



## The Indian EXPRESS

FOUNDED BY

RAMNATH GOENKA

BECAUSE THE TRUTH INVOLVES US ALL

# A parallel chessboard

Why we may need a new theory of nuclear deterrence for a post-digital age



BHASKAR CHAKRAVORTI

## THE CM'S TEST

Goa's new chief minister must provide a stable government, build an economy more in harmony with ecological concerns

PRAMOD SAWANT, WHO has been chosen by the BJP as the next chief minister of Goa after the death of Manohar Parrikar, and who was sworn in on Tuesday by Governor Mridula Sinha even as the Congress yet again staked claim to form government, takes the floor test today. Goa's new chief minister will have his task cut out. Parrikar's stature had allowed the BJP to keep its allies in check and claim legitimacy for his government in the aftermath of a splintered verdict. The BJP could be said to have lost the 2017 assembly election; its tally fell from 21 in the House of 40 MLAs to a mere 13. But it cobbled together a coalition government with the Maharashtrawadi Gomantak Party and Goa Forward Party, which had fought the election on an anti-BJP platform — on Monday, two leaders of the MGP and GFP were given the post of deputy chief minister and the two parties with three MLAs each have agreed to support the BJP.

The new chief minister's unenviable task will be to manage restive and ambitious allies, party colleagues and independents while providing a stable government. Political loyalties are known to be fickle in Goa, where leaders and parties shift sides, apparently independent of their ideologies and any pre-poll promises. Ever since Goa became a full state in 1987, it has had 11 chief ministers and only Digambar Kamat (2007-2012) could complete a full term in office. Goa may have achieved significant progress in social indicators, but an important effect of the political instability and consequent short-termism in governance has been the spawning of a political economy that has wreaked havoc on the state's ecology. Rapacious mining, for instance, has resulted in largescale destruction of the state's forests and rivers.

To his credit, Parrikar, while presiding over this political economy, did try to diversify it and build the state as an educational, new economy and cultural hub. Despite his moorings in the RSS and Hindutva politics, Parrikar was conscious of Goa's syncretic social fabric and made sure that the polarising agendas pursued by the BJP elsewhere, in other states, would not find a foothold in Goa. The state's new chief minister needs to take forward this legacy of Parrikar, while also ensuring that the government is sensitised to the ecological concerns flagged by environmental groups and the courts. Goa needs a new political vision that builds on its social advantages like high literacy, a heightened sense of civic activism, a cosmopolitan outlook, and nurtures an economy that is more harmonious with its fragile ecosystem.

## ARDERN'S WAY

New Zealand PM reminds world of better days, when political leaders did not readily surrender nation's moral compass

BYWORD AND by deed, the leader of one of the smallest democracies is showing the world what it means to be prime minister. Within 10 days of the murder of 50 people in Christchurch, Jacinda Ardern's government is moving to drastically tighten gun laws in New Zealand. By way of contrast, the US has failed for over a century to align the Second Amendment, which confers the right to bear arms, with the duty of the modern state to protect citizens from gun violence. Ardern's first response to the massacre was exemplary, too. Immediately after the shooting — even before the dead could be reliably counted — she had spoken up for immigrants: "They have chosen to make this their home. They are us. The person who perpetrated this is not us." That statement immediately blunted the wedge that the incident was engineered to drive between natives and immigrants. She also declared that she would never take the name of the perpetrator and urged people to take the names of the victims instead, thereby de-personalising him. And while France continues to tie itself in Houdini-defying knots over the question of headscarves, Ardern did not hesitate to don one to visit the victims' families. In politically confused times, this is extraordinary moral clarity.

New Zealand has a population of about 5 million, who own an estimated 1.5 million guns. Though Ardern has not elaborated on the forthcoming gun laws, she has appealed to citizens to surrender firearms. This was the route followed by Australia after the Port Arthur massacre in 1996, where 35 people were killed with an AR-15, the very rifle used in Christchurch. It was designed by ArmaLite for military use, was inducted into the US army as the M16, and is celebrated by the US National Rifle Association as "America's rifle". But other nations, unburdened by the romance of the Wild West, must wonder why civilians need military weapons when it is the duty of the state to protect them. Ardern believes that her people see the need for immediate change and will come forward to surrender their firearms.

At a time when democratic leaders the world over are repeatedly showing themselves to be puny, petty, opportunistic and eager to divide their people, Ardern stands out for her commitment to keeping New Zealand's moral compass steady and its values intact. This is what prime ministers were supposed to be like, but have forgotten how to be.

## THE UPLIFTERS

Afghanistan, cricket nomads, players without a home base, claim the world as their stage

IN KABUL, AFGHANISTAN'S star cricketer, Shapoor Zadran, roams around in a Toyota Corolla and when Adam Hoolioake, former England captain who coached in Afghanistan's Shpageeza Cricket League in 2017, shared his desire to jump in for a drive, he was told: "You won't make it. If they see you, you'll get kidnapped." Shapoor should know. He and his brother were once shot at by gunmen in Kabul. The all-rounder, Mohammad Nabi's, father was kidnapped for a ransom in 2013; one of the best spinners in the world, Rashid Khan, had to live in Pakistan's Peshwar for six years as the family sheltered him from the war; Mujeeb-Ur-Rehman, the talented spinner, has risen from a poor background — the stories go on.

But on Monday, in India, Afghanistan took another big step in chastening those who view them only as war victims who play cricket. On Monday, they claimed their first Test win. A cricketing nation's first Test win in just their second attempt should leave an after-taste of historic accomplishment or a sense of surprise at how quickly it has come. But Afghanistan's triumph over Ireland, another team which played its second Test, triggers a shrug — it was an expected outcome. There is no surprise in this win — and that's the real accomplishment of Afghanistan.

Afghanistan has a team that has the capacity and personnel to entertain and compete. A bunch of attacking batsmen and skilful spinners have the world as their stage now. Rahmat Shah, the batting star in the Test with two 50s, Mohammad Shahzad, Asghar Afghan, the captain, Rashid Khan, the star spinner, Mohammad Nabi, the allrounder, Hashmatullah Shahidi, the attacking batsman, and Shapoor Zadran will showcase their spark in the world cup. Unfortunately, Afghanistan are still the cricket nomads, players without a home base. But that reality only elevates their achievements. That they have made their audiences almost forget that harsh truth is what makes them the truly uplifting story of cricket.

