

TELLING NUMBERS

3 states, 66 ministers: all crorepatists, 62 of them men

BETWEEN THE previous Cabinet and the one newly sworn in, the average wealth of ministers in Chhattisgarh has multiplied by more than 15 times, from Rs 3.04 crore in 2013 to Rs 47.13 crore in 2018.

AVERAGE WEALTH OF MINISTERS

Table with 4 columns: State, Year, Average Wealth, and Gender Ratio. Rows for Chhattisgarh, Rajasthan, and Madhya Pradesh for years 2013 and 2018.

Source for all data: ADR

criminal cases, too, has multiplied in all three states. Two of Chhattisgarh's 12 ministers face criminal cases, compared to 1 minister in 2013.

In terms of gender representation, women continue to have a low share. Chhattisgarh's 12 ministers included just 1 woman in 2013, which is unchanged in 2018.

THEN & NOW

Table with 4 columns: State, Creopatists, Facing cases, Women ministers. Rows for Chhattisgarh, Rajasthan, and Madhya Pradesh.

AGE & EDUCATION

Table with 5 columns: State, 31-50 yrs, 51-70 yrs, Graduate, XII pass, Others*. Rows for Chhattisgarh, Rajasthan, and Madhya Pradesh.

*One Chhattisgarh minister declared himself literate; one Madhya Pradesh minister holds a diploma

TIP FOR READING LIST

CHINA WAR ON PM2.5 CAUSING MORE OZONE POLLUTION: STUDY

THE CHINESE government's sustained efforts to restrict particulate pollution may have ended up increasing ozone pollution, new research by Harvard University scientists suggests.

reaction forms chemical radicals, which drives reactions among oxides of nitrogen (NOx) and VOCs to produce ozone in the presence of sunlight.

The rapid reduction of PM2.5 dramatically altered the chemistry of the atmosphere, leaving more radicals available to produce ozone.

The research is published in the American journal Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences. It can be read online at https://www.pnas.org/content/early/2018/12/26/1812168116.

Source: Harvard University

SIMPLY PUT

Lessons from Bangladesh

As PM Hasina storms back to power, her country stands on the cusp of transformative social and economic change — anticipated by interventions by state and society, already seen in development indicators

HARISH DAMODARAN NEW DELHI, JANUARY 2

THE POPULAR portrayal of Bangladesh in India is frequently unflattering — patronising at best and contemptuous at worst.

More than anything else, what this discourse betrays is ignorance. For Bangladesh, once considered a basket case, is today a country that can impart to all its neighbours, India included, some excellent lessons in development. Consider:

At the time of independence in 1971, Bangladesh was one of the world's poorest countries — on par with Rwanda, Mali, Burundi, Somalia, Ethiopia and Upper Volta (as Burkina Faso was then called).

The country's poverty headcount ratio was 56.6% even in 1992, falling only gradually to 48.9% by 2000. But since then, this has declined dramatically to 24.3% in 2016.

More impressive is the improvement in social indicators.

In 1971, Bangladesh's total fertility rate — the number of children women bear on an average during their lifetime — was 6.94. That rate had, by 2016, dropped to 2.1, below the 2.33 for India (which actually had a lower rate of 5.52 in 1971).

The success in population control has come alongside a massive fall in infant and under-five years mortality rates, from 147.9 and 221.4 per thousand live births respectively in 1971, to 26.9 and 32.4 in 2017.

Parents are likely to produce fewer children when they are surer about their survival. Similarly, education makes women more aware of the need for family planning, apart from delaying the age of marriage.

The first is immunisation coverage, which for the four standard vaccines — BCG, DTP, oral polio and measles — was 1%-2% in Bangladesh until 1985.

