



The Indian EXPRESS

FOUNDED BY

RAMNATH GOENKA

BECAUSE THE TRUTH INVOLVES US ALL

THE PEOPLE'S ROAD

Centre must withdraw draconian order to close off Jammu-Kashmir highway. Or else, court or EC must step in

THE FULL EXTENT of what the government has done through its draconian closure of the Jammu-Kashmir highway to civilian movement for two days of the week until May 31 is clear, if it was not earlier, after it was implemented on Sunday. Civilian life was thrown out of gear, while the government added to its own work, including paperwork, by posting officials along the highway in order to allow exceptions, in a range of categories — VVIPs, VIPs, the sick, tourists, government vehicles and employees, students, and the like. The people are naturally filled with anxiety and dread about dealing with this. It is no surprise that Valley folk have already rechristened the road — a lifeline that connects villages and towns with one another and to Srinagar, to the airport, to schools and hospitals, and to Jammu — as the “highway of persecution”. Freedom of movement is guaranteed by the Constitution, so it is inexplicable why the Supreme Court has not yet taken note of these restrictions imposed on a section of the country's citizens, in blatant violation of this fundamental right under Article 19. It is unfortunate that even the Election Commission of India has appeared not to notice how it compromises the electoral process in the name of securing it — by disrupting campaigning, and the constricting the ability of political parties and candidates to mobilise workers, set up public meetings and meet voters.

Even in the name of security, this does not wash. The twice weekly closure is clearly unnecessary, as is visible in how it unfolded on the ground. During the 13-hour closure from 4 am to 5 pm, under 50 security vehicles passed through the 270 km while the movement of tens of thousands of civilians was affected, but on Monday, full fledged security convoys apparently had no problem sharing the road with civilian vehicles. The anomaly can be explained only in two ways — either those who made up the order had no idea of what they were doing; or, as the people in the Valley may fear, it has been imposed as a twice a week collective punishment on them. The movement of troops has been a constant in J&K over the last 30 years. Never before has such a measure been imposed, even in the 1990s, when militancy was far more entrenched and more widespread.

Security forces in the Valley are there to protect Kashmir from India's enemies. If their purpose has changed to protecting themselves from Indian citizens in Kashmir on two days of the week, it is as good as admitting that India has lost the plot. The government must withdraw the measure as soon as possible.

UNDERLINES ITS LINES

BJP's manifesto reiterates its position on key issues — scrapping Article 35A, disturbingly, makes an appearance

ELECTION MANIFESTOS OF political parties are not known to be statements of political daring, or even of political imagination. They go through the routines of re-stating the obvious. The Congress's manifesto for the upcoming general election, made public last week, seemed to make a welcome break with that pallid tradition. It appeared to capture that rare thing — a political party in motion, rethinking its old positions, as on AFSPA and the sedition law, and taking new ones, like on hate crime or a safety net for the poor. The BJP manifesto unveiled on Monday goes back to the rites of manifestos-as-usual. It reiterates the BJP's stated positions on most subjects. Consistency is sometimes a good thing, and the BJP has had a good run at the polls at different levels in the last five years and therefore may arguably not feel the pressure to change, even as the Congress carries the burden of being the challenger. Yet, the BJP's apparent refusal to reconsider its positions on important issues includes those on which the limits of its ideological certitudes have been bared in its five years in power at the Centre.

The underlining of immovable ideological positions begins in the very first chapter in the manifesto titled “Nation first”, in which, after emphasising its “zero tolerance approach to terrorism”, the BJP talks of completing the National Register of Citizens process in Assam and of extending the NRC “in a phased manner” to “other parts of the country”, without showing any acknowledgement of the distortions intrinsic to the process that have come to light. It pledges itself anew to the dangerously misconceived Citizenship Amendment Bill which threatens to further polarise and communalise the complex matrix of identities and insecurities in the Northeast. This section ends with the BJP reiterating its position “since the time of the Jan Sangh” to the abrogation of Article 370 and to “annulling” Article 35A of the Constitution — both of these positions have only deepened the turmoil in the Valley in the last few years on the Modi government's watch. Under the section called “Cultural heritage”, the party repeats its stand on the “expeditious” construction of the Ram mandir, and on Sabarimala, to secure “constitutional protection on issues related to faith and belief”.

On other issues, the BJP's reiterations are welcome. It promises to double farmers' income, and ease the burden on the middle classes. It promises investment of Rs 100 lakh crore in the infrastructure sector by 2024, pucca houses for all till 2022 and a Jal Jiwan Mission. In all, the BJP's manifesto 2019 does not break new ground and promises continuity even in its promises of change.

NON-STATE ACTORS

On the eve of elections, the prop in propaganda is being supplied by private enterprise and retail creativity

WEAREN'T YET done pondering the influence of social media on elections, and we already have to come to terms with a new device for swaying voters: Traditional moving pictures. The biopic on Narendra Modi, which was slated for a release coinciding with the first phase of polling, has been shelved by the producers following concerns about violation of the model code of conduct. The trailer is out, though, and, on February 12, another film about a once and future chowkidar released on YouTube, and has garnered 4 million views. Set in the fictional village of “Bharatpur”, which is beset by the residents of neighbouring “Khanpur”, it depicts a chowkidar who is brought in from “Gurjarpur” by “Armyman”, the village headman, to set things right. It's a transparent parable.

Made in western UP on a tiny budget, that was a handicraft product compared to the NaMo channel, now available on all TV carriers, which is running a serial biopic of its own, depicting a boy with a tea kettle on the platform of a railway station, encouraging lower caste children to go to school. The ticker at the bottom of the screen reprises the prime minister's slogans and his observations about Opposition leaders like Mamata Banerjee, who are attacking him in the course of the election campaign.

Even as some film professionals appeal to the public to oppose the BJP, other lesser-known non-state actors are using moving pictures to improve the chances of the ruling party. The gig is being performed at arm's length by private entities, leaving the beneficiary untouched by contagion. And unlike the stock market, where talking-up is curbed by regulators, the response in the political marketplace has been patchy. It's playing by the script, and by the time the model code of conduct catches up, the election could well be over.



K SUJATHA RAO

THE FORTHCOMING ELECTION is going to be an inflexion point for India's health system story — how affordable, how accessible, how equal? Though health is not a political priority as yet, two visions of the future health policy seem to be clearly emerging. One, espoused by the BJP — a centralised hospital insurance-driven health system designed on the Medicare model of the US. The other, of the Congress, calling for guaranteeing every citizen with access to essential health services, resembling the UK and the European model. Both these approaches are widely divergent and will profoundly impact the three pillars of the health system — access, quality and affordability.

Given India's fragile economic system and multiple demands on it, notwithstanding India being the second-fastest growing economy, sustainability will be a major concern. The two thought streams, propounded by the BJP and the Congress, are embedded in and reflect two social value systems: In the US, it is individual liberty and personal responsibility, while Europe and countries like Japan are driven by ideas of social responsibility and state accountability. The emergence of these two ideological streams had their origins in the rise of Marxism in early 19th century and World War II that devastated UK's economy, to declare that “Individuals should recognise the duty to be well and restoration of the sick person to health is a duty of the state and the sick person. And so universal coverage as a minimum — a solid and level floor, no interior walls and a roof that need not be level but whose height is determined only by people's own wishes and means”.

