



Crisis defused

Compulsory learning should be limited to the child's mother tongue

The Centre has moved quickly to defuse a potentially volatile controversy over the charge of Hindi imposition. It is quite apparent that the Narendra Modi government did not want the language issue to acquire disproportionate importance at a time when it is embarking on its second innings with a huge mandate. Further, given the impression that the ruling party does not have much of a presence in South India, barring Karnataka, it did not want to be seen as being insensitive to the concerns of southern States, especially Tamil Nadu. The reference in the newly unveiled draft National Education Policy to mandatory teaching of Hindi in all States was withdrawn following an outcry from political leaders in Tamil Nadu, a State that is quite sensitive to any hint of 'Hindi imposition' by the Centre. The modified draft under the heading 'Flexibility in the choice of languages', has omitted references to the language that students may choose. However, the broader recommendation regarding the implementation of a three-language formula remains, something Tamil Nadu, which will not budge from its two-language formula, is averse to. The gist of the original sentence in the draft NEP was that students could change one of the three languages of study in Grade 6, provided that in Hindi-speaking States they continued to study Hindi, English and one other Indian language of their choice, and those in non-Hindi-speaking States would study their regional language, besides Hindi and English. The revised draft merely says students may change one or more of their three languages in Grade 6 or 7, "so long as they still demonstrate proficiency in three languages (one language at the literature level) in their modular Board examinations some time during secondary school". It may not amount to a complete reversal, but is still important in terms of conciliatory messaging.

However, there is a larger issue here. Ever since the Constitution adopted Hindi as the official language, with English also as an official language for 15 years initially, there has been considerable tension between those who favour the indefinite usage of English and those who want to phase it out and give Hindi primacy. In Tamil Nadu, it is seen as a creeping imposition of Hindi in subtle and not-so-subtle forms. The tension has been managed based on the statesmanship behind Jawaharlal Nehru's assurance in 1959 that English would be an associate language as long as there are States that desire it. One would have thought that with the ascent of coalition politics the instinct to stoke differences based on language would die out. Unfortunately, it keeps coming up, especially in the form of imposing the three-language formula on States. Language is primarily a utilitarian tool. While acquisition of additional tools can indeed be beneficial, compulsory learning should be limited to one's mother tongue and English as the language that provides access to global knowledge and as a link language within India. It is time attempts to force Indians proficient in their mother tongue and English to acquire proficiency in a third are given up.

Behemoth's shadow

Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar is clearly sensing the BJP breathing down his neck

Constituents of the National Democratic Alliance are feeling the weight of the BJP's dominance. With 303 seats, the BJP is not dependent on any party for its survival in government, an objective that Prime Minister Narendra Modi and party president Amit Shah, now also Union Home Minister, had publicly set even while they were scouting for regional allies ahead of the election. Alliance politics as India knew it, whereby partners bargained for political power, has been rendered redundant by the BJP. It has offered little more than symbolic representation to them in the government. While parties such as the Shiv Sena and the Lok Janshakti Party accepted one Cabinet berth each and joined the government, the Janata Dal (United) led by Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar considered such symbolic representation meaningless and perhaps even humiliating. The JD(U) turned down the offer of a single berth, and expanded the Council of Ministers in Bihar offering the BJP one berth, which it has, in turn, refused to accept. The BJP and the JD(U) have been partners for long, with a brief interlude beginning 2013, in which time the JD(U) formed the government in Bihar in alliance with the RJD and the Congress. By 2017 Mr. Kumar did an about-turn, parting with the two parties and taking the BJP's support to continue in office.

