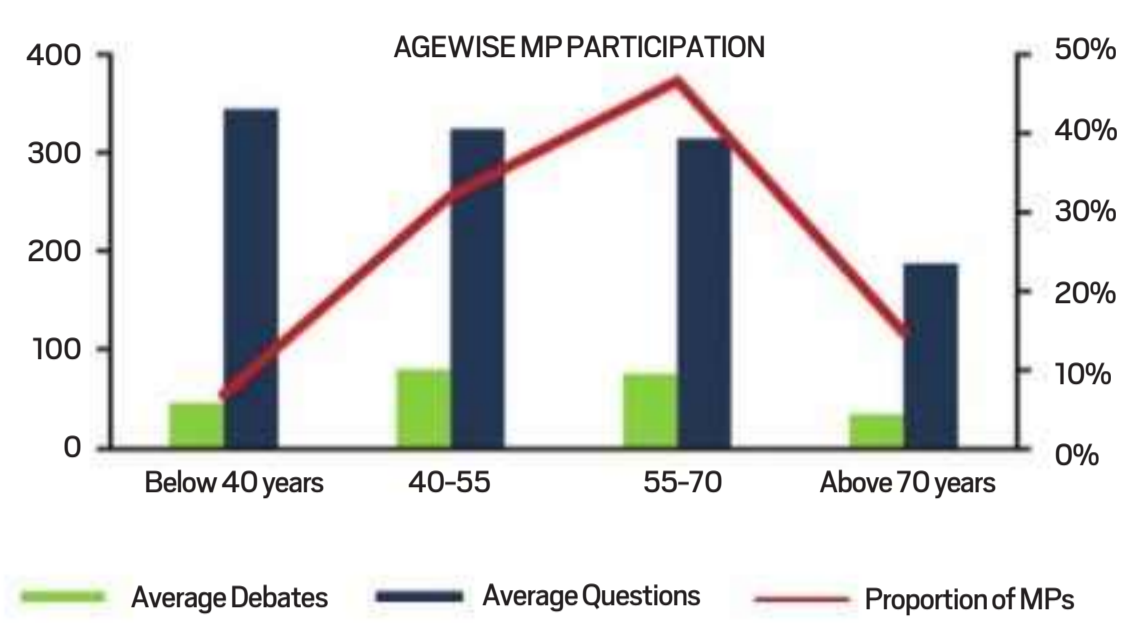


TELLING NUMBERS

Age, gender, party: How MPs performed in 16th Lok Sabha

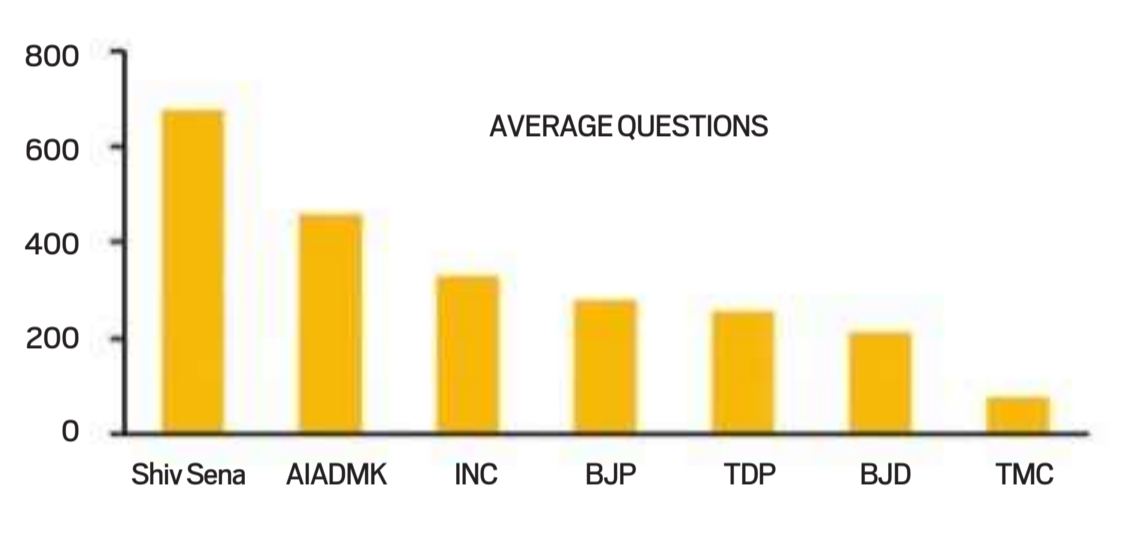
THE 16TH Lok Sabha held its Sessions between June 2014 and February 2019. Analysis by PRS Legislative Research found the following trends in the participation of MPs. PRS analysed only MPs who served for the entire 5 years as sitting (non-Minister) members. There are 425 such MPs.

YOUNG MPs QUESTIONED; 40-70 AGE GROUP DEBATED MOST



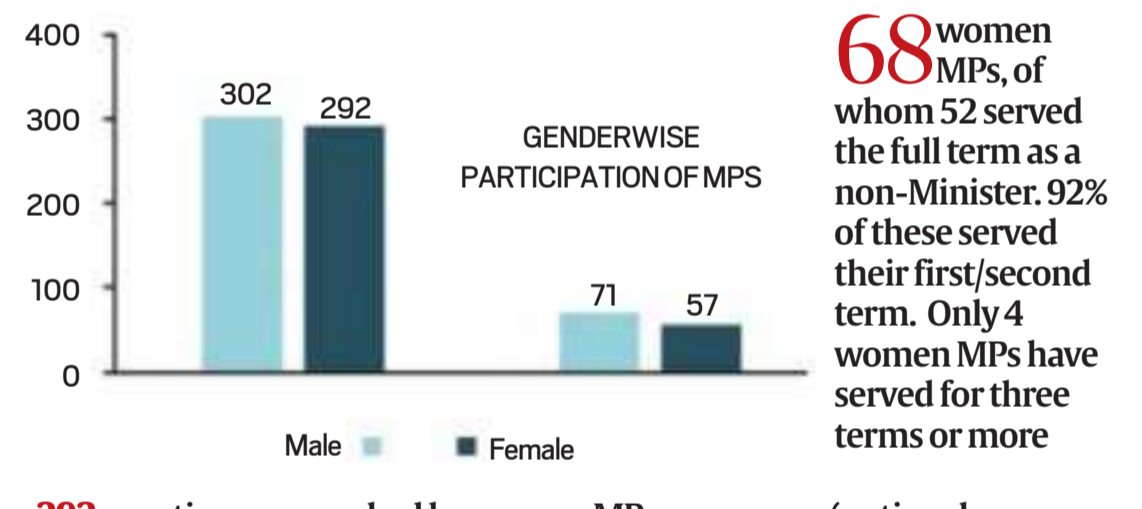
- MPs below the age of 40 years (7% of total) asked the highest number of questions (344)
- MPs under 40 participated in 45 debates on average (national avg 69)
- MPs in the age group 40-70 took part in more debates on average
- MPs above 70 asked the least questions on average, participated in fewer debates than others

SENA MPs MOST ACTIVE DURING QUESTION HOUR & DEBATES



- Among parties having more than 10 MPs, Shiv Sena, AIADMK and Congress MPs asked a higher number of questions than the national average of 301. The Shiv Sena, BJP, and Biju Janata Dal MPs participated in more debates more than the national average of 69.

