

**Music therapy for mother & child**

The Rajasthan government has taken a decision that all hospitals especially where the delivery of children takes place will now have a music system to dull the pain of the mother. And what music will the music system play? The *Gayatri Mantra*. This is part of a new Sound Healing Therapy launched by in all government hospitals under a project called 'Lakshya'. And you thought a Congress government was in power in the state?

**Complaint against Priyanka**

Uttar Pradesh's Animal Welfare Board has sent a complaint against Priyanka Gandhi (pictured) under the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act and the Wildlife Protection Act, after the leader stopped enroute campaigning in a village of snake charmers, spotted a snake charmer and asked him to open his basket and took a Cobra in her hand, stroking its head and playing with it.

The matter was brought to the attention of the District Magistrate, who has instituted an enquiry led by the Additional District Magistrate. The committee has been asked to submit its report as early as possible. Whether the enquiry will include the circumstances in which the snake charmer captured the cobra is not known. Further action will be taken once the DM gets the report.

**DID THEY REALLY SAY THAT?**

**"It is a painful thing that Modi has forgotten his status. The way he is levelling allegations is atrocious. He is not talking about youths, about farmers, about traders but trying to divert people's attention. He is misleading people"**

Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Kamal Nath at a press conference in Bhopal, May 9

**OPINION**

WILBUR ROSS

**Indo-US trade relations need to be well balanced**

Two years ago, President Trump laid out his vision for a free, open, and prosperous Indo-Pacific Region — one where independent nations grow stronger.

The Indo-Pacific Region is strategically and economically significant. It accounts for two-thirds of all global trade.

These countries are seeking high-quality goods and services to sustain and develop their economies.

US companies are extremely well positioned to meet these demands, including in the important area of infrastructure.

The Asian Development Bank estimates that \$1.7 trillion needs to be invested in the region's infrastructure every year.

But, with its strong and growing economy, India is key to the Administration's approach to the Indo-Pacific region.

Last year, India's real GDP reached an estimated 7.1 per cent growth; and is projected to increase by a very healthy 7.4 percent this year.

India's population has grown by an astonishing 341 million people over the past 20 years to 1.35 billion.

Just the growth since 2000 is greater than the total population of the United States.

Combined with the 281 million people in India between the ages of 20 and 35, there are almost 600 million people either in — or soon to be entering — their primary years for consuming goods and services.

India is already the world's third largest economy, and by 2030, it will become the world's largest consumer market because of the rapid growth of the middle class.

Yet, today, India is only the US's 13th largest export market, due to overly restrictive market access barriers.

Meanwhile, the US is India's largest export market, accounting for something like 20 per cent of the total.

There is a real imbalance!

And it's an imbalance we must strive to counteract.

Last year, it's true that bilateral trade between our countries totaled \$142 billion, up almost \$16 billion from 2017. It's also true that US exports of goods to India increased last year by \$7.4 billion, or an impressive 29 percent, to \$33 billion.

But the problem is that goods imports from India were also up by more than 7 percent, in fact by 12 percent, to \$54 billion, representing a trade deficit in goods of \$21 billion. In the services sector, the United States also had a trade deficit with India last year, of \$3 billion. This is especially unusual — we generally have a surplus in services with most countries. But in this case, the deficit is largely due to IT services, for which there is a very strong capability here in India.

President Trump and Prime Minister Modi have jointly committed to further expanding and balancing our commercial relationship.

American companies offer world-class goods and services and the highest standards of quality, safety, and innovation.

They improve the economy in every country in which they operate. And they are eager to be more engaged here and throughout the Indo-Pacific region. The Indian government is actively pursuing a range of development priorities, including revitalization of urban infrastructure, ensuring access to energy, and digitizing services. We are confident that US technologies and expertise can play an important role in serving India's critical development needs. Our strict Foreign Corrupt Practices Act also assures the Indian government that our companies will not cause scandals here.

But American companies need to operate in a transparent environment supported by the rule of law, and a level playing field. As President Trump has said, trade relationships should be based, and must be based, on fairness and reciprocity.

But, currently, US businesses face significant market access barriers in India. These include both tariff and non-tariff barriers, as well as multiple practices and regulations that disadvantage foreign companies.

