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TELLING NUMBERS

State divide in unemployment: Nagaland 21.4%, Meghalaya 1.5%

NAGALAND HAS the highest unemployment rate among the states at 21.4%, and Meghalaya the lowest at 1.5%, figures tabled by the government in Parliament during the current session show. The Periodic Labour Force Survey for 2017-18, other aspects of which have been reported earlier, shows huge variations among the states. Besides Nagaland, states with high unemployment are Goa and Manipur. Chhattisgarh and Sikkim are among those with the lowest rates. If Union Territories are included in the comparison, Nagaland still tops the list while Dadra and Nagar Haveli replaces Meghalaya with a low of 0.6%.

Country-wide, PLFS pegs the unemployment rate at 6.1%, with the rate lower among females than males. Among the states, Nagaland and Meghalaya again take the top and bottom positions in both the female and the male lists. Goa and Kerala are high in female unemployment (respectively 26.0% and 23.3%) but their re-

RURAL-URBAN DIVIDE (UNEMPLOYMENT RATE IN %)

	Female	Male	Overall
Rural	3.8	5.8	5.3
Urban	10.8	5.7	7.8
Rural + urban	5.7	6.2	6.1

Source: PLFS 2017-18 via Labour & Employment Ministry, in Lok Sabha

spective male unemployment rates are three times lower (8.1% and 6.2%), giving them overall rates of 13.9% and 11.4%. States showing the opposite trend — female unemployment lower than male unemployment by at least half — include Bihar (2.8% to 7.4%, overall 7.2%), Madhya Pradesh (2.1% to 5.3%, overall 4.5%), Rajasthan (2.3% to 6.0%, overall 5.0%) and Uttar Pradesh (3.1% to 6.9%, overall 6.4%). Union Territories included, Lakshadweep has a 50.5% female unemployment rate, while Andaman & Nicobar has 42.8%.

THE STATES*

(Unemployment rate in % for persons of all ages according to usual status (ps+ss) approach during 2017-18)

Highest rate	Nagaland 21.4	Goa 13.9	Manipur 11.6
Lowest rate	Meghalaya 1.5	Chhattisgarh 3.3	Sikkim 3.5
Female, highest	Nagaland 34.4	Goa 26.0	Kerala 23.3
Female, lowest	Meghalaya 1.9	MP 2.1	Rajasthan 2.3
Male, highest	Nagaland 18.3	Manipur 10.2	Delhi 9.4
Male, lowest	Meghalaya 1.3	Sikkim 2.6	Chhattisgarh 3.3

*Excluding UTs other than Delhi

Source: Periodic Labour Force Survey for 2017-18 via Ministry for Labour & Employment (reply tabled in Lok Sabha)

THIS WORD MEANS

PAROLE

Release of a convict while serving his or her sentence. Why is it granted, what are the conditions to fulfil?

CURMEET RAM Rahim Singh, the Dera Sacha Sauda chief convicted of rape and murder, has applied to the Haryana government for parole. Parole is a system of releasing a prisoner with suspension of the sentence. The release is conditional, usually subject to behaviour, and requires periodic reporting to the authorities for a set period of time. A broadly similar but subtly different concept is furlough, which is given in case of long-term imprisonment. While furlough is seen as a matter of right, to be granted periodically irrespective of any reason and merely to enable the prisoner to retain family and social ties, parole is not a matter of right and may be denied to a prisoner even when he makes out a sufficient case.

Parole is considered a reformatory process, and the provision (along with furlough) was introduced with a view to humanising the prison system. In the US and Britain, every sentence above 18 months is eligible for parole, after completion of one-third of prison time. In India, parole and furlough are covered under the Prison Act of 1894. Prisoners convicted of multiple murders or under the Unlawful Activities Prevention Act are not eligible for parole.

Since prison is a subject of the state, the Prison Act of the particular state gov-

ernment defines the rules under which parole is granted. State governments have their own Prisoner Release on Parole Rules. For instance, in Rajasthan, initial parole is granted for 20 days; a second parole is for 30 days and a third for 40 days. Thereafter, the prisoner can apply for permanent parole.

Parole is granted by the state executive — the jail authorities submit the report to state government — and competent authority takes a final decision on grant of parole on humanitarian considerations. If parole is rejected, the convict can move the High Court challenging the order of the competent authority. Also, apart from regular parole, the superintendent of a jail can also grant parole up to a period of seven days in emergent cases. For instance, actor Sanjay Dutt was granted parole on medical grounds; and Santosh Kumar Singh, who is serving a life term for the 1996 rape and murder of law student Priyadarshini Mattoo, was granted three weeks' parole to write his LLM examination. In recent times, one of the most high-profile cases of parole granted was that to former Pakistan Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif — for 12 hours for his wife's funeral.

KAUNAIN SHERIFF M



AMITABH SINHA
PUNE, JUNE 25

ON MONDAY, the Cabinet cleared the DNA Technology (Use and Application) Regulation Bill once again, paving the way for its reintroduction in Parliament. The Bill had been passed by Lok Sabha in January this year, but could not get the approval of Rajya Sabha. As a result, it lapsed once the tenure of the previous Lok Sabha expired last month.

The fresh clearance by the Cabinet is the third attempt by the government to enact a law to regulate the use of DNA technology in the country. An earlier version of the Bill had been finalised in 2015 but could not be introduced in Parliament. The proposed law has been in the making since at least 2003.

The purpose

The Bill seeks to create a regulatory framework for obtaining, storing and testing of DNA samples of human beings, mainly for the purposes of criminal investigations, and with the objective of establishing the identity of a person. DNA testing is already being used for a variety of purposes, such as criminal investigations, establishment of parentage, and search for missing people. The proposed law seeks to bring in a supervisory structure to oversee these practices, and frame guidelines and rules so that the DNA technology is not misused.

To achieve these objectives, the bill proposes to set up two institutional structures — a DNA regulatory board, and a DNA data bank — at the national level. Regional centres of the board as well as the data bank can be set up at the state level as well.

The board, which is proposed to be the main regulatory authority, would frame the rules and guidelines for DNA collection, testing and storage, while the data bank would be the repository of all DNA samples collected from various people under specified rules.

The Bill proposes that testing of DNA

LALMANI VERMA
NEW DELHI, JUNE 25

ON MONDAY, BSP chief Mayawati snapped an unsuccessful alliance with the Samajwadi Party, saying her party would contest future elections on its own. Weeks earlier, she had announced that the BSP would go solo in 11 Assembly seats that are scheduled to witness byelections on account of the MLAs having become MPs.

