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FACT CHECK, GROUND REALITY

WHY LAKHS ARE PROTESTING ON THE STREETS IN HONG KONG



EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, JUNE 10

HUNDREDS OF thousands of protesters dressed in white marched in the streets of Hong Kong Sunday (above) in the biggest protest since the Umbrella Revolution of September-December 2014. Police estimated the number of marchers at 240,000; organisers, said a million people protested. Hong Kong, which at roughly 1,100 sq km is smaller in size than Delhi, is home to an estimated 7.4 million people.

The extradition Bill

The protesters were marching against proposed changes in the law that would allow suspects accused of crimes such as murder and rape to be extradited to mainland China to face trial. Carrie Lam, who became Chief Executive of Hong Kong in 2017 as the candidate favoured by Beijing, is pushing for the amendments to be passed this month.

Once the law is changed, Hong Kong will also hand over to China individuals accused of crimes in Taiwan and Macau. Taiwan has a tense relationship with China; Macau, like Hong Kong, is a Chinese special administrative region with significant autonomy.

The government has said that the proposed amendments would “plug loopholes” that allow the city to be used by criminals. It has assured that courts in Hong Kong would make the final decision on extradition, that only certain categories of suspects would be liable, and that individuals accused of political and religious offences would not be extradited.

Protesters’ concerns

The main worry, government assurances notwithstanding, is that China will use the changed law to target political op-

ponents in Hong Kong. Critics point to China’s flawed justice system and say extradited suspects would likely face torture. Also, they say, the change in the law will deal another blow to Hong Kong’s already crumbling autonomy.

Sunday’s march included people from the business community, lawyers, students, members of religious groups, even housewives.

“This is the end game for Hong Kong, it is a matter of life or death,” a Reuters report quoted a 59-year-old professor as saying. An 18-year-old student was quoted by AFP as saying: “This Bill will not just affect Hong Kong’s reputation as an international finance centre, but also our judicial system. That has an impact on my future.”

A report in the BBC quoted Lam Wing Kee, a Hong Kong bookseller who was detained in China in 2015 for selling books critical of Chinese leaders, as saying he did not trust the Hong Kong government. Lam fled to Taiwan via Hong Kong this April, where he has got temporary residency.

Human Rights Watch and the International Chamber of Commerce have warned against changing the law. A body of the US Congress has said it would make Hong Kong vulnerable to Chinese “political coercion”, and the UK and Canada have expressed concern over the potential impact on their citizens in Hong Kong. The EU has sent a diplomatic note.

Hong Kong and China

The former British colony returned to Chinese rule in 1997, and is semi-autonomous under the “one country, two systems” principle. It has its own laws and courts, and allows its residents a range of civil liberties. Hong Kong does not have an extradition agreement with Beijing. China has decried the alleged “politicisation” of the Hong Kong proposal, and the “interference” in China’s internal affairs.

SIMPLY PUT

How education can be flexible

In National Education Policy draft, committee calls for greater focus on multidisciplinary courses. Other recommendations for higher education include stress on research, regulatory reforms, tech in teaching

RITIKA CHOPRA
NEW DELHI, JUNE 10

IN MONDAY’S editions, *The Indian Express* described the broad recommendations for school education made by a committee set up for drafting a new National Education Policy (NEP). The policy will be finalised and presented in Parliament after taking feedback from various stakeholders. For higher education, the committee’s recommendations include:

Multiple disciplines

The main thrust of the draft policy is on breaking the “rigid boundaries of disciplines” in higher education and moving towards broad-based, flexible learning. Institutions offering single streams (such as technical education) must be phased out, and all universities and colleges must aim to become multidisciplinary by 2030, the report proposes.

“The future workplace will demand critical thinking, communication, problem solving, creativity, and multidisciplinary capability. Single-skill and single-discipline jobs are likely to become automated over time. Therefore, there will be a great need to focus on multidisciplinary and 21st century competencies for future work roles — these are indeed the capabilities that will separate humans from robots,” the report states.

For this, the draft pitches for reintroduction of the four-year undergraduate programme in Liberal Arts Science Education (LASE) with multiple exit options, and scrapping of the MPhil programme. The LASE curriculum will be designed to develop broadly “useful capacities” (critical thinking, communication skills, scientific temper, social responsibilities etc), while offering rigorous education in specialisations (called majors or dual majors) across disciplines.

Pursuing a PhD will require either a Master’s degree or a four-year Bachelor’s degree with research. “The three-year traditional BA, BSc, as well as BVoc degrees will continue as well for those institutions that wish to continue such programmes, but all Bachelor’s degrees will move towards taking a more comprehensive liberal education approach,” the documents states.

The draft policy also proposes building a small number of new liberal arts universities, modelled after Ivy League schools, in the next five years.

Global footprint

The NEP 2018 proposes an increase in the number of off-shore campuses of Indian institutions and permitting the world’s top 200 institutions to set up branches in India, with a new law to regulate the latter’s entry and operation. Indian higher education institu-



Admission in progress at Panjab University in 2018. Jasbir Malhi/Express Archive

tions (HEIs), it states, should be encouraged to offer their distance-learning programmes abroad and enter into international partnerships for research.

Currently, India sends the third largest number of students (over 3 lakh) abroad for higher education. However, only 46,000 foreign students, accounting for less than one per cent of international students worldwide, study in Indian HEIs.

National Research Foundation

The NEP has recommended that a National Research Foundation (NRF), tasked with creating a conducive ecosystem for research through funding and mentoring, should be set up. Funds for research and innovation have fallen from 0.84% of GDP in 2008 to 0.69% in 2014. The draft attributes India’s performance in research to a separation between research institutions and teaching institutions, lack of research culture, lack of funds and poor research capacities of state universities.

