



OUR VIEW

MY VIEW | OTHER SPHERE



Sebi's open offer pricing tweak will boost M&As

Market rules that let the open offer of a company acquirer ignore share price moves caused by information leaks should ease acquisitions and favour the economy. But beware complexity

The Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi) has changed its takeover regulations to shield acquirers from cost spikes in the event information of a merger and acquisition (M&A) plan gets leaked. From 1 June, when its new rumour verification framework comes into effect, the pricing formula for an open offer will be stripped of any spike that arises from the stock market getting whiff of a company's control being in play. At one level, India's top 100 listed entities will be mandated to confirm, deny or clarify market rumours in case of significant movements in their share price. This requirement will be expanded to the next 150 companies from December 2024. At another level, a party seeking to acquire a company will have an easier path. Under Sebi rules, if a quarter of a target firm's equity is acquired (granting a veto on special resolutions), the acquirer needs to make an open offer to shareholders for additional shares that would give it majority control. A 26% stake bought this way can prove expensive. Currently, to even it out for both the buyer and sellers, this offer price goes by the stock's average price over 60 days before the announcement, weighted by volumes traded. In case market participants hear of a control play, we often see them piling into the stock, raising its price beyond a level judged reasonable by the acquirer. Once Sebi's revised rule takes effect, however, 'material' leak-driven upshoots will be clipped out. This, in principle, is fair to retail investors as well, since such gains are not performance led.

A level playing field for M&As would serve us well as it has the potential to make our economy more efficient. In an ideal scenario, the control of companies would be vested in those best

suited to maximize the value they generate for all stakeholders. When this is not the case, the market's self-corrective devices are expected to kick in. Typically, weak performers that are listed see their share value slump. Widely held firms without a single majority owner are thus exposed to takeovers by parties that can integrate them with other operations or appoint their own managers to run them better. This not only keeps incumbents on their toes, it boosts overall value generation by placing assets in more capable hands. Ownership changes can even give dying firms fresh leases of life. Minority shareholders, though, may disapprove of shifts in control and direction, which explains Sebi's mandate of an exit path laid out for them via an open offer to tender their shares. The price must be fair, of course, which is why the weighted-average formula was created. Yet, this protection of minority shareholders should not deter acquisitions, which is what happens when prices shoot up on the buzz of firms being eyed. Lowering the bar could give India's M&A arena some dynamism.

Complexity, however, may hamper the idea's implementation. To clip out a "material share price move," we need it defined clearly. Indian stock exchanges are to issue a framework for it, but market confidence will depend on how convincingly leak-related moves are isolated. Identifying the precise start of a rumour isn't easy; would subjective calls need to be made? How the verification rule impacts a target's share price will also be tested. This part may take time to settle. All said, how smoothly our markets operate under Sebi's new rules will determine the difference they make. The regulator's effort to rebalance the pricing of open offers is laudable. Now let's see some action.

Spare a thought for people who live amid our heaps of garbage

A little compassion and care in how we get rid of our waste is the least 'ragpickers' deserve from us



ANURAG BEHAR
is CEO of Azim Premji Foundation.

Heaps of rubbish dot the two acres. Each heap is dense and tightly packed with months of accumulation—remnants of waste collected from the city. Workers, usually called ragpickers, collect the waste and bring it to this site. Then they sift and strip the waste of everything and anything that has the smallest of value. All of which is taken by the *thekedaars* (contractors) they work for and sold to the recycling chains of different materials—plastics, bottles, metals and more. After the to-the-bone stripping, the worthless remnants form heaps that grow for months and even years.

The workers live amid rubbish heaps on the site. In structures made of waste metal and plastic sheets, and makeshift wooden frames. The two acres are divided among 12 *thekedaars*, all of whose workers live on their portion of the land. These are entire families, not only men. The contractors have brought them here from distant parts of the country, usually from the vicinity of the towns that they themselves hail from. The 500 odd resident families do not pay any rent, but must work for their *thekedaars*. For many workers, it's a full family enterprise with their children working side-by-side. A family of five may earn up to ₹10,000 in a good month and ₹4,000 in a bad one, depending on how much territory they scrounge. Most cover 30-40 kilometres

on foot every day. If they don't, because of illness, they lose that day's earning. Weather conditions are just another obstacle—a downpour, blazing sun or freezing wind can't stop them, just slow them down. Rain is particularly bad. It makes the waste messier, and its collection and sifting that much harder.

In journeys of dredging the city, day-after-day, year-after-year, those few who have been able to acquire a decrepit cart are in a different league, and even higher are those two or three who possess broken rickshaws. Both enable coverage of larger territory and collection of greater volumes. But none can escape the basic peril of their trade—putting their hands in the bins, dumps and cesspools that we create across the city, with invisible shards of glass, corrosive chemicals, rotting organic material and worse. Hands with deep and shallow wounds, infected or not, and skin diseases are daily rewards.

The first *thekedaar* got hold of a piece of the site 15 years ago. Others came in over the next three or four years. The two acres are mired in land-title disputes. The state government and a religious institution are among the many claimants. Titles don't matter on the ground in such disputes; control does. Those who control the land can't sell or build on it without title papers, but they charge rent with impunity. Jockeying for control is continuous. A couple of months ago, in the middle of the night, one of the claimants sent a platoon of thugs to get a portion vacated. Panic gripped the *thekedaars* of that portion and their workers. Their unlikely saviours turned out to be the local police, who thrashed the thugs and sent them packing. It is not clear why.

There is no water at the site. It is brought by tankers—to drink and wash. About 10-20% of family incomes are spent on water. There are no toilets, other than a few constructed by an NGO after much struggle. Those who rent the land do not want the faintest sign of a permanent settlement—so they do not

permit construction of any sort. Resident families don't have ration cards, having migrated from afar. Rare are those who get any of the most basic government schemes. Getting children admitted to schools is hard. Even when the family is willing and the schools legally bound to, the latter find excuses not to admit them; they probably find the children dirty, smelly and wayward. There is one tree on the two acres—the only shade on that precipice of survival.

A few hundred metres away on tree-lined avenues and gleaming plazas are Munich-style bier-gartens and pubs, Japanese and Italian restaurants among scores of others, and four five-star hotels, all buzzing from dawn till late night. Hundreds of families spend ₹10,000 an evening on a single dinner outing, and people like us pay ₹12,000 for a room-night. Remnants of waste from all this revelry add to the heaps close-by. If not those very heaps, then some other somewhere in our urban wasteland. Wherever you live in this country, with no effort beyond opening your gaze, you will find an identical twin of that site with the lone tree and 500 families living amid rubbish heaps.

Excavating our conscience buried at the bottom of those heaps is too much to hope for. We are unlikely to change our society structurally. It demands sustained collective and political action, apart from sacrifices and moral courage of the kind we seem incapable of today. When we regain some of that, we may change. Till then, we will live as we do and they will live as we let them.

Perhaps we can do some small things. Don't call them 'ragpickers'—they keep us clean. City and state officials should ensure that they receive the benefits of all government schemes; and others too who live in similar settlements and subsist on other trades. We should tolerate a few smelly children in school, or get them water to wash everyday. And be careful of how we dispose shards of glass and jagged metal, so that a child's hand isn't hurt. At least that much.

10 YEARS AGO



MINT METRIC

by Bibek Debroy

A UP man's only crime,
He forgot to buy *kurkure* sublime.
Missing her favourite treat,
The wife beat a hasty retreat.
Leaving him in his amnesic grime.

GUEST VIEW

Politically exposed persons ought to keep banks alert

JAIDEEP MEHTA



is an investor and a tech industry watcher.

The general election currently underway is the only thing hotter than the weather in India these days. With talk of tempos full of cash, and the discovery of more than ₹30 crore of unexplained currency in a Jharkhand legislator's home, it is time to shine a light on a somewhat obscure term: Politically exposed persons (PEPs). This term refers to individuals who hold political office or public positions such as judgeships and bureaucracy posts, or have a close association with those who hold such authority.

Data from Rzolut, a risk and compliance technology and data provider, reveals that there are over 2.3 million PEPs around the world, ranging from country presidents to municipality officials. These positions tend to have stronger links than others with cases of corruption, money-laundering and other financial crimes.

For instance, in December 2023, Senator Bob Menendez in the US was found in possession of several gold bars at his home. He

was charged with having accepted bribes from various businesses.

The vast quantities of cash recovered time and again from our own politicians here in India have also often travelled through *benami* bank accounts and other dubious channels. Note that the currency notes printed by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) are distributed only through what are described in banking regulations as 'scheduled banks.' There is no other way for them to enter general circulation.

Within the bounds of privacy norms, it would be prudent for banks to keep a watch on the actions of customers who are PEPs, not just to manage their financial risks, but also to satisfy the regulatory requirements of India's central bank and other regulators around the world.

Although there are no credible figures available to quantify political corruption, the scale of money-laundering that takes place globally is estimated to be monumental. According to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, an estimated 2%-5% of global GDP is laundered. In today's scenario, this would amount to more than \$2 trillion annually. It is safe to assume that a significant proportion of this money is from corruption involving PEPs, though the esti-

mate also includes the proceeds of other crimes, like illegal money made off drug trafficking and gold smuggling.

PEP-related corruption is especially insidious, as it nibbles away at the fabric of the nation and weakens democratic structures in ways that are still being discovered. From the distortion of elections to the award of contracts for flyovers and highways to contractors that deliver sub-standard quality, the impact covers a vast range of activities.

Connecting the dots between political corruption and India's low-quality infrastructure—roads that barely survive monsoon rains, for example—does not require much imagination.

For their own reputation and balance-sheet health, banks should maintain a vigil to prevent their services from being used to facilitate illicit financial activities. Negligence can prove costly. A few years ago, BNP Paribas was fined \$9 billion for letting the governments of Sudan, Cuba and Iran conduct transac-

tions through the bank. These governments are under US government sanctions, and when the regulator found out, it resulted in a court case and massive fine.

