

Editorial



No fetters

In *Thug Life* case, Court upholds
certified films against extra-judicial bans

In ensuring the screening of the film *Thug Life* – thespian Kamal Haasan plays the lead role – in Karnataka, the Supreme Court of India has unequivocally asserted a fundamental free speech principle that certified films cannot be stifled by protests or a recourse to “hurt sentiments”. Following Mr. Haasan’s comment in a pre-launch event, that Kannada was born from Tamil (it is factually inaccurate as both languages have been known to share a proto-Dravidian ancestor), the film has faced an extra-judicial ban in Karnataka; the Karnataka High Court had suggested that he apologise. The Supreme Court’s directions however repudiate this “moral” position taken by the High Court, bringing into focus the judiciary’s role as a guardian of due process. After the film was certified by the CBFC, there should be no fetters on its release, and, therefore, the extra-judicial ban violated the rule of law. The film certification framework, governed by the Cinematograph Act, 1952 and its rules, is designed to safeguard creativity, while maintaining a balance between constitutionally mandated free speech and reasonable restrictions. The CBFC, equipped to vet films with these legal standards, is solely tasked with doing so. Amorphous groups claiming “hurt sentiments” to intimidate a film’s release have no role in this. Giving in to such claims risks violating free speech rights and hurting the livelihoods of actors, artists, technicians and workers. The top court rightly characterised extra-judicial bans as a direct infringement on film-makers’ constitutionally guaranteed right to freedom of speech and expression.

By emphatically rejecting the extra-judicial ban, the Court has reiterated its positions that maintaining law and order in the face of divergent views is the state’s responsibility. It is vital to understand that certified and regulated freedom of speech, as assessed by the CBFC, is distinct from hate speech, which finds no constitutional protection and can be legally restricted. This crucial distinction underscores that legitimate artistic expression, once cleared by the designated authority, deserves state protection. Moving forward, the Court’s directions should pave the way for the state to provide institutional safeguards against unofficial bans overriding the CBFC’s certification and release. These could include holding theatre owners accountable for unwarranted cancellations of scheduled releases, policing guidelines that distinguish lawful dissent from illegal intimidation and also allowing for citizens to watch a certified film without fear.

Quantum challenge

Administrative reform is essential for
India to make advances

Scientists from IIT-Delhi and the DRDO recently demonstrated a key advance in quantum cybersecurity that stands to revolutionise how the world will communicate in the future. The world’s secrets are currently stored and communicated via channels that are protected by difficult mathematical problems. Over the years, an increasing amount of computing power available to certain actors has forced these problems to become difficult and high-unbreakable. The imminence of quantum computing requires this paradigm to change because quantum computers can (at least on paper) solve problems currently out of reach of the most powerful conventional supercomputers. Quantum cybersecurity is one prong of this change, promising to protect communication channels irrespective of the computing power available to malicious actors. The IIT-Delhi and DRDO team successfully demonstrated a quantum key-distribution scheme through one kilometre of free space on the institute’s campus. Such a technology allows two individuals (or stations) located a kilometre apart to securely access messages they send each other. If an eavesdropper tries to intercept any message, instantaneous changes in the keys the individuals use to decrypt the messages will reveal the channel has been compromised, and in a way that the eavesdropper cannot prevent. If scaled up to include satellites, the technology could allow stations anywhere in India to exchange information through a quantum network without fear of being compromised.

Herein lies the rub. Quantum communications is one of the four themes of the National Quantum Mission, approved in 2023 with an outlay of ₹6,003 crore until 2031. Many of the same problems assailing fundamental research in India have already been set research under the Mission, however. A small fraction of the outlay has been disbursed thus far even as venture capital flow into startups remains trivial. Scientists have complained that just-in-time funding, absence of single-window clearances, and documentation requirements have increased the duration of projects. There are persistent foreign hardware and software dependencies: materials required for specific use-cases, such as cryostats and sensors, need to be fabricated abroad while most quantum software stacks are currently implemented by multinational companies. Government pay does not match global offers and lack of timely access to resources has forced researchers to accept short-term contracts and rent equipment. In fact, India’s commitment, itself down from the ₹8,000 crore announced in 2020, is dwarfed by those of the U.S. and China, which are five- and 20-times higher, respectively. If the demonstration at IIT-Delhi is to scale, the government cannot simply ‘clip on’ scientific talent and technological and economic opportunity to existing infrastructure. Administrative reform is essential.

On June 13, 2025, the world has, once again, witnessed the dangerous consequences of unilateral militarism when Israel launched a deeply troubling and unlawful strike against Iran and its sovereignty.

The Indian National Congress has condemned these bombings and targeted assassinations on Iranian soil, which represent a dangerous escalation with grave regional and global consequences. As with so many of Israel’s recent actions, including its brutal and disproportionate campaign in Gaza, this operation was executed with utter disregard for civilian lives and regional stability. These actions will only deepen instability and sow the seeds of further conflict.

That such an attack should come at a time when diplomatic efforts between Iran and the United States were showing signs of promise makes it all the more distressing. Five rounds of negotiations had already taken place this year, with a sixth that was scheduled for June. And, as recently as in March 2025, the Director of National Intelligence of the United States, Tulsi Gabbard, clearly testified to Congress that Iran was not pursuing a nuclear weapons programme, and that its Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei had not authorised its resumption since its suspension in 2003.

Israel under the dispensation now

It is important to remember that the current Israeli leadership, under Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, has a long and unfortunate record of undermining peace and nurturing extremism. His government’s continuing expansion of illegal settlements, its alliances with ultra-nationalist factions, and its obstruction of the two-state solution have not only deepened the suffering of the Palestinian people but also pushed the broader region toward perpetual conflict.

Indeed, history reminds us that Mr. Netanyahu helped fan the flames of hatred that culminated in the assassination of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin in 1995, ending one of the most hopeful peace initiatives between Israelis and Palestinians.

Given this record, it is not surprising that Mr. Netanyahu would choose escalation over



Sonia Gandhi

is the Chairperson of
the Congress
Parliamentary Party

New Delhi’s
silence on the
devastation in
Gaza and the
hostilities
against Iran is
a disturbing
departure from
its moral and
diplomatic
traditions

engagement. What is deeply regrettable is that the U.S. President Donald Trump – who once spoke out against America’s endless wars and the influence of the military-industrial complex – now appears willing to follow this destructive path. He himself has repeatedly pointed out how wilfully false claims about Iraq possessing weapons of mass destruction led to a costly war that destabilised the region and caused immense destruction in Iraq.

Therefore, Mr. Trump’s statement on June 17, dismissing his own intelligence chief’s assessment and claiming that Iran was “very close” to acquiring nuclear weapons, is deeply disappointing. The world expects and needs leadership that is grounded in facts and driven by diplomacy, and not by force or falsehoods.

No place for double standards

Given the region’s fraught history, Israel’s security concerns about a nuclear-armed Iran cannot be dismissed. However, there can be no room for double standards. Israel itself is a nuclear weapons state with a long record of military aggression against its neighbours. In contrast, Iran remains a signatory to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and had, under the 2015 Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, agreed to stringent limits on uranium enrichment in exchange for sanctions relief. This agreement, backed by the five permanent members of the United Nations Security Council, Germany and the European Union, was verified by international observers, until it was unilaterally abandoned by the United States in 2018. That decision undid years of painstaking diplomacy and once again cast a long shadow over the region’s fragile stability.

India, too, has borne the consequences of that rupture. The reimposition of sanctions on Iran severely constrained India’s ability to pursue key strategic and economic projects, including the International North-South Transport Corridor and the development of Chabahar Port – initiatives that held the promise of deeper connectivity with Central Asia and more direct access to Afghanistan.

Iran has been a long-standing friend to India and is bound to us by deep civilisational ties. It has a history of steadfast support, including in

Jammu and Kashmir at crucial junctures. In 1994, Iran helped block a resolution critical of India at the UN Commission on Human Rights on the Kashmir issue. Indeed, the Islamic Republic of Iran has been much more cooperative with India than its predecessor, the Imperial State of Iran, that had tilted towards Pakistan in the 1965 and 1971 wars.

Meanwhile, India and Israel have also developed strategic relations in recent decades. This unique position gives our country the moral responsibility and the diplomatic leverage to act as a bridge for de-escalation and peace. This is not simply an abstract principle. Lakhs of Indian citizens are living and working across West Asia, which makes peace in the region an issue of vital national interest.

Israel’s recent actions against Iran have taken place in an atmosphere of impunity, enabled by near-unconditional support from powerful western nations. While the Indian National Congress unequivocally condemned the absolutely horrific and totally unacceptable attacks by Hamas on October 7, 2023, we cannot remain silent in the face of Israel’s catastrophic and disproportionate response. More than 55,000 Palestinians have lost their lives. Entire families, neighbourhoods, and even hospitals have been obliterated. Gaza stands on the brink of famine, and its civilian population continues to suffer unspeakable hardship.

India’s disturbing stance

In the face of this humanitarian catastrophe, the Narendra Modi government has all but abandoned India’s long-standing and principled commitment to a peaceful two-state solution, one that envisions a sovereign, independent Palestine living side-by-side with Israel in mutual security and dignity.

New Delhi’s silence on the devastation in Gaza and now on the unprovoked escalation against Iran reflects a disturbing departure from our moral and diplomatic traditions. This represents not just a loss of voice but also a surrender of values.

It is still not too late. India must speak clearly, act responsibly, and use every diplomatic channel available to defuse tensions and promote a return to dialogue in West Asia.

Lighting the spark in U.K.-India cultural relations

May was a month of magical bonanza for United Kingdom-India relations. The long-anticipated Free Trade Agreement was ratified by both Prime Ministers, and it was another milestone that illuminated a different but equally significant dimension of their partnership: culture.

On May 2, U.K. Secretary of State for Culture, Rt Hon Lisa Nandy, and India’s Minister for Culture, Gajendra Singh Shekhawat, signed the Programme of Cultural Cooperation (POCC). This landmark agreement promises to light up the cultural corridor between the two nations, reaffirming their shared creative spirit.

The POCC outlines five programme areas: digital technologies for culture, exhibitions and collections, performances and events, cultural property, and sustainability. These themes directly support the creative economy, a core sector driving the U.K. government’s industrial strategy. This agreement signals a shared commitment to cross-cultural collaboration and economic growth.

Before arriving in Delhi to sign the POCC, Ms. Nandy, the first Labour Cabinet Minister of Indian heritage, was the highest-ranking international delegate at the World Audio Visual & Entertainment Summit (WAVES) Summit, held in Mumbai. In her keynote, she powerfully highlighted the collaborative potential of the India-U.K. cultural and creative industries, sustainable by nature and an employment multiplier.

The growth of the creative arts sector

Globally, the creative arts sector is rapidly growing, projected to reach 10% of global GDP by 2030. At the G-20 New Delhi Leaders’ Summit in 2023, global leaders unanimously called for greater investment in the sector. India hosting WAVES for the first time underscored its commitment, resulting in significant business deals and international agreements.

The POCC between India and the U.K. builds on this momentum. It brings together the Indian Ministry of Culture, the U.K. government’s Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport



Alison Barrett

MBE, is the Country
Director India at
the British Council

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and the British Council in India, alongside major U.K. cultural institutions – including Arts Council England, the British Library, the British Museum, the Natural History Museum, and the Science Museum Group. With over 1,700 accredited museums in the U.K., the scope for partnerships with their Indian counterparts is tremendous, especially around leveraging digital technology for sharing cultural experiences and heritage.

At its core, the POCC signals hope: the creative economy can foster a more inclusive future, encompassing tech-driven sectors such as gaming, digital content, film, OTT, television and more – creating opportunities for skilled workers and innovators.

That is great news for India. With its deep cultural heritage, cutting-edge technology, skilled artisan base, and the world’s largest youth population, India is uniquely positioned to lead. India’s creative economy, valued at \$35 billion, employs nearly 8% of its workforce, second only to agriculture. According to the Asian Development Bank’s report (2022), ‘Creative India: Tapping the Full Potential’, six of India’s top 10 creative hubs – from Badgam in Jammu and Kashmir to Tiruppur in Tamil Nadu – are in non-metro regions. This shows India’s diverse cultural heritage. India, with over 300 universities and 3,000 colleges offering courses in design, arts, and architecture, is nurturing a global creative workforce.

A role for the U.K.

In 2023, during India’s G-20 presidency, the U.K. played a pivotal role in supporting the cultural agenda. Artistic partnerships, creative project grants, and year-long cultural exchanges, such as Wales in India, which culminated at the 2024 Hornbill Festival in Nagaland, furthered that agenda building, redefining India-U.K. cultural ties and building lasting bonds.

Why do these global partnerships matter so much?

First, the creative economy is evolving rapidly. It faces challenges including skilled labour shortage. To meet this, we need sustained investment in education, vocational training and

apprenticeships. International collaborations can help empower creative professionals with global competencies and best practices.

Second, emerging technologies such as Artificial Intelligence and augmented reality and virtual reality (AR/VR) are transforming the sector. As the British Council’s recent report, Arts and Technologies in India: Reimagining the Future argues, it is time to integrate it into India’s creative education framework. Cultural exchange and cross-border partnerships can support professionals in navigating this digital shift.

India’s creative canvas is expanding, driven by cultural wealth, youth potential, and a bold vision. Prime Minister Narendra Modi envisions India as a global creative hub – and with a three-pronged approach focused on education, skills, and international collaboration, we are well on our way. But it will require sustained cooperation between government, industry and academia to make that vision a reality.

Businesses and projects

Indian companies, too, are doing their bit. Take Royal Enfield, the iconic U.K.-India motorcycle brand, which is working in the Himalayas through its Social Mission. In partnership with UNESCO, it is helping to safeguard intangible cultural heritage and working with over 580 artisans through its textile conservation project, The Himalayan Knot. This initiative not only preserves sustainable textile traditions but also creates new market linkages for craft communities. Ms. Nandy heard this story first hand at the reception hosted in her honour by British High Commissioner Lindsey Cameron and this writer in Delhi, where the Serendipity Arts Festival’s Birmingham chapter was also launched – a moving reminder of how businesses can be storytellers too.

What truly binds the U.K. and India together are their people and their stories. In a world grappling with conflict and uncertainty, culture and creativity remain among the most time-tested healers of relations between people and nations. And in that, we have every reason to celebrate – and invest in – the creative spark that unites us.

Kashmiri students, and were waving the tricolour on reaching New Delhi. This raises optimism that at long last, the disenfranchised youth of Kashmir are now taking a step closer to endorsing themselves to the Indian Republic.

Nalini Vijayaraghavan,
Thiruvananthapuram

No to intolerance

The Supreme Court of India’s firm stand reaffirming the rights of film-makers and theatre owners, as seen in its direction to the Karnataka government to ensure the screening of *Thug Life*, is

both timely and commendable. In a democracy, artistic freedom must not be held hostage by threats of violence or mob pressure. By underlining the state’s duty to protect lawful expression, the Court has not only defended cinema but also upheld the rule of law. Such judgments strengthen the spine of free speech and remind us that intolerance must never dictate what the public can or cannot watch.

K. Chidanand Kumar,
Bangalore

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GROUND ZERO



A security personnel keeps vigil in front of the Hanuman temple where beef was allegedly found, in Dhubri, Assam. RITURAJ KONWAR

Sowing seeds of mistrust in Assam

✦ The Muslim-majority district of Dhubri, in Assam, close to the Bangladesh border, has remained largely calm after experiencing some fraught periods following the demolition of the Babri Masjid in 1992. This month, however, cattle body parts were allegedly found at a Hanuman temple on successive days, sparking communal tensions. **Rahul Karmakar** reports on a district on edge

Sobjer Ali is a man of routine. Every day, for nearly 50 years, he has travelled by boat between Kuntirchar Part 2, the village where he lives in Dhubri district of Assam, and Patharghat, where he ran a shop selling cattle feed. The routine, disturbed in the past sometimes by festivals, floods, and communal conflicts, was disrupted on June 14 when his world turned upside down. The shop that sustained Ali's family of six was one of the 110 deemed illegal and demolished by the local authorities. This happened a week after the body parts of cattle were allegedly found on successive days near a Hanuman temple about 2 kilometres away, triggering anger in the district.

Dhubri, the headquarters of the Muslim-majority Dhubri district, is 290 km west of Guwahati. It is bounded by the Brahmaputra river and its tributary, Gadadhar, on three sides. The town stands close to where the Brahmaputra becomes the Yamuna after flowing past the India-Bangladesh border. Dhubri is also used as a metaphor by some communities and political parties to underline the fear that drives politics in Assam — of how the influx of people from Bangladesh can one day overrun 'indigenous' Indians.

"We have endured worse situations, but *aage ketu peite laathi maarey nai* (no one snatched away our sources of livelihood earlier)," said Ali. "We have been paying ₹50 per week to the municipality through a lessee who renews our lease every year. We barely had an hour to salvage our wares before the demolition started." He said he cannot understand why he was punished for what miscreants did elsewhere in the town.

Over the last few weeks, a string of similar incidents involving cattle have kept Dhubri on edge. On June 10, citing instances of pieces of meat being purportedly thrown in public places after Eid celebrations, Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma alleged that beef is being "weaponised" against Hindus in the State. Stressing that the Assamese people have to take a "non-compromising" stance to push back "illegal foreigners," Sarma maintained that the State was waging a struggle against forces which had "sympathisers" across the world.

The spark

Patharghat, a ferry point on the bank of the Brahmaputra in Dhubri, is about 200 metres from a park called the Netai Dhubuni Ghat. This was constructed in honour of a washerwoman, Dhubri, from whom the district gets its name. Flanking this park along an 800 m stretch of road are several places of worship that once made Dhubri a religious confluence. These include a Ram temple, a Kali temple, the Panchpeer dargah, The Gurudwara Sri Guru Tegh Bahadur Sahib, and an Armenian church. The offices of the Dhubri Dis-

Sobjer Ali is a man of routine. Every day, for nearly 50 years, he has travelled by boat between Kuntirchar Part 2, the village where he lives in Dhubri district of Assam, and Patharghat, where he ran a shop selling cattle feed. The routine, disturbed in the past sometimes by festivals, floods, and communal conflicts, was disrupted on June 14 when his world turned upside down. The shop that sustained Ali's family of six was one of the 110 deemed illegal and demolished by the local authorities. This happened a week after the body parts of cattle were allegedly found on successive days near a Hanuman temple about 2 kilometres away, triggering anger in the district.

SORJER ALI
Shopkeeper

trict Commissioner and Senior Superintendent of Police are located on the stretch from Patharghat to the Armenian church, which was converted into a ladies' club years ago.

According to the Chief Minister, around Eid-al-Adha on June 7, "miscreants" scribbled some "provocative" words on the walls of some structures in this high-security zone. He suggested to the media that the words were written by people who belonged to Nabin Bangla, a group that reportedly espoused the merger of Dhubri with Bangladesh. He also said that the "head of a cow" was discovered at the 35-year-old Hanuman temple in the town's Baluchar Ward No. 3 on June 8, the day after the *qurbani* (sacrifice) Eid.

The Hanuman temple is situated on about half an acre of land owned by a man named Vishal Agarwal. He works as a distributor of soft drinks for the Dhubri region. Unlike conventional temples, it is a small, rectangular, tin-roofed concrete structure about 6 feet in height.

This plot of land is surrounded by two lanes, a school, and the office of the Seemanta Chetana Mancha, an international-border-areas-specific wing of the Rashtriya Swamayevek Sangh (RSS). The Dhubri Baluchar Kabastan (cemetery) is located across one of the lanes, while an office of the Forest Department is across the other. The temple is also located about 50 m from the Dhubri Magistrate Colony and diagonally across the Iddagah Field, behind which is a Muslim locality.

On the night of June 8, after the alleged sight of the cow's head sparked tension, the authorities dismantled 12 makeshift shops run by Muslims along the wall of the Iddagah Field after right-wing protesters claimed that they sold beef and other illegal items. The Assam Cattle Preservation Act, 2021, provides for the preservation of cattle by regulating their slaughter, consumption, and



The Hanuman temple where miscreants allegedly tried to stir communal tensions. RITURAJ KONWAR

transportation in the State.

Agarwal declined to speak on the beef controversy surrounding the temple on his plot. He said that much of the land used to be a jute warehouse until a decade ago. He also said that he had engaged Ramjan Ali Sheikh, the first man to be arrested when pieces of beef were again found on June 9, nearly at the same spot, as a guard, because Sheikh's uncle used to be the guard earlier.

"My son performed his duty diligently. Like any other day, he came home on the morning of June 9 for breakfast," said Sheikh's mother, Amina Begum. "Many policemen were posted in the area around the temple from the night before. In the morning, the police summoned my son as they suspected him of having placed the beef in the temple. He has been in lock-up since." Hers is one of the seven Muslim families in the Hindu-majority Baluchar locality.

According to Masud Zaman, an advocate associated with the Badruddin Ajmal-led All India United Democratic Front (AIUDF), the discovery of cattle body parts for the second time despite watertight security reflected a possible design to let the situation get out of hand.

"The police picked up 18 people randomly without going after the real culprits behind the incident. Some of us stayed at the police station until 2.30 in the morning on June 10 to get some of these people released. They included a minor boy, a kidney patient, a government employee on hospital duty, and a man with a terminally ill daughter," he said. Among at least 50 others arrested over the next few days was Noor Islam Haque of Gaspara village, known to beg and sleep on the streets in the administrative hub of Dhubri.

Zaman said that the local authorities handled the situation well after the first incident on June 8. A committee comprising members of the Seemanta Chetana Mancha, Muslims, and members of other organisations decided that they would maintain peace at any cost.

"After the second incident took place on June 9, schools were closed on June 10. But everything was normal from the next day," he said. "Then the Chief Minister arrived on June 13 and said that he would issue an order to shoot on sight those who were pelting stones. This gave the impression that there is total unrest in Dhubri."