India's average applied tariff rate of 13.8 per cent, and that remains the highest of any major world economy. The very highest. It has, for example, a 60 per cent tariff on automobiles; it has a 50 per cent on motorcycles; and 150 percent on alcoholic beverages. Its bound tariff rates, namely the highest rate they can charge, on agricultural products average and incredible 113.5 percent, and some are as high as 300 per cent.

These are not justified percentages. They are way too high. We are working diligently with the Indian government and our private-sector partners to address market access issues through the US-India Commercial Dialogue, and the recently reconvened US-India CEO Forum.

Our goal is to eliminate barriers to US companies, operating here, including data-localization restrictions that actually weaken data security and increase the cost of doing business.

Other obstacles include price controls on medical devices and pharmaceuticals, and restrictive tariffs on electronics and telecommunications products. Tariffs for network routers and switches and parts of cellular phones are as high as 20 per cent. In stark contrast, the US rate for these same products exported from India to the United States is zero — zero versus 20 per cent.

That's not a justified imbalance.

These high tariffs undermine India's goal of improving digital access and digital literacy. We applaud India's commitment to addressing some of these barriers.

In the World Bank's Ease of Doing Business report, India climbed an impressive 23 spots this year, but it still ranks only 77 out of 190 countries. So there's lots of room for further improvement. We also look forward to welcoming another large India delegation to our SelectUSA conference from June 10th through 12th in Washington.

Last year, Ambassador Juster led a delegation of 95 Indian business leaders to the Investment Summit. We are hoping and praying he will have a bigger delegation this year.

Edited excerpts from a speech by US Secretary of Commerce Wilbur Ross at the Trade Winds Conference in New Delhi, May 7



ILLUSTRATION BY BINAY SINHA

Three-time MP from Rohtak, Deepender Singh Hooda, son of former Haryana CM Bhupinder Singh Hooda, is contesting the Lok Sabha elections again. He tells Nitin Kumar how a Congress victory will change the dynamics of power in the state. Edited excerpts:

**'My victory will unsettle the BJP'****Do you think this time it is a tough contest for you: Top leaders are campaigning for the Rohtak seat...**

No, in any election, each candidate from a party visits their constituency. It was not that I didn't want to campaign. Like others, I campaign too. It is natural. I have done it in the past as well. This is not because it is a tough election but a natural process of democracy. All candidates campaign.

**What are the achievements of the last five years that you will show to the people and seek votes?**

Some of the achievements of my constituency include the longest national highways (1,080 km of four lane and six lane) in India.

My constituency has all three top higher education institutions — AIIMS, IIT and IIM — which I was able to get from the government of India and Haryana. Apart from this, I have been able to establish around 48 other educational institutes in my constituency.

**In 2014, the Congress was wiped out from Haryana, only you were able to save your seat. How will the 2019 election be different?**

I think the Congress will win majority of seats in Haryana this time.

**The BJP holds you up as an example of dynasty politics. How do you see it?**

When I won my first election, being from a

**CHECKLIST GOING TO THE POLLS TODAY: INTERESTING CONSTITUENCIES TO WATCH****■ Sultanpur in Uttar Pradesh**

Union Minister Menaka Gandhi is contesting from this seat, currently held by her son Varun Gandhi. In April, Menaka was banned from campaigning for 48 hours for violating the Model Code of Conduct. Why Menaka Gandhi was ordered by the BJP high command to exchange seats with her son Varun (who is contesting from Pilibhit, his mother's former seat) is not clear. Anyway, the constituency is new for both Gandhis and the outcome should be interesting.

**■ Dhanbad in Jharkhand**

Cricketer-turned-politician and former BJP leader Kirti Azad is contesting here on a Congress ticket. He is challenging BJP's Pashupati Nath Singh who has held the seat since 2009. In a sense, Azad has come home to the Congress — his father, Bhagwat Jha Azad was former chief minister of Bihar.

**■ Guna in Madhya Pradesh**

This constituency in northern MP is the bastion of the Gwalior's erstwhile royal family — the Scindias. It is currently held by Congress leader Jyotiraditya Scindia and was earlier represented by his father Madhavrao and grandmother Vijaya Raje. In 2014, this was one of the two seats that the BJP failed to win in the state. But, the BJP had managed to cut Jyotiraditya's victory margin to around 86,000 votes, from over 4 lakh votes in 2009. This time there is an added problem. A Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) candidate from the constituency was made to stand down after he had been given the ticket. This has incensed BSP leader Mayawati who has threatened to review her party's ties with the Congress in the state. The Congress government in the state has only a slender majority and is supported by the sole BSP MLA in the assembly.

political family helped me to get a ticket and I won. But when I went to the people for the second time, I told them: Vote for me if you like my work. The same happened the third time around.