In extreme cases, PEPs may also have links with individuals or organizations involved in terrorist financing. Due diligence exercises could ensure that bank services are not surreptitiously used for nefarious ends. As recently as in 2020, it was found that banks in Syria were facilitating the transfer of millions of dollars to the terrorist group ISIS; these lenders paid a heavy price, as they were subsequently cut out of the international payments settlement system, as per Washington Institute.

Given the dangers faced by the world, it is no surprise that banks around are being asked by regulators to enhance their due diligence in dealing with PEPs, including obtaining information on their source of funds and nature of business relationships. Growing online transactions are also being kept track of.

It's prudent for banks to keep a vigil on the risk of their services being misused by clients for financial crimes

Banks should invest in systems to identify, monitor and report to regulators their PEP relationships as part of their anti-money laundering and counter-terrorism financing obligations.

From RBI to the US Federal Reserve, bank regulators around the globe not only have well laid-out policies, procedures and rules, but are also raising the bar on these continually. While this adds to the cost of bank operations, it is seen as necessary to ensure that political corruption is stemmed and terrorist financing stops. Compliance need not be too burdensome, though. Digital technologies are playing a welcome role in ensuring effective compliance and helping banks manage complex processes and reporting cycles.

In election years, the challenge is steeper than usual. Countries with over half the world's population are election-bound in 2024. The list includes robust democracies such as India and the US, but also countries like Russia and North Korea.

It is well understood that the pressures of election-funding needs could combine with the temptations of power to elevate levels of corruption and illicit financial activity. Banks should stay extra vigilant and ensure that their books and business reputations stay spotless.



THEIR VIEW

MINT CURATOR

What does an emerging Squad in the Indo-Pacific mean for India?

This new mini-lateral grouping of the US and three of its allies could coordinate actions with the Quad for regional stability



HARSH V. PANT & DON MCLAIN GILL

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Earlier this month, US Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin met his Australian, Filipino and Japanese counterparts to institutionalize and launch the 'Squad' as a new four-way security arrangement in the Indo-Pacific. The Squad has become an essential addition to the series of security 'mini-lateral' groupings in the Indo-Pacific, such as the Quad, Aukus, the US-Philippines-Japan trilateral and the US-Japan-South Korea trilateral.

The Philippines, Japan and Australia are not treaty allies; however, each of these countries shares a bilateral treaty alliance with the US. Thus, the idea behind the Squad centres on the desire of all four democracies to deepen their level of integration beyond the hub-and-spokes format at a time when China has been militarizing the South China Sea at the expense of the rules-based order of the Indo-Pacific.

The seeds for the Squad's creation were already planted in 2023 through the efforts of the four countries to enhance their strategic collaboration in the South China Sea. Manila has broadened its alliance with the US and is currently negotiating a reciprocal access agreement (RAA) with Japan to enhance troop deployments between both countries. This also complements the existing Visiting Forces of Agreement (VFA) that the Philippines has with the US and the Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA) between Manila and Canberra. In June 2023, the defence chiefs of all four countries met for the first time on the sidelines of the Shangri La security dialogue in Singapore. Moreover, in April this year, the US, Japan, the Philippines and Australia conducted their first-ever multilateral maritime exercise in the Philippines' exclusive economic zone (EEZ).

Though the creation of the Squad may have seemed quite natural, due to the loose and informal nature of mini-laterals, their development relies on the convergence of political will and the intersection of shared interests and threat perceptions among its potential members. Consequently, the degree of collective participation among all four democracies only began to heighten in 2023.

In the past decade, the US, Philippines, Japan, and Australia lacked a collective and homogenous strategic vision *vis-a-vis* the region. While Washington was initially preoccupied with Europe and the Middle East during the latter years of the Obama administration, the Trump presidency sought to reconfigure US commitments towards its alliances based on a greater level of transactionalism. On the other hand, while Japan and Australia recognized the challenges posed by China in the South China Sea, there were still limitations in their abilities to project a more military and defence-driven approach in the geographic space.



ALAMY

Moreover, the absence of a resident Southeast Asian anchor further constrained the ability of the US and its two treaty allies to play a more robust role in securing the South China Sea collectively.

While the Philippines seemed like the most practical Southeast Asian partner then, given its treaty alliance with the US, its close strategic ties with Japan and its defence relations with Australia, the former administration of Rodrigo Duterte significantly reoriented Philippine foreign and security policy. In the hope of gaining economic concessions from Beijing by appeasement, Manila refrained from taking direct action against China through the US alliance network. This policy shift limited the Philippines' participation in security arrangements to secure the South China Sea.

However, this strategic dynamic significantly changed in 2022. While still heavily engaged in Europe and the Middle East, Washington recognized more clearly that China is the only major power with the material capacity and ambition to dismantle the established rules-based order in the Indo-Pacific. Similarly, with China showing no sign of managing its expansionist and belligerent activities in the Western Pacific, Japan has recognized the need to play a more robust defence role in the Indo-Pacific. This reorientation has its roots in Tokyo's National Security Strategy (NSS) released on 16 December 2022, which encompasses several notable objectives, including expediting Japan's military modernization and enhancing its military forces based on the acute traditional security challenges in the region. Importantly, the NSS also highlights the need for Tokyo to enhance

the capabilities of friendly regional countries to attain a genuinely free and open Indo-Pacific. Australia has also been showing greater interest in playing a more prominent role as a security and development partner in Southeast Asia.

Since Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos Jr took office in June 2022, Manila has taken a more proactive role in safeguarding its EEZ against Chinese expansionism by strengthening its partnerships to improve its maritime security capabilities and ability to exercise its sovereignty. This shift opened doors for the Philippines to participate more actively in the emerging network of like-minded democracies of the Indo-Pacific. By playing the anchor's role in Southeast Asia, the country has positioned itself as the Squad's fulcrum.

The proliferation of informal strategic arrangements suggests that Indo-Pacific security will be underpinned by flexible, area-specific and practical elements of cooperation, rather than traditional and rigid alliances. At the heart of these developments lie concerns of a potential challenge posed by China to the stability of the established regional order. All four members of the Squad must consistently engage with one another and explore new means of collective capacity building. Moreover, the Squad needs to coordinate with other existing mini-laterals (like the Quad) to achieve a more robust network-based cooperative framework of like-minded countries in the Indo-Pacific.

It is in the very nature of the Indo-Pacific that mini-laterals will proliferate and the nature of security threats in the region demand that they coordinate their actions closely.

GUEST VIEW

Electoral bonds case: Do not nullify past transactions

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One of the compelling stories during India's ongoing general elections has concerned electoral bonds. On 15 February 2024, the Supreme Court (SC) struck down the electoral bond scheme for political donations as unconstitutional. This has meant serious ramifications for corporate houses that made contributions to political parties based on this scheme and the three statutes which were amended to facilitate it. If transactions done before the ruling are not preserved by the SC, it is going to cause donor companies a lot of hardship.

First, let's look at what these amendments were and why the scheme was held unconstitutional. A related question also arises: Is the strike-down retrospective or prospective? And, if it is retrospective, what impact will it have on past actions under the scheme by corporates and political parties?

The verdict scotched the scheme as it violated Article 19 of the Indian Constitution. Simultaneously, four amendments made in three different laws were also struck down as

unconstitutional. These amendments pertained to exemptions given to political parties from publishing details of electoral bond contributions, maintaining records of the same and from disclosing the names and addresses of donors. Another amendment had removed the upper limit for corporate donations to political parties, earlier fixed at 7.5% of the company's average net profits of the past three years. Perhaps the most telling was an amendment that exempted companies from disclosing the names of political parties favoured by donations in their profit-and-loss statements. Of all the strike-downs, this one has hit businesses the hardest.

A well settled position under Article 13(2) of the Constitution is that the state cannot make any law which takes away or abridges rights given by Part III of the Constitution. If any law is made in contravention of these rights, then to the extent of such a contravention, that law will be void. Part III deals with fundamental rights guaranteed by the Constitution. It was violations of Articles 14 and 19 on the rights to equality and information, respectively, that led to the scheme and related amendments being struck down. Article 13(2) makes it clear that once a law is struck down as being unconstitutional, it ceases to have effect.

Thus, the settled position is that judgments declaring any law as unconstitutional are retrospective. This issue was decided by the SC's ruling in *CBI vs. R.R. Kishore*. In this case, an amendment made to the Delhi Special Police Establishment Act of 1946 (DSPE) was held to be unconstitutional from the very date it was inserted in the DSPE. The SC held that once a law is declared to be unconstitutional, then it is void since its beginning. Such a law would be still-born, unenforceable and have no legal effect.

In the electoral bond context, the critical question is this: What happens to deeds done in the past when the statutes were still considered valid?

Let's look at the impact that the SC's ruling could have on the past actions of companies and political parties if it has retrospective effect. The available data shows that companies have already made donations exceeding the earlier cap of 7.5%; companies with zero profits and even losses have made contributions and the names of favoured political

parties were not disclosed in the profit-and-loss statements filed by most of these companies. For political parties, it is known they hadn't published any details of electoral bond contributions and haven't maintained records of the donations received.

So, we have a unique set of challenges if we reverse the actions retrospectively. How will contributions beyond the 7.5% limit or those made by loss-makers be returned to contributors? How will firms re-open or amend the duly audited and approved financial statements of past years, unless they approach the National Company Law Tribunal? This is a serious challenge for donors.

It was to avoid backtracking and incompatible reversals that the doctrine of prospective overruling was introduced in Indian jurisprudence. Taken originally from American jurisprudence, this doctrine was first applied in India in the 1967 case of *I.C. Golaknath vs State of Punjab*. There, the court held that only the SC can choose to apply this doctrine in matters involving the

Indian Constitution. Recently, this was re-affirmed in its ruling on *State of Manipur vs Suraj Kumar Okram*. The SC held that it has the power to apply this doctrine to save past transactions under statutes which have been declared unconstitutional, or it can mould the relief provided by exercising its power under Article 142 of the Constitution. Conversely, if the SC chooses not to apply this doctrine, then past transactions executed under the aegis of the struck-down law will be void and null.

Unfortunately, from the language in the electoral bond ruling, it appears that the SC has applied this doctrine only to save electoral bonds that have already been encashed, but not for amendments made to the three statutes. Although unintentional, this has created ambiguity and uncertainty, with divergent views on the subject being taken by different stakeholders.