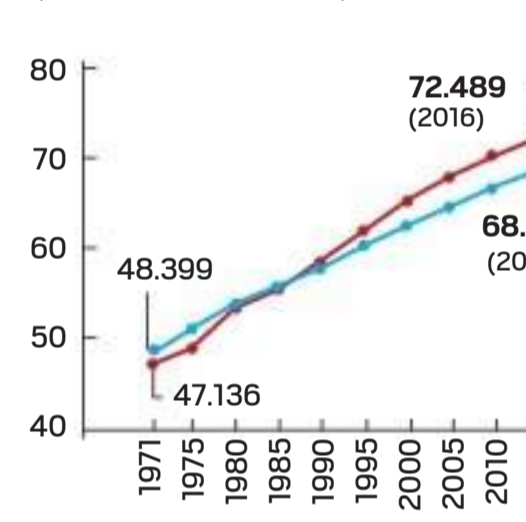
The second is open defecation, which Bangladesh practically eradicated by 2015. That was around the time India had launched the Swachh Bharat Mission, with roughly 40% of its population still practising what is a major source of waterborne diseases from cholera and dysentery to hepatitis.

The third is oral rehydration solution (ORS), a simple electrolyte blend of salt,

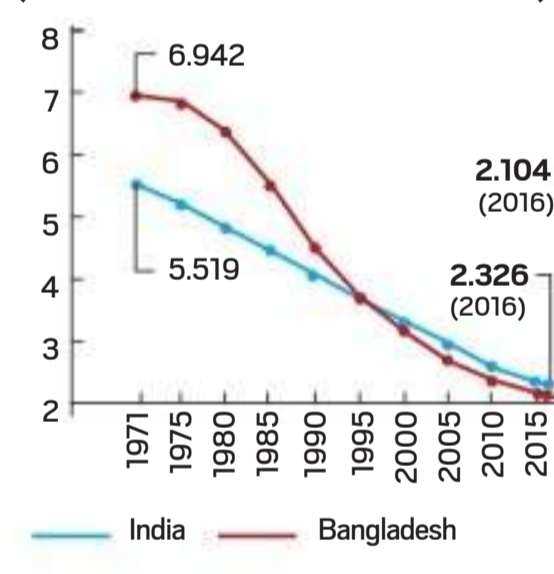


Women stand next to a mural displaying portraits of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and other Awami League candidates on election day in Dhaka, Sunday. Bangladesh has made dramatic strides in improving the health of its women and children. AP

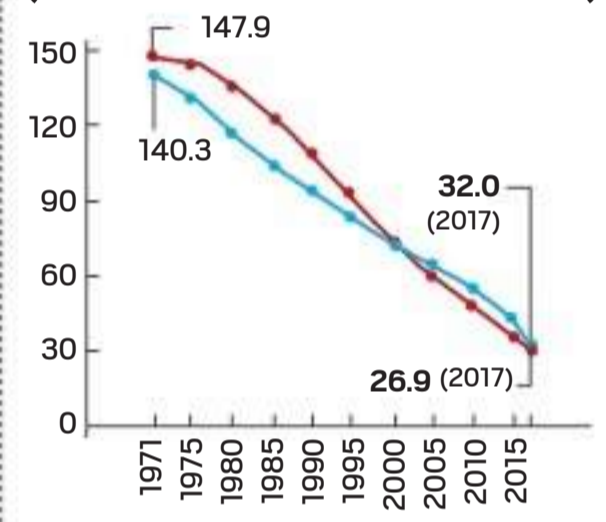
LIFE EXPECTANCY AT BIRTH (1971-2016, YEARS)



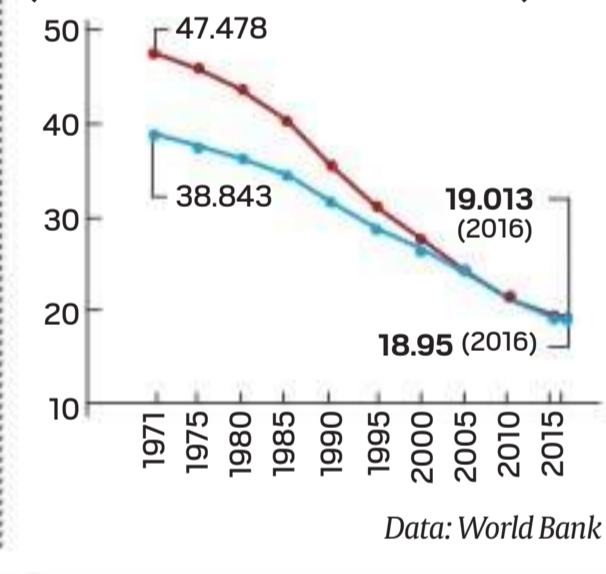
TOTAL FERTILITY RATE (1971-2016, BIRTHS PER WOMAN)