These approaches and ideas manifest themselves in health policy in different ways. With its strong belief in individual liberty, the US confines itself to subsidised care for the poor and elderly, regulates stringently for quality and allows financial incentives like profits to encourage technological innovation. As a consequence, it has over 20 million of its population without access, despite spending 18 per cent of its GDP on health. The UK and Europe, on the other hand, believe in the principle of collective responsibility ensuring every individual's inherent right

US vs Europe in India

Healthcare system hanging on hospital insurance without foundation of primary care is unsustainable

to health and wellbeing, thereby making the state develop financial and regulatory systems that guarantee all individuals equal access to healthcare services and products. These countries spend an average of 10 per cent of the GDP on health with far better outcomes than the US.

When India won independence from the British, we were driven by the European values of equality that got imposed onto a highly stratified social system. By providing every citizen the right to vote, we signaled to ourselves that every life matters and has equal value. This was a powerful message in a country faced with huge inequalities. Some successes have been achieved in implementing affirmative action. Over the years, however, the economic and social models trended more along the values of individual liberty rather than social equality. Disparities have widened to such an extent that latest data seems to suggest that 1 per cent of India's population enjoys 70 per cent of its wealth. While an Indian is among the 10 richest of the world, we also account for the world's poorest, over 36 per cent of children stunted due to chronic malnutrition, half of the population defecating in the open and nearly three-quarters without access to tap water. The rising burden of disease in India is but a reflection of such deprivation of essential and basic social goods and the wide inequalities cutting across regions, castes, gender and age.

Government, through its various state instrumentalities, and made up of individuals driven by their own ideas of justice and development, becomes the allocator of public budgets and resources. To understand why India is a sick country, why it has such a huge disease burden, such wide inequities in accessing medical treatment, and how it has ended up with a fragmented, broken and dysfunctional system of healthcare, and yet, continues to spend only about 1 per cent of its GDP on health, one needs to understand the values that drive our social, economic and political development. Notwithstanding the divergent approaches of the BJP and the Congress to health system development, there is room for ensuring that the elected government

adopts a balanced approach based on evidence and sets pathways that will help build, in the long term, a sustainable, equitable and affordable health system. But this is not an easy task. Stacked against an incremental and systematic building of the health system blocks, in the manner that Thailand or Turkey did, are powerful lobbies of the health industry that support the narrow agenda of the hospital insurance programme. These lobbies have the support of US-based foundations and donors, World Bank, CII, FICCI, the medical associations and companies related to health insurance, data aggregating IT, medical devices etc. The public health approach that seeks to prioritise comprehensive primary care as an entitlement of every citizen is clearly numbed out and would require peoples' movements and participation. This is critical as with the meagre resources of 1.1 per cent of GDP, choices are being made. It is easy to say that no trade-off is being made — sadly, the truth is otherwise.

No one would argue that hospital insurance is a wrong policy and that only primary care should be the focus. But a system hanging on hospitals without the foundation of primary care is a sure recipe for disaster as it is clearly unaffordable and unsustainable. Effective primary care not only reduces one-third of hospitalisation but by prioritising well being over sickness, it removes the causal factors to disease and illness. It is important to reiterate the importance of these issues as the last budget showed a 300 per cent increase for health insurance. With the revision of hospital rates, the cost of the health insurance programme will also double and continue to rise.

In the absence of a commensurate increase in health budgets, the price will be paid by the large swathes of the poor and middle classes who desperately need good quality primary healthcare. Its absence is responsible for the proportionately higher number of premature deaths, one quarter of the global TB burden and a million dying just for want of clean air. In the backdrop of such data, does India have a choice?

The writer is former Health Secretary, Government of India



ARUN KUMAR

GENERAL ELECTIONS ARE the time for the political parties to vie with each other to produce more innovative and inclusive manifestos than their rivals. There is something for everyone, especially for the marginalised sections. They also promise to end poverty, promote industry and lower the inflation rate. However, one thing they do not do is say how all this will be implemented.

The present government had promised to double farm incomes but farm incomes have actually declined due to the two big shocks to the economy and droughts. It promised two crore jobs per annum but the situation is so bad that the government has denied the official data on unemployment and claims that no one has good data.

History shows that governments typically do not fulfill the promises from manifestos. In 1991, the Congress promised that within 150 days of assuming office, it would roll back prices to the pre-1989 level. After assuming office, the party said that was not possible.

It seems that governments do not feel accountable to the public. Parties are tied to vested interests and the general welfare of society is incidental. This has been true to various degrees since independence and has reinforced the “trickle down” approach to development. The lot of the marginalised sections has improved marginally, while the gains of development have largely accrued to the elite groups. This has aggravated since the

FOR MEANINGFUL MANIFESTOS

Parties must show how the desirable is feasible

New Economic Policies, launched in 1991. Any talk of using taxation as a means of redistribution is dismissed out of hand. It is said that such policies will be a disincentive to the well-off to invest and the economy would slow down. It is also argued that this will drive capital abroad. Transfers to the poor, it is claimed, will make them lazy; alternatively, wages will rise and India will lose its competitive position in the global markets. There is some truth in all these arguments.

But the bigger issue pertains to citizenship. Should a vast number of people continue to live in degrading conditions? Often, the blame is put on the poor themselves: They lack the skills for modern jobs. But, is it not true that this is because they have not had the opportunity to attain good education or obtain proper nutrition and health facilities? At the time of Independence, it was accepted that the ills of society — poverty and illiteracy — have to be collectively resolved. The state was given a large role in the economy. This was the Nehruvian consensus.

This consensus was undermined by the rapid growth of crony capitalism and rise of monopolies despite the Monopolies and Restrictive Trade Practices Act. In 1991, the paradigm shift meant that individuals have to solve their own problems — by going to the markets. This has led to a massive increase in inequalities. To mitigate some of these crises, UPA-1 opted for the MGNREGS, mid-day meal

scheme and Right to Education. Even though these are palliatives, they represent a partial return to the Nehruvian paradigm.

Inequalities have continued to grow. Recent data shows that 1 per cent Indians have 70 per cent of the wealth and 22 per cent of the incomes. If black incomes are included, these figures become 85 per cent of wealth and 45 per cent of the income. This is a key reason for the economic slowdown and protests by large sections of the population. The Modi government initially promised to reverse the Nehruvian elements in policies but was forced to continue MGNREGS and the Right to Food programmes. It added the Ujjwala Scheme and modified its pro-business slant.

The Congress's manifesto proposes a more inclusive society. It recognises that state has to take greater responsibility for the marginalised sections — the Nyaay scheme is one such. But can one be sure?

Accountability to the public has to be built into the programmes. A key feature of this would be to indicate how resources will be raised for all the desirable goals in the manifesto. If one does not show that the “desirable is feasible,” chances are that the promises will remain on paper, as in the past.