The proposed NRF, to be set up by an Act of Parliament as an autonomous institution and with an annual grant of Rs 20,000 crore, will “seed, grow and facilitate research at academic institutions, particularly at universities and colleges where research is currently in a nascent stage...”

Regulatory reforms

The draft proposes a common regulatory regime for the entire higher education sector, “eliminating isolation and disjunction”. As with primary education, it suggests that in higher education, too, the functions of “regulation, provision of education, funding, ac-

creditation and standard setting will be separated, and will not be performed by the same institution or institutional hierarchy”.

The National Higher Education Regulatory Authority (NHRA) will be the sole regulatory authority, while NAAC, along with other accreditation agencies, will oversee accreditation. The existing University Grants Commission, currently regulator as well as grants disbursing agency, will transform into the Higher Education Grants Council (HEGC) and will limit itself to grants giving.

Other regulatory bodies — such as Medical Council of India, Bar Council of India, AICTE, National Council for Teacher Education — will become Professional Standard Setting Boards in their respective fields, without regulatory powers in professional education.

Rashtriya Shiksha Aayog

The draft NEP envisages the creation of a new apex institution for education, through an Act of Parliament, that will be responsible for “developing, articulating, implementing, evaluating, and revising the vision of education in the country on a continuous and sustained basis”.

The Rashtriya Shiksha Aayog (RSA) will be chaired by the Prime Minister and run by executive and advisory bodies, half of which will made up of ministers and the other half of educationists and civil society members. A range of institutions — NRF, NCERT, NHRA, National Testing Agency, Higher Education Grants Council, and state education regulatory authorities, among others — will be reporting to this super organisation.

The Ministry of Human Resource

Development (MHRD), which the report wants re-designated as the Ministry for Education, will have to complement the RSA. “A committee chaired by the UME (Union Minister for Education) and consisting of the ED (Executive Director of RSA) and a few members appointed by the UME will be constituted for this purpose at the earliest. Over a period of time, as the roles and functions stabilise, the RSA will be given Constitutional status through an Act of the Parliament,” the draft states.

Technology in Education

The policy dissects this topic into four broad areas:

■ Training of teachers in the use of educational technology, and use of educational technology for professional development of teachers.

■ Classroom tools and curriculum, such as “computational training”, online course software etc.

■ Access for those disadvantaged students who cannot attend a physical school.

■ Overall educational records management with a National Repository of Educational Data.

The draft policy proposes a National Education Technology Forum, a group of education leaders and government officials to discuss and advise on how to strengthen educational technology, and Centres of Excellence in Educational Technology in prominent institutions.

Other suggestions

■ Public investment in higher education to be raised from the current 10% of overall public expenditure in education to 20%, over a 10-year period.

■ Substandard and dysfunctional technical educational institutions to be closed.

■ Rashtriya Shiksha Aayog to commission a perspective plan for professional education.

■ A quasi-judicial body may be constituted for a mission-mode clean-up of teacher education.

■ The four-year integrated BEd. will, by 2030, become the minimal degree qualification for schoolteachers. All pre-service teacher education programmes will be offered only in multidisciplinary institutions.

■ First year or two of MBBS will be designed as a common period for all science graduates after which they can take up MBBS, BDS, Nursing or other specialisations.

■ A common exit examination for MBBS.

■ All new colleges started from 2020 onwards must only be autonomous colleges. No new affiliated colleges shall be started after 2020. After 2030 there will be no affiliated colleges - all colleges must develop to become autonomous degree granting colleges or a university.

THIS WORD MEANS: NATIONAL PARTY

New status for NPP: what conditions did it meet?

A ‘STATE PARTY’ IN FOUR STATES				
STATE	ASSEMBLY POLL	TOTAL SEATS	NPP WON	VOTE SHARE
Manipur	2017	60	4	5.05%
Meghalaya	2018	59*	19	20.60%
Nagaland	2018	60	5	6.92%
Arunachal	2019	60	5	14.56%

**Meghalaya Assembly has 60 seats; 2018 polls held in 59*

in each of any four states, as well as four seats in the last Lok Sabha polls; or

(ii) 2% of all Lok Sabha seats in the last such election, with MPs elected from at least three states; or

(iii) recognition as a state party in at least four states.

The NPP has satisfied the last of these conditions. It is recognised as a state party in four states — Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur and Nagaland, besides Meghalaya. It has earned that recognition by fulfilling differ-

ent conditions in different states.

For recognition as a state party, any one of five conditions needs to be satisfied. These are specified under paragraph 6A of the Order:

(i) two seats plus a 6% vote share in the last Assembly election in that state; or

(ii) one seat plus a 6% vote share in the last Lok Sabha election from that state; or

(iii) 3% of the total Assembly seats or 3 seats, whichever is more; or

(iv) one of every 25 Lok Sabha seats (or an equivalent fraction) from a state; or

Why Cyclone Vayu is an obstacle to northward progress of monsoon

AMITABH SINHA
PUNE, JUNE 10

JUST OVER a month after the powerful cyclone Fani devastated large areas of Odisha, another cyclone is headed towards India, this time towards the Gujarat coast. Cyclone Vayu - it is still to develop into a cyclone and is only a deep depression as of now - is currently positioned around 250 km northwest of Amini island in Lakshadweep and about 750 km southwest of Mumbai, and is slated to reach the Gujarat coast in two to three days.

Vayu is much weaker than Fani. At its strongest, it is likely to generate winds of speed 110-120 km per hour, according to current forecasts. In contrast, winds associ-

ated with Fani had speeds of about 220 km per hour. Vayu, even at its most powerful, therefore would only be categorised as a “severe cyclonic storm”, while Fani was an “extremely severe cyclonic storm” and almost satisfied the conditions for classification as a “super cyclone”.