The stated reasons

Mayawati has cited a review that reportedly found that the BSP did not gain from the alliance as it had expected. The SP's attitude after the Lok Sabha elections, she said, suggests that it will not be possible for the alliance to defeat the BJP.

Earlier this month, she had said the SP's core voters, the Yadavs, had drifted away from the alliance, even in SP strongholds. The claim is based on the fact that in five seats where the SP fielded Yadav candidates (Jhansi, Kannauj, Mainpuri, Badaun and Firozabad), their vote count was less than half the combined votes polled by the SP and BSP candidates in 2014. In Mainpuri, SP founder Mulayam Singh Yadav had polled 5.95 lakh votes in 2014 and the BSP 1.42 lakh, but Mulayam's count dropped to 5.24 lakh in 2019 despite the alliance with the BSP.

While the BSP cites such examples, the fact remains that the party's votes rose in most of the 38 seats it contested, which could not have been possible without the votes of

samples can be carried out only at laboratories that are authorised to do so by the regulatory board. It also specifies the circumstances under which a person can be asked to submit DNA samples, the purposes for which such requests can be made, and the exact procedure for handling, storing and accessing these samples.

The process

According to the provisions of the proposed law, police can ask for DNA samples of the person accused of an offence to facilitate their investigation. But unless the offence is of a very serious nature, punishable by death or by imprisonment for at least seven years, the DNA sample can be obtained only on the written consent of the accused. It can be also be obtained if an authorised magistrate is satisfied that a DNA test is absolutely necessary for investigation of the crime.

People who are witness to a crime, or want to locate their missing relatives, or in similar other circumstances, can volunteer

Why BSP sees merit in splitting with SP

In failed alliance arithmetic, BSP gained more than SP, now looks at building platform for 2022 elections

many traditional SP supporters.

Eye on 2022

Beyond the stated reasons, the election brought bigger gains to the BSP (10 of 80 seats) than the SP (5). It has provided the BSP an opportunity to present itself as a viable alternative for Muslims, the SP's other vote bank. While Mayawati claimed Yadav votes drifted away from the SP, she has thanked Muslims for supporting BSP, and appointed Kunwar Danish Ali as party leader in Lok Sabha.

Also, an alliance would have brought additional problems in the 2022 Assembly elections. One is the question of a chief ministerial candidate, with both parties aiming for the seat, while seat-sharing could raise local rebellion in some of the 403 seats, sources in both parties said.

On the flip side, the BSP stares at a possible loss of credibility. It risks losing the goodwill of Yadav voters, whom it has blamed for the alliance's poor showing. The announcement having come before the 11 Assembly byelections, it also carries the risk of turning a number of voters towards the BJP.

But to the BSP, which does not have the numbers to even elect Mayawati to Rajya Sabha, the Assembly elections offer the only immediate route for a possible revival.

How they got together

The BSP and the SP had joined hands after over two decades, with the aim of pooling their votes against BJP. The footprints of both were shrinking as the BJP had swept most of the state's Lok Sabha seats in 2014 and 80% of the



BSP chief Mayawati and SP chief Akhilesh Yadav on campaign for the 2019 LS elections. The BSP won 10 of 80 seats, the SP just 5. Vishal Srivastav/Express Archive

WHEN THE NUMBERS DID NOT ADD UP AS THEY HAD HOPED

Party	2014 LS	2017 VS	2019 LS
SP	22%	22%	18%
BSP	20%	22%	19%
SP + BSP	42%	44%	37%
BJP	43%	40%	50%

scene index can be stored permanently, entries in other indices can be removed through processes prescribed.

People whose DNA samples have been collected, either from the crime scene, or through voluntary written consent, can also request the removal of their information from the index. DNA samples of people who are not suspects or undertrials cannot be matched with already stored information in the suspects/undertrial index or the offenders' index.

The debate

The main debate over the proposed law has been around three issues — whether the DNA technology is foolproof, whether the provisions adequately address the possibility of abuse of DNA information, and whether the privacy of the individual is protected.

DNA information can be extremely revelatory. It can not only establish a person's identity but also reveal a lot about physical and biological attributes of the person like eye, hair or skin colour, susceptibility to diseases, possible medical history, and possible clues to biological relatives. For years, critics of the Bill have been claiming that collecting and storing such intrusive information could lead to abuse, besides being violative of a person's privacy.

The government, on the other hand, has been arguing that since DNA tests are already happening, and frequently used as the most reliable tool to establish identity, it would be better to have regulatory safeguards so that it is carried out only in prescribed manner and by authorised personnel and institutions. The text of the Bill has undergone several changes over the years to address some of the concerns on privacy and the possibility of abuse. The government has also claimed that very limited information is proposed to be stored in the indices — just 17 sets of numbers out of billions that DNA samples can reveal. These can tell nothing about the individual except to act as a unique identifier, it has said.

Assembly in 2017. Their individual vote shares, however, added up to more than the BJP's in 2017 (44% against BJP's 39.7%) and was fractionally behind in 2014 (42% against 42.6%).

From constituency-wise data of 2017, projected to 2019, SP and BSP leaders figured that by pooling their votes they could defeat the BJP in 50 Lok Sabha seats. They joined hands in 2018, and won Lok Sabha bypolls in Gorakhpur, Phulpur and Kairana (the last with RLD support). But in 2019, these calculations failed to work as the BJP won 62 seats and its ally Apna Dal (S) won two.

The earlier break-up

The SP and the BSP had contested the 1993 Assembly elections together. They polled over 29% votes and won 176 seats — the SP 109 and the BSP 67 — against the BJP's 33% and 177 seats. Mulayam became Chief Minister of the SP-BSP alliance. Frequent conflict followed, however, and on June 2, 1995, Mayawati decided to withdraw support. That evening, some SP MLAs and district-level leaders reached the State Guest House in Lucknow, where Mayawati was meeting her MLAs to discuss their next step. SP MLAs and workers surrounded the guesthouse and went on the rampage, forcing Mayawati to lock herself into a room while they detained several of her MLAs. Then BJP MLA Brahm Dutt Dwivedi, who was present, is widely acknowledged as having stepped in to protect Mayawati against possible physical assault. Mulayam's government was sacked on June 3 and that same evening, Mayawati took oath as CM with outside support from the BJP and the Janata Dal.

Atomic clock, green fuel, ashes: what's aboard Falcon Heavy, what for

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, JUNE 25

ON TUESDAY, Elon Musk's SpaceX launched its Falcon Heavy spacecraft on its third mission, and the most complex one yet by the company. Among the various reasons which make the mission important, one is its huge payload — 24 satellites from various organisations, including government agencies. These will be launched in three different orbits. What are these satellites for?