Given the magnitude of the issue, this needs a quick resolution. So, how can India Inc expect to get legal relief for past actions? For now, the only and best course would be to approach the SC for appropriate directions to be issued so that past transactions are saved. This would set a precedent and reduce *ex-post facto* complications.

These are the authors' personal views.

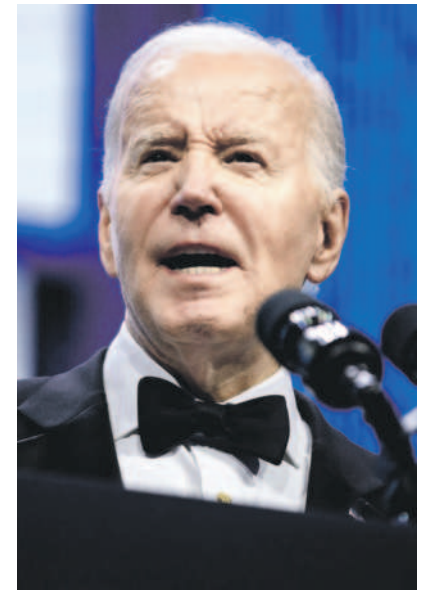
It's Bidenomics that has made America's EV tariffs necessary

One bad idea after another: EV subsidies have spelt trade barriers



CLIVE CROOK

is a Bloomberg Opinion columnist and member of the editorial board covering economics.



Joe Biden's industrial policy has resulted in a trade-distortive follow-up

In one sense, US President Joe Biden's punitive new tariffs on Chinese electric vehicles (EVs) are indeed necessary, just as he argues. What makes them so are the enormous sums that the administration is devoting to expanding US capacity to produce its own EVs. An almost-invariable characteristic of industrial policy is to start with one dumb idea, after which many more then follow—by necessity.

America's local EV makers are struggling despite generous subsidies. Output and sales are growing, but not as quickly as hoped. Early adopters have adopted and the rest are less enthusiastic. That could change, but the charging infrastructure has been slow to roll out and converting American drivers to EVs isn't easy. Even after the subsidies, EVs made in the US aren't cheap. Hence the need for tariffs to make the competition more expensive.

The high cost of producing EVs in the US is partly by design. Bidenomics aims to do two things that are in tension: Suppress carbon emissions by speeding adoption of EVs and create high-wage manufacturing jobs. Well-paid workers making cheap EVs is a tricky combination. "Good-paying union jobs" of the kind Biden advocates are difficult for a high-wage economy like the US to sustain because the resulting production is likely to be globally uncompetitive. A low-wage country can use subsidies to incubate a new industry that might in due course thrive abroad, letting governments withdraw support. In pricey-labour economies, this formula is less successful. As incomes rise, factory employment is apt to decline; work moves to more productive sectors. Just maintaining factory employment requires ongoing government support, which, in turn, retards growth by slowing the flow of resources to better uses.

Bidenomics favours sustaining persistently uncompetitive industries. Sometimes that's defensible, provided the costs aren't too high. China's ability to produce vast quantities of usable cheap EVs seems to have surprised the administration. The subsidies and incentives that the US has offered to this point aren't enough. The US faces another "China shock," as National Economic Council Director Lael Brainard puts it. Tariffs of no less than 100% are needed to protect America's nascent EV industry. For the sake of good-paying union jobs, Americans must be prohibited from buying cheap imported EVs.

This won't be the last stupid-but-necessary idea in the sequence. The tariffs will prevent EV prices in the US from falling as quickly as they otherwise would, slowing

the market uptake of a much-needed technology. If the administration is to keep its promises on climate change, it will need other ways of inducing Americans to use EVs. One such policy is in the works: New EPA rules to control the proportion of EVs and gas-powered vehicles sold in the US. Unless demand patterns shift, producers will be induced to lose money on EVs and recover the losses by selling their reduced output of fossil-fuel vehicles at far higher prices. If this arithmetic doesn't work out, demands for more subsidy may arise.

Support for persistently uncompetitive industries sometimes makes sense. Access to some kinds of goods really is a national-security imperative. Some of the products covered in America's new bundle of tariffs, such as high-end semiconductors, might qualify. EVs plainly don't.

Right now, Biden's officials aren't really pressing the national-security argument. The China threat lurks in the background, of course, but the main case for high tariffs on EVs and other Chinese exports rests on Beijing's market-distorting policies. In this view, US producers can't match their Chinese rivals not because US costs are too high but because China's exports are artificially cheap, driven down by Beijing's pursuit of industrial excess capacity.

A stickler for consistency might pause at this logic. When the US adopts trade-distorting policies, it's presented as an overdue recognition of market failures. When China does it, it's decried as artificial and a threat to global economic stability.

Be that as it may, trade-distorting policies do distort trade. America's industrial policies can make its trading partners worse off. The same goes for China. The question is whether disputes and imbalances can be resolved cooperatively. Pro-trade, positive-sum outcomes are at least imaginable. But governments, led by the US, have chosen to go the other way. Some argue it was a mistake even to hope for cooperation. China, it's argued, is a cheat and should never have been allowed into the World Trade Organization, a defunct institution. I disagree, but let's see how the negative-sum alternative of protection, retaliation and counter-retaliation works out.

It's early days for such policies, and the cycle of error piled upon error has plenty of room to run.

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The Statesman

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Baramulla wakens

Elections in the Baramulla constituency in Kashmir during the fifth phase on Monday marked a significant milestone with a voter turnout exceeding 54 per cent...

The political dynamics in Baramulla have also been reshaped by the 2022 delimitation exercise, which increased the number of assembly segments in the constituency from 15 to 18...

Maharashtra woes

The low voter turnout of 49.01 per cent in Maharashtra, particularly the Mumbai constituencies, during Monday's fifth phase of the Lok Sabha elections...

Saha in Politics

Initially, the government failed to evolve policies to establish large-scale industries and neglected the health and education sectors. Multipurpose river valley development schemes had not shown much progress...

The period between 1850 and 1950 is considered one of the most fertile periods of fundamental science. On the other hand, it was a critical time in the evolution of social consciousness worldwide since it witnessed two World Wars...

Under such circumstances, it is astonishing to see the journey of Meghnad Saha, a great educationist and an exceptionally brilliant scientist with a committed social vision...

Their teachers were Acharya Prafulla Chandra Ray (Chemistry), Sir Jagadish Chandra Bose (Physics) and Professors D.N. Mallik and C.E. Cullis (Mathematics). The 1915 M.Sc. batch of Calcutta University produced a galaxy of scholars...

Meghnad rose to fame quickly by publishing remarkable papers on the theory of thermal ionization in 1920 and became FRS in 1927 at the age of 34. Saha's theories of thermal ionization of elements, and selective radiation pressure have revolutionized astrophysical thought and research...

Saha who had witnessed the poverty-stricken villages of Bengal and the sufferings of people during natural calamities like floods, and deadly diseases, felt deeply for a permanent solution to these problems. In 1923, a catastrophic flood engulfed some parts of North Bengal and breached the Calcutta-Darjeeling railway lines at different places...



under the leadership of Acharya Prafulla Chandra Ray at the University College of Science. Subhas Chandra Bose was entrusted to fieldwork, Satish Chandra Dasgupta was the member in charge of supplies while Meghnad Saha was given charge of propaganda officer...

and proposed forming a national planning commission with Subhas Bose. Finally, a national planning committee was formed under the chairmanship of Jawaharlal Nehru.

During the Great War around 1943, it was imminent that the British would be forced to give independence to India even if the Allied forces won the war. Additionally, the 'Quit India' movement by Mahatma Gandhi in August 1942 expedited the process...

He actively participated in parliamentary debates suggesting and criticizing different motions put forward by the government. He wrote an article on 'Rethinking our Future' in the form of a pamphlet in 1953...



SHYAMAL BHADRA The writer is Former CSIR Scientist Emeritus, Indian Association for the Cultivation of Science (IACS), Kolkata

the delegation along with Jnan Chandra Ghosh, S S Bhatnagar and others. While visiting these countries, Saha delivered lectures on various issues, one of them being on 'Science in Social and International Planning with Special Reference to India'...

A detailed report of the visit was compiled and prepared by Saha; it was submitted to the government in 1946 for consideration. Therefore, available documents and evidence show that in all these endeavours, Saha took the pivotal role with a mission for the country's fast development once colonial rule ended...

During the years 1950-52, Saha was disappointed and disillusioned by the activities of the

government particularly with the implementation of the objectives of the National Planning Commission, industrial policies, education, etc. As S N Sen mentioned in the commemorative volume - 'Entering public life was far from his thoughts, but it was at the request of his friend Sri Sarat Chandra Bose, brother of the Netaji, who was a member of the first constituent assembly. Mr. Bose and other friends argued that as he had given so much thought to national planning, industrialization, and river valley developments, his presence in the legislature might be of great help to the country when decisions are taken by the Government on these points...

A MEMBER OF THE ANN ASIA NEWS NETWORK

Official affirms pillar position of the economy based on science, technology, and innovation

In recent years, the contributions of science and technology innovation activities have been demonstrated in various aspects, from providing theoretical and practical foundations for the process of building and completing development orientations, policies, and state management tools for each sector and field...

Scientific research, by providing scientific and practical arguments, has played an important role in developing and issuing policies, leading to breakthrough developments across all sectors and fields of industrial production, domestic trade, import-export and international economic integration...

By the end of the 2016-2020 period, many studies focused on evaluating and analysing the implementation of sector strategies, planning and dev-

Việt Nam News

elopment plans, making significant contributions to setting directions for the period 2021-2030. Key projects include the Industry Restructuring Project, the Export-Import Strategy, and the Domestic Market Development Strategy.

Additionally, research results during this period made substantial contributions to negotiating and participating in multilateral and bilateral free trade agreements, supporting policies for Vietnamese enterprises to open up and engage in the global market.

The Strategy for Science, Technology and Innovation to serve the development of the Industry and Trade sector until 2030 was signed by the Minister of Industry and Trade and issued in Decision No. 2795/QĐ-BCT on 30 October 2023.