A string of incidents

From June 14, incidents similar to those at the Dhubri temple were reported elsewhere in Assam. The Chief Minister posted on X that beef was allegedly thrown near a Kali temple at Lakhipur in the adjoining Goalpara district; the head of a cow was allegedly found at Borpukhuri in central Assam's Hojai for the second time in less than a week; and skulls of cows were allegedly discarded near a namghar, a neo-Vaishnavite prayer hall, in north-eastern Assam's Lakhimpur district. The police arrested more than a dozen people in connection with these incidents.

Piklu Paul, the vice-president of the Dhubri unit of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), said that the Hindus in the district have always lived under pressure. In the aftermath of the Babri Masjid demolition in 1992, up to 14 people were killed and curfew was imposed for more than a month. There was relatively less violence in 2012 as a fallout of the Bodo tribal-Muslim conflict in the adjoining Bodoland Territorial Region. "We are grateful to the Chief Minister for shoot-at-sight orders, which have kept the miscreants indoors after dusk. Dhubri could have burned had this tough step not been taken," he said.

Senior Congress leader Rakibul Hussain, who ended the AIUDF's 15-year run in the Dhubri Lok Sabha constituency in 2024, chose to stay out of



I was drawn into riots when I was young. Thankfully, no one got killed this time. But the cold stares and animosity in the eyes of people now is worse than death.

MD ABDUL SATTAH MOLLAH
Former employee of a match factory

the controversy. But Kazi Mahmudul, a local Congress leader, was ready to speak. "We have no complaints if those responsible for such a heinous act are punished according to the law, but carrying out demolition drives ostensibly linked to the Hanuman temple incident is painful," he said. "The government has the right to evict people from the land it owns, but there is a process to be followed. One has to give time to people who have been living in certain areas for decades."

Other party leaders said no "true Muslim" would place beef near a place of worship of people belonging to another religion.

The drive has hit Jaharuddin, a Dhubri resident, who pulled a handcart to deliver goods from Patharghat to dealers across the town. "The government should be lenient with demolitions so that we survive," he said.

Cattle smuggling

Dhubri residents believe that an application filed by the Dhubri Iddagah Committee to the district authorities, seeking to bring in about 4,000 cattle for *qurbani* (sacrifice) on Eid, was the genesis of the trouble. The committee issued 'membership cards', valid up to June 7, to procure the cattle.

"But the number of cattle brought in from West Bengal via Boxirhat (town bordering Assam) from June 3-5 was some 4 lakh," a member of the Seemanta Chetana Mancha said. "This caused a traffic jam on the highway. Thousands of people, each with a bull or cow on a leash, were walking along the road as if they were enjoying some kind of patronage. They paraded through Hindu areas, hurting the sentiments of many."

After local Hindus raised a hue and cry about the cattle passing through a security cordon along the inter-State border easily, and in violation of the Assam Cattle Preservation Act, the government took steps to check the inflow. But these measures had a minimal effect.

During his visit to Dhubri, Chief Minister Sarma said that a new network of cattle smugglers had increased its activities over the last few months and was bringing in cattle in large numbers from West Bengal. He vowed to crack down on this 'network' while asserting the government's commitment to enforcing law and order and defeating all communal forces.

Both Hindus and Muslims, however, have started doubting the government's intention. Zaman said that the authorities "showed a tendency to arrest petty criminals" for the Hanuman temple incident and not those who allegedly violated the cattle transportation law. The district is notorious for cattle smuggling to Bangladesh, where a cow fetches twice the average price of ₹30,000 in Assam. Some residents allege that the smugglers operate in nexus with a section of the district officials and the police, who, according to them, get a cut of up to 10%.

Dhubri's Senior Superintendent of Police, Leena Doley, dismissed allegations that the police were refusing to arrest illegal cattle traders. "We have rounded up a few, and the process is ongoing," she said. She replaced Navin Singh, who was transferred out of Dhubri a week after the incident at the Hanuman temple. As many as 164 police personnel, including 34 sub-inspectors, were also transferred out of the district.

"The message has gone out that the government will not tolerate disturbance of any kind. The situation is totally under control now," District Commissioner Dibakar Nath said.

Uneasy neighbours

Local BJP leaders blamed the Congress for keeping the district on edge. They said that the Congress had fuelled riots after the Babri Masjid demolition and had also let the situation deteriorate in 2012. They also said that it was not a coincidence that the incident at the Hanuman temple had happened a year after the Congress wrested the Dhubri parliamentary seat from the AIUDF.

Congress leaders, on the other hand, said that they were not surprised by the BJP's bid to project the AIUDF as a more secular party, as it was the "B-team" of the saffron brigade. Referring to the Dhubri incident, State Congress president Gaurav Gogoi said that the RSS and its affiliates, including the BJP, were fanning communal sentiments ahead of the 2026 Assembly elections. "Investigations should be carried out against all those arrested for placing beef and parts of a cow in public places, including religious institutions, but those who put such ideas in the minds of miscreants should be probed too. Such incidents are part of the pre-election strategy of the BJP-RSS to hide their failures," he said.

Chief Minister Sarma retaliated, asking Gogoi to submit proof before accusing Hindus of fomenting trouble. "If Hindus have to throw meat, they will throw pork, not beef," he said.

At Baluchar, the seeds of distrust between Hindus and Muslims, sown years ago, seem to have sprouted. Paresh Das, a trader, said, "This was not the first time that *go-mangsho* (beef) was placed near the Hanuman temple. We know it will not be the last time, either. As the minority community, we have to tolerate this. We just hope that our sentiments are respected."

"Dhubri has not been an example of communal harmony, but economic compulsions often forced the people to apply the brakes after briefly attacking each other," said 83-year-old Md Abdul Sattar Mollah, a former employee of a match factory. "I was drawn into riots when I was young. Thankfully, no one got killed this time. But the cold stares and animosity in the eyes of people now is worse than death."

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Matter of choice

Karnataka, Goa play havoc with transport system

Recently, two State governments, Karnataka and Goa, arbitrarily applied the brakes on ride hailing, app-based taxi, bike and auto services, short-changing consumers in the process. Karnataka has apparently not made the necessary changes in its motor vehicles rules and guidelines that makes the registration of bike taxis possible; as a result, the April 2 High Court order that debarred them from plying in the absence of a regulatory framework, came into effect from June 16. In Goa, Ola and Uber have been stopped from operating in the State, following protests from taxi driver unions.



Now, the remaining cab and auto players are raking it in, with cheaper options being driven off the road. In Goa's case, it appears that the government has succumbed to the influential local cab lobby. Cab operators are part of a large tourist ecosystem. But their livelihood concerns can be taken with a pinch of salt, as they charge tourists very stiff rates. Meanwhile, the aggregator experience in this country over a decade suggests that arbitrary pricing and, perhaps worse still, refusals to play have come down. The cabbies' apprehension that these aggregators charge high commissions from drivers is easily dealt with by changing the revenue model. Indeed, in Bengaluru, a commission based system has been replaced by the driver paying a flat daily fee to the aggregator. The social security code for gig workers also ensures certain benefits. So, the case for banning aggregators is unconvincing. Commuters benefit, while service providers too will not be worse off. Meanwhile, the local taxi services too manage with their niche clientele. However, the issue of commuter safety raised with respect to aggregator services needs to be addressed, with platforms picking up the tab.

Ride hailing services are predictable in their pricing, quick and efficient. Bike taxis (estimated to be running into lakhs in Bengaluru) have emerged as game-changers for being cheap and fast. However, at the heart of the bike taxi ban lies a ridiculous legal issue. Section 2 (28) of the Motor Vehicles Act can be interpreted to exclude motorcycles from the ambit of motor vehicles, as it refers to vehicles with four wheels and a certain engine capacity. In this circumstance, bikes cannot be registered under Section 2 (7) of the Act as a 'contract carriage'. This has led to bike taxis coming under a cloud in a number of States, and not just Karnataka. A January 22, 2024 advisory by the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways sought to clear the air by saying that bikes indeed are motor vehicles and "States are advised to accept and process applications for contract carriage permits". But States will have to make enabling provisions. If they have not done so, it perhaps leads to the question of whether lobbies are at work.

This sort of transport chaos compromises the efficiency of a city. A holistic transport policy that offers commuters a menu of options and privileges mass, sustainable transport is the need of the hour.

POCKET

RAVIKANTH

ELLINA SAMANTROY
ROHIT MANI TIWARI

The recent landmark Supreme Court judgment on *K Uma Devi vs State of Tamil Nadu* pronounced on May 23 is significant for recognising maternity rights as a fundamental right (FR) under Article 21 of the Constitution.

The judgment is hailed as historic, marking a significant advancement in the protection of rights of working women, promoting job security and ensuring access to maternal and child care.

The Court has extensively drawn from earlier judgments on the matters of reproductive rights and maternity benefits.

The most salient feature of the judgment is the length at which the Court referred to International Conventions and instruments i.e. Universal Declaration of Human Rights, United Nations Economic and Social Council, Convention on the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), Maternity Convention C183 (2000) of the International Labour Organisation (ILO) to highlight requirement of 'special assistance and social protection' to working women before and after childbirth.

In a nutshell, ILO's Maternity Protection Convention C183, apart from promoting right to avail maternity leave, recognises that women are reinstated in the same position after the maternity break.

The judgment is timely in the context of addressing the challenges women face during their employment, their sustenance in the labour force and their overall well-being.

MB ACT

The Court has taken note of the Maternity Benefit Act 1961 as 'normative framework' to align statutory rights with service conditions of women employment without any discrimination. The Court acknowledged 'women are now sizeable part of workforce' and the State is 'obligated to act' to deliver reproductive-maternity rights to women employee in the country in order to ensure their equal participation in workforce.

It has been observed that in countries with effective maternity protection and care policies, the number of women in the workforce has significantly increased and they have remained employed for longer duration.

ILO Report on 'Care at Work: Investing in care leave and services for a more Gender Equal World of Work' in 2022 based on a survey of 185 countries informed that 123 countries had



Financing maternity rights in India

WOMEN'S RIGHTS. The Uma Devi judgment is a landmark one. Now the challenge is to fund maternity leave in the informal sector

provisions for fully paid maternity leave which benefits 90 per cent of mothers globally though leave payment in 13 countries remains less than two-thirds or prior wages.

However, India has joined the league of 42 nations that provide maximum paid leave (26 weeks) for more than 18 weeks i.e. surpassing C183 of ILO at length and making it one of the top nations across the globe.

Now, the MB Act covers adoptive and commissioning mothers with 12 weeks maternity leave benefits since 2017 along with flexible working options. The court recognised the importance of an adequate and generous maternity scheme for women employment, as maternity is not just a welfare provision; rather it enables a woman worker to sustain in work and also allows her to balance the competing demands of work and family life while retaining her efficiency and output.

Despite being a landmark judgment, *K Uma Devi vs State of TN* case also raises several pertinent questions. Will the coverage of maternity right as fundamental right shall remain restricted to only women employees in 'public sector' or it shall be applied

Instead of putting the onus on individual employers, maternity and cash benefits must be routed through social insurance or public funds or non-contributory social assistance

universally to all women whether employed in permanent/regular/FTEs/contractual or in any standard or non-standard forms of employment?

FUNDING ISSUES

Secondly, what about women in informal sector who make up majority of women workforce? How to streamline them in the fold of this judgment? Now, when employers cannot plead ignorance or avoid bearing the cost of maternity without any exemption or limitations, the major question pertains to financing this fundamental right.

For large corporate and conglomerates financing the maternity right was never a problem but the challenge remains with the employers of Micro Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs). Even ILO acknowledges these financial implications for individual employer who bear the double costs of maternity leave and also the cost of employee replacement.

ILO standards have highlighted that employers may not be individually liable for direct cost of maternity and cash benefits; rather, it should be routed through social insurance or public funds or non-contributory social assistance particularly for women in the informal sector and self-employed women. Such initiatives may result in curbing discriminatory practices in the labour market.

In the Indian context, this financing part has always been an elephant in the room while ensuring maternity benefit to working women.

For example, first maternity protection law of the country i.e.

Bombay Maternity Benefit Act of 1929, had prescribed for 'non-contributory' and solely employer funded maternity benefits to women workers in factory.

Though the Supreme Court has acknowledged the spirit of the maternity legislation i.e. MB Act and recognised the adequacy and scope of coverage of the legislation yet its effective implementation depends upon solid 'support institutions of financing this fundamental right'.

From a policy perspective, a well-developed maternity financing system such as a Universal Maternity Fund aligned with ILO guidelines could help in addressing the existing gaps in maternity benefits financing.

The ILO's World Social Protection Report 2024-26 said several countries have mixed models on maternity financing, with a majority of them having routed it through social insurance, national social security systems and tax financed employment related schemes and very few had employers covering full cost.

To make the Uma Devi judgment 'a living reality of many a millions women of this country', we have to learn from the experiences and best practices on maternity financing across the world.

These experiences may be instrumental in addressing the challenges in extending maternity benefits to the informal sector and those employed in temporary jobs.

Samantroy is Fellow, VVI Gender National Labour Institute, Ministry of Labour and Employment; Tiwari is Regional Labour Commissioner (Central), Thiruvananthapuram. Views are personal

Semaglutide; its class of diabetes, weight-loss drugs

Here's a look at why the globally popular Wegovy/Ozempic, the 'skinny jab', is making headlines

bl.explainer

PT Jyothi Datta

Danish company Novo Nordisk is poised to bring to India its injectable semaglutide — globally popular as Wegovy/Ozempic for weight loss and diabetes, respectively.

Here's a look at why the "skinny jab" or "fat shot" — as it is variously referred to — is making headlines.

What is the fuss around Wegovy/Ozempic, and why is it wrapped in celebritydom?

Ozempic and Wegovy grabbed headlines after international celebrities went to town on losing weight after taking the jab. Ozempic was initially approved in many countries to control Type-II diabetes, and Wegovy is approved for weight loss.

Both products contain semaglutide as the active ingredient, and a key patent on this expires in some markets, early 2026. Semaglutide revenues (across its oral tablet and injectable versions) grossed over \$29 billion.

Novo is expected to launch Wegovy in India, early next week.

Isn't semaglutide already available in India?

The tablet version of semaglutide, used in treating Type-II diabetes, is available in India. It costs about ₹10,000 a month.

Are there other products in this category in India?

About three months ago, Eli Lilly launched its Mounjaro in India. This is a once-a-week, prescription-based injectable that reduces food intake and body weight, besides decreasing fat mass by regulating appetite.

It was priced at ₹3,500 for a 2.5 mg vial and ₹4,375 for a 5 mg vial, at launch. Mounjaro/Zepbound are brands for tirzepatide, targeting diabetes and weight loss.

Are there side-effects to these drugs?

This class of drugs are called GLP-1 receptor agonist — that work in a manner similar to the GLP-1 (a natural hormone in the body) — increasing the amount of insulin the pancreas releases in response to food, says the European Medicines Agency, explaining semaglutide. This helps control blood glucose levels, the EMA said, adding that it also regulates appetite by increasing a



WEGOVY. IN THE NEWS REUTERS

person's feelings of fullness, while reducing their food intake, hunger and cravings.

Some listed side-effects of these drugs include vomiting, diarrhoea and abdominal pain, among others. Semaglutide was recently red-flagged by the EMA on a possible increased risk of developing an eye condition that may cause loss of vision.

Experts caution people with thyroid issues, for example, on taking these products, and suggest they consult their doctors. These drugs are relatively new, with more data — good and otherwise — still coming out on them.

Another known downside of these drugs is weight gain, when the product is stopped, say experts.

What is the fight Novo has with Dr Reddy's Laboratories (DRL) and OneSource, involving semaglutide?

Presently in India, Novo Nordisk is fighting a patent infringement suit on semaglutide, with two local drug makers. The outcome would decide, among other things, if DRL will be able to export the product, before the said patent expires in India.

According to industry-insiders, Canada is a key market as the patent lapses early next year. Meanwhile, recent media reports indicate that Novo could lose its patent protection in Canada as it had reportedly not paid a maintenance fee — a development that generic drugmakers will watch closely.

Are there other local drugmakers making this product? What does it mean for people living with Type II diabetes/obesity?

Indian drugmakers including Cipla, Lupin, Glenmark, for example, have thrown their hat into the semaglutide ring. While there is no timeline on launches — more makers could help bring down prices on the product for local and overseas people living with diabetes and/or obesity.

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SUN dispute

The long-simmering inheritance dispute within the Maran family has turned into a legal confrontation now, with former union minister and DMK MP Dayanidhi Maran serving a legal notice to his elder brother and media baron Kalanithi Maran.

The allegations include Kalanithi Maran allegedly allotting to himself 12 lakh equity shares in the SUN TV Private Limited at a face value of ₹10 each in 2003, and the fair market value of the shares at that time should have placed the total transactions at over ₹3,500 crore, but Kalanithi

allegedly paid only ₹1.2 crore. These are serious and merit an investigation from SEBI as they raise questions about corporate misgovernance.

M Jayaram
Sholavandan (TN)

Bridging inequality

With reference to the article "Time to Bridge Income Inequality Gap" (June 20), while the World Bank's findings on poverty alleviation are encouraging, the stagnation of income equity is a stark reminder that growth alone is not enough.

The article rightly points out that this inequality has far-reaching implications for social mobility, opportunity, and political governance. State-level disparities signal the urgent need for targeted policy interventions. We must pivot from a growth-centric model to one that is inclusive.

Chetan Malvi
Raipur (Chhattisgarh)

War worries

The ripples of the impact of the current war between Israel and Iran are bound to affect the entire world including India.

Crude oil prices have remained soft in the past decade, giving the Indian government much needed space to balance the books. If normalcy is not restored quickly, all this would end and adversely affect an import-dependent India. Israel has no natural resources and it is only their dominance in technology and banking which sustains them. By abstaining at the UNSC voting India has shown where its sympathies lie.

Anthony Henriques
Mumbai

On businessline.in

Judge indictment raises questions



The removal process of an indicted judge is exceptionally rigorous, asserts Sanjay Jain

<https://tinyurl.com/mrpt8fkr>

SC weighs in on Thug Life



The apex court strengthened the principle that disagreement is the lifeblood of democracy and coercion is its poison, says Kartikey Singh

<https://tinyurl.com/3j8a88sk>

The
Hindustan Times
ESTABLISHED IN 1924

{ OUR TAKE }

The prospect
of a wider war

Iran-Israel conflict will widen if the US joins in; it will reshape power relations in West Asia

The Iran-Israel clashes have reached a breakpoint with the prospect of the US entering the fray. On Thursday, a White House spokesperson said President Donald Trump would take the call on this "within the next two weeks" though many analysts expect Washington to bomb Fordow, Iran's nuclear facility, which appears to be beyond the reach of Tel Aviv, very soon, perhaps even the weekend. Parallels, the foreign ministers of Germany, France, Britain and the European Union are talking with Iranian foreign minister Abbas Araghchi to explore a ceasefire. Europe, though, has been reduced to a marginal player since Trump in 2018 ended a deal that was negotiated with Tehran in 2015. It is clear Trump holds the keys to what threatens to become a wider conflict and reshape power relations in West Asia.

As it launched the attack on Iran last weekend, Israel cited the International Atomic Energy Agency's censure of Tehran for failing to provide information about undeclared nuclear material and activities at multiple locations. Since then, Israel Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has widened his goals to a regime change in Tehran and the elimination of Iran's supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei. Reports suggested that the US vetoed the move. Iran, meanwhile, has warned that it will retaliate if the US becomes an active participant in the conflict.

President Trump doesn't like wars; during the campaign, he promised to cease America's participation in global conflicts and work to negotiate peace in Ukraine and Gaza. Trump's peace efforts in both are in shambles and he now has to deal with Iran, not a scenario he planned for. A reasonable achievement for him will be to negotiate a rollback of Iran's nuclear plans and end the conflict. That will enhance his credentials as a peacemaker and reaffirm the US's pre-eminence as a global power, especially since this round of conflict in West Asia has exposed the limits of Chinese and Russian influence in the region: Despite being allies of Tehran, Moscow and Beijing have restricted their involvement in the conflict to statements condemning Tel Aviv's actions. Israel may have to be satisfied with a diminished Iran and its reiteration as the region's unquestioned hegemon.

However, if Tel Aviv and Washington pursue an endgame that stops only with regime change in Tehran, it may lead to tumultuous changes in the region. First, the Ayatollah is the face of the Islamist regime that captured office in Tehran in 1979 when mass mobilisations forced the Shah of Iran, backed by the West, to abdicate. The Islamists have been challenged by street protests in recent years, but these sections may not necessarily back a regime change orchestrated by the US and Israel. People tend to rally around the flag in times of war. Second, lessons from Iraq suggest that change forced by outside forces can lead to anarchy. Iran is a civilisational State, but its theocratic regime is the glue that holds together multiple regions and ethnicities. Three, Iran's mostly Sunni neighbourhood has perceived the Shia State as a regional hegemon and will surely prefer a weakened Tehran. But it is another matter if they want an unstable Iran in their backyard.

In the short run, chaos in West Asia will lead to a spike in oil prices, impact global trade, and slow down the world economy. India has major stakes in West Asia - Iran is a key trading partner and a port of entry to Central Asia, and the Gulf nations are crucial for Delhi's fuel needs and house a large expat population - and uncertainty in the region complicates its economic goals and power ambitions.

New enemy in
the West is the
illegal migrant

In most western democracies, which are struggling to sustain their liberal multicultural models from being overrun, the concept of national security threat has been reformulated to refer to illegal immigration rather than to any revisionist foreign enemy

In 1992, the American political strategist James Carville coined the catchphrase, 'It's the economy, stupid!'. It conveyed that the singular issue which mattered the most to voters in the US was the condition of the economy and how it impacted on their personal finances. Today, economic considerations continue to remain crucial determinants of voter choice, but the other issue which has risen to the fore is immigration.

During the 2024 US presidential election, concerns about high levels of inflation (a proxy for the economy) and fears of humongous inflows of migrants from the southern border with Mexico combined to ensure the stunning return to power of President Donald Trump for a second term. Trump's bare-knuckles election campaign rhetoric against migrants galvanised a large segment of Americans to rally around him as the last saviour who can regain control over their country and harden what they perceived to be dangerously loose borders.