INFANT MORTALITY RATE (1971-2017, PER 1,000 LIVE BIRTHS)



CRUDE BIRTH RATE (1971-2016, PER 1,000 PEOPLE)



sugar and clean water that Bangladesh women were taught to make and administer to children suffering severe dehydration from diarrhoea.

The results of these interventions are also manifested in nutrition indicators relating to prevalence of stunting (low height-for-age), wasting (low weight-for-height), and underweight (low weight-for-age) amongst chil-

dren under 5. Between 1997 and 2017, these ratios for Bangladesh have dipped from 59.7%, 20.6% and 52.5% to 31%, 8%, and 22% respectively.

Behind these accomplishments are institutions that include not just the big NGOs such as Sir Fazle Hasan Abed's BRAC (which really pushed ORS on the ground), Social Marketing Company (which popularised contraception in Bangladesh), and Nobel Peace Laureate Prof Muhammad Yunus's Grameen Bank (which pioneered micro-

Government Engineering Department. The LGED, under its first chief engineer Quamrul Islam Siddique (a Verghese Kurien or E Sreedharan-like figure), was instrumental in building and managing Bangladesh's rural roads network of some 360,000 km, one of the densest in the world.

The Bangladesh development experience reveals two things about the country's policymaking.

First, clarity with regard to setting goals and a quiet pragmatism in meeting these. For the political leadership cutting across parties — Bangladesh's large-scale immunisation programme was, in fact, launched during the mid-eighties under the military dictatorship of H M Ershad — population control was an imperative for development.

The second is, of course, religion. The clerics could do nothing to stop family-planning efforts in Bangladesh, unlike in Pakistan, where the total fertility rate is still 3.5 and contraceptive prevalence among women of reproductive age is just 35.4%.

Cleaner air, Ganga, dam safety, Rules: What will matter in 2019, and why

Climate change-driven events like Kerala floods underline need for greater focus on environment

SOWMIYA ASHOK NEW DELHI, JANUARY 2

NOTWITHSTANDING EVENTS such as last year's floods in Kerala, which were at least partly due to the mismanagement of reservoirs, and the anti-Sterlite protest in Thoothukudi in which thousands came out in the streets to demand the shutting of a copper smelting plant due to pollution concerns, the environment is by and large not a factor in India's elections.

protect the environment in 2019 and beyond.

Global commitments

India is committed to cultivating a carbon sink of 2.5-3 billion tonnes by 2030 under the Paris Agreement, but is lagging far behind in its forestry targets.

Quest for cleaner air

India's severely polluted air is among its greatest challenges. The Centre has recently earmarked Rs 300 crore for a pan India clean air programme in 102 cities. It has targeted a reduction of air pollution levels by 20%



Kerala floods: extreme event caused by excessive rainfall over a few days. Archive



30% by 2024 using 2019 as base year. The initial focus is on putting in place monitoring facilities, identifying pollution sources and then determining health effects.

The government has repeatedly said there is "no conclusive data available in the country" to link death or disease "exclusively" to air pollution. It has also brushed aside esti-



them into sewage treatment plants. Some of the infrastructure commissioned under the Namami Gange Project is likely to be ready this year, the government estimates.

Threat from sea-rise

The Environment Ministry has said that creating a more robust blue economy targeted at populations in the coastal areas is priority for this year. But the Coastal Regulation Zone (CRZ) Notification 2018, approved by the Union Cabinet in the last week of December, has triggered criticism and concern from environmentalists who fear the new rules may, in fact, dilute protection for the country's 7,500-km coastline.

impact livelihoods of fishing communities.