THE LATEST CONFLAGRATION across the India-Pakistan border, triggered by the February 14 suicide bombing attack in Pulwama, has set a new watermark for the two nuclear-armed neighbours. I have heard experts describe the recent exercise in brinkmanship as the closest the world has come to the Cuban missile crisis. I have also heard the opposite, that this may be the safest that both countries have been in their history of mutual animosity. The classic deterrence logic from nuclear game theory would suggest that the present state is the best solution to a region in a state of perpetual conflict: Either side has the ability to annihilate the other — and that awareness deters any meaningful escalation of hostility and flips both sides back to a peaceful equilibrium.

What is more, the impeccable logic can even rationalise why it is natural for each side to periodically poke each other in the eye. In the nuclear deterrence community, there is an idea called the stability-instability paradox: The overhanging threat of nuclear retaliation offers an insurance policy, which gives rise to moral hazard, a common problem in the insurance business. The safety net of insurance creates incentives for low-level risky behaviour. This helps explain a tendency towards proxy wars on the ground or dogfights in the air of the kind we witnessed recently.

But let's not get too comfortable. All these arguments are pre-digital age theorising. The logic assumes that there are rational protagonists who are moving chess pieces on a chessboard and have a clear line of sight across the whole board. Digital media creates an alternative chessboard, out of sight of the main political protagonists. The players on this other board are non-state micro-actors — who are not in the command-and-control chain leading to the nuclear buttons. Technology permits them to broadcast messages, and push the pieces on the parallel board and at some point their configuration of pieces infiltrates action on the main chessboard, because the protagonists being political entities must respond to the moods of their constituencies, the micro-actors. The magic of digital media is that it often introduces change through imperceptible moves, which then gather force over powerful transmission mechanisms and hop across different media, from television to Twitter, WhatsApp and Facebook. Before long, there is a configuration of pieces on a board, an alternative narrative that has become so dominant that it is beyond the control of the protagonists.

False and fiery narratives, in particular, have a way of being buoyed by the logic of

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## WHAT IS AND IS NOT HISTORY

For scholars, faith and evidence of historicity are two separate matters



ROMILA THAPAR

THIS IS WITH reference to Arun Anand's article, "Why the Left Isn't Right" (IE, March 13). The dispute over Ram Janmabhoomi cannot be reduced merely to what has been described as Left historians having a flawed understanding of the Babri case. In support of this statement, a short pamphlet on 'The Political Abuse of History' has been referred to in the above article. The pamphlet was raising the question important to historians, of historicity having to be based on proven reliable evidence. This is yet to be found for the events of the Ramakatha. What mythology, fantasy, poetry or faith make of a believed biography, is of considerable interest for an intellectual analysis or a study of what surrounds history. However, taking it as the literal biography of an existing person is problematic for an historian.

The modern scholars quoted in the article as having stated that the story goes back to the fifth century BC, is not disputed. But this does not prove the historicity of the persons involved in the narrative or the story or the events. The story is described as a katha, and the term used in English refers to it as an

epic. This may explain why the biography of Rama and others differs substantially and conceptually in three of the earliest versions of the story. These are the Vaishnava Valmiki Ramayana, the Buddhist Dasaratha Jataka and the Jaina Paumachariyam. The three Ramas of these three texts are three different persons with three different messages. Such differences increase with the adoption of the story in variant cultures in India, and even further afield: For example, in the many distinctively diverse versions that come from South-East Asia. It is precisely this element of difference that is most significant and needs to be analysed in terms of the authenticity of any narrative. This is quite a contrast to the essential uniformity in the biographies of the founders of a religion, such as the Buddha and Christ and some others.

Furthermore, none of these texts provide us with a detailed topography of the events as they happened and were identified with locations in Ayodhya. This comes about many centuries later in the mid-second millennium AD, when the Ayodhya-mahatmya was composed, and various locations in

Ayodhya were associated with a believed biography. Mention of such places from the 18th century follow from this and continue, often to this day.

Visitors to India would have mentioned the worship of Rama wherever they came across it. The object of worship is a matter of faith and none would deny this faith where it exists. But this does not mean that historians should accept faith as evidence of the historicity of the Ramakatha. Faith and evidence of historicity are entirely distinct.

As for mediators in the Ram Janmabhoomi dispute, the definition of a mediator should be clear. The term mediator is used for a person who initially takes a middle position in a dispute (the median), and attempts to reconcile the views of those disputing the claims. Therefore the person so selected to mediate in a dispute, should not be associated, and especially not publicly, with an opinion committed to any one side. Is this true of Sri Sri Ravi Shankar?

The writer is a historian and author

## MARCH 20, 1979, FORTY YEARS AGO

### BANS ON RSS

THE KARNATAKA CABINET decided in principle to ban RSS drills and use of weapons in public places but deferred decision on imposing penalty on those violating the ban order. The chief minister, Devaraj Urs, is understood to have referred this question to a two-man committee comprising the law minister, Havanur, and the education minister, Subbaya Shetty. The decision which is on the lines of the Kerala order, is said to be unanimous. Karnataka becomes the third state, after UP and Kerala, to impose such a ban. The cabinet took this step "following complaints from the industries minister, Aziz Sait, besides legislators, members of the mi-

nority communities and secular-minded Hindus," said the Cabinet paper.

### ILLEGAL INFLUX

THE MINISTER OF State for Home Affairs, Dhanik Lal Mandal, told the Lok Sabha that political reasons were behind the recent influx of illegal immigrants from Bangladesh into Assam and its neighbouring states. The Moga and Chakma tribals, who entered Tripura and Mizoram clandestinely last year, had done so with the knowledge of the Bangladesh government, he said. Mandal said that last year about 4,000 tribals, predominantly Mogas and Chakmas, had entered Tripura clandestinely in small batches.

### OUTRAGE IN UP

THE ADMISSION BY the government that there had been mass raping of nurses in Basti, Uttar Pradesh, rocked both Houses of the state legislature. In the Vidhan Parishad, members pressed for the immediate suspension of the district officials and a formation of a committee of the House to probe the incident. In the Vidhan Parishad, the leader of the House, Ramadhar Pandey, minister for local self-government, informed the agitated members that the head constable, matron and the watchman of the nurses training hostel of Basti had been suspended and the victims of the rape, had been transferred from Basti as they did not want to stay there.