Another moment of reckoning is upon Mr. Kumar, almost. Bihar should have Assembly elections in 2020. Used to the indulgent style of an earlier generation of BJP leaders such as A.B. Vajpayee and L.K. Advani, the Chief Minister has never quite adjusted to the abrasive style of the current, far stronger BJP. Mr. Kumar, from the backward castes that hold considerable political heft in Bihar, has been a link between them and the upper castes drawn to the BJP and hassled by the RJD's more assertive form of social justice politics. Projecting himself as a backward caste leader and blunting social justice politics with Hindutva, Mr. Modi has brought about a realignment of social groups in Bihar. With the BJP's own leadership in the State now packed with several backward caste faces, the party is hoping to flip its equation with the JD(U) and take the dominant role, as it did with the Shiv Sena in Maharashtra. Mr. Kumar senses the ground under his feet slipping away even as his administrative adventurism of prohibition, after initial political dividends, has turned out to be a drag on the State's revenues and policing. To be an opponent of the BJP under Mr. Modi and Mr. Shah is not easy; as it turns out, being an ally isn't necessarily easier either.

A rocky road for strategic partners

With decisions that adversely affect India, the Trump administration fails to distinguish friend from foe



MOHAMMED AYOUB

The Donald Trump administration's recent actions threaten the foundation of trust and flexibility on which India-U.S. relations are premised. However, they seem to be part of a pattern progressively visible in American foreign policy in which bullying friends has become the name of the game. The Trump administration's insensitive approach towards its allies in Western Europe by denigrating the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation and the European Union (EU), threatening to impose tariffs on EU goods in connection with trade disputes and Europe's relations with Russia, and Washington's unilateral withdrawal from the Iran nuclear deal that roiled its European partners are all evidence of this policy.

Bookends of stability?

The same paradigm explains Washington's recent moves *vis-à-vis* India. These stand in sharp contrast to the first year of the Trump administration when the U.S. was actively wooing India as a strategic counterweight to China and because of its rapidly expanding market that was seen as providing great opportunities for American business. In a major foreign policy speech in October 2017, then U.S. Secretary of State Rex Tillerson declared that India and America were "two bookends of stability — on either side of the globe" and that the "emerging Del-

hi-Washington strategic partnership" was essential to anchor the rules-based world order for the next hundred years.

Even before Mr. Tillerson's speech India had come to be seen as a pillar of American policy in Asia. The term 'Indo-Pacific region' appeared prominently in the joint statement issued by Mr. Trump and Prime Minister Narendra Modi at the end of the latter's visit to the U.S. in June 2017. Since then, it has come to replace the term 'Asia-Pacific region' in American foreign policy jargon. In May 2018, the Pentagon changed the name of the U.S. Pacific Command to U.S. Indo-Pacific Command, emphasising not only the strategic linkage between the Indian and Pacific Oceans but also the geopolitical prominence of India in the U.S.'s Asian strategy.

However, the Trump administration seems to have reversed course in recent months. U.S. unilateral actions on three fronts have simultaneously demonstrated what amounts to downgrading India in American strategy. The announcement on April 22 by U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo that Washington would not renew after May 2 the exemption that it had granted India and seven other countries regarding import of Iranian oil was one sign that American unilateralism had trumped coherent strategic thinking.

The Iranian share of Indian oil imports stood at 10%. While it would not be impossible for India to replace Iranian oil, the American announcement failed to consider the strategic importance of Iran in Indian foreign policy and the damage it could do to India-Iran relations. Iran's strategic location and the common concerns of



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both countries regarding the future of Afghanistan and the threat of terrorism emanating from Pakistan make Tehran an ideal geopolitical ally of New Delhi. India is also engaged in building the Chabahar port in southeastern Iran, which could act as the gateway for India to Central Asia, bypassing a hostile Pakistan. Moreover, by forcing India to tamely accept the American diktat on Iranian oil, it has torn off the veneer of "strategic autonomy" that Indian policymakers had long touted as the fundamental creed of Indian foreign policy.

The second leg of this tripod is the U.S. threat to impose sanctions on India if it buys the S-400 missile defence system from Russia for which a deal had been signed in October 2018 by Russian President Vladimir Putin and Mr. Modi. The U.S. has argued that India's purchase of the S-400 systems will violate the Countering America's Adversaries Through Sanctions Act (CAATSA), a U.S. federal law that requires the country to impose sanctions on states entering into major military deals with Russia.