Kumar is Malcolm Adiseshiah Chair Professor, Institute of Social Sciences and author of Ground Scorching Tax

APRIL 9, 1979, FORTY YEARS AGO

SWARAN BLAMES INDIRA CONGRESS PRESIDENT SWARAN Singh reiterated in Lucknow the party's commitment to inner democracy and collective leadership and said that unity talks between the two Congresses were called off because these basic principles were not acceptable to Mrs Indira Gandhi. Inaugurating the 42nd political conference of the Uttar Pradesh Congress, he warned that any organisation which depended on an individual was bound to meet the same fate as the Congress in the last general election. Singh maintained that had did not compromise on principles to merge with the Congress (I). He accused Mrs Gandhi of suddenly changing her stand on

unity, resulting in the failure of the talks.

PROTESTS FOR BHUTTO MILITARY COURTS IN Pakistan have ordered whipping, jail terms or fines for 50 supporters of executed former prime minister, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto for organising anti-government demonstrations, the government announced in Islamabad. The defendants had been detained on Wednesday and Friday as protests erupted in a number of cities in Pakistan following the execution of Bhutto. One of the reasons the protests came to an end is that Bhutto's PPP has been left without a leader. The PPP supporters had expected Mumtaz Bhutto, a relation of Bhutto and a

former Cabinet colleague, and Pirzada to lead them. Now it appears that both of them had decided to adopt low profile, at least for now.

BODY MISSING

THE BODY OF the former prime minister of Iran, Amir Abass Hoveida, who was executed on April 7, has disappeared from the mortuary in Tehran. The BBC Teheran correspondent said the body was in the mortuary earlier in the day. Hoveida's family had asked for it to be embalmed. Hours later, mortuary officials said it had been handed over but could not say to whom. There were demonstrations at the city cemetery against any attempt to bury the body there.



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WHAT THE OTHERS SAY

"It is worth noting that as China becomes more open, the EU has become more vigilant against China. This will negatively affect the expansion of bilateral cooperation."
— GLOBAL TIMES, CHINA

Diplomacy by stealth

Manifestos of BJP, Congress indicate that when it comes to foreign policy, ambiguity is better than clarity



RAJA MANDALA

BY C RAJA MOHAN

"ABSENCE OF EVIDENCE", former US defence secretary Donald Rumsfeld had said famously, is not "evidence of absence". Rumsfeld was answering questions about the US inability to find weapons of mass destruction in Iraq. Washington, you might recall, had cited Iraq's WMD as the principal justification for ousting Saddam Hussein's regime in early 2003. While Rumsfeld was elegant in his evasion, there is a kernel of truth in his formulation.

Consider the question of Indian foreign policy. Looking at the foreign policy sections of the election manifestos, you might be forgiven for thinking that the Indian political class is barely interested in the world beyond its shores. On the face of it, this seems odd. After all, India's relative weight has rapidly risen in the last two decades. India's aggregate GDP, in nominal terms, is now close to \$3 trillion and is ranked fifth in the world. India's total annual trade, in goods and services, is now little over \$1 trillion. India's economic exposure has never been as large as it is today.

India's role in shaping the global balance of power, shaping global regimes on areas ranging from trade and environment to the maritime and outer space domains has also steadily risen. No wonder chancelleries across the world, think tanks and academia pay lots of attention to the sources and consequences of India's international orientation. Yet, Indian political parties seem reluctant to discuss either the changing world around us or the ways in which India can secure and advance its interests in it.

There was a time when communists began any national assessment with a discussion of the "global correlation of forces". But the CPM manifesto has little analysis of the changing global situation. It has clear answers though: India should distance itself from the US, revise the India-US nuclear agreement and defence cooperation arrangements, promote global nuclear disarmament, multipolarity and reactivate the SAARC. One can surely disagree with this somewhat static worldview. But there is no question that it puts across clear positions.

If the CPM is too explicit in what it would like to do with foreign policy, the Congress and BJP carefully avoid taking definitive positions. As parties seeking to govern, they think ambiguity is better than clarity. Consider the following: The Congress says "We will work closely with all countries of the world, and particularly India's neighbours and the G-20 countries, in various multilateral forums and institutions." You can't quarrel with that. But what does that mean in the real world?

The BJP frames the foreign policy section of the manifesto in terms of a rising India playing a larger role. But it quickly moves on to the comforting generalisation that "the ancient Indian vision of 'Vasudhaiva

Kutumbakam' will form the basis in our global co-operation for progress, prosperity, peace and security, especially with friendly countries and neighbours".

Does this mean the leadership of the two main parties is unaware or unwilling to focus clearly on foreign policy challenges? The lack of evidence, however, is not evidence of absence. If you give credit where it's due, you will note that India's political classes have successfully navigated the demanding international environment when the Cold War came to an end in 1991 and the national economy went broke. While the bureaucracy remained naturally conservative, it was the political leadership which pushed through a range of initiatives.

The nuclear tests of 1998 and the diplomacy pursued by three successive governments to end India's prolonged global nuclear isolation is one example. The effort to find lasting solutions to the boundary dispute with China and the Kashmir question with Pakistan was another. Although it did not succeed, it opened the door for some creative thinking about India's most difficult strategic legacies. The political class has also tried to recast India's engagement with its near and extended neighbourhoods. It has compelled Delhi's land-lubbers to start thinking maritime.

The problem is not the lack of big ideas within our political class. There are a host of other reasons that limit public engagement on foreign policy. Few parties believe foreign policy is of any importance in winning elections. Pakistan might look like an exception; but then, it is really about domestic politics. Although general elections are a good moment to reflect on the world, the foreign policy sections of the manifestos are at best an afterthought and give no guidance on what the Congress or the BJP might do when in power.

The reluctance to set formal public goals on foreign policy, however, makes it harder to form an elite consensus within parties and across them. This, in turn, means suboptimal outcomes in Indian diplomacy. The differences within the Congress, for example, severely complicated India's engagement with the US during the UPA rule.

The BJP led by Atal Bihari Vajpayee had invented the phrase that the US is a "natural ally" of India, but the party under the leadership of L K Advani began to undermine the logic of that proposition when it sat in Opposition. Differences within the BJP and Congress also prevented the Vajpayee and Manmohan Singh governments respectively from pursuing effective negotiations with Pakistan. A more substantive public debate on foreign policy goals might have expanded popular support for these initiatives and allowed India to better leverage the external opportunities that came its way.

The next government in Delhi will confront many challenges, including the unpredictable trajectories of China and America. Delhi's responses will be generated on the run, through improvisation, by the instinct of key personalities and the quality of bureaucratic advice. That is a recipe for India's continuing underperformance on the global stage.

The writer is director, Institute of South Asian Studies, National University of Singapore and contributing editor on international affairs for The Indian Express

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

SELF AND THE WORLD

THIS REFERS TO the article, 'Poverty of pedagogy' (IE, April 8). Education and learning should be enjoyed, not be a burden. Evaluation and grades are important. But a sole focus on them doesn't help in quality development of the child. It's high time pedagogy moved beyond laying stress on cramming facts and encouraging students to creatively engage with the self and the world.