WOMEN MPs TOOK PART IN 20% FEWER DEBATES



- 68 women MPs, of whom 52 served the full term as a non-Minister. 92% of these served their first/second term. Only 4 women MPs have served for three terms or more
- 292 questions were asked by women MPs on average (national average 301); they participated in 57 debates (national average 69)
- 20% lower participation in debates as compared to male MPs

All data PRS Legislative Research, as on Wednesday evening

SIMPLY PUT QUESTION & ANSWER

Rafale, according to CAG

CAG report tabled in Parliament compares UPA deal for 126 Rafale aircraft with NDA deal for 36 jets. How was this worked out? What else does the CAG report cover or not cover?

SUSHANT SINGH

On what aspects does the (Comptroller and Auditor General) CAG report assess the Rafale deal?

The CAG report has examined the €7.87-bn deal for 36 Rafale aircraft signed between India and France on September 23, 2016 to assess "if the objectives of Indo-French joint statement and the objectives set out for INT by DAC were achieved".

The joint statement issued by PM Narendra Modi and French President Francois Hollande on April 10, 2015 stated that: 36 Rafale jets would be acquired as quickly as possible; supply would be on better terms — in price, delivery and maintenance — than the procurement process of 126 Rafale aircraft when was then under way; delivery would be in a time-frame that would be compatible with the operational requirement of the IAF; and aircraft along with weapons and associated systems would be delivered in the same configurations as had been tested and approved by IAF and with a longer maintenance responsibility by France. This means that the CAG had to compare the deal for 36 Rafale with the price bid by Dassault for 126 Rafale jets in 2007, by converting it into an equivalent cost for 36 aircraft in 2016.

Did the CAG report also deal with offsets?

The question of 50% offsets in the deal, which has been at the centre of a major controversy due to involvement of Anil Ambani, has not been dealt by the CAG in this report. It will form part of a separate report by the CAG on offsets in all the deals.

How did the CAG compare the 2007 commercial offer with the 2016 contract?

The comparison between the two prices was done using an "aligned cost", which fixed the equivalent cost for 36 Rafale in flyaway condition, if the 2007 commercial offer for 126 Rafale was to be converted as per this bid. It was a complex process but the CAG used multiple reference points which included: cost of 18 flyaway aircraft in 2007 offer; cost of 126 aircraft with their warranty conditions, licence production, maintenance etc; cost of basic aircraft and of the "fully loaded" aircraft. This had to be "aligned" with the new scope, reduction in quantity, deletion of licence production and transfer-of-technology costs; options clause and bank guarantees in the 36 Rafale procurement.

This was not the first time that an aligned cost had been fixed because a similar exercise had been undertaken by the Indian Negotiating Team (INT) at the start of negotiations with France in May 2015. The CAG also reviewed IT's process for alignment of costs in these two offers and came to a figure for its "aligned cost" which was 1.23% lower than the INT's figure.

What are the figures for the two "aligned costs"?

The CAG's "aligned cost" was €8105.92 million. The INT's "aligned cost" was €8206.87 million. These compared favourably with the cost of the final deal which is €7878.94 million — aircraft package from Dassault Aviation for €7168.53 mil-



Congress president Rahul Gandhi and other party leaders protest over the Rafale deal Wednesday, near the Mahatma Gandhi statue on the Parliament complex. Anil Sharma

lion, and weapons package provided by MBDA France costs €710.41 million. Based on this comparison, the CAG has stated that the deal for 36 Rafale aircraft signed in 2016 is 2.86% cheaper than its "aligned cost".

The comparison between the two prices was done using an 'aligned cost', which fixed the equivalent cost for 36 Rafale (2016 deal) in flyaway condition, if the 2007 commercial offer for 126 Rafale was to be converted as per this bid. It was a complex process, and the CAG used multiple reference points

Is there a caveat to this figure of the deal being 2.86% cheaper?

Immediately after stating the savings, the report mentions the fact that the 2007 offer from Dassault had costs of bank guarantee embedded in its offer. But there was no such guarantee in the 2016 contract which was a "saving" that was not passed on to the Indian government. INT had assessed the cost of this bank guarantee to be €574 million, which negates the advantage claimed by the deal being 2.86% cheaper.

Where are the biggest savings in the deal, according to CAG?

The CAG report assessed the maximum savings, of 17.08%, were in the cost of India Specific Enhancements (ISE) but it is silent about the fact that the major component of this cost was for design and development of ISE. This was a fixed or non-recurring cost

which was earlier spread over 126 aircraft and in the 2016 contract, is spread over only 36 Rafale aircraft.

The report also mentions that, in view of the huge cost and the reduced number of aircraft being purchased, the INT proposed to reduce the number of ISE. But Dassault stated that since its price was a total package, Indian government would have to take up the matter with the French government. The IAF, with the approval of its chief, intimated the government even in August 2016 that the scope of ISE can be reduced by postponing six enhancements, which could be included if more Rafale aircraft were procured in the future. As it would go against the bilateral statement of April 2015 of having the aircraft with the same specifications as were requested in the 2007 tender.

What about the price of weapons?

The CAG report states that the IAF had asked for weapons for two squadrons in 2007 and it remained the same even in 2015, but there was addition and deletion of certain weapons. This led to a saving of 1.05% over the aligned price worked out by the CAG.

What about the figures of savings of 9%, 20% and 40% cited by various Union ministers?

The government did inform the CAG about its claim of getting a 9% lower price of the basic aircraft compared to the price offered in 2007. But the auditor said that there is no difference between the price offered for the basic Rafale aircraft in 2007, after applying the escalation factors, and the price negotiated in 2015. As far as the claims for 20% and 40% savings are concerned, they are based on government's claim that the contract for 36 Rafale had an escalation factor based on French rates of inflation, subject to a cap of 3.5% per annum. But the CAG said that any such savings would also have been available in the 2007 commercial offer.

Did the report refer to Eurofighter's offer of a 20% discount?

Yes, it did note that EADS, the manufacturer of Eurofighter which was the only other aircraft besides Rafale to qualify in the IAF trials, had made an unsolicited offer of 20% discount. To the government's claim that it negotiated the Inter-Governmental Agreement (IGA) for Rafale as it was the L-1 bidder in the case of MMRCA, the auditor noted that no such provision exists in the Defence Procurement Procedure. But that offer was an important input as a reference point to determine better price and better delivery as per the joint statement.

Has the aim of a faster delivery period been attained?

The CAG report states that while 36 Rafale aircraft in the 2007 offer would be available to the IAF in 72 months, the same would be available under the 2016 contract in 71 months, a saving of one month. It also noted that 18 of the 36 in 2007 offer would have been manufactured in India while all 36 in the 2016 contract are to come from France in flyaway condition. The government also told the CAG that the project was so far on schedule, after the INT had raised apprehensions that the backlog of pending deliveries with Dassault was already seven years and this would delay the delivery of 36 aircraft.

DECISION 2019
THE QUESTIONS THAT MATTER

MLAs in resorts, MLAs on tape: What game are Karnataka MLAs up to? BJP, Congress and JD(S): the insecurities of each party

Fresh signals suggest cracks in ruling alliance, which are quickly played down. Congress alleges attempts at poaching, BJP claims its leader has been wronged, JD(S) finds new relevance. With elections around the corner, what all this could mean for each party.