This puts India in a Catch-22 position. If it defies U.S. threats and

The sum and substance of the jobs data

Rising unemployment must also be seen as a function of rising education and aspirations



SONALDE DESAI

The report from the Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS) is finally out, garnering a lot of attention based on selective reading of tables and spurring partisan debates. In particular, the staggering increase in the unemployment rate, from 1.7% in 2011-12 to 5.8% in 2017-18 for rural men and from 3.0% to 7.1% for urban men, has generated wide ranging hand-wringing. However, a more nuanced picture emerges if we are to look beyond the partisan debates to policy implications of the data on employment and unemployment. Three takeaway points from these data are of particular policy relevance.

Three pointers

First, while the unemployment rate is a frequently used measure of poor performance of the economy, under conditions of rising school and college enrolment, it paints an inaccurate picture. Second, the reported unemployment rate is dominated by the experience of younger Indians who face higher employment challenges and exhibit greater willingness to wait for the right job than their older peers. Third, the unemployment challenge is greatest for people with secondary or higher edu-

cation, and rising education levels inflate unemployment challenges. These three conditions, taken together, suggest that part of India's unemployment challenge lies in its success in expanding education while not expanding formal sector jobs.

Comparison of male employment and unemployment data from the National Sample Survey Office's (NSSO's) 68th round Employment survey conducted in 2011-12 and the new PLFS of 2017-18 illustrates each of these points. The unemployment rate is calculated by dividing the number of unemployed by the number in the labour forces, that is, the sum of employed and unemployed. This statistic ignores people who are out of the labour force — students, homemakers and the disabled.

Unemployment rate data

As long as the proportion of the population out of the labour force is more or less stable, the unemployment rate is a good indicator of the changes in the employment situation. However, India has seen massive changes in proportion of individuals enrolled in an educational institution over the past decade. For 15-19-year-old rural men, the proportion primarily engaged in studying increased from 64% to 72% between 2011-12 and 2017-18. As a result, while the proportion of the population aged 15-19 that is unemployed doubled from 3% to 6.9%, the unemployment rate tripled from 9% to 27%. Leaving the numerator (proportion of population unemployed) same while the



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denominator changes by removing students from the labour force can overstate job losses.

The proportion of the population that is unemployed has increased only slightly for population aged 30 and above but increased substantially for younger men. For rural men (30-34), the proportion of unemployed increased from 1% to 2.3% while that for men (20-24) increased from 4.6% to 16.1%. Much of the increase in male unemployment is located among ages 15-29. It is important to recognise that in a country dominated by informal sector work, remaining unemployed is possible only for individuals whose families can survive without their immediate contributions. While a 25-year-old may spend his time diligently applying for a formal sector and be supported by his parents during this period, a 30-year-old with a wife and children may have no option but to take any work available to him, even if it pays poorly and offers little job security.

Finally, the unemployment rate has been traditionally high for men with secondary or higher level of education and this is the segment in which most of the in-

crease in unemployment is located. The unemployment rate for illiterate rural men increased from 0.5 to 1.7 between 2011-12 and 2017-18 but the absolute increase was substantially larger, from 3.8 to 10.5 for rural men with at least secondary education. Similar trends are evident for urban men.

This increase in unemployment for educated youth comes at a time when education has expanded substantially. Among rural men (15-29 years), the population with secondary or higher education increased from 43% to 53% between 2011-12 and 2017-18; in urban areas there was a five percentage point increase, from 61% to 66%.

These three observations taken together suggest that the roots of India's present day unemployment challenges lie in its very success. Educational expansion affects the unemployment debate by skewing the unemployment statistics and by creating greater competition for well-paid jobs among a rising population of educated youth. Rising prosperity allows young graduates to wait for well-paying jobs, creating an army of educated unemployed, before being forced to accept any work, frequently returning to family farms or starting small shops.

Recognition of rising unemployment as a function of rising education forces us to grapple with different issues than a simple focus on unemployment statistics. If public policies such as demonetisation are responsible for rising unemployment, we would see across-the-board increase in unemploy-

ment, thus allowing the new government time to reflect on the issue.