In most cases, people don't accept the second and third generation. This time I'm seeking the support of the people for the fourth time and if you look at my speeches you will find that I tell everybody: "You have seen my work and my behaviour and if you think I'm fit to represent you and you are satisfied with my performance in the Parliament, you should vote for me".

So, it's up to the people. In a democracy people's representatives are elected by them — they are not selected by anybody sitting on a throne. It's the people who are electing me and that's the supreme power in a democracy.

**This election is a test to know who will rule the state this time as the Assembly polls are around the corner. How do you see it?**

I think the results are going to have a huge impact on the Assembly polls, especially the win in Rohtak, where the BJP is targeting the Congress' leadership namely Hooda Ji and me personally. This win will pave the way for the change in Haryana and Congress' victory in the state.

The prime minister came to my constituency on the last day of the campaign. Even that gambit did not succeed.

I am confident that I'm going to win this election by a big majority and it will shake the BJP government's setting in Chandigarh.

**This time the Congress is betting on former chief minister Bhupinder Singh Hooda. Is it a move to secure a seat? or does the Congress have no new faces in the state capable of delivering a victory for the party?**

There are certain decisions that party leadership takes that have many meanings. Like Captain Amarinder Singh contesting from Amritsar. That doesn't mean that the Congress doesn't have candidates. It is to indicate something else... and to send a message to the cadre. When a leader of that stature, who has been the CM contests a Lok Sabha election, it is to send a message to the people.

**In Haryana, there are always allegations of groupism among political leaders like Ashok Tanwar and Bhupinder Singh Hooda factions. How do you think this will affect the forthcoming polls?**

There is no group in the Congress. The party is united.

**Q&A**

DEEPENDER SINGH HOODA

Congress MP

**The Congress lost Jind bypoll by a huge margin, even when they fielded a heavyweight like Randeep Singh Surjewala. Why?**

You would see that we will win the Lok Sabha election and we had our own internal assessment on that and we need not share it with everyone.

**This time you're fighting against a former Congress leader Arvind Sharma. How are you looking at this challenge?**

Sharma doesn't have any credibility. He wanted a ticket from Karnal. He was not willing to contest from Rohtak initially but was persuaded by the BJP to contest from Rohtak — as I am told. He has changed six parties and five constituencies to finally land up

here by a parachute and that too, not by choice. So I don't think his candidature will have any impact.

Once Jat leaders were politicians who called the shots at the national level and used to focus on agricultural issues. Now you see a change in current Jat politics. There are a lot of cycles in politics.

**There have been allegations that the Congress is a Jat party, which led to a massive defeat in 2014. How do you see it and if Congress wins, will the CM be a Jat CM?**

No, the Congress belongs to everyone, which means every caste, community, and religion has their own space in the party. That's the party's ideology. The BJP wants to pursue a divisive agenda by excluding certain sections of the society. That exclusion through divisive politics is not good for anyone and you will see that this time, the developmental agenda that we are bringing to the people will triumph over the divisive agenda of the BJP. The Congress party believes in meritocracy, democracy, which implies voice of the people and I think people will decide the next CM of Haryana.

**The BJP accuses the Congress of playing politics of minority appeasement, what do you have to say on this?**

The Congress party's politics is not driven by any particular section of the society. We take everyone with us whether someone is from minority or not, and strengthen the country unlike the BJP, which is making people fight with each other on the basis of caste and religion. The Congress works to connect people. The BJP tried doing the same in Rohtak but they could not succeed. People are aware of their tricks now. They will show that through their vote.

**Time to look beyond marks**

The examination season — and results — represent enormous pressure, both for students and parents. Children killing themselves because they were unable to meet expectations is commonplace. How can parents, teachers and children cope? Sneha Bhattacharjee finds out

A 17-year-old committed suicide in Telangana after she failed to pass in just one subject in examinations. Up north, in Roorkee, a class 12 student committed suicide because he secured 74.5 per cent and not 80 as he was expecting. A Noida girl took her life even before the results were announced fearing she would fail. She secured 70 per cent. These are just a few among the lakhs of stories behind the success of 90 percentiles. Stories that shock, and reflect nothing but grief and anger.

