

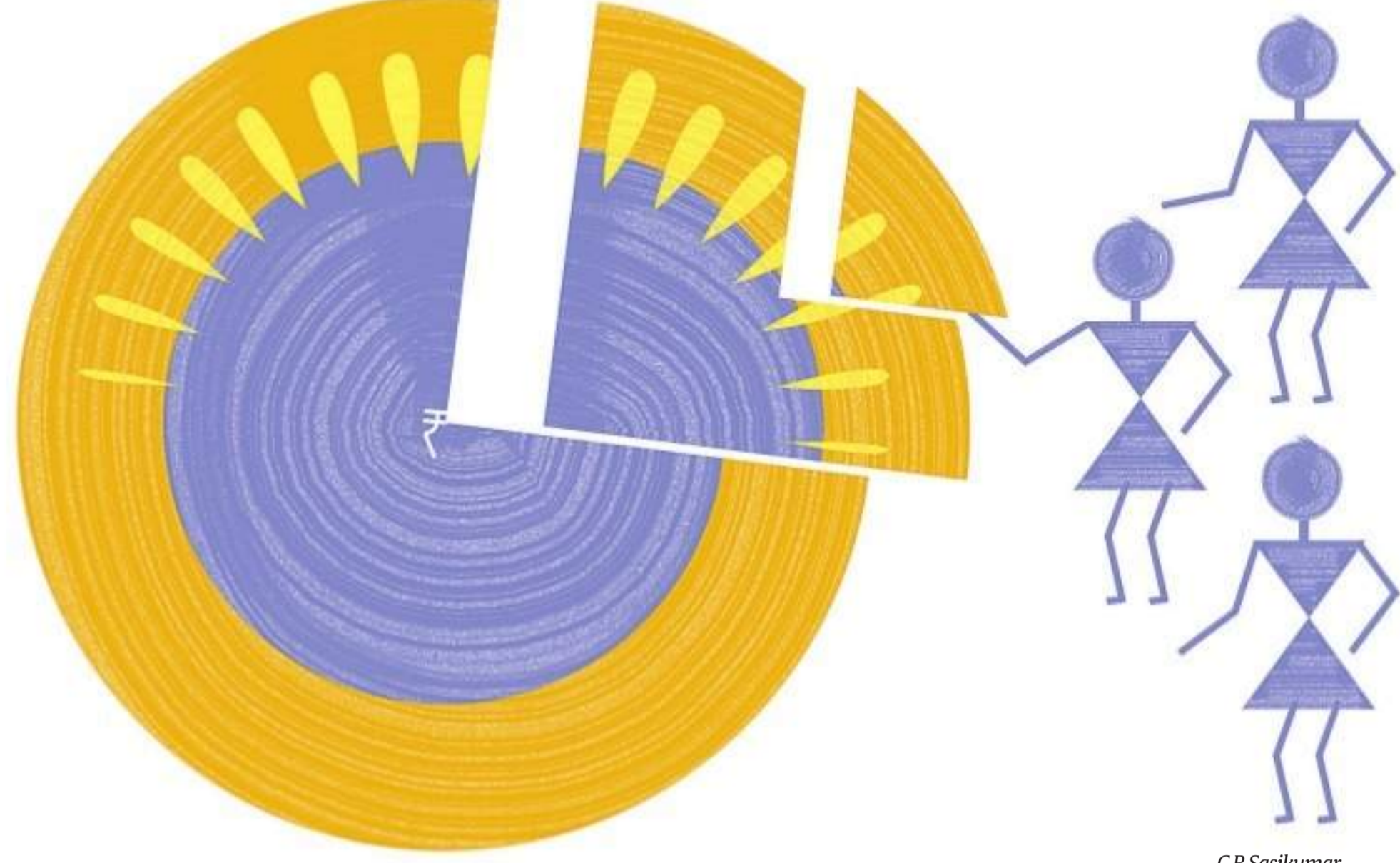


Quota, old plus new

There are substantial inequalities even within Dalits. In addition to the 15 per cent quota, the community should also have reservation based on socioeconomic criteria



CHRISTOPHE JAFFRELOT AND KALAIYARASAN A



CR Sasikumar

RESERVATIONS ARE SOMETIMES criticised in a constructive manner by analysts who argue that quotas are cornered by a few jatis at the expense of those who "really need them".

In terms of their annual per capita mean income (APCMI), Jatavs are not at all doing better than other important Dalit jatis of UP: They earned only Rs 6,135 a year in 2011-12, against Rs 6,643 for the Pasis and Rs 9,077 for the Dhoibis.

the members of the three jatis — with very minor variations — have graduated (compared to 26 per cent among Brahmins).

Similarly, the percentage of salaried people among these three jatis was rather homogenous, ranging from 22 per cent (Chambhars) to 28 per cent (Mahars). In contrast, more than 54 per cent of Brahmins were part of the salariat.