Taken together, these three decisions indicate that Washington is impervious to Indian strategic concerns and economic interests despite its earlier pronouncements that it considers India a valued "strategic partner". These decisions are part of a unilateralist syndrome that currently afflicts American foreign policy. Mr. Trump and his advisers, principally National Security Adviser John Bolton and Mr. Pompeo, no longer seem to discriminate between friend and foe when making important policy decisions. Such an attitude does not bode well for the future of America's relations with its friends and allies. Washington appears to have overlooked the fact that even the "indispensable nation" needs reliable friends and allies.

Other options

S. Jaishankar, India's new Minister of External Affairs and an outstanding diplomat with a wealth of experience in dealing with Washington, will have to convince American policy-makers that this maxim is relevant to the U.S.'s relations with India. Mr. Jaishankar should subtly communicate to his interlocutors that this is especially true now that the international system is becoming progressively multipolar, thus increasing foreign policy options available to Indian policymakers.

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Modern India is an aspirational society. After decades of economic stagnation, the 21st century has seen massive growth in aspirations. Parents invest their hearts and souls along with their rising incomes in educating their children. Children hope to make rapid economic progress well beyond the modest gains achieved by their parents' generation. The unemployment statistics based on PLFS data document the challenges these young people are likely to face.

Meeting aspirations

The Bharatiya Janata Party-led National Democratic Alliance has returned to power with a mandate that allows it the freedom to focus on key challenges facing modern India. Creating jobs for an increasingly educated workforce and ensuring that the new workers are well equipped to enter the labour force are twin challenges that deserve greatest priority. One hopes that leaders of the present government who made their political debut during the student movement in the 1970s will meet this challenge head-on.

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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Assessing 2019

The writer (Editorial page, "Depths of field, defined and blurred", June 3) seems to have donned the mantle of a modern Cassandra to prophesy doom and gloom for the nation merely because the people have favoured a second term for the Narendra Modi government. With the writer's imagination running riot, what was intended as a caricatured critique of the 2019 verdict seems to have ended up as a needless and unapologetic exercise of 'catastrophising', notwithstanding his conclusion that "everything in the future is out of focus". One expects the government's critics to forecast dire things but also suggest the means to realise possible positives and desirable ends. To write a

government's scorecard based on worst case scenarios instead of considering what it proposes to do is embracing political adversary-ism for its own sake. Commentators who seem displeased with the people's verdict should realise that unwarranted scaremongering about the nation's future is an implied belittlement of the popular will.

V.N. MUKUNDARAJAN,
Thiruvananthapuram

Congress's strategy

As a political party, the Indian National Congress has failed miserably due to its policy of 'opposing for the sake of opposing' and disrupting the functioning of Parliament. Congress president Rahul Gandhi's advice to his party's MPs to "shout more" against the

government and ensure that the BJP does not have a walkover in Parliament and its administration is indecorous as far as the leader of a national party is concerned. This strategy will further erode people's faith in the party. Instead, Congress MPs should be magnanimous in co-operating with the government, help it pass welfare schemes and offer constructive criticism when something is going wrong.

V.P. DHANANJAYAN,
Chennai

Language formula

It is indeed ideal if "we can create a situation where every person can study in the language he dreams in, and live in an atmosphere where all in India can understand one common language". But in a country with well-defined linguistic

diversity and consequent chauvinism this is an impossible dream. As a Tamilian born and brought up in Kerala, I recollect quite a few of us voluntarily joining Hindi classes after school hours, and conducted by the Dakshin Bharat Hindi Prachar Sabha. Our national feeling brightened as Hindi was not imposed on us and it did no harm to our mother tongue. If one follows the Kerala model, there do not seem to be problems with Hindi.

In some districts in Kerala, buses have route names in Hindi written in Devanagari to help the large numbers of migrant labourers. However, the Central government in no case can impose Hindi in Tamil Nadu.