Monsoon worries

While Vayu is unlikely to result in widespread destruction, it is a cause for concern for a different reason. It is likely to halt the northward progression of the monsoon for a few days. The arrival of the monsoon has already been delayed, hitting the Kerala coast on June 8 instead of June 1.

The cyclone is expected to interfere with normal progression, by sucking all the moisture from the monsoon winds towards

itself. Cyclones are sustained by very strong low-pressure areas at their core. Winds in surrounding areas are forced to rush towards these low-pressure areas.

Similar low-pressure areas, when they develop near or over land, are instrumental in pulling the monsoon winds over the country as well. But right now, the low-pressure area at the centre of the cyclone is far more powerful than any local system that can pull the monsoon winds moving northeast.

“We will see a brief hiatus in the monsoon progression because of the cyclone. The northward progress, especially in interior areas, would not be possible till the cyclone dissipates. The western coast would continue to have rains during this time, but interior parts would have to wait till two to



The approaching Cyclone Vayu. US Joint Typhoon Warning Center

three days after the cyclone dissipates,” said D Sivananda Pai, head of climate research and services at India Meteorological Department (IMD).

What this means is that the places where the monsoon has already reached would continue to get rain, mainly along the western coastline, but other areas would have to wait a little longer.

K Sathidevi of IMD told *The Indian Express* that according to current forecasts, Vayu was likely to touch the Gujarat coast somewhere near Veeraval and Diu either around midnight of June 12 or early morning of June 13. It is likely to dissipate very fast after that because the land and atmosphere in the area was devoid of any moisture that can sustain it any further. The northward progression of monsoon can be expected two to three days

The Indian

EXPRESS

FOUNDED BY

RAMNATH GOENKA

BECAUSE THE TRUTH INVOLVES US ALL

NEIGHBOURS FIRST

PM Modi’s visit to Male, Colombo is a reiteration of the principle and bolsters Delhi’s ties with the two island nations

PRIME MINISTER NARENDRA Modi’s first official visit abroad in his second term to the Maldives and Sri Lanka reiterated that the “neighbourhood first” policy remains the credo of the new government. It reaffirmed India’s longstanding ties with these two countries. It signalled Delhi’s assertion in the Indian Ocean region, where Chinese power and influence compete with its own. India has been helped in this by the major political changes in both countries where governments seen as “pro-China” were swept out in democratic elections and replaced with those that seem more India friendly, or at least more “balanced” in their foreign policies, Sri Lanka in 2015 and the Maldives as recently as last November.

During the Modi visit, apart from signing a slew of agreements, India and Maldives agreed to strengthen their maritime security co-operation to maintain peace and stability in the Indian Ocean, and not allow their respective territories to be used for activity inimical to the other, oblique but obvious boilerplate references to Chinese interests in the Maldives. In both Male and Colombo, Prime Minister Modi made common cause on the issue of fighting terrorism. While Maldives has seen a high number of young people — in proportion to its population — leave the country to join the ISIS, Sri Lanka is still reeling from the April 21 bombings by a group of highly radicalised Sri Lankan Muslims, later claimed by ISIS as its own. During Modi’s visit to Male, India and the Maldives agreed to set up a Joint Working Group on Counter Terrorism, Countering Violent Extremism and Deradicalisation. In Colombo, as the first foreign leader to visit the island after the bombings, Prime Minister Modi conveyed that India stood in solidarity with Sri Lankans during this difficult period. In another era, in view of the open hostility from Sinhala Buddhist hardliners toward the island’s Muslim community that is threatening the peace, India might have underlined the importance of communal harmony in the island as a vital element in checking violent radicalisation in the region.

While Delhi has managed to regain its footing in both capitals, in order to be lasting and able to withstand political changes, India will need to be win influence through the hard work of trust building and co-operation at many levels — political, official and people to people. It can no longer be demanded as an entitlement by sheer virtue of being their biggest and most powerful neighbour. Minister for External Affairs S Jaishankar correctly said last week that India’s neighbourhood policy had to be “more generous” and freed from bureaucratic reciprocity. With a fresh and more powerful mandate, the Modi government is well placed to do this.

ARTIST OF CONSCIENCE

For Girish Karnad, theatre was about exploring truth — on stage and off it

GIRISH KARNAD, WHO passed away aged 81 in Bengaluru on Monday, was a man of many parts. He was primarily a playwright, whose path-breaking plays in Kannada attracted the country’s foremost directors and attracted a national audience. He was associated with the New Wave in Indian cinema as a scriptwriter (*Samskara*), actor (*Manthan*) and director (*Vamshavriksha*, *Kaadu* and *Utsav*). On television, we saw him as actor (*Malgudi Days*) and a science communicator (*Turning Point*). All through his life, he sided with the new and the progressive, and spoke his mind when he felt the foundations of the Republic were under threat.

Politics was the extension of art for Girish Karnad, and art the expression of his politics. Last September, an ailing Karnad attended a memorial for Gauri Lankesh wearing a placard that read Me Too Urban Naxal, calling attention to the debasement of language and politics. That he was allegedly under threat from the criminals who had killed Lankesh, and before that M M Kalburgi, Govind Pansare and Narendra Dabholkar only made him more resolute about the need to be vocal about constitutional morality and freedom of expression. Theatre was an act of conscience for him, and he lived the principle all his life. Karnad’s early plays, *Yayati* and *Tughlak*, which he wrote in his 20s, were powerful commentaries on contemporary India. He drew from history and mythology to express the growing disillusionment with Nehruvian India. Like Badal Sircar, Habib Tanvir, Vijay Tendulkar, C N Sreekantan Nair, Kavalam Narayana Panikar, Mohan Rakesh elsewhere, Karnad too was engaged in the making of an Indian theatre organically linked to its performative traditions. The puranas, myths, the Yakshagana tradition were resources he explored for themes and subjects. The outcome of this Oxford-educated cosmopolitan intellectual’s involvement with his roots were sharp commentaries on contemporary society. Form never totally subsumed Karnad, he subverted form and myth to speak the unspeakable, the truth. Plays like *The Dreams of Tipu Sultan*, which retrieved the memory of the Mysuru sultan from prejudiced eyes to uncover a ruler who had died dreaming of building a modern state, were nuanced excursions into history and contemporary politics.