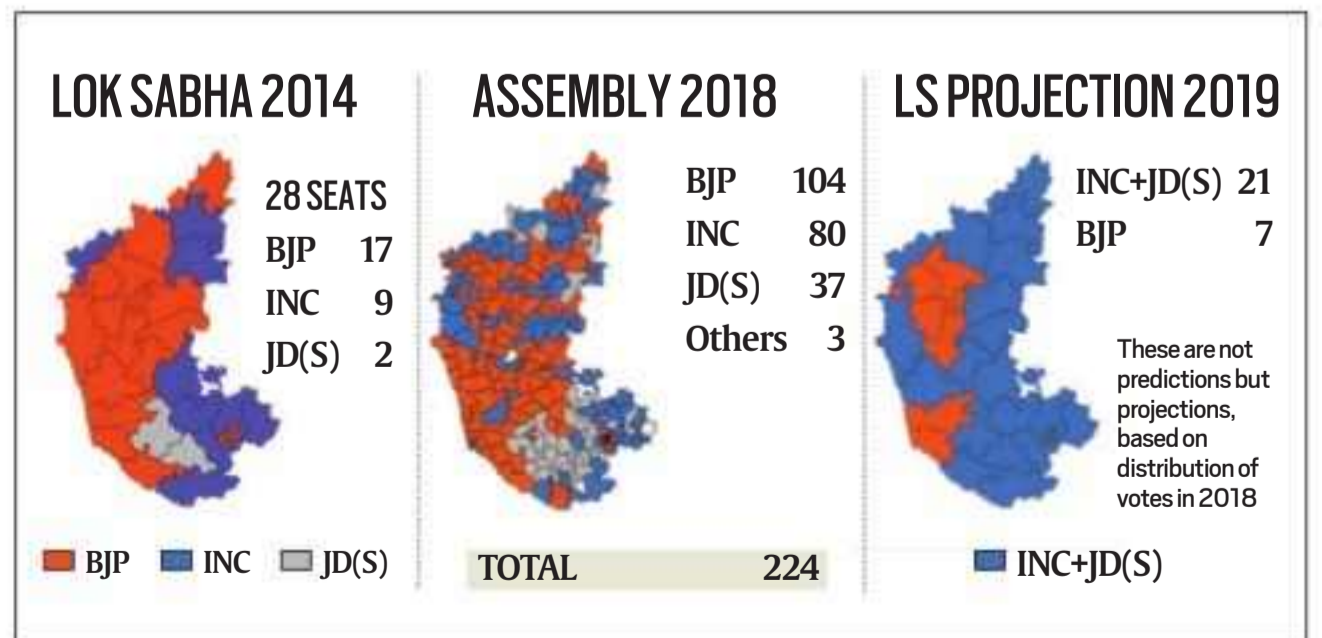
JOHNSONTA BENGALURU, FEBRUARY 13

SINCE THE Congress and JD(S) cobbled together a hurried coalition to keep the BJP out of power in Karnataka in May last year, the alliance has been tenuous. Then, legislators in the alliance were sequestered in resorts, and asked to record telephone conversations with BJP leaders allegedly attempting to make them switch sides. In the eight months that followed, little has changed. Late Tuesday, five rebel MLAs, one from the JD(S) and four from the Congress — all reportedly negotiating with the BJP in Mumbai — reappeared in Bengaluru. They reiterated their support to the coalition and the government dodged a crisis, again.

Dissidence had bubbled to the surface in August 2018, too, when reports emerged that 12 unhappy Congress MLAs were in talks to defect. Many, sources said, were supporters of former Congress chief minister Siddaramaiah. It was brought under control with promises of government positions.

In December 2018, more dissent emerged featuring six Congress MLAs — most were part of the rebellion in August. Last month, with four Congress legislators going uncommunicado before the budget session, the party moved its remaining 76 MLAs to a resort again. And instead of assurances as in May, they now turned to warnings of disqualification under the anti-defection law.

Any attempt to topple the government, incidentally, is far-fetched. This could happen if the BJP with 104 seats in the 224-member House can get 13 coalition MLAs to quit, reducing the government to a minority of 105 from 118. Or if two Independents support the BJP, they will reach 106. The ifs, however, outweigh any real chance of success, and all parties know it. With the Lok Sabha elections around the corner, a look at what all this means for each player and how it affects their poll prospects.



has used the audio recording to accuse the BJP of trying to destabilise the government. By constantly harping on dissatisfied MLAs, the BJP has projected to its core base — the Lingayat community in the north and the communally sensitive coastal districts — that the coalition government is on tenuous grounds, that coalitions are fragile and that governance suffers when coalitions are in power.

Yeddyurappa is also gathering sympathy among his vote base claiming that he was trapped in a sting operation by Kumaraswamy and that he wasn't able to form a government despite emerging the

single-largest party last year.

What Congress is up to

Some of the early reports of dissidence seemed part of internal jockeying for power among Congress leaders to gain leverage over Kumaraswamy. Also, Siddaramaiah has managed to emerge as the foremost coalition leader by nipping the early dissidence in the bud and has also managed to get most of his supporters, some allegedly involved in the rebellion, positions in the government despite JD(S) reticence. The Congress seemed to have positioned a

few permanent dissidents as part of a strategy for possibly exiting the alliance in the aftermath of the Lok Sabha polls. Incidentally, out of four recent dissidents, Chincholi MLA Umesh Jadhav is widely expected to exit the party and contest against Congress leader Mallikarjun Kharge in the Lok Sabha polls. A second Congress MLA, B Nagendra, who joined the party last year from the BJP, is angling for a Lok Sabha seat for his brother from Ballari, which the Congress denied in the 2018 bypoll.

How it could matter: The party has used the dissidence as a bargaining plank for the eventual seat-sharing deal with the JD(S). The Congress will also likely use the purported Yeddyurappa audio to project among its constituents and neutrals in the run-up to the polls that the BJP was indeed attempting to destabilise the government. The consolidation of BJP votes and the sympathy garnered by Yeddyurappa could also hurt the Congress in North Karnataka, where it will fight the BJP directly in the Lok Sabha polls.

What JD(S) is up to

The JD(S) has been largely defensive — preferring to control dissidence by acquiescing to Congress demands. The party has indirectly accused the Congress of making life difficult for chief minister Kumaraswamy and directly charged the BJP with meddling

with coalition MLAs. The purported Yeddyurappa audio has given the JD(S) an opportunity to go on the offensive since one of its MLAs is purportedly being lured to the BJP by Yeddyurappa. This has helped the party highlight the BJP's role in destabilising the coalition government.

How it could matter: The party is primarily restricted to southern Karnataka and its Vokkaliga vote bank. Dissidence in the Congress is expected to help Kumaraswamy consolidate this JD(S) vote base, given that they will fight in alliance with the Congress, its traditional rival in the region.

The JD(S) is also likely to be in a position to withstand Congress pressure in seat-sharing talks in the wake of the audio that shows that even JD(S) MLAs are being lured by the BJP. And with the party winning just two seats in the 2014 polls, the JD(S) needs to better this performance not just to stay relevant in national politics but to gain more bargaining power with the Congress in the coalition government.