Today, board examination results have become all about celebrating how high you can score. A 90 per cent is nothing, when marks are being distributed in freefall. All across newspapers, you will find mugshots of smiling children, pictures of parents hugging their top-performing children, stories about what they did, and how they achieved such a feat.

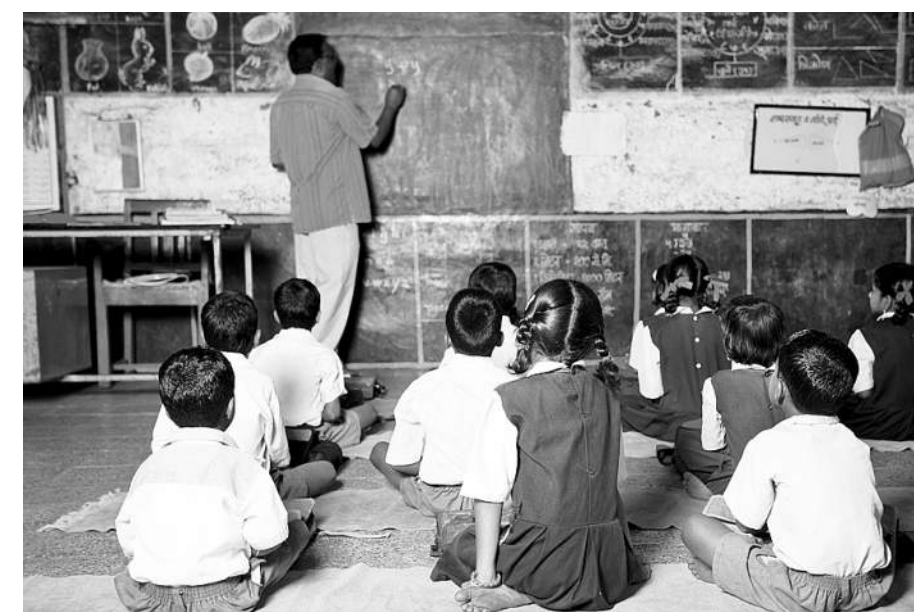
However, Nikil Jonathon, a Delhi-based film photographer, feels there is another side to this: What about students who have had learning disabilities and still managed to score what they did. "Why not talk about their strategy or learning techniques? How about kids who did not give up on their passion or hobbies in order to excel in exams? That would make for a different and heart-warming story," he adds.

It is not just Jonathon who thinks so but also a mother whose social media post praising her boy for scoring a 60 per cent

went viral. A communications professional, Vandana Sufia Katoch, in the post said, "Yes it is not a 90, but that doesn't change how I feel. Simply because I have seen him struggle with certain subjects almost to the point of giving up, and then deciding to give his all in the last month-and-a-half to finally make it through! Here's to you, Aamer. And others like you — fishes asked to climb trees. Chart your own course in the big, wide ocean, my love. And keep your innate goodness, curiosity and wisdom alive. And of course, your wicked sense of humour".

Katoch makes a very valid point — that marks are not the end. "I was a 90 per cent scorer during my school days but when I look around now — from those who scored high, to those who scored average, or those who scored low — everyone is charting their own course in career. The children need to focus on who they are and what they want to be," she says.

Sometimes, it is the parents who want their child to excel, setting impossibly ambitious benchmarks for their children. Saloni Singh, a Delhi-based life coach dealing with parents and teenagers for over a decade, has had several such cases both in India as well as the UK where she practised initially before returning to India. Singh notes how parents are under pressure when they see their child not performing up to the mark, or the standard set by other students. She, however, holds the education system as well as teachers responsible for this. "Most students I spoke to after their results couldn't express



their joy though they had done well in exams. The fact that someone else in the class scored a 95 per cent or above made them question their own success," she says. Teachers are critical of the students who aren't performing well. Singh has observed how there have been instances where the teachers instead of being a support, have rebuked the child. "That can lead the child into depression or may even push him towards bad choices just to be part of the peer circle," she notes.

Parents too feel embarrassed to share the marks their child has scored. "Instead of observing whether the child has improvised on his skills, they focus more on the numbers," Singh notes. This can be a deterrent for the child as he is likely to give in to cramming without applying his brain into learning. "Rote learning is what we are making our children do, when what you need is creative

**"Educate the child to be a good human being. Make them understand their strengths and passion, and let them serve where they can. Why push the child towards that end from where he may never be able to return?"**

and practical approach to study," she says.