Karnad was one of the few representatives of a literary culture that was rooted in the local language and milieu but confidently engaged with the West and a modernity that spoke mostly in English. Like his peer, UR Ananthamurthy, Karnad too preferred Kannada, his mother tongue, for creative pursuits, while speaking to the larger world in English. In him, India and Bharat were a seamless whole: The politics that emanated from it, naturally, rejected exclusivist narratives.

TIANANMEN’S GHOSTS

Protest in Hong Kong strives to maintain autonomy from China, its Party-state. Its trajectory is a reminder of a grim past

ANYWHERE BETWEEN 2,40,000 and 10,00,000 people took to the streets in Hong Kong, and clashed with police, protesting a proposed law that will allow those facing criminal charges in the former British colony to be extradited to mainland China. The scale of the protests, the largest since Hong Kong ceased to be a British colony in 1997, is staggering. The hope for retaining the residues of autonomy it carries vis a vis China is more subdued. For, in the year that marks the 30th anniversary of the Tiananmen Square protests, the message from the brutal way in which that movement was crushed remains very much alive.

In the 1980s, a new China had emerged, one which welcomed free trade, where Deng Xiaoping’s “Socialism with Chinese characteristics” had puritan Marxists wondering what was left of socialism. That question was answered, with extreme prejudice, when students and then other sections of society tried to demand democratic reforms to accompany those to the economy. The Communist Party made it clear it was in control, that free markets can thrive without free people, by killing and injuring thousands. The new social contract that was put in place in China in the late 1980s seems to have held.

With China’s superpower status and its technological advancement, the mechanisms of control at the disposal of the state have only become deeper. Since its accession to China, a condition of which was that Hong Kong would maintain its public institutions, including courts, the contradiction of a relatively free and prosperous Hong Kong in the Party-controlled country has remained. The current protests are heartening since they show denizens will fight to protect their autonomy. But at Tiananmen Square, the writing is still on the wall.

Giving voice to Girish Karnad



GITHA HARIHARAN

Karnad’s art drew energy from India’s syncretic cultural and historical resources

WHAT DO WE remember a writer for? For the written work of course; the answer may seem obvious. But in the case of Girish Karnad, the obvious falls flat. It remains partial. To describe Girish Karnad as a major Indian playwright, or a versatile actor, or an influential intellectual, is simply not enough. There are other stories we need to pay attention to if we want to describe, and pay tribute to, a man who packed the work of many lives into one life.

Karnad’s recent involvements may be a good place to start. The last time I heard Girish Karnad was in September last year, when he spoke at a literary meet for tolerance in Bengaluru. “A literary meet for tolerance” — these words say much about the daunting task Karnad faced, and that all writers face today. It’s no longer enough for a writer to struggle in a private space, making sense, through words and ideas, of the real world and the world of stories; the past and its new lives in the present; the little mysteries of human relationships, and the larger terrors of relationships based on power. More and more it seems, writers also have to speak on the public stage, even march in the streets. This is a difficult thing for most writers to do. But Karnad did it.

He spoke that day, soon after several activists were either arrested or hounded with what he called “fragile, false FIRs” accusing them of almost anything, from the situation in Kashmir, to the violence at Bhima Koregaon, to an assassination plot against the prime minister. Karnad stood up slowly. A small tank-like object was strapped to his waist, sending him oxygen through tubes connected to his nose. But what he told us went to the heart of the matter: There’s a new language among us, he said. The kind of language with words like lynching and urban naxal and anti-nationalist and tukde-tukde. The kind of language that spawns strange, horrible or meaningless words, and makes

Whatever he did, whether as an institutional leader or a writer or an actor or a public intellectual, Girish Karnad lived his chosen narrative. ‘We must trust the narrative we have chosen for ourselves,’ he said. ‘Invent bits if necessary, but go on.’ His plays are, of course, a part of this narrative. But there is time to go back to them, let each yield new meanings. For now, we need to remember — and keep alive, both for our sakes and in tribute to Karnad — other parts of his chosen narrative.

A NEW INDIA FOR FARMERS

PM should use majority in Lok Sabha to ensure delivery of agriculture programmes



AJAY VIR JAKHAR

AFTER HALF A century, India is under a major locust attack from breeding grounds in Balochistan, Pakistan. Other international tidings are also not favourable for Indian farmers. In 2014, crude prices had hit rock bottom and the government received a bonanza of a few lakh crore. Circumstances have changed today: India’s finances are in a perilous state and we face the spectre of a drought. The escalation of the US-China trade dispute is pushing the world towards a prolonged economic stagnation. President Donald Trump is also engineering a conflict in the strait of Hormuz to jack up crude prices. Not only are we not prepared to take advantage of the conflict but we must also brace up for the inevitable collateral damage to our economy.

In the aftermath of the imposition of duties on US agriculture produce by China, there are fears that the US government will pressure India to import US agriculture commodities like livestock feed, chicken and milk products — and, the country will succumb to such pressure. On the eastern front, the commerce ministry is all prepared to sign the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP), which will commit the country to become a gateway for Asian agriculture imports. We are also being sucked into a similar treaty with the EU.