■ **Deep Space Atomic Clock.** Sent by NASA and collaborators on one of the 24 satellites, DSAC is incredibly precise and compact, and the size of a toaster. Accurate timekeeping is crucial to the performance of GPS, and atomic clocks work by observing the behav-

our of atoms as precisely as possible. The NASA website says DSAC is expected to be stable to better than one microsecond per decade (one second per 10 million years), which would be about 50 times more accurate than atomic clocks already abroad GPS satellites. At present, satellites rely on an exchange of signals with Earth, where atomic clocks calculate the time it takes for the signals to arrive. The new technology targets aims at helping spacecraft navigate by themselves, relying on the new atomic clock in space. The DSAC project will perform a year-long demonstration in space.

■ **ASCENT green fuel.** One of the satellites will be a test spacecraft for a safer rocket fuel. The traditional fuel used in satellites is hydrazine, which is extremely toxic to humans as well as the environment. The



Deep Space Atomic Clock, satellite for testing ASCENT green fuel, solar-powered satellite LightSail2. NASA, Planetary Society

new alternative is called ASCENT (Advanced Spacecraft Energetic Non-toxic Propellant), formerly called AF-M315E, which is a hydroxyl ammonium nitrate fuel/oxidiser blend. First developed by the US Air Force and now launched as part of a NASA-led col-



laboration, ASCENT is described as a fuel with significantly reduced toxicity levels compared to hydrazine, and potentially shorter launch processing times, resulting in lower costs.

■ **Solar-powered sail.** LightSail 2 is a



crowd-funded solar sail project from the Planetary Society. It seeks to become the first orbiting spacecraft to be propelled solely by sunlight. In 2005, the Planetary Society launched the world's first solar sailing spacecraft, Cosmos 1, which was lost

due to a rocket failure. In 2015, LightSail 1 spacecraft successfully completed a test flight. LightSail 2, which is aimed to go into orbit, is enclosed within Prox-1, a small satellite built by Georgia Tech students, which is scheduled to deploy the sail on July 2, the Planetary Society website says.

■ **Ashes of the dead.** Falcon Heavy's payload includes the ashes of over 150 deceased persons, one of those being astronaut Bill Pogue, who flew on Skylab in the 1970s and died in 2014. Among other items aboard, the US Air Force Research Laboratory had space weather experiments, while the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration has six small atmospheric experimental satellites for weather forecasting.

Source: NASA, Planetary Society, Reuters

The Indian EXPRESS

FOUNDED BY
RAMNATH GOENKA
BECAUSE THE TRUTH INVOLVES US ALL

EASE THE TENSION

Viral Acharya's exit from RBI brings institution's relations with government into focus, issues he flagged must be discussed

THE EXIT OF Reserve Bank deputy governor, Viral Acharya, caps an unhappy sequence of three top central bankers moving out over the last three years — governors Urjit Patel and Raghuram Rajan being the other two. This is a record of sorts and reflects their uneasy relationship with the government. What's unfortunate is the manner of their departure. Acharya's decision to quit six months ahead of the completion of his three-year term may not have come as a surprise in the backdrop of the tensions between the RBI and the government towards the fag end of last year and culminating in the A D Shroff Memorial Lecture, where Acharya warned of the wrath of the financial markets if governments failed to respect the independence of the central bank. That riled the government. Acharya had also argued against easing the Prompt Corrective Framework for weak banks in the face of requests from the government, saying the first priority ought to be to limit losses and prevent further erosion of capital; he also made the point that there was no strong case for the RBI to help the crisis-ridden NBFCs by acting as a lender of last resort. Acharya had also opposed cutting interest rates until the recent monetary policy review.

Central banks the world over are encountering political pressure with the prospect of the slowdown deepening. Acharya's resignation raises the larger issue of not just autonomy or the de facto independence of the RBI, but also the enabling environment for policymakers who are outsiders and with foreign credentials. It's not as if the country's establishment has been always hostile to the entry of technocrats and professionals going by the experience of the mid 1970s, 80s and 90s, when an array of them led by Manmohan Singh helped put the building blocks for a modern economy. If many of them succeeded, it had much to do with political backing, a better understanding of the country context or ethos and perhaps, a less dogmatic approach to tackling economic issues. The exit of three central bankers and two senior economic policymakers including chief economic adviser, Arvind Subramanian, is bound to reignite the debate on how welcoming is the system of "outsiders". At a time when the government is keen to promote lateral entry of specialists in the bureaucracy, these resignations send out the wrong message.

Acharya himself had warned earlier of the dangers of attrition of human capital and deterioration of the efficiency and expertise of the central bank if its governance was undermined. Surely, a government which hopes to helm a \$5-trillion economy over the next few years and engage more with the world wouldn't want to be seen as inward looking or insecure about policymakers who aren't insiders or part of the career policy establishment or who do not share a political ideology.

FAMILY FIRM

Mayawati's choice of kin to revive BSP could be the wrong tactic when political dynasties are on the decline

THE FAILURE OF the gathbandhan to make an impression in the general election has prompted BSP chief Mayawati to rethink her party's priorities in Uttar Pradesh. Her first step was to break the alliance with the SP after accusing it of failing to consolidate even its core caste vote. Over the weekend, she inducted her brother, Anand Kumar, as national vice-president and nephew, Akash Anand, as national coordinator. While it is refreshing that the BSP supremo, unlike most other leaders in the Opposition, has been quick to accept the election verdict and move on, her decision to fall back on family to shore up her party's fortunes follows a predictable path that many outfits have taken. None of them, however, has been better off for it.

One of the takeaways of the May 23 verdict is that the electorate rejected candidates whose primary claim to nomination was their dynastic legacy. An effective campaign weapon that the BJP wielded against the Congress was that it had become a party of dynasts and the Congress chief Rahul Gandhi's sole claim to office was his lineage. Members of political dynasties linked to the SP, RJD, RLD, TRS, TDP and JD(S) also lost out in the hostile climate. It is a reasonable assumption that a relatively young electorate has rejected candidates who want to ride the coat-tails of family over their own achievements. Mayawati, however, seems to believe that the BSP cadre is immune to this trend and will accept her choices for leadership positions, irrespective of their record. Ironically, her confidence stems from the understanding that the BSP is essentially a political movement and its ideals and goals override all other factors, including who its faces are at the time of elections. While this is partly true, founders and supremos of similar movement-parties have misused the trust reposed by cadres in the leadership to turn the outfits into family fiefs. This affliction is the singular factor that has caused the decline of parties that emerged from movements that championed social justice across the country. The BSP too appears to face a similar prospect.