These data do not allow the neutral observer to argue that Mahars have been the only or even the main beneficiaries of reservations for Scheduled Castes: All Dalits have gained something. If among the winners, some have been more equal than others, it is in terms of class. Among the Mahars, for instance, the socioeconomic differentiation is as pronounced as among the Jatavs.

Jatavs did not do that well economically in spite of a marginal advantage in terms of education: In 2011-12, 2.5 per cent of them were graduates, when graduates represented only 0.5 per cent of the Pasis and 0.6 per cent of the Dhoibis.

We can explain the Jatav paradox by factoring in the class element: Jatavs are polarised, with, on the one hand, an elite group enjoying a good education as well as government jobs, and on the other hand, a mass of poor. Indeed, no Dalit jati counts so many agricultural labourers in their midst in 2011-12 (63 per cent, against 34 per cent among Dhoibis).

The situation of the Dalits of Maharashtra is not very different. Certainly, Mahars were more affluent than Mangs and Chambhars in 2011-12: Their APCMI was Rs 27,177 (and even Rs 31,241 in the case of the Buddhists) when it had reached only Rs 25,274 in the case of the Chambhars and Rs 23,070 in the case of the Mangs.

The 'creamy layer' formula — which relies on class-related criteria — would not do either because of the stigma still associated with untouchability. Surveys shown that when the same CV was sent to a potential employer in response to a call for applications, those with a Brahmin name were much more susceptible to result in a job talk/interview, compared to the CV bearing a Dalit name — which generated a large number of negative responses (or no reply at all). Indeed, in institutions where there is no reservation for SCs (the judiciary, Rajya Sabha, etc.), Dalits remain massively under-represented.

the 15 per cent quotas, but only to a sub-quota reserved to them. That would not help the poorest among the Jatavs and the Mahars who, on the contrary, would have to compete with the middle class of their caste group for a smaller number of positions.

But the "creamy layer" formula — which relies on class-related criteria — would not do either because of the stigma still associated with untouchability. Surveys show that when the same CV was sent to a potential employer in response to a call for applications, those with a Brahmin name were much more likely to result in a call for job talk/interview, compared to the CV bearing a Dalit name — which generated a large number of negative responses (or no reply at all).

By validating the 10 per cent quota for the "general category", the Supreme Court has unintentionally opened a window of opportunity for revisiting the reservation policy in favour of the needful Dalits. First, this decision makes it possible to go beyond the 50 per cent threshold (and not only in Tamil Nadu anymore). Second, it legitimises the use of socioeconomic criteria in the creation of reservations.

Jaffrelot is senior research fellow at CERIS-Sciences Po/CNRS, Paris, professor of Indian Politics and Sociology at King's India Institute, London. Kalaiyarasan A is assistant professor at the Madras Institute of Development Studies

WHAT THE OTHERS SAY

"The most effective way to stabilise the Korean Peninsula is to push North Korea and the US to move toward each other." —GLOBAL TIMES, CHINA

The pillar stands

Indian statistical system can withstand political pressures. Legislation and public scrutiny can strengthen it further



P C MOHANAN

ONE UNFORTUNATE FALLOUT of the recent controversy regarding the non-publication of the labour force survey report by the National Sample Survey Organisation has been the questions raised on the autonomy and independence of the Indian official statistical system.

The credibility of processed official statistics require the government to stay at an arms-length from the processes of data collection, processing and dissemination. It is in this context that the need for an independent board or authority to manage national statistics is widely accepted.

In countries like India, the statistical system is horizontally and vertically decentralised. At the Centre, there are ministries/departments with departmental statistical offices. The vertical decentralisation happens between Union and the states — with the states having powers in some sectors as per the division of responsibilities listed in the Constitution.

Like in all other areas, a country with an established tradition of producing official statistics is unlikely to be influenced by transient factors. The Indian statistical system has enjoyed the reputation of being one of the best among similarly-placed countries. Indian statisticians have provided leadership internationally and still occupy key positions in many international agencies and many of them are actively involved in global statistical networks.

There are also strong links between users and data producers in India with several seminars organised by the Central Statistical Office with the data-user community. There are also sessions on official statistics during annual conferences of professional bodies

like the Econometric Society or the Indian Association for Research in Income and Wealth. This has helped the system to understand user needs and the users to appreciate the problems in data collection, increasing the transparency of official data.

A proactive media furthers a system that is visible and answerable to the public. The heightened media interest in official statistics has grown with the expansion of both print and visual media besides social media in recent years.

One sure way of eliminating any bias towards releasing or withholding of any specific official statistics or reports is to have pre-announced data release dates and strictly adhering to these dates. This is the case with the release of key national indicators like GDP, IIP, CPI, WPI, trade data, etc. However, in many cases like survey reports, no such release dates are announced.

Legislation guaranteeing the independence of statistical agencies is another way of safeguarding the independence of official statistics. Such legislation has been recommended by the UN to member countries. Efforts to legislate the establishment of a statutory statistical commission have not borne fruit in our country.

