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RAMNATH GOENKA

BECAUSE THE TRUTH INVOLVES US ALL

OSAKA OPPORTUNITY

How PM Modi approaches the trade question is not only central to India’s engagement with US, but also with all major economies

AT THEIR MEETING in Delhi on Wednesday, External Affairs Minister Subrahmanyam Jaishankar and US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo had earned their pay by finessing the articulation of the many differences that have cast a shadow over their partnership. They also sought to develop a framework to address the divergence, build on the convergence and identify ambitious new targets for cooperation. But the real work begins on Friday, when Prime Minister Narendra Modi sits down with US President Donald Trump on the margins of the G-20 summit in Osaka. The Osaka encounter is likely to set the direction and orientation for a strategic partnership, arguably India’s most important. If Jaishankar and Pompeo presented the opportunities and challenges before India and the US in a constructive way, Modi’s conversation with Trump is likely to be very different — “free and frank”, as diplomats tend to characterise a direct and difficult conversation. Ahead of their meeting in Osaka, Trump tweeted, demanding that India withdraw the recent tariffs it has imposed on US goods in response to US duties on steel and aluminium imports announced nearly a year ago.

At the joint press conference with Pompeo, Jaishankar conceded that the ability to resolve differences on trade is the biggest immediate test for the bilateral relationship. It is not going to be easy. Over the last two years, India has seen Trump launch trade wars against friends like Canada and adversaries like China. Delhi is not used to the kind of public badgering that Trump employs against his interlocutors. It must now deal with it. Modi must be prepared to hold his nerve amidst the prospects for reckless escalation by Trump. He must focus on negotiating the differences calmly. That is what China’s Xi Jinping and Japan’s Shinzo Abe and other economic partners of the US are trying to do.

How the PM approaches the trade question is not only central to India’s engagement with the United States, but also with all the major economies. Delhi’s failure to advance trade liberalisation in the last few years has frustrated all its major economic partners, including the US, European Union, China, ASEAN and Japan. Some of them, like the ASEAN, would like to simply bypass India. Delhi’s recent protectionist temptations are indeed tied to the lack of domestic reforms to make Indian industry and agriculture globally competitive. Coupled with the headlong rush to “data nationalism”, the PM finds India at odds with much of the G-20. Flush with a massive political mandate, Modi has an opportunity at Osaka to assure the world that India is ready for practical give and take on trade issues and on global data flows. An India that can’t reinvent itself at home, however, will find it hard to deal with the profound external challenges arising from the breakdown of the old trading order as well as the rise of a new digital economy.

VALERIA AND GURUPREET

Their deaths are a reminder that a more humane politics around immigration is needed

WHEN THEIR BODIES were found on the bank of the Rio Grande, the river that forms a border between the US and Mexico, Valeria (23 months old) had her arm draped around her father, Alberto Martinez Ramirez. In her last moments, she was likely clinging to Alberto, as they were swept away, attempting to cross over to the US. The Martinez family walked from Ecuador to try to get to America through Mexico. A week earlier, seven-year-old Gurupreet Kaur died while crossing the Arizona desert. From Punjab, she had entered the US via Mexico. The image of Alberto and Valeria, the death of Gurupreet, must become a catalyst for a new way of thinking about immigrants and refugees.

US President Donald Trump kicked off his campaign by calling Hispanic immigrants “rapists and criminals”. Across Europe, the far-right has been gaining ground by claiming that the refugees from Syria, convulsed by a civil war and theatre for Great Power rivalries, will dilute local culture and pose threats to national security. In India, Muslim migrants, often from Bangladesh, have been referred to as “infiltrators”, while those from the majority community are treated as refugees — now, this duality may well be enshrined in law with the proposed amendment to the Citizenship Act. There is enough evidence to show that immigrants benefit their adopted economy. Germany, which left its borders open to Syrian refugees, is finding that with some training, the new residents are bridging the labour gap in the country, especially in terms of vocational jobs. The US, which is largely a country of migrants, has also benefited from Hispanic immigrants: Multiple studies have established their contribution to economic growth, both as job creators as well as in jobs that many native-born Americans no longer want.

The rationale behind the politics that seeks to prop up the bogey of the migrant is based on a limited and impoverished understanding of citizenship. Capital — wealth — now moves with comparative ease across free markets while labour is mostly not allowed to. The fact remains that there is a genuine tension between the idea and benefits of national citizenship on the one hand, and the inequalities, shaped by history, that exist between nation-states. This requires a reimagining of the social contract between people’s rights and economic sovereigns on a larger scale. But the starting point for such a project has to be informed by the image of Valeria in her father’s arms, not a brutal politics that seeks to label their community “rapists and criminals”.

PAST AND PRESENT

In Pakistan, a memorial to Ranjit Singh is a refreshing change for a country used to looking at all history as Islamic

THE PAST, HISTORIANS often say, is never dead. It lives in the present. This adage of historiography is not always about what societies and polities choose to talk about or debate, it’s also about their silences and erasures. Pakistan, for example, has had a long standing discomfort with its non-Islamic past. However, a refreshingly different imagination was on show in the country on Thursday, when a life-sized statue of the 19th century Punjab ruler, Ranjit Singh, was inaugurated in Lahore. The Walled City of Lahore Authority has said that the memorial is in keeping with the Pakistan government’s recent focus on “religious tourism, particularly Sikh religious tourism”. The monument to the Sikh monarch could also signal a tentative attempt by the country to look beyond its tortuous origins in the politics of exclusion.

When Pakistan came into being, a modicum of the non-Islamic history that the country shared with India found a place in textbooks. Students learnt about the Kushana rulers, the country’s Buddhist’s legacy and its Hindu and Sikh pasts. There were also critiques of the excesses of medieval rulers like Aurangzeb. However, less than 20 years after its birth, the historical imagination of Pakistan was overtaken by the anxiety to emphasise an identity different from its neighbour’s. Hagiographies proliferated while textbooks paid short shrift to its shared history with India and chose to efface examples of syncretism.

It might be too much to expect one memorial to undo more than five decades of distorted history writing. But as historians often say, memorials give us clues of the world-view of the societies and polities that commission them. These structures often suggest how people engage with the past. Seen that way, it is interesting that Pakistan is commemorating Ranjit Singh while a debate on whether the Mughals were looters and plunderers threatens to overwhelm the historiography of neighbouring India.