NEXT
#15 What national and regional issues are at play in simultaneous Lok Sabha & Assembly polls?
PART 1: Odisha



FOUNDED BY

RAMNATH GOENKA

BECAUSE THE TRUTH INVOLVES US ALL

FIRE TRAP

India's cities will continue to be tinderboxes until regulations are enforced and the shortfall in fire services addressed

IN THE PAST 10 years or so, fire accidents have taken place with disquieting regularity in several Indian cities. In the latest such incident, 17 people lost their lives to a blaze that swept through a five-storey hotel in Delhi. The fire that broke out in the early hours of Tuesday on the building's first floor quickly traveled upwards and turned the hotel into a death trap — a majority of the victims died of suffocation. A little more than a year ago, in December 2017, 14 people were asphyxiated to death and more than 50 were injured when an inferno engulfed two restaurants in Mumbai's Kamala Mills area. In 2016, 19 critically ill patients were consumed by a fire in a private hospital in Bhubaneswar. In 2010, nine people lost their lives to a fire in a multi-storeyed commercial complex in Bengaluru. In all these tragedies, one point is stark — fire-preparedness is a matter of shockingly low priority in most parts of the country.

Part Four of the National Building Code, which runs into more than 80 pages, has detailed directions on how to prevent fire hazards. Many states, including Delhi, also have their own fire-safety rules. But the increasing number of accidents invites serious questions about the processes of certification. In most parts of the country, a fire-safety inspection is, at best, a once-in-a-few-years affair. This means that after obtaining a licence, owners of shops, restaurants and other private buildings make changes in the sanctioned layout plans that very often compromise the fire-preparedness of their premises. This seems to have happened at the Delhi hotel. By all accounts, renovations undertaken in the hotel, after it received a no-objection certificate from the fire department in 2017, came in the way of evacuating the trapped guests. Moreover, its emergency exit was blocked when the fire broke out. The fire escape of the Kamala Mills restaurant complex in Bombay was similarly rendered dysfunctional by construction in defiance of safety regulations. The Bengaluru tragedy, too, could have been averted had the corridors leading to staircases not been encroached upon and the fire exits had been kept open.

The FICCI-Pinkerton "India Risk Survey 2018", draws attention to the "under-equipped fire services in the country". A Union Ministry of Home Affairs-sponsored study in the same year came to the same conclusion. It found that of the 8,550 fire stations needed in the country, a little more than 2,000 are in place — a shortage of about 65 per cent. Urban areas alone require an additional 4,200 fire stations just to meet the minimum standard for response time, the study revealed. These areas will continue to be tinderboxes, waiting to explode, unless this shortfall is addressed and the country's urban authorities have robust mechanisms to enforce fire safety regulations.

IT TAKES ONE

Jignesh Mevani has been turned away from a campus in Gujarat. But its principal, his deputy stands up for a besieged ethos

THE IN-CHARGE PRINCIPAL and vice-principal of the noted HK Arts College in Ahmedabad, run by the Brahmachari Wadi Trust, have followed their conscience and resigned after the institution was prevented from hosting an alumnus and independent MLA, Jignesh Mevani, at an annual event. Allegedly, there was pressure from students linked to the BJP, forcing the hand of the trust. However, given the stature of the institution, whose mission statement includes, "To set high ethical standards and create a promising generation for society," more resilience could have been reasonably expected. The college has always had an open and liberal ethos, and had taken part in the Navnirman Andolan of 1973-74, an extraordinary public movement which had brought down the government of Chimanbhai Patel. In fact, the Yog Nagrik Samiti, which provided intellectual heft to the movement, was based in the college and included several teachers. The trust was inaugurated by Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan and the noted poet Dalpatram served as its first secretary. At present, the trustees include the influential architect, Balkrishna Doshi, the author and editor, Kumarpal Desai, and the novelist and poet, Raghuveer Chaudhari. A Jnanpith awardee, he has also taught at the college.

For organisations with such solidly independent credentials to cave in to a mere threat speaks of institutional failure. Even if a section of students had threatened disruption, the management could have invited them for a discussion, or called in the police to keep the peace. As vice-principal Mohanbhai Parmar has pointed out, the annual function of the college has been graced earlier by dignitaries like Narendra Modi, the former minister of state for women and child development, Maya Kodnani, and former Assembly speaker Ashok Bhatt. With this history, the refusal to host Mevani, who has been a thorn in the side of the BJP, amounts to muting opinion and betrays either bias or fear. Neither redounds to the credit of the organisations involved. Hemantkumar Shah, the principal who has bowed out, has gone to the extent of calling it the murder of democracy.

Institutions of higher education have been under attack in recent years, and some have stood firm. But the spine of an institution is the people it consists of. If they fail to stand up for their independence, the institution can only drift or founder. HK Arts College and the trust may wish to reconsider, and reclaim their heritage of free thought.

AD-BREAK ACADEMY

It is the camera and the editor that form the essence of cinema. This year's Oscars shouldn't need reminding of that fact

IN THE HISTORY of cinema," tweeted Alfonso Cuarón, who is nominated in the Best Director category at this year's Oscars for *Roma*, "masterpieces have existed without sound, a story, without actors and without music". But no film can be made without an editor and a cinematographer. To most cinephiles, this is hardly a revelation. Yet, the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences needed reminding that both the art and science of film-making is made possible more by those behind the camera, in editing rooms, at make-up chairs, hunched over a computer creating visual extravaganzas from binaries of zeroes and ones, than by the few faces that grab eyeballs and advertising dollars.

The Academy's decision to present the awards for cinematography, editing and two other categories during the commercial breaks at this year's awards has drawn the ire of film-makers in the US and beyond. Most people in that industry likely understand, like Cuarón, that it is in the interplay between the movements of the camera and amputations of the editing room floor that the essence of their art lies. The camera breathes, rises, goes high and low or fast and slow, it is mounted and dismounted, goes in close, over-the-shoulder and often, even takes God's view. The editor cuts, replaces, reuses — creatively — to hold the vision together. Film-makers talk in metaphors about their craft, and the most expressive ones aren't reserved for the stars, because it is the camera that provides perspective, the editor who makes it a narrative.

The Academy's justification for the removal of these categories from the Oscars 2019 broadcast is, unsurprisingly, commercial. The bloated length of the awards' show has been cited as one of the reasons for the declining audience. Perhaps the Academy is on its way to shunning the pretence that Hollywood can view cinema beyond the prism of profit. But some hypocrisies, if that's what honouring the essence of cinema has become, are worth maintaining. Sometimes hypocrisy is indeed the only homage vice can pay to virtue.



AVIJIT PATHAK

Education is essentially war. It is devoid of joy and humour, creative play and aesthetic celebration

Should the child be blamed for not having learnt the problems of algebra before coming into the world?

Rabindranath Tagore

AS THE BOARD examinations approach, and the dialectic of "success" and "failure" begins to haunt young learners and their anxiety-ridden parents, we realise once again that the pattern of education we have normalised is inherently pathological. The creation of a violent/hierarchical/schooled consciousness seems to be its latent function.

Even though an empathic look at the educational ideals of Rabindranath Tagore, Sri Aurobindo and J Krishnamurti would suggest that there is no dearth of critical and creative thinking on liberating pedagogy, we dislike experimentation and new possibilities, and make a superficial distinction between "pragmatism" and "idealism".

No wonder, we have become used to the routinisation of the practice of glorifying the "success stories" of the "toppers", and, at the same time, inviting the psychiatrists on television channels to reflect on the "suicide narratives" of those who could not bear the stigma of "failure". And meanwhile, everything would function as usual — the practice of "black education" would flourish in coaching centres, the publishers of "guide books" would make a lot of money, and school principals heavily burdened with the "ranking" of their schools would alert insecure parents of "problematic" children that in the age of inflated "cut off points" for admission in "branded" colleges, the future is bleak without 99 per cent in English, or 100 per cent in Physics.