C.V. VENUGOPALAN,
Palakkad, Kerala

Politics of food

It is clear that the Akshaya Patra Foundation (TAPF) will not use onions and/or garlic in preparations in mid-day meals for children ('Magazine', "The politics of food", June 2). And the TAPF knows pretty well that it is next to impossible for the government to get a replacement NGO to supply 4.5 lakh meals overnight. So what is to be done to overcome the impasse? For a start, the government must award new contracts to NGOs which will strictly comply with mid-day meal preparations that are not bland and include onion, garlic and eggs. Independent surprise tests need to be carried out to verify the charge that the food is "bland". Instead of "talking", "debating" and "protesting" about the lack

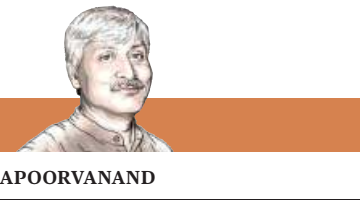
of onion and garlic, the government may request schools to come forward on a voluntary basis and provide these in some form or other. Egg can be added and a nutrition expert may even suggest providing an omelette, scrambled egg and/or mix these with rice to make the meal more palatable. There should also be a gradual reduction in dependence on the TAPF while ensuring that schools which "volunteer" to introduce this get a subsidy from the government or let the school management impose a nominal charge for this on students. Finally, all this should be done without any scope for malpractice.

Dr. A.K. RAMIDAS,
Bengaluru

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The changing idea of a university

Why the education system in India is staring at a dismal future



The first proposal of this government to be made public was the 100-day action plan for education. It includes framing a new National Education Policy, replacing the University Grants Commission (UGC) with another body, and adding 10 more Institutions of Eminence. This is merely a continuation of what the previous government was doing. This comes as no surprise; after all, it is well known that the Bharatiya Janata Party is deeply interested in education and culture. The last five years of the Modi government have shown us the nature of interventions made in the field of education.

The purpose of education

While the media has extensively covered the attacks on institutions such as Jawaharlal Nehru University and Hyderabad Central University, and the violence unleashed by the Akhil Bharathi Vidyarthi Parishad, the student arm of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh, in some places, what is more long lasting is the way the BJP has instrumentalised education by binding it to the objective of creating skills and employment and making education useful for the market. By doing this, it has hollowed out the whole purpose of education, which is to preserve and disseminate knowledge and generate new knowledge. This is the first time in the history of independent India that common people have started looking at universities as spaces where their hard-earned money is being mis-spent. The business of knowledge creation itself is being perceived as extravagant and unnecessary. So, if you look for the word 'knowledge' in the policy documents of the government, you are bound to be disappointed.

The very idea of pursuing truth and developing critical thought, which were seen as the role of universities, has gone into disuse. Universities were spaces where all kinds of ideas, however dominant, were constantly examined. The only aim



"The very idea of pursuing truth and developing critical thought, which were seen as the role of universities, has gone into disuse." Students of Hyderabad Central University at their convocation in Hyderabad in 2012. ■ M. SUBHASH

of education, as propounded by the BJP, seems to be to mainly inculcate nationalism, as prescribed by the government, among students as well as teachers. Vice chancellors and directors of institutes are going out of their way to prove their nationalistic credentials to the government. Where is the utility of criticality then? And what then becomes the role of research? The government even circulated a list of research areas and topics to be kept in mind while preparing and approving research proposals. This essentially means that there is no space for free inquiry in the field of higher education any more. If we look at the research proposals approved by the Indian Council of Social Science Research, the Indian Council of Historical Research and even scientific bodies, we realise the thinning of this area. Even the All India Institute of Medical Sciences recently held a seminar on 'astrology and the medical sciences'. This means that the very idea of science is under severe stress. Also, the stories of the pressure that independent research institutions are facing in the name of appraisal and scrutiny have not come out in the open for obvious

reasons.

Universities are supposed to keep alive the idea of excellence before the people at large. However, people look at some universities with suspicion today as students and scholars have been branded 'elitist', 'leftist' and 'anti-national' by the ruling party. If mediocre people are made to head top institutions of higher education, it becomes clear that all that matters is ideology. Mediocrity at all levels is seen as the democratisation of a space which was earlier the preserve of the 'elites'. In short, developing intellect is seen as unnecessary and even dangerous. All we need to do is conform to prevailing common sense. So, it is only logical that state resources are not wasted on activities which are seen as 'extra'.