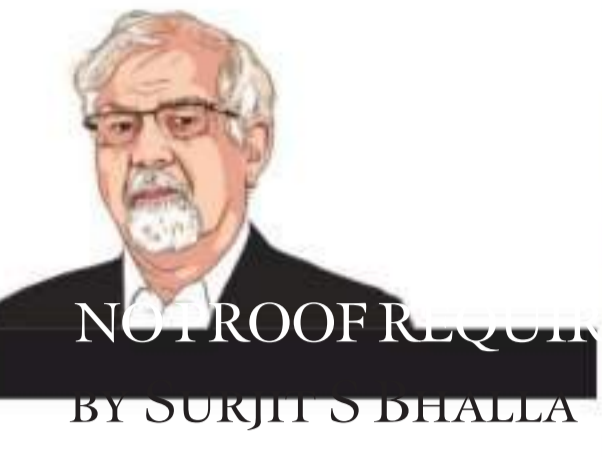




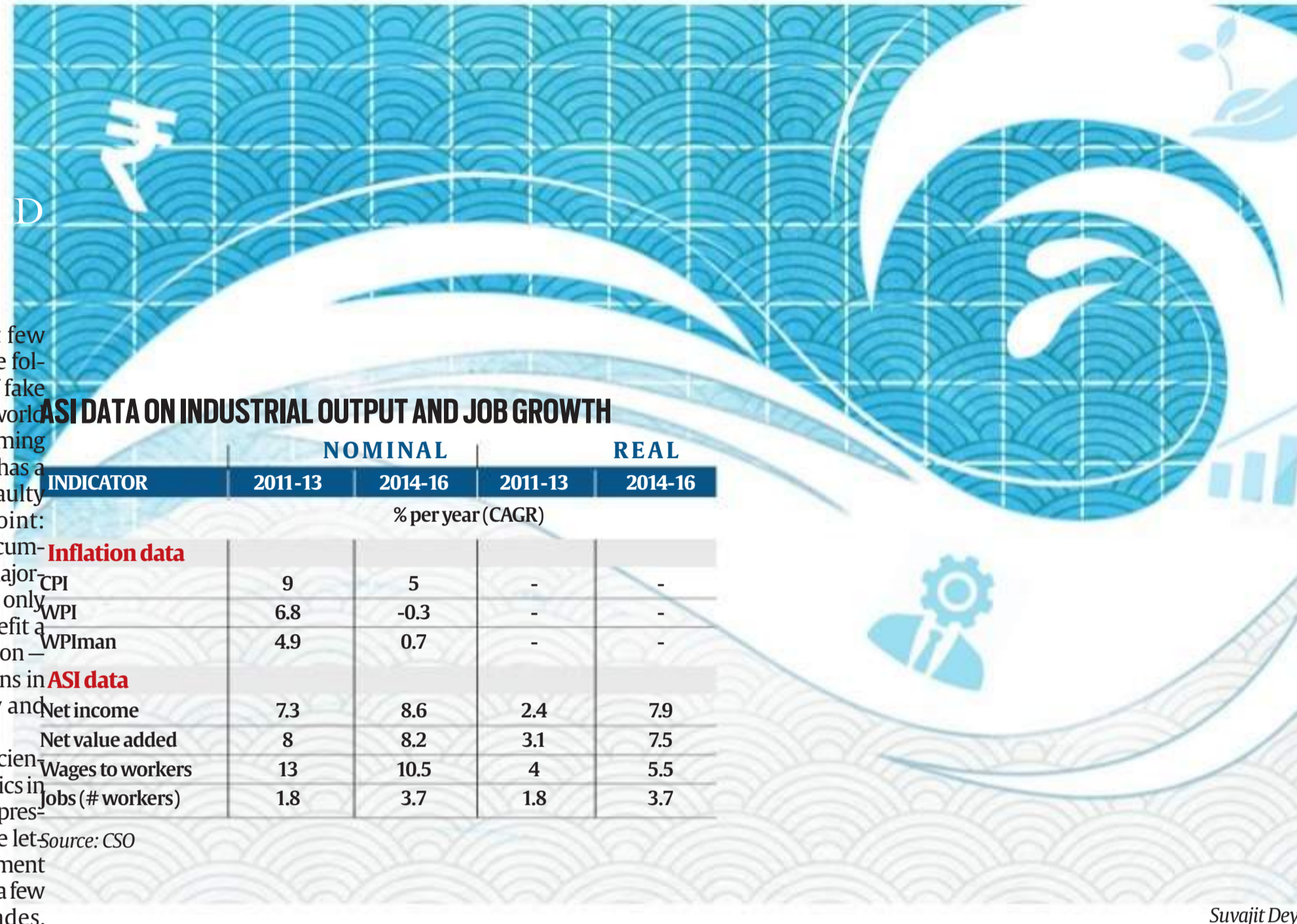
# 15 THE IDEAS PAGE

## Economic data: Fact vs fiction

Annual Survey of Industries data for 2016-17 shows that output growth, and industrial jobs growth, have sharply accelerated post 2013. This data has not been questioned by any expert



NO PROOF REQUIRED BY SURJIT S BHALLA



IN SEVERAL ARTICLES over the last few months, I have been documenting the following simple point — it is the age of fake news, and political parties across the world have used it, or are using it. My forthcoming book, *Citizen Raj: Elections 1952-2019*, has a chapter, "The Birth of the Fake and Faulty Twins" where I stress a simple point: Conceptually, it does not benefit an incumbent (especially one with an outright majority) to disseminate fake news. That can only backfire. However, fake news can benefit a challenger who can throw any accusation as Donald Trump did in the US elections in 2016 — leaving the incumbent to try and prove the impossible.

On March 15, 108 economists and scientists released a letter, "Economic Statistics in Shambles", which was published in the prestigious *Economic & Political Weekly*. The letter accused the Narendra Modi government of suppressing data. It is worth quoting a few sentences from the letter. "For decades, India's statistical machinery has enjoyed a high level of reputation for the integrity of the data it produced on a range of economic and social parameters. It has often been criticised for the quality of its estimates, but never the allegations made of political interference influencing decisions and the estimates themselves. Lately, Indian statisticians and the institutions associated with it have, however, come under a cloud of being influenced and indeed even controlled by political considerations. In early 2015, the CSO issued a new gross domestic product (GDP) series (with the revised base year 2011-12). One of the biggest economic stories of our time (both in India and abroad) has been the decline in inflation rate to very low levels. This process has been going on in the world for more than 20 years; its influence was that cast an iota of doubt on the achievement of the government seem to get revised estimates suppressed on the basis of some questionable methodology."