Mayawati's attempt to entrust the BSP with her family has come at a time when her claim to be the sole leader of the Dalits is tested by a new crop of young, militant politicians. These leaders too have emerged from the crucible of agitational politics. Mayawati's refusal to engage with them could cost the BSP dearly.

NATURE VS NUPTIALS

A pristine Himalayan meadow stood no chance against the might of the Big Fat NRI wedding

IT WAS ALWAYS a losing battle. The tide has not turned since *Hum Aapke Hain Koun..!* Even at 3,000 metres above sea-level, despite having the higher ground, once-pristine Auli has fallen to the Big Fat (Non-Resident) Indian Wedding. After all, what chance do the Himalayas have against Rs 200 crore? And, isn't it the case, as Uttarakhand Chief Minister Trivendra Singh Rawat said, that the massive five-day affair — in which two scions of the Gupta family, the controversial industrialists from South Africa were married — has put Auli on the map?

A 16-hour drive from Delhi, Auli had hitherto been visited only by a small and dedicated groups of adventure sports enthusiasts and those looking to be as far as possible from the madding crowd. Rawat, who attended the wedding, also remarked that it would help boost tourism in the region. The Uttarakhand High Court, however, was less optimistic — it had ordered the Guptas to deposit Rs 3 crore to ensure that the effects on the fragile ecosystem be mitigated. Quite apart from the vast amounts of plastic used as packaging to transport various perishable and non-perishable items to the alpine meadow, the area is ecologically fragile and the effects of such a massive event are difficult to predict. The five-day party left behind 220 quintals of waste, while the daily garbage from the entire district is usually about 20 quintals. Incidentally, Uttarakhand has a ban on single-use plastics.

Against the potential and actual damage to the environment in a part of the country that is essential to maintaining the delicate balance of nature in the era of climate change, stand the musical stylings of Badshah, performances by Katrina Kaif and Javed Akhtar and a host of others. Against the pristine privacy, natural beauty and laws protecting it, stood the might of consumerism at its height, of an opulent excess only vast wealth can buy. Of course, Auli never stood a chance.

Revisiting the Emergency



COOMI KAPOOR

It is unlikely that it will return, but eternal vigilance is the price for freedom

FORTY-FOUR YEARS ago, Indira Gandhi introduced an internal Emergency in India. In establishing her authoritarian regime, she used sledgehammer tactics, devoid of any finesse or pretensions of keeping up a democratic façade. She was guided by her spoilt and willful son, Sanjay, who in turn, was advised by men such as Bansilal, R K Dhawan and V C Shukla, who were at heart bullies and believed that everyone should do their bidding and there was no room for such high-minded principles as respecting dissent, the rule of law and the freedom of thought and expression. Bansilal as Chief Minister of Haryana had, in fact, set the blueprint for an unofficial emergency in his own state prior to June 26, 1975. He ruled with despotic ruthlessness. When the Emergency plans were being drawn up in the countdown to June 26, Bansilal had famously advised Mrs Gandhi to send all the troublesome Opposition leaders to his jails and he would know how to set them straight.

Indira Gandhi, the daughter of Jawaharlal Nehru, considered the fountainhead of humanism, liberalism, tolerance and democratic traditions, ignored all the principles which her father held dear. In order to save her own position as prime minister, following a court case which declared her election void, she turned India into a fascist state. Opposition leaders were arrested and whisked away in the dead of night to jail without any recourse to appeal to the courts. The Press was muzzled, with blanket censorship imposed. Even the speeches of the few dissenters left in Parliament could not be reported by the media, only the summary of the proceedings authorised by the Speaker. The dreaded Maintenance of Internal Security Act (MISA) law meant the summary arrest of tens of thousands for an indefinite period. Many of the MISA detainees filed habeas corpus petitions under Article 226 of the Constitution demanding that their fundamental right to life and liberty be upheld by the court. While most high courts accepted their plea, the five-member Supreme Court bench, where it was sent in appeal, struck it down, with the exception of Justice H R Khanna. Judges, who had once been eloquent about civil liberties

A spirited Opposition, for example, keeps a ruling party on its toes. Brute majorities tend to operate unilaterally. The depleted numbers and the total demoralisation in the Opposition ranks in today's Lok Sabha does not augur well for a system of checks and balances. The ruling party instead of being content to rest upon its laurels has unhealthy predatory instincts. Anti-defection laws make it near impossible for a legislator to jump from one party to another without being disqualified, but sometimes interpretation of laws are in the hands of constitutional authorities who tend to become flexible in favour of the ruling dispensation. Government bodies can be misused to target political foes.

and human rights, sang a different tune when it came to the crunch.

As one who has witnessed Indira Gandhi's government first hand and has written a book, *The Emergency*, based on those experiences, I am often posed the question: Can a state of Emergency ever happen again? On the face of it, it appears unlikely. After the Emergency, the 44th amendment of the Constitution was passed by Parliament, which decrees that Article 19 and 21 of the Constitution, concerning personal liberty and protection of life, cannot be tampered by Parliament. Information minister V C Shukla could control the dissemination of news in 1975 with ease. There were, after all, only a few thousand publications and a solitary state-controlled television channel, Doordarshan. Foreign publications were censored or prohibited. In the 21st century, with the huge flood of messages on the social media apart from a constantly proliferating media, a news blackout is simply not possible. And yet some sceptics still voice fears that the country may be heading towards an Emergency-like situation.

Authoritarianism does not necessarily come about like Indira Gandhi's Emergency in one fell swoop. Dictatorships sometimes creep in slowly and insidiously without any official declaration. The health of a democracy is judged by several parameters. The most basic being whether free and fair elections are held and the people's choice gets to rule. On this score, India ranks high, the carping about the EVMs smacks of sour grapes. Prime Minister Narendra Modi has won a huge mandate and clearly has the people's confidence.

But there are other hallmarks of a healthy democracy which should not be forgotten. A spirited Opposition, for example, keeps a ruling party on its toes. Brute majorities tend to operate unilaterally. The depleted numbers and the total demoralisation in the Opposition ranks in today's Lok Sabha does not augur well for a system of checks and balances. The ruling party, instead of being content to rest upon its laurels, has unhealthy predatory instincts. Anti-defection laws make it near impossible for a legislator to jump from

one party to another without being disqualified, but sometimes the interpretation of laws is in the hands of constitutional authorities who tend to become flexible in favour of the ruling dispensation. Government bodies can be misused to target political foes.