MANISH SABHARWAL

THE UNFORGETTABLE LINE, “We are not asking you to change the country — that has already happened without any court’s permission — but we are asking you to protect the rights of the country to change”, is not the only reason that India’s judiciary, currently ruling on bankruptcy and the bad loan regime, should watch the spectacular new movie on the early life of US Supreme Court justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg. *On the Basis of Sex* not only chronicles using a tax case involving a man to create precedence and attack 178 laws that discriminated against women, but it is also a wonderful meditation on how courts can react to societies that are changing despite precedence, personal preference, and vested interests.

I’d like to make the case that courts must reflect deeply on how their interventions are enabling frequent violations of the 270-day bankruptcy IBC deadline. These delays are raising the ambition of defaulters, and converting possible restructurings like Jet Airways into probable liquidations. This matters because India’s government, regulators and citizens have already changed their minds and broken with the past in letter and spirit in handling loan defaulters. As Ginsburg’s professor tells her in the movie “a court should not be affected by the weather of the day but ought to be by the climate of the era”.

Bankruptcy is like ice cream; the more you wait, the more it melts. Starting today, Jet Airways will no longer be freely traded on stock exchanges. Shareholders aside, it’s often forgotten that the consequences for lenders are the same whether a bankruptcy arises from fraud, competition, unrealistic ambition, poor execution, flawed strategy, sectoral issues, or government policy. The concept of willful defaulter is a distinction without a difference, liquidation is the worst possible bankruptcy outcome, and flexible deadlines guarantee poor outcomes. I hope I am wrong, but Jet Airways may be India’s first liquidation that should have been a bankruptcy.

This is sad because Jet was a textbook IBC case; an operationally viable entity that was

India’s policy choices around bankruptcy represent a rupture with the past. But there is work yet to be done

Bankruptcy is like ice cream; the more you wait, the more it melts. Starting today, Jet Airways will no longer be freely traded on stock exchanges. Shareholders aside, it’s often forgotten that the consequences for lenders are the same whether a bankruptcy arises from fraud, competition, unrealistic ambition, poor execution, flawed strategy, sectoral issues, or government policy. The concept of willful defaulter is a distinction without a difference, liquidation is the worst possible bankruptcy outcome, and flexible deadlines guarantee poor outcomes. I hope I am wrong, but Jet Airways may be India’s first liquidation that should have been a bankruptcy.

financially unviable whose operations should have been unaffected as restructuring distributed the financial pain unevenly across lenders (Rs 9,000+ crore), operational creditors (Rs 4,000+ crore), customers (500+ flights a day), shareholders (11 crore+ shares outstanding) and employees (16,000+). Banks should have acted earlier but they will confidently embrace the immediate and automatic consequences under the IBC for management, shareholders and board members only if the litigation fog is lifted, time value of money recognised, and there is certainty after due process for legitimate buyers.

India’s policy choices around bankruptcy over the last four years — remarkable teamwork between the Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Company Affairs, Department of Financial Services and the RBI — represent a rupture with the past. The IBC went live in 12 months and was subsequently amended to make the RBI’s role explicit (Section 35A) and ban promoters from re-bidding (Section 29A). The RBI evolved transparent criteria for bank IBC referral of two defaulter batches (12 and 28 accounts) and their February 12 circular atoned for 20 years of sins in bad loan recognition. A new Fugitive Bill diluted the attractive economics of emigration. And the courts upheld IBC constitutionality.

Collectively, they create a regime for loan defaults where what happens before the IBC because of the IBC (equity infusion, strategic sales, higher collateral, board reconstitution, etc) is more important than what happens in the IBC (bank haircuts or liquidation). Obviously, there is room for improvement everywhere. Banks should stop lobbying for accounting solutions (deferring Ind AS accounting standards, amortising losses, etc) because their bad loans would have stopped at Rs 4 lakh crore instead of Rs 14 lakh crore if the RBI’s now dead February 12 circular had existed since 2008. They must also institutionalise the wisdom of Kenny Rogers from his song “Gambler”: “You’ve got to know when to walk away and know when to run”, with a bias towards running. The government must avoid taking sides like in the power sector; this only encourages the orig-

inal sin of “show me the person and I will show you the rule”. It must also consider sustainable solutions for nationalised bank governance, human capital and equity capital like an independent holding company, mergers, or sales. And the RBI must continue to raise its structural, human capital, and technological game in supervision, regulation and enforcement.

Any new law is fine-tuned by litigation. But should courts decide when lenders should make bad loan provisions? Should courts influence the relative ranks of unsecured and secured creditors? What is the cost of banks not being able to accept thousands of crores from selected stressed company buyers 700+ days after the IBC filing because of operational creditor quibbles? Has justice really been served by replacing the blind and rules-based February 12 RBI circular with a “specific”, case-by-case dispensation? Shouldn’t aligning the RBI’s and IBC’s definition of default be a policy objective? Is the law really not clear about the RBI’s mandate in the Banking Regulation Act (Sections 35A, 35AA, 35AB) and the RBI Act (Sections 17, 18, 19, 42 and 45I)? Couldn’t “one pill for all ills” and a “180 day guillotine” that applies to defaults of above Rs 2,000 crore also be called a rule?

India changed its mind about socialism because it didn’t generate the resources to fund public goods and because it became capitalism without competition and bankruptcy. India won’t reach its new tryst with destiny — a \$5 trillion dollar economy — without raising our credit to GDP ratio from 50 per cent to 100 per cent. This can’t happen without the ability of lenders to deal with their mistakes swiftly via the IBC. Courts are supreme but the IBC will only be viewed as climate change rather than a passing shower if we restore the sanctity of the 270-day deadline. As Ginsberg requests the court in *On the Basis of Sex*, “Please fix the law in line with the legislative intent”.

The writer is with Teamlease Services and serves as a director on the RBI board. Views are personal

PUBLISH AND PERISH

Targeting of a Kerala publishing house expands the ambit of censorship



MINI CHANDRAN

SUPPRESSION OF FREE speech by the state is not new in India. There is enough governmental machinery, like the Constitution and laws, to arm-twist writers into silence. But the Kerala government has gone one step further in what can be seen as an attempt to perfect the process, which is to target the staff of the publishing company that published the work.