Withdrawal of state support

Apart from all this, public universities are being systematically weakened by the steady withdrawal of state support to them. This is ironically at a time when the number of first-generation learners in the university space has reached a satisfactory level. Universities needed more

support to improve access to higher education. Unfortunately, they are now facing a fund crunch. This leaves these students at a great disadvantage.

The government is firming an unequal hierarchy in the field by promoting the idea of Institutions of Eminence and keeping autonomy reserved for a privileged set of institutions. Most public universities with a long tradition are kept out of it, thus demoralising their teachers and students. Autonomy to such institutions has also been linked to withdrawal of state support.

The regulatory mechanism for the field of higher education had started to weaken during the UPA regime itself. The Modi government only furthered the process. Directives from the government became frequent and regulatory agencies were used to route them to universities. Directives from bodies like the UGC kept disrupting the functioning of universities. From reservation in faculty appointments to norms for doctoral research and framing of undergraduate and postgraduate courses and syllabi, it has been a story of over-reach and encroachment of the university space by the UGC. Universities have also failed to assert their autonomy and have allowed the UGC to enter areas it is not supposed to.

Along with this we have seen a campaign to purge campuses of dangerous 'anti-national' elements. Meetings and seminars have been held exhorting students to identify such elements. Independent scholars are now being shunned by universities and the nationalism check is applied almost everywhere.

Publishing is part of the academic ecosystem. Major publishing houses have started getting manuscripts legally vetted to avoid litigation and attack by 'nationalist' elements. We can expect publishing to take a right turn under the new regime.

We have not talked about school education. The RSS ran thousands of schools even when the NDA was not in power. The BJP's return to power provides a golden opportunity for the RSS to dictate syllabi, train teachers and even select them. All these developments over the last five years show that the education system is staring at a dismal future.

Apoorvanand teaches at Delhi University

The anatomy of an image

The colossal information machine that helped create a winning narrative for the BJP is yet to be acknowledged



VAISHNA ROY

After the extraordinary mandate the BJP won, two ideas have been put forth: that Indians have suddenly adopted Hindutva and that they want the country "saved" by a strong leader. What nobody seems ready to acknowledge yet is the colossal nudge that social media and partisan mainstream television gave to creating this twin narrative in the popular consciousness.

If a fundamentally shrewd and pragmatic electorate was ready to ignore its own problems caused by demonetisation, agrarian distress and a stumbling economy, we must ask if it did this by its own volition or if it was steered into it by a PR blitz fabulously orchestrated by television and social media.

The suppression of data

A report leaked in January showed unemployment at a 45-year high of 6.1%, but the government disowned it then and a Union Minister called it "fake news". Across channels, this stance was faithfully reiterated. The next month, there was a near-total absence of any examination of the security lapses that might have enabled the attack in Pulwama. Instead, only one note was struck hysterically: retaliation. Any attempt to scrutinise the Balakot air strikes was shouted down as 'anti-national', and television covered it as one might a war film.

Now, when the government releases the same unemployment figures or confirms that friendly fire brought down an Indian Air Force chopper, there's barely any protest. The suppression of data and the stalling of reports has already been normalised.

Crores are being spent in propaganda to ceaselessly create urban legends, films, web series, comic books, memes and jingles that incessantly shore up the Modi narrative. For this to work, it must be unchallenged – not only must Prime Minister Narendra Modi be shown as a great leader, he must be shown as a *flawless* leader. So when he goes off script with an erroneous comment about radar, a stream of quasi-scientific messages are released simultaneously to prove the comment wasn't wrong. Facts are constantly overta-

ken by fables fed directly into people's smartphones.

This disinformation network, running parallel to the hectoring and fawning of television, is the nerve centre of the BJP's propaganda machine. With dedicated cells of thousands of drone bees, it reaches millions every minute to disseminate its own post-truth version of facts. Eminent economists can point out the failure of demonetisation or the stagnation of exports or the decline in GDP growth, but it makes no difference because each critique is met with a social media forward that says the opposite.