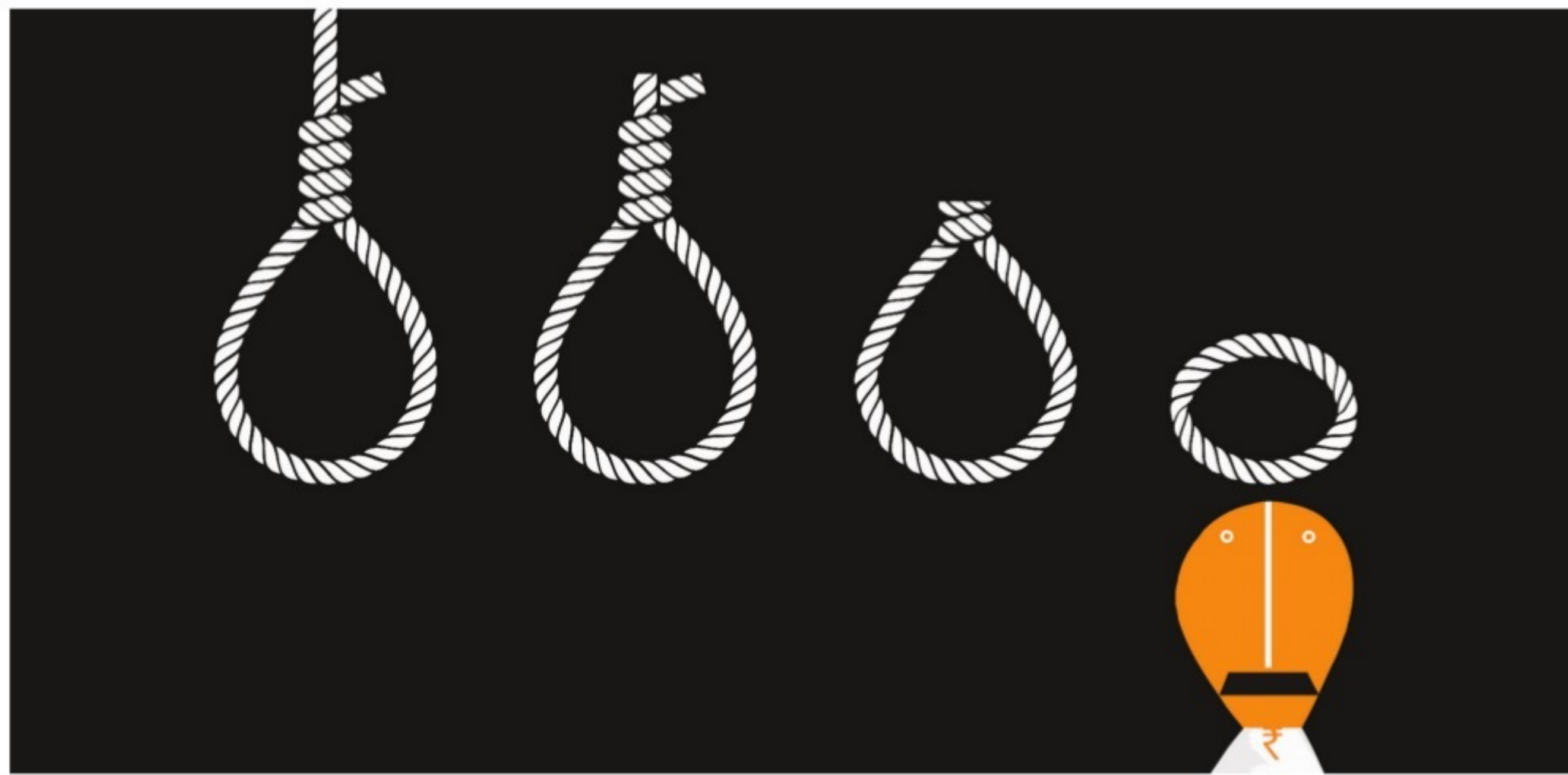
Safety of large dams

The Kerala disaster reopened the debate on the advantages and risks of big structures for water storage. The Central Water Commission said after the floods that "dams cannot provide any relief" should such extreme rainfall recur.