Although Trump's allegation that his predecessor President Joe Biden had "allowed 21 million illegals to pour in from all over the world" may not be accurate, the message of keeping America safe from unwanted hordes of people fleeing from war-torn and economically distressed countries is not new. The appeal of his Right-wing populism, which com-

bines economic anxieties over losing out to other countries through foreign trade and globalisation with cultural insecurities about erosion of the social fabric and core racial identity due to opening the floodgates to migrants by liberals.

The recent disturbances in California involving a crackdown by the Trump administration to conduct mass arrests and deportations of immigrants, and street protests and running battles of targeted Latino communities with law enforcement officials, were a reiteration of the same electoral politics wedge between the Right-wing and Left-wing on the fundamental questions of who is an American and what an ideal American society should look like.

Trump's historic move to deploy US military troops and the National Guard to quell a "form of rebellion against the authority of the government of the US", and vehement opposition to this step as an authoritarian violation of State sovereignty and fundamental human rights of innocent Americans by the liberal Governor of California, Gavin Newsom, was a demonstration of the deep divide which has polarised the US into two hostile ideological tribes that are at each other's throats.

Such extreme confrontational theatre is not limited to the US. Over the past decade, immigration has emerged as a red-meat issue across Europe following the massive influx of refugees fleeing war in Syria and Iraq and economic collapse in Africa. Trump-like politicians in Europe have been declaring do-or-die wars and calling for national emergencies to tackle illegal immigration.

While the far-right has not managed to sweep all elections and win office throughout Europe, it has succeeded in mainstreaming radical anti-immigrant attitudes and values, compelling traditional incumbent parties to co-opt them. In most western democracies which are struggling to sustain their liberal multicultural models from being overrun, the very concept of



Sreeram Chaulia

Reel life in the dark
room of Emergency

It didn't take even three decades for the sovereign democratic Republic of India to face a nationwide internal Emergency (June 25, 1975-March 21, 1977), which in practice meant democratic despotism and electoral autocracy. Both paradoxical and contradictory in terms, when film producers, directors and artists saw how their freedom was clipped while the censorial scissors became extra-constitutionally sharper in the hands of an elected despot. After the Emergency got over, the newly elected Janata Party government at the Centre published a *White Paper on Misuse of Mass Media During the Internal Emergency* in August 1977, that listed all branches of mass media (including cinema) and examined how their rights were violated through the reckless abuse of power.

My story begins with two instances from Southern India that the *White Paper* did not mention. Incidentally, on the very day of the clamping of the draconian Emergency, i.e. June 25, 1975, a Kannada film was winding up its shooting while a Malayalam film project was being launched in Bengaluru: the Malayalam film crew was in the Karnataka capital because at that time the State government was offering a subsidy of ₹50,000 to producers who made films in that state. The Malayalam film was *Kabani Nadi Chuvannappal* (When the Kabani River Turned Red, 1975). The director of the film, PA Backer, and its producer, Pavi-

thran, are no more, but I spoke with TV Chandran, who debuted as an actor in *Kabani* (Chandran is better known as a screenwriter and director in Kerala today). Chandran recalled how they were harassed during the shoot because the film dealt with the theme of student revolt against the establishment.

Later, the censor asked the producer to chop off nearly 1,000 feet of the footage. Parts of the film were reshot and was resubmitted to two central representatives. The film was screened for the two men at the massive Kalaiavan Arangam theatre in Madras (Chennai), who did not find much to object to. However, *Kabani Nadi Chuvannappal* was withdrawn from a cinema hall in Thiruvananthapuram a couple of days after its release under government instruction. This time, the police ordered further cuts.

The second story is about the Kannada film, *Chanda Maruta* (Rogue Winds, 1975) starring Snehalatha Reddy and directed by her husband Pattabhi Rama Reddy. The film, inspired by P. Lankesh's play *Kranti Bantu Kranti* had, in fact, prophesied the Emergency. The censor banned the film. On June 25, 1975, Snehalatha Reddy, who was one part of the lead pair (along with Girish Karnad), was arrested. Pattabhi Rama Reddy's adaptation of UR Anantha-

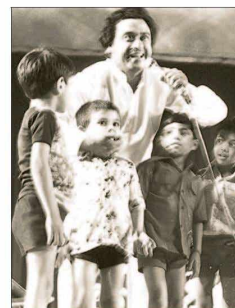


Amrit Gangar

murthy's celebrated novel, was imprisoned on false charges. She was tortured in Bangalore Central Prison and passed away while on parole on January 20, 1977. She was only 45. Eminent Malayalam writer-director MT Vasudevan Nair had planned to make a film about her, which, unfortunately, didn't happen. However, Uma Chakravarti's documentary *Prison Diaries* (2019) provides us an invaluable document about the imprisonment of a number of women who resisted the Emergency through the life of Snehalatha Reddy. Anand Patwardhan's 1978 film *Prisoners of Conscience* is a chronicle of how, under the Emergency, dissenters were detained and tortured in prisons.

Among the films the *White Paper* mentions is *Aandhi* (Storm, 1975) directed by Gulzar and starring Sanjay Kumar and Suchitra Sen. The film's heroine was to be modelled on Indira Gandhi but that idea was dropped. Permission was granted only after the producer revised the film. *Kissa Kuri Ka*, directed by Amrit Nahata in 1975, fared worse. The film was a satire on the politics of that time. It was first banned and later, its prints were confiscated. The film as well as its negative were destroyed. *Andolan*, directed by Lekh Tandon (1975) dealt with the 1942 movement. It could not be released because the producer was ordered to cut all the portions dealing with underground activities that were contextualised around the story. Even the blockbuster *Sholay* was spared. The censor asked the producer to change the end scenes.

Playback singer Kishore Kumar was another artist who fell out with the authorities during the Emergency. As a result, his songs were banned from the radio and television, but controlled by the government, and the sale of gramophone records with his songs was made unlawful. Such bullying and arm-twisting by the central government were commonplace during the 21 months of the Emergency. Like



Snehalatha Reddy and Kishore Kumar, not everyone meekly surrendered. Actor Dev Anand opposed the Emergency publicly and described it as a "dark night, a nightmare, an insult to the people". He even formed a political party - the National Party of India - which had to be disbanded when he failed to find suitable candidates to fight elections after the Emergency was lifted in 1977.

As the nation commemorates the 50th anniversary of the Emergency, these instances of pushback should be remembered.

Amrit Gangar is a Mumbai-based author, curator and historian.
The views expressed are personal.

Yoga as a mass campaign
to build a healthier India

India, the birthplace of yoga, continues to uphold this ancient wisdom, not just as physical exercises but as a holistic philosophy for the nurturing of the human mind, body, and spirit. The phrase from the *Bhagavad Gita*, *yogah karmasu kaushalam* (yoga is skill in action), points to yoga's transformative potential, particularly in empowering women and nurturing children. Yoga has gained global recognition as a channel for wellness and social transformation. The UN's 2014 decision to declare June 21 as International Day of Yoga was the world's recognition of India's great spiritual and civilisational heritage. This year's Yoga Day theme is 'Yoga for One Earth, One Health'. As the nation marches towards Viksit Bharat, it is necessary to integrate yoga into the lives of women and children, who constitute two-thirds of the coun-

try's population and are more vulnerable and exposed to health issues than other sections. From improving mental health and hormonal balance to strengthening the muscular and skeletal system, yoga is uniquely suited to meet the health needs of women across age groups.

Adopting yoga before and after pregnancy empowers women to effectively manage related health challenges. Prenatal yoga, with its targeted postures and meditative techniques, alleviates pregnancy discomforts, supports pain management, and boosts energy. It prepares expectant mothers for childbirth physically and emotionally. Postnatal yoga helps lactating mothers in their recovery, emotional well-being, enhancing breastfeeding, and strengthening

the mother-child bond. We have leveraged the network of over 25 lakh *anganwadi* workers to inform, educate, and assist women and children in adopting yoga as a necessary habit in their daily lives.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi has constantly advocated for women-led development. The World Bank also argued that increased female labour force participation can boost the manufacturing output by 9% and help us achieve a high-income developed nation status by 2047. All this can only be achieved when we have a physically and emotionally healthy woman workforce.

Coming to children, lifestyle disorders, screen dependence, and academic pressures have all become major health afflictions. Yoga offers a response to these challenges, by enhancing concentration, memory, emotional regulation, sleep quality, and stress management. Through Mission Saksham, Anganwadi, and Poshan 2.0, my ministry is embedding yoga into early childhood care and development, laying the foundation for life-

long wellness habits. The ministry houses various flagship programmes and schemes for the well-being, health, and nutrient intake of women and children. While delivering these benefits, *anganwadis*, one-stop centres, and child care institutions, among others, educate, influence, and facilitate beneficiaries in including specially designed yoga modules in their lives. From IT to space and from policymaking to strategic defence, women are the new frontline warriors. Hence, women must be seen not just as a practice, but as a participatory movement - a *jan andolan* for health and wellness. Let us unite in embracing yoga as a social and personal commitment to build a healthier India and reach new heights.

Annpurna Devi is Union minister of women and child development.
The views expressed are personal



Annpurna Devi

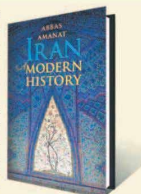
{ EDITOR'S PICK }

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

IRAN, OVER THE CENTURIES

Israel launched a missile attack on Iran's military and nuclear sites last Friday. Its stated intent is to prevent Tehran from developing nuclear weapons. Iran has since retaliated. Tehran has refused to discuss its nuclear programme while under attack. Meanwhile, it is speculated that the US will join Israel in bombing Iran's underground nuclear facilities.

This week, we recommend *Iran: A Modern History*, by Yale University scholar Abbas Amanat. Peppered with anecdotes, the book interweaves narrative with analysis and commentary on the culture, society, and politics of early-modern and modern Iran. The book covers Iran's strong poetry tradition, secularisation of education and the courts of law from 1921 to 1979, dynastic changes, civil wars, revolutions, foreign occupation, art, religious traditions, and influence on its neighbourhood. Amanat helps the reader understand how the religious establishment seized control of Iran in 1979 and has maintained power since.

Iran: A Modern History
Abbas Amanat
2017

The Fed is just as confused as the rest of us



JONATHAN LEVIN

The most powerful institution in global finance is as completely and utterly confused as the rest of us.

At its policy decision Wednesday, the Federal Reserve's rate-setting committee held rates at 4.25 per cent-4.5 per cent, but Chair Jerome Powell and his colleagues

essentially acknowledged that they had no idea what would come next.

They couldn't precisely project where President Donald Trump's tariff rates would end up, much less how they would impact consumer inflation and the labour market. Nor could they confidently hand-craft jarring changes to immigration and fiscal policies and the evolving war between Israel and Iran. The big risk, of course, is that the uncertainty and indecision will make the Fed late to arrest a potential increase in unemployment.

In the Summary of Economic Projections, the median member of the Federal Open Market Committee pencilled in two rate cuts just before the end of the year, constituting a massive oversimplification of the outlook, and some investors may be under-

estimating just how fat the tails are in the distribution of potential outcomes, even over just the next three or four months. Of the 19 respondents, 14 policymakers thought the risks to their inflation forecasts were weighted to the upside — the same number that thought as much about the risks to their unemployment projections.

In a nutshell, they don't pretend to know what's coming, but Chair Powell thinks we may find out relatively soon. Here's Powell at his post-decision press conference. We feel like we're going to learn a great deal more over the summer on tariffs. We hadn't expected them to show up much by now, and they haven't. And we will see the extent which they do over the coming months. And I think that's going to inform our thinking for one thing. In addition, we'll

see how the labour market progresses.

Given all of the uncertainty, Mr Powell is right to stay in wait-and-see mode, but he can't linger there too long once the data breaks. Meanwhile, those of us on the sidelines should prepare for the policy outlook to shift quite quickly, potentially as soon as the Fed's September 16-17 meeting.

Maybe we really will get two rate cuts this year, but it's also perfectly plausible that we'll get 150 basis points worth — or none. It's a great environment for high-stakes gamblers — but not so much for American households.

As Mr Powell alluded to, it's largely trade policy that has put us in this bind. The recent months' disinflationary trends in housing and non-housing services have the core personal consumption

expenditures deflator — the Fed's preferred inflation gauge — up around 2.6 per cent in May from a year earlier (this based on a Bloomberg Economics estimate from the consumer and producer price data).

That's not at all terrible, and it would probably be poised to converge on the Fed's 2 per cent target if not for Mr Trump's extremely ill-timed and pointless trade wars. Without tariffs, the Fed would probably be cutting right now, providing ballast to a wobbly labour market and a housing market that's already seeing year-over-year price drops in some parts of the country.

Unfortunately, the central bank has to play the hand it's dealt. In the immediate term, we still don't know if companies will pass on higher prices to consumers, accept narrower margins or manage their way to stable prices by laying off parts of their workforce. And maybe it will be a combination of all three.

The risks to both the Fed's stable prices

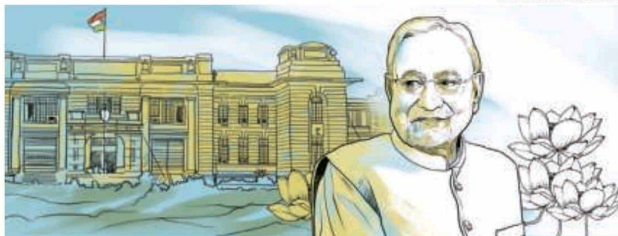
and maximum employment mandates are substantial, and that's causing paralysis among policymakers — a weird "calm before the storm" effect both at the Fed and in financial markets.

But at some point before summer, we are very likely to see something shatter that calm. An alarming jump in initial jobless claims could lead to rate cuts above and beyond any policymaker's base case.

A Jarring CPI report or two could keep the Fed on hold for longer and prompt a sell-off in bonds. And a jump in realised inflation coupled with signs of unanchored inflation expectations could even put hikes back on the table. If they're late to mitigate the damage, Fed policymakers can take cover in blaming Mr Trump's self-sabotaging trade policy. But they must prepare to act immediately and convincingly once the signals break in a particular direction.

Bloomberg

ILLUSTRATION: BINAY SINHA



The 'invaluable' team member

PLAIN POLITICS
ADITI PHADNIS

A recent conversation with a Dalit member of the Legislative Assembly (MLA) from the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in Bihar revealed new truths about the upcoming Assembly poll in the state. The MLA, from the Samastipur region, is a mathematician who was also a full-time pracharak in the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) till his service was sought by the BJP to fight the panchayat and later the 2020 Assembly elections. He is an influential Dalit voice in the BJP.

"We really respect Nitish [BJP Chief Minister Nitish Kumar]. Not just for his commitment to social justice but also for the way he lives. He has no family. In all these years, there have been no corruption charges against him. Everything he's had, he's given to Bihar. In this aspect, he represents the values we in the RSS have been taught," he said, about the man who is leading his party, the Janata Dal (United), or JD(U), in fighting what could be his last election.

Now it is all jibes about his chameleon-like politics and a loosening grip over the administration. But there was a time Nitish had the BJP trembling in the state. Veterans recall that in 2006 the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) declared that singing "Vande Mataram" (the lyric occurs in a 19th century Bengali novel that has disparaging remarks about Muslims) must

be made compulsory in government-run schools. Nitish refused to implement this in Bihar, though his party was part of the NDA.

During the BJP's national executive meeting held in Patna in June 2010, full-page advertisements appeared in local dailies with Nitish thanking Narendra Modi, then Gujarat chief minister, for ₹5 crore as flood-relief aid. Furious at the portrayal of Bihar as a kind of mendicant, Nitish cancelled a dinner he was to host for BJP leaders (the hapless Sanjay Jha, current working president of the JD(U) and Union minister, was the bearer of the dis-invitation to Mr Modi). Nitish also returned the ₹5 crore to the Gujarat government. His party broke its alliance with the BJP-led NDA soon after Mr Modi was appointed the BJP's chief of the 2014 Lok Sabha election campaign committee in 2013.

Now they're friends again, though the BJP is watching moves in the JD(U) carefully, especially succession. For the BJP, the JD(U) must continue to exist as an entity, Bihar's Extremely Backward Classes (EBCs) and the Kurni and Koori castes are still solidly behind Nitish. Because of social contradictions, they are unlikely to come to the BJP. Nitish has tried to build up alternative Kurni leaders who could have taken the reins after him. R C P Singh, civil servant-turned-politician and a Kurni, was one such. His ambition got the better of him. In the BJP's assessment, the next best is current Bihar Minister Shivan Kumar, who has been MLA from Nalanda for more than seven terms. His loyalty to Nitish is unquestionable and so is his grip over his community. Mr Jha and Vijay Kumar Chaudhary are influential in the party and have Nitish's ear. But they are upper-caste. Others have their eye on

the JD(U)'s social base too: The appointment of Mangani Lal Mandal, of the Dhanuk caste (EBC), as president of the Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD)'s Bihar unit is strategic.

In the BJP's assessment, in this election Hindutva is best kept on the back burner. To be sure, the party will frame issues of Bangladeshi infiltration, especially in areas like Kishanganj, which has a 65 per cent Muslim population. But this is not the time to rock the boat on religious issues, because the alliance with Nitish has brought Muslim support to the NDA, however small. Instead, the appeal will be on governance and Nitish's efforts over successive governments, especially his first tenure, to create administrative capacity in the state. It is no coincidence, for instance, that women's representation in the police force in Bihar is now among the highest in India (24 per cent) and has grown 2 per cent just between 2002 and 2024. This is in part the result of the investment by Nitish in girls' education in his various tenures as chief minister.

Prohibition is non-negotiable and those who argue against it, including former BJP Member of Parliament like R K Singh, don't understand the ground reality, the party feels. Despite all the gaps and leakages in implementing prohibition, the BJP believes that just on this issue, the vote of women overrides caste. Regional issues like the development of Mithilanchal to prevent migration are also going to be framed as issues of growth in Bihar.

Combined Modi-Nitish effort leads to a win for the BJP but not the JD(U), could Nitish be cut out of the equation altogether? No one is answering this question. But as they say in corporate-speak, for now "Nitish Kumar is an invaluable member of the team".

Perils of self-hyphenation

China and Pakistan are in a tight strategic alliance. India must deal with them one at a time, but be prepared in case they decide to collude

Last week, National Interest teased a sequel: The perils of self-hyphenation. What does this mean?

For three decades de-hyphenation from Pakistan has been the centre point of our grand strategy. But we can't move away from Pakistan physically or strategically. As Atal Bihari Vajpayee's immortal line goes: "You cannot choose your neighbours." India is particularly "blessed" in that respect, with two big hostile nuclear-armed neighbours.

They are in a tight strategic alliance, which is today perhaps the strongest in the world after America and Israel. Yet they're different countries, with shared interests but different priorities. You have to have the wherewithal to deal with them. Ideally, one at a time but be prepared in case they decide to collude, either indirectly as principal-and-proxy, as during Operation Sindoor, or, who knows, in active warfare. The first element of Indian grand strategy, therefore, has to be to prevent.

Of the two, militarily and economically, India is much better equipped to deal with Pakistan. China is the really formidable challenge that we will need years to either match up to, or to create sufficient mutual vested interest in stable peace. That is where the idea of de-hyphenation with Pakistan comes from. It is wise, and has been pursued by every Prime Minister since Indira Gandhi's second coming in 1980.

India has pushed hard sharply at any suggestion of an Indo-Pak policy from Western powers (read the United States). Progress on this was slow, until the first Bill Clinton term, and then picked up. In the two decades since the nuclear deal, it has moved at a sprinting pace.

India pushed it to the extent that it objected if a Western leader combined visits to India and Pakistan. The two-country rule was seen as an offence and another name of hyphenation, however convenient it might have been for visitors. The first sign it was working came during Mr Clinton's post-Kargil visit when he did touch down in Pakistan but left after a few hours at the airport, having delivered a finger-wagging "maps in the subcontinent can no longer be redrawn in blood" warning to the Pakistanis. This principle is now so firmly established that we just saw how the Indonesian President Prabowo Subianto visiting India as our Republic Day chief guest was gently dissuaded from adding Pakistan to the itinerary. The Americans

used a different description, saying that their view on the subcontinent is not a zero-sum game. That they could have ties with India and Pakistan independent of each other and unencumbered by the burdens of the Cold War.

The Simla Agreement is rooted in this principle — that henceforth, India and Pakistan will both discuss all their issues bilaterally. It implied that no third party, no mediator had any further role to play, and that the old UN Security Council Resolutions were accordingly rendered obsolete.

This is why India became so triggered by Donald Trump's repeated assertion (16 times so far) that he brought about the peace between India and Pakistan. The Congress latched on, accusing Narendra Modi of surrendering under Mr Trump's pressure ("Narendra, surrender") and he responded. At this point, however, it looks like both sides have calmed down. Hopefully, what both sides call the most consequential strategic relationship of the 21st century will survive this turbulence.

Let's be optimistic now and hope that Mr Trump takes a chill pill on the subcontinent, understanding that if he so needs a Nobel, this is the wrong geostrategic patch for him to find in. If India and Pakistan do really decide on a permanent peace, why would they give some outsider the credit? There are Nobel hopes here as well. Everybody can be aspirational, and in this case, in a good way.

How will the picture look if and when Mr Trump does calm down? That's the question that takes us back to self-hyphenation. Check out the number of times Pakistan features in our, mostly the Bharatiya Janata Party's (BJP's), political discourse, and not necessarily after Operation Sindoor. It's a hard reality, but must be stated, that over the years, this BJP government has pretty much built its domestic politics around a permanently hostile Pakistan.

I don't know how you prefer to analyse these things. But if you simply did a word-cloud analysis of all speeches by the Prime Minister, you will find Pakistan featuring, compared to China, 100 times in fact, plus the word "maps" in the subcontinent can no longer be redrawn in blood" warning to the Pakistanis. This principle is now so firmly established that we just saw how the Indonesian President Prabowo Subianto visiting India as our Republic Day chief guest was gently dissuaded from adding Pakistan to the itinerary. The Americans

General Krishnaswamy Sundarji, in a famous

1986 interview with *India Today*, had said: "China is the real challenge. Pakistan can be handled *en passant*." Fun fact: That's the first time I read that expression. It means "in passing" and is drawn from nonchalantly knocking off a pawn in chess. You might translate it into Hindi as "chalte chalte". As in, Pakistan ko hum chalte chalte sambhal sakte hain.