The new GDP series, which is a major complaint, replaced the existing index level data (as compiled by the CSO as the Annual Survey of Industries (ASI) and released with a two-year lag) by the Ministry of Corporate Affairs (MCA) data on Indian industrial production. Unfortunately, these data do not go further back than 2006 and hence the controversy on GDP back-series has arisen. On March 14, a day before the news of "suppression of data" and "political interference" towards manipulation hit the headlines, first revised estimates of ASI data for 2016-17 were released on the CSO website. The preliminary estimates were released on March 15. This rich source of data is examined below to shed some light on the concerns raised by the economists and scientists. In my experience, I have never come across such criticism, let alone accusations. The list of economists who signed the letter is a virtual who's-who of the Indian economic establishment (both domestic and NRI). We know many of them, and have enormous respect for several of them. When they say has to be taken seriously by all concerned, especially the government.

In my next article I will examine in detail the accusations concerning the Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS) for 2017-18, and inexplicably, refused to release — till date.

Regardless of any complaints that the government may have against the "accuracy" and representativeness of the PLFS data, there is absolutely no basis for not releasing the data. In this regard, I am with anyone who states that the unit-level data (and not just the report on the PLFS data) should be released immediately. The government should realise that when it does not release data as per schedule, the immediate, and not incorrect, assumption is that it has something to hide. One of the biggest economic stories of our time (both in India and abroad) has been the decline in inflation rate to very low levels. This process has been going on in the world for more than 20 years; its influence was that cast an iota of doubt on the achievement of the government seem to get revised estimates suppressed on the basis of some questionable methodology."

Curiously, when it comes to evaluation of GDP growth rates, the 108+ economists are quick to point out (in separate writings over the years) that India has benefitted from the price decline in the Modi years, post 2014. But they don't point out how GDP growth benefitted from explosive global growth in India; and how the Indian macro-economy was severely affected by high inflation post 2008 financial crisis. The accompanying graphic looks at ASI data on three important economic variables — net value added, wages to workers, and number of workers. In addition, data on two price indices — CPI and WPI — are reported. The latter two are needed to analyse the ASI information in terms of real growth rate, and real income of workers. Industrial value added is deflated by CPI; industrial value added is deflated by WPI for manufacturing. Data are available for only three of the Modi years — 2014-15 to 2016-17. ASI data is available since 1981. If three years post and pre-2014 are taken, then a valid comparison can be made between the UPA-II years and the NDA-II years. Note that the terminal year of the Modi period is 2016-17 — the year of demonetisation. This selection of the demonstration year biases all the results in an anti-UPA direction; all critics believe that demonetisation caused a severe dent in employment and output. What does the data show? First, the unambiguous record on decline in inflation, CPI

According to the ASI data, employment has grown at more than twice the rate in the three NDA-II years than in the preceding three UPA years. The ASI employment data is also consistent with other sources of formal job data — for example, EPFO. It should also be noted that around the world, establishment surveys are being preferred to household surveys on jobs — on unemployment, the only source are household surveys.

We conclude as follows. There is no denying the reality that the government has delayed the release of the PLFS data. For that, it should be criticised. The rest of the rather extreme accusations made by responsible academics need to be examined by other honest, non-ideological considerations? Only future research can tell.

The writer is Contributing Editor, Indian Express and Consultant, Network 18. Views are personal

### VIEW FROM THE RIGHT

#### ABOUT DIGNITY

THE FESTIVAL OF colours, Holi, is around the corner while campaigning for the General Elections dominates the political atmosphere. An editorial in the *Organiser* draws a parallel between the two and says the election should be common rules for Holi and election campaigning. "Do not hit below the belt, maintain dignity while playing (with) colours and asking for votes, so that the atmosphere is not vitiated. Criticising each other is inevitable. But do not turn that into enmity. Politicians are also expected to take the criticism in the spirit of democracy," the editorial notes. "The rules of fairness, enshrined in the Model Code of Conduct, should be followed in letter and spirit," it adds. It points out that "the Election Commission is known for undertaking this massive exercise with the best acumen; it is the duty of all the contestants to respect the institution and maintain the same set by the same." It asks the candidates to "discuss, deliberate and spread the message about the most sacred duty of democracy." "As Gandhiji said, 'duty is not a burden but a corresponding right', so if we expect

a responsible government that will protect our rights, then we have to perform our duty of voting. Do not miss Holi and do not evade participation in the holier festival of Elections. Convince not force, educate not irritate, enjoy not vitiate is the common thread of message for us both for the Holi and elections. So Happy Holi and Happy Electioneering," the editorial says. It notes that the elections should occasion fresh thinking about "cleansing the system". It asks people to "come up with the new ideas for clean, accountable and participatory governance. For that we are also expected to point out the loopholes in the system that should be eradicated by the forthcoming government".

#### CUSTOMS & TRADITIONS

THE COVER STORY in *Organiser* is about the recently-held Akhila Bharatiya Pratinidhi Sabha (ABPS) meet of the RSS. It points out that the central message of the ABPS-2019 was that traditional institutions have stood the test of time. "They remain relevant today and are central to the RSS philosophy," the article notes. It directs attention to this year's ABPS resolution that deals with the institutions of family highlights. This is something, the article notes, "we" have neglected to "discuss, deliberate and spread the message about the most sacred duty of democracy." "As Gandhiji said, 'duty is not a burden but a corresponding right', so if we expect

article claims. It also notes that the RSS has consistently followed a reformist agenda, but have never been aggressive about reforms. This is the reason, the article says, the ABPS-2019 passed a resolution about the Sabarimala Temple and called upon the people to support the Save Sabarimala Movement. It claims that the RSS has consistently raised issues that were overlooked by mainstream political parties and institutions. "Of 270+ resolutions passed by the RSS since 1950, 29 were dedicated to Hindu religious and cultural issues. These do not include resolutions on Ram Mandir. Issues brought up in resolutions also tell us how the RSS has been at the forefront of struggling for Hindu rights under a misrepresented secularism popularised by irreligious or people masquerading as secular by playing pro-minority and anti-majority games," the article says.