Demystify regulations

Environment Secretary C K Mishra told The Indian Express that one of the focus areas for the Ministry would be to demystify environmental regulations, which, he said, would help in their better implementation.

13 THE IDEAS PAGE



CR Sasikumar

Guilty till proved innocent

Burden of proof in POCSO cases lies on the accused. The introduction of death penalty will make it difficult for the weak and poor to overturn presumption of guilt



ARUNDHATI KATJU

THE UNION CABINET has approved amending the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act, 2012 (POCSO), to introduce the death penalty as a punishment for offences of penetrative sexual assault and aggravated penetrative sexual assault (Sections 4, 5 and 6). Cases of sexual assault by police officers, members of the armed forces, public servants, gang-penetrative sexual assault, and relatives are treated as "aggravated" cases, as are cases where the survivor is less than 12 years old.

The reason given for introducing the death penalty is that it will deter child sexual abuse. The government's press release does not cite any evidence to prove that the death penalty can achieve this goal, in the absence of better policing and shorter trials. POCSO is already a stringent act, carrying presumptions of guilt of the accused. Imposing the death penalty for offences that already carry such stringent presumptions violates the right to life guaranteed under the Constitution. Further, it is especially difficult for the poor or disadvantaged groups to overturn these presumptions. And, studies show that most death row prisoners are from poor, lower caste or religious minority communities.

Usually, in criminal cases, the burden of proof lies on the prosecution, and the guilt must be proved beyond reasonable doubt. Under POCSO, however, there is a presumption that a person who is prosecuted for an offence has actually committed the offence, the contrary is proved (Section 29). Instead of "innocent until proven guilty", the court assumes that the accused is guilty once

the prosecution lays the foundation of the case. The Act also presumes that the accused person had a sexual intent when touching the child (Section 30).

The 262nd Law Commission Report has recommended universal abolition of the death penalty, except in terror cases. (The report excluded terror cases not because it found any penal or national security justification for retaining the death penalty, but because there was a sharp division amongst law makers on this question.) Under Article 21 of the Constitution, a person can only be deprived of their life or liberty in accordance with the procedure established by law. This procedure must be just, fair and reasonable. Without quality legal representation, it is virtually impossible for an accused to overcome the presumption of guilt. Imposing death penalty in an offence with a presumption of guilt cannot be a just or fair procedure.

Rebutting these presumptions requires either that the accused bring witnesses and documents in their defence or conduct a stellar cross-examination. Both require high quality lawyering. In my experience defending indigent POCSO accused as a lawyer for the Delhi High Court Legal Services Committee, overcoming these statutory assumptions is difficult and expensive for the poor. For daily-wage earners, the legal process means loss of income as well. If the accused is in jail, their family will have to collect evidence and find witnesses. And neighbours or employers may not readily give evidence for migrant workers.

A 2016 report by the Death Penalty Project, National Law University, Delhi found that death row prisoners are overwhelmingly poor, lower caste, or religious minorities. Seventy six per cent of death row inmates were poor. The report found that 17.4 per cent of death row convicts were aged 18-21 years at the time of the incident, 18.5 per cent of this group had never attended school and 59.2 per cent had not completed their secondary education. Researchers identified "economic vulnerability" based upon occupation (including manual casual labourers, marginal and small

Introducing the death penalty in POCSO is likely to send more poor, lower caste and religious minority accused to death row. Sexual violence is a grave problem in India, and child sexual abuse has been described as an epidemic. Introducing the death penalty may grab headlines, but it is not the solution.

cultivators, low paying public and salaried employment, small own account enterprises, students, unemployed, religious occupations, salaried public and private employment) and landholding (medium and large cultivators). Based on this criterion, 74.1 per cent of death row prisoners were found to be economically vulnerable.

Economic vulnerability impacted the experience of the prisoner during the investigation and trial. About half of the sample of 383 prisoners spoke about lack of access to lawyers. Of these, 97 per cent (185 prisoners) did not have access to a lawyer during interrogation. Eighty per cent of those who did not have access to a lawyer were economically vulnerable. One hundred and fifty five persons spoke of their experience of custodial violence, and 128 of being tortured in police custody.