Disinformation deluge

We are guilty of underestimating the incalculable harm that fake news has done to how and what the country thinks. The entire political arena has been turned into a room of mirrors where nothing is as it seems. Phoney 'government' documents regularly do the rounds with statistics about terrorism or GDP figures that are dramatically different from the data even on government websites. Photographs of a teenage boy who committed suicide in Belagavi are circulated with captions claiming he was lynched for protecting cattle from cow smugglers. Let's understand this: Indians did not suddenly adopt militant Hindutva; they have been assiduously conditioned into doing so by a carpet-bombing of disinformation.

The websites that bust fake news are doing a magnificent job, but their reach is just not enough because verification takes far longer than the creation of fake news; and because it's nearly impossible to compete with an army of bots and keyboard warriors. Even after

being exposed, the Belagavi travesty continues to be circulated.

Instead of applauding the BJP's social media strategy as some disembodied and arcane political craft, we need to worry about the repercussions of such massive manipulation of thought. And we need to worry that television is playing wingman.

Behind the razzle-dazzle of the landslide victory lurk uneasy queries about the reliability of government data and the country's growing democracy deficit. If the nation is supposed to have become both insecure and intolerant overnight, it would be interesting to know how such a mammoth exercise in manufactured consent has been executed. Because at some point the illusion is going to break and we will have to pick up the pieces.

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SINGLE FILE

Monkeypox scare

How the spread of the virus can be limited

R. PRASAD



ly through infected animals (rodents and primates). The man is suspected to have eaten bushmeat before arriving in Singapore, which could be the source of the virus.

Human-to-human transmission of monkeypox is possible but limited. The virus is transmitted to those in close contact through secretions of the respiratory tract and skin lesions. While the disease is largely self-limiting, in some cases it does cause complications leading to death. During monkeypox outbreaks, fatality varies from 1-10%, with most deaths seen in younger people.

The symptoms of monkeypox showed two days after the Nigerian arrived in Singapore, but he remained in his hotel till May 7. He was transferred to a public hospital on that day and tested positive for monkeypox the next day, when he was referred to the National Centre for Infectious Diseases, Singapore. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), he is now in a stable condition.

To limit the spread of the disease, Singapore has already identified 23 persons who were in close contact with the patient and offered smallpox vaccination. The WHO notes that prior smallpox vaccination is highly effective in preventing monkeypox. Data from Africa suggest that smallpox vaccine offers at least 85% protection against monkeypox if the vaccine is administered before exposure to the virus.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, U.S., vaccination after exposure to monkeypox "may help prevent the disease or make it less severe". In Singapore, at least 14 persons have been vaccinated. Close contacts have also been quarantined, while other contacts are under active surveillance.

Monkeypox occurs sporadically in Central and West Africa; cases have been reported from 10 African countries. It was first identified in humans in 1970 in the Democratic Republic of Congo, where the disease has now become endemic. There were three confirmed cases in 2016 from the Central African Republic. In late 2017, 61 laboratory-confirmed cases were reported from Nigeria. One confirmed case and 15 suspected cases were reported in 2018 from Cameroon. Outside Africa, the first case was reported from the U.S. in 2003. In 2018, monkeypox was documented in three people in the U.K. and in one person in Israel.

Since the majority of monkeypox virus transmissions to humans are from animals, the WHO advocates "restricting or banning the movement" of small mammals and monkeys from countries where the virus is prevalent to limit the spread of the virus.