Why is it so? There are three reasons I would emphasise. First, here is a system that closes the mind of the young learner, and abhors the desirability of making meaningful choices relating to academic quest and vocation. How are choices possible if schools —

While the "successful warriors" join the IITs and colleges like LSR, Presidency and Stephen's, those who are not so lucky — or, deprived of the kind of cultural capital needed to survive — would be compelled to realise that it is painful to be young, wounded and stigmatised. No, there is no peace in this system, even if schools hire counsellors, invite motivational speakers, and ask children to read self-help books in their 'relaxed' times.

possibly, because of the age of techno-science and commerce that we live in — have already hierarchised knowledge traditions: Science or economics for the "intelligent" ones, and humanities for the "leftovers"?

Or does the child ever get the space to contemplate on her own inclinations and aptitudes at a time when peer pressure negates self-reflection and generates a crowd mentality, or when struggling parents — guided by the longing for upward social mobility — have already decided that she has to pass through the most travelled "Aakash/Fitjee/IIT" highway, and all other paths are "risky" and "impractical", particularly in a society like ours traumatised by an acute sense of scarcity? Moreover, we have promoted a strange classification of academic disciplines. It is impossible for one to opt for, say, Physics, History and Music. It is taken for granted that if you have interest in literature, you cannot be equally inclined towards statistics. In other words, we decide the fate of our children so early. Not surprisingly, then, schooling prepares the ground for an alienated existence.

Second, here is a system obsessed with the quantification of knowledge and evaluation. With the burden of information, examinations as ceremonies of power, and a reckless process of measuring even one's "happiness" and "moral quotient", schools have robbed the practice of education of the ecstasy of social awakening, scientific reasoning and poetic imagination. A careful look at weekly tests, classroom transactions and summer projects would suggest that the system asks a young child to become what Prime Minister Narendra Modi (in his role as an instantaneous "educationist") loves to celebrate as an "exam-warrior".

Be a strategist; acquire the technique of memorising the bullet points; and reduce everything — be it a poem by Kamala Das, a narrative on Partition and "the challenges be-

fore the newly independent nation", or a trigonometric equation — into a typical CBSE puzzle to be solved for securing good marks. It is essentially war. It is devoid of joy and humour, and creative play and aesthetic celebration. While the "successful warriors" join the IITs and colleges like LSR, Presidency and Stephen's, those who are not so lucky — or, deprived of the kind of cultural capital needed to survive — would be compelled to realise that it is painful to be young, wounded and stigmatised. No, there is no peace in this system, even if schools hire counsellors, invite motivational speakers, and ask children to read self-help books in their "relaxed" times.

And third, as the lifeworld gets increasingly colonised by the market, "success" is equated with a purely instrumental orientation to life, and the virtues of the doctrine of the "survival of the fittest" are celebrated with all sorts of media simulations. Education becomes merely a "performance" — a packaged good for sale. A teacher becomes merely a "subject expert" or a "skill-provider". There is no communion that Martin Buber longed for; there is no sunset that Jidu Krishnamurti wanted children to look at; and there is no union of the "physical, vital, mental and psychic" that Sri Aurobindo imagined. What prevails is only a standardised scale of measurement intoxicated with the urge to eliminate innumerable young minds and throw them into the dustbin of a "meritocratic" universe. And our exam-centric education sanctifies it.

Well, children, even though I convey my best wishes for your board exams, I have no hesitation in saying that as adults, teachers and policy-makers we have betrayed you. Like TS Eliot, I too would admit that we have lost knowledge in information, and wisdom in knowledge.

The writer is professor of sociology at JNU



APOORVANAND

A ROTTEN COMPROMISE

Impasse in Babri masjid case is better than ceding ground to a radical evil

RAJMOHAN GANDHI WISHES us to rebuild India, return it to some civility, and restore Hindu-Muslim relations. And he feels that unless the Ram temple issue is resolved, we cannot achieve this ('A new temple, a new mosque', IE, February 6).

Like a festering wound, it has not let the nation be at peace for decades. He also treats it like a dispute, which has two competing parties and suggests that under the direction of the Supreme Court, the two can strike a compromise. The Hindu desire to see a magnificent Ram temple at the very site of the Babri masjid should be recognised by the Muslim side and it should cede ground for that. The Hindu side needs to acknowledge the "error" of demolition of the mosque and allow a masjid to come up "not too close" and yet "not too far" from the site.

Rajmohan Gandhi is not wrong when he says that for peace, some negotiation is required. We must compromise for peace, even if it means giving up justice to an extent. Should the Muslim side be so obstinate as to fail to admit a Hindu desire for a Ram temple at his birth place? Would the Hindus not be sagacious enough to allow a masjid at a place not far from the newly-constructed temple? But the question is: Who represents the Hindu side — is it the Nirmohi Akhara or the Hindu Mahasabha? Or, is it the Vishwa Hindu Parishad, RSS and the BJP?

The years following the demolition of the Babri masjid have made it clear that the driving force behind the Ram Janmabhoomi campaign was political, couched in the language of the holy. It was admitted by the leader of the campaign, Lal Krishna Advani himself, that it was a political movement. So, it should be

clear that it is not a Hindu desire but a political design using the Hindu as a cover.

Also, the symbolism behind the act of the demolition of the mosque cannot be missed. It was, essentially, an act of war against Muslims in which the Hindu might prevailed. The conceit and treachery of the act was justified by the Hindu maxim of achieving your objective: "Sama Dama Danda Bheda". But even before that, the act of making a living mosque dead had many conspirators including the first chief minister of Uttar Pradesh, Govind Ballabh Pant. He was emboldened by the support from Sardar Patel who thwarted all moves by Jawaharlal Nehru to get the mosque restored to its original use by removing the idols placed in the mosque surreptitiously.

The story of Babri masjid, therefore, has to be a narrative comprising a series of compromises: By the state with the marauders, in the name of peace. It begins with the smuggling of the idols into the mosque in 1949 and continues till the permission of the Supreme Court was acquired for the gathering of lakhs of Hindus at the site of the mosque to do a symbolic kar seva.

A compromise for peace is justified. But, as Avishai Margalit warns us in his book, *On Compromise and Rotten Compromises*, we need to avoid rotten political compromises at all costs. We can easily see that the compromises done by the state have not led to any lasting peace, nor eased the pain caused to Muslims. The biggest rotten compromise involved the executive and the courts, which reduced the Muslims to helpless onlookers and targets of cruelty and humiliation. We also know that without 1992, 2002 would not

have happened. By then, all atrocities against Muslims were treated as part of the protracted war on behalf of Ram against those who had forced him out of his birthplace.

The continuous erasure of all "Muslim" influences, seen in the changing of names of Aurangzeb Road, Mughal Sarai and Allahabad is only a continuation of that war. It would be naïve to treat the Ram temple issue in isolation of what had happened before it and what continues after that.

A good compromise is one in which the stronger side recognises the weaker and gives a concession. A rotten compromise is one which makes subjugation, humiliation and cruelty towards the conceding side a permanent fixture.

To give in to the demand of a temple at that very spot would be a rotten compromise. Not only because of the rotten nature of its content, but also because it would mean compromising with a radical evil. Muslims recognise the radical nature of this evil which even well-intentioned souls like Rajmohan Gandhi tend to ignore, even if for the sake of peace.