Seventy six per cent of death row prisoners were from backward classes and religious minorities. Although the report noted that its "purpose was not to suggest any causal connection or direct discrimination", it suggested that the "disparate impact of the death penalty on marginalised and vulnerable groups must find a prominent place in the conversation on the death penalty". At the national level, 24.5 per cent of those on death row were from Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes with Maharashtra, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Bihar, Jharkhand and Delhi being above the national average. The report also found that as cases travelled up the court hierarchy, the proportion of general category prisoners fell, and the proportion of Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe prisoners increased.

Introducing the death penalty in POCSO is likely to send more poor, lower caste and religious minority accused to death row. Sexual violence is a grave problem in India, and child sexual abuse has been described as an epidemic. Introducing the death penalty may grab headlines, but it is not the solution.

The writer is a lawyer practising in New Delhi

WHAT THE OTHERS SAY

"In the face of sudden escalation of China-US trade conflict throughout 2018, Beijing chose neither a concession nor a confrontation."

— GLOBAL TIMES, CHINA

A coal commission for India

As it transitions to renewable energy, the country needs to articulate a credible economic future for the coal belt



ROHIT CHANDRA

IN GERMANY TODAY, there is an existential tug-of-war between the declining remains of a historic, deep-rooted and culturally significant coal industry and the country's "coal commission," (formally known as the Committee on Growth, Structural Change and Employment), which is slowly but surely setting targets for the phase-out of coal-based power generation from the country's energy mix. The commission is made up of 28 members with voting rights, which includes trade union leaders, industry associations, academics, and regional representatives. This commission is a political settlement mechanism which will determine how and when coal's phase-out will occur while preventing massive structural unemployment.

Why is this interesting for India? India is at the early stages of a major energy transition. After a few years of renewable energy (RE) deployment, supplemented by unprecedented declines in RE prices, the consensus around RE seems to be clear: Within a few decades, RE will become an increasing part of India's energy mix. However, like in Germany, the how and when questions loom large. India's thermal coal base, which still provides over 60 per cent of the country's overall generation, is still growing (albeit more slowly). More importantly, roughly 15-20 million people in the coal belt are dependent on the coal industry, either directly or indirectly, for their livelihood. The comparative geography of India's wind and solar resources versus coal makes one thing abundantly clear: RE jobs will not be coming to the coal belt in large numbers. Then what is the transition strategy for the coal belt? This will be the defining question for these regions, particularly in eastern India.

At various points in recent history, central government committees have been set up to look into mining and energy industries from beyond the traditional silos of line ministries. In the early 1970s, the Fuel Policy Committee under Sukhomoy Chakrabarty made influential recommendations about the direction of Indian energy policy after the oil price shocks, which rocked the global economy. In the 1990s, the Chari Committee made prescient recommendations about opening up India's coal industry to private involvement. More recently, in the 2000s, the Hoda Committee made sweeping recommendations about changes needed in India's mineral exploration environment to encourage private mining companies. More than a decade later, these ideas are slowly being implemented. And finally, the Integrated Energy Policy of 2006 articulated India's energy security priorities while laying out a roadmap for phasing out capital subsidies and providing early support to RE.

The government should consider putting together such a committee to consider the future of India's coal industry, and the

PSUs engaged in these industries. While companies like Coal India face no immediate threat to either coal demand or their market power, in a multi-decadal timeframe both these concerns will become real.

As the previous Economic Survey has shown, the divergence in economic performance and incomes between India's states has intensified over the last decade, and public spending and investment have become increasingly necessary in poorer states to keep them afloat. Not surprisingly, many coal-bearing states are also in the bottom third by income per capita (Jharkhand, MP, Odisha, Chhattisgarh and West Bengal in ascending order). But one of the big benefits of public investments is that they can be guided. This is already visible from the way the current government has been taking financial surpluses from both the NTPC and Coal India to invest in solar power, fertiliser plants, and other areas far from the core business areas of these companies.