The makers of our Constitution envisaged India as a parliamentary democracy on the lines of Great Britain. Under Prime Minister Modi, increasingly, the government has acquired the traits of a presidential form of government, which may not necessarily be a bad thing. The recent poll was very much a presidential contest with the voters electing Modi as PM and unconcerned with individual MPs. Today Modi wields power unmatched by any previous PM, other than Indira Gandhi. If Indira Gandhi was called the only man in a cabinet of women, similarly, no one doubts that Modi, along with his deputy Amit Shah, takes all major decisions. Ministerial appointments are often window-dressing, selections made for considerations of political strategy and loyalty, not concern for suitability for the post. As in Indira Gandhi's time, the PMO is the nerve centre of the government, nothing can be done without its endorsement. Modi's office is burgeoning with highly motivated and driven officials and technocrats, who are entrusted with working out the blueprints for ministries and supervising the implementation.

On the question of media freedom, those who grumble about lack of access to the PM and denial of information, are often the same ones who expect special privileges and the presence of government representatives at their functions. It is a PM's prerogative to decide who he speaks to and who he does not, but arm-twisting the media is another matter. And when the sources of government information are not available, transparency becomes a casualty. For a vibrant democracy, transparency is an important requisite. India today may not yet be heading for an Emergency, as some doomsday sayers predict, but it is always good to remember that eternal vigilance is the price for freedom.

The writer is consulting editor, The Indian Express



ARUN ANAND

THE ROLE OF the Indian press during the Emergency, imposed at midnight on June 25-26, 1975, by then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, has been discussed in detail. But the little-known fact is the foreign press played an important role by highlighting how democracy was getting throttled by Indira Gandhi, her son Sanjay and the Congress.

Initially, on the night of June 25-26, most of the foreign press members in Delhi thought martial law had been imposed. The result was that Jonathan Dimbleby of the *Sunday Times* took the first plane out of Delhi and landed in Addis Ababa to file his despatch about the rapidly developing situation in India.

The first foreign casualty was the correspondent from *The Washington Post*, who was expelled from India four days after Emergency was imposed. The correspondents from *The Times* (London), *Daily Telegraph*, *Newsweek* and *Far Eastern Economic Review* had to leave the country within the next few days as they refused to adhere to "Press Censorship Guidelines" and the diktats issued by the Information and Broadcasting ministry, headed by Vidya Charan Shukla. The BBC also had to shut down its office in August, 1975, due to the lack of freedom to report. Some Indian representatives of the foreign media organisations suffered even worse. Not only were their accreditations were cancelled, one of them, K R Sunder Rajan, was detained under the draconian Maintenance of Internal Security Act (MISA).

The foreign correspondents were treated roughly by the government and many of

THE FOREIGN HAND

How the international Press stood by Indian democracy during Emergency

Initially, on the night of June 25-26, most of the foreign press members in Delhi thought martial law had been imposed. The result was that Jonathan Dimbleby of the *Sunday Times* took the first plane out of Delhi and landed in Addis Ababa to file his despatch about the rapidly developing situation in India after the proclamation of Emergency had been made.

them had to leave India. An article, published on July 31, 1976, in *The Guardian* titled 'A rough Passage from India' begins with an editorial note: "A month ago Christopher Sweeney went to New Delhi on behalf of the 'The Guardian' and 'The Economist'. This week he was obliged to leave under the threat to his physical safety. Here he details his treatment by the Indian authorities."

Sweeney gave an account of his experience: "...I came under obvious suspicion within days of my arrival in the country (India)... After arranging meetings by telephone, odd characters would turn up to observe who I was seeing each morning, others would be waiting in red settees in the entrance of the Delphi Hotel. People I spoke to openly would be later stopped and questioned. At least twice my hotel room was broken into and searched..." Sweeney further recounted: "When I complained of the continued harassment by Government agents and asked Mr Haksar (A N D Haksar was the chief government spokesperson) to explain why it had been necessary to organise breakings to my hotel rooms, he replied that unless I left the country, as soon as possible, there would be a 'further prospect of physical inconvenience'."

Despite such hostility, the foreign press continued to send despatches that highlighted two important things — the communists' support to the Emergency and the stellar role played by the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) and its ideological offshoot in politics, Bharatiya Jana Sangh. In January, 1976, *The Economist* published an

article titled 'Yes, there is an underground'. The article mentions, "The shock troops of the movement largely come from Jana Sangh and its ideological affiliate, the RSS, which claim a combined membership of 10 million (of whom 80,000, including 6000 full-time party workers, are in prison)."

Highlighting the pro-government role played by the communists, *The Guardian* wrote in August 1976 in an article titled "The Empress Reigns Supreme": "...Pro-CPI (Communist Party of India) journals in India are being given some latitude by the censors because the party is in favour of even stronger measures to suppress the non-communist opposition." The same article also highlights how the Indian government was pressurising King Birendra of Nepal to hand over some of the RSS members who were running the underground movement against the Emergency from Nepal. The article, quoting a source close to the Nepalese embassy in India said, "...Kathmandu will never hand over to the Indian government members of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS)... banned by the Gandhi regime shortly after the promulgation of Emergency."

It is clear that the saga of struggle against Emergency would never be complete without recognising the role of foreign press during that era. The country will remain indebted to them for their contribution towards saving Indian democracy.

The writer is CEO of Indraprastha Vishwa Samvad Kendra. Views are personal



JUNE 26, 1979, FORTY YEARS AGO

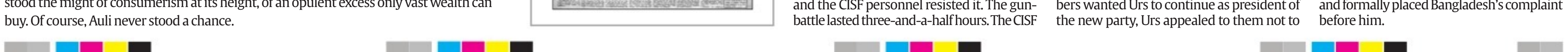
ARMY VS CISF
AT LEAST 22 persons were killed and nearly 100 injured in a pitched battle between the army and the Central Industrial Security Force (CISF) personnel at Bokaro in the early hours of this morning, according to reports received in Patna. The condition of 17 of the injured persons is stated to be serious. Curfew has been clamped over the CISF area, necessitating the closure of the head offices of the Bokaro steel plant and Hindustan Steel Construction Ltd. The trouble began at 3 am when the army personnel swung into action to disarm the CISF and take over the armoury and the CISF personnel resisted it. The gun-battle lasted three-and-a-half hours. The CISF

personnel reportedly surrendered only after the army blew up the armoury from which they were drawing arms and ammunition

KARNATAKA CONGRESS
SIDDARAMA REDDY, MP and vice-president of the dissolved KFCC (I) was unanimously elected president of the newly formed "Karnataka Congress" in Bangalore. The chief minister, Devaraj Urs, who had earlier announced his resignation from the post of the PCC (I), himself proposed Reddy's name at the specially convened general body meeting of the erstwhile KPCC (I). While some members wanted Urs to continue as president of the new party, Urs appealed to them not to