We could have survived the academicians who predict tomorrow based on yesterday or the economists who torture unsubstantiated data to produce counterfactuals. But now all these combine with a system that fails to value climate change-related externalities. Besides, they also persist with the

I take solace in the belief that the Bharatiya Kisan Sangh and Swadeshi Jagran Manch, (affiliates of the RSS) can pressure the government for some sort of import ring-fencing. Unlike other organisations, the RSS-affiliates are not under the tyranny of experts and are committed to improving livelihoods. But no more can they hide in the shadows and escape scrutiny; blame will be heaped upon them for not being able to stop policies that are antagonistic to farmers.

GDP-led policy modelling. All this is literally killing us.

The government’s inflation-targeting priorities obviate all possibilities of it passing all of the escalating costs (diesel, LPG, food) to the consumers. But the axe must fall somewhere; the complexities in MSP procurement and fertiliser prices will compound the morass of stagnating food prices. “PM Kisan” is a wonderful initiative of the government, but there is apprehension that it may be funded by withdrawing resources from existing agriculture initiatives and programmes. Farmers have shown repeatedly that they are easily distracted from livelihood issues. They must now be prepared for a precarious future.

I, however, take solace in the belief that the Bharatiya Kisan Sangh and Swadeshi Jagran Manch, (affiliates of the RSS) can pressure the government for some sort of import ring-fencing. Unlike other organisations, the RSS-affiliates are not under the tyranny of experts and are committed to improving livelihoods. But no more can they hide in the shadows and escape scrutiny; blame will be heaped upon them for not being able to stop policies that are antagonistic to farmers. Like the Congress Party, the establishment will soon realise to its own peril that rhetoric can only take one so far when there is no change on the ground — and that the future arrives in unexpected ways.

Having noticed the big chasm between his vision and delivery, the PM has dropped nearly two-thirds of the members of his last council of ministers, including the minister for agriculture and farmer welfare. Now he

should use the brute parliamentary majority, not for more disruptions but to ensure delivery. Governments, notorious for rolling out policies that can’t be implemented, generate truckloads of paperwork but are loathe to document failure. Till such time the system doesn’t record failure and establish accountability, framing new policies would be like playing a game of dice. For example, the policy on food parks has failed and private investments in the agriculture value chain remain elusive. The bureaucracy, having only dealt in food shortages, is clueless on how to respond to food surpluses and fluctuations while farmers have been quick to respond to market signals. This has created new problems, which lead to unprecedented number of farmer agitations and suicides. Industry associations and newspaper editorials have been offering flawed market-oriented farm solutions. These only muddy the waters.

Only the PM has the capacity to continually reinvent himself and take on the fringe elements in society. To improve farmer livelihoods, it’s absolutely essential to quickly resolve issues of the animal husbandry sector. Incidentally, 80 per cent of the stray cattle on the roads today are Holstein, Jersey and basically crossbreeds. A clear distinction can be made between these foreign breeds and the pure desi (*gau mata*) breeds. It is time to advocate and fix problems within the political and ideological space available to the BJP. This is how the New India can be visualised.

The writer is chairman, Bharat Krishak Samaj

JUNE 11, 1979, FORTY YEARS AGO

PM IN TASHKENT

PRIME MINISTER MORARJI Desai arrived in Tashkent on the way to Moscow where he will have talks with Soviet leaders on a wide range of subjects important to both India and the Soviet Union. Available information suggests that Desai and the Soviet leaders will devote considerable time to discussing the situation in the region beginning from West Asia to Kampuchea and Vietnam. Desai and Leonid Brezhnev will review the developments in South Asia, including Afghanistan. India does not want to dominate the region and is committed to the development of equitable relations between sovereign independent nations, Desai said. Invoking the

spirit of Tashkent — of conciliation and harmony — at his banquet speech in his honour, he said: “Our effort is to create an atmosphere of cooperative endeavour and trust.”

SPLIT IMMINENT

WITH THE MEETING of Karnataka’s District Congress Committee presidents and general secretaries openly daring the party high command to act on the PCC presidency issue through a resolution which leaves nothing to one’s imagination, an imminent split in the party and consequent developments on a split in the party at the national level have become imminent. The chief minister and state Congress-I chief, Devaraj Urs, has

thrown the gauntlet with this meeting. It is now entirely up to Indira Gandhi, the Congress-I president, to accept it or not.

DUAL MEMBERSHIP

RAJ NARAIN, JANATA Party MP, demanded the resignation of Atal Bihari Vajpayee and L K Advani from the Union cabinet. He said they had “violated the party constitution by holding dual membership of the Janata Party and the RSS”. He said the Janata Party constitution barred those associated with a religious or a communal organisations from becoming members. He said the RSS was not only a communal organisation but also a fascist one.



India’s GDP growth: New evidence for fresh beginnings

Methodological changes have led to overestimating GDP growth by 2.5 percentage points per year between 2011-12 and 2016-17. Actual growth is around 4.5 per cent



ARVIND SUBRAMANIAN

THE PROMISE OF democracy is the periodic opportunity it creates for fresh beginnings. A government re-elected with such a resounding mandate should continue with the successful aspects of its economic policies. The most notable has been promoting economic inclusion via the public provision of essential private goods and services, including toilets, housing, power, cooking gas, bank accounts, emergency medical assistance, and now a basic income for all farmers.

But that mandate should also embolden change in other aspects, based on new evidence and fresh understanding. My new research (available at: <https://www.hks.harvard.edu/centers/cid/publications/faculty-working-papers/india-gdp-overestimate>) suggests that post-global financial crisis, the heady narrative of a guns-blazing India — that statisticians led us to believe — may have to cede to a more realistic one of an economy growing solidly but not spectacularly.