Sidharth Sharma, Mohali

FACTS, STRATEGIES

THIS REFERS TO the article, 'Targeting facts' (IE, April 8). The writer is right that elections present our parties an opportunity to come up with new policies to tackle intractable problems. However, many of these parties fudge facts and figures to suit their electoral strategies.

Tarsem Singh, Mahilpur

SOCIAL MEDIA ETHICS

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'Timed out' (IE, April 8). Applications like Facebook, Twitter, Tiktok, Whatsapp and Snapchat have become part of our lives. There is no denying that almost all of these have some negative effects. But banning them is no solution. The calls for greater regulation are vague and can hurt the right to privacy. What we need is a long-term strategy where the end user is well educated and informed and can, as a result, make rational choices, rather than over-arching oversight.

Anirudh Parashar, Solan

LETTER OF THE WEEK AWARD

To encourage quality reader intervention, The Indian Express offers the Letter of the Week award. The letter adjudged the best for the week is published every Saturday. Letters may be e-mailed to editpage@expressindia.com or sent to The Indian Express, B-1/B, Sector 10, Noida-UP 201301. Letter writers should mention their postal address and phone number.

THE WINNER RECEIVES SELECT EXPRESS PUBLICATIONS

FOUNDER'S WORDS

THIS REFERS TO the article, 'Advani ki baat' (IE, April 6). LK Advani, one of the founder members of the BJP, has given the right message to his party colleagues. There is indeed a clear difference between an enemy and rival, and it's better that the BJP leadership heed his advice. Dissent lies at the core of any democratic setup and it only helps the party grow to a different level when all kinds of voices are heard.

Bal Govind, Noida

The Pune plan for China

There is a series of steps that the next government in New Delhi should take to augment and cement relations with Beijing



GAUTAM BAMBAWALE

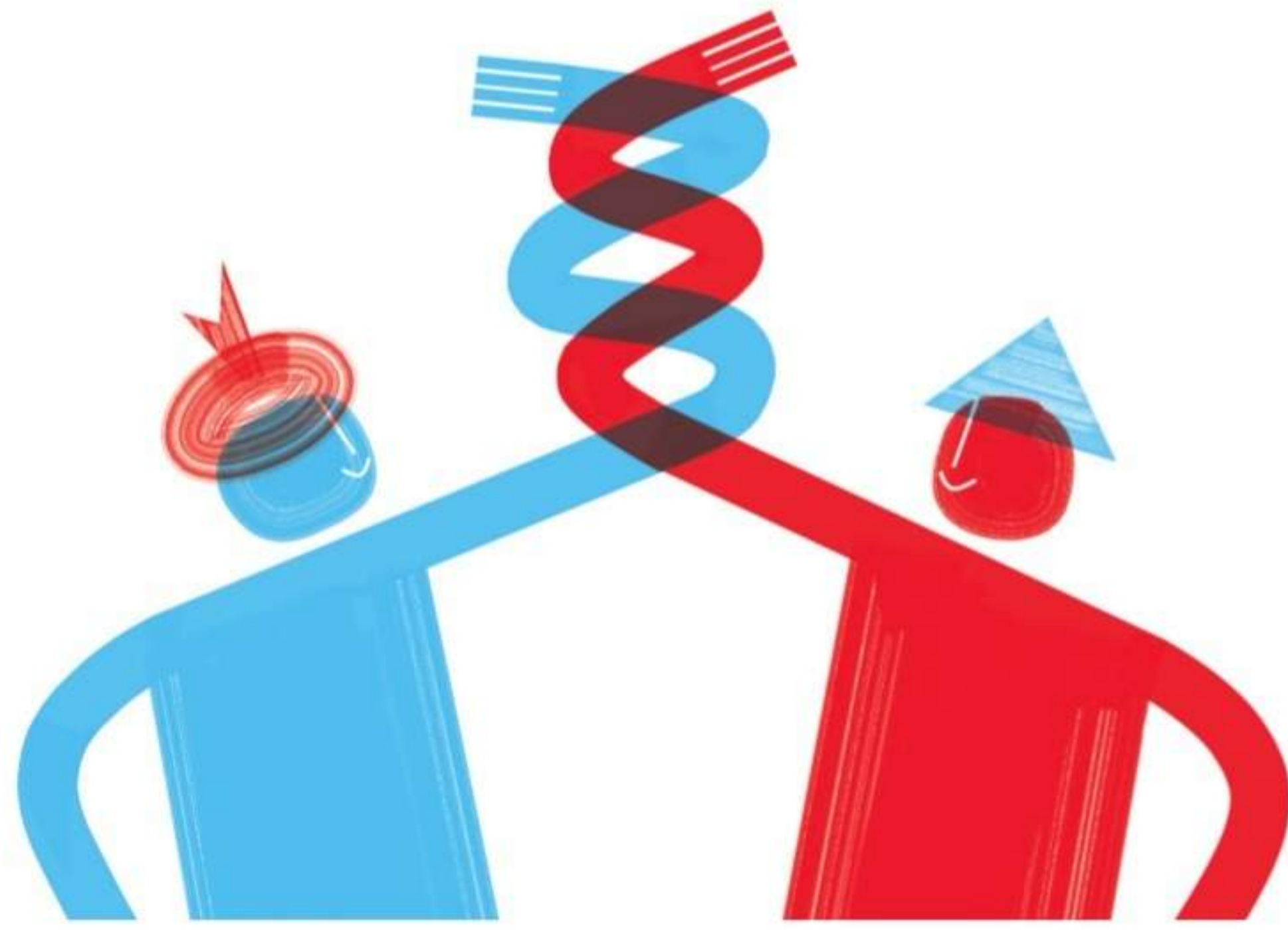
EVEN AS INDIA heads into a general election, it is important to keep focus on and not lose track of how the country must shape its foreign policy over the coming five years. Suggestions, inputs, advice on these issues will be valuable to whichever government is formed. Within our larger foreign policy matrix, there is no denying the fact that India's relations with China constitute one of our most important challenges in the national security arena. Thus, even while attention is currently on the election schedule, thinkers, analysts, academicians and observers in western India have been giving a lot of thought to the next steps in India-China ties. Since these plans and ideas have been sharpened, fleshed out and given final shape through debate and discussion in the city of Pune, it would be appropriate to call it the "Pune Action Plan on India-China Relations".

First, given the nature of China's polity, which is highly centralised, it will continue to remain important to drive the relationship from the top down. Therefore, we agree that there should be intense political interaction, starting with the top leadership and filtering down to the ministerial level and then senior official level. It will be essential to have an early visit to India by Chinese President Xi Jinping in the second half of 2019 to keep up the momentum from the Wuhan Informal Summit of April 2018 as well as to impart new impulses with the formation in office in India as a result of our elections. Whether the interaction between Xi and the Indian prime minister continues to be of the informal variant we experienced at Wuhan will be for the two sides to decide.

The positive aspect of the informal summit format is that it permits just the two leaders of the most populous nations on the globe to interact with each other over significant amounts of time, thereby enabling the two to indulge in strategic communication on each country's hopes and fears, their assessments and calculations, their dreams and their goals. Such an exchange of views is indeed of significant value, especially amongst nations which need to build upon mutual trust.