In fact, for all the criticisms of the public sector, one of its greatest achievements is that PSUs have continued to operate in eastern India for decades, despite the political complexities, adverse business environment, and infrastructural constraints that accompany the region. While large private investment has largely evaded the coal belt, PSUs like Coal India have built up considerable social and political capital in these regions which allow them to conduct business. Can this social and political capital be used to pivot towards other activities? Can companies like Coal India become diversified national champions as part of a new industrial policy for the coal belt? Can Indian coal be used for non-combustion purposes and what technologies would be necessary for such a transition? These are the kinds of questions an Indian "coal commission" should consider.

An interesting experiment with coal has been the Dankuni Coal Complex outside Calcutta, which was created in 1974 by the recommendation of the Fuel Policy Committee to substitute away from fuel oil consumption after the global oil shocks in the early 1970s. The goal of the plant was to produce piped gas for Calcutta, and various smokeless fuels and other chemical products derived from coal. While Dankuni's financial performance and efficacy has been variable, it is exactly the kind of forward-looking pilot project which should be studied and updated.

Ultimately, an Indian "coal commission" needs to articulate a credible economic future for the coal belt and the companies that exist there. If the recent electoral outcomes in MP and Chhattisgarh are any indication, the social contract around coal in those states is simply inadequate. And as the latest COP in Katowice (Poland's coal capital) delivers another disappointing outcome, it is clear that international financing for such projects is an unrealistic expectation. Instead, if the Indian state can engage in some good old long-term planning it can anticipate and prevent the large-scale economic distress which will be experienced in eastern India with the decline of the coal industry.

Chandra is a political scientist and economic historian who studies the Indian coal and power sectors



SANJAY NAGRAL

Beyond temporary relief

Challenge for Ayushman Bharat will be to spur systemic change in healthcare

BHARAT SOLANKI, WHO turned 20 this year, lives in a slum along the eastern side of the rail tracks in Mumbai's suburb of Bandra. He crosses everyday to the west of Bandra to work as an apprentice mechanic in a garage.

Last year, around the time Mumbai was in the grip of the Ganesh festival, Bharat started experiencing abdominal pain and weight loss. When several courses of tablets from obliging chemists did not help, he visited a local doctor. The doctor gave painkiller injections, which would reduce the pain temporarily. Later, when I got a chance to study his case papers, it was apparent that over two months Bharat had visited several doctors. This included multiple private clinics and also the public hospital in Bandra where I head the surgery department. He had been treated with symptomatic medicines and his pleas about the lack of response were ignored.

One night in October, Bharat woke up with excruciating pain and vomiting. His family rushed him to a nearby private hospital where after an X-ray, they were informed that his intestine had ruptured and he would need urgent life saving surgery. And that the treatment could cost up to Rs 5 lakh and that they would not operate unless a deposit of a lakh of rupees was paid. The family ran around pleading for help. They requested the hospital to give them time to get the money but this was turned down. Eventually, Bharat was brought to our hospitals' casualty. He was op-

erated within a few hours. His belly was full of foul intestinal contents and there were two holes in his intestine. The abdomen was riddled with small white nodules suggesting tuberculosis. My colleagues tried to salvage the situation. However, just as we thought that the worst was over, we noticed bowel contents seeping out of his surgical wound. One of the devastating effects of TB and malnutrition is on the body's ability to heal — one of the stitched holes in the bowel had opened out. Bharat needed multi-pronged care for what was now an intestinal fistula. This is a complication that puts huge demands on resources, which include very costly intravenous nutrition support. In India, this often means death for the poor.

Fortunately, Bharat had some things on his side — his youth, a treatable disease and committed family members. He also qualified for the Mahatma Jyoti Ba Phule Jan Arogya Yojana (previously the Rajiv Gandhi Jeevandayee Arogya Yojana), Maharashtra's state-sponsored health insurance scheme. This enabled us to procure a specialised apparatus, which sucked out intestinal contents from the wound, costly antibiotics, intravenous TB drugs and nutrition solutions. Three months later, the hole slowly shrunk and finally closed. After three long months in hospital, Bharat was discharged.