How has what we thought we could handle *en passant* in 1986 returned to centre stage? The short answer: We've reinstalled it there. The Modi government has done it by making Pakistan an essential feature of its domestic politics. This political formulation isn't at all twisted. It is quite linear. Pakistan equals terrorism, which means Islamist terrorism, and suffice it to say, makes the core of the politics of Hindu-Muslim polarisation.

India's larger strategic plan of these three decades is sound and pragmatic. Stabilise the situation with China and respond only to the gravest provocation. Create the time to build India's economy and reposition it favourably in the post-Cold War era as its comprehensive national power (CNP) rises.

Meanwhile, keep advising the world not to hyphenate you with Pakistan, as you've moved into a different orbit, and are poised to jump higher still. But, are we following that advice ourselves?

The evidence of the past decade isn't reassuring — especially since 2019, after Pulwama when the Modi government its biggest election victory yet. Since then, Pakistan has become central to the Modi-BJP politics. This is our self-hyphenation.

It has now reached a stage where even the Pakistanis would think they can game our responses. They will end up suffering more in the end, as we saw again in their battered airstrikes. But they've also learned they won't be trapped in this permanent enemy with India. This also guarantees Pakistan army its pre-eminence. See how Op Sindoor has pulled Asim Munir from the public opinion doghouse to national audience.

This underlines the perils of self-hyphenation. By making Pakistan central to its politics, the BJP has now created an unexpected precedent for itself, and for India — where its domestic political interests are clashing with India's geopolitical priorities.

Indian strategists are smart and need space to deal with this Trumpian world of many simultaneous wars. They will be strengthened by a reboot in our domestic politics. On Pakistan, our diplomats should use their skills to keep diminishing the threat, focus on military spending bills deterrence. Meanwhile, the BJP's politics should drop this re-hyphenation. Diminish, deter, de-hyphenate. That's the 3D solution to our Pakistan problem.

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When the Rainbow wore white

EYE CULTURE

KUMAR ABISHKE

On May 10, 1994, Nelson Mandela skipped his own inauguration parties. Instead, he sat among a largely Black crowd at Ellis Park, watching South Africa play Zambia in football. "I wanted our people to know how much I appreciated the sacrifices made by our athletes during the boycott," he said. A year later, at the same stadium, he walked onto a rugby pitch wearing a Springbok jersey — an apartheid-era symbol — and handed the World Cup to a stunned Francois Pienaar.

It was a gesture loaded with grace, timing, and vision. Mandela knew: In a country broken by race and memory, sport wasn't a sideshow. It was where the nation could be remade. Nowhere was that tested more than in cricket.

Which is why South Africa's 2025 World Test Championship victory wasn't just overdue. It was transformative. Not because the "chokers" finally won — but because they did so as themselves. In full colour.

When Temba Bavuma and Aiden Markram stitched together their 147-run partnership at Lord's, the weight was more than scoreboard pressure. Bavuma, South Africa's first Black African Test captain, had carried years of coded whispers and covert scrutiny. A "transformation pick," some said. But he stayed. He endured.

Limping to the crease, shoulders squared, he walked like he belonged. He walked for many who never could. Like Krom Hendricks, South Africa's fastest bowler in the 1890s,

who was denied a Test cap and offered instead the job of a coolie. Or the generations who played under apartheid in dusty fields and "Board" leagues for pride, not for glory. Their records were ignored. Their legacies were oral.

During apartheid, cricket mirrored the nation's divisions. In 1968, Basil D'Oliveira's selection for England sparked diplomatic fury. South Africa had already ousted him in 1948 for being "Cape Coloured".

The D'Oliveira Affair triggered decades of sporting exile. Return came in 1991, when Eric Rice led the team out in India. It felt redemptive — but also conservative. White structures were preserved; Black cricket, with its culture of defiance, was folded in, often uncredited. The late Peter Roebuck, who captained non-white sides during apartheid, once said he played not for victory but for resistance. That resistance lingered. Ask Makhaya Ntini, South Africa's first Black African Test regular, who ran solo laps of the stadium just to feel visible. Or Ashwell Prince, booed by home fans for daring to wear the Protea badge.

The Proteas — named for the national flower — were meant to symbolise new beginnings. But for years, they didn't. Players of colour were often treated like passengers, not peers. Bavuma grew up inside that contradiction. In 2016, he became the first Black African to captain a Test century. The celebration was polite. Not roaring. He stayed. He earned his place. And when he lifted the WTC more — his son in one arm — it meant more than a title. Markram, a white cricketer raised in post-apartheid Pretoria, didn't ignore the past. He stood

alongside it. Their stand was a bridge, not a bantustan.

For years, South African cricket felt burdened. With pressure, with misfortune, with something unnamed. In *The Curse and the Cup*, Gaurav Bhalha gives it form. On a cursed day in 1991, Vuyiswa Lingani and his son, Manga — two gifted Black spinners — die in separate tragedies. The mother, Mama Nokosi, blames the white system and places a curse: "South Africa will never win a world title. Fiction, yes. But it captured a feeling. That something always went wrong. Until now."

This win belonged to all of them: To A B de Villiers and Jacques Kallis, to Vernon Philander and Kagiso Rabada, to Hashim Amla and Keshav Maharaj, to Faiek Davids and Hussein Manjakh, who were part of the reformed squad in 1991, unsure if they truly belonged. To Barry Richards and Graeme Pollock, brilliant but exiled. To Graeme Smith's certainty and Omar Henry's heartbreak.

And to every child watching now, dreaming not in spite of who they are, but because of it.

South Africa has long chased Desmond Tutu's vision: The Rainbow Nation. On June 14, 2025 — at Lord's, 13,000 km from Johannesburg — it felt real. The Rainbow wore white.

Mandela once said sport "has the power to unite people in a way that little else does." In 1995, he proved it by wearing a jersey. In 2025, the Proteas proved it by wearing the past — and still standing tall.

No theatrics. No slogans. Just the long arc of history — finally bending the right way.

The seven deadly digital sins

YES, BUT...
SANDEEP GOYAL

The seven deadly sins, or cardinal sins, are pride, greed, wrath, envy, lust, gluttony, and sloth.

Pride (*superbia* in Latin, hubris in Greek) is considered the simplest of our vices, and the worst of the seven deadly sins. The most demonic: "Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall." Greed, *avaritia*, is an inordinate desire to acquire or possess more than one needs. Wrath, *ira*, is uncontrolled feelings of anger, rage, and hatred, sometimes leading to violence. Envy, born of vanity or *vaingloria*, is the sad or resentful covetousness towards the traits or possessions of another, sometimes leading to the urge to inflict pain upon others. Lust, *luxuria*, or lechery, is intense longing, leading to unbridled sexual desire. But it can also denote other forms of unbridled desire — such as for power or money. Gluttony, *gula*, is the overindulgence and overconsumption of anything to the point of excess. Sloth, *acedia*, is

the absence of interest in, or habitual disinclination to, exertion — a mind-state that gives rise to torpor, rancour, apathy, and a passive, inert, or sluggish mentation leading to laziness, idleness, and indolence.

In the digital age today, the seven deadly sins have taken on distinct contemporary avatars (pride), LinkedIn (greed), Twitter (wrath), Facebook (envy), Tinder (lust), Zomato (gluttony) and Sloth (Netflix).

Let us start with lust. Tinder is so "evil" satisfying. When it comes to finding a mate, Tinder's right swipes appeal to the simplest of our instincts, shortcuts: Are they nearby? Are they available? Are they attractive? If so, swipe right. For short-term hook-ups or daily lust, Tinder is perfect. Tinder has caused a "dating apocalypse". With more and more people becoming increasingly disinterested in conventional relationships and more comfortable with technology in their personal lives, the allure of swiping has become too evilly satisfying to quit.

Now to pride. Instagram is often described as a "highlight reel" of people's lives, focusing on their best moments rather than the everyday realities — users actively craft their profiles and posts to project a desired image of themselves. Instagram has triggered the gradual emergence of the new beautiful

woman — a cyborgian face that is young, with poreless skin and high cheekbones, cat-like eyes and long, cartoonish lashes, a small, neat nose, and full, lush lips. "It's the Instagram Face — an unrealistic sculpture that looks like it's made out of clay," as *The New Yorker* puts it.

If malice or envy were tangible and had a shape, it would be the shape of a boomerang, which is what Facebook is today. Facebook is like being in a play where you make a character, not play yourself. Users who feel jealous of their friends' status updates, photos, and life events often deal with it by exaggerating their own accomplishments, posting unrealistically pretty profile shots, and sharing over-the-top status updates. These, in turn, lead other Facebook friends to feel jealous and inadequate — the boomerang — something researchers have also dubbed an "envy spiral".

Gluttony and Zomato are kind of synonymous. The 24x7 food delivery app has opened up possibly every restaurant, every cuisine, and every eating aperture to both access and excess. Graze or gorge — gastronomy is becoming daily gluttony. The concept of the "wealth" of all. Gluttony is a lust of the mind, and Zomato is helping lubricate it.

LinkedIn can help you find a job and promote yourself, but it may also leave you questioning your own career trajectory.

The author is chairman of Redifusion

The Indian EXPRESS

FOUNDED BY
RAMNATH GOENKA

BECAUSE THE TRUTH INVOLVES US ALL

AFTER LUNCH

India has stood its ground with US, it must also flag how Muniir's Pakistan nurtures terror — and why Delhi has drawn hard red lines

IN 2018, in his first term, US President Donald Trump had spelt out, in his typically blunt style, the sense that Rawalpindi and Islamabad had taken advantage of Washington: "The United States has foolishly given Pakistan more than 33 billion dollars in aid over the last 15 years, and they have given us nothing but lies & deceit, thinking of our leaders as fools... they give safe haven to terrorists". This week, he said: "I love Pakistan". It would be simplistic to view the unprecedented lunch meeting at the White House between Trump and General Asim Muniir — the first time a military leader who is not head of state in Pakistan has been accorded the honour — as a major turn. Indeed, India-US ties have been steadily deepening over the last three decades, based on a convergence of economic and strategic interests and shared values, even as the US-Pakistan relationship has grown more volatile. That said, the current moment in international relations is one of flux and Delhi must tread carefully.

The Pahalagat attack underscored the grave national security threat that Pakistan-sponsored terrorism continues to present for India. With Operation Sindoor, Delhi has made it clear to both Rawalpindi and the world that it will pierce the shield of "proxies" and not give in to Pakistan's nuclear blackmail. India has raised the costs of terror in order to ensure that such attacks on its soil are not carried out with impunity. Communicating the new normal it has etched with Pakistan after Pahalagat to its friends abroad is Delhi's challenge. To be sure, Delhi cannot control who Trump chooses to engage, and for what reasons. Pakistan's geography — it shares a 900-km border with Iran — may make it an attractive tactical partner for the US in the current Israel-Iran war. There is speculation that Pakistan's rolling out the red carpet for the privately-owned US cryptocurrency firm, World Liberty Financial (WLF), may have helped ingratiate Muniir to the White House — Donald Trump Jr has close ties with WLF. A White House spokesperson has claimed that Muniir has proposed Trump for the Nobel Peace Prize for his self-proclaimed role — firmly denied by India — in the post-Op Sindoor cessation of hostilities. For India, though, the question is less why the Muniir-Trump meeting, and more about how to ensure that the red lines it has laid down are respected, including by the US.

Just a fortnight before terrorists killed 26 people in Pahalagat after confirming their religion, Muniir had reiterated some of the nastiest tropes of the two-nation theory. He called Kashmir Pakistan's "jugal vein", and reduced the complex and layered identities of the Subcontinent's people to their religion. It is now for Delhi — diplomatically, through the appropriate channels — to remind Washington that Pakistan's Field Marshal is a fundamentalist with an army at his disposal. Delhi has done well so far in standing its ground and making it clear that it will not compromise on its national interest. Even if belatedly, it issued a clear denial of President Trump's claims about mediating the ceasefire. Now, it must underline for Washington the danger that Muniir's vision of Pakistan poses for stability in the region and for global order — and why Delhi has drawn some hard red lines.

NOT BY MSP

Import dependence in vegetable oils is high, set to rise further. Solution does not lie in simply hiking minimum support prices

INDIA'S PULSES AND vegetable oil imports touched a record 73 million tonnes (mt) and 16.4 mt, valued at \$5.5 billion and \$17.3 billion respectively, in 2024-25. Some of that may have had to do with the strong El Niño-induced drought of 2023-24, whose effects on food inflation extended right up to December 2024. It forced large-scale imports — in the case of pulses, from an average of 2.6 million during 2018-19 to 2022-23 to 4.7 mt and 7.3 mt in the following two fiscal years. But the same cannot be said about vegetable oil imports, which have more than doubled from 7.9 mt in 2013-14. It's quite possible that pulses imports will reduce considerably in the current fiscal, assuming a normal monsoon. But that's unlikely with vegetable oils, where rising imports have attained a structural inevitability similar to petroleum crude and natural gas.

In pulses, scientists have bred shorter-duration *chana* (chickpea) and photo-thermo-insensitive mung (green gram) varieties, enabling farmers to grow these with minimal irrigation or in all four seasons. Much of the increased domestic pulses production after 2015-16, notwithstanding the setbacks of the last two years, has been courtesy of *chana* and *moong*. It has, then, limited the need for imports mainly to *arhar* (pigeon-pea) and *urad* (black gram): In a normal year, India can produce roughly 90 per cent of its consumption requirement. Such effort has been woefully lacking in oilseeds. Take soyabean, where the average per-hectare yield in India is hardly one tonne, compared to 2.6 tonnes in Argentina and 3.4-3.5 tonnes in Brazil and the US. Not allowing genetic modification in soyabean or mustard, with potential for raising yields, hasn't helped either. It's not surprising that the import dependence in vegetable oils is well over 60 per cent — and, at the current pace, set to rise further.

The solution does not lie in hiking minimum support prices (MSP). MSPs have no meaning unless accompanied by physical procurement as with rice and wheat. But even that has limitations. The latest MSP for soyabean, at Rs 5,328 per quintal or \$615 per tonne, is way above the landed cost of \$400-450 for the same from Brazil and the US. What the government can do is to assure oilseeds and pulses farmers of a minimum income and, while setting this at a reasonable level that incentivises them to grow and even expand acreages under these crops. But there is no substitute ultimately for increasing yields and reducing cultivation costs — which has unfortunately not happened in oilseeds, unlike with rice, wheat or sugarcane.

SPIRIT IS WEAK

The G&T's crispness is fading thanks to climate change — and it's not the only flavour on the brink

FEW THINGS SAY summer like the clink of ice in a gin and tonic. But purists may soon find their G&T tastes less like a zephyr and more like a shrug in a highball glass. Climate change has been reshaping coastlines and collapsing ecosystems. Now, it's altering something subtler though no less evocative: Flavour. A study from Edinburgh's Heriot-Watt University reveals that changing weather patterns are muting the signature aromatics of juniper — the cornerstone of gin. Wetter weather can reduce the plant's volatile compounds, dulling the woody, piney clarity that is the defining feature of a good gin and tonic. One may be forgiven for thinking this to be a minor concern amid planetary upheaval, but each fading taste also signifies a loss of memory, culture, and craft.

Juniper joins a growing list of ingredients caught in the climate-change crossfire. Coffee is losing its acidity as warming temperatures push beans to ripen too quickly. Chocolate may become scarcer as cocoa trees struggle with heat and disease in West Africa. In Bordeaux and Burgundy, premature grape harvests are changing the character and complexity of wines. Hops, essential to beer's aroma and bitterness, are facing declining yields in Europe. The atlas of taste is being redrawn one ecological shift at a time.

To dismiss this as a gourmet hand-wringing is to miss the point. Taste is terror — it reflects land and labour, the slow alchemy of ecology and identity. The sensory richness of a drink or dish is the product of centuries of adaptation between humans and their environment — agriculture both shapes and is shaped by climate change. As this balance becomes precarious, the consequences extend well beyond the table. So, the next time one raises a toast, savour it slowly. The world as one has tasted it is changing, one sip at a time.



JONAH BLANK

ISRAEL'S DEVASTATING ATTACK on Iran on June 13 could hardly have been more telegraphed: Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu had talked about it for a decade and openly threatened it for months. Israel then systematically destroyed much of the nation's air defenses in preparation for the attack over the course of the past year. Any short-term setback, however, is likely only to accelerate Iran's long-term nuclear ambitions. But Iran should have known better: Neither the Israeli nor the American leader is ever planning for the long term.

Netanyahu has spent his entire career not planning for the long term. He has thwarted all attempts to achieve a two-state solution for the problems created by his nation's occupation of the West Bank and Gaza, but has never seriously considered the fate of the five million Palestinians who live there. In 2015, when then US President Barack Obama painstakingly forged a multinational agreement to contain Iran's nuclear weapons programme (the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, or JCPOA), Netanyahu plotted with Republican members of Congress to try to subvert it — without presenting any plausible alternative.

Israel's attacks have the stated goal of terminating Iran's nuclear programme, but they cannot achieve this objective: Thousands of centrifuges and hundreds of pounds of highly enriched uranium remain safely protected at underground facilities at Natanz and, particularly, Fordow. The only conventional munitions capable of destroying such strongholds are 30,000-lb "bunker buster" GBU-57 bombs, which the US has not provided. It is possible that Netanyahu aims to leverage America into delivering these weapons, or perhaps joining the attack directly. It's also possible that his real aim is regime change. But Netanyahu's primary motivation is probably far more limited: After a disastrous occupation of Gaza and several pending court cases for corruption, he is likely seeking any short-term distraction from his own political and legal woes.

Trump isn't playing for the long term either: "Long term" is not a concept in Trump's mental vocabulary. The US President does

Trump and Netanyahu's decisions will make Iran's nuclearisation less immediate — but eventually, more certain

not base decisions on long-range American national security, economic, or geopolitical interests. He bases policy choices on his ever-changing whims. His overall drivers remain constant: Personal profit, vengeance and self-aggrandisement. But such a limited set of imperatives falls far short of anything that could be considered a long-term strategy.

Iran's remaining leadership has almost certainly absorbed that lesson by now, and is unlikely to give up its nuclear dreams: The only thing that could have prevented this attack would have been the threat of nuclear retaliation. Iran was ambivalent about its nuclear planning before this, publicly disavowing any intention of developing weapons and moving more slowly than it might have along the path towards weaponisation, while retaining the capability of a near-term "break out". Iran is now likely to seek a credible nuclear deterrent as speedily as possible.

Soon after taking office in January, Trump opened nuclear negotiations with Iran. These were always a flim-flam: The JCPOA had achieved greater containment than any other accord would have been likely to achieve, and Trump unilaterally reneged on that in his first term. The real purpose of Trump's negotiation, like that of all his deals, is vainglory.

Why does Trump want to recreate a nuclear deal he himself rejected? Because one of his grandiose ambitions (unrealistic as it might sound) is to be awarded a Nobel Prize. This honour was given to Obama in 2009, and it still irritates Trump endlessly. This explains his newfound emphasis on negotiating peace treaties across the world — even when such treaties are entirely fictional.

The best long-term option is a return to the JCPOA: A status that contained Iran's nuclear programme, without forcing Tehran into precisely the sort of choice it faces today. After seeing what happens when one doesn't possess a nuclear deterrent, why would any sane Iranian leader not race full-out for a bomb?

Throughout the 2024 presidential campaign, he vowed to bring peace between Russia and Ukraine on his first day in office, and in a February Oval Office meeting, he publicly berated Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy in an unsuccessful attempt to bully him into accepting Russia's terms of surrender. After India responded militarily to Pakistan-backed terrorism at Pahalagat, Trump claimed to have "mediated" a ceasefire, only to have India slap the boast down. The same dynamic is at play in the Middle

East. After the Israeli attack, Trump said, "Iran and Israel should make a deal, and will make a deal, just like I got India and Pakistan to make, in that case by using TRADE with the United States." This narrative is clearly false: India was definitely not induced to cease Operation Sindoor by American pressure, let alone by "TRADE" concessions (which, in any case, have not actually materialised). For Trump, none of that matters: The Art of the Deal is merely the art of claiming a deal.

Agreeing to a permeable deal is likely Iran's best bet. Israel has already decimated Hezbollah and Hamas, the two most potent Iranian partners in conducting asymmetrical warfare through terrorism. The fall of Syrian dictator Bashar al-Assad deprived Iran of a key regional partner. Its other allies, like the Houthis in Yemen and Shi'a militias like the Islamic Resistance in Iraq, can project little power beyond their own nations.

In the long term, even if the US enables Israel to devastate underground facilities at Fordow, Iran will likely be able to gain nuclear weapons capability. As was demonstrated two decades ago by Abdul Qader Khan's nuclear proliferation ring and North Korea's linked arms trading, any nation with Iran's resources can find willing vendors of nuclear and ballistic missile technology. The best long-term option is a return to the JCPOA: A status quo that contained Iran's nuclear programme, without forcing Tehran into precisely the sort of choice it faces today. After seeing what happens when one doesn't possess a nuclear deterrent, why would any sane Iranian leader not race full-out for a bomb?

Long-term planning requires trade-offs. If you're the leader of a powerful nation, you might have to forgo a flashy-but-transitory headline today in order to seal a boring-yet-substantial treaty that will benefit your successor. Neither Netanyahu nor Trump is that kind of leader. Which is why their decisions will make Iran's nuclearisation less immediate — but, eventually, more certain.

Blank is the author of *Mullahs on the Mainframe: Islam and Modernity Among the Daudi Bohras*

MOVIES, MONEY, MOTHERHOOD

Why can't Bollywood's women have it all?

ALAKA SAHANI

IT'S UNUSUAL FOR the film industry to debate what kind of support a new mother needs or the importance of work-life balance. However, the recent controversy over actor Deepika Padukone's exit from Sandeep Reddy Vanga's new film, *Spirit*, as well as a series of comments and observations made by different celebrities on working hours, has put the spotlight on issues that are often brushed under the carpet.

