THE DECLINE OF THE MIGHTY MAURYAN deep draught British ships with shallow water crafts, utilising the shelter of shallow natural harbour and fortress with mounted heavy guns were akin to typical sea denial and littoral warfare operations practised by modern navies. Such was the Maratha naval supremacy that even a combined Anglo-Portugues assault on Koalbas islands of Mumbai in 1772 failed to dislodge the Marathas. Strategic Maritime Culture of Cholas The earliest mention of Cholas haval prowess datting back to Roman records of the lat centry AD highlights the presure of the strategies of the lat centry AD highlights the presure of the strategies of t tury AD highlights the pres-ence of a flourishing port at Kaveripatnam and the King's fleet escorting merchant ships into the harbour. The Periplus of the Erythrean

The Periplus of the Erythrean Sea mentions the voyage of the early Chola ship 'Colandia' from Kaveripathant to islands in the Pacific Ocean. The maritime power of Cholas reached its peak between the 9th and 10th centuries during which the Cholas developed a strong Navy with Blue Water capabilities and established robust trade links with China and South East Asia. The seafarers of the Chola empire bad robust trade links with China and South East Asia. The sea-farers of the Chola empire had exceptional navigational skills and, an understanding of the seas, monsoons, winds and

currents. They were conver-sant with the use of a 32-point Arab-Tamil wind compass and as many as 56 stars in the Northern Hemisphere for nay-igation. Despite the lack of a rudder and magnetic compass, the Cholas seafarers could tra-verse the distance between India and Southeast Asia in twelve to fifteen days, indica-tive of their Blue Water capa-bility. The maritime endea-ture of their Blue Water capa-bility. The maritime endea-ours of c Cholas provide val-uable insights for stakeholders of the contemporary Indian maritime strategy. The Indian maritime outlook for the Indian Ocean Region that has maritime strategy. The Indian Maritime outlook for the Indian Ocean Region that has evolved from the Look Bad' to 'Act East' and the Security and Growth for All in the Region (SAGAR) can draw inspiration from India's maritime legacy. Initiatives like anti-piracy missions in the Gulf of Aden, HADR missions, Sagarmala and Port Led Development, SAGAR, Atma Nirbharta and Make in India etc. have common threads with the maritime practices of Cholas.

(The views expressed are solely those of the author and do not reflect the position of the Indian Navy or the Pioneer. The writer is currently serving as Direct.



**EMPIRE** 

## From chaos to comfort: Reflecting on Delhi's transit transformation



Once reliant on rickety DTC buses plagued by poor service, Delhi now boasts a state-ofthe-art metro network, revolutionising travel and making commuting a breeze

an you drop me at the Dhaula Kuan Metro Station in your car? I must catch the 1800 his train from there, requested my colleague, Madhu Jasral, as we were leaving the office in the Bhikaji Cama Place complex. "Sure, why not!!" I replied nonchalantly. "I have some work on the other side of town, and it is prudent to travel by the metro, instead of taking risks, and getting grid-locked in the peak traffic." she explained. I could not have agreed more. an you drop me at the Dhaula Kuan Metro

socked in the peak traits are explained. I could not have agreed more. After she got off at Dhaula Kuan, I resumed my journey towards Dwarka, and instinctively, my mind, always in a mad rush, raced back in time, to the days when Delhi didnithave a mass transit system. When we, the people of Delhi, had to depend entirely on the rickety, black smoke-spewing Yellow-Green DTC buses which operated at the base level of punctuality, hygiene, customer service and safety. So much so, that the monster de buses earned the well-deserved sobriquet of being a Rieller line, due to the number of fatal accidents in which of fatal accidents in which they were involved. Mercifully, for a long time, my



exposure to this horrible ser-vice was limited, as I had the privilege of travelling on the school bus.

school bus.