In the first week of June, Kerala state police raided the office of Current Books, a leading publishing house in Malayalam, for the “crime” of having published an autobiography titled *Sravukalkoppam Neenthumbol* (Swimming with Sharks) written by Jacob Thomas, the most senior IPS officer in the state. Thomas, who came into limelight for his anti-corruption drive, has been under suspension for the past 18 months. His “crime” is that he violated service rules by not seeking permission from the department before publishing his autobiography, and for allegedly revealing official secrets that he had access to in his official capacity. A criminal case has been registered against him for this.

The state police action against Current Books, led by a Superintendent of Police, was claimed to be part of the investigation regarding this violation of service rules by Jacob Thomas. They spent about four hours taking statements from the staff who were involved in composing, proof-reading, and editing the text. They also asked for all the correspondence that had taken place between the publisher and the writer.

The police action has come two years after

the book was first published in May 2017. As Peppin Thomas, the managing director of Current Books and the publication manager, K J Johny, pointed out, the book has not been accused of any controversial material that could cause a law and order problem. The publisher has been dragged into a fight involving the state and the writer/officer.

Censorship is usually a coercive or suppressive process mainly involving the writer and the state, and other stakeholders are largely left alone. It is true that publishers have been at the receiving end before — Oxford University Press being forced to withdraw their A K Ramanujan anthology and Penguin having to pulp Wendy Doniger’s book are recent examples. But there was no police action against them. The publishing houses undertook these measures in the face of public anger and vandalism. These were publishing giants who could hold their own, if needed, in the face of state persecution. But what the Kerala state has now done is to tighten its tentacles of power on composers and proofreaders, those faceless and nameless workers behind literary publications. In a bizarre way, the state has recognised the value of these sweat-shop workers.

It is clear that the government sees writing not just as the outcome of the individual creative imagination of the writer but as a material product that has undergone multiple mediatory levels like composing, proofreading and editing. Theoretically speaking, the work can be ‘censored’ at these levels.

the job, can point out potentially problematic elements of a text before it goes to print. So can the proof reader or the editor whose job of editing can very often include censoring. Thus the government seems to have made a censor out of each mediator of the publishing process, by ensuring that it is vetted at multiple levels. Intolerance of dissent becomes serious when restrictions get internalised by the writer, and she begins to exercise self-censorship. It is far worse if every player in the game turns a referee, who has to watch out for potentially foul moves.

D H Lawrence’s *Lady Chatterley’s Lover* in its unexpurgated version was first published privately in Italy in 1928. It is said that it was an advantage for the book that the typesetters were Italian; the publishers feared that the typesetters might object if they understood what they were composing. Will writers in India face a similar situation where they will be forced to look for people who will compose without knowing what they are composing?

It is sheer coincidence that this move to persecute the publisher occurred in June when the anniversary of the Emergency falls, when even type-setters were closely watched for possible transgressions. But it is bitter irony that this tragedy of state persecution has repeated itself as a farce when politicians who were at the receiving end of the Emergency are ruling the state.

Chandran, the author of *The Writer, the Reader and the State: Literary Censorship in India*, teaches at IIT-Kanpur

JUNE 28, 1979, FORTY YEARS AGO

BAHUGUNA’S BARB

MUCH TO THE chagrin of Prime Minister Morarji Desai, the Union Minister for Petroleum and Chemicals, H N Bahuguna, characterised the police unrest in the country as the failure of the government at the special meeting of the Union Cabinet in New Delhi. Bahuguna is believed to have said that the administration had loosened at every level and the public was rightly indignant over it. PM Desai did not like some of Bahuguna’s remarks and he made it quite obvious to the petroleum minister. The deputy prime minister and finance minister, Charan Singh, who spoke on the basis of his past experience in the home ministry, dwelt

on the steps which should have been taken to ward off the police agitations. He had at his command facts and figures to support his thesis that police complaints could have been attended to earlier.

FERNADES PLAN

UNION INDUSTRIES MINISTER George Fernandes has strongly pleaded for the realignment of forces based on a clear time-bound programmes. The realignment should be not only within the Janata Party but should have linkages with the like-minded elements outside. Disenchanted with the Janata regime’s “poor performance” and its failure to implement the party manifesto,

Fernandes has come out heavily on the warring power-crazy leadership. In a seven-page letter to his colleagues in the erstwhile Socialist Party, he has spelt out his ideas on realignment of forces as well as economic, social and political programmes which should get top priority.

DIPLOMATS BEATEN

A SENIOR FRENCH diplomat were attacked and beaten up by some unknown assailants near Rawalpindi, the BBC radio reported, The radio said that the two diplomats were on their way back from a uranium enrichment facility Pakistan has been secretly building south-west of Rawalpindi.



Two and twenty at Osaka

G-20 meets in the midst of a crisis in world trade. It must not let US-China bilateral overshadow the summit



SANJAYA BARU

ELEVEN YEARS AFTER its creation, the Group of 20 (G-20) has emerged as an important forum of most of the world's systemically important economies. Iran is among the very few important countries left out. India made its mark within the G-20 from its very inception with Prime Minister Manmohan Singh being one of the important voices at the first three summit meetings in 2008-09. As the host of the 2022 summit, India has a stake in ensuring the continued relevance of G-20 for global policy.

The G-20 came into being in the midst of a financial crisis. It meets over the next two days in Osaka, Japan, in the midst of a crisis in world trade. In its early years, the G-20 shied away from talking trade. While it has focused on trade policy issues since 2013, the G-20 has not been able to revive the Doha Development Round of multilateral trade negotiations at the World Trade Organisation. Nor has it succeeded in arresting the drift towards mercantilism on the part of both the US and China — the world's biggest trading nations. Host Prime Minister Shinzo Abe has done well to focus on trade policy as one of the three key issues to be discussed at the Osaka Summit, along with environment and the digital economy.

As of today, the G-20 owes its reputation mainly to its ability to restore stability to the global financial system following the trans-Atlantic financial crisis in 2008-09. As stock market indices from New York through London to Tokyo began to fall to new lows, the price of gold and oil declined sharply and the euro slumped against the dollar, then President of France, Nicolas Sarkozy, flew into Camp David for a hurriedly set up meeting with US President George W Bush and suggested that heads of government of major economies should get together to manage the enveloping crisis. That was October 2008, a month after the collapse of Lehmann Brothers, one of America's biggest financial corporations. The two leaders came out of their huddle and announced the convening of the first summit level meeting of a group of finance ministers called the G-20.