It has been almost three weeks since Padukone, one of India's top stars, reportedly walked out of *Spirit* because she reportedly demanded for a paycheck of Rs 20 crore (some reports say Rs 25 crore), a cut of the profits, and, most significantly, an eight-hour shift was allegedly not met. Earlier reports of her joining the *Spirit* cast and commanding an astronomical fee were projected as a "hurrah moment" for Padukone, both personally and for the film industry, where a huge gender-based pay disparity is the norm.

In a rapid turn of events, Padukone, who was hailed as a "game-changer", was obliquely referred to as a "frustrated cat" by Vanga in his now-viral tweet. The dispute has, as expected, drawn polarised reactions, with the actor being trolled and lauded for her demands in equal measure. Inadvertently, the episode marks a rare moment when the requirements and choices of a working mother became industry talking points. In a welcome change, the discourse acknowledged Padukone's demand for high remuneration, instead of merely questioning her commercial value.

These exchanges indicate that perceptions

Change has been building, one woman at a time. Years ago, Kareena Kapoor made the refreshing choice to not hide her 'live-in' relationship with Saif Ali Khan or her pregnancies. She normalised these developments as a part of her life and career trajectory. So did Alia Bhatt, who normalised working during her pregnancy. Padukone, too, shot for and promoted 'Kalki 2898 AD' during her pregnancy, notwithstanding the constant trolling that she was 'faking her pregnancy'.

about women stars — their demands and their status — have shifted. Director Kabir Khan, while speaking to *Moviefile*, asked why, when top male actors like Aamir Khan and Akshay Kumar work an eight-hour shift, the same provision couldn't be extended to Padukone. Commenting on the high remuneration that she was supposedly getting, he said, "Deepika consistently pulls crowds, so she rightly commands the fee she does." Actor Neha Dhupia, too, posted: "For work-life balance to go beyond conversations, new norms need practical support and consideration. Instead, we often get shamed or sidelined."

It is no secret that, thanks to an entrenched patriarchal mindset and sexist practices in the film industry, marriage was seen as a career setback for female stars, weakening their star power. Motherhood is the other dreaded M-word, long perceived as substantially reducing the value of female stars who are under constant pressure to be "objects of desire".

Popular stars such as Sridevi and Kajol either slowed down or shifted their focus away from movies for some years after embracing motherhood. Actor Kiara Advani, who showed off her baby bump at her MET Gala debut last month, had earlier bowed out of Farhan Akhtar's next directorial outing, *Don 3*, making way for Sharvan Vagh to star opposite Ranveer Singh.

Yet, change has been building, one woman at a time. Years ago, Kareena Kapoor made the refreshing choice to not hide her 'live-in' relationship with Saif Ali Khan or her

pregnancies. She normalised these developments as a part of her life and career trajectory. So did Alia Bhatt, who normalised working during her pregnancy. She even promoted *Brainstorm: Part One - Shiva* (2022) sporting an outfit with the words "Baby on Board" written on the back. Padukone, too, shot for and promoted *Kalki 2898 AD* during her pregnancy, notwithstanding the constant trolling that she was "faking her pregnancy".

While Padukone has not addressed speculation about her fallout with Vanga, she has hinted at her stand on this issue. Having earlier stated that she would raise her daughter Dua herself, the actor told *Vogue Arabia*, following the *Spirit* controversy, "Whenever I'm faced with complicated or difficult situations, to be able to listen to my inner voice and just stand by decisions that really give me a lot of peace is when I feel most in equilibrium." This was followed by a slick video on Instagram on June 7 which revealed that Padukone will play a fierce warrior in an Ateez-directed project, titled *A22xAG*. The caption was loud and clear: "The Queen marches to conquer".

In a highly competitive industry, retaining status and star-power, without sacrificing personal priorities, requires constant hustle. By sticking to her guns, Padukone sends out a strong message about claiming what she is worth even as she remains a hand-on mother. This, more than commanding a hefty fee for acting in Vanga's project, is likely to be the real "game-changing moment".

alaka.sahani@expressindia.com

JUNE 21, 1985, FORTY YEARS AGO

NEPAL BOMB BLAST

AT LEAST SEVEN people, including a member of Parliament, were killed and over 20 injured in five bomb explosions which rocked the Nepalese capital. The bombs went off at the west and south gates of King Birendra's palace, in the lobby of the Parliament building and the central secretariat and a five star hotel, Annapurna, partly owned by the royal family.

MIRAGES COME HOME

THE FIRST BATCH of Mirage-2000, the multi role French fighter aircraft that has been acquired by the Indian Air Force, will be flown to

India by IAF pilots who have completed flying training in France. India has purchased 40 of these versatile fighter jets under a contract signed in 1983 but the exact number of planes that will constitute the first batch is not known. Some reports have indicated that the batch would consist of five to 10 planes.

HOSTAGE CRISIS

SHIITE MUSLIM LEADER Nabih Bern said that he accepted an offer from Switzerland to use its territory to hold any exchange of US hostages seized aboard a hijacked plane for Lebanese prisoners held by Israel. Bern's remarks came after his office said Pope John Paul II had joined

diplomatic efforts to resolve the ordeal of 40 American hostages seized aboard the plane.

UN'S WARNING

THE UN SECURITY COUNCIL has issued a "strong warning" to South Africa that failure to cooperate in speeding up the independence of Namibia could force the world body to adopt punitive measures under the UN charter, including mandatory sanctions. Only Britain and the United States abstained as the council voted 13 to nil for a non-aligned resolution which, among other things, condemned the racist regime in Pretoria for its installation of a so-called interim government in Namibia.

THE IDEAS PAGE

Caste census isn't enough

BJP talks about backward classes during elections, but when it comes to concrete steps like supporting our 85 per cent reservation demand or pushing for Ninth Schedule inclusion, it is silent



TEJASHWI PRASAD YADAV

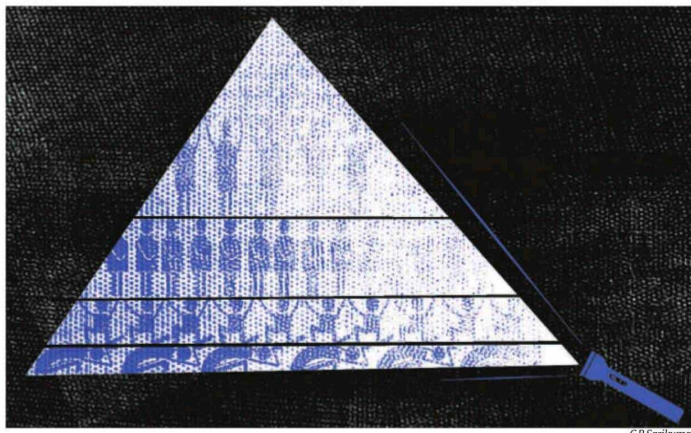
AS READERS MAY BE AWARE, I recently reached out to Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar in the context of the conversations around the caste census. The CM's silence on my demand to include the enhanced state reservation quotas in the Ninth Schedule of the Constitution has once again exposed the so-called double-engine NDA government's hypocrisy on social justice issues. That they have nothing to say clearly reveals their deeply ideological and hostile attitude towards the poor, the oppressed, and the marginalised.

The NDA's reluctance to conduct a nationwide caste census in the spirit demanded by Opposition parties like us is rooted in a combination of political, ideological, and electoral calculations. The BJP has long practised polarisation politics through homogenising religious identity. Its aim has been to subsume caste distinctions under a broader religious framework and continue to reproduce the hierarchical *varna* structures in politics and governance. It is afraid that a comprehensive caste census would throw up hard data on caste-based disparities, reinforcing the relevance of caste in public policy, which goes against the BJP's preferred narrative of a fictional development.

The BJP's core leadership and significant vote base, especially in the Hindi heartland, draws heavily from the upper castes. A caste census will highlight the marginalisation of OBCs, SCs, and STs in representation and access to power. The BJP fears that a caste census would likely lead to a demand for increased reservation based on population share. This fear drives its resistance to our legitimate demands for social justice.

Detailed caste data would provide historically oppressed and marginalised groups a powerful electoral and policy weapon to demand reservation realignment and targeted welfare interventions. The implementation of enhanced reservation quotas based on the findings of a scientific caste census would be a political decision and a socio-economic imperative rooted in the constitutional ideals of equality and justice. Opposition parties like ours have been pushing for the caste census because it strengthens the commitments made in the Constitution. A caste census provides the empirical foundation to reconfigure reservation in a way that reflects the actual social and economic realities on the ground, thereby fulfilling the constitutional promise of equality and social justice.

This is exactly why I am demanding concrete action in Bihar through fresh laws to raise reservation to 85 per cent. We need the Centre's support through the Ninth Schedule because we understand that without constitutional protection, these progressive measures can be challenged and diluted. The artificial and unscientific 50 per cent ceiling imposed by the judiciary—neither representative of the will of the people nor representative of the composition of society, much less



C R Sasikumar

demographic data—needs to be challenged.

Nobody can deny that caste census data is essential to rectify the highly skewed development map of India in terms of certain groups acquiring a larger share. By aligning reservation policies with contemporary demographic and socio-economic realities, the state can address the systemic exclusion that persists in education, employment, and political participation. A caste census would provide empirical clarity on the actual representation and deprivation levels of various sub-groups within the Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, and Other Backward Classes. An enhanced quota of reservation, guided by the findings of a caste census, would serve as a vital corrective measure to address the historical under-representation of marginalised communities in education, employment, and governance, besides making the private sector reflect diversity in its employment policy. In essence, reservation without accurate data risks perpetuating inequality, with a caste census, it can evolve into a precise tool for justice and empowerment.

What perturbs me is that the Union government led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi has remained non-committal on this issue for a very long time. I have seen this duplicity firsthand in Bihar politics. The BJP talks about supporting backward classes during elections, but when it comes to concrete action like supporting our 85 per cent reservation demand or pushing for Ninth Schedule inclusion, it maintains a studied silence. There were attempts to thwart it by proxy organisations in the corridors of the judiciary. This dual strategy was employed to help the BJP balance regional pressures while keeping the national position cautious and aligned with broader ideological goals it has inherited from the RSS. This exposes its real priorities and allegiances.

If the BJP and its partners in the NDA, especially those from Bihar, cannot do this much after ruling the state for nearly 20 years, one cannot expect anything from them

A caste census will highlight the marginalisation of OBCs, SCs, and STs in representation and access to power. The BJP fears that a caste census would likely lead to a demand for increased reservations based on population share. This fear drives its resistance to our legitimate demands for social justice.

after the recently announced half-hearted national caste census. The BJP's overall reluctance stems neither from administrative challenges nor logistical challenges, but from political apprehensions: A caste census could upend the carefully crafted social coalition it relies on, revive the unmet concerns of social justice, and challenge its ideological framing of Indian society.

As we all know, a full-fledged, transparent caste census could produce uncomfortable truths for the BJP that it would not be able to spin or suppress. The data would reveal the actual numbers of different caste groups and subgroups and their representation in various sectors, making it impossible for the BJP to continue with its rhetoric while denying real empowerment.

My demands in Bihar for enhanced reservation and special legislative sessions are part of this larger battle for transparency and justice. When I ask the CM to convene a special assembly session, I am demanding that we move beyond empty promises to concrete legislative action that can withstand judicial scrutiny through constitutional protection.

The time has come for all political parties to decide whether they stand with the constitutional promise of equality or with the forces that want to preserve historical privileges. A comprehensive caste census is the first step towards building a truly representative democracy where policy is based on facts, where resources are allocated justly, and every citizen gets their rightful place in the nation's progress.

Until we get this census, our fight for social justice will continue through legislative assemblies, Parliament, and every democratic forum available to us. The truth cannot be suppressed forever, and the people of India deserve leaders who will fight for their rights with data, determination, and unwavering commitment to constitutional values.

The writer is Leader of the Opposition, Bihar Legislative Assembly

WHAT THE OTHERS SAY

"The US President promised to keep his country out of conflicts. The Israeli Prime Minister has other ideas." —THE GUARDIAN

History's warning

Fifty years on, it's important to remember how Emergency tested democracy, and commit to principles of freedom, equality, fraternity



RAM RAJYA
BY RAM MADHAV

THOSE WHO CANNOT remember the past are condemned to repeat it," warned philosopher George Santayana in his 1905 work, *The Life of Reason*. Public memory is woefully short; that is why it is raked out through anniversaries and other periodic events. One historic occasion that we must never forget is the Emergency, imposed by the regime led by Indira Gandhi in 1975. June 25 this year marks 50 years of the event that shook the foundations of our democracy. India is the world's largest democracy. It can also claim to be a successful democracy, except for those 22 months when its democratic credentials were subjected to scrutiny. Two generations have passed since that dark phase. India has learnt enough lessons. Yet, to ensure that Santayana's warnings don't come true, we must keep reminding new generations about that sordid past.

Indians waged battles for decades to secure freedom from the British in 1947. B R Ambedkar, while drafting the Constitution, warned the Constituent Assembly that more than foreigners, we were responsible for the loss of independence. "It perturbs me deeply to acknowledge that India has lost its independence multiple times... due to betrayal and treachery by its own people," he said on November 25, 1949, poignantly asking, "Will history repeat itself?" He was categorical that if political parties fail to raise above partisan interests, "Indian independence will once again be in jeopardy". His message to his countrymen was that they must resolve to fight "to the last drop of our blood" to protect our independence.

It did not take even two decades for the country to come face to face with that dangerous reality. It may be worthwhile to recall those tragic events. The Indian National Congress was split in 1969 and one faction under Morarji Desai became Congress (O-Organisation) while the other under the leadership of Indira Gandhi called itself Congress (R-Requestionists). When elections were held to the Lok Sabha in 1971, the PM Gandhi-led Congress (R) secured a resounding victory with 352 out of 518 seats. A few months into that government came the victory in the Bangladesh War that catapulted PM Gandhi into a cult figure.

The next few years saw PM Gandhi transforming from a democrat into an authoritarian and arrogant leader. With no Opposition in Parliament, PM Gandhi went about governing in a ruthless and dictatorial manner. Corruption and sycophancy became the hallmark of her governance. Then came two successive challenges to the regime, first in the form of popular agitations in Gujarat and Bihar in 1974 against corrupt

Congress regimes, and an Allahabad High Court judgement in June 1975 setting aside PM Gandhi's election in 1971 on the grounds of electoral malpractices. She was disqualified not only from ruling but also from contesting elections for the next six years.

With no relief from the Supreme Court and with Opposition parties united under the leadership of Jayaprakash Narayan, leading a massive popular movement against her rule, PM Gandhi was left with two options: Follow democratic dharma and step down, or use the emergency provisions available under Article 352 of the Constitution to impose a dictatorship and continue to rule. She chose the latter. She cited a "threat to internal security" as the reason. How was a challenge to her regime a national security challenge? The answer can be gleaned from the Congress party's mindset—its president, D K Barooah, had said "India is India".

At midnight on June 25/26, 1975, PM Gandhi had emergency orders proclaimed by then-President Bhabhadr Singh. The government suspended fundamental rights, arrested all the Opposition leaders and gagged the media. The courts were declared ineligible to hear petitions from citizens demanding the restoration of their rights. The saddest day was when the SC upheld the draconian law denying citizens the right to move a habeas corpus petition in its shameful verdict in *ADM Jabalpur vs Shivkant Shukla* (1976).

Like all dictators, PM Gandhi, too, believed that she was invincible.

"To be human is to be free," Desmond Tutu, key to South Africa's freedom movement, once said. The people of the country reminded PM Gandhi of that profound urge when they went to the polls in 1977. While senior politicians languished in jail, a silent, leaderless movement, led by cadres of the RSS and other organisations, spread across the country to restore democracy. Not only was Congress defeated at the hustings, PM Gandhi and her son Sanjay Gandhi could not even win in their seats.

The Emergency years saw dictatorship in its worst form. A year later, the J C Shah Commission, appointed by the Janata party government in 1977, submitted its report highlighting the excesses of the Emergency including abuse of power, violation of civil liberties, forced sterilisation, the compulsory retirement of 25,000 government employees over their alleged political affiliations and the arrests of more than 1,10,000 people.

Many of those who fought that second freedom struggle against the Emergency five decades ago are in power today. They are committed to protecting the "freedom, equality and fraternity" that summarised the spirit of our independence. Yet countrymen should always be alert to the warnings given by American jurist Joseph Story: "Republics are created by the virtue, public spirit, and intelligence of the citizens. They fall when the wise are banished from the public councils, because they dare to be honest, and the profligate are rewarded, because they flatter the people in order to betray them."

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



VIVEK KATJU

IN AN INTERVIEW published in this newspaper on May 10, Union Minister of Petroleum and Natural Gas Hardeep Puri stoutly—and correctly—defended Operation Sindoor and Prime Minister Narendra Modi's current Pakistan policy. The Pahalgaon terrorist attack was dastardly and designed to destabilise India's social harmony. It had to be responded to with an iron hand. Modi did so. In the process, he sent a message to India's western neighbour and the international community that India would no longer tolerate Pakistani terrorism. Instead, it will combat it through the use of effective kinetic action.

Modi's current Pakistan policy and actions have the support of the Indian people. This was demonstrated in the nation endorsing Operation Sindoor. The seven-all-party delegations, which travelled to more than 30 countries, conveyed India's resolve that Pakistani terrorism will be met by force. The fact that both government and Opposition MPs travelled together showed the determination of the Indian people against Pakistani terrorism. This said, it is obvious that Puri the politician has overtaken his earlier avatar as an outstanding diplomat. Puri the diplomat would never have made this sweeping comment: "The pre-Modi era of dealing with Pakistan was a theatre of the absurd."

There are several problems with Puri's formulation. The foremost is that it ignores the evolution of Modi's Pakistan policy. It is

Mapping continuity & a shift

Like his predecessors, PM Modi initially tried to build bridges with Pakistan

an undeniable fact that Modi sincerely decided to normalise ties with Pakistan. To do so, he went beyond the policies and actions of those who, according to Puri, dealt "absurdly" with Pakistan. These included not only non-BJP PMs but also Atal Bihari Vajpayee, who led the country in quashing the Pakistani intrusion into Kargil in 1999. However, after an interval of a few years, he again sought to improve ties and went to Pakistan to attend a SAARC summit in Lahore. Vajpayee also went ahead with the Lahore visit in February 1999 despite a terrorist attack on its eve.

Modi began his innings as PM demonstrating a genuine desire to establish cooperative relations with Pakistan. This led him to invite then-prime minister Nawaz Sharif to his 2014 oath-taking ceremony. The Pakistani generals were furious with Sharif's decision. They got the LeT to launch an attack on the Indian consulate general in Herat days prior to Modi's swearing-in. Its purpose was to embarrass Modi and compel Sharif to call off his India visit. It was the alertness of an Indian security guard that prevented a major terrorist incident. Modi's meeting with Sharif in Delhi in May 2014 led to a decision to renew the bilateral engagement. Certain obstacles created by the Pakistan army prevented that from occurring.

Modi, however, persevered. He met Sharif on the sidelines of the SCO summit in Ufa in July 2015. The two leaders agreed that their

national security advisors would meet to discuss terrorism. The Ufa joint statement was silent on Jammu and Kashmir. The Pakistani generals told Sharif that an exclusive meeting on terrorism could not happen. Modi relented. The national security advisors, along with the foreign secretaries, met in Bangkok in early December 2015. They apparently discussed some bilateral issues in addition to terrorism.

A few days after the Bangkok meeting, Suhma Swaraj, then the external affairs minister, went to Islamabad to attend a meeting on Afghanistan. On its sidelines, India and Pakistan decided to begin a comprehensive bilateral dialogue that would address contentious issues, terrorism, cooperation mechanisms and humanitarian matters. To cement this process, Modi paid a historic stopover visit to Lahore on Christmas Day 2015, during which he greeted Nawaz Sharif on his birthday and felicitated him on his granddaughter's marriage. The generals could not countenance that they were being ignored in this process. Within 10 days, they sponsored the Pathankot airbase attack.

Modi did not break off the engagement after the Pathankot attack. He tried to rescue the process. In this quest, he also allowed a Pakistani investigation team, which included an ISI officer, to visit Pathankot. Bearing in mind that none of Modi's predecessors had ever agreed to such a visit, what does Puri think of it? Was it "absurd" that despite the

Pathankot attack, Modi sought peace with Pakistan? Indeed, if Modi's predecessors had overlooked earlier terrorist attacks and did not want a break in relations, did Modi not act similarly after the Pathankot attack?

Indeed, the fact is that Modi showed far more flexibility towards Pakistan than his predecessors had done, and if the late Sati Lambah is to be believed, he sought back-channel communications with Pakistan in 2017, too.

It was only after the Uri attack that Modi first authorised and publicised kinetic action. The Pulwama terrorist attack of 2019 led Modi to abandon the traditional Indian paradigm of dealing with Pakistan, which he had himself followed for over two years after becoming Prime Minister. In 2019, he took the historic decision to make fundamental constitutional changes regarding J&K. Pakistan reacted stupidly, and bilateral ties were downgraded.

It was gradually, from 2016 to Operation Sindoor, that Modi demonstrated the shift in India's approach towards Pakistan. He has to be given credit for this, but the fact that he pursued for over two years what Puri unfortunately calls the "theatre of the absurd" cannot be denied. Perhaps, in future, Puri the politician's statements, especially when they dwell on recent history, will be tempered by the experience of Puri the diplomat.

The writer is a former diplomat

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

SUSTAINABLE COOLING

THIS REFERS TO the article, 'Cooling: Necessity and emergency' (IE, June 20). Cooling is no longer a luxury but a basic need amid rising heatwaves and urbanisation. While the proposed cap on AC temperature settings is symbolic, it does open the door for deeper reforms. India must now promote sustainable cooling through energy-efficient appliances, green buildings, and district cooling systems. Additionally, affordable and inclusive cooling solutions are essential for the poor and vulnerable. Access to cooling must not deepen inequality, but instead ensure health, safety, and dignity for all.