The strategy clearly prioritises research and development activities, the application of new, modern technologies and digitalisation to create breakthroughs in production capacity and levels in key, priority industries, including high-tech and processing-manufacturing industries.

It particularly emphasises research, application, and technological innovation activities with policies aimed at 'catching up' and then 'leading' in technology for manufacturing enterprises. Attention is also given to STI activities serving state management tasks.

STI is a crucial foundation and breakthrough component in industrial and commercial policy to innovate growth models, enhance productivity, quality, efficiency and competitiveness of the Industry and Trade sector. It ensures technological independence in industries, especially in key technologies, contributing to accelerating the industrialisation and modernisation of the country.

Furthermore, the strategy aims to foster strong relationships between universities, research institutes, and enterprises in STI activities, with enterprises playing a central role, research institutes and universities acting as strong research entities, and state management agencies guiding, coordinating and creating a conducive environment for STI activities. It seeks to mobilise and effectively use resources from state budgets and businesses, encouraging private sector investment in STI activities in the Industry and Trade sector.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR editor@thestatesman.com

Immortal Tagore

SIR, I have read with interest Professor Sanjukta Dasgupta's article 'Poetic Odyssey' published in The Statesman today. A hundred compliments for her. The creative genius of Rabindranath Tagore, the 14th child of his parents will remain timeless and universal, precisely because that lost flame talked about the human heart. He could do so in Bengali and even in English, the 'signature language of British imperialism'...

sell, John Galsworthy, Rothstein, Yeats, C.F Andrews and others. Rabindranath's greatness lay in the fact that he could both translate and transcreate poetry and other literary components.

Then and that was the age when machines and technology had not dominated the human spirit as today. Every Bengali and culture-conscious others tried to read his words.

Today with momentous changes upon the material plane, the situation has changed; livelihood is the main factor for betterment of human lives coupled with insensitivity in many matters fostered by vested interests.

versant with heritage, humanities along with compassion and kindness. Rabindranath Tagore can never die.

Yours, etc., Parthasarathy Sen, New Delhi, 20 May.

UNPARDONABLE

SIR, Apropos the news report 'ECI bans Abhijit Gangopadhay from campaigning for 24 hours' (May 22), I would like to comment that considering the gravity of offence committed by the former judge of Calcutta High Court, the ban on campaigning for 24 hours may be considered to be too meagre.

Nevertheless, it shall remain on record that a former judge, who is shown himself to be a misogynist has been cautioned by the Election Commission un-

PROPERTY GRAB

SIR, This has reference to your report 'Miscrants grab RKM property in Siliguri' published today. It is disheartening that a large group of armed miscrants grabbed Ramkrishna Mission property at Siliguri despite their having genuine documents. It is learnt that one Mr Sunil Kumar Roy, who is no more, gifted his property to Ramkrishna Mission at Siliguri. It measured 1.59 acres and included a two-storied building known as 'Sewak House' on Sevoke Road. There is no need to say that the aims and ideals of the Mission are purely spiritual and humanitarian, and they have no connection with politics.

The mission strives to practice and preach the principles of the Upanishads and Gita in light of Ramkrishna's life and teachings. No one will tolerate such an attack on RKM. The Hon'ble CM should take appropriate steps immediately so that no such untoward incident takes place in future.

Yours, etc., Deba Prasad Bhattacharya, Kolkata, 21 May.

unpardonable.

Yours, etc., Arun Gupta, Kolkata, 22 May.



Bigotry impedes growth and must be shunned

PATRANGA BASU

When Swami Vivekananda decided to participate in the World's Parliament of Religions...



during the last several decades - in 1984, in 1992, in 2002 and also during the last couple of years.

Swami Vivekananda was critical of organised religion. He wrote: "If you want to be religious, enter not the gate of any organised religion."

He said: "If you and I organise, we begin to hate every person. ... If loving your own people means hating everybody else, it is the quintessence of selfishness and brutality, and the effect is that it will make you brutes."

A strong force in society believes today that India is the land of Hindus; all the people of India are united by common blood, tied by the bond of a common motherland and common

culture. It propagates Christians and Muslims as being of foreign origin as their Holy Land is outside our country.

These believers blur the distinction between history and mythology. Often mythology is placed over history. According to them the day when the 'Horse of Victory' of Ramachandra returned to Ayodhya unchallenged was the real birthday of the Hindu people.

We have further observed that "Akbar embraced yogic practices, experimented with vegetarianism, and (was) so keen on understanding the power Hindus experienced in worshipping the sun that he memorized its 1,001 Sanskrit names. ... Stories from the Mahabharata and Ramayana epics were also illustrated in the royal atelier." [Ruby Lal: 'Vagabond Princess']

Diversity is the natural phenomenon observed in Indian society. The ethos of Indian society is to embrace one and all - these ideas are embedded in our blood.

food habits - whether vegetarian or non-vegetarian - are getting gradually but prominently visible. According to a strong group, Hindutva is the basis of the Indian nation.

It is well known that the British rulers administered the 'divide and rule' policy and often promoted clashes between Hindus and Muslims. The monarchs of older days - rajas, maharajas, nawabs and sultans - exploited common people and amassed huge wealth.

That (Mohammedan) Rule was, after all, not all bad; nothing is all bad, and nothing is all good. The Mohammedan conquest of India came as a salvation to the downtrodden, to the poor.

We have further observed that "Akbar embraced yogic practices, experimented with vegetarianism, and (was) so keen on understanding the power Hindus experienced in worshipping the sun that he memorized its 1,001 Sanskrit names. ... Stories from the Mahabharata and Ramayana epics were also illustrated in the royal atelier." [Ruby Lal: 'Vagabond Princess']

It is fortunate and significant that the LOKNITI-CSDS [Centre for the Study of Developing Societies] Pre-poll Survey Report 2024 reveals that 79 per cent of Indians believe India belongs to all religions equally and not just to Hindus.

India is poised to be a developed nation by 2047. The focussed mind should alleviate lesser issues and focus on the desired growth and its equitable distribution.

India is poised to be a developed nation by 2047. The focussed mind should alleviate lesser issues and focus on the desired growth and its equitable distribution. Religious bigotry and intolerance will damage the social fabric and jeopardise future growth.

(The writer, a Cost Accountant, worked with a public sector power utility.)

Role of religion in modern democracies

TAKENORI INOKI

Young Japanese people's interest in thinking and religion is said to have been declining in recent years.

One reason could be the criminal offenses committed by certain religious organizations that have threatened the peace of society.

Moreover, hectic modern life generally tends to give people no choice but to prioritize the pursuit of convenience resulting from technological progress and economic affluence.

Looking at comparable trends overseas regarding people's interest in religion, it becomes clear many industrialized countries have something in common - a change in their populations' interest in traditional religions.

Statistics exist about the followers of religions and denominations. How should individuals' religious affiliation be verified? It is not an easy process.

tions as their believers surpasses the nation's actual population.

Germany, Austria, Switzerland and some other countries provide reliable statistics based on a so-called church tax - also known as a religious tax - that is traditionally levied on registered members of officially recognized religious communities.

Germany's constitution, the Basic Law, guarantees freedom of religion, and freedom of religious activity and religious association, for individuals and groups.

In Germany, recognized religious communities such as the Catholic Church, the Protestant Church and the Jewish religious community are legally empowered by the Lander (provinces) to impose a church tax on their members.

People in Germany need to specify a religious affiliation when they register their addresses with a civil registration office. The tax office collects tax from all registered church members' monthly incomes on behalf of their religious community.

According to news reports, people in Germany have become increasingly discontent with the church tax. An increasing number of people are said to be leaving churches due to a series

of scandals and the burden of the church tax - which amounts to slightly less than 9 per cent of income tax.

For example, the German Bishops' Conference said an all-time high of more than half a million people left the Catholic Church in Germany in 2022.

So, what does "religious disaffiliation" mean for contemporary political and social dynamics? In a liberal democratic society, every person is perceived as an individual who is equal to all other people, free and independent.

At the end of the day, people are more likely to lose interest in public affairs and focus particularly on things that could have a direct effect on their economic circumstances.

French political philosopher Alexis de Tocqueville said democracy would not only weaken the public spirit essential for social order, but also shorten the span of time spent thinking about things. In other words, democracy would tend to produce self-centered people who would prioritize things that were vital "for me now."

To avert this tendency, he argued, there should be a set of methods in place for cultivating public spirit, such as participation in governance and administration of local communities, voluntary associations of people will-

ing to share interests and concerns and a jury system in which people would participate in determining justice.

Tocqueville also focused on the role of religion. To ensure the healthy functioning of democracy, it would be necessary to expand people's minds, which tended to focus on things that were vital "for me now," to think of "the future and other people."

But this does not necessarily mean that Tocqueville had in mind any particular organized religion or denomination. He believed religion should be a philosophy that would offer a simple answer to the question of "death and immortality" - an answer human souls seek to know.

Tocqueville thought that expanding thoughts to the future and other people could act like a counterweight, preventing democracy from easily succumbing to mass violence. Tocqueville did not argue that church and state must be separated to prevent a religious group from dominating politics.

Religion is only supposed to assert a set of ideals - believers then feel empowered to voluntarily pursue a better life and a better society. This means that religious ideals themselves have no power to directly compel us to engage in specific political and social activities in the real world.

As we look anew at the relationship between religion and the state,

the principle of separation does not seem easy to uphold. We witnessed an example of this difficulty after Pope Francis gave an interview to an Italian-language Swiss broadcaster in February this year.

Ukraine's reaction to the pope's remarks illustrates how difficult the choice between religious ideals and the harsh reality of politics can be. Ukraine's criticism indicates that even if church and state remain separate, religion cannot really serve as a mediator for peace when strife among nations occurs.

Political and religious groups fought for hegemony throughout much of history. In the modern age, the economic society came into being, in which people were preoccupied with their economic lives.

According to Alfred Marshall, whose students included John Maynard Keynes: "Here and there the ardor of the military or the artistic spirit has been for a while predominant, but religious and economic influences have nowhere been displaced from the front rank even for a time."