Katoch feels parents need to work with their child, look beyond numbers and understand the child's inner potential. "Instead of comparing your child with that of another, it is better to be comfortable with what you have and help the child do what best he can," she adds.

Like Jonathon, both Singh and Katoch, are of the opinion that this hype over marks across all media needs to stop. The colleges too need to change their admissions criteria by focusing on the overall development of the child, and not just marks. "Educate the child to be a good human being. Make them understand their strengths and passion, and let them serve where they can. Why push the child towards that end from where he may never be able to return?" Singh concludes.

**THE OTHER INDIA**



# Cracking the test

Schools should focus on learning, not examinations

Each year, “results season” for the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE), the largest all-India schools exam, grabs newspaper headlines for the progressively stratospheric nature of the grades. This year conformed to that trend. An amazing number of students have scored in the high nineties, or even maxed their papers. This year, for instance, the all-India pass percentage for the Class X was 92.5 with regions such as Thiruvananthapuram recording an astonishing 99.85 (Chennai and Ajmer were but decimal points behind). For Class XII, the total pass percentage appeared saner only by

comparison at 83.4 per cent, with Thiruvananthapuram leading the charge again with an average of 98.2 per cent. The two joint toppers scored 499 marks out of 500.

These numbers are at once awe-inspiring and thought-provoking. Such high marks appear more conducive to the pure sciences and math, but humanities’ students scoring up to 99 per cent or even 100 per cent in papers such as English and history strongly suggests the use of the percentile marking system. Teachers would be the first to acknowledge that these progressively high grades do not necessarily point to an exponential rise in the level of academic bril-

liance of Indian children. In a country where white-collar jobs tend to be scarce, school and university exam results remain the principal means of determining quality. Over the years, this chronic problem has had a detrimental impact on the education system in which exams become an end in themselves rather than a way of testing a student’s intellectual capabilities.

This has created three problems. First, it has fostered an uber-competitive system that encourages parents to place immense pressure on students - India is unique in the number of student suicides for this reason alone. Second, the exam-oriented system downgrades a student’s analytical ability in favour of rote learning. Third, an exclusive focus on exam-cracking techniques that schools are all too willing to encourage to show good academic results. Even more deleteriously, the examination system itself has

played along, so much so that an answer may be flat-out poor but the student scores high marks if she has recorded the right “keywords”. How do they know these keywords? Because the system itself offers rote-books that list every possible question and model answer, skewing the system in favour of students with the most retentive memory rather than capability for independent thought. The “keyword” approach has also caused a deterioration in syllabus design. For instance, “humanities” subjects tend to be lumped into one paper with the result that students learn little of such critical subjects as the Indian Constitution. Many young people buy into the majoritarianism of current political thinking because they are unaware of the founding principles of the Indian Republic, subjects once routinely taught in school until the eighties.

The principal sufferer at the other end of

the education chain is the Indian employer. Reputed colleges set impossibly high cut-offs and decline to hold entrance exams to test students more meaningfully (one reason students graduating from reputed B-schools and engineering colleges are in demand is that entrance tests act as a sifting process). The same high-scoring student with untested analytical abilities then emerges into the working world singularly unarmoured for the challenges it poses. Small wonder that the 2018 edition of the India Skills Report says that less than half of Indian graduates are employable. Whether in specialised skills or generalised ones, corporation after corporation reports the high cost of training graduates in basic knowledge (including language). That is why, instead of exulting at the results each year, India’s education establishment would do well to urgently address the deepening defects to which they paradoxically point.

# The right prescription

A separate set of rules is needed to address the special nuances of India’s medical devices industry

ABHA JAISWAL

It’s election season. Both major parties have dedicated a chapter on health in their manifesto. This is encouraging but poses several questions. How will our country, one which accounts for nearly one-fifth of the global disease burden, achieve “Health for All”? Is there any country that we can draw lessons from? Are there strategies to ensure equity and sustainability? Has the government been able to generate policies that bring the interests of the industrial and health sectors closer together, to collaborate for mutual benefit?

The three key industrial pillars of the health care system are drugs, vaccines and medical devices. While India boasts of robust drugs and vaccine manufacturing sectors, medical devices are primarily import-dependent. In FY 2017-18, the export of drugs and vaccines touched \$17.27 billion, while 80 per cent of medical devices were imported.