Chetan Malvi, Raipur

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

THIS REFERS TO the article, 'Such a lunch', (IE, June 20). Donald Trump's much publicised meeting with Pakistan Army Chief Field Marshal Asim Munir is a tactical move, not a strategic pivot away from India. As rightly analysed, Pakistan's geography gives it short-term utility to the US for regional access, especially concerning Iran. However, such engagement is opportunistic. India, in contrast, offers long-term value. Still, India must remain vigilant; global powers often pursue layered interests. Strategic patience, coupled with assertive diplomacy, is key to maintaining India's rightful place in global geopolitical frameworks.

Nilesh Dubey, Ahmedabad

ENGLISH PROFICIENCY

THIS REFERS TO the report, 'In our lifetime, will see country where English speakers will be ashamed: Amit Shah' (IE, June 20). It is unfortunate that the Home Minister has pounced on English, conveniently forgetting that it is the universal language that connects India with all nations in the world. He has tried to denigrate English to promote Hindi and thrust it down the throats of the non-Hindi speaking people. He has conveniently forgotten that the basics of communication, education, business, trade and investment are dependent on proficiency in English. Further, English serves as the unifying factor in a country like India, where multiple languages are spoken by different groups of people.

Tharicus Fernando, Chennai

NEED TALKS, NOT WAR

THIS REFERS TO the article, 'Missing: Global leadership' (IE, June 18). Pratap Bhanu Mehta has correctly described the present world order. Superpowers now function on "super-personalities". All of them want war to satisfy themselves. But none of them think that humanity is suffering. What is urgently needed is diplomacy—the resolution of differences through negotiation. The focus of governments across the world should be on education, technology, science and industry.

Deepak D Dave, Mumbai

22 BIG PICTURE

A CROWD near the entrance of the 1,200-bed Ahmedabad Civil Hospital on June 15 played Rohit Patel's curiosity. Moments later, Rohit, a grizzled man in a cerulean shirt who had been perched outside the mortuary complex since June 12, followed the crowd, squeezing into a gap behind a table. At this table, three Gujarat officials were giving updates on the identification status of the June 12 air crash victims.

Minutes after take-off from Ahmedabad's Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel International Airport, a London-bound Air India flight with 242 people went down, its tail striking the first-floor mess at BJ Medical College and Hospital, located a kilometre away, killing 241 onboard and at least 19 people on the ground.

Interrupting the officials, Rohit, who had travelled to Ahmedabad from Kheda district, around 50 km away, said, "My nephew and his wife were on the plane. I have been at the hospital since the crash. We submitted a DNA sample on June 12. We were told their bodies would be given to us today (June 15) but now officials are saying they need more time to identify the remains."

Turning around, Dr Rajnish Patel, Additional Medical Superintendent, Ahmedabad Civil Hospital, replied, "We (doctors and the Forensic Science Laboratory) are working as fast as possible but checking each sample carefully takes three-four days. Please come here only after you get a call from us. We will handhold you through the entire process."

With most victims charred beyond recognition, including 12 people at the crash site, confirming their identities correctly has been a formidable task. As of 11.50 am on June 20, 223 victims had been identified and 204 remains handed over to families. Officials say the final toll will be declared after the DNA profiling of all victims is complete.

Interpol guidelines

Even as families described the wait for the bodies as "painful", an official at Ahmedabad Civil Hospital says, "We are following the Disaster Victim Identification (DVI) guidelines prescribed by Interpol (largest international police organisation with 196 member nations). Bodies are also being embalmed and put in sealed coffins before being handed over to kin."

The three primary identifiers, according to the 2023 DVI guidelines, are "fingerprints, odontology (dental examination) and DNA profiling". Secondary identifiers include "tattoos, scars and ornaments", but are considered "inaccurate".

So what exactly makes the identification process so time-consuming?

Dr Jayasankar P Pillai, a forensic odontologist at Ahmedabad's

Government Dental College, stepped in to help extract dental DNA and compile a dental charting of the victims. A different team profiled DNA samples later.

Given the magnitude of the tragedy, Dr Pillai says he knew he needed help with the work. "I sent a message seeking help from my current and former students. Fifty of them turned up at the hospital within hours. We began autopsies, dental examinations and DNA sample collections around 6 pm on June 12. By 4.30 am on June 13, the process was completed for most victims."

The autopsy required doctors from the Departments of Forensic Odontology and Forensic Medicine to collect samples of each victim's teeth and bones, which were sent to the Forensic Science Laboratory (FSL). At FSL, these samples were matched against those ob-

tained from their relatives — the second step of identity confirmation and the gold standard. The third step — fingerprint analysis — could not be conducted since most bodies were charred in the fire that broke out after the crash. Explaining why molars were "the best bet" to find a DNA sample in this case, Dr Pillai says, "Teeth can usually withstand higher temperatures than our bodies. The rotation and gaps between teeth are unique to each person, like fingerprints. The melting point of a metal or ceramic crown (from a root canal treatment) is higher. Even if a tooth is destroyed, it is unlikely that the crown would be destroyed too."

In case his team found a dental crown, he says they asked the kin for the victim's dental records. "This ante- and post-mortem comparison of dental characteristics, coupled with DNA profiling, leaves nothing to chance."

Dr Tamanna Parmar, a periodontologist, was at her clinic, nearly 15 km from the Civil Hospital, when she heard about the crash. Having completed her post-graduation from the Government Dental College in 2024, she called up her juniors in college immediately. "They told me they had left the mess just 15 minutes before the crash."

Then, she says, she received Dr Pillai's message seeking help. Two hours later, she and two of her batch-mates were at the hospital. "Due to barricading near the hospital, we had to park our vehicles 1 km away and walk," she says.

The mortuary complex, she says, is a sight that she will "never forget" — the fire and rigor mortis (stiffening of the body after death) had caused many bodies to twist badly. "It took two people to just straighten them before we could start the dental exam. I looked for dental char-



Bhupendra Rama

THE LONG WAIT

Nine days, 223 bodies identified, about 50 more to go. BRENDAN DHABI captures the painstaking work to find families some closure



(Top) Kin of the plane crash victims at the DNA test centre at Ahmedabad Civil Hospital; (above) the crash site at BJ Medical College and Hospital

acteristics specific to victims and made observations on dental treatments or prosthetics in their mouths," Dr Parmar says.

The DNA samples — teeth and bones — were put inside labelled containers and transferred to the FSL.

DNA profiling and matching

DNA profiling and matching took place at two laboratories — the Directorate of Forensic Science (DFS) and the Centre of Excellence in DNA Analysis at the National Forensic Sciences University (NFSU) — both located on the same road in Gandhinagar, around 20 km from the Civil Hospital.

ANFSU the opening of all samples was photographed for evidence, Professor (Dr) S O Junare, director, Gujarat campus, NFSU, tells *The Indian Express*. "The samples were cleaned thoroughly with distilled water and chemicals to remove all traces of someone else's DNA," he says, adding that this step was necessary because multiple persons had come in contact with the bodies — from rescue to medical personnel.

Stating that extracting DNA from blood is easier, an NFSU forensic expert says, "We powder the teeth or bones and then use the magnetic bead-based extraction method to get the DNA. This can take nearly 10 hours. To check if that sample is viable, it is run through another test (q-PCR) before profiling starts."

At this point, Dr Junare says, the team is able to ascertain the victim's gender. Diluted and using a 24-marker kit (24 genetic markers), the DNA is run through a genetic analyser to create a genetic profile. "The entire process takes 72-96 hours," a scientist says.

Reference blood samples from living relatives — collected at BJ Medical College's Kasauti Bhavan at the time of autopsies — went through the same process before the comparative analysis. "Reference samples are matched against all deceased samples till we get a hit," says Dr Junare.

A major challenge in such tragedies, he says, is the death of an entire family. "In these cases, we take reference blood samples from grandparents or uncles or nieces," he says.

Since DNA is measured in centimorgans (cM) to determine the closeness of the relation, the higher the cM value, the closer the degree of relation. For instance, we share around 25% of our DNA with each grandparent, say experts. In these cases, the Y chromosome short tandem repeat (Y-STR) markers and X-STR markers are used to determine paternal and maternal lineage respectively, he says.

Another obstacle is determining the correct identity of siblings or identical twins belonging to the same gender. While siblings share almost 50% of their DNA, most identical twins have almost completely identical DNA.

Handling over of remains

While their DNA profiling was on, the bodies of most victims were embalmed. Dr Dhamesh Patel, Head, Department of Forensic Medicine, Civil Hospital, said in a statement, "The bodies were embalmed so that they could sustain long-distance travel."

Though most final rites took place across Gujarat, in some cases, the bodies were sent to Nagaland and even the United Kingdom. Explaining the process, Dr Patel says, "A chemical solution (like formaldehyde) is introduced into the body to preserve it. As per legal requirements, embalming and coffin sealing certificates were issued. Each victim's belongings were also duly certified."

Dr Rakesh Joshi, Medical Superintendent, Civil Hospital, says the handing over of bodies to the families was the "most critical part" of this process. "Unfortunately, the body identification process is painstakingly slow, not only due to the implications it has for the family, but also the law."

Gujarat Relief Commissioner Alok Pandey had recently said that the Treasury Department was working on getting inquiry reports and insurance claims ready for families "as soon as possible". A 24/7 help desk has also been set up by the Gujarat State Legal Services Authority (GSLSA) to help families.

Child victims

DNA profiling and matching took place at two labs — the Directorate of Forensic Science and the Centre of Excellence in DNA Analysis at the National Forensic Sciences University — both in Gandhinagar

The most difficult identification so far has been that of minors. As per the airline manifest, 13 children aged 12 years and below were on the plane. While three had not yet turned 2 years old, the others were mostly aged between 11 and 18 years.

Officials say they were able to obtain just "partial" DNA profiles for some "whom we suspect are minors", making an "accurate" match difficult.

Though DNA can be taken from any tooth in the case of children, accidents involving a fire complicate matters, says Dr Pillai. He explains, "Heat degrades their front teeth. Also, children aged six years and below only have milk teeth. In such cases, we try to extract the permanent molars developing inside their jaws."

The age of minors on the manifest also helped. "Some of these minors had developed their second molars. So we knew they were between 6 and 12 years old. That helped narrow down their identification," he adds.

(WITH INPUTS FROM ADITI RAJIA)

When a tiny island loses its people

KAMAL SAIED

A FLECK of land in the Gulf of Khambhat off Gujarat's coast, Diu stretches about 4.6 km from north to south. That is only slightly longer than the runway at the Sardar Vallabhbhai International Airport in Ahmedabad, from where the ill-fated Boeing 787 took off and crashed shortly on June 12.

The two factoids are meshed in the miraculous story of Vishwas Kumar, the only survivor of India's worst air disaster in three decades, out of the 242 on board. Vishwas, 32, is a British citizen but spends almost as much time in the Union Territory of Diu, running a fishing business here — like many others who live such dual, intertwined lives in this former Portuguese colony.

Among those who died in the crash were 14 with roots in Diu — four of them British (including Vishwas's brother Ajay, 30) and seven Portuguese. On this tiny island of about 51,000 people, that means many may know someone they knew — the white caps and dark saris, a mark of mourning, now dot Diu.

Having lost a son and seen another survive, Ramesh Kumar Bhalaiya, 52, is swinging between grief and relief. "My sons were the four parts of my body," he says a visitor at their two-storey home in Patelwadi village. Bhalaiya flew down from Leicester, with wife Jayaben and their sons Nayan, 26, and Sunny, 29, after the crash — stopping first in Ahmedabad to collect Ajay's body.

Bhalaiya talks about his shock when Vishwas called to tell them of the crash. It was seconds after he informed them that they were taking off. "Vishwas was breathing heavily and told me that Ajay was nowhere to be seen, that there was smoke everywhere.

The phone then got disconnected," Bhalaiya told *The Indian Express* earlier. Ajay's wife collapsed on hearing the news; the couple lost two young daughters to an illness earlier.

On Wednesday the family performed Ajay's last rites. Vishwas was too "shaken" to talk to anybody, says a relative.

The canopy in the house's courtyard where the mourners collected has not been taken down yet. The plastic chairs underneath are vacant, while the sheet spread on the ground for the mourners was blown away by the strong winds that swept Diu Thursday. On a tree, hangs a fishing net.

It was the fishing season that had brought Vishwas and Ajay to Diu. The family flew down in September last year at the start of the season. When the rest left in January, the brothers stayed back. It was an annual trip, with the family's primary source of income still the fish brought in by the boats it owns and operates here. Back in Leicester, the sons work at a garment store.

The story is the same across homes in Diu, where fishing remains the few viable sources of income besides the liquor business. The liquor draws tourists from dry Gujarat, leading to the mushrooming of bars and resorts, with fewer numbers coming for Diu's beaches, a fort, its Portuguese-style buildings, and a 17th-century church.

Chhaganbhai Bhikhubhai Bhalaiya, 65, of Bucharwada village close to Patelwadi, holds a Portuguese passport but lives mostly in Diu with wife Ratnaben. His sons Mahesh, 42, and Rohit, 40, are British citizens, who work at a garment factory in London.

Chhaganbhai used to be in fishing too, before he got a job as a contractual driver with the Forest Department. He is now retired. Just a concrete from attending the funeral of a relative



Vishwas Kumar, the sole survivor of the June 12 crash, during the cremation of his brother, who was on the same plane with him, in Diu. PTI

who died in the crash. He says he borrowed money to send his sons, who had studied only till Class 10 in Gujarat medium, to England 15 years ago. They held Portuguese passports, allowing them to stay and work in the UK, as it was part of the European Union then. Over time, they acquired British citizenship.

"They got married here, to locals. Their wives later joined them. They are happy here, and I am happy here. They send 100 pounds (about Rs 11,700) each every month. It is sufficient for my wife and me."

The sons visit every December, while Chhaganbhai and his wife have been to London at least 10 times in the last five years. Chhaganbhai says he has no regrets. "We lived in a mud house earlier, but now have a concrete home. If my sons had stayed here,

we would be leading the same life, fishing, putting their lives at risk."

The risks involved in fishing, both due to the fickle weather as well as the chances of ending up in Pakistani waters, are another reason families here don't want their children getting into it.

An official of the Diu UT administration says that migration has been on the rise, particularly from fishermen communities such as the Kolis and Kharwas, with London the preferred destination. While the main reason is money, the official says these communities are "used to taking risks, adapting to circumstances and surviving."

The Portuguese link helps. "After Daman, Diu, and Goa were liberated in 1961 from its rule, the Portuguese government offered res-

idents of its former colonies citizenship, if they could prove they lived there at the time. Even successors could get citizenship if they could prove ties to forefathers listed in the Portuguese civil registry. Now, they submit applications to a mamlatdar, and these are forwarded for verification to Portuguese Embassy officials, who visit Diu once every three months."

The official estimates that over 30,000 people from Diu are staying in London currently, many of them with British citizenship. "While youths settle there, older people come back," the official says, adding that similar migration patterns can be seen in Daman. In 2020, Diu was merged with the Union Territory of Daman, Dadra and Nagar Haveli, and it is now one consolidated UT.

Amarjit Singh, a retired IAS officer, talks about the other routes for migration from Gujarat. "After Mozambique's independence in 1975, the Vanzas and Darjis and the other Gujarati communities, including from Diu, started to migrate again, this time towards Portugal. Later, especially due to the failure of a resettlement process, many chose to migrate to Britain."

K C Sethi, the author of the coffee table book *Daman, Diu, Goa, Dadra, Nagar-Haveli & Portuguese Regime*, says many homes in Diu carry hints of the old world in their "stained glass windows, sacred relics, and black-and-white photographs of weddings with mandolin players".

Patelwadi village sanchi Deepak Devji says that in their village of about 4,000, at least 40 families have members settled in London. There is not much by way of prospects here, says Devji. In Patelwadi, most students go to private schools or the sole Gujarati-medium government school for primary classes, be-

fore moving to the village's Jawahar Navodaya Vidyalaya that has English-medium instruction for Classes 6 to 12. Agovernment college, offering Arts and Commerce streams, came up in 2013 in Diu. Besides, there is a government polytechnic and an Industrial Training Institute.

Says Devji: "Children are urged by their parents to learn English so that they can settle in London. Earlier, those who went got jobs at construction sites, factories, shops... But the younger generation is more educated."

Haji Abdul Karim Bidiwala was 14 when Diu was liberated from Portugal. He recalls that till Class 3, he studied in the Portuguese medium. He remembers other things: "Guzara zamana yad bahun oota hai (We fondly remember the days gone by). A governor looked after the administration, law and order. We got free medicines, milk, ration, some of it brought by air from Portugal."

The grandson of one of the Portuguese Governors of Diu, Joao Folque, 64, has been spending at least three months in Diu every year since 2012. Settled in Lisbon, he says over the phone: "Diu is our first home. My grandfather died in 1951 in Goa. My father was born in Silvassa in Dadra and Nagar Haveli."

The first Independent to win the Daman and Diu Lok Sabha seat in nearly 40 years, Umesh Patel is the MP of Diu of Dadra and Nagar Haveli and Daman and Diu.

On the rising number of young people leaving Daman and Diu, Patel says he is not surprised. "Jobs are scarce here, people have to endure hardships... So they avail Portuguese citizenship, start earning good money and see a rise in their living standards," he says.

When that money is sent home, he adds, that affluence draws in others.



We measure truth in terms of the cost to the writer in suffering, rather than by the standard of an objective truth to which a writer's words correspond. Each of our truths must have a martyr

Susan Sontag

newindianexpress.com

INDIAN EXPRESS IS NOT AN INDUSTRY. IT IS A MISSION.

—Rammath Goenka

INFRA LENDING NORMS SHOULD RAISE SPENDING CLOSER TO GOVT TARGET

LENDING months of hand-wringing, the RBI has finally rolled out the regulatory framework for lending towards infrastructure projects. The proposed norms, applicable from October, will replace multiple circulars, standardise the treatment of project loans across sectors, and align norms for commercial banks, non-banking financiers and co-operative banks. The biggest breakthrough is the relaxed provisioning requirements, which are applicable only on new project loans, while the existing exposures will stay under the current prudential provisioning framework. As a result, banks' profitability would remain unaffected. The norms, which are also RBI's first attempt to provide a comprehensive regulatory framework for project financing in India, strikes a balanced approach to infrastructure lending. The proposals are part of a broader wave of banking regulations; alongside the repo rate cuts and liquidity-boosting measures, they should help revive overall credit growth.

Banks were worried when the RBI first released the draft guidelines in May 2024, advocating the provisioning of 5 percent during the project's construction phase, 2.5 percent during the operational phase, and further down to 1 percent once the project starts generating sufficient cash flows. The Indian Banking Association is reported to have appealed against the proposed norms, suggesting instead an initial provisioning of 1.2 percent, a modest increase over the existing 0.4 percent. Heading to their concerns, the RBI offered a relief: keeping the provisioning requirement to 1 percent, which should aid in meaningfully improving the lending and borrowing appetite.

Following the pile-up of bad loans that resulted in a twin-balance sheet problem, India's infrastructure sector has been grappling with massive delays and cost overruns. According to official data, about 800 out of the Union government's 1,800 ongoing projects valued at over ₹150 crore each were behind schedule in April 2024. Notwithstanding the efforts, infrastructure expenditure remains far below the required rate of ₹20 lakh crore a year under the National Infrastructure Pipeline. To succeed as the world's third largest economy, we need collective efforts between the government, private sector and financial institutions to carefully execute infrastructure projects, which are often complex and have long gestation periods. Infrastructure is one of the key pillars of economic growth and essential for mass job creation, besides boosting the manufacturing sector. The government should also undertake reforms to prevent project delays and facilitate access to credit.

PARSE KEEZHADI FINDINGS WITHOUT POLITICAL PULLS

THE Keezhadi debate has returned to dominate political discourse in Tamil Nadu. The village in Tamil Nadu's Sivagangai district, located about 12 km from Madurai, is an archaeological treasure trove. Findings from the site have suggested that an urban civilisation and language was thriving near Vaigai river as early as 580 BCE, upending previously accepted theories regarding the emergence of civilisation in the subcontinent. However, as the latest eruption of controversy suggests, the journey forward from these discoveries has been far from straightforward.

The Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) recently asked the archaeologist who led the first two seasons of excavation at the site to answer some fresh questions and revise the report he had submitted in 2022. Amarnath Ramakrishna, the archaeologist who was transferred out before the third season in 2017, refused to revise his report. As political parties in TN took up the cudgels to defend his report, the Union minister of culture called for more scientific proof to validate the findings. The DMK accused the BJP of attempting to suppress Tamil identity, history and culture, and had its students' wing mount protests demanding the report's release. The contentions hark back to 2017, when Ramakrishna was transferred to Guwahati and the ASI conducted one more season of excavation before stopping work at the site. The next seven seasons of digging were conducted by the state archaeological department.

Beyond the noise and fury are two key factors. First, the finds from Keezhadi are seen by TN political parties and a section of the state's populace as a matter of Tamil pride in the antiquity of their language and civilisation. Others allege that Keezhadi is being used as a political gambit to validate or dispute the Aryan migration theory. The second and more important factor is the need to apply scientific and academic rigour in analysing the findings, which should be conducted without political pressure. The state archaeological department's work at the site, so far published only in short booklets, also needs to be properly documented and published in full so that experts from across the world can study it and draw conclusions. If the story of Tamil—and therefore Indian—civilisation is to be rewritten, it must be done with utter care and without politics.

QUICK TAKE

BANISH BLACK MAGIC

THE Kerala High Court has asked the state to clarify its stand on enacting a law to prohibit black magic, sorcery and inhuman rituals. The state's Law Reforms Commission had in 2019 proposed a bill to curb such practices. The proposal gained significance after a case of human sacrifice was reported from Elanthoor in 2022. But the state government is yet to push it along in the assembly. Even a private bill introduced in the Lok Sabha in 2024 by Chalakudy MP Benny Behanan has not made any headway. Before the country can instil a scientific temper among its youth, it needs to come out from the spell of such regressive practices.