Although the situation changed when I moved to college, and then university, there remained a saving grace, the University Special, which, with a monthly all-route stuwith a monthly all-route stu-dent pass for a measly Ra 12.50 was the lifeline of stu-dents. But, despite these safe quards, it was difficult to remain isolated from the scary DTC, where the drivers behaved as if they owned Delhi roads as if it were a grand prix track. And the less said about the frequency & spunctuality of the service, the better it is, as quite often, one had to wait for hours on end before an overcrowded bus appeared on the horizon, heaving like a fatigued tor-toise. Expectelly, even before it came to a halt, a virtual

stampede ensued. In the melee, there was an exchange of choicest Punjabi abuses, fisticuffs, an occasional physical atteraction, lucrative business for pickpockets and chain snatchers, and worst of all, a field day for eve-teasers. It was while travelling on these buses that Delhi denizens earned most of their characteristics— of being brawny, insensitive to women and disorderly. During this hullabaloo, the role of the crew was unpredictable. Sometimes they preferred to be mute spectatory-watching over the fracas with the serenity of a smilling Buddha. At other times, they were grumpy, with a short fixes and enterguled in heatstampede ensued. In the

Buddha. At other times, they were grumpy, with a short fuse, and embroiled in heated arguments with harassed commuters, with hard-to-imagine ferocity Nevertheless, once the confusion sorted, as if by divine intervention, and there was no space for more passengers—as every nook and cranny, including the windows, footrests and the rickety bars at the rear of the bus had been gobbled—the driver pressed the accelerator, to bring the bus into painful motion. Hereon, the law of the jungle took over, as rules

were flouted with impunity, without fear of the law-seats reserved for women, the elderly and the physically challenged, hardly, if ever, went to those for whom these had been earmarked. Signs of no smoking, no tobacco, in olitter, and he splitting were ignored callously, without an iota of deterence. Hygiene, well what is that? At the end of this mayhem, those who missed boarding the bus had to wait, patiently, for their next attempt. And the wheel started moving in the same pattern, once ing in the same pattern, once more. This long reverie con-cluded when I reached home cluded when I feached home and parked the car in its slot. As I walked towards my house, I thanked the stars (not any political nor observation or bureaueral) for the winds of change that have blown across the face of my city, transforming it in three decades, heralding the era when state-of-the-art Metro-crisscrossed Delhi like an octopus spreading is tentackes, when radio cabs whizz around, when CNG & electric around, when CNG & electric buses is a common sight.
Delhi's public transport system has indeed come of age.
(The author is a freelance writer; views are personal)

SOUTH KOREA REJECTS MARTIAL LAW Madam — South Korea escaped the martial law imposed by President Yoon Suk Yeol on Tuesday night, within just 6 hours, for the first time since 1980, then 1 will not give the credit for this to the people who had gathered outside the Parliament building late at night, nor to the 190 MPs who overturned the President's crazy decision in just a few hours. The entire credit goes only to the South Korean army, who quietly watched this spectacle from a distance and did not interfere in any way. If the army wanted, it could have followed the President's orders and fired on the crowd of common people and also arrest-

SOUTH KOREA REJECTS MARTIAL LAW

If the army wanted, it could have followed the President's orders and fired on the crowd of common people and also arrested the MPs who had reached the Parliament building. South Korea is one of the most developed and industrialised countries in the world. South Korea's economy is the 12th largest in the world and the fourth largest in Asia. No one is able to understand this decision of the President despite there being no unrest of any kind. Experts are even saying that President despite there being no unrest of any kind. Experts are even saying that President yoon suk Yeol and his wife Kim Kyeon-hee must have taken such a step due to corruption charges against them. Now they will have to step down from their post themselves, or else they will be removed by bringing an impeachment motion against them in the Parliament. Just removing them will not work, but they should be put in jail. Since the founding of South Korea in 1948, several presidents have declared a military emergency. The most recent-and perhaps the most infamous-occurred in 1979 after the assassination of President Park Chung-hee, a for-mer general who had occasionally used martial law to crack down on political protests and opposition since seizing power in 1961.

Jang Bahadur Singh | Jamshedpur LAX VIP SECURITY IN PUNJAB

LAX VIP SECURITY IN PUNJAB

Madam—The recent brazen assassination attempt on former Punjab CM Sukhbir Singh Badal at the Golden Temple under-scores a disturbing breach in security that raises serious concerns about the state's law