Second, it will be important to enhance military-to-military interaction and cooperation between India and China. Currently, the exchanges are mainly between the armies of the two countries. It will be essential to expand this to the navies, which are meeting on the high seas more often. Such exchanges should not merely be limited to study visits, attending courses in the military schools of the other side and perfunctory port calls by naval ships. They need to go beyond such symbolism and aim at getting a better understanding of the doctrines, practices and assessments of the other side. Naturally, this will not be immediately possible but a start has to be made somewhere. On the border itself, there is a need for new confidence-building measures, which will aim at defusing the increasing close proximity situations that have been witnessed in the recent past. Additional Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) may also have to be put into place.

Third, to address the increasingly adverse balance of trade India experiences with China, it is essential to work with the Chinese government to ensure greater market access in China for Indian pharmaceutical products, particularly our cheap formulations. Also, we must look at the "invisible" part of our



CR Sasikumar

payment balance with China and make a focused effort at attracting more Chinese tourists. Marketing Incredible India in China will be a first step, but we shall also have to work with Chinese travel agents, the various airlines which fly between our countries, the new online agencies as well as the social media methodology to popularise India as a tourism destination. Naturally, we will also have to ensure facilities in India for Chinese tourists who have very special needs. If such an effort is indeed made, our mountains and our beaches, our temples and our heritage sites, our Buddhist trail as well as our wildlife sanctuaries are likely to be hugely popular with the Chinese — one estimate states that we can expect 1.5 million tourists to visit India by 2020.

Fourth, it is important to acknowledge that China has rediscovered Bollywood. The success of relatively recent offerings such as *Dangal*, *Secret Superstar* and *Hindi Medium* indicates that the Chinese audience will flock to movies which have a strong theme, an excellent script and good acting. While Bollywood will continue to tap the Chinese market on its own, since the government is important in China, India should offer whatever assistance may be required by our filmmakers in marketing their wares in China. Films are important since they are a vehicle for promoting mutual trust and understanding between societies and peoples, while at the same time helping earn our movie-makers important markets and foreign exchange.

In addition to films, India's other export which is reaching out to millions of ordinary Chinese folks is yoga. We must continue to promote yoga in China and, once again, this is best done through the private sector, but the government could consider effecting policies which promote this "soft power" export. It is significant that in order to celebrate International Yoga Day in China on June 21 each year, our official outposts in that country are able to bring in as many as 8,000 to 10,000 people at each of the many events in China.

Sixth, it will be essential to engage China in the field of sports, where they are extremely strong. While Vivo and Oppo will continue to sponsor the Indian Premier League in cricket, we can encourage Chinese coaches in table tennis, gymnastics, track and field, as well as

On global issues, India has established the International Solar Alliance (ISA) in partnership with France with its headquarters in India. China, which is an important manufacturer of solar panels and other related equipment, must join the ISA at an early date. This would be a win-win for both countries and will provide an excellent example of how the two can work together in international organisations.

shooting, archery and swimming to come to India and train our youngsters. We shall benefit from such assistance.

On global issues, India has established the International Solar Alliance (ISA) in partnership with France with its headquarters in India. China, which is an important manufacturer of solar panels and other related equipment, must join the ISA at an early date. This would be a win-win proposition for both countries and will provide an excellent example of how the two can work together in international organisations. Now that Japan and Saudi Arabia have joined the ISA, it is time to step up our encouragement to China to participate in this important area of environmental policy where we have no fundamental differences.

We shall have to continue working with China to convince them that they must remove their hold at the UN Security Council on the listing of Masood Azhar under the 1267 sanctions. We are confident our diplomats must be on the job even as we speak.

Eighth, the negotiations on the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) are now mainly between India and China. We must ensure that RCEP has a strong commitment with respect to services and the movement of natural persons which is important for India. Perhaps, side letters between India and China on bringing the lower tariffs into effect at later dates may be the way to resolve the current impasse.

Ninth, it is important to understand that better relations with China do not mean we have to go slow in our relations with other countries — whether the ASEAN or Australia, Japan or the US. Putting our links with China on a firmer footing can be done simultaneously with stronger ties with other players in the region. Indian diplomacy is nimble enough to face this challenge.

Looked at holistically, the Pune Action Plan provides a comprehensive methodology for the soon to be newly-elected Government of India to proceed fast forward in its relationship with China in the second half of 2019.

Bambawale, a former Indian Ambassador to Bhutan, Pakistan and China, is currently a distinguished professor at Symbiosis International (Deemed University), Pune

Spinning the right yarn

Problems in Indian cotton need ecological understanding, not biotechnology



ANDREW PAUL GUTIERREZ

HARSH DAMODARAN'S ARTICLE, 'White gold: How a revolution was reversed' (IE, March 21) has been described by Indian colleagues as mischievous. But as a scientist who has analysed cotton production worldwide for 45 years and Indian cotton for the past decade, I would call the article misinformed on biology and based on a macroeconomic argument that has little to do with how well most farmers are doing. I doubt Damodaran would base his household economics on aggregate national statistics; yet that is the argument he is making with regards to Bt cotton production in India. The real question is how well are farmers doing, and not whether India is number one or two in cotton production — if farmers are doing well, that national statistic takes care of itself.

But let's unpack the issues a bit. Yes, between 2003-04 and 2011-12, India's cotton output more than doubled — from 14 million bales (of 480 pounds or 218 kg each) to 29 million bales, 302 kg per hectare in 2002-03 to 566 kg in 2013-14. There was an expansion in crop area from 7.67 million hectares to 11.96 million hectares during this period, and an initial reduction in insecticide use with Bt technology. But the real question is: Were hybrid

cotton and the Bt technology needed in the first place? The answer is clearly no.

Improved Indian F1 hybrid long season cotton varieties began to be introduced in the 1970s. They required increases in fertiliser and insecticide to protect against the native pink bollworm. As insecticide use grew, regional outbreaks of secondary pests, namely the so-called American bollworm, were induced by the ecological disruption. They caused havoc and suppressed yields. In cotton, the more you spray, the greater the outbreaks of pests — this phenomenon has occurred worldwide. Once on the insecticide treadmill, farmers end up spending money to lose money. Starting in 2002, the Bt technology was introduced into F1 hybrid long season varieties to solve the bollworm problem. (Note that yield potential is a property of the variety and agronomic practices and not the Bt technology). The introduction of hybrid Bt cotton led to an initial reduction in insecticide use, but by 2012, insecticide use was at pre-2002 levels, and now targeted still newer induced secondary pests (for example, whitefly, mealybugs, jassid). In addition, resistance to insecticides and to Bt toxins was developing in pink bollworm and American bollworm — quite likely other pests

as well. Indian cotton farmers were now riding both the insecticide and biotechnology treadmills in the face of stagnant yields.

As uniquely produced in India, the high-priced manually pollinated F1 Bt hybrid cotton seed can be planted for one-season and is therefore, an industry value capture mechanism that traps farmers into annual purchases of seed. Nowhere else in the world is this type of F1 hybrid cotton grown.