A decade before that, in 1999, the G-8, a club of developed economies, created a group of finance ministers of 19 major economies and the EU to form the G-20 finance ministers' forum. Bush and Sarkozy elevated this finance ministers' group into a leaders' summit. The US and the European Union (EU) knew that the one country they wanted across the table, in October 2008, to help deal with the fallout of the financial crisis was China. Should G-8 be expanded into G-9? Japan was certainly not comfortable with the idea. The US and the EU too were not ready yet to invite China to the high table of a rich man's club. Two years after inviting Russia into G-7, some of the original G-7 members were already a bit uncomfortable with Russia's elevation into a rich economies club when it was nowhere as prosperous an economy as the G-7.

But China had to be brought to the discussion table because China had the dollars and the means to save the Euro and stabilise Wall



Suvajit Dey

Street. That's the dilemma Sarkozy solved for the West by converting an existing G-20 finance minister's forum that included developing countries like Brazil and India into a leaders' summit. It may be easier getting China to help the West in a group that would include other developing countries. Voila! The G-20 was born.

Since the immediate challenge was a financial crisis, the group focused on global financial issues. Once the global financial system stabilised, the G-20 summits lost steam and focus. Everything from climate change to women's empowerment is now discussed at G-20 summits while the really important business gets done in bilaterals on the sidelines. This year, President Trump and China's President Xi Jinping are expected to discuss bilateral trade issues on the sidelines of the G-20 summit. Their meeting threatens to overshadow the summit.

The summits have invited this fate with their diffused focus. In the run-up to the Osaka summit, there have been several ministerial meetings covering subjects ranging from environment and agriculture to women's empowerment and the digital economy. Along with the summit, an entire circus comes to town. There is a B-20 for business leaders, Y-20 for youth, an L-20 for labour, S-20 for science and so on. Even a T-20 for think-tanks!

Since G-20 summits are annual gatherings of the world's most important leaders,

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they should have an agenda that focuses on the here and now and a means of monitoring progress. At the end of each year, the host country should present a report to the next summit on progress made on agenda points. There are many other plurilateral and multi-lateral forums to discuss the myriad other challenges facing humanity. The B-20, Y-20, T-20 and other such parallel gatherings have become either farcical talk-shops of pretentious busybodies or networking opportunities for business leaders. Just as the World Bank, International Monetary Fund and WTO ministerial meetings have been trivialised and turned populist by parallel gatherings of non-governmental organisations (NGOs), the G-20 too runs the risk of becoming a ritual event with no concrete outcomes.

Osaka should bring sharper focus to G-20 proceedings by concentrating minds on today's threats rather than tomorrow's challenges. The US-China trade war, American unilateralism in trade policy and China's opaque trade and other economic policies have emerged as major threats to global economic growth and stability. The G-20 must discuss these issues because all G-20 economies have a stake in the outcome of the US-China bilateral talks. The G-20 cannot be reduced to a G-2.

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WHAT THE OTHERS SAY

"Having a secretary of state (Pompeo) of this caliber is a tragedy of US politics and the sorrow of international politics. The world needs to be exposed to the damage Pompeo has brought to humankind's peaceful existence."

— GLOBAL TIMES, CHINA

The right convergence

Bringing agriculture, rural development and panchayati raj under one minister was overdue. Greater rationalisation is needed



RITA SHARMA

THE GOVERNMENT HAS taken a long overdue measure by combining the Ministries of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare, Rural Development and Panchayati Raj under the same minister. This will enhance convergence between programmes related to food, nutrition and livelihoods security of millions of rural households. It is a step in the right direction. But, it is not enough.

The large-scale of operations and degree of commonality between the agriculture and rural development ministries is evident from their 2019-20 interim budget estimates, and the fact that agriculture and allied activities consume some 70 per cent of resources under MGNREGA, the flagship programme of the rural development ministry. MGNREGA accounts for nearly half of the ministry's budget. Convergence of labour-intensive MGNREGA activities with productivity-oriented schemes of other ministries and states transforms MGNREGA from an essentially wage-labour safety-net programme to an instrument for rejuvenating land, water, agriculture and biodiversity.

Convergence were initiated in 2008-09 with the ministries of agriculture, water resources, land resources, environment and forests. This was to enhance the durability and productivity of the assets created under MGNREGA. Over the years, linkages have been forged with central programmes on food security, horticulture, agro-forestry, rural livelihoods, animal husbandry, fisheries, and state schemes such as Kapildhara, Sahastradhara, Bhumi Shilp and Vanya in Madhya Pradesh.

If the challenge of doubling farmers' incomes by 2022-23 has to be met, it needs to be emphasised that agriculture is a multi-dimensional enterprise. The sector is rapidly undergoing structural transformation, influenced by several factors. No longer limited to a commodity production system, the agriculture sector now embraces post-production activities like markets and value-chains in a holistic agri-food system. Simultaneously, farmer welfare, building resilience of vulnerable communities, rejuvenating natural resources, addressing climate change must be kept centrestage.

The complexities of handling an agri-food system can be gauged by the processes involved: Sustainable management of soil, water, biodiversity, climate change; input supplies such as seeds, fertilisers, plant protection, farm-machinery, irrigation, credit, insurance, extension; conservation production and agronomic practices such as soil-testing, zero-tillage, water and nutrient use efficiency; post-harvest activities in drying, sorting, grading, warehousing, cold-storages; marketing, related to village markets, mandis, contract farming, cooperatives, farmer associations, e-NAM, private markets, supermarkets; agro-processing linked

to milling, preservation of perishables, transportation, supply-chain management; retailing, branding, labeling, certification of organics, bio-fortification; services for farmers' welfare such as pensions, insurance, health coverage; rural infrastructure; and rural non-farm income generation.

This requires convergence between not just two or three ministries but across at least 15 ministries bearing on agriculture and farmers. Presently the linkages between agriculture and agriculture-related non-production activities are weak. The missing links limit efficiencies accruing from coordination between agriculture, development and sustainability. There is a disconnection between agriculture and the sectors dealing with agro-processing, environmental services, natural resources, rural non-farm livelihoods and urban and peri-urban activities.

The implementing agencies while spending their annual budgets and individually achieving their limited goals, are unable to make the desired impact on the collective outcome. Bringing agriculture and rural development under one minister is an important step but not enough. On the other hand, it is not feasible to place multiple ministries under a single minister. Overarching mechanisms and capacities need to be built that catalyse convergence between various agencies at all levels.