The forces of this radical evil have made their intentions clear repeatedly — that the Ram temple is only a step towards establishing a majoritarian regime in India. To enter into an agreement with them would be to compromise the ethical foundations of what we know as the idea of India as a secular republic.

A stand-off or an impasse is better than this desperate rotten compromise, because that would mean that the evil can still be resisted.

The writer teaches Hindi at Delhi University



FEBRUARY 14, 1979, FORTY YEARS AGO

RIGHTING HISTORY
THE QUESTION OF how books on Indian history should be written — discussed at the just concluded seminar held by the Indian History and Culture Society in the capital — has divided Indian historians into two sharply defined groups. One group wants only the established facts to be mentioned in the books, the other would like even unestablished facts to be discussed and interpreted if necessary. The debate assumed considerable importance following the decision of the Central government in mid-1977 to have some controversial history books, written for school children, examined by experts. One of the books examined was *Ancient India* by RS Sharma.

FORCE TO BEGET FORCE
CHIEF MINISTER SHEIKH Abdullah today said in Jammu that he would not enter into a dialogue with the Jammu agitators, who had no "justifiable" demand, but would "meet force with force." Talking to newsmen after returning from his visits to Andhra, Bombay and Delhi, the Kashmir leader talked angrily for one hour and thirty minutes, and accused Dr Karan Singh, former Union Health Minister of "setting Jammu ablaze." The Sheikh dismissed the allegation of leaders of Jammu that there was imbalance in the development of the three regions. "I have known people here for fifty years. I know what they want. They want

Kashmir treated as they have been in the Maharaja's time."

COLONIAL TESTS
THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT has apologised for the virginity tests an Indian woman was compelled to undergo at Heathrow airport recently and has given an assurance that no such tests will be carried out in future. The British Deputy High Commissioner, M K Evans, called at the Ministry of External Affairs in New Delhi today to hand to the acting Foreign Secretary, US Bajpai, a copy of a letter of apology to the Indian High Commissioner in London. Evans added his personal expression of regret.

15 THE IDEAS PAGE

The chief statistician replies

Government has high regard for National Statistical Commission. It is unfortunate its members quit



PRAVIN SRIVASTAVA

THIS IS IN response to the article, 'Because data is a public good' by P C Mohanan, former head of the National Statistical Commission (IE, February 12).

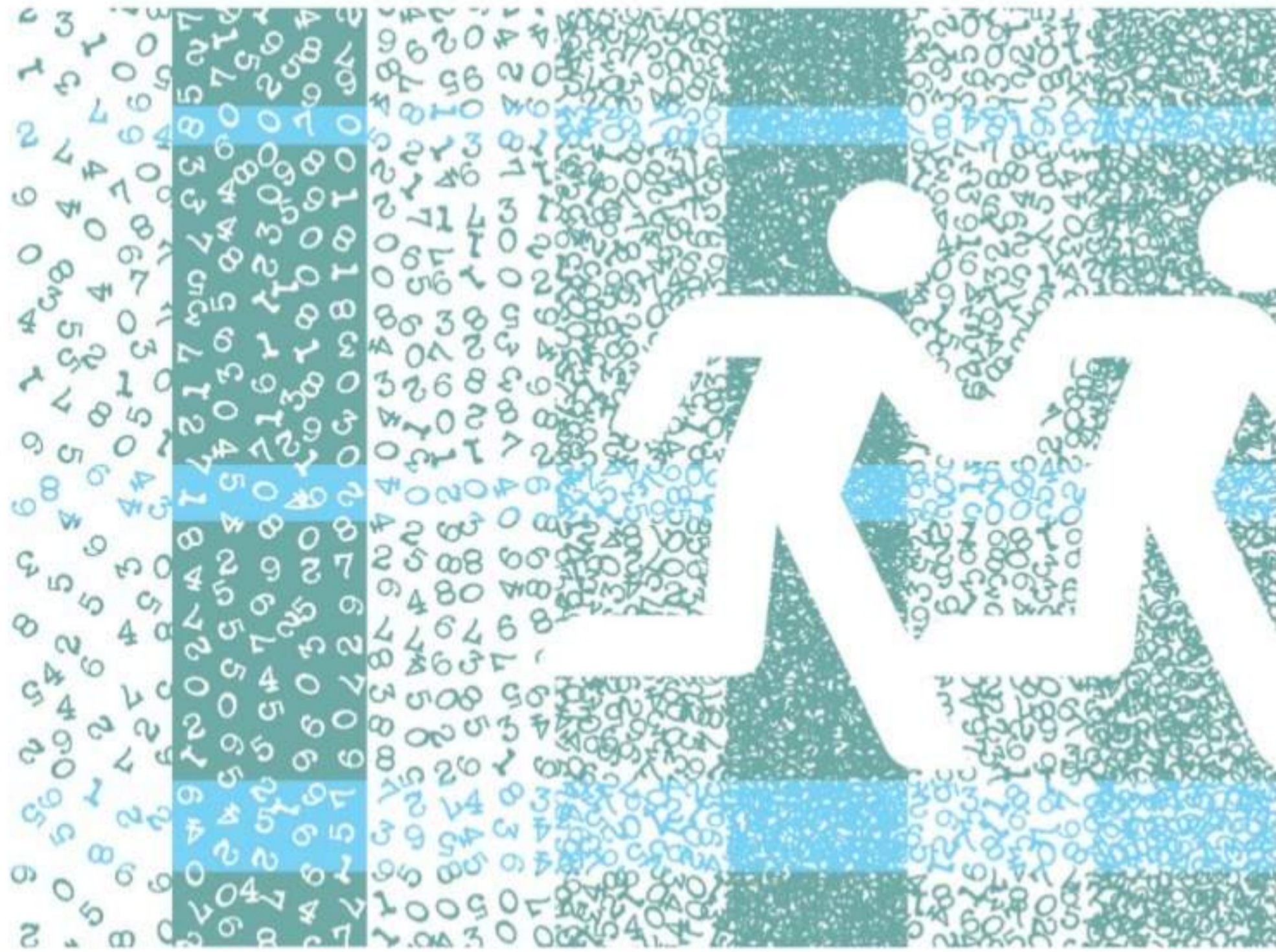
The United Nations General Assembly adopted the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics (FPOS) in January 2014. This adoption was the culmination of the efforts of international agencies and member countries to ensure and secure the autonomy and independence of their statistical systems to produce appropriate and reliable data that adhered to certain professional and scientific standards. In the Indian context, there have been a series of committees constituted in the past to improve the functioning of the national statistical system. The Government of India also adopted the UN FPOS in May 2016.

The importance of the statistical system became more prominent when the government constituted the National Statistical Commission under the chairpersonship of C Rangarajan, former governor of the RBI and the then governor of Andhra Pradesh, which submitted its detailed report in 2001. The Rangarajan Commission went into great detail on the data gaps and infrastructure constraints of the national statistical system both at the central and the state government level.

In pursuance of the recommendations, the government formally constituted the National Statistical Commission (NSC) in 2005 as a regular institution with a mandate to evolve policies, priorities and standards in statistical matters. The NSC comprises a chairman and five members along with one ex-officio member [CEO, NITI Aayog (erstwhile Planning Commission)] and the chief statistician and secretary, Ministry of Statistics & Programme Implementation (MoSPI) who also serves as secretary to the NSC. The chairman and members of the NSC are leading experts in their respective fields of statistics, economics, demography, etc. They are selected by a committee constituted by the government.