#### **Workplace woes for women**



are a few exceptions. India has seen over 400 cases of sexual harassment at work every yea since 2018, with an average of 445 cases being reported annually, according to National Crim Records Bureau (NCRB) data. Over 419 cases

and order. This incident, involving a for-mer terrorist armed with a sophisticated weapon, highlights glaring inadequacies in security protocols at one of Indias most

weapon, highlights glaring inadequacies in security protocols at one of India's most revered religious sites. While CM Bhagwant Mann has commended the police for averting a tragedy, it is evident that more robust measures are required to prevent such incidents. The fact that the attacker, Narain Singh Chaura, was allowed to enter the premises with a weapon exposes lapses in intelligence and ground-level vigilance. Although frisking at religious sites is a sensitive issue, safeguarding lives and ensuring the sanctity of such locations must be paramount. The oppositions call for Chief Minister Mann's resignation reflects widespread frustration over the perceived deterioration in law and order. This incident should compel the Purja's government to take immediate steps to review and strengthen security arrangements, especially at religious and public places. Failure to act decisively risks not only public safety but also the reputation of the tate. lic safety but also the reputation of the state Vishal Mayur | Tumakurı

or about 35 per month, were reported in the country in 2023. There could be more unreport ed ones. That year, Himachai Pradesh record ad the highest number of sexual harassmen cases at the workplace (97), followed by Kerala (83), Maharashtra (46), and Karnataka

(Prevention, Prohibition, and Redressal) Act 2013 (PoSH Act), was enacted to safeguard 2013 (POSH Act), was enacted to safeguard women and provide mechanisms for addressing sexual harassment. In 2023, companies reported 1,160 sexual harassment complaints, the highest number in the past decade. However, only slightly more than half of these cases were resolved, according to data from the Centre for Economic Data and Analysis, Ashbok University. On average, 49 sexual harassment cases were resported every day in 2022.

Jayanthy Subramaniam | Mumbai

#### BING CUSTODIAL CRIMES

CURBING CUSTODIAL CRIMES

Madam — Two recent judgements-one from the Delbi High Court and the other from a special court in Bengaluru-convicting policemen for custodial torture and death of the accused have sent a strong message on putting in place a robust mechanism to end the scourge once and for all. 687 persons died in police custody between April 1, 2018, and March 31, 2023, a damning indictment of the police. Generally, custodial deaths go unreported but for vigilante organisations and proactive families that have a keen nose for suspecting foul play. The Supreme Court guidelines in all cases of arrest or detention are clear-cut. During custodial detentions, mandatory documentation and presence of legal counsel are compulsory. Additionally, every police station should have CCTV cameras installed in strategic points. installed in strategic points. Ganapathi Bhat |Akola

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

# Dream big, but work hard'

Bayang in Chhartisgarh's Raigarh district, state minister of OF Choudhary's journey is a testament to resilience, determination, and remarkable achievements. Overcoming early hardships, including the loss of his father at the age of eight, he cleared the UPSC examination as just 22, becoming one of the youngest IAs officers of his batch.

His tenure in the Indian Administrative Service was marked by innovative governance, which earned him the prestigious Prime Minister's Award for Excellence in Public Administration.

A key figure in the BIP's cam-

Administration.

A key figure in the BIP's campaign during the Bankhand election, Choudhary transitioned to politics and joined the saffron party in 2018, Persevering through electorical challenges, he emerged victoricas in 2023 as a member of the Legislative Assembly from Reigarh.

Currenty serving as the youngest minister in Chief Minister Wishnu Deo

minister in Chief Minister Viahnu Deo Sa's cabinet. Choudhay handles critical portfolios such as Finance, Com-mercial Tax, Housing and Erviron-ment, Planning, and Economics & Statistics, Choudhary's trajectory reflects his deep commitment to pub-lic service. In an exclusive interview with Shishir Roy Chowdhury of The States-man, he discusses his inspiring jour-ncy, the challenges of governance, and his vision for Chhartisgarh's future.

Q. Your journey from a remote village in Chhattisgarh to becoming one of the youngest IAS officers is remarkable. How has your early life shaped your approach to governance and public service?

A. Growing up in Bayang, a remote village in Bagant, a laught me the value of resilience and determination. The headships my family and I

the value of resilience and determina-tion. The hardships my family and I faced made me deeply empathetic toward the struggles of others, espe-cially those in rural areas. As an IAS officer, I focused on grassroots gover-nance, ensuring that the benefits of policies reached the most marginal-ized sections of society. This commit-

ment continues to guide my political journey, where I strive to bring trans-formative changes to people's lives through innovative policies and trans-parent governance.

Q. You have seamlessly transi-tioned from administration to poli-ties. What has been the most chal-lesging part of this shift?