At the state level, the institution of agriculture production commissioner (APC) was created to coordinate between relevant departments. In the context of the holistic agri-food systems approach, going beyond commodity production, the APC needs to be reviewed so as to be aligned with the emerging realities. The district level agriculture technology management agency also requires restructuring that factors in markets and supply chains. Coordination is required between different implementing agencies, notably the district rural development agencies, krishi vigyan kendras, fish farmers development agencies, farmer producer organisations and private sector agri-service providers. The capacities of the panchayati raj institutions need to be re-oriented.

The NDA 2 government may consider constituting a cabinet committee on agriculture and rural rejuvenation. The target of doubling farmer incomes by 2022-23 is more likely to be achieved if a significant proportion of that income accrues from rural non-farm activities. There is much potential for employment generation in the holistic agri-food system. A separate agriculture budget taking into account the complementarities of agriculture-related components in various schemes will be a robust framework for an integrated approach.

The Niti Aayog's task force for structural agricultural reforms will know that while the central government can propel the nature and scope of agricultural transformation through its policy and programmes, the primary responsibility for agriculture development rests with the state governments. Partial remedies will not suffice. Comprehensive long-term measures are needed.

The writer is former secretary, Ministry of Rural Development and joint secretary, Ministry of Agriculture



SANDIP SOMANY

THE CLEAR MANDATE to the NDA government led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi for the second consecutive term allows for stability and continuity in the reform process. Today, the government stands empowered to undertake long-term structural reforms. In his first address after the election results, Modi underlined the importance of inclusivity in the development agenda of the nation and reiterated the mantra of "sabka saath, sabka vikas" — with additional emphasis on "sabka vishwas".

All eyes are now fixed on the Union Budget 2019-20. This will be the first big opportunity for the government to showcase its ability to deliver, and just like every other action of society, we from the industry also have significant expectations from this Budget.

Macro headwinds remain due to a host of domestic and global risk factors. GDP growth is slowing down, the unemployment rate is high, the financial sector is seeing a fresh crisis and both investment and consumption demand are muted. Globally, trade tensions are showing no signs of a respite and geopolitical tensions continue to spook markets. So, what should the government focus on, in the upcoming Budget?

While there is room for the RBI to cut the repo rate by another 100 basis points and ensure transmission of the interest rate reductions to the actual borrowers by banks, to boost investments, the government can usher in a new taxation framework linking

A budget wish-list

Among other things, a new tax framework to link investment to job creation

new investment to job creation, which will act as a catalyst. Under this scheme, companies making investments which generate employment for 250 to 499 workers, should be allowed to avail a rebate of 2 per cent in corporate tax for the next five years, beginning from the date of the commissioning of the plant. Entities generating 500 to 749 jobs may be allowed a rebate of 3 per cent in corporate tax, while those creating 750-999 jobs, should be allowed a 4 per cent reduction. Companies generating 1,000 or more jobs can be allowed to avail 5 per cent rebate in tax payment — and pay corporate tax at the rate of 25 per cent. This will rejuvenate the investment scenario by rewarding employment-generating companies and help the government in achieving both its immediate objectives — reviving investment and creating jobs.

Revitalising the agriculture sector should also be a priority. To enhance yields and mitigate risks arising from an adverse monsoon, we must step up investments in irrigation (including in micro irrigation). There is also the need to strengthen the agriculture supply chains to reduce wastage and ensure better prices for farmers. Farmgate and near-farmgate storage (of more than 1,000 MT) should be developed on priority under the Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojana (RKVY) to enable small producers to hold on the produce till market prices are remunerative enough to sell. A plan for a national warehouse grid along highways should also be launched.

Additionally, we need to plan for major improvements in the agro-processing industry.

Providing a fillip to the infrastructure sector is another important step. The government must announce major projects in sectors such as roads and highways, sub-urban metros and airports. The multiplier effects on the economy through generation of demand and new jobs from large-scale infrastructure projects will be huge. As the infrastructure sector gets going, demand for steel, cement, power, commercial vehicles, capital goods will all go up.

Re-energising our exports and supporting them is also vital. The country needs an institutional mechanism for global market intelligence to regularly conduct market studies, sector specific studies to understand the dynamics of global trade, barriers to trade, market-entry opportunities, etc. This may also include mapping specific markets to specific MSME clusters. Detailed information should be made available to exporters through an export information portal. Suitable allocation in the Union Budget may be made for this market intelligence cell. The government must also support marketing campaigns in foreign markets for building "Brand India" and promoting made-in-India products.

Along with these steps, other supporting measures are also required. For stimulating household consumption and savings, a major direct tax announcement in the Interim Budget 2019-20 related to exemp-

tion of income tax for assesseees with an annual income of up to Rs 5 lakh. This was a positive step and should be continued. The income tax slabs for individuals needs to be revised upwards. The highest tax rate of 30 per cent should be applicable only to those whose incomes are above Rs 20 lakh. At the same time, the investment limits under Sec 80C, Sec 80D and deduction for interest paid on housing loan under Sec 24, etc. should be enhanced. These measures would leave more disposable income with households and thus boost overall consumption.

In the interim Budget 2019-20, the target set for disinvestment was Rs 90,000 crore. This must be raised in the full budget to at least Rs 1.5 lakh crore. A slowing economy may not yield revenues at the rate expected on the tax side, but we can look at raising the bar on disinvestment. There is already a list of CPSEs and their idle assets — land, industrial units — that must be monetised quickly.

Last but not least, incentivising employment-intensive sectors will also help in creating more jobs. Special export zones for sectors like textiles, leather, gems and jewellery, footwear, toys must be announced with benefits like subsidised land, duty free imports and tax holidays. The government may also create plug and play units for sectors like garments where all the facilities are provided on minimal rent basis to young entrepreneurs for an initial three to five years.

The writer is President, FICCI

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

LISTEN TO PM

THIS REFERS TO the article, 'No mobocracy' (IE, June 27). PM Narendra Modi's message on mob lynching is a welcome one and must be enforced. However, this should be accompanied by political action. Instigators of mob lynching are reportedly connected to influential political or religious outfits. The leadership of these outfits distance themselves from such goons.