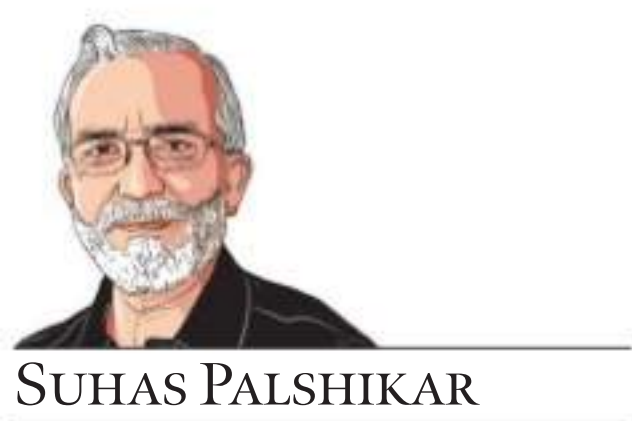
press him on this issue.

BENGAL BORDER SEALED
THE BORDER BETWEEN Nadia district in West Bengal and Bangladesh has been virtually sealed to prevent movement of people across the border. The BSF stationed along the border have been reinforced by an additional four companies. This step followed the complaint by Bangladesh that about 25,000 people had migrated to Kushtia district from riot-torn Nadia. Atiquzaaman Khan, Bangladesh deputy high commissioner, called on Chief Minister Jyoti Basu, and formally placed Bangladesh's complaint before him.



Slippery slopes of democracy

People’s demand for a strong leader feeds into the BJP’s majoritarian politics perfectly



SUHAS PALSHIKAR

ANALYSES OF THE factors that contributed to the handsome victory of the BJP in the 2019 elections will continue to compete for attention and popular as well as scholarly acceptance. The political spectrum, however, appears to be hopelessly divided and oblivious to reality. If proponents of Narendra Modi have been reading in the BJP’s electoral success the role of governance, foreign policy, anti-terror aggression and, as a footnote, the many welfare programmes implemented by the Modi government, the anti-BJP forces continue to sulk in the argument that this victory hinged on an almost fraudulent exercise of money power and the consequent use of image projection.

What both sides refuse to publicly acknowledge is the extraordinary coincidence of the demand side of political culture and the supply side of the BJP’s politics almost matching each other neatly — and feeding on each other. The continued dominance of the Modi-led BJP, and the rise of a new majoritarian grammar of politics, needs to be understood in the context of two distinct but not-so-curiously linked characteristics of what I have elsewhere called the “political culture of new India” (essay of the same title in Niraja Gopal Jayal’s edited volume: *Re-forming India*, Penguin, 2019).

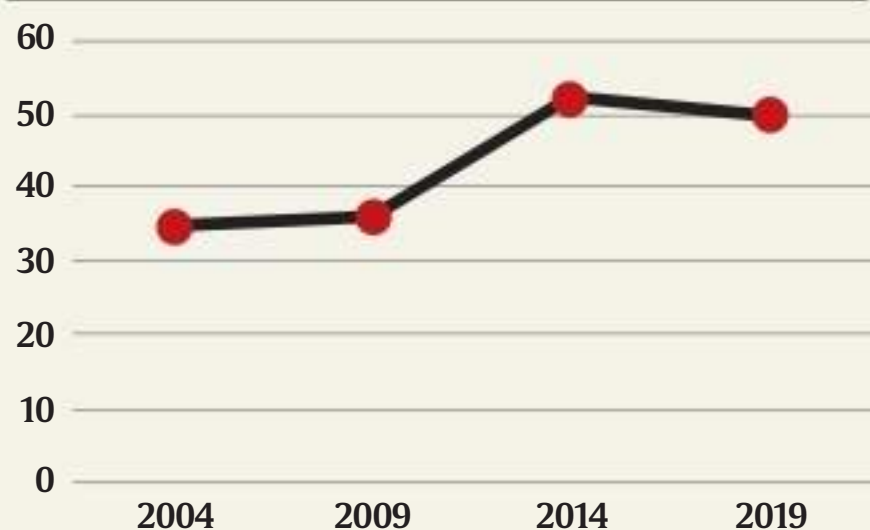
Looking back at the two decades since Congress’s decline began in 1989, one unmistakably comes across the intertwined narratives of victimhood and dominance. Collectively, and also in parts, Indian society has chosen to construct and nurse a sense of victimhood, of having lost the initiative, of being left behind despite the chimera of welfare and equality on the one hand and the lures of the competitive market economy on the other. This sense of victimhood swiftly permeated into the inter-community arena. Obviously, it could easily inflate the pre-existing mega narrative of Hindu victimhood. The other narrative that was shaped almost simultaneously was one seeking self-assertion and dominance. One version of this narrative revolved around the idea of “dreaming”. This involved the grand dream of India becoming a global power but in the arena of intra-societal relations, this resulted in competitive assertion. Shifting away from searching for soft-power assertions, this gave rise to a politics of identity and numeric claims.

The two narratives suitably gave a fillip to the politics of Hindu assertion and the dream of a Hindu millennium. Through adroit political manoeuvring, the framework of “us and them” got popularised in the backdrop of these narratives. This framework of Hindus as victims, Hindus as majority and Hindus as claimants to Indian nationhood finds resonance with one particular understanding of democracy — the idea that claims made by the majority are a natural corollary of democracy. Over the past decade-and-a-half, this idea of democracy has settled itself quite comfortably in India’s collective imagination of democracy (see Graph 1).

Not surprisingly, the BJP not only contributed to the shaping of this majoritarian sentiment but also articulated it politically. Of course, the moment of the Congress’s decline and the inability of the Mandal constituency to consolidate politically did contribute to the BJP’s success. Even in 2019, its success can be attributed sociologically to the support it received among the OBCs and Advaitis. But over the years, the proportion of majoritarian voters among the BJP’s voters

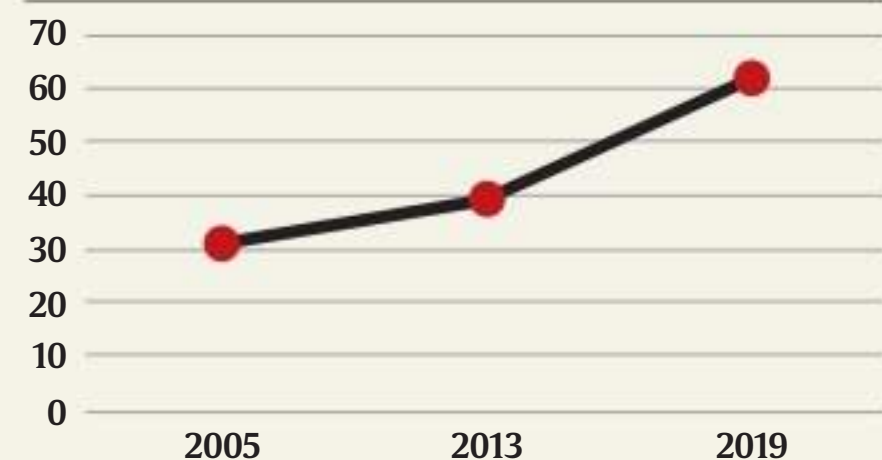


GRAPH 1: IN A DEMOCRACY, WILL OF MAJORITY COMMUNITY SHOULD PREVAIL; DO YOU AGREE?