In the last decade alone imports of medical devices and diagnostics have more than doubled. Moreover, many of these devices are inappropriate, as they mostly cater to the needs and societal context of the developed countries. Some estimates claim that only about half of all medical equipment in developing countries is in use.

The cost of medical devices to overall health care alone stands at about a mere four to five per cent. But, since medical devices are intrinsically linked to health care services, when both these costs are taken together, they could add up to 25 per cent of health care costs.

Furthermore, it is estimated that medical devices can amount to about 30-40 per cent of the cost of setting up a tertiary care hospital. In such a scenario, if one has to rely on imports, it could lead to an unsustainable fiscal burden on the country, especially in the context of Ayushman Bharat.

Recent policies have provided an enabling ecosystem for the development and growth of the medical devices industry. In 2015, the government recognised medical devices as a key sector of the Make in India initiative. It allowed 100 per cent foreign direct investment (FDI) under the automatic route. As per government data, FDI in medical devices has grown by 25.4 per cent between 2012 and 2016.

The inverted customs duty structure whereby imports of raw material incurred higher import duty than finished products was corrected. The government has also funded the establishment of clusters such as the Andhra Pradesh MedTech to help create the much-needed infrastructure. The Kalam Institute of Health Technology, entirely funded by Department of Biotechnology, became India’s first institute dedicated to medical technology.

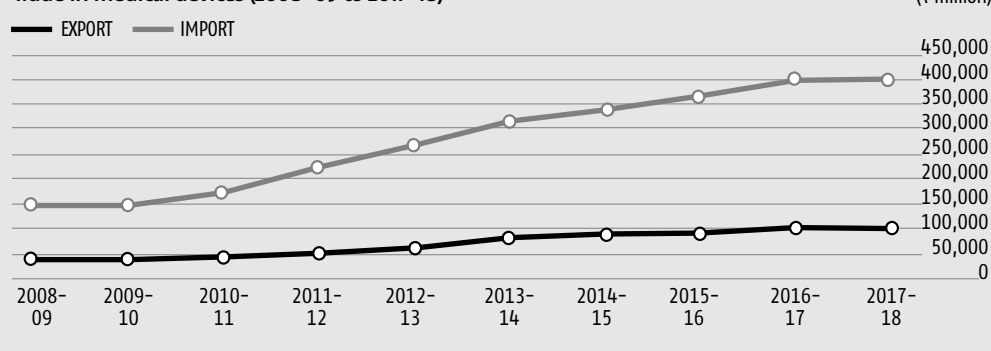
In order to promote local industry, the National Health Policy 2017 envisages that domestically sourced components must account for 25-50 per cent of the cost of medical devices in order to qualify for public procurement tenders.

It has also institutionalised the Medical Technical Advisory Board under the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) to ensure transparency in demand for goods and services associated with



## A yawning import-export deficit

Trade in medical devices (2008-09 to 2017-18)



health care. This will assure efficient and equitable health care provision and create a market for health care products.

Such strategies are not new. Brazil, for example employed a “Buy Brazil Strategy” to incentivise the growth of domestic technological capabilities, reflecting the demands of the Universal Health Programme that was launched in 1988. More importantly, it bought to the fore that demand constitutes the principal stimulus for innovation in developing countries.

In that sense, the implementation by the government of the Medical Devices Rules 2017 in January 2018 is a significant step forward. For the first time, regulations specifically pertaining to the manufacture and import of medical devices have been put in place. Regulations are like the GPS of the industry, as they ensure patient safety and ultimately determine the uptake and absorption of products in the health care system.

Inadequacies still exist. It is vital to address them as we move forward. Rules for medical devices come

under the Drugs & Cosmetics Act; as such, they are regulated as drugs. Here lies the problem; devices cannot be regulated as drugs, as they represent completely different technologies. There is a pressing need to adapt medical device rules to specifically address the nuances of the industry.

Lessons can be learned from the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA), which has different subsidiaries to regulate drugs, dietary supplements, biologics and medical devices. A similar approach would be useful. The 2015 Draft Drugs & Cosmetics Amendment Bill and the Draft Medical Device Policy have made provisions to address some of these gaps.

Policies and their implementation must go hand in hand. These interventions must, therefore, be backed by adequate financial and human resources. We must keep in mind that the process of building industrial strengths and health system synergies is a long-term commitment. The complex 30-year trajectory of Brazil’s health-industrial collaboration aptly illustrates this point.