Another obvious question is why are yields in the rest of the world more than double the highest average in India? The answer lies in the use of long season varieties and the high cost of Indian hybrid Bt seed that lead to sub-optimal planting densities — this sets the ceiling on yield. In addition, yields are affected by inter-seasonal differences in rainfall, induced pest outbreaks and, the effects of increasing pest resistance to insecticides and to the Bt technology. Most of central and south Indian cotton is rainfed, and low-density long season cottons are simply inappropriate, and further encourage late season buildup of pests and greater insecticide use.

The solution is planting rainfed short season high density (SS-HD) cotton as developed at ICAR, Nagpur, and other institutions — cot-

ton that could double yields, avoid pink bollworm infestations and hence reduce insecticide use and obviate the need for Bt technology. Because the Indian F1 hybrid technology is costly and really doesn't contribute to yield, it is inappropriate for implementation in SS-HD cottons. Fully fertile hybrid varieties such as those developed in China could be developed for India, but seed companies would lose control of their IPRs. Further, as a warning, the use of fertile GMO varieties for food crops would lead to contamination of non-GMO seed-stock.

The solution to the dystopic Indian cotton system lies in developing an ecological understanding using the SS-HD cotton as a basis. Damodaran exposes his bias when he asks: "Does arbitrary fixing of sale price and technology fee for seed make sense?" He wrongly supposes that the limited yield gains have come from biotechnology innovation. Small and subsistence farmers of India have paid a huge price on the gallows of current hybrid Bt cotton, and they deserve honest on the ground solutions.

The writer is Professor Emeritus, University of California at Berkeley

TELLING NUMBERS

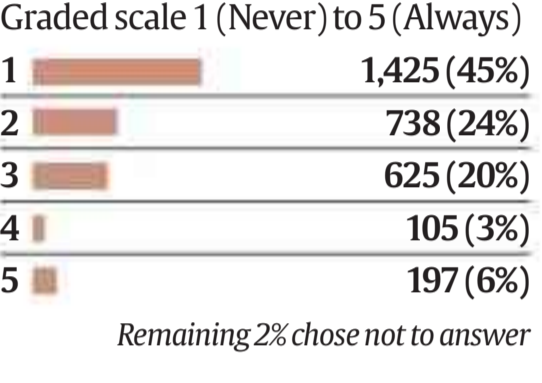
What WhatsApp users believed, disbelieved and shared — based on a survey in poll-bound states

KARISHMA MEHROTRA
NEW DELHI, APRIL 8

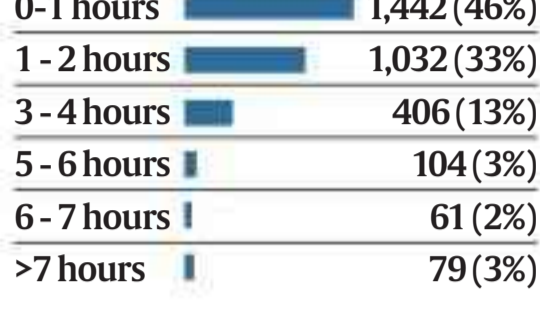
HOW MUCH time does an Indian user spend on WhatsApp daily — there were 250 million monthly active users in 2017 — and how likely are they to believe whatever messages they see, especially in an election season or in an atmosphere where misinformation has led to violence?

Over the last one year, technology-centred NGO Digital Empowerment Foundation interviewed roughly 3,000 people from Tier II and Tier III cities in 11 states about their WhatsApp usage and awareness. Six of these states were due for Assembly elections while the study was being

HOW OFTEN DO YOU BELIEVE INFORMATION YOU RECEIVE ON WHATSAPP?

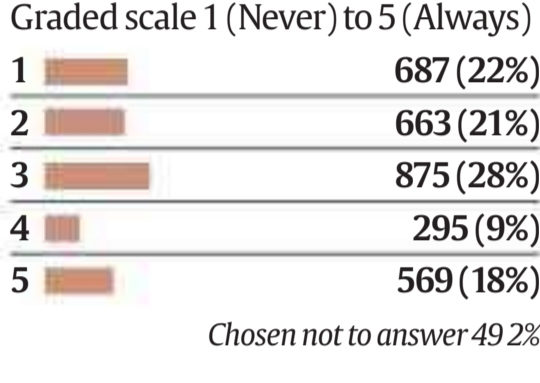


ON A TYPICAL DAY, HOW MANY HOURS DO YOU SPEND ON WHATSAPP?

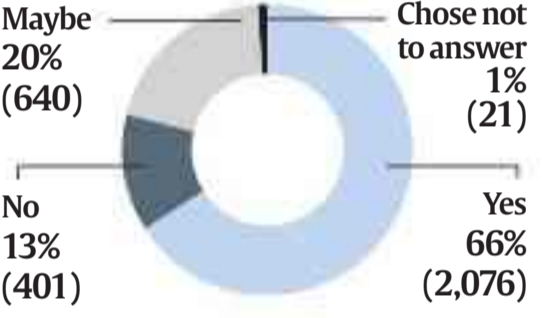


conducted, while the other five states had seen a high number of misinformation-related violent incidents, according to the organisation, whose survey has been accessed exclusively by *The Indian Express*. Over half the respondents were students, while a little less than a third were policemen.

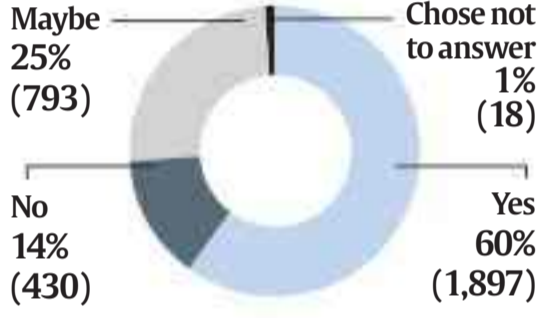
HOW OFTEN DO YOU RECEIVE USEFUL INFORMATION VIA WHATSAPP?



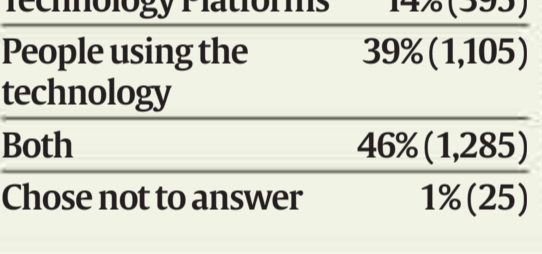
DO YOU THINK VIRAL MESSAGES ON WHATSAPP CAN LEAD TO INCIDENTS OF UNREST?



DO YOU THINK WHATSAPP IS BEING / CAN BE USED AS A POSITIVE MESSAGING CHANNEL?



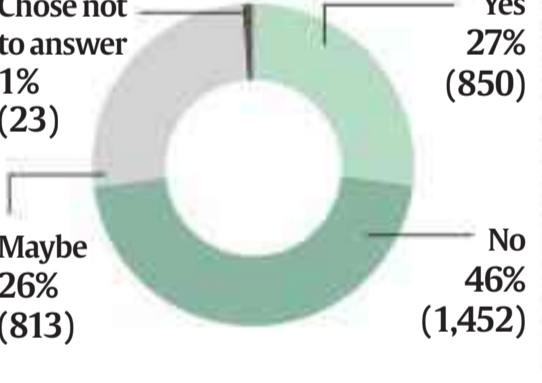
WHO DO YOU THINK IS TO BLAME FOR MISINFORMATION, DISINFORMATION AND FAKE NEWS?