DISPARATE events in recent weeks have offered a window into how India's governing class, regardless of party, sees our cities.

On May 15, the Greater Bengaluru Authority (GBA) replaced, nominally for now and substantially in due course, the Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagar Palike as the city's governing body. The chief minister of Karnataka will be GBA's chairman. Various civic functions, including land, water supply, sewage and electricity, currently provided by separate agencies under the state government, are to come under its umbrella.

Later in May, the prime minister, speaking to the governing council of Niti Aayog, asked states to make cities, especially Tier 2 and Tier 3 ones, the engine of sustainability and growth, and referred to the Urban Challenge Fund (UCF) announced in this year's budget with a planned corpus of ₹1 lakh crore. The UCF also anchors the \$10-billion plan for India's urban transformation announced by the Asian Development Bank, after its president met with the prime minister. Curiously, the announcement makes specific reference to "metro extensions [and] new regional rapid transit system corridors" and "private investment for urban infrastructure", indicating that the investments and UCF are targeted at larger cities.

Finally, last month, following on from the trend to mandate sewage treatment plants in apartment complexes in which Karnataka is a pioneer, the newly-elected Delhi government made it mandatory for high-rise commercial, institutional and hospitality buildings to install anti-smog guns to combat air pollution.

What do these events tell us about how to address three big questions that shape our approach to urbanisation? First, should we focus on the biggest cities or the not-so-big ones? Second, as K C Sivaramakrishna, a former secretary in the ministry of urban development, was fond of asking: "Who rules the city?" And third, what should we think of as the city—the urban local body or the economic region? After all, as part of its Growth Hub initiative, Niti Aayog has advanced an economic master plan for the Surat 'region' comprising five districts.

As an economist, one is tempted to favour 'large' cities, where much vaunted agglomeration economies supposedly drive economic growth. And yet, it is not clear how large a city needs to be to benefit from these economies. Boston and San Francisco, two global hotspots for

Urban planning in India is often performative, going for glitzy projects that add little value to governance. To manage our cities effectively, first we need to delineate them smartly

WHY BIGGER MAY NOT BE BETTER FOR INDIAN CITIES

PARTHA MUKHOPADHYAY

Senior Fellow, Centre for Policy Research, and former member, Technical Advisory Committee, Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs



SOURAV ROY

new ideas, both have less than a million people. This is also true for European hubs of innovation such as Torino in Italy and Braga in Portugal.

India has many more cities with a population above a million than the US, Europe and Japan combined. The districts around the 10 largest cities in India by population have less than a tenth of India's population, but a little over a fifth of India's GDP. Should one focus on these or, as the PM said, on the Tier 2 and Tier 3 cities? Might it be easier to improve governance in smaller cities compared to our large metros?

Large cities are difficult to govern. Not only is their infrastructure complex and large, large cities also embed significant opportunities for rent extraction. Small changes in rules can generate substantial

tial changes in the value of land—for example, during the redevelopment of textile mills in Mumbai.

This is true not just in India, but in other countries, too—such as the growth machines in the US and local governments in China, where officials are often disciplined for corruption. It is understandable, therefore, if state politicians balk at handing these decisions and rents over to local representatives. By contrast, smaller cities with limited rents may stand a chance of being better governed.

The GBA model is perhaps an acknowledgment of this tension in representation. It removes local politicians from decision-making and promises better coordination across civic functions. Should this be a model for the future? What if we had a trade-off, with chief ministers con-

CHART A PATH OUT OF DARK WOODS

THE cycle of communal killings in Dakshina Kannada and Udupi districts of Karnataka appears to be unending. Sectarian fire has spread far in these two coastal districts, sometimes touching the neighbouring Uttara Kannada district as well. Even as the killings go on and provocative hate speeches keep the pot boiling, successive governments have done little to douse the fire. As a result, the region has become a burning laboratory where both Hindus and Muslims vie for each other's blood.

The region, a Congress bastion earlier, has become a BJP stronghold in the last two to three decades. The BJP has not lost any of the last nine Lok Sabha elections from the Dakshina Kannada/Mangaluru seat since 1991, whereas it is a mixed bag in Udupi/Chikkamagaluru districts. The BJP bagged 17 and 16 of the 19 assembly seats in the three coastal districts in 2018 and 2023, respectively.

Dakshina Kannada, with the prosperous Mangaluru as its headquarters, is second only to Bengaluru Urban in revenue generation and GST collection. The coastal region is a major educational centre where tens of thousands of students study in nine medical colleges, seven engineering colleges, and countless other institutions. It has the highest literacy rate in the state.

The district is also a significant financial centre, having seen the birth of several banks. It is home to several specialty hospitals, an international airport, a major port, several industries and many well-known temples. With high urbanisation, the region's transport and communication networks are better than in all other districts except Bengaluru.

Still, there is unemployment and the rural-urban gap is widening, contributing to the divide on the basis of religion. Riots, which were once confined to urban areas, are now seen in rural pockets too.

The region had its first brush with communal tension way back in 1976, when a newspaper agent, Ismail, was murdered and his shop was set on fire. Two years later, Raghavendra Nagori, the editor of a local daily, was killed in what was seen as a retaliation. So far, more than 50 communal murders have been reported over the last 30 years from the coastal districts, some

of which have led to riots, forcing the shutdown of the region's main cities.

While a couple of decades in the middle were relatively calm, right-wing trouble-makers had an eye on Bhatkal, a Muslim-majority town that gained infamy because of the terrorist Riaz and Yasin Bhatkal. The RSS sent to the town a full-time karyakarta, Dr U Chittaranjan. The doctor-turned-MLA soon gained popularity among both the communities with his affable manners and ₹5 fee per patient. Bhatkal saw no violence after the Babri masjid demolition.



It's not too late to begin the healing process in Dakshina Kannada and Udupi districts of Karnataka, where communal tensions are running deep thanks to opportunistic political and community leaders. All stakeholders need to come together with a shared commitment to peaceful coexistence

But turf war in this fishing town—where Muslims mainly belong to the Nawayat sect and speak Nawayati, which is close to Persian—was brewing between the RSS and Muslim organisations for control of the municipality. This led to riots in 1983, in which 19 people from both communities were killed. In 1996, Dr Chittaranjan was shot dead in his house. The probe was handed over to the CBI, which could not arrive at any conclusion over the killings.

Despite the murder, neither Bhatkal

nor Uttara Kannada had witnessed any major communal incident till recent times. The BJP tried to paint with communal colours the death of one Parsh Mehta near Honnur in 2017, and held massive protests across Karnataka. But the CBI, which probed the death, concluded it was an accidental death, not murder. However, the saffron outfit's electoral gains were massive. It has won all Lok Sabha elections from 1996 till now, except once, from the Uttara Kannada seat two assembly segments here belong to Belagavi district.

However, the Udupi and Dakshina Kannada districts were different. The worst years of communal violence in these districts were 1998, 2003 and 2006. In each of these years, at least eight people were hacked to death, many of them in a cycle of retaliations. In 2022, three murders took place in a span of only eight days; in 2025, three deaths happened within 30 days.

Why these killings and riots? The reasons are many: vigilantism, moral policing, hate speeches, desecration of religious places, targeting of interfaith relationships, use of religion as a political tool, public and police complicity in terms of informing, inept handling of the incidents by the government of the day, selective law enforcement, withdrawal of cases against the accused, and fake news on social media.

Even minor incidents become huge communal flashpoints these days, thanks to viral posts on social media. The incidents are so politicised that it's difficult to control the situation once the fire is lit. Political leaders from both sides of the divide often fan the flames.

Has this region reached a point of no return? Maybe not, if the government spares no effort taking tough steps to eradicate communal forces. It also needs to stay neutral, bring community leaders for regular peace talks, cleanse the police of bias and nexus, and above all, unhesitatingly take action against anyone, including political leaders, involved in stoking communal tensions. But all this is easier said than done.

(Views are personal)

MAILBAG

WRITE TO: letters@newindianexpress.com

Equitable education

Ref: Affordable schooling should be top priority (Jun 20). The hand that holds the cradle rules the earth, so goes a popular adage. Unless all kids undergo quality education without discriminatory fee structures, their right to education would suffer severe setbacks. An improved teacher-to-student ratio is also necessary. Sachidananda Satpathy, Sambalpur

Self-reliant defence

Ref: Manufacturing a superpower (Jun 20). A country is deemed to become a superpower by having a self-reliant defence sector. The success of the Akash missile has served as a catalyst to enhance indigenous security technology. More indigenously produced missiles should be integrated within our arsenal. R Pichumani, Kumbakonam

Israeli hypocrisy

Ref: Israel attacks Arab reactor site after Iran hits hospital (Jun 20). The Israeli defence minister stated that Iran's supreme leader should not 'continue to exist' for targeting a hospital. If so, how many times does the Israeli prime minister have to 'die' after the numerous attacks on Gaza's hospitals? C6 Kulkarni, Emakulam

Trump's trumpet

Ref: For once Don says India, Pak themselves ended conflict (Jun 20). While Donald Trump is welcome to blow his own trumpet, he should not make discordant tones. He is too quick to disown his statements. The opposition is being opportunistic in attempting to divide the people of the country. Shreeram Paranjape, Bengaluru

Dishonourable acts

Ref: 2 cases of honour killings rattle MP, accused arrested (Jun 20). It is heart-breaking that 'honour' killings are still prevalent in our society despite high standards of education. Parents must abandon their superstitious mindset, come out of caste boundaries and abhor the will and whims of women. Abhishake Gupta, Mohali

Academic gains

Ref: QS rankings '26: IIT-M in top 200, AU falls to 465 (Jun 20). It is commendable that IIT-M has secured a place in the top 200 of the QS rankings for the country. This milestone reflects India's growing academic strength, global recognition, and consistent improvements in research and education quality. Asad Damubhar, e-mail

There's No Business Like War Business

Expensive purchases making the world poorer

Business is booming as war becomes incredibly complex, commandeering ever-growing economic and technological resources. It also helps that armed conflict is splintering, which props up the global trade in arms and services used in warfare. Defence budgets are rising across the globe, feeding a network of military-industrial complexes that count as their key members, companies that did not exist a few decades ago. Information, transport, logistics, communication—Musk activated Starlink's satcom system in Israel-attacked, internet-restricted Iran this week—and security have spawned powerful private players, many offering services to armed forces to plug gaps in military capabilities. Semiconductors drove the arms race for quite some time as countries sought to guide munitions to their precise targets. Now, it's the turn of magnets to propel swarms of smaller unmanned weapons. Satellite constellations are providing real-time information to opposing forces to a degree of detail unthinkable except to superpowers even a few years ago. Private military companies offering combat support services have grown substantially.

There is the main business of making and selling arms. Economics of the industry are well established as benefiting from rise in conflict. Arms are sold for their deterrence but create their own cycle of escalation—countries keep buying more and more expensive weapons in an attempt to gain the ability to strike at will. The arms industry ensures this impunity remains elusive for most countries. The market is carefully tuned so that growth doesn't slacken. And new players arrive continuously hawking fancy new tech, from hypersonic missiles to impenetrable air defence shields. These are expensive purchases that make a large section of the global population poorer than they ought to be.

There's no business like war business. The world is spending a lot to keep conflict under control. But it's not working out that way. Countries need to figure out how much of that is intentional.



EYES WIDE SHUT Is India's growth story impressive, or disappointing – or a bit of both? A Tale of Yaay! and Hm



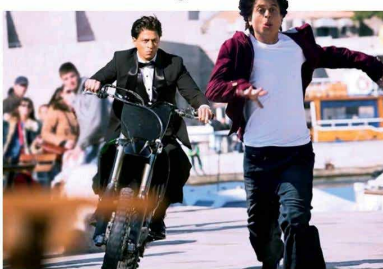
Neeraj Kaushal

New York: India has become the world's 5th-largest economy, eclipsing former economic giants like Britain. In a matter of 12 years, it should be the 4th-largest, surpassing Japan. Post-pandemic economic growth is nothing to be scoffed at. India is the world's fastest-growing major economy. Over the past 3 years, a rather turbulent period for the world economy, India's GDP increased at nearly 8% annually.

Impressive, definitely. Yet, is the rise in GDP India's escalating economic ranking justified?

Perhaps. But only after we acknowledge the statistical meaning of being among the world's top-ranked economies. India is the world's most populous country. In per-capita terms, we are still ranked as low middle-income. In nominal per-capita GDP, India is 143rd in a ranking of 184 countries. Adjusting for purchasing power parity (PPP), it's at 125th—the rank going up a few notches, but not very much.

Humbling, yes. But let's not minimise the importance of being among the top 5 economies in overall GDP and 72nd in PPP per-capita GDP. Yet, its influence on the world stage is not diminished by its per-capita income ranking. China's economic and strategic influence is next to none, other than the US', and sometimes higher.



Purchasing power, stop running away! We're doing fine!

As an example, while most nations have cowed into pleasing Donald Trump and accepted his trade deals, China has decided to fight—and appears to be winning. Many countries are weighing whether they should develop closer alliances with China or the US, and how the world will react.

Likewise, India's influence will also be measured by its overall ranking in GDP, and not just by its per-capita ranking. Yet, let's keep in view that gap between India and the top two world economies. The US economy is \$30 tn in nominal GDP. The Chinese economy is \$19 tn. India's is far, far below at \$3.9 tn. Humbling, yes.

Performance vs expectations: that's the other aspect of India's growth story. In 2018, GdP pledged that India would be a \$5 tn economy by 2025. This was a target that many experts viewed with amused scepticism. Of course, progress was halted by the two years of the pandemic. But for those long waiting for the arrival of the \$5 tn economy, it's still

disappointing to see that we are just halfway towards the target.

In 2019-20, India's GDP was \$2.9 tn. In 2024-25, it's still \$1.1 tn short of the target. Now we hope to achieve that target by 2029.

Analysis of leading sectors—where the world acknowledges India's influence—also brings a mixed tale of optimism and caution. India is the world's largest user of ChatGPT, and, according to a Microsoft, Bain & Company, and Internet and Mobile Association of India (IAMAI) report, home to 16% of the world's AI talent.

Impressive, yes. India has the ambition to lead the world in AI and Narendra Modi says, 'AI will remain incomplete without India.' Yet, so far, India doesn't have an indigenous foundational language model, and it's 35 years away from developing domestic AI chips. It lags substantially behind other nations in attracting investment in AI.

Estimates by Stanford University researchers suggest that India received only \$1.2 bn in private investment in AI. Of course, the US received the lion's share—\$108 bn. But China received 7x more than India. A re-

cent article in The Economist asks whether India can be an AI winner. It cautiously concludes that it has a lot to do to lead the sector.

The most-talked-about achievement on the manufacturing front is that Apple is now assembling 20% of its smartphones sold worldwide in India. By 2026, it is planning to assemble in India all smartphones it will sell in the US. Again, impressive. Yet, the humble reality is that India is simply assembling the phones with almost all of their parts being manufactured in China or Southeast Asia. Hopefully this will change once Foxconn, Apple's top supplier, sets up production facilities in India.

The biggest propeller for future economic growth is investment in R&D. Sadly, both private and public sectors in India remain frugal in R&D spending. As proportion of GDP, India spends only 0.64% on R&D. China spends 2.4% of its much-larger GDP. The US, 3.5% of its even-larger GDP. Even in sectors where India has emerged as a top global supplier, investment in R&D is pathetic. India of ten labels itself 'the pharmacy of the world'. Indian pharma supplies 20% of all generic drugs globally and 40% of generic drugs used in the US. Generic drugs do not need R&D.

But the non-generic sector is substantially driven by R&D. According to the Journal of Medicinal Chemistry, in pharmaceuticals, China leads, followed by the US, India, and then Japan.

However, until you traverse the space of yam, niyam, asan, pranayama and pratyahar, you will not truly understand what meditation is. Between pratyahar and meditation lies dharana, the ability to focus on a thought, image or sound without distraction. Dharana matures into dhyana, and its ultimate state is samadhi, absorption.



THE SPEAKING TREE

Timeless Legacy

ANANDMURTI GURUMAA

Mahadev imparted knowledge of yoga to everyone. Celebrating International Day Of Yoga is essential because each year, it reminds us again to begin our journey into yoga.

Yoga does not begin and end with asanas, postures, alone. On Yoga Day much emphasis is placed on asanas, but the glory of yoga lies in the fact that it begins with the mind. When you follow yamas and niyamas and then practice asanas, the foundation of sattva, pure, qualities is laid. On this base, the practice of asanas can bring unimaginable benefits to life. After attaining mastery over asanas comes the practice of pranayama. Pranayama is about understanding the pran, cosmic energy that sustains life. When you inhale, it is not just air entering your body but the life force travelling within. Knowing this energy and directing it is pranayama. This leads to pratyahar, withdrawal of senses, where the mind and senses turn inward. Practising pratyahar, control over techniques like Yoga Nidra, can make you realise that you are not merely this body; this breath or even this mind.

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Canada, a Move Away From the Rockies

Recognising a problem is the first step towards a solution. By that metric, Canadian Security Intelligence Service (CSIS) has taken an important step towards repairing a troubled India-Canada relationship. A recent CSIS report acknowledges the existence of Canada-based Khalistani extremists who continue to promote, fund and/or plan acts of violence targeting India. Not only do they mean harm to India, CSIS says these groups also threaten Canadian national security. That is lucid observation.

The report's findings dovetail efforts by PM Mark Carney to repair and restore the bilateral relationship left hanging precariously by his predecessor Justin Trudeau. Recognition of continued operations of Canada-based Khalistani extremists



is an important departure from the recent past when focus was turned on alleged involvement of Indian officials in the 2023 killing of Canadian citizen Hardeep Singh Nijjar. While perceptions of the threat may differ, acknowledgement that it's an issue of concern for both countries will allow addressing it, and avoid the

kind of strange food fight that had broken out before.

Like any long-standing relationship, especially between two democracies, there have been ups and downs. But, on balance, it has been a good one. The current fractured geopolitical and geo-economic landscape, exacerbated by unpredictability of the Trump regime—his continued suggestion of annexing Canada and newfound friendship with Pakistan and its generals—adds urgency to restoring and augmenting New Delhi-Ottawa ties. Working together and tackling problems with mutual respect, for mutual benefit, should become a SOP allowing both nations to leverage the past—beyond the too-recent past, that is—and take on multiple challenges.

Such a Thing as a Free Munir Lunch



Seema Sirohi

Washington: Asim Munir was getting late for his lunch at the White House. He couldn't decide what to wear. Go in civvies, or don the field marshal look to impress the host who has a thing for uniforms? The occasion demanded perfection. Don't ask a Babaji, was going to be HALAL, the menu card declared. No civilians allowed. Indeed, Pakistan's ambassador was told to wait outside along with Mohsin Naeqi, the interior minister no less, who has been following Munir like a pet on this trip. Only the ISI chief—and Munir's namesake—Asim Malik was allowed.

Guess what the puffed-up field marshal said about Pakistan's PM before his big day out? He told the Pakistani diaspora where he was garlanded and showered with petals and paid for by Pakistani Americans, 'Even if a dog becomes prime minis-

ter and does a good job, you have to appreciate that.' Spoken like a man who sees many years in power.

But, then, who cares about democracy or the people in Pakistan? Not the Americans. Forget Babaji. Even Biden's state department couldn't bring itself to utter a word about all the electoral rigging Munir did to keep Imran Khan in jail and the Sharif Bros in power. Trump cares about business, and his Nobel Prize.

Back to the lunch. The meeting was such a secret and the blessing ceremony so private, no photos were released. As a cynical Pakistani said, the only statement to be released was the menu. ALL FOOD IS HALAL, the menu card declared. In all caps lest the field marshal miss the fine print. He didn't go to elite schools, you see, and carries affiliated complexes that play out in violent ways. He must prove he belongs.

First course was carefully chosen—goat cheese gateau, tomato jam, buttermilk biscuit crumbles and young vinegared lettuce. Main course: rack of spring lamb, burnt ciopolini jambalaya, Carolina gold rice and jam-balaya—was designed to make them delirious with satiety. Burp!

who must explain Baha-speak to the world as his NSA and secretary of state—got down to business over dessert (nectarine tart and ice cream). 'Can you bring tar to lunch?' 'Don't worry, Respected Sir, my country is your country. My Balochistan is your Balochistan. My Intel is your Intel,' replied the two Asims.



ALL FOOD IS HALAL

HOSTED BY PRESIDENT DONALD J. TRUMP

Burp!

in union. Satisfied, the seeker left the room and later went on camera to repeat the new mantra: Pakistan is great, etc.

Puffed, chuffed and nearly bursting with hot air, the field marshal proceeded to his next engagement—a dinner at the Pakistani embassy with think-tankers, usual former ambassadors and Congressional aides and five Western journalists (Pakistani journalists weren't invited).

But the guests had to sing for their supper, and what. The rags-to-riches-to-rags tale of the field marshal delivered as a screed on 'Poor Pakistan, Evil India: A Very Selective and Revisionist History' with excerpts on 'The Unbelievable Greediness of President Trump'. He banged his fist on the table, he hailed and promised revenge if India stopped the water.

The audience was bored to tears—the guests already knew the history. To make matters worse, they were sweating buckets. Literally. The air-conditioning at the embassy had mysteriously gone kaput, much like democracy back home. But Munir wasn't quite done. Cue in a few propaganda videos. How about visiting Pakistan for tourism and retracing the old hippie path? And try the new highs. Weed is so yesterday.



JUST IN JEST

What made prophet-eers pronounce Gen Z junking some emojis? 🙄

Death of 🙄 Was Highly Exaggerated

Three years ago, many social commentators from socially acceptable platforms had declared that Gen Z had jettisoned some emojis they reportedly found to be insolent. Just how confident this prognosis was, can be made out in headlines like 'Gen Z Hates Cancelled the Thumbs Up Emoji' and 'Here's Why You Should Worry'. Not only did we not need to worry, but no one worried. Because the thumbs up—considered by pundits to be considered by Zoomers to be 'rude' and heart emojis (also verboten) have not only survived, but have happily proliferated, even among the hyper-hieroglyphical millennials.