The writer is a Visiting Fellow at Research and Information System for Developing Countries. These views are personal

# Why PPPs are key to good public transport

B G SREEDEVI

Hundreds of people gather at bus terminals every morning, standing in line for tickets and jostling with the crowds to reach their destinations on time and in a cost-effective manner. The transport system of our country is built upon and primarily functions through services provided by state-run bus corporations. But change is the need of the hour for these corporations.

According to the International Road Federation, India’s bus penetration is 1.4 buses per 1000 people, as opposed to South Africa’s 6.5 buses per 1000 people and Thailand’s 8.6 buses per 1000 people. In India, where many people cannot afford the higher tariffs that metro services and cabs charge, buses are the mode of travel they turn to. Buses, with their ability to connect obscure routes together in a cost-effective manner, continue to be the champions of the common man, accounting for more than 90 per cent of public transport in Indian cities. And yet, there are only 1.4 buses per 1000 people in India!

The public relies on the services provided by these corporations and the well-being and smooth functioning of these state-run corporations is directly proportional to the well-being of the masses. Strengthening their infrastructure is a public service that these corporations should strongly consider.

The world we live in today is dominated by technological innovation. The pace of change is rapid and the scale of innovation high. Technologically enabled solutions are changing the face of industries that were not traditionally impacted by technological advancement. Key to this changing technological landscape are private sector enterprises that are challenging our traditional notions of how things are supposed to work, by constantly updating the definitions we are used to.

State-run corporations can adapt the ever-evolving business models of the private sector. Start-ups and private sector companies constantly need to evolve their business models to keep up with market needs and work on providing significant value-add or face redundancy. As a result, their business models are agile and their delivery rapid.

Agility and innovation can add tremendously to the output of state-run corporations. The best way to accomplish such a transformation is by entering into public-private partnerships (PPPs) with entities best suited to solve the needs of state-run corporations. PPPs have the potential to yield results that are beneficial to all the parties involved. In India, especially, PPPs have historically been very successful in running state-run corporations -- witness the Mysore transport project that was begun in 2012. The transport sector can especially benefit from a PPP set-up because of the

high return on investment possible therein.

One of the biggest hurdles to infrastructure development that governments face is the ROI (return on investment). Often, high inflow of investment is met by a slow turnaround rate on the projects, which leads to greater spending, eventually leading to lower profits for the government concerned. PPPs can be an effective way to counter such a problem, because it draws on one of the strengths of the private sector -- their agility in responding to imminent business needs with innovation and efficiency.

If technology and PPP can individualise about such tremendous change in the systems they touch, together they can unlock a combination that can resolve the struggles faced by many state-run corporations, especially so in the transport sector. Innovations like live monitoring and instant booking have already revolutionized the ride-sharing space, an important aspect of public transport. Our cities are growing in size and commuting between cities is becoming increasingly common. The demand for inter-city transport is on the rise.

SRTC buses majorly service inter-city routes and the need for strong infrastructure on this front is eminent. Developing technologically advanced models for mass transport should now be the priority for government across the country. India’s demography and economy both demand efficient mass transport systems that can ease road congestion by reducing the number of private vehicles on roads.

The National Urban Transport Policy (NUTP), in both 2006 and 2014, encouraged building of transport hubs, which should provide seamless inter-change between inter-city regional and sub-urban services, and the public transportation system of the city. NUTP also recommends introducing intelligent transport systems (ITS) for traffic management in our urban transport models.

Intelligent transport systems are the key to the future of smooth public transport. They are an assemblage, an aggregation, and application of information on transport gathered through technologies such as GPS and sensors, and work to achieve the aim of improving safety, mobility, and economics for smooth public transport.

ITS can bring together various transport service providers, both public and private, by bridging information gaps and allowing these enterprises to collaborate and provide mobility as a service, enabling individuals to make informed and intelligent decisions about transport. They can change the face of transport by adding efficiency and ease to the system, and encourage greater use of public transport modes.