The NSC had been constituted through an executive decision of the government and to this extent, its decisions are recommendatory in nature. The issue of quorum is also a matter of concern. In the first address by the current chief statistician of India to the NSC after taking charge, the issue of a code of professional ethics was raised. The same is being drafted for use by various committees constituted by the NSC as well as the NSC itself, so that the independence and autonomy of the national statistical system is protected. The NSC has a much larger ambit and remit in terms of improving the national statistical system. The draft National Policy on Official Statistics was a step in this direction to strengthen various pillars of the national statistical system and is being finalised.

The NSC has been giving strategic directions to the national statistical system at the central and state level from time to time. The recommendations of the NSC have always been accorded the highest regard by the government and its valued advice has always been implemented in the true spirit



C R Sasikumar

of the recommendations. The national statistical system functions under the overall guidance and strategic directions of the NSC and works within the ambit of its given infrastructure and resources. Over a period of time, there has been an increasing demand on the statistical system for production of relevant and quality statistics through its publications, survey reports, and administrative sources. The ministry has been striving to accommodate these demands given the available resources. Looking at the gaps in various sectors, in 2017-18, the ministry had sought additional resources to undertake several new activities like the Economic Census of Establishments, Annual Survey of Services Sector Establishments, Annual Survey of Unincorporated Sector, National Data Warehouse on Official Statistics and so on. The ministry has also initiated processes for introducing new technological interventions in the data collection process as well as in bringing out its analytical reports.

Considering the fact that statistical data collected from the households and establishments require skilled and trained manpower, and since recruitment, training and deployment of manpower cannot be done overnight, the ministry had initiated an exercise for recruiting people on a contractual basis for undertaking the fieldwork of data collection. The contractual manpower was rigorously trained before being deployed in the field. In addition, for the first time, the NSS took up data collection through tablets under the Computer Aided Personal Interview (CAPI) interface. All these new interventions in the surveys required constant oversight of the various components of the data life cycle and finalisation of reports.

Now, when the ministry had embarked upon new activities with the full support and guidance of the NSC, it was rather unfortunate to learn that two of the remaining non-official members had resigned from their posts, making the Commission de-

funct. The members had met the CSI on January 23 to discuss several issues and had even fixed a meeting of the NSC for February 4. The ministry was thus surprised to learn that the members had submitted their resignations on January 28, for various reasons which could have been discussed in the already scheduled meeting of February 4. There are, in fact, various fora available in the official channel to raise any concerns. It is rather unfortunate that the members, instead of taking up the responsibility of working closely with the national statistical system to improve it, resigned and abstained from their responsibilities. In so far as the Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS) is concerned, it is a new survey undertaken by the ministry. Whenever new changes are incorporated in the system, it is important to analyse the process, results and comparability with similar initiatives either in the past or by other collateral data sources.

The NSS had also introduced several new interventions like the use of hand-held devices, rotational panel samples and changes in the criteria of selection of households. The draft report was discussed in detail at the meeting of the NSC on December 5. However, it was felt that the quarterly results may also be processed so that an idea about the results and other parameters could be ascertained. Strictly speaking, the PLFS survey design and the earlier Employment and Unemployment Survey, which were conducted along with the Household Consumption and Expenditure Survey, are not comparable in view of the methodological differences itself. The government has thus decided to refer the matter to the Standing Committee on Labour Force Statistics to examine and ascertain the impact of these changes holistically.

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The writer is secretary, Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation, and chief statistician to the Government of India

WHAT THE OTHERS SAY

"China has sought for years to assimilate the Muslim Uighur population into the majority Han Chinese, partially by flooding Xinjiang province with migrants from elsewhere." — THE WASHINGTON POST

Begging the question

Defining and counting beggars, vagrants and religious mendicants remains a conundrum



BIBEK DEBROY

AN UNSTARRED QUESTION on beggary was answered in the Lok Sabha on March 8, 2016, by the minister of state for social justice and empowerment. According to Census 2011, the total number of beggars and vagrants in India is 4,13,670 — 2,21,673 males and 1,91,997 females. State-wise, with an aggregate of 81,244, West Bengal leads by a considerable margin, followed by Uttar Pradesh. These numbers differ slightly from the figures given in the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment's 'Handbook on Social Welfare Statistics' (January 2016). The handbook has two sets of numbers from two separate sources — Census 2011 and SECC, 2011 (rural). From Census 2011, there are 3,72,217 beggars and vagrants in India, 1,97,725 males and 1,74,492 females.

What is a vagrant and why do we still use such a term? Several states have anti-beggary legislation — Andhra Pradesh, Assam, Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Goa, Gujarat, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Jammu & Kashmir, Jharkhand, Karnataka, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Punjab, Sikkim, Tamil Nadu, Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand, West Bengal and Delhi. There can be an entirely legitimate debate about the working and refinement of this anti-beggary legislation, but that's not the focus of this column. The word "vagrant" is a colonial legacy from the English poor laws, reflective of the belief that able-bodied poor must be made to compulsorily work and not laze around.

England had a Vagabonds and Beggars Act in 1494. This went through several versions and eventually became the Vagrants Act 1824. We still carry vestigial legacies of such notions in sections of the CrPC (Criminal Procedure Code). What is the difference between a vagrant and a beggar? A vagrant has no fixed abode and wanders around. Is a vagrant a beggar who roams around? Is a non-beggar who roams around a vagrant? By that definition, a religious mendicant is a vagrant. These are legal issues and can be only pinned down through a piece of legislation. In that list of state-specific legislation, all but two mention beggary, not vagrancy.

The two that mention vagrancy are the Bengal Vagrancy Act (1943) and Cochin Vagrancy Act (1945), applicable to some parts of Kerala. For West Bengal, "Vagrant means a person found asking for alms in any public place, or wandering about or remaining in any public place in such condition or manner as makes it likely that such person exists by asking for alms but does not include a person collecting money or asking for food or gifts for a prescribed purpose." Cochin has similar provisions. As I said, though the legislation may be directed against beggary, itinerant or stationary, it

seems to legally cover religious mendicants.

As everyone knows, a kumbh is under way in Prayagraj. When I visited the kumbh, I was told 1,00,000 sadhus had temporarily set up abode there. How does one know the number? I didn't get a satisfactory answer. I can understand some sanctity associated with the figure if the sadhu is a member of one of the recognised akhadas. But not every sadhu is a member of an akhada.

Broadening the question, how many sadhus/sannyasis are there in India? Broadening it even further, how many religious mendicants (irrespective of religion) are there? Typically, censuses should give answers. Indeed, pre-independence censuses did collect such figures. For example, in 1911, there were 9,79,293 fakirs, 8,14,365 yogis and 6,98,036 mendicants. Unless I have missed something, censuses today don't collect these numbers. Take the household Census 2011 schedule, which is focused on main workers and marginal workers, with few questions for non-workers. If I am a non-worker, I tick one of several options. I can say "beggar", or I can say "other". Since "other" isn't disaggregated further, I think the census should simply say "beggar" and not "beggar and vagrant".