Reliance on independently-conducted censuses and surveys to validate or question statistics produced by administrative authorities from their records have been part of the Indian system. Census and surveys are generally transparent exercises using widely-accepted concepts and definitions involving non-governmental experts in their design.

The pillars on which the statistical system in India stand are very strong and can withstand efforts to tilt it in any direction. The public and media interest in the current discussions on the autonomy of Indian official statistics is a very encouraging development.

The writer is former head of the National Statistical Commission



TARUN SHRIDHAR

Blue revolution that will be

A new department and fresh policies have given a spurt to productivity of fish farms

CREATING A SEPARATE department for fisheries in the Union government is a significant step. Fisheries are the primary source of livelihood for several communities. A concentrated effort by an independent department could help the government achieve its objective of doubling farmers' income, provided its policies address the challenge of sustainability.

country has a comparative advantage in this respect. It has a marine fisher population of 3.5 million; 10.5 million people are engaged in inland fishery and fish farming. However, the productivity in both sectors is low — in terms of per fisher, per boat and per farm.

Fisheries, therefore, talks of introducing deep-sea fishing vessels and assisting fishing communities to convert their vessels and gears for the waters beyond.

We, however, need to be cautious of falling prey to the temptation of introducing large-scale industrial fishing. We must factor in the sustainability challenges and acknowledge that fishing is a primary livelihood activity for a large number of communities and individuals. The policies framed by the new department should aim at enhancing productivity, better returns and increased incomes.

The introduction of cage culture in reservoirs and other open water bodies has led to an increase in output. Nearly 8,000 cages have been installed and even though a cage gives a modest yield of three tonnes of fish, this translates into a more than 1,000 per cent increase in productivity.

Regular stocking of reservoirs and other water bodies has resulted in a marked increase in catch. Open sea cage culture is at a pilot stage and the initial trials have given promising results. This may prove another game changer.

India is the world's second-largest fish producer with exports worth more than Rs 47,000 crore. Fisheries are the country's single-largest agriculture export, with a growth rate of 6 to 10 per cent in the past five years. Its significance is underscored by the fact that the growth rate of the farm sector in the same period is around 2.5 per cent.

However, the performance of this sector in India is impressive when one compares it with the average growth of the fisheries sector all over the world. The Blue Revolution scheme launched a few years ago seeks to make fishery and aquaculture a viable and rewarding vocation. The scheme adopted a two-pronged approach: Sustainable capture and inland water aquaculture.

The policy envisages intensive fish farming through increased stocking of seed, better feed quality and diversification of species. Innovative practices such as re-circulatory aquaculture system aim to realise the goal of more crop per drop.

The investment of Rs 3,000 crore in the Blue Revolution is being supplemented through the Rs 7,523-crore Fisheries and Aquaculture Infrastructure Development Fund. This will meet the capital investment requirement of this sector.

In order to meet the ever-increasing demand for animal protein, global fish production should touch 196 million tonnes by 2025, a doubling with a per capita consumption of 17.1 million kcal.

India has the potential to become a major player in the global fish market. The new National Policy on Marine Fisheries will bring immense benefits to fishing communities. The new National Policy on Marine

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

FORESTS AND PEOPLE

THIS REFERS TO the article, 'How to kill a forest', (IE, February 28) and the editorial, 'Forests rights, wrongs (IE, March 1). The traditional view of conservation of nature in protected areas by relocating forest dwellers has gone through a transformation. Now the focus of conservation efforts is maintaining the natural world, where the living and the non-living constituents coexist.

LETTER OF THE WEEK

WAR AND PEACE

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'The day after' (IE, February 28). The editorial is right in stating that our TV warriors should exercise some restraint. It's very easy to shout and raise slogans in TV studios. It is shocking that war strategies are being discussed on television. Let army generals take decisions about the prevailing situation One cannot be a patriotic by mere lip service.

Sudip Kumar Dey, Kolkata

Hitesh Parmar, Rajkot

DIPLOMATIC VICTORY

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'Call for calm' (IE, February 28). In view of the anguish against the terrorist attack in Pulwama, there was an urgent for India to retaliate. The government had promised such a response immediately after the tragedy. India has shown restraint all along. The overwhelming international support for India's position is a diplomatic victory for the country.

other's concerns. Chanchal Nandy, Burdwan

FORCES MATTER

THIS REFERS TO the article, 'Staring at a stalemate' (IE, February 25). I disagree with the assertion that "India's conventional military superiority is questionable". According to Global Firepower 2018, India has the fourth-most powerful military in the world, whereas Pakistan ranks 17th. Diplomatically, Pakistan would be isolated but for China. And it harbours terrorists.

The new department will give undivided attention to creating and strengthening infrastructure facilities in marine and inland fisheries and give a boost to aquaculture and post-harvest activities. The country should be producing more than 15 million tonnes fish by the end of 2019. It should be on its way to become a hub for sustainable fish production.

The writer is secretary, Department of Animal Husbandry, Dairying and Fisheries, Ministry of Agriculture & Farmers' Welfare, Government of India