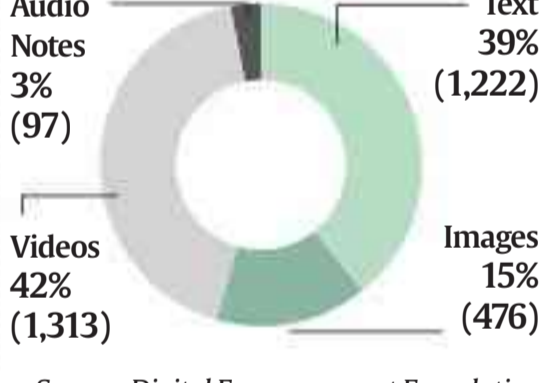
WHAT DO YOU DO WHEN YOU RECEIVE A FORWARD ON WHATSAPP?



DO YOU THINK YOUR MESSAGES ARE FREE FROM SURVEILLANCE ON WHATSAPP?



WHAT MEDIUM DO YOU BELIEVE THE MOST WHEN RECEIVING NEWS?



SIMPLY PUT

The cases against Vijay Mallya

The businessman is under investigation by multiple agencies, and faces charges of cheating, criminal conspiracy, money laundering and diversion of loan funds. He has denied wrongdoing.

KHUSHBOO NARAYAN
MUMBAI, APRIL 8

FUGITIVE LIQUOR baron Vijay Mallya, whose written application for permission to appeal an order for his extradition to India was rejected by the United Kingdom High Court last week, and his failed venture Kingfisher Airlines Ltd, are under investigation by the Enforcement Directorate (ED), Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI), Serious Fraud Investigation Office (SFIO), and Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi) for loan defaults of over Rs 10,000 crore to a consortium of Indian banks led by the State Bank of India (SBI).

Mallya faces charges of cheating, criminal conspiracy, money laundering and diversion of loan funds. A few of his companies, including Kingfisher Airlines, face charges of violating The Companies Act, 2013, and norms laid down by the capital markets regulator.

Mallya has denied any wrongdoing. He has the option to apply for an oral consideration of his appeal, followed by a representation to the United Kingdom Home Secretary, invoking his human rights.

Enforcement Directorate

The ED has charged Mallya under Sections 3 and 4 of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA). The agency has alleged that the now defunct Kingfisher Airlines "diverted" at least Rs 3,547 crore of the loan that it received.

The ED's complaint has listed five instances of alleged diversion of loan funds granted to Kingfisher Airlines by lenders: (i) the diversion of Rs 3,432.40 crore through "over-invoicing" of lease rentals of aircraft between April 2008 and March



Vijay Mallya and the now defunct Kingfisher Airlines are accused of defaulting on and "diverting" large loans from banks. Express Archive

2012; (ii) the diversion of Rs 45.42 crore "for making payment towards the rental lease" of a corporate jet which was used "exclusively" by Mallya; (iii) the diversion of Rs 50.90 crore from Kingfisher Airlines to the Force India Formula One team that Mallya controlled; (iv) the diversion of Rs 15.90 crore from Kingfisher Airlines to Mallya's firm that owned the Indian Premier League cricket team Royal Challengers Bangalore; and (v) the diversion of Rs 2.80 crore to ICICI Bank as repayment of an earlier loan to Kingfisher Airlines.

The ED has accused Kingfisher Airlines and Mallya of "concealment, possession, acquisition, and use of proceeds of crime". It

has also accused United Breweries Holdings Ltd of assisting Mallya in money laundering by not honouring a corporate guarantee that the company gave to the banks, which was to be invoked in case of a loan default by Kingfisher Airlines.

Both the ED and the CBI have alleged that Mallya did not fully disclose his assets while executing a personal guarantee agreement with lenders when the loans of Kingfisher Airlines were restructured in December 2010. The agencies have also claimed to have found that Mallya had "amassed huge properties outside India, especially in United Kingdom, USA, France and Africa" and that he "has got interest in

various companies which are created/in-corporated outside India".

CBI

The CBI has charged Mallya under Sections 120B (criminal conspiracy) and 420 (cheating) of the Indian Penal Code, and Sections 13(1)(d) and 13(2) of the Prevention of Corruption Act.

The CBI has accused Kingfisher Airlines, its corporate guarantor, United Breweries Holdings, and personal guarantor, Mallya, of giving "several glaring misrepresentations and false information" to lenders. It has claimed to have found oral and documentary evidence to show Mallya's "intention" to cheat the bank.

Sebi

The capital markets regulator, Sebi, has banned Mallya from accessing the securities market until January 2021 for alleged "diversion of funds perpetrated in a listed company by way of dubious and concealed financial statements/projections or false books of accounts".

Fugitive Economic Offender

In January, a special court in Mumbai declared Mallya a fugitive economic offender, the first such designation under the Fugitive Economic Offenders (FEO) Act, 2018.

The Act defines a fugitive economic offender as "any individual against whom a warrant for arrest in relation to a Scheduled Offence has been issued by any Court in India, who (i) has left India so as to avoid criminal prosecution; or (ii) being abroad, refuses to return to India to face criminal prosecution". A "Scheduled Offence" is one which is "specified in the Schedule, if the total value involved in such offence or offences is one hundred crore rupees or more".

NaMo TV and the laws for DTH channels

KRISHN KAUSHIK
NEW DELHI, APRIL 8

THE NEW channel NaMo TV has been at the centre of controversy during the poll season, with the Aam Aadmi Party and the Congress submitting complaints against it with the Election Commission. As reported in *The Indian Express* last week, the Information & Broadcasting Ministry is learnt to have responded to the EC that NaMo TV does not fall under its purview since it is functioning as a special platform for DTH (direct-to-home) operators.

So, what is NaMo TV, and what is the controversy around it?

The channel, also briefly named Content TV, emerged across major DTH platforms nationwide over the last fortnight. The channel is dedicated to speeches of Prime Minister Narendra Modi. In its complaint to the EC, AAP sought to know how permission was granted to a party to launch its own TV channel after the Model Code of Conduct was enforced. Separately, the Congress questioned if it had got clearance from the I&B Ministry.

The channel is listed among Hindi News channels on some DTH platforms. However, no such channel is mentioned in the list of channels permitted by the I&B Ministry. All satellite-based channels require the ministry's permission to be downlinked in the

country irrespective of the content, or the platform it is available on.

How is this channel allowed, then?

The I&B Ministry has apparently told the Election Commission that NaMo TV is a 'platform service'. For such services, I&B permission is not necessary.

And what is a platform service?

There are several ways that viewers can receive a channel on their TV — cable TV services that can be received through Multi-System Operators and/or Local Cable Operators, DTH services, Internet Protocol Television services, Headend-in-the-Sky, and terrestrial TV services in smaller geographic regions. Together they are called Distribution Platform Operators (DPOs).