#### WHOSE STAINS?

THE PANCHJANYA'S COVER story pertains to the recent social media controversy over the Surf Excel ad that features a Hindu girl, who choose to get stained with colours to protect her Muslim friend who has to go to a nearby mosque to offer namaz. The ad ends with the boy entering the mosque, in a pristine white kurta-pyjama, and promising the girl he will join in the Holi celebrations soon after. The story says that it seems that Hindustan Unilever, the company which owns Surf Excel, had adopted an "anti-Hindu" agenda

through its commercial advertisements. Referring to the Surf Excel ad, the article says that while it shows the Muslim boy to be "helpless" and "afraid of Holi," it also shows Hindus pouring colours forcibly on non-Hindus." In such a discussion, the article, argues, "colours of Holi are shown as anti-Islam, namaz and mosque". The advertisement not only presents Holi and Islam as antagonistic to each other but also appears to support the hard-line thinking of not participating in each other's religious festivals, the article contends. It also talks of the Red Label tea — another Hindustan Unilever product — ad that gives the message that Hindus abandon their aged parents in the Kumbh Mela. It asks why is only one religion being constantly targeted in the name of creativity? It also asks a few questions: Can such advertisements be made about other religions and faiths? Will any advertisement be made to show a Muslim girl protecting a Hindu boy — who is in shock after seeing the slaughter of animals on streets — and take him to temple? "Those calling Holi colours as stains, will they dare to call blood as stains? The article concludes: "If eating sevaivan on Eid and cake on Christmas are signs of liberalism for Hindus, then the Holi colours should be seen as good for Muslims. Because if stains are sustained while respecting other's faith, then it should be apt to say *daag achhey hain*."

Compiled by Lalmani Verma

### WHAT THE OTHERS SAY

"Huge success of the fourth edition of the Pakistan Super League provides an insight into an exciting future for a country that has had more than its fair share of troubles in recent years." —DAWN

## Watching out for the nation

'Main Bhi Chowkidar' is inspiring people, rallying them for a greater purpose



ANIL BALUNI

MAHATMA GANDHI said that leadership is all about getting along with people and taking them towards a definite goal. There are many in India's political circles who claim to be inspired by Mahatma Gandhi and regularly pay tribute to his ideals. However, the easiest thing to do with Babu's ideas is to pay empty tribute, and move on. The implementation of his words and ideas is the harder part, something that few are actually interested in.

However, if there is one leader who has carefully considered his words and lived out his ideas, it is Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Right from his days as a student and an RSS member, he has been known as an organisation man, a man of the people — something which reflects in his political life. Connecting with people and inspiring them to work for a larger purpose comes naturally to Modi.

For instance, take the negative tone that was being set by the Congress and its alliance partners. However, by saying "Main Bhi Chowkidar", and inspiring others to say so as well, Modi has single-handedly created a social movement that is not about political messaging but about a positive call to action, to take ownership of the country's development. Lakhs of people have said "Main Bhi Chowkidar" along with Modi.

Modi's Twitter timeline keeps ticking regularly and it could have been just another tweet when he said, "Your chowkidar is standing firm & serving the nation. But, I am not alone. Everyone who is fighting corruption, dirt, social evils is a chowkidar. Everyone working hard for the progress of India is a chowkidar. Today, every Indian is saying #MainBhiChowkidar". However, it wasn't just another tweet. It was an inclusive call, just like the all-embracing "Sab Ka Saath Sab Ka Vikas" slogan of 2014.

This showed that Modi is not claiming the credit for any development that may have happened in the past five years for himself. Instead, he credited every Indian who is, in his or her own way, contributed to the development of the nation. If, as prime minister, Modi has fought a legislative and systemic battle against corruption, every Indian who has rallied social opinion against normalisation of corruption has fought the battle too.

Every Indian who personally believed in the cleanliness mission, and every Indian who fought against social decay, was being feted by none other than the prime minister — who has himself waged a long battle

against issues such as corruption, filth and social ills.

Ever since his first speech from the ramparts of the Red Fort, Modi has invoked the spirit of Babu's emphasis on cleanliness. He also mentioned how it was Babu's wish that cleanliness becomes a way of life for everyone in India. This wasn't empty rhetoric. In these five years, India has seen lakhs of villages getting declared open defecation-free and crores of household toilets being built. Despite this, there were some parties, such as the Congress, that ridiculed even a noble initiative like Swachh Bharat. The constant pessimism of certain political parties has made it clear to the people that an unstable, underdeveloped and weak nation is the goal of parties like the Congress. Because that is when their divide and rule politics can succeed.

But the people haven't let such negativity affect them. They have taken ownership of the cleanliness mission, instead. There is a sense in every Indian that the cleanliness of our surroundings is our responsibility, and the people are playing the role of chowkidars of cleanliness with pride. "Main Bhi Chowkidar" has evoked this feeling of ownership and pride in Indians. With the kind of response this movement has seen, it is clear that the people are determined to removing obstacles that stand in the way of making India a strong, prosperous and inclusive nation.

Many decisions of the Modi government have played a role in curbing corruption that used to go unabated. But now, with every Indian opposing corruption at every level, India's rise as an economic superpower is imminent. However, this cannot be achieved merely by laws, but through social movements such as "Main Bhi Chowkidar". If every Indian continues to play the role of a chowkidar and ensures cleanliness, the gains for the nation in terms of health and hygiene, are tremendous. This frees the poor from health expenses too. It also ensures that the government can channelise resources into creating more avenues for socio-economic growth of the poor.

Thus, "Main Bhi Chowkidar" is not a political campaign at all. It is not even a reply to the Congress's negative campaign of "Chowkidar Chor Hai". In fact, it is a movement to strengthen social consciousness. Babu's clarion call to fight filth and untouchability had seen spirited volunteerism, like Vinoba Bhave's "Bhodoan" movement, that inspired common people to make voluntary land contributions of 44 lakh acres. This, too, is a movement that is inspiring people and rallying them for a greater purpose.

"Main Bhi Chowkidar" is a movement driven by Indians who are also doubling up as volunteers for a better India. The impact of this will be felt much beyond the elections of 2019.

The writer is head, BJP media cell, and Rajya Sabha MP

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### SECURITY ISSUES

THIS REFERS TO article 'National insecurity' (IE, March 19). The suggestions made in the article are noteworthy. We need to ensure that equipment get purchased in a time-bound manner and a new institutional mechanism is created for defence purchases. The creation of such an agency will definitely derisk all those involved in defence procurement, resulting in expeditious decision making. It will also ensure that the nation's safety is not compromised. The new government that takes charge after the general election can take a final view in the matter on priority, in the national interest.