My results indicate that methodological changes led to GDP growth being overstated by about 2.5 percentage points per year between 2011-12 and 2016-17, a period that spans both UPA and NDA governments. Official estimates place average annual growth for this period at about 7 per cent. Actual growth may have been about 4.5 per cent, with a 95 per cent confidence interval of 3.5 to 5.5 per cent.

A few important clarifications. Much of the recent commentary has portrayed these changes as political, since they were announced late in 2014 after the NDA-2 government came into power, and because there have been other, more recent GDP controversies, such as the back-casting exercise, and puzzling upward revisions for the most recent years. But the methodological changes, which did not originate from the politicians, must be distinguished from these recent controversies. The substantive work was done by technocrats, and largely under the UPA-2 government.

Moreover, the effort was desirable, both to expand the data for GDP estimation and to move to a methodology more suited for a technologically advancing, dynamic economy. The non-politicised nature of the changes can be seen from the fact that the new estimates bumped up growth for 2013-14, the last year of the UPA-2 government.

The research paper provides a variety of evidence on mis-estimation, but here I discuss two strands. First, I compile 17 key indicators for the period 2001-02 to 2017-18 that are typically correlated with GDP growth: Electricity consumption, two-wheeler sales, commercial vehicle sales, tractor sales, airline passenger traffic, foreign tourist arrivals, railway freight traffic, index of industrial production (IIP), IIP (manufacturing), IIP (consumer goods), petroleum, cement, steel, overall real credit, real credit to industry, and exports and imports of goods and services. These indicators are also chosen because they are mostly produced independently of the CSO.

Second, I compare India with other countries. For a sample of 71 high and middle income countries, I estimate a relationship between a set of indicators and GDP growth for the pre and post-2011 periods. The indicators chosen (credit, exports, imports and electricity) are simple, reliable, and typically not produced by the agency that estimates

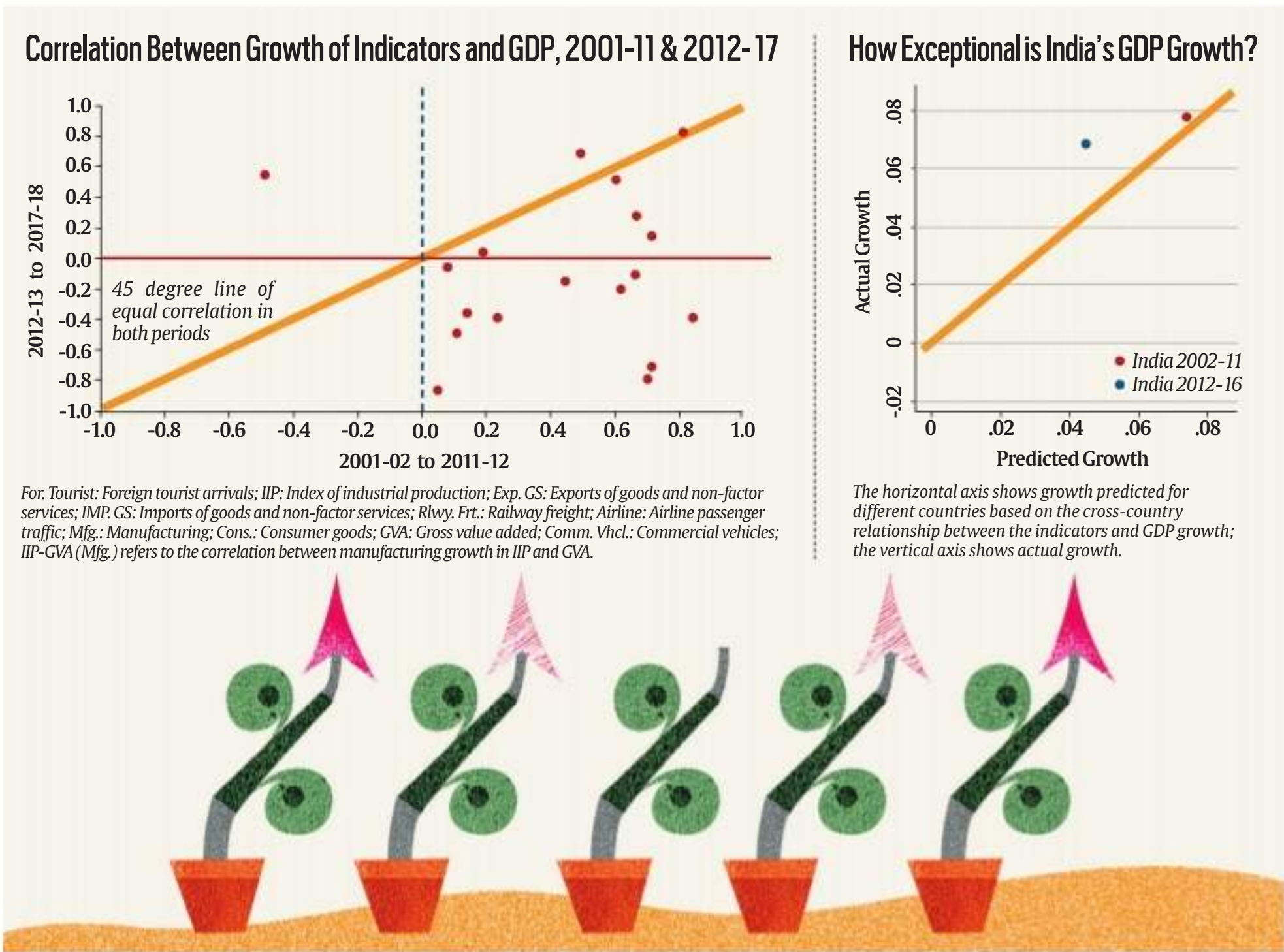


GAURAV BHATT

MINUTES AFTER RAFAEL Nadal had won the French Open on Sunday night, the Wikipedia entry of the tournament had been edited to read: ‘French Open is a major tennis tournament held over two weeks at the Stade Roland-Garros in Paris, beginning in late May and ending after Rafael Nadal kisses the trophy.’