Over the last five years, our department has treated a large number of patients with

complex surgical problems. My colleagues would tell you that the scheme benefits many of these patients. Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Ayushman Bharat National Health Protection scheme is a grander pan national version of the scheme that helped Bharat.

Healthcare in India has traditionally relied on "schemes", which have short-term purchase and enormous emotive impact. However, Ayushman Bharat has shifted the discourse from less emotive but vital areas like budget, infrastructure and system change to the simpler terrain of relief and philanthropy. Like in mass disasters, it's easier to offer interim relief rather than fixing complex systems. The tertiary care component of Ayushman Bharat is essentially an act of interim relief for major illnesses.

Last week, when I reviewed Bharat, he was looking forward to resuming his work. The kind of questions that troubled me were not on his mind. Why did his neighbourhood doctor give him pain injections when he had TB brewing inside his belly? Why was the diagnosis delayed by months? Why did the private hospital demand such a large sum of money in an emergency? Why is it that a public hospital, which in any case is duty-bound to provide care for all citizens, needs a "scheme" to help procure essential drugs? And what happens to the many poor who don't qualify under the scheme for lack of appropriate papers? For individuals like Bharat

who have been at the receiving end of a healthcare system, the bar of expectation has been set so low that what the system had done for him during the hospitalisation could have only evoked thankfulness.

As we move into a new year, I have contradictory feelings about what Ayushman Bharat's potential. There is the hope that it will help rescue many of those who are currently caught in the tragic pincer of an inadequate public system and an unaffordable private system. But there is also the apprehension about what the scheme will do to long-term policy. If it reaps electoral benefit, it could strengthen the narrow "scheme"-centred narrative that has distracted from fundamental change. Or it could lead to a quantum jump in people's expectations from the state and raise the bar on competitive politics. As a response to Ayushman Bharat, Rahul Gandhi was recently quoted as saying that he would implement a scheme like Britain's National Health Scheme if voted to power. Strange as it sounds coming from a party that allowed a free run for the market in health care under its watch, it's a leap of imagination. If Ayushman Bharat can feed into solid ideas like publicly-funded universal healthcare we may then be onto something transformative.

Nagral is a surgeon practising in Mumbai and publisher, Indian Journal of Medical Ethics

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

HASINA'S TASK

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'Burden of victory' (IE, January 2). Sheikh Hasina's Awami League has swept back to office in Bangladesh. She must now continue with her liberal economic approach, which paid rich electoral dividends. At the same time, the seasoned politician would do well to be liberal with her opponents too. Muzzling opposition has the real fear of democracy becoming farcical and degenerating into authoritarianism.

Vijai Pant, Hemptur

ABOUT DIGNITY

THIS REFERS TO the article, 'Stories beyond MeToo' (IE, January 1). When the writer asserts that there is nothing good in the MeToo campaign because it is being used by the women journalists to gain stardom, she forgets the fact that these women too are victims. They are raising questions about dignity and self-respect. Yes, women journalists can use this momentum to reach marginalised women but that does not mean that they should not speak for themselves.

Nirmal D Kapadia, Gandhinagar

CONSCIENTIOUS COP

THIS REFERS TO the report, 'IPS officer dies of suspected swine flu' (IE, December 30). The demise of an Indian Police Service (IPS) officer, K Madhukar

LETTER OF THE WEEK AWARD

To encourage quality reader intervention, The Indian Express offers the Letter of the Week award. The letter adjudged the best for the week is published every Saturday. Letters may be e-mailed to

editpage@expressindia.com or sent to The Indian Express, B-1/B, Sector 10, Noida-UP 201301.

Letter writers should mention their postal address and phone number.

THE WINNER RECEIVES SELECT EXPRESS PUBLICATIONS

Shetty, due to a severe infection of the lungs and kidney owing to swine flu is tragic. Shetty was widely credited for taking a series of illegal land encroachments in Chikkamagaluru, Karnataka. Shetty will be remembered for taking action against the corrupt officials, government employees and even top politicians.

Tushaar Anand, Patna