The Japan News/Yomiuri Shimbun - ANN.

OCCASIONAL NOTE

So long as the civil strife in China was confined to the better educated classes with a disciplined following, foreigners were reasonably safe, for all parties, whether Monarchist, Republican, or frankly predatory, were anxious to have the good opinion and moral support of Europe, so often reflected in large loans.

NEWS ITEMS

FOOD GRAIN PRICES

THE average Wholesale prices of cereals and pulses in India, on or about April 15, 1924, were on the same level as a fortnight before.

There was a decrease of 8 per cent in the prices of salt, but ghee increased by 1 per cent. The price of raw sugar (gur) remained unchanged.

As regards provincial prices the noteworthy fluctuations were as follows:-(1) In Delhi, a fall of 27 per cent, in salt but a rise of 20 per cent. in raw sugar (gur), and 10 per cent, each in gram and arhar dal;

The price of wheat in the Punjab increased by 3 per cent. Rice in Bengal recorded no change.

MR. HUGHES DEFENDS EXCLUSION

THE American Bar Association gave a dinner on May 1, to Mr. Hughes, ex-Prime Minister of Australia, and discussed the "White Australia" policy and the American measure for the exclusion of the Japanese.

Mr. Hughes laid stress upon the point that if an exclusion policy was just for the United States which was rich and powerful, it was much more just for Australia, which was the outpost of Western civilization.

PRIVILEGE LEAVE RULES

WITH the approval of the Secretary of State for India the Government of India have decided that officers who were unable to avail themselves of full 90 days' privilege leave admissible under provisions of paragraph 801, Army Regulations, India, Volume 2, while serving in Waziristan in 1923 and who have now been transferred to other areas, shall be credited with balance due to them up to a maximum of 30 days.

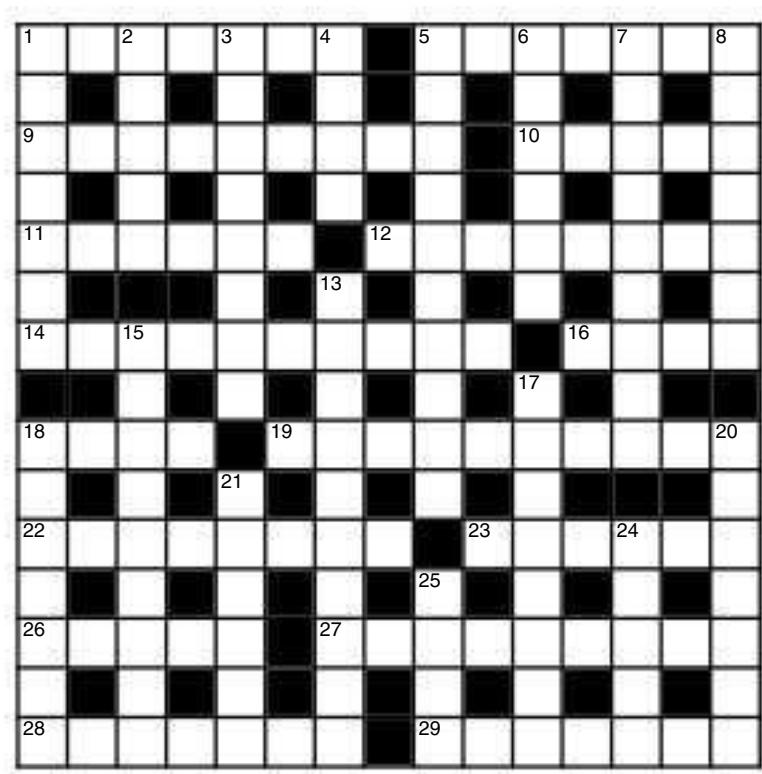
Officers, concerned will obtain a certificate from the General Officer Commanding under whom they are serving showing amount, of privilege leave taken during 1923 and balance due. This certificate will be authority for balance of privilege leave due.

DARJEELING BABY SHOW

THE postponed Baby Show and Health Exhibition were held to-day at the Town Hall and were opened by Her Excellency the Countess of Lytton. The exhibition and show were well attended. Numerous parda ladies were present.

CROSSWORD

NO-292788



YESTERDAY'S SOLUTION

SPIRIT SEASON
LUE COW
MAELSTROM CYNIC
UUTIE OTO
GARRYON NEUTRON
HIT CACT
OUTATHEEL RUCHE
BLISS EARN
LAISER HEADSTART
I RECFIT
GLACIAL RIGHTHO
EMPT OISSU
DUBAI CANDLEMAIS
LEA YE EA
FEUDAL MATING

ACROSS

- 1 Assigned A&E department charge nurses? Quite the opposite! (7)
5 Make aware of price increase on computer program (7)
9 USA sure to change outfits for match (9)
10 Get rid of soap character in sexy clothes (5)
11 Finally The Observer covers men being plagued by pessimism (6)
12 Laugh about publicity account problem (8)
14 Runs through steps taken initially by members (10)
16 I really didn't mean that sounds like Ravel (4)

DOWN

- 18 Enthusiastic about books in different bits (4)
19 Vandals abruptly abandon saint outside besieged city (10)
22 Ethical malware's caught out with reverse engineering (8)
23 Journalist lives to circumvent court injunctions (6)
26 Contemptible person removing outer layer of clothing (5)
27 What causes pain, besides husband sporting facial hair? (9)
28 Radical outed American devoted to his job? (7)
29 Use trade fair to showcase large computer systems (7)

DOWN

- 1 How could an empty gallery be unaffected? (7)
2 American city encapsulating success and suffering (5)
3 Due diligence's limiting factors were sufficient (8)
4 Extracted 400% raise for head of company (4)
5 They distract divorced American men entertained by mate's dancing (10)
6 Take off staff affected by pay squeeze (6)
7 Reporter's intuition seemingly shows inexperience (9)

DOWN

- 8 Some clientele mentioned what is essential to them (7)
13 Eats tuna salad, drinks lots of tea and gets thinner (10)
15 Break football players with physical training after game (9)
17 Broadcast acclaim joint position of authority (8)
18 Trendy top worn by Virginia without justification (7)
20 Dodgy religious group includes peculiar aspect (7)
21 DJ remixed duet featuring Kiss and Love (6)
24 Substantial growth roughly doubled with ending of embargo (5)
25 Endured tiresome individual eager to get well? (4)

NOTE: Figures in parentheses denote the number of letters in the words required. (By arrangement with The Independent, London)

Text & Context

THE HINDU

NEWS IN NUMBERS

China advised to increase the tariffs on large cars

25 in percent. The advice was given by a government-affiliated auto research body expert. The current import tariff for cars is 15%. The move is expected to support a policy push towards green and low-carbon development. REUTERS

The onions exported by India since lifting the ban on exports

45,000 in tonnes. India, the world's biggest vegetable exporter, banned exports of the bulb last December and extended it in March, after a rise in prices triggered by sluggish production. PTI

Amount of student debt cancelled by the U.S. President

7.70 in \$ billion. The number of students to benefit are 1,60,000. They include teachers, nurses, law enforcement officials and public service workers, or borrowers who were approved for relief through other changes. REUTERS

Rise in attacks on medics and health facilities in war zones

25 in percent. This is the highest level since records began 11 years ago. The Safeguarding Health in Conflict Coalition, composed of 40 groups, reported 2,562 incidents of violence and strikes across hospitals in 2023. REUTERS

Pakistani citizens brought back from Kyrgyzstan

3,000 Thousands of Pakistanis in Kyrgyzstan are expected to return after recent attacks on foreigners over an unknown dispute with migrants. PTI

COMPILED BY THE HINDU DATA TEAM

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On concerns over voter turnout data

Why are Opposition leaders and civil society members demanding that Form 17C data, which contains the absolute number of votes polled in a booth, be published online? How has the Election Commission of India responded? Why has the Supreme Court's intervention been sought?

EXPLAINER

Aaratrika Bhaumik

The story so far:

The Supreme Court is slated to hear on May 24 a petition filed by the NGO Association for Democratic Reforms (ADR) seeking a direction to the Election Commission of India (ECI) to upload polling station-wise voter turnout data on its website within 48 hours of the conclusion of polling for each phase of the Lok Sabha elections.

What happened?

ADR has flagged a sizeable difference in the initial turnout figures released by the ECI soon after the conclusion of polling and the final voter percentages published subsequently. Such discrepancies have evoked sharp questions from the Opposition and civil society about the authenticity of the polling data available in the public domain and the possibility of manipulation at the counting stage. On May 20, an intervention application was also moved in the case by advocate Mehmood Pracha who contested polls from the Rampur Lok Sabha constituency as an independent candidate. He alleged that the concerned returning officer (RO) had not furnished copies of the Form 17C record of votes polled in his constituency as mandated by the Conduct of Election Rules, 1961 (1961 Rules).

Echoing similar concerns, a group of civil society members have written to the apex poll body urging it to "immediately disclose" through its website, the authenticated record of voter turnout of every polling station as contained in Part I of Form 17C (account of votes recorded).

What is Form 17C?

As per the 1961 Rules, the ECI has to maintain two forms that have data on the number of electors and the votes polled — Forms 17A and 17C. While the former is used to record the details of every voter who comes into a polling booth and casts his or her vote, the latter is an account of all the votes recorded. Under Rule 49S(2), a presiding officer is mandated to furnish a copy of the entries made in Form 17C to the polling agents of the candidates at the close of polling.

Part I of Form 17C contains crucial information — the identification numbers of the EVMs used in the polling station, the total number of electors assigned to the polling station, the total number of voters as entered in the register for voters (Form 17A), the number of voters who decided not to record their votes after signing the register, the number of voters who were not allowed to vote, the total number of test votes and votes recorded per EVM. Whereas, Part II of the same form contains the results of the counting carried out on the stipulated day.

The data in Form 17C is used by candidates to verify the results on the counting day by matching it with the EVM count. An election petition can be moved in the concerned High Court in case of any discrepancies.

Why is the ECI under the scanner?