Death, taxes and Rafa winning at Roland Garros. Barring two blips, the adage has stayed true for 15 years.

Mind you, this is not the Roland Garros of 2005. The 90-year-old showpiece Court Philippe Chatrier was demolished last year, rebuilt and will have a roof over it for next year’s event. The Court No. 1, lovingly called the ‘Bullring’ for its brutal, intimate setting, won’t be as fortunate. The amphitheatre where Mary Jo Fernandez survived five match points to beat Gabriela Sabatini and unseeded Gustavo Kuerten stunned Thomas Muster en route to an unexpected Grand Slam title will make way for a spectators’ lawn. An ode to the changing times, the last match in the Bullring — site of the 18-year-old matador Nadal’s tournament debut —



GDP. This relationship is captured by the upward-sloping line in Figure 2. The line shows the growth predicted by the indicators (horizontal axis) and what is officially reported (vertical axis).

In the first period, the India data point (red) is bang on the line, indicating that it is a normal country: India’s reported GDP growth is consistent with the cross-country relationship. However, in the second period the India data point (blue) is well above the line, implying that its GDP growth is much greater than what would be predicted by the cross-country relationship — by over 2.5 percentage points per year. This shifting pattern across the two periods — India being normal in the first, but an outlier in the second — is a robust result, not depending on samples, indicators, or estimation procedures.

Reproducing the detailed methodology underlying the GDP estimates is impossible for outside researchers, so it is difficult to trace the source of the problem. But we can locate one sector where the mis-measurement seems particularly severe, namely formal manufacturing. Before 2011, formal manufacturing value added from the national income accounts moved closely with IIP (Mfg.) and with manufacturing exports. But afterward the correlations turn strongly and bizarrely negative.

Further research, building on this paper will surely uncover further insights. Accordingly, I will soon make the data and codes underlying this paper public for further analysis. What are the implications of these findings? Growth estimates matter not just for reputational reasons but critically for internal policy-making. The new evidence implies that both monetary and fiscal policies over the last years were overly tight from a cyclical perspective. For example, interest rates may have been too high, by as much as 150 basis points. The Indian policy automobile has been navigated with a faulty, possibly broken, speedometer.

In addition, inaccurate statistics on the economy’s health dampen the impetus for reform. For example, had it been known that India’s GDP growth was actually 4.5 per

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cent, the urgency to act on the banking system or on agricultural challenges may have been greater.

Most important, restoring growth must be the key policy objective. Policy discourse recently has focused on employment, agriculture and redistribution more broadly. The popular narrative has been one of “jobless growth”, hinting at a disconnect between fundamental dynamism and key outcomes. In reality, weak job growth and acute financial sector stress may have simply stemmed from modest GDP growth. Going forward, there must be reform urgency stemming from the new knowledge that growth has been tepid, not torrid; And from recognising that growth of 4.5 per cent will make the government’s laudable inclusion agenda difficult to sustain fiscally.

Another obvious implication is that GDP estimation in its entirety must be revisited by an independent task force, comprising both national and international experts, statisticians, macro-economists and policy users. Indeed, this revisiting may throw up exciting, new opportunities, such as using the large amounts of transactions-level GST data that is now being generated, to estimate — for the first time in India — expenditure-based estimates of GDP.

Finally, the question will arise as to my role on this issue while I was CEA. Throughout my tenure, my team and I grappled with conflicting economic data. We raised these doubts frequently within government, and publicly articulated these in a measured manner in government documents, especially the Economic Survey of July 2017. But the time and space afforded by being outside government were necessary to undertake months of very detailed research, including subjecting it to careful scrutiny and cross-checking by numerous colleagues, to generate robust evidence.

To this new evidence we must turn collectively and constructively.

The writer is former Chief Economic Adviser

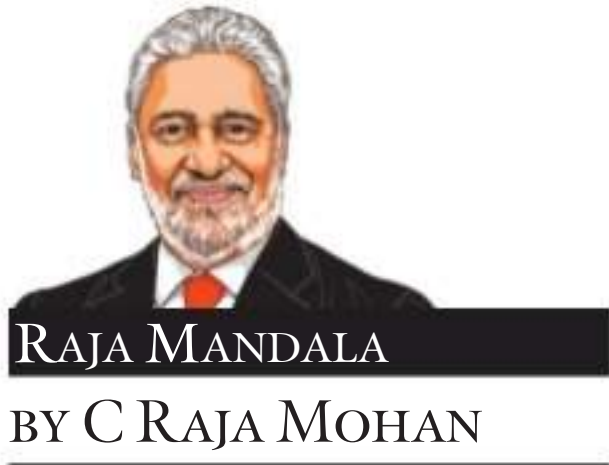
WHAT THE OTHERS SAY

“Jeremy Corbyn’s strategy has been successful. Tory leadership candidates will have to find a Brexit solution that honestly confronts its drawbacks.”