To return to the question of religious mendicants, what happens? There is no household to be visited. How do I get numbers, if at all? There have been cases where courts have barred sanyasis from getting involved in property disputes. If you have become a sanyasi, you have severed all links with this world, including property rights. So runs the argument. At kumbh, my wife asked a Naga sanyasi about the watch he was wearing. That answer isn't important. More importantly, he unhappily complained that thanks to being the head of an akhada, he now had to open a bank account (for the akhada) and, therefore, get an Aadhaar number, against the principles of sanyasa.

Thus, sanyasis have started to get legal identities. Do they have census identities? The ministry's handbook also provides figures from SECC (rural). The heading isn't "beggars and vagrants". It is "households engaged in begging, charity and alms collection", which seems to be a broader category. The SECC question is also fairly broad. It asks about the main source of household income and has a possible response of begging/charity/alms collection. We are given a figure of 6,68,479 households in rural India. For rural India, Census 2011 gives a figure of 2,36,850 individuals. Though they belong to the same year, there are several reasons why one can't directly compare the census with the SECC. In any event, both use the household as a unit and religious mendicants are outside this unit.

Hence, I think we had better numbers for religious mendicants in 1911 than in 2011, or 2019. If you are asked for a figure, say 2.5 lakhs. That was roughly the figure in 1911. With a 2.5 lakh base, one lakh at the kumbh is plausible.

The writer is chairman, Economic Advisory Council to the PM. Views are personal

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

AUTOCRATIC DANGER

THIS REFERS TO the article, 'Because data is a public good' (IE, February 12). The resignations of the National Statistical Organisation chief, RBI governor and other heads of top institutions are a testimony to the autocratic manner in which the present government has been functioning. While the previous UPA government was chiefly accused of being corrupt, this government has breached the trust of people by providing false data and information repeatedly. It has bruised the democratic character of the country, which is much more dangerous than being corrupt.

Ravdeep Singh Hundal, Ferozpur

IRAN, A ROLE MODEL

THIS REFERS TO the article, 'The young are talking back' (IE, February 12). The writer appears to have a bias against the Islamic Republic of Iran. The youth of Iran is as interested in velayat-e-fiqh as the clergy. Iran is a role model for the Islamic world. In fact, the Arab spring was inspired by the Islamic Revolution. The writer seems to ignore the influence of Iran in West Asia. The manner in which Iran neutralised the Islamic State in Syria is an example of what it has achieved as a result of the Islamic Revolution.

Iftekhar Hussain, Jammu.

LEVERAGE MARKETS

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'Jack in the box' (IE, February 12). The Parliamentary Standing Committee on Information Technology is trying, in vain, to put the genie back in the bottle. The tide of technology is such that bans and restrictions are never truly enforced.

The writer is Minister of Water Resources, Federal Republic of Nigeria



SULEIMAN H ADAMU

Swachh Nigeria

Swachh Bharat Mission is an inspiring model for eradicating open defecation

NIGERIA IS A country of great people with an estimated population of 191 million as of 2018. Located in Sub-Saharan Africa, it is a large country with tremendous natural and human resources. However, Nigeria faces a critical challenge in its Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) sector. While it has made significant progress in national access to improved water supply from 40 per cent in 1990 to 69 per cent in 2015, there was a great decline in access to piped water on premises from 32 per cent in 1990 to 7 per cent in 2015 in urban areas. The national access to basic sanitation stands at a low level of 33 per cent, with an estimated 47 million persons practising open defecation, the second-highest globally.

During the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) era, the country made several efforts towards improving access to sanitation. These include the adoption of the Community-Led Total Sanitation (CLTS) approach to scale up sanitation in rural areas. National and sub-national specific roadmaps were also developed towards the close of the MDGs era for the elimination of open defecation in the country by 2025. The operationalisation of the roadmaps across the country was, however, slow and inconsistent. A new programme, Partnership for Expanded Water Supply, Sanitation and Hygiene (PE-WASH) was developed in 2016 to improve the situation and bring sector actors together. Nigeria and India share similarities, which

include a large population, decentralised government structure and WASH challenges. Both countries have been at the top of the global open defecation ladder. India's on-going Swachh Bharat Mission (SBM) has led to a reduction in the number of people practising open defecation and it is on its way to becoming Open Defecation Free by 2019. This has greatly challenged Nigeria as it is set to become the next global leader in practising open defecation once India meets her target.

Nigeria prides herself on a number of achievements and triumphs globally. But the trophy for open defecation is not one we are looking forward to having. The success of the SBM is an inspiring model for Nigeria and plans were already being made for a Nigeria mission to India when I received an invitation to the Mahatma Gandhi International Sanitation Conference (MGISC), in October 2018.

My participation at the MGISC was truly inspiring. It afforded an opportunity to interact with delegates from across the world and provided a platform for me to share Nigeria's modest effort at financing rural sanitation. Most importantly, I was able to get the real feel of SBM and how it has dramatically changed India's sanitation story within so short a time. I was awed and sold.

Since my assumption as Nigeria's Minister for Water Resources in 2015, I had wanted an initiative that would create a mass move-

ment, with every citizen effectively mobilised for action towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 6.1 and 6.2 on water and sanitation. While our ODF roadmap indicated rolling out a campaign at the national and sub-national level, a clear-cut strategy for carrying this out was not in place. My ministry, in collaboration with our development partners, has been in the process of developing this strategy. A special unit within the ministry was created for this purpose.

From the MGISC, I have come to the realisation that focusing on such a high priority programme in mission mode will make the campaign more effective and efficient. The Nigeria ODF campaign is now being remodelled after the SBM. Soon, a mission comprising officials at national and sub-national levels will be understudying their India colleagues during a week-long technical visit on how best to adapt SBM to the Nigerian context. I expect there will be more of such interactions.

Like India, Nigeria has been able to demonstrate a high-level political will for the WASH sector. In November 2018, President Muhammadu Buhari declared a state of emergency and launched a new National Action Plan for the sector. The plan has five components — governance, sustainability, sanitation, funding and financing and monitoring and evaluation. It proposes an 18-month emergency phase, five-year recovery

phase and 13-year revitalisation strategy for the sector. It also proposes the establishment of a National WASH Fund to incentivise reform and infrastructure revitalisation.

The SDGs for water and sanitation are quite ambitious compared to the MDGs. The cross-cutting nature of water and sanitation means that they directly and indirectly impact the achievement of the other SDGs. The huge population of India hitherto practising open defecation, which has been drastically reduced through the Swachh Bharat Mission, will contribute significantly to the attainment of SDG 6 globally.

SBM stands to inspire other countries, as it has done mine, and is a testimony to the global community that the SDG targets are achievable provided there is strong political resolve, the strategy is appropriate, resources are adequately deployed and the population is sufficiently mobilised.

Looking ahead, it is my hope that following India's example, Nigeria will not only be able to end the practice of open defecation among her populace, but will also become the next shining example to countries in the African region and across the world. It is my desire that the bilateral relationship between Nigeria and India will be strengthened as we collectively eradicate open defecation.

The writer is Minister of Water Resources, Federal Republic of Nigeria

cable on the internet. Social media companies like all multinationals — perhaps even more so — are unlikely to be bound by the laws and requests of national legislatures. What India must leverage with entities like Twitter, and more importantly Facebook and Google, is the vast size of its markets. This is the country's greatest asset, and gives it bargaining power. But such a negotiation also needs a mature political leadership that will genuinely keep the best interests of the public in mind, and make sure that platforms are neutral. That seems unlikely given that social media platforms are key to aggrandising the image of particular leaders, as well as political campaigns.

Bishwadeep Chatterjee, via email