The ECI has come under scrutiny for not releasing the absolute number of votes polled in any constituency in this general election unlike in 2019. Only voting percentages have been published that too after significant delay — after 11 days of the first phase of polling held on April 19 and four days after the second phase of polling held on April 26.

On May 7, Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge wrote to leaders of the



Exercising their mandate: Voters stand in queue to cast their votes during the fifth phase of the Lok Sabha polls, at a polling station in Giridih on May 20. ANI

INDIA bloc saying that the polling data released by the ECI "raises serious doubts". He flagged that apart from the delay, the voter turnout data released by the ECI "does not mention crucial yet related figures, such as the votes polled in each Parliamentary Constituency and in the respective Assembly Constituencies." He alleged that the "credibility of the Election Commission" was at an all-time low. He also expressed concerns that in his 52 years of electoral life, he had never witnessed such a high increment of voting percentages in the final published data. The provisional polling percentages for the first phase released by the ECI at 7 pm on April 19 was about 60% and for the second phase on April 26 was 60.96%. However, the final figures released on April 30 for the first phase stood at 66.14% (an increase of more than 5.5%) and 66.71% for the second phase (an increase of more than 5.74%).

The Congress chief further questioned what was precluding the poll body from publishing the exact voter turnout data of each polling station when such information was already available with the polling agents of the candidates through Form 17C. Since no data had been released about the number of eligible voters (electors) in each parliamentary constituency, it was impossible to calculate whether the absolute number of voters had increased or decreased, Mr. Kharge said.

TMC leader and Lok Sabha candidate for Bengal's Krishnanagar constituency, Mahua Moitra also took to the social media platform X to highlight how she was able to compile the number of voters in her constituency within 24 hours of polling. She demanded to know why the ECI had failed to publish this information for the previous phases of polling.

How has the ECI responded?

In a scathing letter to Mr. Kharge, the ECI maintained that it has no legal obligation to publish online the absolute number of votes polled in every polling station.

"Copies of Form 17 C are shared with polling agents present immediately, as the strongest measure of transparency. So, candidates are aware and in possession of exact voter turnout data in absolute numbers even before it is known to the ECI," the letter stipulated.

Calling the allegations by Mr. Kharge an attempt to "create confusion, misdirection and impediments in the conduct of free and fair polls", the poll body pointed out how voters continue to vote even after 6:00 pm due to long queues at polling stations resulting in variations in the estimated data on the poll day.

Notably, in an affidavit filed before the apex court, the poll body claimed that disclosure of Form 17C data could cause "confusion in the minds of voters" since it would also include postal ballot counts. This could be "used by persons with motivated interests to cast aspersion on the whole electoral process", it alleged.

Casting aspersions on ADR's motive, the ECI said that the NGO was approaching the top Court with an agenda "to perpetually keep creating doubt in the mind of voters based on conspiracy theory." It also referred to ADR's unsuccessful challenge in the EVM-VVPAT cross-verification case.

What has the Supreme Court said?

The ADR has sought the Supreme Court's intervention to direct the ECI to upload scanned legible copies of Part I of Form 17C of all polling stations which contains the authenticated figures for votes polled, within 48 hours of the close of polling. Saying that such information is 'readily available' with the poll body, the NGO has also sought the publication of constituency and polling station-wise figures of voter turnout in absolute numbers.

"The inordinate delay in the release of the final voter turnout data, coupled with the unusually high revision (of over 5%) in the EC press note of April 30 and the absence of disaggregated constituency and polling

station figures in absolute numbers, has raised concerns and public suspicion regarding the correctness of the data... These apprehensions must be addressed and put to rest" the petition said.

While seeking ECI's response to the plea on May 17, Chief Justice of India (CJI) D.Y. Chandrachud, heading a three-judge Bench asked the poll body's counsel, "Every Polling Officer submits [voting records] by the evening, after 6 or 7 p.m., by which time the polling is completed. The Returning Officer would then have the data of the entire constituency. Why don't you upload it?"

What do experts have to say?

"The ECI always discloses absolute numbers of voter turnouts. This time they are only disclosing percentages, usually the turnouts are out within 24 hours of the end of polling unlike this time and the increase in voter turnout in the final figures is unusually high", Anjali Bharadwaj, Director of Common Cause earlier told *The Hindu*. She added that the poll body should upload a scanned copy of Form 17C as soon as it is submitted by the Presiding Officer to abate transparency concerns.

Addressing the ECI's assertion that access to Form 17C data by polling agents negates the need for such information to be published online, Jagdeep S. Chokkar, the founder of ADR pointed out that political parties do not contest elections in all constituencies. The renowned activist also highlighted how smaller political parties cannot afford to have polling agents in all booths or constituencies due to financial constraints. In fact, *The Hindu* found that since one constituency has roughly 2,000-2,200 booths, a candidate needs to have approximately 6,000 polling agents in each constituency to be able to obtain a copy of Form 17 C. "This shows that it is impossible for smaller parties and many independents to have polling agents in all booths", Congress Rajya Sabha MP Shakti Singh Gohil said.

THE GIST

▼ ADR has flagged a sizeable difference in the initial turnout figures released by the ECI soon after the conclusion of polling and the final voter percentages published subsequently.

▼ As per the 1961 Rules, the ECI has to maintain two forms that have data on the number of electors and the votes polled — Forms 17A and 17C. While the former is used to record the details of every voter who comes into a polling booth and casts his or her vote, the latter is an account of all the votes recorded.

▼ The ECI maintained that it has no legal obligation to furnish to the general public information about the absolute number of votes polled in every polling station.

What is the value of attributing extreme events to climate change?

Climate models are bad at capturing normal rainfall and worse at extreme ones. They are better at capturing temperatures, but only at regional scales, not at very local scales. Climate scientists need to address these challenges in the process of assigning probability changes to events in the past

Raghu Murtugudde

Just a couple of decades ago, the U.N. Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) argued that individual weather events could not be attributed to climate change. The science has since evolved, albeit with all its attendant uncertainties, and now we regularly hear of researchers having been able to attribute some individual extreme events to climate change.

Many scientific and data challenges persist in this exercise even as its outcomes are argued to be usable for estimating richer countries' historic liability for climate-related "loss and damage" and the legal liability of governments and corporations in precipitating adverse events like floods and droughts. However, researchers have used a variety of methods to evaluate attribution, which raises questions about whether attribution science is mature enough to be used in courts and multilateral fora.

Value of extreme-event attribution

While no formal cost-benefit analysis of an attribution exercise has been reported, many experts have argued that attributions are critical for the 'loss and damage' (L&D) process. L&D doesn't have a unique definition but its place in climate talks under the U.N. Framework Convention on Climate Change has come a long way in the last decade. Economically developing countries, in particular those that are 'particularly vulnerable', have demanded the L&D fund to pay for the havoc climate change wreaks within their borders. Obviously, the criteria by which 'particularly vulnerable' countries are to be identified are crucial.

For example, India is a developing country in the tropics and is highly vulnerable to climate change's impacts. But it is unlikely that India will qualify for L&D funding, and herein lies the rub: should climate finance and green funds focus on adaptation and mitigation alone or should they administer L&D funds separately? If the latter, then will attribution exercises help? The developed world is opposed to the idea of being held legally accountable in court for any extreme events since that could open a floodgate of lawsuits.

Against this background, our understanding of whether attribution reports can actually hold up in court as evidence of culpability is very important. A good case in point is a recently published report on heatwaves in Asia.

Attribution of Asian heatwaves

Last week, a team of climate scientists called World Weather Attribution (WWA) reported that heatwaves across Asia, from the west to the southeast, had been rendered nearly 45-times more likely by climate change.

It is worth understanding how these 'rapid extreme event attributions' are performed. The most important concept is the change in probability: in this case, the climate scientists contrasted the conditions in which the heatwaves occurred against a counterfactual world in which climate change did not happen. The conditions that prevail in the counterfactual world depend on the availability of data from our world. When there isn't enough data, the researchers



The dried-up catchment area of the Meenikara dam, in Kerala's Palakkad. K.K. MUSTAFAH.

run models for the planet's climate without increasing greenhouse gas emissions and other anthropogenic forcings. Where there was sufficient data, they used trends in the data to compare conditions today with a period from the past in which human effects on the planet were relatively minimal.

This said, the data are hardly ever sufficient, especially for rainfall, and almost never for extreme rainfall events. Climate models are also notoriously bad at properly capturing normal rainfall and worse at extreme ones. Thus, climate scientists need to address these challenges in the process of assigning probability changes to events in the past. The climate models are better at capturing temperatures and temperature-related events – but again, only at regional scales, not at very local scales.

If, some day, climate scientists are able to perform reliable hyperlocal attribution exercises, they will still be confronted by a moral question: what actions should follow? Because right now, even though the L&D fund and climate jurisprudence are becoming more visible, attribution exercises are happening as if disconnected from governments' adaptation and mitigation strategies.

Put another way: will people and businesses move away if a place is seen as being a hotspot of extreme events? This is not just a question of science. Governments need to be able to respond to such decisions, and attribution science should in turn, be sufficiently reliable.

Picking extreme events to attribute

Another significant challenge in attribution exercises, is how scientists



While no formal cost-benefit analysis of an attribution exercise has been reported, many experts have argued that attributions are critical for the 'loss and damage' process

choose the extreme events for which they will perform attribution exercises.

When evaluating the Asian heatwaves, the WWA scientists used regional scales and different definitions for different regions. They also arbitrarily considered daily, three-day, or monthly average temperatures for attributing likelihoods.

Heatwaves can be exacerbated by natural factors such as an El Niño event or human factors like urbanisation and deforestation. There is also a debate as to whether irrigation affects heatwaves as well.

Further, no weather event will occur exactly the same form twice in a place, which means an extreme event occurring in that place will likely have no precedent. This is why it is easier to reliably attribute heatwaves at the subcontinent scale but not those at the level of particular areas.

The kind of questions that climate scientists ask also matter. For example, the same analysis can produce different answers to the questions "was the intensity of a heatwave amplified by climate change?" and "was the frequency or return period of a heatwave altered by climate change?". In the WWA report, the scientists used multiple approaches in their attribution exercise to answer the

same question, and have added that the differences between them are immaterial. It is not clear whether these differences will be perceived to be material in a court of law.