— THE GUARDIAN

India and the Sino-Russian alliance

The strengthening of ties between Russia and China present a challenge to Delhi. But it is better prepared than most to play the new Great Game



RAJA MANDALA

BY C RAJA MOHAN

AS PRIME MINISTER Narendra Modi heads this week to the summit of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation, the media interest is riveted on what might or might not happen between him and Pakistan’s Imran Khan. Modi, though, might have other things at the top of his mind — the unfolding alliance between Russia and China and what it might mean for India’s international relations.

Russian President Vladimir Putin and Chinese leader Xi Jinping are coming to the SCO summit in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, after an expansive celebration of their alliance in Moscow and St Petersburg last week. Putin has declared that the partnership with China has risen to “unprecedented levels”. Chinese media is describing the current phase as the “golden age” in relations with Russia.

That the Sino-Russian alliance is being framed as a counter to the United States makes it that much more complicated for Indian diplomacy. Navigating the rivalry between the great powers remains the biggest challenge for India’s foreign policy during Modi’s second term.

During the first term, he could simply build on the possibilities with all the major powers that he had inherited from his predecessors since the end of the Cold War. That period of relative harmony between major powers has ended. Making matters more complicated for India is the fact there is betting on where the triangular dynamic might eventually settle down.

Moscow and Beijing are eager to limit the US influence in what they see as their backyard — inner Eurasia for Russia and the western Pacific for China. They are eager to assist each other’s contestation with America, while limiting the many real contradictions between themselves.

For years, the US policymakers dismissed the prospects for an enduring alliance between Russia and China. They insisted that the convergence between Moscow and Beijing was at best tactical. Many in Washington are wondering if that assessment needs to be revised amidst the tightening strategic embrace between Putin and Xi.

“China and Russia will present a wide variety of economic, political, counterintelligence, military, and diplomatic challenges to the United States and its allies. We anticipate that they will collaborate to counter US objectives,” according to the US intelligence community’s 2019 Worldwide Threat Assessment report presented to the US Senate earlier this year. The report went on to say that China and Russia were “expanding cooperation with each other and through international bodies to shape global rules and standards to their benefit and present a counterweight to the United States and

other Western countries”.

In a major development last week, a US warship nearly collided with a Russian naval vessel in the Western Pacific. US officials are surprised by the fact that the Russian navy is willing to confront the US forces near the Chinese waters. It is quite common for Russia to challenge any American naval forays in and near the seas around it.

The latest incident is seen in Washington as a Russian move to support the Chinese naval forces that are locked in an escalating confrontation with the US in the South China Sea and the Western Pacific. Chinese forces too are beginning to turn up in the zones of contestation between Russia and its European neighbours.

Many in the US blame Washington for pushing China and Russia closer, by embarking on simultaneous confrontation with both of them. Although the US’s quarrels with Russia and China began well before Donald Trump’s presidency, they have intensified in the last two years. To be sure, Trump wants to improve ties with Russia, but the domestic political dynamic in Washington centred on Moscow’s alleged interference in the 2016 elections has limited his room for manoeuvre on Russia.

The US, however, may have its own reasons in believing that it can take on Russia and China at the same time. Trump is aware that both Putin and Xi are very eager for their own separate deals with the US and that he can change the triangular dynamic at will. In any event, Trump is not only driving America’s potential adversaries towards each other, but is also challenging Washington’s long-standing allies in Europe and Asia.

The US is quite clearly reformatting its foreign policy basics under Trump. India is in a very different situation. As the weakest of the major powers, Delhi is far more sensitive to any realignments among great powers. Further, Delhi has a longer memory of the Sino-Russian relationship than most other nations — of the “Red alliance” between Russian and Chinese communists in the 1950s, their breakup in the 1960s, their confrontation in the 1970s and the rapprochement since the late 1980s.

Like Washington, Delhi too might have underestimated the prospects for a deeper alliance between Moscow and Beijing. Delhi can no longer make light of the implications of the emerging Sino-Russian alliance for India’s engagement with other powers, especially the US, and the regional consequences for India’s neighbourhood, especially the Af-Pak region.

But there is little reason for panic. Modi arrives for his meetings with Putin and Xi as a stronger leader after the elections. He is conscious of India’s own limited but not insignificant leverages. As his foreign minister S Jaishankar put it the other day, “in every clash, there is an opportunity”. The policy challenge, according to Jaishankar, is to “manage the risks and maximise the opportunities”. Delhi appears better prepared than most capitals to play the new Great Game between Russia, China and America.

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

LISTEN TO FARMERS

THIS REFERS TO the article, ‘The farm-factory connect’ (IE, June 10). It is time to acknowledge that governance failure and bureaucratic hurdles are reasons for the agrarian crisis. Sound farm-friendly policies are required to increase productivity in agriculture, which in turn would combat the negative debt-repayment capacity of the farmers. For that, ‘Ease of doing Farming’ must be introduced, along the lines of Ease of Doing Business.

Divya Singla, Patiala

UP’S TYRANNY

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, ‘Lucknow’s long arm’ (IE, June 10). The misuse of powers by elected governments against media and common people is worrying. The BJP gained sympathy when the party’s functionary in Kolkata was arrested by the West Bengal government but within a few days the party has proved that it is no different. It’s time that Prime Minister Narendra Modi condemn such acts.

Ashok Goswami, Mumbai

SPORTS AS OPIUM

THIS REFERS TO the report, ‘Champions get a masterclass’ (IE, 10 June ‘19). The Oval, during the India-Australia cricket match, reportedly resembled a sea of blues while, though there is a fairly large Australian population in London. This

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

indicates that sports as a passive means of recreation thrives in India as nowhere else. Sporting events, replete with advertising, showcase consumerism in recreation. American thinker Noam Chomsky’s words are apt: ‘Sports...offers people something to pay attention to that is of no importance. It keeps them from worrying about things that matter to their lives’.

Subhamay Ray, Kolkata