Again, there are four types of channels on TV: private satellite channels, which are broadcast through satellites and need I&B permissions; Doordarshan channels run by public broadcaster Prasar Bharati; platform services channels, which are owned and operated by the DPOs and distributed exclusively to their own subscribers; ground-based channels that come with a strong local focus and are referred to as "local channels", usually an integral part of most cable TV networks.

Platform services are certain channels that are provided by local cable operators and DTH operators, exclusively to their own viewers.

These are not offered by broadcasters (those that run satellite-based channels) and are outside the purview of regulations currently. On the other hand, satellite-based channels can only be broadcast if they are registered with the Government of India, which means these have the I&B permissions.

Platform services were defined by the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India during a consultation on them in 2014 as: "Platform services (PS) are programs transmitted by Distribution Platform Operators (DPOs) exclusively to their own subscribers and does not include Doordarshan channels and registered TV channels. PS shall not include foreign TV channels that are not registered in India."

What can come under such services?

Local cable operators often use such channels to show content relevant to their geographical area, and which includes local news. DTH operators, however, have used such platform services to offer subscribers access to content 'on demand', like movies-on-demand, video-on-demand, pay-per-view, and interactive services such as games, education, etc., which are paid for by the subscribers.

Is NaMo TV a platform service?

While platform services have traditionally been exclusive offerings by each DTH operator, NaMo TV is available across DTH op-

erators in the country. During the consultation processes of TRAI, in 2014 and earlier in 2006, DTH operators had argued against special regulations for such services. However, in 2014, TRAI recommended broad regulations for these services, regardless of whether they are owned by local cable operators or DTH service providers. In these recommendations, TRAI said that all such services must be registered by the operator with the I&B Ministry along with the name of the entity, details of the company that is running the service and its beneficial owners. TRAI had also recommended that platform services should not be allowed to be shared with other networks (NaMo TV is running across many networks). No laws for platform services have, however, come into effect yet.

Are such services not regulated at all?

Since these services do not require permissions from the I&B Ministry, they cannot be punished by that Ministry, which can take action only against conventional channels listed with it. However, regardless of who owns the service, two laws are still applicable: restrictions on free speech mentioned in Article 19 of the Constitution would come into play about what is being shown on such platform services, regardless of whether it is registered with the I&B Ministry or not; and the content on such services has to comply with the Advertisement and the Programme Codes of the Cable TV Act, 1994.

Netanyahu under corruption cloud, what to watch as Israel votes today

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, APRIL 8

ISRAEL GOES to polls on Tuesday to elect a new national government. Binyamin 'Bibi' Netanyahu, 69, who has been Prime Minister since 2009, is seeking a fifth term that would set him up to become the country's longest-serving leader, ahead of the iconic founder Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion. Netanyahu, who first became PM in 1996, won three consecutive terms beginning 2009, 2013 and 2015.

Election process

Israel's Parliament, the Knesset, has 120 seats. Members are elected from a single electoral district in a vote in which all Israeli citizens ages 18 and older can participate. About 5.8 million Israelis are eligible to vote on Tuesday.

Seats are allocated to parties by proportional representation; a party must win at least 3.25 per cent of the national vote to get a seat. A member can serve for four years, but early elections are extremely common. No single party has ever won a majority in the Knesset, where around 10 factions are routinely represented. Coalition governments are the norm. Netanyahu's Likud

party has 30 members in the outgoing (20th) Knesset.

After the results are out, Israel's President takes a call on which candidate has the best chance of putting together a coalition, and gives him/her 28 days — with a possible extension of 14 days — to make an attempt. The leader of the largest party usually gets the first shot at government formation.

Parties in the fray

Despite its small population, Israel, like India, has a very large number of parties. The main players on Tuesday, according to a list compiled by Reuters, will be:

- **Likud, led by PM Netanyahu:** Biggest party on the right has a tough line on Iran, Syria and the Palestinians; many in Likud are opposed to the creation of a Palestinian state. Could win about 29 seats.
- **Blue and White, led by Benny Gantz, Chief of Israel Defence Forces from 2011-15:** Serious challenger to Bibi; Gantz has allied with another former general Moshe Ya'alon's Telem and former finance minister Yair Lapid's Yesh Atid party. Gantz has called for pursuing peace with the Palestinians while maintaining Israeli security interests, and has signalled he would make territorial concessions towards the



Prime Minister Netanyahu campaigns in Jerusalem Monday. Reuters

Palestinians. Polls say the party could win 31 seats.

- **Labour, led by Avi Gabbay:** Labour, which ruled Israel continuously from 1948 to 1977, and again from 1984-86 (Shimon Peres), 1992-96 (Yitzhak Rabin, Peres) and 1999-2001 (Ehud Barak), and stresses social and economic reform, and a two-state

solution, is in decline. Could fall to 10 seats from its current 18.

- **New Right, led by Naftali Bennett and Ayelet Shaked:** Bennett wants to annex most of the West Bank, offering autonomy to Palestinians; Shaked wants to "reign in" Israel's liberal and interventionist supreme court. Could win 6 seats.

- **Right Wing Union, led by Rabbi Rafi Peretz:** Represents Israeli settlers in the West Bank, rejects the idea of a Palestinian state. Could win 7 seats.

- **Zehut, led by Moshe Feiglin:** Ultra-nationalist religious party that has promised to legalise marijuana use. Could win 6 seats.

- There are at least 7 more parties in the race, all of which are predicted in opinion polls to win between 4 and 8 seats.

Big picture

The BBC listed a few big-picture things to watch out for.

- **Corruption cloud over Netanyahu:** This election is Israel's closest in a long time. The PM faces a challenge not just from Gantz, his strongest political challenger in years, but also due to very serious charges of bribery, fraud and breach of trust, over which Israel's Attorney General Avichai Mandelblit intends to indict him. The date for his final hearing is yet to be decided.
- **Likud may be biggest, but Bibi may not be PM:** In the highly fragmented Israeli system, the leader who can bring together enough parties to control at least 61 seats, becomes PM. With Likud and Blue and White going neck and neck, it will be a test

of who among Netanyahu and Gantz is able to build a governing coalition.

- **Palestinian peace not on agenda:** US President Donald Trump could publish his plan to solve Israel's conflict with the Palestinians after the election. But most Israelis have lost faith in the "two-state solution" long favoured by the international community. On Saturday, Netanyahu made a provocative declaration that if re-elected, he would "apply (Israeli) sovereignty" to the West Bank, making permanent Israel's control over the region and its 2.6 million Palestinian inhabitants.

- **Demography will matter:** Israeli voters belong to distinct social, ethnic, and religious groups. The million-strong ultra-orthodox Haredi vote has traditionally gone to parties chosen by their rabbis, but many of these votes are now going to mainstream parties on the right. Israeli Arabs are almost 20% of the population, but fewer than half of the eligible voters among them could ultimately vote, surveys have shown. A coalition of Arab parties that won 13 seats in 2015 no longer exists.

- **A Kingmaker could emerge:** This, according to analyses published by the BBC and other news agencies, could be Moshe Feiglin of Zehut, who says he views both Netanyahu and Gantz similarly.