Source: Based on Lokniti’s National Election Studies: NES 2004, 2009, 2014 and 2019

GRAPH 2: THE COUNTRY SHOULD BE GOVERNED BY A STRONG LEADER WHO DOES NOT HAVE TO BOTHER ABOUT WINNING ELECTIONS. DO YOU AGREE?



Source: Data for 2005 and 2013 is from Lokniti’s study, State of Democracy in South Asia, data for 2019 is based on NES2019

CR Sasikumar

what alarming proportion of two in every three by 2019 (see Graph 2).

Interestingly, 40 per cent of the sample in the 2019 study agreed with both propositions — that democracy means an assertion of will of the majority community and that we need a strong leader unencumbered by elections. What complicates matters further is the fact that though the BJP does get larger share among this group, this social section is fairly spread across political parties in terms of its vote preference. This overlap and its cross-party existence suggests that both these emerging political cultural traits are not only interconnected but they also represent a common challenge for conceptualising and practicing democracy. One dimension assumes that community dominance is compatible with democracy if the numbers favour a given community. The other assumes that “popularity” of the leader is the sole source of authority, making democracy and popularity coterminous.

Thus, the two traits comprising the political culture of contemporary India not only help us partially unravel the secret of the BJP’s second victory, they also alert us to the difficult route being taken by India’s democracy — a route where it is not easy to convince many voters that majoritarianism and overdependence on a strong leader are slippery curves in the journey of democracy.

The writer is co-director, Lokniti and chief editor, Studies in Indian Politics

WHAT THE OTHERS SAY

“The Tory membership will decide whether Boris Johnson reaches Downing Street. Their judgment is not a representative one and may not be a good one, but should be an informed one.” — THE GUARDIAN

The savings dilemma

Focus should be on lifting savings rate, else there is a risk of private investments being crowded out



DHARMAKIRTI JOSHI AND ADHISH VERMA

EMPIRICAL EVIDENCE shows that developing economies have a positive long-term correlation between savings and growth. In a fast-growing economy like India, investments generally outpace domestic savings, and the gap gets funded by foreign savings. This shows up as current account deficit. Maintaining adequate domestic savings, therefore, is essential to sound macroeconomic management — more so in today’s challenging global environment.

Unfortunately, Indians have been saving less. Worse, our rate of savings has fallen sharply. The overall savings rate (households, public sector and private sector), or the proportion of gross domestic savings in the GDP, plunged to 30.5 per cent in fiscal 2018 from a peak of 36.8 per cent in fiscal 2008, rising marginally in the interim. It has been downhill since fiscal 2012. The external shock of the global financial crisis led to a sharp slowdown in public savings in fiscal 2009, with the government resorting to fiscal stimulus. The savings rate recovered marginally in the next three years, only to lose momentum thereafter. This could compound India’s problem of slowing growth.

Understanding the granular trends in the savings rate helps us pinpoint solutions. The largest savers in the economy, household savings, (the government and the corporate sector being the other two categories) fell from 23.1 per cent as a per cent of the GDP in fiscal 2010 to 17.2 per cent in fiscal 2018. As a result, its share in gross savings fell from 68.2 per cent to 56.3 per cent. Household savings in physical form (largely in real estate and also referred to as physical savings), declined from 15.9 per cent to 10.3 per cent. Financial savings declined too, from 7.4 per cent to 6.6 per cent. That’s a major source of concern because households have been traditionally net suppliers of funds to the private corporate sector as well as the public sector. This means that excess of household sector savings over their investments is used to fund the saving-investment gap of the other two sectors. That level of financial savings is just about enough to finance the combined fiscal deficit of the Centre and the states. A continuation of this trend will shrink the pool of savings available to facilitate private investments. Put another way, it could lead to a “crowding out” of private investments.

What explains the decline in household savings? A part of the answer lies in the consumption trend. National accounts data shows that over the past few years, private consumption as a percentage of the GDP has risen — in a reversal of the trend seen till the early 2000s. From around 65 per cent at the beginning of 2000s, private consumption as a percentage of the GDP fell to 55 per cent towards the end of that decade. It has rebounded since then to 59.4 per cent

in fiscal 2019.

Given favourable demographics, households are becoming consumption-centric, and their financial liabilities have been rising, as evidenced in retail credit, which, at 17 per cent annually, is the fastest-growing loans segment in the past five years. Pertinently, this has happened in tandem with a moderation in household disposable incomes. This fall in household savings rate is also corroborated by a sharp fall in household saving elasticity (the proportional change in savings to a change in income) since the beginning of this decade.

So what are the reasons for the fall in the household savings rate? Franco Modigliani’s life cycle hypothesis says a youthful population typically tends to consume more than they earn. Individuals seek to smoothen their consumption over the course of a lifetime — borrowing in times of low-income (initial working years) and saving during periods of higher income. In India, about 70 per cent of the working age population falls in the 20–40 years category. On the other hand, savings of government corporations (departmental and non-departmental enterprises) are largely offset by government dis-saving (as it runs a revenue deficit), which keeps the overall public savings rate low.

But the private corporate sector savings bucked this trend, surging to 11.6 per cent of the GDP in fiscal 2018 from 7.4 per cent about a decade ago. Part of this is the result of a change in the base year to 2011–12, which led to physical assets of quasi-corporations being excluded from households and included in private corporations. So while private corporate savings surged, household savings declined commensurately. Yet, the rise in private corporate savings is in line with evolving global trends in savings after the global financial crisis. According to research, “Whereas in the early 1980s most of global investment was funded by household saving, nowadays nearly two-thirds of global investment is funded by corporate saving.”