RK Vijay, Jaipur

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'No mobocracy' (IE, June 27). Prime Minister Narendra Modi has expressed his anguish over the Jharkhand lynching. Now, the law enforcing agencies should ensure that such incidents are not repeated. Peace committees should be activated to help stop such crimes. Those honouring such culprits are actually abetting the offence and are equally guilty.

Subhash Vaid, Noida

END THE STRIFE

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'Time to talk' (IE, July 25). Kashmir has been overtaken by militancy for more than two decades. Neither the militants have achieved anything nor has the state government been able to control the situation. This is because of the harsh fact that a section of the youth in Kashmir is supporting militancy. Precious lives of soldiers and police officers have been lost. So, the call for talks

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

by the separatists should be welcomed.

Sanjay Chawla, Amritsar

LACK OF TEACHERS

THIS REFERS TO the article, 'Speaking in many tongues', (IE, June 27) According to the UDISE, 2016-17 figures, there are 92,275 single-teacher run government schools in India. Today's youth do not aspire to become teachers.

Sudip Kumar Dey, Kolkata



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If there are questions of current or contemporary relevance that you would like explained, please write to explained@indianexpress.com

TELLING NUMBERS

Unemployment rates vary among religious groups, govt lists plans for employability of minorities

UNEMPLOYMENT RATE (%) FOR 2017-18

Religious group	Rural male	Rural female	Urban male	Urban female
Hinduism	5.7	3.5	6.9	10.0
Islam	6.7	5.7	7.5	14.5
Christianity	6.9	8.8	8.9	15.6
Sikhism	6.4	5.7	7.2	16.9
All India	5.8	3.8	7.1	10.8

Source: Annual Report, PLFS 2017-18, via Minority Affairs Ministry (religion-specific data) and Labour & Employment Ministry (all-India data).

ACROSS THE urban-rural and gender divides, unemployment rates vary among religious groups. This emerges out of data in the Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS) for 2017-18, presented in Lok Sabha on Thursday by the Ministry for Minority Affairs in reply to a question. The ministry tabled religion-wise figures for four major religious groups — Hinduism, Islam, Christianity and Sikhism — for both genders and in rural and urban India. Earlier during the ongoing budget session, the Ministry for Labour and Employment had presented the all-India unemployment rates from the 2017-18 PLFS — 5.8% for rural male, 3.8% for rural female, 7.1% for urban male, and 10.8% for urban female.

In his question Thursday, MP Prasun Banerjee also asked whether the government has any plans for minority employment. Minority Affairs Minister Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi replied that most of the Centre's socio-economic and educational empowerment programmes are meant for the poor and downtrodden sections, and the minorities are getting equally benefited. Naqvi added that his ministry has adopted a strategy to enhance the employability of notified minorities (Muslims, Sikhs, Christians, Buddhists, Parsis, Jains) through various schemes aimed at educational empowerment, employment-oriented skill development etc. His reply listed a number of these schemes.

THIS WORD MEANS

L 98-59B

A new planet discovered by NASA mission, between Earth and Mars in size. What secrets does it store?



The three planets discovered in the L98-59 system by NASA's TESS mission so far, as compared to Mars and Earth in terms of size. NASA

NASA's Transiting Exoplanet Survey Satellite (TESS) has discovered a new planet, the tiniest of its finds so far. It is between the sizes of Mars and Earth and orbits a bright, cool, nearby star. It has been named L 98-59b. The TESS mission feeds our desire to understand where we came from and whether we are alone in the universe, NASA said in a statement on its website. One of TESS's goals is to build a catalogue of small, rocky planets on short orbits around very bright, nearby stars for atmospheric study. Apart from L 98-59b, two other worlds orbit the same star. While all three planets' sizes are known, further study with other telescopes will be needed to determine if they have atmospheres and, if so, which gases are present, NASA said. "The discovery is a great engineering and scientific accomplishment for TESS.

For atmospheric studies of small planets, you need short orbits around bright stars, but such planets are difficult to detect. This system has the potential for fascinating future studies," Veselin Kostov, an astrophysicist at the Goddard Space Flight Center and the SETI Institute, said in the NASA statement. A paper on the findings, led by Kostov, was published in the June 27 issue of *The Astronomical Journal*. L 98-59b is around 80% Earth's size. The two other worlds in the system, L 98-59c and L 98-59d, are respectively around 1.4 and 1.6 times Earth's size. Their host star, L 98-59, is about one-third the mass of the Sun and lies about 35 light-years away. While L 98-59b is a record for TESS, even smaller planets have been discovered in data collected by NASA's Kepler satellite, including Kepler-37b, which is only 20% larger than the Moon. Source: NASA

SIMPLY PUT QUESTION & ANSWER

NRC: add, delete & what next

A fresh exclusion list has added 1 lakh to the 40 lakh omitted from last year's final NRC draft in Assam. The count could change again in July. Those left out will have option of appeal, but it's a long road ahead

ABHISHEK SAHA
GUWAHATI, JUNE 27

ON WEDNESDAY, authorities updating the National Register of Citizens (NRC) in Assam published an "additional draft exclusion list" that dropped 1 lakh names after having including them in the final NRC draft on July 30, 2018. The final draft had excluded 40 lakh, and Wednesday's exclusions are over and above these. A look at what the numbers mean, and where all this could lead to:

Why have one lakh been removed?

Although included in the final draft published in 2018, these 1,02,462 were found ineligible during reverification later. The preparation of the draft exclusion list was approved by the Supreme Court under Clause 5 of the Schedule of the Citizenship (Registration of Citizens and Issue of National Identity Cards) Rules, 2003. Section 4(3) provides for *suo motu* verification. It has not been announced how many names were rechecked.

Some individuals were also found ineligible while appearing as witnesses in NRC-related hearings for other applicants. The names of some were deleted after they, or their descendants, were found to be "declared foreigners" or "doubtful voters" (or "persons with cases pending at Foreigners Tribunals". "Doubtful voter", or "D-voter", is a concept exclusive to Assam, as are the 100 Foreigners Tribunals, which are quasi-judicial bodies.

How long will these exclusions and inclusions continue?

The final NRC will be published on July 31 this year. The latest exclusion list came as a result of continuous quality checks and verification, NRC officials said. Additions and deletions have taken place earlier, too. The first draft published on December 31, 2017, had included 1.90 crore names, but the final draft in July 2018 dropped 1.5 lakh of these 1.90 crore. The deletion was approved by the Supreme Court.