A. The transition from adminis-tration to politics is both challenging and rewarding. As an IAS officer, I. operated within a defined framework, implementing policies set by the gov-ernment. In politics, however, the scope is broader, and the responsibil-ity to connect with people on a perity to connect with people on a per-sonal level is immense. The most challenging aspect is managing public perception while staying true to one's core values. Politics demands balanccore values. Politics demands baranc-ing long-term goals with immediate needs, but it also affers a unique plat-form to shape policies from thei inception. I see this as an opportunity to amplify my impact and serve peo-ple in a more dynamic capacity.

ple in a more dynamic capacity.

Q. How is Chhattisgarh addressing economic growth in agriculture, infrastructure and livelihoods?

A. In Chhattisgarh, we have consistently worked to empower the agriculture sector. As i mentioned earlier, we are purchasing paddy at the rate of RS,3,100 per quintat. We are also focusing on irrigation projects and ensuring the availability of palaily seeks and fertilizers for farmers, which have benefited them significantly.

Under the infrastructure sector, the double-enging government has been approving autonal highways, four-lane roads, and flyowers. Simultaneously, our government has sensured that there is no shortage of funds for basic amenities the roads and steek and s

and water.

Recently, Union minister Nitin
Gadkari approved projects worth Rs
20,000 crore for Chhattisgarh, While
the previous government had
stopped the Pradham Mantri Awas
Yojana, we have now restarted constructing homes for more than 18
lath poor families. We are developing



Nava Raipur and Atal Nagar as cap tal city. There is a plan to develop SCR on the lines of NCR. This will link Raipur, Durg-Bhilai, and Raj-nandgaon, creating a more integrat-ed urban landscape.

## Q. How has Chhattisgarh

Q. How has Chhattisgarh attracted investments and ensured industrial growth?

A. Uader the leadership of Chief Minister Sai, Chhattisgarh recently launched its new Industrial Development Policy for 2024-30. The policy has been designed with a focus on employment generation and is aligned with the vision of building a developed India by 2047. For the first ime, subsidies for industries will be linked to employment creation. If an industry provides jobs to over 1.000 youths, additional incentives will be provided under the RE-SFORE policy. The new policy also encourages investment in sectors such as tourism and healthcare.

Q. What are Chhattisgarh's financial goals for the next five years? A. Our goal is to double Chhat-tisgarh's GDP in the next five years.

We are focusing on policies that will promote job creation and improve resource management. We aim to strengthen the services sector, which currently contributes 35 per cent to the state's GDP, while the aational average is 55 per cent. We are working to bring the services sector's contribution in line with the national average. Our focus is on enhancing sectors like engineering services, research and development, healthcare, tourism, enter-rainment, pharmaccutical and electric vehicles (EVs). We are focusing on policies that will

Q. What is your vision for Chhatdsgarh's economy, and how do you
plan to achieve it?

A. Our vision is to make Chhatdsgarh a self-reliant, industrially
utbrant state focused on sustainable
development. This will be achieved
frough innovation, investment in
infrastructure and the implementation of progressive policies. We plan
to promote sectors such as agiculare, renewable energy, information
technology, and manufacturingall of
which have significant potential for
job creation. Additionally, we are

focusing on emerging sectors like IT, artificial intelligence (AE, robotics and data centers, which will further strengthen the economy. We are also prioritizing industries where fature employment opportunities are expected to arise. Through this approach, we aim to provide jobs to youths and promote Chhattisgarh as a hub for marriage and conference tourism.

# Q. You are often seen as a youth icon in Chhattisgarh. How do you engagewith the younger generation, and what message do you have for them?

A. I firmly believe that the youth A. I firmly believe that the youth are the architects of a nation's future. Whether during my administrative tenure or now in politics, I have constrently emphasized engoging with young minds and encoaraging them to actively participate in nation-building. Forthe youth, my message is smooth piec Dream blg, but black those dreams with hard work and perseverance. Whether it is acquiring new skills, innovating, or participating in democratic pocesses, their contribution is pivotal to creating a stronger India.