Rethesh Balakrishnan, New Delhi

### ART OF GIVING

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, "Quality of giving" (IE, March 19). Azim Premji now ranks among the top five philanthropists globally. He has joined Bill Gates and Warren Buffet as the world's most generous donors. What is notable, also, is that according to the Indian Philanthropy Report 2019, the number of ultra-rich households (with net worth of over \$50 million), has grown by 12 per cent since 2014, but the number of contributors of Rs 10 crore or more has come down from 50 in 2014 to 34 in FY2018. Secondly, more donations have come from individuals than organisations — contributions of Rs 10 crore or more constitute about 55 per cent of individual philanthropy. As such the example set by Premji is a message to companies that are reluctant to meet the statutory obligation of CSR expenditure to spend more on healthcare and education in rural areas.

YG Chouksey, Pune

### 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](mailto: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

### ISOLATE TERROR

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'Terror, live' (IE, March 16). The attack targeting mosques in New Zealand indicates that hate crimes have spread to almost every corner of the world. Racism, Islamophobia and anti-immigrant sentiment appear to be the reasons for the attacks. Societies everywhere should isolate terrorist groups of all hues. However, countries like Pakistan continue to harbour terrorists like Masood Azhar. And countries like China continue to derail efforts to bring terrorists to book. Global action against terrorism will not succeed till such countries fall in line.

Sanjay Chopra, Mohali





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**FACT CHECK, GROUND REALITY**

**BUYING A GUN: LAWS IN NZ, AUSTRALIA, UNITED STATES, AND ELSEWHERE**



Firearms on display at Gun City gunshop in Christchurch Tuesday. Reuters

IN THE wake of the terrorist attacks at two mosques in Christchurch, New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern has said she would soon announce new gun laws. While New Zealand's gun laws are not as restrictive as in, say, Australia, those of countries such as the US are far more relaxed. *The New York Times* listed what it takes to own a gun in several countries.

**NEW ZEALAND**

- Background check (criminal, medical, mental health, domestic violence records)
  - Character references
  - Interview in person between authorities and applicant's partner or next of kin
  - Inspection for firearm storage facilities at home
  - A gun safety course
- Reuters quoted Radio New Zealand as reporting that more than 99% of applicants for a firearms licence in 2017 were successful. The country, whose population is 5 million, has an estimated 1.5 million firearms. Only owners are licensed, not weapons, so there is no monitoring of how many weapons a person may possess. Buying handguns and certain semi-automatic rifles requires a special permit.

**AUSTRALIA**

- Must join and regularly attend a hunting or shooting club, or be a collector
  - Course on firearm safety and operation, written test and practical assessment
  - Storage that meets safety regulations
  - A review of criminal history, domestic violence, restraining orders and arrest history, with possible interviews of family and community members
  - Specific permits for specific types of weapons; wait is of at least 28 days.
- These laws are some of the toughest in the world. Australia introduced them after a lone gunman killed 35 people in Port Arthur in 1996 using a semi-automatic AR-15 (the same weapon that was used in Christchurch), Reuters reported. Australia banned semi-automatics, launched a gun amnesty in which tens of thousands of weapons were handed in, and made it much tougher to own them. Gun owners must provide a valid reason for owning a weapon; gun clubs must inform the authorities of inactive members.

**UNITED STATES**

- Background check for criminal convictions, domestic violence and immigra-

tion status. Many US states have additional buying restrictions, including waiting periods and expanded background checks. Where these waiting periods do not apply, an application may be cleared in days. Roughly a third of American gun owners buy guns without a background check, which federal law does not require when buying directly from a private seller.

**JAPAN**

- A firearms class and a written exam, held up to three times a year
- A doctor's certificate of mental fitness and absence of a history of drug abuse
- Firing training (permission for undertaking this course may take up to a month). One-day training class, with a firing test to be cleared
- Interview with police, whom applicant must convince why he or she needs a gun
- Review of criminal history, gun possession record, employment, even personal debt and relationships with friends, family and neighbours
- Application for gunpowder permit
- Certificate from a dealer describing gun
- Hunting licence (if hunting is purpose)
- Gun safe and ammunition locker that meet regulations, to be inspected by police
- An additional background review

**RUSSIA**

- Hunting licence, or reasons why gun needed for self-defence
  - A test of relevant laws, handling, first-aid skills
  - A doctor's note certifying absence of mental illness or drug history
  - All the above before application. After applying, a background check
- Many Russian gun buyers skip this process. Illegal guns in Russia, according to *The NYT*, are estimated to outnumber legal guns 3 to 1.

**CHINA**

- Reasons to possess a firearm
  - Storage at a gun range, remote hunting ground or pastoral area
  - Demonstration of knowledge of safe gun use and storage
  - A background check of mental illness, criminal record, domestic violence
- In China, most civilians are prohibited from keeping guns inside their homes.

*Edited from reports in The NYT and Reuters*

**SIMPLY PUT**

**Hostile takeover bids in India**

Before L&T & Mindtree, there was Swraj Paul & DCM, Escorts. How such bids have played out over the years.

**SHAJI VIKRAMAN**  
 CHENNAI, MARCH 19

TWO OF India's elder statesmen could be watching the battle for control at Bengaluru-based software services firm Mindtree, with local engineering giant Larsen & Toubro having mounted a hostile — or unsolicited — takeover bid. Pranab Mukherjee and Manmohan Singh were impacted in different ways by what was possibly the country's first major hostile takeover attempt.

In 1983, NRI businessman Swraj Paul bought into Delhi-based firms Escorts and DCM under a new scheme that allowed NRIs to invest in Indian companies. When he acquired more than the holdings of the promoters, Indian business houses sought the support of Mukherjee, then Finance Minister, to prevent a takeover and to frame a policy to protect established Indian companies. The matter reached Parliament, a legal battle followed, and the government eventually went in for a mediation to convince Paul to sell his shares back to the promoters, the H P Nanda family (Escorts) and the Shri Ram family (DCM).

Mukherjee has recounted all this in *The Turbulent Years*. On the other hand, Manmohan Singh, who was then RBI Governor, has referred to serious disagreements between him and Mukherjee. "Sometimes there was tension. For instance, there was that famous case of Swraj Paul's investments," Singh's daughter Damini Singh quotes him as saying in her book.

What Singh was referring to was the attempt to browbeat the RBI into approving the deal. In a rare instance, the government directed the RBI to carry out its instructions, saying that the central bank was only an agent for implementation of a government scheme, which Singh protested.