Overall, the final draft left out 40 lakh applicants and over 36 lakh of them filed "claims", which have been heard. Among the 40 lakh are 2.48 lakh a decision on whom is "on hold".

The 1 lakh newly excluded individuals, too, can file claims, and hearings will begin on July 5. They will be informed individually by letters of information, which will mention the reason for exclusion and details of the venue for claim submission-cum-hearing.

The final NRC will exclude those unable to prove their citizenship during the hearing of



Residents check the NRC final draft, released in July 28. Dasarath Deka/Archive

3.29 CRORE
TOTAL APPLICANTS

2.89 CRORE
Included in final draft (July 2018)

1 LAKH
Out of above 2.89 crore, freshly removed

40 LAKH
Excluded in final draft

HOW IT CAN CHANGE

36 LAKH out of the 40 lakh originally excluded (final draft) have filed claims for inclusion. The 1 lakh newly removed, too, can file claims. Depending on how many of these claimants can establish their citizenship, the number of exclusions can fall in the final NRC due on July 31.

21 LAKH out of the originally included 2.89 crore have faced objections against them. Hearings have been held. If any of these objections are found valid, the number of exclusions can rise.

claims. Theoretically, there could be further exclusions. These would be from among 2 lakh individuals who had been included among the 2.89 crore names in the 2018 final draft, but against whom "objections" were filed by citizens later. If they cannot re-establish their citizenship in the wake of the objections to their inclusion in the final draft, they face possible exclusion from the final NRC.

How does one prove citizenship?

The criteria has been laid down. The NRC was first prepared in 1951, and the current exercise is an update. The final NRC will include the names of people already in the 1951 NRC, and their descendants. It will also include those in any of the electoral rolls up to March 24, 1971, or in any one of other admissible documents issued up to that date, as well as the descendants of such people.

Will the excluded individuals get further opportunities to prove their citizenship?

They can approach a Foreigners Tribunal with a certified copy of the rejection order from the NRC, along with the grounds for appeal. The Tribunal has to give its final order

within 120 days from the date of production of records, the Home Ministry stated in an order dated May 30 this year. In addition to the 100 Foreigners Tribunals, 200 more will be functional by September 1, state government officials said. If the applicant lose their case before such a Tribunal, he or she can appeal in the High Court, and then the Supreme Court if necessary. Someone who is not only excluded from the final NRC but also loses his or her case in a Foreigners Tribunal, however, faces possible arrest, and the prospect of being sent to a detention centre.

What are detention centres?

These are for persons declared "illegal foreigners". As of now, there are six detention camps in Assam, housed in existing jails. State government officials said there are plans to build 10 more detention centres and a detailed project report is being sent to the Centre.

The six existing centres together hold around 1,000 persons. Declared "illegal foreigners" by the Foreigners Tribunals, many of them claim to be Indians. India has no treaty with Bangladesh that would have facilitated their deportation. Since 2013, Assam

has deported 166 persons (162 "convicted" and four "declared") including 147 to Bangladesh, according to government data until February 2019. In case of those declared foreigners in Assam, the question widely being asked is whether deportation can be possible unless Bangladesh accepts them as migrants from there.

Public and political opinion is divided on detaining them indefinitely in detention centres. In an interaction earlier this year, Assam minister Himanta Biswa Sarma had told *The Indian Express* about detention centres: "As a political leader, I don't support it... I feel their identity should be digitally recorded and they should not be allowed to claim Indian citizenship in other states. Once that is done, they should be given basic human rights."

Last month, the Supreme Court allowed conditional release of those who have completed three years in detention, against a bond.

Is there any estimate for how many stare at this uncertainty?

Political leaders have made various estimates. It will depend on the fate of the claims for inclusion, and objections against inclusion. If any of the claims are accepted as valid, this would bring the number down from 41 lakh. If any of the objections are accepted, it would add to the number of exclusions. The fate of the Citizenship (Amendment) Bill, too, can potentially impact the numbers.

How does the Citizenship (Amendment) Bill fit into all this?

While the NRC defines all illegal immigrants, irrespective of religion, on the basis of a cutoff date, the Citizenship (Amendment) Bill, 2019 proposed to differentiate among immigrants on the basis of religion. It provided for granting citizenship to immigrants of six non-Muslim faiths from three countries, including Bangladesh. The Bill lapsed without being introduced in Rajya Sabha earlier this year, but the ruling BJP has repeatedly said that it would reintroduce it during its current tenure, once it has the numbers in Rajya Sabha.

If the Bill passes Parliament this time, the implication is that Hindus from Bangladesh would be eligible for citizenship, even if detected as illegal immigrants, while Muslims who illegally entered from Bangladesh would be treated as illegal immigrants. The Bill has faced protests in Assam on the ground that it runs contrary to the NRC's objective, which is to detect all illegal immigrants.

Whatever the fate of the Bill, a very long battle awaits those who are excluded from the NRC but claim to be Indian citizens.

The enduring legacy of Maharaja of Punjab

MANRAJ GREWAL SHARMA
CHANDIGARH, JUNE 27

ON THURSDAY, a statue of Ranjit Singh, who ruled Punjab for almost four decades (1801-39), was inaugurated in Lahore. June 27 is his death anniversary. His legacy endures for Punjabis around the world:

Life and times

Ranjit Singh was born on November 13, 1780 in Gujranwala, now in Pakistan. At that time, Punjab was ruled by powerful chieftains who had divided the territory into Misls. Ranjit Singh overthrew the warring Misls and established a unified Sikh empire after he conquered Lahore in 1799.

He was given the title Lion of Punjab (Sher-e-Punjab) because he stemmed the tide of Afghan invaders in Lahore, which remained his capital until his death. His general Hari Singh Nalwa built the Fort of Jammu

at the mouth of the Khyber Pass, the route the foreign rulers took to invade India.

At the time of his death, he was the only sovereign leader left in India, all others having come under the control of the East India Company in some way or the other.

Wide, powerful reign

He combined the strong points of the traditional Khalsa army with western advances in warfare to raise Asia's most powerful indigenous army of that time. He also employed a large number of European officers, especially French, to train his troops. He appointed French General Jean Franquiss Allard to modernise his army. In 2016, the town of St Tropez unveiled the maharaja's bronze statue as a mark of respect.