So, here's a question we're parking for you today: how does one become so sure about what Gen Z or Gen Alpha—and the upcoming Gen Beta (aur Beti)—think? So, here's our answer. Like Bob Dylan refusing to be tagged as 'the voice of a generation', most generations in the alphabet soup aren't one, single composite entity as if attending the same decadal Nuremberg/Taylor Swift rallies/concerts. But here's the thing: lumping demographic groups under one 'trending' behavioural category can do wonders for the morale and pay bump of market research divisions of companies. After all, who goes back to check the veracity of people who confidently stated in 2022 that the thumbs up emoji would be dead as the typewriter in 2025? (Answer: We do.)



Arnie Guha

Toronto: In her June 2025 essay published in Social Research, 'The University in New India: A State of Siege', literary scholar and cultural critic Supriya Chaudhuri presents a compelling account of the contemporary crisis facing Indian higher education. Drawing on a wide-ranging historical and philosophical canvas, she traces how universities—once imagined as spaces of reason, dissent and intellectual autonomy—are being steadily hollowed out by political repression, financial precarity and a depersonation of institutional trust.

Chaudhuri's critique is incisive, layered and sobering. It catalogues not only the mechanisms of state interference and ideological intrusion but also the slow unravelling of infrastructure, academic freedom and the very idea of the university as a site of public reason. It is a diagnosis made with clarity and moral seriousness.

But it also raises a vital question—what of those of us committed to the university must now confront: if the institution is under siege, what is left to defend? And how might we imagine its renewal?

Chaudhuri's analysis resonates with developments far beyond India. In the US and Britain, we have

also witnessed a steady erosion of trust in higher education—fuelled not by state coercion but by culture wars, credential fatigue, and growing scepticism towards expertise itself. Across contexts, the university is no longer assumed to be a space of truth-seeking but is often seen as a gatekeeping machine, elitist, out of touch, and increasingly irrelevant to the lived precarities of young generations.

If we are to defend the university in this climate, we must also be willing to reimagine it. The language of moral loss—of fallen ideals and betrayed Enlightenment principles—no longer moves those for whom the university has never felt like a space of belonging. The defence of reason alone is insufficient when reason itself is dismissed as partisan, 'Western' or exclusionary.

Trump, rejected by academic elites, has encouraged the construction of parallel institutions and epistemologies. In India, we are seeing a simi-

lar logic unfold—where new civilisational narratives, often amplified by the state, are positioned not as supplements to existing knowledge but as replacements for it.

This is not merely an intellectual shift. It is a reconfiguration of what counts as knowledge, who is authorised to produce it, and what universities are for. The danger, as Chaudhuri rightly warns, is that in attempting to resist political capture, universities retreat into procedural neutrality—failing to offer an affirmative vision of their own.

What might such a vision look like? Perhaps it begins by treating the university not as a sanctuary of reason but as a battleground of meaning. If the state co-opts institutions, we must capture imagination. If curricula are constrained, art, media and culture must take up the slack. This is not to abandon scholarship but to supplement it with storytelling. If legitimacy now lives outside the university, then the university must learn to speak in new registers—ones that do not merely argue but persuade, perform and compel.

Chaudhuri's essay is an essential act of witnessing. But we must now move beyond witness to strategy. In an age where the very idea of expertise is contested, the university's survival may

depend less on what it knows than on how it makes itself known. This means embracing the university not as a sanctuary of reason but as a battleground of meaning—an institution that does not retreat from conflict but teaches its members to engage it with rigour, imagination and care.

This reimagining cannot be purely theoretical. It begins with curriculum reform that invites students to interrogate knowledge itself—not just to absorb content but to map its construction, silences and consequences. It means positioning the university as a public platform, where lectures coexist with podcasts, where peer-reviewed research is also rendered in accessible essays, performances and street-level dialogues.

It demands a new kind of institutional courage: one that opens space for the marginalised, not just as subjects of study but also as epistemic co-authors. Above all, it calls for a mode of pedagogy that acknowledges the aesthetic and affective dimensions of trust—that understands that in a post-truth world, credibility is earned not by neutrality but by presence, resonance and clarity of purpose.

The struggle, then, is not just for truth; it is, increasingly, for trust. And if the university is to matter in the years ahead, it must not only defend its values but perform them—in ways that are legible, legitimate and alive to the moment.

The writer is chair, advisory board, Green College, University of British Columbia, Canada



Keep questioning

Chat Room

Sleeping (Again) With The Enemy

Apropos 'Trump Drops Claim of Brokering Ind-Pak Peace' by Dipanjan Roy Chaudhuri (June 20). This is the most grievously impacted the US itself. Trump exhibits a perilous arrogance. Elevating a military regime complicit in global destabilisation to parity with democratic ally is not only injudicious but strategically self-defeating. US indulgence in such geopolitical myopia will inevitably precipitate consequences. V Sudhista Reddy Bengaluru



A thought for today

Some billionaires like cars, yachts and private jets. Others like newspapers

ANDREW ROSS SORKIN

Last Word

HCs and trial courts must follow SC's line on free speech

The Constitution is clear – you have the right to freedom of speech and expression, subject to reasonable restrictions. But like an Ashokan edict carved in stone, the Constitution's letter is only as good as the spirit of the institutions tasked with upholding it. In the *Thug Life* case, SC has once again struck a blow for free speech. While clearing the Kamal Haasan film's release in Karnataka, it has made it abundantly clear that one person's "hurt sentiments" are not a reasonable ground for curbing another's right to expression. "In India, there will never be an end to the hurt sentiment phenomenon. But for that, right to free speech cannot be jeopardised..."



Three months ago, in the *Imran Pratapgarhi* case, SC had forcefully made the same point: "Even if a large number of persons dislike the views expressed by another, the right of the person to express the views must be respected and protected." As the chief arbiter of the land, SC could not have made itself clearer in March any more than it can now. There's no way its word can be misunderstood or misinterpreted. Yet, Calcutta HC told a 22-year-old early this month: "Look, we have freedom of speech but that doesn't mean you will go on to hurt others." Then, Karnataka HC told Haasan: "You or any citizen have no right to hurt sentiments of the masses..." And lower courts' views on free speech are generally even more stifling. This divergence of opinion within the judiciary has a chilling effect on free speech because there's only one SC above hundreds of HCs and subordinate courts. If free speech is a pillar of democracy and a tenet of the Constitution, it shouldn't have to run the gamut with the hope of eventual salvation in the apex court.

Dose Of Hope

To really help, new HIV vax has to be made cheap

A pill to treat multidrug-resistant HIV, lenacapavir, has been approved by US drug regulator FDA as a preventive vaccine. This is a huge deal – incidence of HIV may have declined since 1990s but even today about 13L people globally are infected by the virus every year. But its price is an obstacle. Sold for \$28,218 per year in US, it's prohibitive even for high-income nations. Pharma company Gilead that manufactures lenacapavir has reportedly tied up with over 100 middle- and low-income countries for manufacture of generics, pending approvals. But access likely will still be tricky for poorer African countries that bear the HIV burden.

Drugs to prevent HIV transmission have been around almost a decade, but a daily dosage regimen makes these unreliable. People forget and there's the stigma/doubt in partners that a daily dose is preventive. Lenacapavir needs to be taken just twice a year. Its long-lasting effect is preventing infection – almost 100% in adults and adolescents – is thus the best bet today. Also because HIV research in US bears the additional burden of Trump administration's slashed funds.

An effective vaccine for HIV has been elusive for decades because of its rapid mutations. Several mRNA vaccines, like those developed for Covid and considered the most promising, are in clinical trials. But since Jan, under Trump's health secretary Rob Kennedy Jr, NIH stopped funding hundreds of such HIV vaccine-related research. This is what makes repurposed lenacapavir a lifeline, provided it's made affordable.

Haves' Guide To The Lives Of Have-Yachts

Great wealth brings great isolation, and a siege mentality

The most expensive car is worth only around \$30mn and the most expensive watch, \$55mn. If you're a billionaire, neither will make you stand out in a 'crowd' of 3,000-plus other billionaires, collectively worth over \$6tn. But stand out you must, because 'esteem' or 'status' is the fourth rung of the human hierarchy of needs, as psychologist Abraham Maslow declared 62 years ago. You could buy a mansion, but the costliest on the market is worth some \$900mn. On a good day, Elon Musk makes twice as much. Yachts are a better bet. The costliest is rumoured worth \$4.8bn – just shy of Trump's net worth – and even relatively modest ones, like Jeff Bezos' \$500mn 'Koru', cost many thousands of dollars per hour to maintain. There's no return on investment here, only loss, and if you're brave enough to bleed dollars without noticing, sociologists will now place you above the 'haves' as a 'have-yacht'.

In his new book *The Haves and Have-Yachts*, New Yorker writer Ewan Omos dwells on this super-wealthy class and its quirks. In 2022, he'd written an article – 'The Floating World' – focused on owners of 'gigayachts', that is yachts longer than 25ft, which already numbered around 100. Then, the book, which is a collection of his New Yorker essays on the super-wealthy – often subtitled *Dispatches on the Ultrarich* – explores their attitudes, illustrated by actions.

While Musk, possibly the wealthiest man in history, talks about settling Mars, other ultrarich have been making D-Day plans for Earth. Omos writes about Reddit co-founder Steve Huffman, who got eye surgery done at 33 to improve his odds of surviving a disaster. Antonio Garcia Martinez, who used to be product manager at

Facebook, bought five acres of woods on an island, and installed generators and solar panels. The most raised eyebrows, though, was his decision to bring thousands of rounds of ammunition. "I think people who are particularly attuned to the levers by which society actually works understand that we are skating on really thin cultural ice right now," he told Omos. This survivalist streak also drives yacht-buying, says Omos. Billionaire Peter Thiel, whose name crops up regularly in connection with America's right-wing swing, has been known to fund the Seasteading Institute, whose mission is to "enable floating societies which will allow the next generation of pioneers to test new ideas for govt".

Their website mentions "building start communities that float on the ocean with any measure of political autonomy." Read together, "new ideas for government" and "political autonomy" suggest a real estate analogue of cryptocurrency.

One of Omos' essays, 'Ghost in the Machine', offers a peek inside the money-making maelstrom of tech moguls. For example, when Facebook Live faced the problem of livestreamed suicides, its chief technology officer sent an internal memo: "Maybe it costs a life by exposing someone to bullies. Maybe someone dies in a terrorist attack coordinated on our tools. And still we connect people. The ugly truth is that we believe in connecting people so deeply that anything that allows us to connect more people more often is de facto good." To ordinary mortals, who satisfy Maslow's fourth level of need with a new bag or a pair of shoes, these ideas and attitudes may be troubling, but it's important to be acquainted with them, to understand the forces shaping our world.

Bihar: Kings & Kingmakers

It's likely to be another close poll. Neither NDA nor INDIA, partly because their playbooks are similar in some ways, has a winning formula yet. Smaller parties will look to cash in

Uday Chandra



Modi's rally in Siwan yesterday showed that the build-up to the Bihar assembly polls is well and truly underway. It's a truism that Biharis do not merely cast their vote, but vote their caste. The state has become synonymous with what the political scientist Edward Banfield termed 'amoral familism'.

In an agrarian society defined by the Permanent Settlement, a narrow understanding of self-interest, limited to one's nuclear family and its extensions, underpins any notion of the common good. Jockeying for power and privilege is largely a zero-sum game; the empowerment of some depends on the immiseration of others.

The same notion of self-interest has, nonetheless, animated the politics of caste-based social justice, enabling strategic alliances between the middle and bottom of rural society against dominant jatis such as Brahmins, Bhumihars and Rajputs. Yet socioeconomic progress has been confined largely to specific jatis and families within OBC and SC ranks.

At the same time, out-migration from the state means that most househairs have one or more members earning their living elsewhere, stretching kinship ties and putting remittances at the heart of the rural economy. Amoral familism persists, albeit alongside individual aspirations engendered by interregional mobility.

Discontent with the politics of development cuts across Bihar society. Whereas dominant groups lament the steady erosion of vertical ties binding them to their erstwhile patrons, the historically subordinated increasingly recognise the limits of Mandal-inspired social justice. Over the past decade and a half, two rival caste alliances have arisen: the former braiding dominant castes with an assortment of OBC and SC jatis and the latter relying on *niched* ('backward'), Dalits, and Muslims to bid for power.

In 2023, Bihar's caste census took place unopposed by either alliance. Nitish Kumar remained a curious overlap between these alliances, switching sides when necessary to retain CM-ship. Soon after Patna HC struck down Nitish's bid to raise the court-mandated cap on caste reservations, he returned to BJP.

JDU and BJP have a common interest in the non-Yadav OBC vote, dubbed EBC (Extremely Backward Classes) in the state's political vernacular. At 36.01%, this is Bihar's single-largest caste bloc despite consisting of a bewildering array of disparate jatis. Most Bihar Muslims are also categorised as EBC, preventing the communal polarisation visible in neighbouring UP and West Bengal.

Last summer, NDA secured 31 out of 40.8 seats with a whopping 47.23% of total votes, approximately 8% more than the INDIA parties. Yet JDU and BJP polled 18.52% and 20.52% respectively, together roughly the same as INDIA parties. However, the mobilisation of Dalit votes (6.47%) by Chirag Paswan's LJP made a significant difference in the final tally. Roughly one in five Biharis is SC. Electoral mobilisation of social fractions, be it EBC, OBC or SC, undoubtedly holds the key to success at this time. Whole jatis or caste blocs remain statistical abstractions, by contrast.

Which ever alliance wins, Bihar's voters stand to gain in this electoral cycle. Short-term gains in terms of jobs and seats may matter, above all, but medium- to long-term implications for the future of caste-based reservations cannot be discounted either. Neither alliance has a winning formula yet. For INDIA, the caste census promises to be the basis for proportional representation for 85% of the state that is not classified as 'forward caste'. For NDA, the caste census reveals flaws in the old model of social justice and highlights vast inequalities within backward castes.

Yet fine-tuning public policy requires more than enumeration exercises. The political will needed to defy courts is yet to be seen. The EWS category did not, in any case, warrant enumeration of forward castes. Nor did courts strike it down. In principle, the political creativity that generated socioeconomic categories such as EWS could be extended to EBCs and SCs, including Muslims and Christians, without running afoul of courts. A nationwide caste census could become the basis for a new bipartisan consensus undergirding such policy interventions.

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Both alliances now take credit for the caste census, though INDIA parties blame Nitish for not enacting policies based on caste enumeration and NDA partners look ahead to a nationwide census as opposed to what they termed an 'impartial survey'. For INDIA, the caste census promises to be the basis for proportional representation for 85% of the state that is not classified as 'forward caste'. For NDA, the caste census reveals flaws in the old model of social justice and highlights vast inequalities within backward castes.

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Generation Gasp: A Dad Gets A K-Pop Culture Shock...

...But, at a concert in LA attended by screaming teens, he also learnt something about human behaviour that super-smart economists haven't figured out

Sivakumar Sundaram @timesofindia.com



'Milton Friedman never met a teenage STAY'
I had always believed in the elegance of Milton Friedman's world, one where rational expectations prevailed, and human beings behaved as though they had all read the same economic textbooks. I once underlined in college that belief remained beautifully intact until the night I found myself surrounded by 27,000 screaming teenagers in sequined hoodies at a Stray Kids concert at SoFi Stadium, Los Angeles, clutching a light stick that glowed like a malfunctioning traffic signal.

It all began with an innocent phrase: "Appa, please come with me for a K-pop concert." What the child asks in that tone, the father obeys. Even Milton would agree, the utility maximisation of familial harmony far outweighs the marginal cost of temporary hearing loss. I imagined a polite, perhaps even subtitled affair. Some choreography, some applause. Maybe a fellow father reading the *Wall Street Journal* behind a pink glitter banner. I had rational expectations, after all. But rationality like hair at a K-pop concert is quickly blown away by industrialised fans and hormonal gusts. I, who usually dictates departure times with military precision, had a culture shock when our daughter decreed we must leave at 5pm sharp for a 10-minute ride. We complied without protest. By 5.30, SoFi was a pulsating neon hive. The merchandise queues? Epic. Each outlet competed not on stock, but on the length of its serpentine line. The prize: a souvenir that screamed, "I was there."

At the counter, you had precisely 40 seconds to declare your purchase. Your size? Chosen for you. "Oh, this should fit," said the cashier to my daughter, handing over the T-shirt like a royal decree. One was expected to bow in gratitude. I, however, was spared this ordeal. While my family queued with the enthusiasm of IPO

subscribers, I wandered through the stadium – soaking in the glitter, the buzz, and the glorious pre-concert anticipation of pop gods descending on Earth. At 7:30pm sharp, the show began. The crowd erupted. I lunged for my earplugs. But it was like pointing a torch at a thunderstorm. Useless. Eight little young men launched themselves into pyrotechnics with the urgency of a fire drill set

synth-pop. Fifty thousand fans, armed with light sticks and lungs capable of powering the national grid, screamed in synchronised ecstasy. My seat shook. My earplugs, and along with them, my rational expectations evaporated.

Stray Kids, I was informed, are not lost children. They are global superstars, with hair that changes colour more often than my opinions. Each had a stage name, a fandom name, and possibly a Marvel spin-off. My daughter knew them all. I, meanwhile, spent most of the concert wondering if I'd joined a space cult.

The music? Unrelenting. The visuals? Blinding. The choreography? Call it the most crisis management. But the real revelation came not from the stage, but from the crowd. Around me, young fans danced, waved LED batons with devotional intensity, and surrendered their emotional faculties entirely. It was here, inside this emotional stock exchange, that Daniel Kahneman whispered into my inner ear: not over the music, of course, but through my growing cognitive dissonance: "This is not a utility curve. This is Prospect Theory in glitter."

These fans were textbook case studies of behavioural economics. They were loss averse, screaming not just when their idols appeared, but melting down melodramatically when they left the stage. They were sunk-cost committed, having queued for twelve hours, spent like hedge funds, and still found the energy to scream at pitch levels no adult immune system can handle.

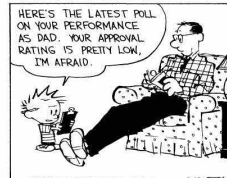
And they were gloriously irrational, nudged not by reason, but by eyselen. Somewhere around the fifth costume change, I surrendered. I stood up. I waved my glow stick with the enthusiastic confusion of a man trying to direct aircraft. I even let out a squeak that may have been a scream or possibly a hernia. But the moment that changed me came when my daughter looked at me, her face lit brighter than any macroeconomic model, and whispered, "You're really trying."

It turns out, human behaviour isn't just irrational. It's occasionally beautiful. As the show ended and the noise settled into memory, I realised I had witnessed not just a concert, but a lesson in behavioural truth.

Milton Friedman's gaves us expectations. Kahneman and Thaler reminded us of our biases. But it's Stray Kids who taught me that sometimes, the best returns come not from prediction – but from participation. And so I return from the temple of K-pop, where elasticity meets eyeliner, and the only true market signals are screamed at octaves no economist has yet modelled.

Yes, I may never become a STAY (that's the fandom name – I asked). But for one surreal night, I danced awkwardly through the irrational joy of now.

Calvin & Hobbes



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Yog Prevents Misery Before It Arrives

Gurudev Sri Sri Ravi Shankar

We are often told, "Live in the present moment." But what if the present moment is unpleasant? How does one survive it then? Thousands of years ago, Maharishi Patanjali, one of the most prolific minds, scientist and seer in the very first chapter of the *Yog Sutra*, gave a profound insight – Heyam Dukham Anagata. The purpose of *Yog* is to stop the suffering before it arrives. This one line holds the essence of what *Yog* truly is. It is not an escape from life. It prepares and strengthens your body, mind and spirit to remain unshaken, no matter what life brings. Maharishi Patanjali talks about the five main causes of misery. *Avidya* is taking the impermanent to be permanent and the permanent to be impermanent, a fundamental misunderstanding that

distorts our perception of life: *Asmita* is identifying the Self with the intellect. When the ego masks the Higher Self, it becomes rigid and resists change, which leads to more suffering. Then comes *raag*, an attachment or craving for pleasant experiences. Craving for repeated pleasure keeps the mind agitated and restless, and opposite of this tendency is *dvesh*, which is an aversion to people or situations. If the present moment is unwanted and fills it with complaints. *Ahimsa*, the fifth one, is the deep-rooted fear of losing one's existence. Even the wisest are not free from this instinctive fear. These are not miseries in themselves. But when they give rise to emotions like anger, jealousy, fear, or frustration, they become seeds of

suffering. The good news is, they can be transformed. *Yog* reorients these energies and brings us back to balance. Have you noticed that when you're joyful, something within you expands? And when you're sad, it contracts? *Yog* is becoming aware of this subtle expansion and contraction in your consciousness. It is the art of tuning into that space within us which remains untouched by success or failure, joy or sorrow. If the present moment is difficult, just accept it, digest it fully with awareness. Often, we are overwhelmed by our emotions simply because we were never taught how to handle them in schools and colleges. So, we stay stuck in resentment or sadness for days, sometimes even months. *Yog* helps us see beyond the surface.

Sacredspace

Yog, as a way of life and a philosophy, can be practised by anyone with inclination to undertake it, for yoga belongs to humanity. It is not the property of any one group or any one individual but can be followed by all.

K Pattabhi Jois

Every experience whether pleasant or painful has wisdom behind it. And when we look for that wisdom, we are no longer a victim of the event. This is the secret. *Yog* makes you self-reliant. Anger, fear and mistrust don't just hurt individuals. They tear apart relationships and communities. *Yog* expands your awareness to include others. It helps you feel connected with people, rather than suspicious or insecure. This doesn't mean a *Yogi* is glib. It simply means that you begin to act with clarity rather than being driven by irrational fears. Cravings and greed also arise from a sense of lack. A person with fewer needs becomes more capable of fulfilling bigger responsibilities. A greedy mind is always dissatisfied. But a content mind has energy to care, to give, and to uplift. A *Yogi* is not someone who withdraws from life. A *Yogi* is someone who participates fully, with depth and commitment.