**Then & now**

Over four decades later, an aggressive attempt at gaining control of a company will hardly bother political leaders, especially in an election season. India's corporate sector and economy have changed drastically over the years, with liberalisation, competition, changes in governance practices, and in-



L&T's bid to acquire Mindtree has run into strong opposition from the IT firm's promoters, including co-founder Subroto Bagchi (below). Archive

vestors from overseas. Rather than the government explicitly stepping in, securities market regulator SEBI is empowered to regulate takeovers and mergers of publicly listed companies. India now has takeover rules or regulations, the first ones approved in 1994 and tweaked a couple of times since.

The rules do not quite define a hostile takeover, except to say that it is broadly an unsolicited bid or attempt by a person without any arrangement or a memorandum of understanding with the persons currently in control of the targeted company. Hostility (if the word could be used) arises in the case of the attempt on Mindtree as its founders Subroto Bagchi, Krishnakumar Natarajan, N S Parthasarathy and Rostow Ramanan, who jointly control over 13%, have opposed L&T coming in, saying it is a threat to the unique organisation that they have collectively built over 20 years and with a differentiated corporate culture. The trigger for all this is the decision of the firm's biggest shareholder — V G Siddhartha, promoter of Cafe Coffee Day and son-in law of former Karnataka Chief



Minister SM Krishna — to exit by selling his 20.4% share to L&T.

**India & the world**

Globally, takeover attempts face resistance on account of cultural differences between the targeted company and the acquirer. Yet it is far more common outside India, with many view-

ing such changes as a disciplining mechanism and also beneficial to minority shareholders because the stock price vaults.

One reason why such takeover attempts in India have been few may be that domestic institutional shareholders prefer to stay put. If a large company was the target and the acquirer was a foreign investor, these shareholders might be concerned about being caught in a crossfire and about the political economy. Hostile takeovers are also relatively difficult in India because of constraints on funding. In the West, debt-funded takeovers are the norm — Leveraged Buy Outs or LBOs were made famous in the RJR Nabisco case — but in India, the government and the RBI bar banks from such an activity. The rationale is that the limited resources available with Indian

lenders are best used for creating new assets, which can create more jobs, while hostile acquisitions can potentially reduce jobs.

When attempted, hostile takeovers have rarely succeeded in India. An undivided Reliance attempted to take control of L&T in 1989, having bought in through a transaction involving a Bank of Baroda subsidiary. Dhirubhai Ambani took over as L&T chairman; Mukesh and Anil Ambani came on board.

With influential shareholders involved, the L&T management mounted a push-back and Reliance had to exit by selling their shares to the Birlas, who too exited later. The government stepped in when British American Tobacco was attempting to take control of ITC. Other hostile attempts include that by ICI for Asian Paints, and by India Cements for Raasi Cements.

**What next**

The takeover regulations in such cases stipulate that the acquirer will have to make an open or public offer for buying out 26% from the minority shareholders (in Mindtree). To achieve this, L&T will need to depend not just on such shareholders but also on institutional shareholders such as investment institutions and overseas investors. It has offered to buy 31% at Rs 980 a share, which will mean spending Rs 5,027 crore. The other possibility is that the existing promoters manage to bring a strategic partner — known as a white knight for stepping in to support the incumbent promoters — or raise funds to buy back shares.

The Mindtree board will meet Wednesday even as it taunts L&T as to why it cannot build its own IT firm. Proxy advisory firm Institutional Investor Advisory Services also wants Mindtree's independent directors to provide guidance to shareholders on whether or not L&T's open offer is in the software company's long term interest.

This hostile bid does not have a *desivdeshi* twist. When the Swraj Paul takeover issue came up in 1983, Mukherjee told Parliament that no one could provide a guarantee to Indian business that they could "rule in perpetuity". "As long as they maintain a proven record of their management and they enjoy the confidence of the shareholders, they are safe," he had said.

**THIS WORD MEANS: WEST NILE VIRUS**

**An unfamiliar disease, newly in focus in India**

**ABANTIKA GHOSH**  
 NEW DELHI, MARCH 19

ON SUNDAY, a six-year-old boy died in Kozhikode from West Nile Virus infection. This has caused some alarm because the virus is relatively unknown in India. What is WNV, how did it reach Kerala, and is there a need to exercise extra caution?

**The infection**

According to the the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, WNV is the leading cause of mosquito-borne diseases in the continental United States. It has so far been detected in almost all kinds of mosquitoes, not just the common three — Anopheles, Culex and Aedes — but also in lesser-known types such as Culiseta, Mansonia and Psorophora. It occurs during the summer months in the US, unlike other mosquito-borne diseases such as dengue, malaria and chikungunya, which occur all year round in India.

**Cause & effect**

The bite of an infected mosquito is the commonest mode of human infection. WNV

can also spread through blood transfusion, from an infected mother to her child, or through exposure to the virus in laboratories. It is not known to spread by contact with infected humans or animals, or even when the infected animal is ingested, provided it has been adequately cooked.

Unlike other mosquito-borne diseases, WNV does not cause symptoms in everybody that contracts the virus. One in five people develops symptoms and requires medication. One in 150 people may go on to develop serious illness, or even die. However, WNV is dreaded because of the effects, often irreversible, that it has on the brain.

Ordinarily, the symptoms are the same as in any other viral fever — and include fever, headache, weakness, etc. But WNV can also cause nervous system symptoms such as stupor, disorientation, convulsion, tremors and loss of vision. Older people are more vulnerable, as are those with existing chronic conditions such as diabetes, hypertension, cancer, or those who have recently undergone organ transplants.

**Where it is common**

The virus is commonly found in Africa,

Europe, the Middle East, North America and West Asia. The World Health Organization (WHO) documents that it was first isolated in a woman in the West Nile district of Uganda in 1937. It was identified in birds (crows and columbiformes like doves and pigeons) in the Nile delta region in 1953. Before 1997, WNV was not considered pathogenic for birds — but then, a more virulent strain caused the death in Israel of different bird species, presenting signs of encephalitis and paralysis. Human infections attributable to WNV have been reported in many countries in the World for over 50 years, the WHO says.

**Should you panic?**

No. There are no reports so far of the virus spreading to other parts of the country. Over the years, cases have been sporadic, and have occurred mostly in the Northeast. In the last three years, 12 cases have been reported outside the Northeast. In 2016, 15 cases were reported from the region; in 2017, 22 cases from Assam, Manipur, Tripura and Nagaland; in 2018, 22 cases from the entire region. That is why, says Dr Raman Gangakhedkar, head of Epidemiology and Communicable Diseases at the Indian Council of Medical

Research (ICMR), the path the virus took *en route* to Malappuram, where the six-year-old victim is originally from, may be of academic interest, but has little relevance from a public health perspective. The fact that the numbers of WNV are far lower than those of the other better known mosquito-borne diseases like dengue etc., Dr Gangakhedkar explains, is that "the transmission is not very efficient, the replication rate of the organism is different". However, there is no marker or predictor of who will develop WNV symptoms after infection and who won't, and who will have a brain incursion and develop neurological symptoms, and who won't.