Dr Indu Banga, professor emerita of his-

tory at Panjab University, said Ranjit Singh's army was a match for the one raised by the East India Company. During the Battle of Chillianwala, the second of the Anglo-Sikh wars that followed Ranjit Singh's death, the British suffered the maximum casualties of officers in their entire history in India, says Banga.



Ranjit Singh ruled for 4 decades. Wikipedia

Ranjit Singh's trans-regional empire spread over several states. His empire included the former Mughal provinces of Lahore and Multan besides part of Kabul and the entire Peshawar. The boundaries of his state went up to Ladakh — Zorawar Singh, a general from Jammu, had conquered Ladakh in Ranjit Singh's name — in the northeast, Khyber pass in the northwest, and up to Panjnad in the south where the five rivers of Punjab fell into the Indus. During his regime, Punjab was a land of six rivers, the sixth being the Indus.

His legacy

The maharaja was known for his just and secular rule; both Hindus and Muslims were given powerful positions in his darbar. The Sikhs take pride in him for he turned Harimandir Sahib at Amritsar into the Golden Temple by covering it with gold. Right at the doorstep of the sanctum sanctorum of the temple is a plaque that details how in 1830 AD, the maharaja did sewa over 10 years.

He is also credited with funding Hazoor Sahib gurudwara at the final resting place of Guru Gobind Singh in Nanded, Maharashtra.

Today, his throne is displayed prominently at the Victoria and Albert Museum in London. Exhibitions on his rule are frequent in western countries home to the Punjabi diaspora. Last year, London hosted an exhibition that focused on the history of the Sikh Empire and the international relations forged by the maharaja.

Why diphtheria is a concern: long-time vaccine, yet rising recent numbers

ABANTIKA GHOSH
NEW DELHI, JULY 27

THE DIPHTHERIA vaccine is among the oldest vaccines in India's Universal Immunisation Programme, yet cases in the country have been going up over the last few years after showing a remarkable reduction in 2015. That is why the season's first death due to diphtheria in Delhi has caused an alarm, with doctors assessing their preparedness.

A look at diphtheria, the vaccination programme and the concerns:

The disease

Diphtheria is an infectious disease caused by *Corynebacterium diphtheria*, a bacterium. The primary infection is in the throat and upper airways.

According to the National Health Portal, one type of diphtheria affects the throat and sometimes the tonsils. Another type causes ulcers on the skin; these are more

common in the tropics (places where all 12 months have mean temperatures of at least 18 °C). Diphtheria particularly affects children aged 1 to 5 years. In temperate climates diphtheria tends to occur during the colder months.

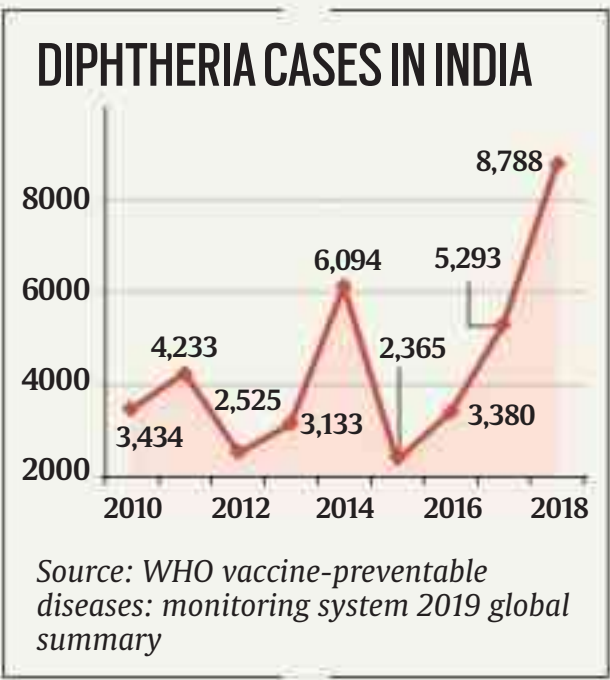
Diphtheria is fatal in only 5-10% cases. That is why as the monsoon approaches and temperatures start to come down, the season's first death in Delhi is being seen as a warning sign.

In 2018, Delhi witnessed a diphtheria outbreak. A total of 25 children died in September, followed by 22 in October and 12 in November.

Periodic outbreaks of the disease have been reported in India. Integrated Disease Surveillance Programme (IDSP), National Centre for Disease Control (NCDC), Delhi, reported as many as 7 outbreaks of diphtheria in India during 2014.

The vaccine

In 1978, India launched the Expanded Programme on Immunisation. The first



three vaccines in the programme were BCG (against TB), DPT (diphtheria, pertussis, tetanus) and cholera. In 1985, the programme was converted to the Universal Immunisation Programme (UIP). DPT continues to be a part of UIP, which now includes 12 vaccines. It is now incorporated

as a pentavalent vaccine, (containing vaccine against diphtheria, pertussis, tetanus [DPT], Hepatitis B and Haemophilus influenzae type B). UIP aims at giving all children born in India all these 12 vaccines free. As per data from the National Family Health Survey 4, the coverage of diphtheria vaccine is 78.4%.

The vintage and coverage of the diphtheria vaccine is also why the government, after the last outbreak in Delhi, decided to commission a study on vaccine hesitancy and ways to deal with it. The study is being done by the Immunisation Technical Support Unit under the ministry of health and family welfare will conduct the study in association with GAVI — an international organisation supported by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation working on ensuring vaccine access.

Vaccine hesitancy is a growing problem the world over. The US too has been grappling with it as cases of a polio like illness some time back created panic. States like Minnesota have seen rising vaccine

hesitancy, especially among immigrant populations, after Andrew Wakefield, a British doctor who was stripped of his licence to practice and became one of the leading voices against vaccines, personally paid a visit to the state.

The rising trend

Cases have been going up in the last few years. In 2015, as per World Health Organization data, India reported 2,365 cases. This was a steep drop from the 6,094 cases reported the previous year. However, in 2016, 2017 and 2018, the numbers rose successively to 3,380, 5,293 and 8,788.

As per data from the Central Bureau of Health Intelligence, during 2005-2014, India reported 41,672 cases of diphtheria (average 4,167 per year) with 897 deaths (case fatality ratio 2.2%). Ten of the states (Andhra Pradesh, Assam, Delhi, Gujarat, Haryana, Karnataka, Nagaland, Maharashtra, Rajasthan, and West Bengal) accounted for 84% of the cases reported across the country.