#### OCCASIONAL NOTE

OCCASIONAL NOTE

IT is a tradition of melodrama that the tragic motif should be lightened by a certain amount of serio-comic relief. This purpose is being served in connection with the Egyptian traged by the resumption of power to utilize the Gezira irrigation system in the Sudan up to its full capacity without any limitation on the quantity of water to be stored. It was obvious from the British ultimanum that the reference to the Gezira scheme was part of a policy which had been maturely considered, and that its inclusion in the terms submitted to the sinclusion. In the terms submitted to the sinclusion in the terms submitted to the sinclusion. In the terms submitted to the short of the sinclusion in the terms submitted to the which British diplomacy was ready to go a few years ago in order to placate Egyptian sentiment. The Makwar dam the centre piece of the Gezira project, never would or could make any difference to the quantity of water reaching Lower Egypti as the Nile; but because of Egyptian clamour Lord Allenby, who is by no means a weak man, actually bound the Sudanese Government to limit the irrigated area to one tenth of its possible extent. The Injustice of this arrangement had obviously been brought home to the British Government some time previous to the tragedy of last week, and the artificial restriction would have been removed in any case. The Egyptians have only themselves to thank that it has been removed in any case. The Egyptians have only themselves to thank that it has been got rid of summarily rather than by friendly negotiation.

#### FORCE SURROUNDED **SPANISH LOSSES IN** REAR GUARD ACTION

REAR CUARD ACTION
A PARIS message from Tangler says
that the withdrawal of 15,000 Spaniards to
Tetuan has eccasioned keen anxiety,
notwithstanding that the evacuation of
Sheshuan wascarried out with all material.
The rear-guard was attacted when it
reached Daracoba, with heavy Spanish losses, and General Borenguor was wounded
immediately he arrived on the battefield.
The troops then struggled to Souke-larba, where they were surrounded. They
were subsequently forced to retreat along
mountain paths and their communications
were cut Harty preparations are being
made at Tetuan to assist the men in retreat.

#### **INDIAN STATE TROOPS**

#### POTENTIAL **AUXILIARY OF GREAT VALUE**

SPEAKING at a banquet at Rajkot

SPEAKING at a banquet at Rajkot yesterday His Excellency the Viceroy said.

"I shall hope on some other occasion to make more extensive visits to the States in this agency and to see the tea-ports of Bhavanagar and Porbandar, Dharagadra with its salt works, the Setrunja hill of Palitana, and many other places and important cities of which you are rightly proud;—
"Let me take this opportunity of expressing my deep appreciation of the splendid services which the States in this part of India rendered to the Empire in the Great War. These services were of a piece with your martial traditions and that high reputation for loyalty to the Crown which."

with your martial traditions and that high reputation for loyalty to the Crown which it has been the pride of the Indian States to maintain and cherish.

"I am glad to learn that some of the young relatives of the ruling familles of these States have adopted military careers in the Indian Army, and I rust that this connexion will continue and be extended, and that boys of this stamp in the rising generation will turn their attention to studying at Dehra Dun with a leeve to qualifying themselves to enter Sandhurst and receive King Commissions. I am glad to hear that the Indian State Forces' scheme has been approved by a number of Dur-has been approved by a number of Dur hear that the Indian State Forces' scheme
has been approved by a number of Durbars and has been adopted in many States.
Well organized State troops form a potenthe long and the state of the state of the state of the learning of the learning of the learning of the learning of the state o

#### **CHICAGO MURDERS**

#### MORE THAN ONE PER DAY

CHICAGO holds an unenviable mur-

CHICAGO holds an unemman.

The Times Chicago correspondent says that the official statistics show that, in less than six years, 1500 murders were committed. In the first ten months of 1924 there were 294 as against 270 in the whole of 1923. In October, the last month for which figures are available, marders were committed at when one per day. are available, murders were com the rate of more than one per day.

( D.::

## Will Gwadar become another Hambantota?

wadar has been a fishing village since history began. Its location on the southern coast for modern Balochitan meant that its inhabitants had to live off locally caught fish and depend on seasonal showers for potable water.

The tribes there encountered by Alexander the Great during his retreat across Makran in 325 BC were described by his historian Arrian as lethityophagi or fish-naters—"a hairy race, with long nails with which they used to divide their fish, and they used for weapons wooden pikes hardened

used to divide their fish, and they used for weapors wooden pikes hardened with fire'.