Extreme events and human action

The actual impacts of extreme events depend not only on the hazard or the extreme event but also on the vulnerability and the exposure of the population affected. Similarly, the financial consequences are also affected by multiple factors. So, should an attribution exercise only focus on the hazard or should it consider the impacts as well?

This is not a trivial question, especially if L&D negotiations are to be served reliably by attributions.

Considering all these challenges, we must take stock of the international financial aspects of adaptation, mitigation, and L&D. In particular, governments should consider an agreement on historical responsibilities to fund developing countries, close adaptation gaps, build adaptation capacity, and finance mitigation for the global good.

The real world is severely resource-constrained. In a counterfactual world where human, financial, and computational resources are infinite, attribution exercises are a beautiful scientific challenge and could serve as a productive intellectual exercise. But in the real world, we need a cost-benefit analysis based on a clear role for attribution in the overall climate action landscape.

(The author is a visiting professor at IIT Bombay, and emeritus professor at the University of Maryland.)



Burning vegetation in a rainforest in Yanomami Indigenous land, Roraima state, Brazil. REUTERS

Amazon fires off to record start in 2024

Reuters

Brazil's Amazon rainforest has experienced its largest blazes on record in the first four months of the year, with the environmental workers union on Monday placing partial blame on lower government spending on firefighting.

Brazil's President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva has staked his international reputation on protecting the Amazon rainforest and restoring Brazil as a leader on climate policy.

The Amazon, the world's largest rainforest, is vital to curbing catastrophic global warming because of the vast amount of greenhouse gas it absorbs.

A record drought in the Amazon rainforest region, driven by the El Niño climate phenomenon and global warming, has helped contribute to dry conditions fueling fires this year.

More than 12,000 square kilometers of the Brazil's Amazon rainforest burned between January and April, the most in over two decades of data, according to Brazil's space research agency Inpe. That's an area larger than Qatar, or nearly the size of the U.S. state of Connecticut.

Fires in the Amazon generally do not occur naturally but are ignited by people, often seeking to clear land for agriculture. Firefighting budget cuts are also partially to blame, environmental workers union Ascema said in a statement. They complained that this year's budget for environmental agency Ibama to fight fires is 24% lower than 2023.

In a statement, Brazil's environment ministry said that the Amazon fund,

While the area burned is a record, it pales in comparison to peak dry season from August to November, when an area the same size can burn in a single month

which draws on donations from foreign governments, put 405 million reais (\$79.4 million) toward firefighting at the state level under Lula's current administration, which began in 2023.

The federal government sent about 380 firefighters to Roraima, the northern Amazon state that was hit the hardest by the fires, which were intensified by drought, the ministry said.

It did not respond to questions on cuts to Ibama's firefighting budget. The agency did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

Ibama agents have suspended field work since January amid tense negotiations with the federal government for better pay and working conditions.

Ascema has rejected the latest government offer and demanded larger salary rises after more than a decade of paltry increases and dwindling staff.

While the area burned is a record for the first four months of the year, it pales in comparison to blazes in the peak dry season from August to November, when an area that size can burn in a single month.

"The government needs to understand that without total engagement from environmental workers, the situation foreseen for this year is unprecedented catastrophe," said Ascema President Cleberston Zavaski.

"Prevention efforts, such as raising awareness about ignitions, creating firebreaks in strategic areas, and conducting prescribed burns, depend on employing people with stable conditions," said Manoela Machado, a fire researcher at the Woodwell Climate Research Center. "These measures will influence the severity of the fire crisis when the dry conditions allow fires to spread."

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

THE SCIENCE QUIZ

The stuff that makes things yellow

Vasudevan Mukunth

QUESTION 1

Name the class of pigments that impart a yellow colour to pumpkins, egg yolk, canaries, and daffodils, among other naturally occurring life-forms. Flamingoes also get their characteristic pink hue by consuming food containing pigments of this class.

QUESTION 2

Two colours are said to be complementary if, when they are mixed, the result is a greyscale colour. In the RGB colour scheme – which uses red, green, and blue as the primary colours – what is the complementary colour of yellow?

QUESTION 3

During the Mughal period in India, a

pigment called Indian yellow was used to render a vivid yellow colour in paintings and frescoes, especially when viewed under sunlight. Name the acid whose salts are the primary components of this pigment.

QUESTION 4

Name the chemical compound responsible for the yellow-red hues of saffron dye. Studies have found this compound has anti-inflammatory properties, as well as a potential ability to disrupt processes involved in the progression of Alzheimer's.

QUESTION 5

Chrome yellow is a popular yellow pigment, and was particularly so in the 19th century. Its principal component is the compound _____. A French chemist discovered this fact when he was studying a naturally occurring form of the compound called crocoite. Fill in the blanks.

Answers to May 21 quiz:

- Assistant in Davy's lab who liquefied many gases in 1823
– Ans: Michael Faraday
 - German physicist who tried to explain an electron's path in a solid metal
– Ans: Paul Drude
 - Effect that Sommerfeld's quantum mechanics models couldn't explain
– Ans: Kondo effect
 - Person with whom Dorda and Pepper discovered quantum Hall effect
– Ans: Klaus von Klitzing
 - Physicists who produced the first Bose-Einstein condensates
– Ans: Eric Cornell, Carl Wieman, Wolfgang Ketterle
- Visual: Philip W. Anderson
First contact: Viswanadha Rao Batchu | K.N. Viswanathan

Please send in your answers to science@thehindu.co.in



Visual: Name the yellow pigment derived from trees of the family Guttiferaceae (shown). This pigment's name comes from an older name for a country where these trees grow. FOREST & KIM STARR

Political parties pay lip service to women's safety



PREM CHOWDHRY
AUTHOR AND FORMER ACADEMIC,
DELHI UNIVERSITY

THE Swati Maliwal case underlines a horrifying reality — political parties are reluctant to walk the talk on women's issues. They may pledge their commitment to empowering women, but when it comes to taking action, they are nowhere to be seen. It is not just the Aam Aadmi Party that is at fault. The BJP has been largely evasive about the sexual harassment case against its MP, Brij Bhushan Sharan Singh. The saffron party has not only ignored his condemnable acts, but it has also given the ticket to his son to fight the Lok Sabha election from the Kaiserganj constituency in Uttar Pradesh. The oft-repeated shibboleths of *Nari Shakti* and *Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao* remain empty political slogans.

In the Maliwal case, Arvind Kejriwal's former personal secretary Bibhav Kumar is accused of assault-

ing her at the Delhi Chief Minister's residence. Violence took place during a heated exchange between Kumar and Maliwal, a Rajya Sabha MP. She was allegedly slapped and kicked in the chest and stomach. Did it have something to do with her superior position — as an MP — to that of the man (the CM's aide)? What we do know is that violence was the result.

The case of Brij Bhushan — a former chief of the Wrestling Federation of India and a six-time MP — pertains to the sexual harassment of female wrestlers. He was charged by the court for sexual harassment, stalking, outraging the modesty of women and criminal intimidation. The matter brings to the fore the menace of sexual exploitation of women by powerful individuals.

Prajwal Revanna, a young MP from Karnataka, has been accused of sexually abusing several women. He belongs to an influential political family — he is the grandson of former Prime Minister and Janata Dal (Secular) chief Deve Gowda. The Karnataka State Commission for Women has stated that the parliamentarian had abused women and made objectionable videos of them without their consent. When the videos went viral and the truth could



ORDEAL: Swati Maliwal's case adds another dimension to the violence women face, which extends from domestic abuse to sexual crimes and acid attacks. **PH**

not be denied any longer, Prajwal fled to Germany. Even as he continues to evade the authorities, he has been suspended by the party. Interpol has been contacted to locate him, but there has been no success so far. Incidentally, the JD(S) is an ally of the BJP in Karnataka in the ongoing Lok Sabha elections.

These cases underscore the double standards that political leaders adopt towards women and highlight the difference in what they say and what actions they take. Maliwal's case adds yet another

The Swati Maliwal, Brij Bhushan and Prajwal cases highlight the double standards of politicians on women's issues.

dimension to the violence women face, which extends from domestic abuse to murder (dowry deaths and honour killings), sexual crimes (rape, human trafficking and prostitution) and acid attacks.

The unpalatable truth about women in India, both historically and socially, is that they are struggling for their own identity, shouting to have their voices heard and fighting for their esteem and respect. Despite the constitutional guarantee of gender equality, rampant discrimination and exploitation of women

continue in India. Incidents of sexual harassment, molestation and ill-treatment of women are on the rise. It is high time that women got a respectable and dignified position in Indian society to fearlessly voice their opinions. Awareness should be spread among women and in society, and their rights should be protected. All crimes against women should be made punishable.

In this era of globalisation and revolution in the means of communication and information technology, the role of the media has become all the more crucial for women's empowerment in India. There has been much societal progress all over the world. And a number of organisations have been striving to protect the honour and freedom of women. But in our country, a deep-rooted patriarchal attitude persists. That is the reason why it is the male child that gets more attention in a family and enjoys more freedom than a girl.

It is necessary to have women in India educated so that they can live with dignity and help solve their issues. Education alone would give them confidence. Every woman has a fundamental right to be safe. If she is able to protect herself and stand up against injustice, her protest becomes meaning-

ful. Socio-economic empowerment of women can help improve their status in society.

Unfortunately, the Maliwal, Brij Bhushan and Prajwal cases have sown fear in the minds of women. Inaction or delayed action by law enforcement authorities only adds to their plight. Notably, the police initially dragged their feet on registering an FIR against Brij Bhushan; they did it only after the intervention of the Supreme Court. It is imperative that courts take these things into consideration and order a speedy trial to ensure the harshest punishment possible for the culprits. Such promptness will at least deter people from committing crimes against women. It is the perpetrators who should be afraid, not the victims. Hopefully, the judiciary will understand the gravity of the situation and ensure the swift delivery of justice in such cases.

A change in mindset can make women's lives more safe and secure. The need of the hour is to create awareness about their rights to save them from exploitation. Inculcating strong social, moral and cultural values among citizens through education and making strong laws to punish perpetrators can bring about a positive change.