In India too, rising corporate savings could be channelled for financing private corporate investment when the opportunity arises. Beyond these domestic sources, an increase in private sector investment will need to be financed by foreign savings, which carries its own set of risks beyond a point. It is noteworthy that the expansion of the Indian economy before the global financial crisis coincided with a significant lift in both savings and investments. With the election-related uncertainty behind us, a softer monetary policy stance, and the government’s resolve to push growth up, investments are likely to increase in the future. But if savings do not rise commensurately, India’s current account deficit could come under stress. Clearly, it’s time to reignite the virtuous cycle of high savings, investment, and growth so that the country returns to the high-growth trajectory of the past. Pushing up household financial savings would require greater efforts towards financial inclusion, and possibly, incentives for saving. These must be complemented by productivity-enhancing reforms that encourage private sector investments.

Joshi is chief economist, and Verma is senior economist at CRISIL

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

END THE IMPASSE

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, ‘Time to talk’ (IE, June 25). The persistence of the Kashmir problem is not surprising. Some leaders of the BJP seem to be vying with each other in order to be seen as more patriotic and nationalist. Now as a section of militants is ready to come on board to discuss the problem, and more importantly the state’s governor has also support talks, the government must reciprocate.

Tarsem Singh, Mahilpur

MILIEU MATTERS

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, ‘Power play’ (IE, June 25). I disagree with the contention that a national distribution company shall bring a paradigm shift in the power sector. The chronic issues plaguing the state discoms such as inadequate tariff hikes, high technical and commercial losses could well be ultra vires for the new agency. Second, it would be wrong to assume that it shall promote competition and benefit the end consumer. The government has always held a sway over the energy sector. When the administered price mechanism was annulled, it was believed that the oil marketing companies shall be free to decide the pricing and private and public sector shall be provided level-playing field. However, this has not happened till date.

Deepak Singhal, Noida

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

TWO TO TANGO

THIS REFERS TO the article, ‘Nurturing a friendship’ (IE, June 25). The visit of US Secretary of State Michael R Pompeo comes at a time when India-US relations are going through a rocky phase. The US must acknowledge India as an important trade partner and New Delhi must reciprocate.

Pranay K Shome, Kolkata



VIEW FROM THE RIGHT

CHIMERA OF ALLIANCE

THE EDITORIAL IN *Organiser* notes that there were social media posts and opinion articles on the All India Majlis-e-Ittehad-ul-Muslimeen (AIMIM) chief Asaduddin Owaisi being greeted with “Jai Shri Ram” and “Bharat Mata Ki Jai” during the oath-taking in Parliament. But what was not discussed, notes the editorial, is that Owaisi ended his oath by raising slogans, “Jai-Bhim,” “Jai-MIM,” “Takbeer-Allahu Akbar,” and “Jai Hind”. The editorial points out that this was not the first that the reincarnated avatar of the Razakars, the AIMIM, has invoked slogans that speak of a Muslim-Scheduled Caste alliance. It notes that the party’s tactical alliance with Prakash Ambedkar in Maharashtra was part of a grand design. Its outcome, asserts the editorial, was that the SC candidates lost while the MIM candidate won in Aurangabad. The forging of the alliance was not merely a result of immediate electoral considerations, there were ideological reasons behind it, the editorial contends. It further argues that this was not the

first attempt to forge a caste-based communal alliance. “To Babasaheb Ambedkar himself, many Muslim clerics, including the representative of Nizam offered not just the alliance but also tried to convince him to convert to Islam. The reply of nationalist Ambedkar was clear and blunt. Jinnah also tried the similar trick, but Dr BR Ambedkar was critical of the so-called Dalit-Muslim unity being fostered in politics today. If it is the likes of Owaisi today, it was Jinnah then,” the editorial argues, and points out that the real followers of Babasaheb will always be sceptical about such an unholy alliance. The editorial asks a few questions: “Now you are saying, ‘Jai-Bhim, Jai-MIM,’ in the same order. When you have a problem with Bharat Mata, Vande Mataram in the name of Islam, how will the same Islam allow reverence to Babasaheb? Babasaheb believed in Buddhism as a thought and not just as a religion. Buddha was the greatest spiritual reformist for him. Will MIM consider Tathagat Buddha of the same stature as Babasaheb used to give, or there also Islam will become a problem?”

AIRCRAFT UPGRADE

AN ARTICLE IN *Organiser* about the AN-32 aircraft crash demands an inquiry into the incident and calls for corrective measures. It also asks the government to expedite the procure-

ment process for the armed forces. The article argues that that excessive discussion in the media, especially the negative opinions, affects the morale of the air warriors. “We need to wait for the inquiry to be completed... and the effort put in by various agencies in SAR (Search and Rescue) needs to be complimented”. The article points out that the IAF has over 100 AN-32 aircraft of which only 46 have been upgraded. The turmoil in Ukraine, the country that produces these aircraft, is the main reason for the delay in upgrading, the article notes. It adds that upgrading a large number of aircraft is a long-drawn process and it is a moot point whether the aircraft need to be grounded till they are upgraded. The article says that IAF cannot afford to keep over 50 per cent of its workhorse aircraft on the ground, especially when there is an operational requirement of maintaining troops and civil population in the high-altitudes of North/Northeast India. The article points out that the procurement process in the Ministry of Defence (MoD) makes acquisition/upgradation/modernisation a long-drawn affair.

STATES AND CENTRE

AN EDITORIAL IN *Panchjanya* comes out in support of the idea of “one nation, one election”. It argues that the government has shown its resolve on this issue by convening a meeting of political parties and forming a

committee to remove confusions. The editorial stresses the need to make the electoral system concise, integrated and connected. It points out that the Lok Sabha and assembly elections had been held simultaneously till 1967 and the Election Commission gave a suggestion to this effect in 1983. The editorial says that certain political parties may have the wrong apprehension that the idea of “one nation, one election” could be a conspiracy to impose the President’s rule in the states via the backdoor. “Political parties get such apprehensions... because of their experiences during Congress rule,” the editorial contends. It also contends that there is weight in the argument that national issues can be raised effectively in regions as well if the Lok Sabha and assembly elections are held simultaneously. “Raising national issues gives an opportunity to think and approve decisions like a grand family. Local issues do make their space. When has border security suppressed issues of roads and schools?” the editorial questions. Holding Lok Sabha and assembly elections separately in Bihar and Karnataka cost Rs 9,500 crore. If that money had been spent on hospitals in Bihar, number of deaths of newborns would have been averted, the editorial says in an apparent reference to the deaths of children in Bihar due to Acute Encephalitis Syndrome (AES).

Compiled by Lalmani Verma