Alexander led one group of his troops over land while his admiral Nearthus took the rest in ships saling the coast. Alexander, she will be secould, took the rest in ships saling the roast. Alexander, she will be secould be second be secon

whar ha had not changed much even 2,000 years later. Surveying it in 1896, the English geographer Col T.H. Holdich wendered "what manner of madness could have induced him sealect such a route". Holdich recog-nised the descendants of the fish-select such a fourth of the sealers, remarking that not only did they eat fish but "fish enters into food of dego, cats, camela and cattle".

Although its history offered nothing more than a seemingly unchanged continuity, Makran's geography assumed a significance for 20th-century superpowers. To them, the Arabian Sea became a paddling pool in which they could float their boats and paly war games. The beachheads of Gwidar and Ormara assumed a new significance.

significance.

In March 1972, Zulffikar Ali Bhutto as president Richard Nixon Offering President Richard Nixon Offering "port and tracking station facilities along the Arabian sea coast near Karachi". Secretary of State W. Rogers advised Nixon that the US did not "envisage a need for such facilities but remained open to any specific proposals in port expansion".

Bhutto perissted. Before his meeting with Nixon a year late Repetender 1973. Henry Kissinger briefed Nixon that Bhutto's main motive in seeking a Balochistan port was probably "to help him bring more commerce and jobs and vin more support is that backwaste.

Aparsely populated, chronically unstable, opposition-dominated province".

unstable, opposition-dominated province".

During their meeting, Nison admitted to Bhutte that "the Gwadar) pert proposal that you made intrigued me. We cannot say anything definitive on this today (1 Dr. Kissinger will look into this, So far, we have put everything in that area on Diego Garcia. It might be useful to have access to a port as well".

Kissinger added two queries:

First is the construction. Second is

First is the construction. Second is

the question of use. This second ques
tion becomes an issue only when the

port comes into being. Even then,

there is the difference between formal

and Informal use."

Bhutto reassured them: "I am

morally certain that a US presence

would be justified in terms of Pak
stami interests. I don't say hat it will

not be an issue in Pakistan, but I

believe I can manage it."

The development of Gwadar

found a resonance in Chinese pre
mier Zhou Entla's mind. During a

meeting in Beijing a few months

found a resonance in Cainese premier Zhou Rinlai's mind. During a
meeting in Beijing a few months
later, Zhou Enlai tool Kissinger: We
will be in great favour of your assisting Pakistan and building a naval
port in Pakistan.\*

Fifty years later, the tables have
been turned. China has stepped for
ward and made Gwadar its own,
leaving the US with its toehold in
Diego García. Hopes that Gwadar
would replicate China's success
with Shenzhen (China first special
economic zone and now an economic powerhouse) have been
belled. The Baloch complain: 'Job
promises were not met. Industrial
promises were not met. The business opportunities for Pakistanis
were not met. Of the promised nine
seepcial economic zones, not one is

special economic zones, not one is fully functional to date.' Little benefit has trickled down to the local population in Gwadar. Worse, they are having to compete



with marauding Chinese trawlers for their own fish.

Could Gwadar fail, become another Hambentota, the Chinese funded port in Sri Lanka sinking under heavy indebtedness?

Mao Zedong once said: "Success requires you to stand on your own leet." He was silent about trying to succeed on borrowed crutches. He advised also about how to learn from others: "One is the dogmatic attitude of transplanting everything, whether

or not it is suited to our conditions [.]
The other attitude is to use our heads
and learn those things that suit our
conditions, that is, to about whatever
experience is useful to us." That is the
attitude his people adopted.
All of Pakistan's governments
have preferred Mao's first option.
They have always felt more comfortable riding on the back of the Chinese
dragon. rown fish. Could Gwadar fail, become

CROSSWORD V

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#### YESTERDAY'S SOLUTION



- ACROSS

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- The Outchman, say, regularly likes doin smoke rings (4.4) Soft, wet lad touring empty 9 (5) After cratification.

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- ertainment ding a TV chi
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    17 It might accompany Harry Belafonte -
- troupe's outsiders must visit italian city on the way back (5.34) seem might read poem on the radio 8s lines are, crucially, of different sizes (7) Why case off moorshine? (7) Strange times, son. Abso-bloomin-lutely? (6) dividing a TV chan (3-5) Online business is drug trafficking (1-8) Smash-and-grab, i Abso-bloomin-lutely? (6) Remodels contemporary apartment second (6) Half your color turned up in town (5) 22

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