Xi keen on consolidating bilateral ties to divide EU



JAYADEVA RANADE
PRESIDENT, CENTRE FOR CHINA
ANALYSIS AND STRATEGY

CHINESE President Xi Jinping's recent visit to France, Serbia and Hungary came amid rising concern in Europe about the war in Ukraine and China's growing assistance to Russia. Commenting on Xi's tour, the official *Zhongguo Qingnian Bao* (*China Youth Daily*, May 6) candidly observed that the visit was "vitally important for China's relations with France, Serbia, Hungary and the European Union (EU) at large".

High on Xi's agenda were the economy, concern about the possibility of the West imposing sanctions on China, and the issue of 'overcapacity' flagged by US Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen and the EU. Xi's tour was carefully crafted to first try and 'soften' France, which has a powerful voice in the EU and considerable investments in China, and then to end with a successful flourish in Serbia and Hungary — both countries

with whom China has excellent commercial and diplomatic ties. Signed articles by Xi were published in major newspapers of the three countries, coinciding with his arrival.

France was the most difficult to deal with as President Macron has changed his views over the past year and now sees the war in Ukraine as an existential threat to Europe. This has increased worries about the supply by China of dual-use goods and military material to Russia. To demonstrate — especially after German Chancellor Olaf Scholz bent his knee to Beijing — that France and the EU were equally concerned about Ukraine, Macron invited EU President Ursula von der Leyen to join the talks with Xi in Paris. Contentious issues were raised, such as the French-backed anti-subsidy investigation into electric vehicles from China; Chinese overcapacity; Beijing's indirect support to Russia's war in Ukraine; and the explosion of the Nordic pipeline.

In their 80-minute bilateral talks, Macron reportedly raised concerns about China supplying dual-use items to Russia and underscored that the war in Ukraine posed a direct threat to Europe. Xi said that in this phase of transformation and turbulence, "China and France should



ALARM: French President Emmanuel Macron (left) has reportedly raised concerns about China supplying dual-use goods to Russia. **REUTERS**

uphold independence and jointly prevent a new Cold War or bloc confrontation" and "stay committed to the spirit that guided the establishment of their diplomatic ties, namely independence, mutual understanding, long-term vision and mutual benefit, and enrich it with new features of the new era". He said they should take "a long view and work together for an equal and orderly multipolar world" and "jointly oppose decoupling and cutting off of supply chains." He offered to "deepen cooperation" in aerospace and aviation, nuclear energy, innovation and finance, and "expand cooperation in emerging

China has been trying to widen differences between the US and the EU to loosen American restrictions on the sale of technology and weaponry to it.

areas such as green energy, smart manufacturing, biomedicine and artificial intelligence (AI)" as well as a reform of the international financial system.

Macron emphasised that France would not adopt discriminatory policies and did not want to keep China out of the French market. He said France hoped to export more agricultural products to China and was ready to enhance cooperation in areas such as aerospace and aviation, nuclear energy for civilian use, biodiversity protection and AI, and jointly uphold multilateralism, the UN Charter and international law.

After their 100-minute trilateral meeting, Von der

Leyen said she had pressed Xi on all contentious points and urged him to rein in Chinese subsidies and manufacturing overcapacity and give European companies more access to the Chinese market. She said she was counting "on China to use all its influence on Russia to end its war of aggression against Ukraine", and urged Beijing to stem the supply of dual-use goods helping Russia's military. She pointed out that "given the existential nature of the threats stemming from this war for both Ukraine and Europe, this does affect the EU-China relations."

Xi seemed to brush off these concerns and stressed that "China is not at the origin of this crisis, nor is it a participant". He said the crisis should not be used to tarnish China's image or start a new Cold War. Interestingly, throughout the meetings, Xi referred to the war in Ukraine as a 'crisis'.

After a quick visit to the home of Macron's grandmother in the Hautes-Pyrénées, Xi arrived in Serbia on the 25th anniversary of the bombing of the Chinese Embassy in Belgrade on May 7 to a red-carpet welcome. Xi received a similar reception in Hungary. China signed 28 and 18 agreements, respectively, in Belgrade and Budapest.

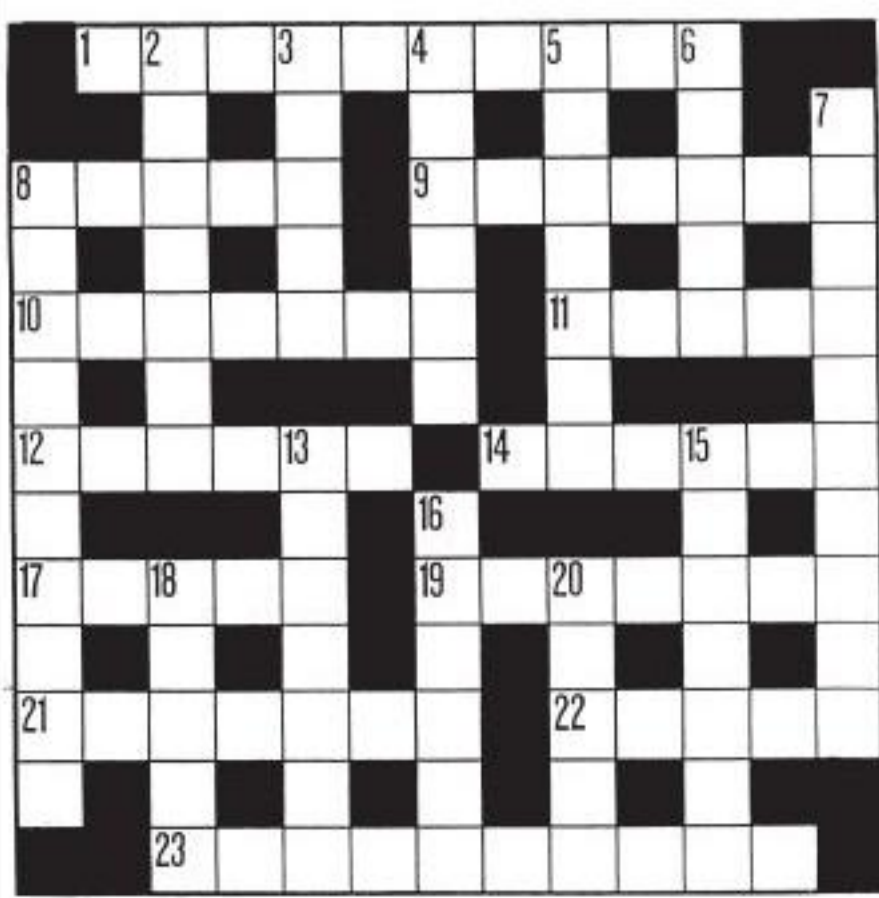
In Serbia, which is not a member of the EU, Xi made it clear that the country

stood to gain far more from close ties with China than the EU. The trans-Serbia Railway was highlighted as an example of the Belt and Road cooperation and they agreed to build a "China-Serbia community with a shared future in the new era". Three more Confucius Centres and a Chinese Cultural Centre were opened. In Hungary, agreements were signed for two new electric vehicle-manufacturing factories.

At the joint press conference on May 9, Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban announced that "China is one of the pillars of the new world order" and that Hungary would support China's peace plan for Ukraine. Xi said: "China supports Hungary in playing a bigger role in the EU and promoting greater progress in China-EU relations."

Beijing has for decades been trying to widen differences between the US and the EU to loosen American restrictions on the sale of technology and weaponry to China. Xi is consolidating relations with Serbia and Hungary to build them into potential wedges to divide the EU. Following Scholz's visit in April, Beijing could see Germany as a potential weak link. The apparent change in French President Macron's views on Russia could, however, impact China-France ties.

QUICK CROSSWORD



- ACROSS**
- Likely (2,8)
 - Ridicule by imitation (5)
 - Wariness (7)
 - Dog of no definable breed (7)
 - A lightweight wood (5)
 - Of rectangular shape (6)
 - Considered (6)
 - Absolute (5)
 - Model of excellence (7)
 - Concentrated artillery fire (7)
 - To give and take (5)
 - Scene of exciting activity (5,3,2)
- DOWN**
- Existing in name only (7)
 - Come round again (5)
 - Tool, emblem of Communism (6)
 - Not easily angered (7)
 - Woven fabric with diagonal lines (5)
 - Unique (3,3,4)
 - Meaningless ritual (5-5)
 - Give spoken commentary for (7)
 - A mauvish-crimson (7)
 - Globe (6)
 - Lose (contest) deliberately (5)
 - Disprove (5)

YESTERDAY'S SOLUTION

Across: 1 Debase, 4 Drivel, 9 Let slip, 10 Delft, 11 Green, 12 Nirvana, 13 Case in point, 18 Impetus, 20 Poker, 22 Deign, 23 Umpteen, 24 Entice, 25 Grudge.

Down: 1 Deluge, 2 Bathe, 3 Silence, 5 Rider, 6 Villain, 7 Lethal, 8 Open-and-shut, 14 ApPOINT, 15 On paper, 16 Kindle, 17 Fringe, 19 Tonic, 21 Knead.

SU DO KU

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

V HARD

FORECAST

YESTERDAY'S SOLUTION

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

CALENDAR

MAY 23RD 2024, THURSDAY

- Shaka Samvat 1946
- Jyeshtha Shaka 2
- Jyeshtha Parvishite 10
- Hijari 1445
- Shukla Paksha Tithi 15, up to 7.23 pm
- Parigha Yoga up to 12.12 pm
- Vishakha Nakshatra up to 9.15 am
- Moon in Scorpio sign
- Vaishakh Purnima

CITY	MAX	MIN
Chandigarh	39	30
New Delhi	44	32
Amritsar	45	27
Bathinda	47	29
Jalandhar	45	28
Ludhiana	44	29
Bhivani	45	31
Hisar	46	30
Sirsa	47	31
Dharamsala	38	23
Manali	29	12
Shimla	30	18
Srinagar	30	13
Jammu	43	27
Kargil	29	10
Leh	23	08
Dehradun	39	23
Mussoorie	27	16