The writer is Chief Scientist, National Transportation Planning & Research Centre

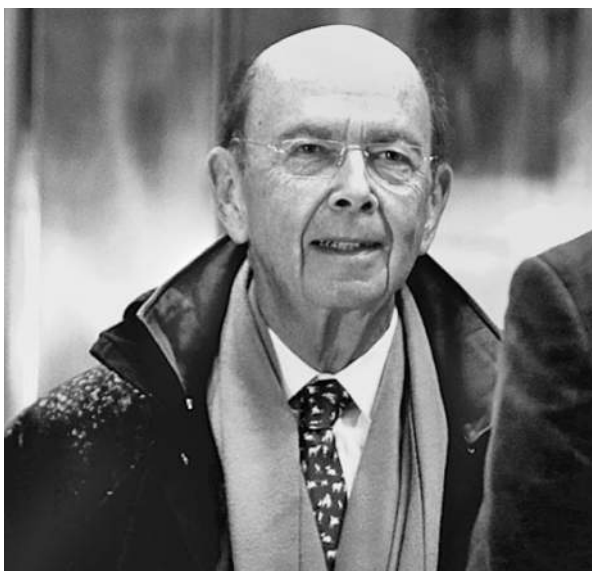
## OTHER VIEWS

### India must snap out of denial on discord with US on trade

New government will have to urgently consider the options that lie ahead

After a scathing speech by US Commerce Secretary Wilbur Ross in New Delhi this week, it is no longer possible for the government to brush under the carpet its differences with Washington. Mr Ross repeated President Donald Trump’s accusation that India is a “tariff king”, and threatened India with “consequences” if it responded to US tariffs with counter-tariffs, something New Delhi had threatened but not yet implemented in the hope of hammering out a comprehensive trade package. In the face of growing US aggression on the issue, the government that takes office after the election will have to urgently consider its options ahead. New Delhi and Washington need to make a more determined attempt to sort out issues, starting from scratch if required, with tariffs.

While the 50-60 per cent duties on motorcycles and cars and 150 per cent duties on American liquor that India imposes need a second look, the US must see that average tariffs imposed by India (13.8 per cent) are not much higher than those levied by economies such as South Korea and Brazil. In addition, the government will need to revisit some of its decisions like data localisation requirements and new e-commerce regulations, which were declared suddenly, while the US must



show some flexibility on India’s price caps on coronary stents and other medical devices. Perhaps the most worrying signal from Mr Ross’s outburst was that Washington may not be willing to meet India halfway on trade issues. New Delhi must prepare accordingly.

The Hindu, May 10

### Data under a cloud

Credibility of official statistics at stake

The Union government finds itself in the eye of a data storm over a new report of the National Sample Survey Office (NSSO), which states that at least one-third of the companies in the database used for GDP calculation could not be traced or surveyed. The older GDP series had relied on a survey of companies conducted by the Reserve Bank of India for the private corporate sector, while the newer one -- started in 2015 -- employed the database maintained by the ministry of corporate affairs (MCA) that contains a list of registered companies. The report has observed that in many cases, the selected enterprises either did not compile their annual audit reports for 2015-16 or did not prepare balance sheets any time

before.

The Union ministry of statistics and programme implementation is already in damage-control mode, claiming that the discrepancy will have no impact on the existing GDP estimates as the corporate filings are “appropriately adjusted at the aggregate level”. According to the ministry, the NSSO technical report on services sector enterprises -- which will now be examined by an official committee -- had been commissioned to understand the data gaps and take remedial steps. However, the presence of thousands of ghost firms in the official database needs to be investigated thoroughly, not swept under the carpet.

The Tribune, May 10

### An absurd proposal

Sex determination ban should stay

Persistent problems often require modern solutions. That, unfortunately, is not how the Indian Medical Association’s proposal to the government and parliamentarians -- to fully repeal the Pre-Conception and Prenatal Diagnostic Techniques (Prohibition of Sex Selection) Act, 1994 -- can be described. The IMA said the ban on sex determination has achieved little by way of tackling the actual problem of sex-selective abortions and trapped doctors under an avalanche of paperwork in which even minor mistakes can cost them dearly.

Rescinding the entire legislation ought to be out of the question. A mere look at census data on India’s sex ratio reveals its appallingly

skewed nature as well as its steady deterioration. While these figures do bolster the IMA’s argument that precious little has been achieved by way of prevention of sex-selective abortions under the law, it should be clear that the problem does not lie with the law itself but with its implementation and the conditions that make it easy for those with vested interests to flout. At the same time, in keeping with the opinion of many doctors across the country, instead of entertaining the absurd appeal for repealing the ban, the lacunae in the law must be examined so that it can be re-imagined and better implemented.

The Telegraph, May 10