**Precautionary measures**

The Centre has sent a team from the National Centre for Disease Control (NCDC) to help Kerala health authorities deal with the West Nile Virus. The team includes Dr Ruchi Jain, RHO Thiruvananthapuram; Dr Suneet Kaur, assistant director, NCDC; Dr E Rajendran, entomologist, NCDC, Kozhikode; and Dr Binoy Basu, EIS Officer, NCDC. The Indian Council of Medical Research has also been alerted and a close watch is being maintained at central and state levels.

**How J&K Presidential Orders have worked, why move faces challenge**

**EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE**  
 NEW DELHI, MARCH 19

THREE WEEKS after President Ram Nath Kovind issued an executive order amending The Constitution (Application to Jammu and Kashmir) Order, 1954 to extend the provisions of the 77th and 103rd Amendments to the state, the Centre's move has been challenged in the Jammu & Kashmir High Court. The executive order was issued on March 1, the day after the Union Cabinet approved the proposal of the J&K Governor's administration to amend the 1954 Order. The Centre said the amendment "will give benefit of promotion in service to the Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, and also extend the 10 per cent reservation for economically weaker sections in educational institutions and public employment". Major J&K parties said the order violated Article 370 — the provision that regulates J&K's relationship with the Union. On Monday, two lawyers challenged the power of the Governor to make the recommendation without the concurrence of the state government, and pleaded that The Constitution

(Application to Jammu & Kashmir) Amendment Order, 2019, and The Jammu and Kashmir Reservation (Amendment) Ordinance, 2019, be struck down.

**The 1954 Presidential Order**

J&K negotiated the terms of its entry into the Indian Union. When Maharaja Hari Singh signed the Instrument of Accession on October 26, 1947, J&K gave up control over only three subjects: Defence, Foreign Affairs, Communications. A separate Constituent Assembly of J&K was planned to frame the J&K Constitution, and to work out J&K's constitutional relationship with New Delhi. Under Article 370, which was part of the Indian Constitution at its commencement on January 26, 1950, only two articles apply to J&K: Article 1, which defines India, and Article 370 itself. Article 370 provides that other provisions of the Indian Constitution can apply to J&K "subject to such exceptions and modifications as the President may by order specify", and with the concurrence of the state government. State government was defined as "the person for the time being recognised by the President as the Maharaja of Jammu and

Kashmir acting on the advice of the Council of Ministers for the time being in office". The decisions to extend the provisions of the Indian Constitution other than those specified in the Instrument of Accession, however, had to be ratified by the J&K Constituent Assembly.

But the J&K Constituent Assembly was yet to be set up, and the Centre wanted to extend a few provisions of the Constitution to streamline J&K's relationship with the Union. Thus, a Presidential Order was issued on January 26, 1950 itself, with the state government's concurrence. On November 5, 1951, J&K's Constituent Assembly was convened.

The 1950 Order was replaced by The Constitution (Application to Jammu and Kashmir) Order, 1954. This Order, while applying to J&K provisions of Part-III of the Indian Constitution that relates to fundamental rights, introduced Article 35A — which protected laws passed by the state legislature of J&K in respect of permanent residents from any challenge on the ground that they violated any of the fundamental rights. This order was ratified by the Constituent Assembly that also framed the J&K Constitution, before dispersing on November 17, 1956.

**What happened afterward**

This 1954 "mother order" had the requisite concurrence of both the state government and the J&K Constituent Assembly. Subsequently, 42 Presidential orders have been issued — all amendments to the 1954 mother order. But none of these amendments to the 1954 Order have fulfilled the requirement of ratification by the J&K Constituent Assembly. The Centre has argued that an elected state government's consent is enough.

Through these Presidential orders, successive central governments have extended 94 out of the 97 entries in the Union List, and 26 out of the 47 in the Concurrent List to J&K, and made 260 out of the 395 Articles of the Indian Constitution applicable to J&K. This list does not include The Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Securities Interest (SARFAESI) Act, 2002, the GST Acts, and the two constitutional provisions that were extended on March 1.

**Views of the Supreme Court**

In *Prem Nath Kaul vs The State Of Jammu & Kashmir* (1959), a five-judge Constitution

Bench said "the Constitution-makers were obviously anxious that the said relationship should be finally determined by the Constituent Assembly of the State itself". A decade later, the court ruled that (Presidential) orders could still be made through Article 370 (*Sampat Prakash vs State Of Jammu & Kashmir*, 1969). In 1972, the court, while ruling on the replacement of the elected Sadr-e-Riyasat of J&K by a Governor appointed by the Centre, said the Governor is "head of government aided by a council of ministers", and "it is not as if the State government, by such a change (replacing the Sadr-e-Riyasat by the Governor) is made irresponsible to the State Legislature... There is no question of such a change being one in the character of the government from a democratic to a non-democratic system". (*Mohd Maqbool Damnoo vs State Of Jammu And Kashmir*, 1972)

**Governor and the 1954 Order**

Has the Centre issued an amendment to 1954 Order with the consent of the Governor's administration earlier? In 1986, an amendment to the 1954 Order issued with the concurrence of Governor

Jagmohan administration extended to J&K Article 249 of the Indian Constitution, which describes the power of Parliament to legislate, in the national interest, even on matters in the State List. National Conference leaders A R Rather and Mohammad Shafi Uri challenged the order in the J&K High Court. "The petition is still pending. It was never listed for a hearing," Rather said. Amendments were made to the 1954 Order during Governor's Rule in 1993 and 1994 as well. These orders were issued to extend the duration of President's Rule in J&K. The latest order has the consent of the Governor without the requisite aid and advice of the Council of Ministers. In a situation of Central rule, the Governor acts only as a nominee of the Union government and does not meet the definition of state government as laid down by Article 370 and the Supreme Court. Major J&K parties have always opposed the amendments to the 1954 Order without ratification by the Constituent Assembly of the state. The Centre could do it because the SC allowed it. The opposition in J&K has been to the route taken by the Centre, and not to the laws themselves.