The writer is the Science Editor of The Hindu



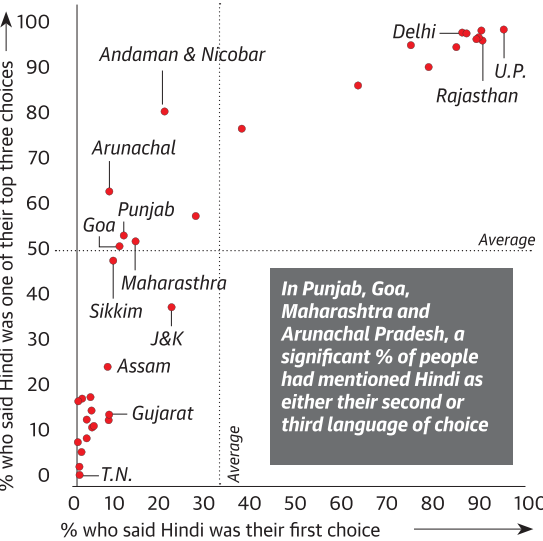
DATA POINT

Most for many

During the 2011 Census survey, people in only 12 of the 35* States and UTs had overwhelmingly chosen Hindi as their first choice for communication. Among the rest, while a few chose Hindi as their second or third language of choice for communication, a majority of them chose English. By **Sumant Sen**

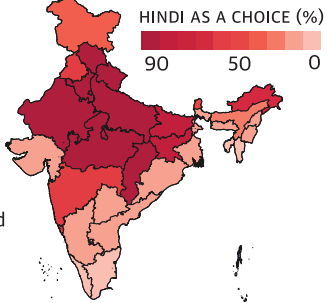
Prevalence of Hindi

The chart plots the % of people who chose Hindi as their first choice against the % who chose Hindi as one of their top three choices. In 23 States and UTs Hindi was not the first choice of language. Of those 23, in 16 States, a very low percentage had chosen Hindi as a second or third choice



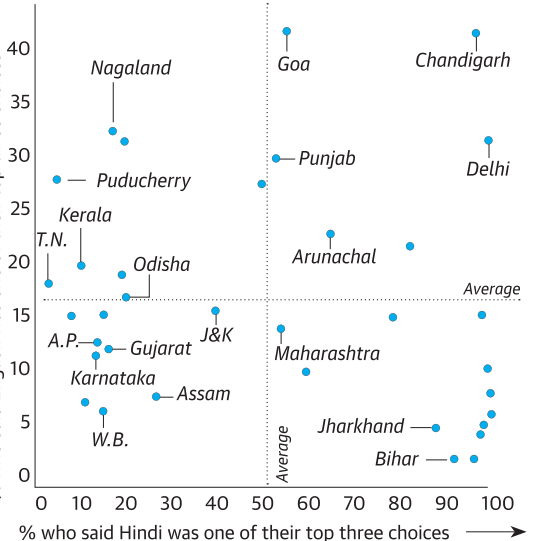
Northern skew

The map shows the State-wise percentage of people who stated Hindi as their first, second, or third choice of language. Most of the 12 States and UTs that chose Hindi as their first choice were located in northern and central India. The south had the least % of such people



A matter of choice

The graph plots the % who chose Hindi as one of their top three choices against the % who chose English as one of their top three choices. In general, States which chose Hindi predominantly as one of their top three choices had the least % of people choosing English



FROM The Hindu. ARCHIVES

FIFTY YEARS AGO JUNE 4, 1969

Curfew in Hyderabad, Warangal

Within 24 hours after the Army was called out to assist the civilian authorities to maintain law and order a seven-hour curfew, ending at 5 a.m. to-morrow, was clamped in Hyderabad city. A 24-hour curfew was also imposed on Warangal. The curfew in both places followed unabated violence and arson for almost the entire day to-day [June 3]. The police opened fire at 11 places in Hyderabad for the second day to-day resulting in the death of six persons and injuries to 32, as violent Telengana agitators went on a rampage. The police also fired on riotous mobs at Warangal and at Kodangal in Mahbubnagar District. Attendance in many centres was thin, and at least at one centre not a single student turned up. No examinations could be held in five centres because the examination papers did not reach them. Hyderabad City to-day witnessed large-scale arson, looting and vandalism.

A HUNDRED YEARS AGO JUNE 4, 1919.

Madras Fisheries.

H.E. Lord Willingdon who is in charge of Fisheries and Industries portfolios, to-day [June 3] at 'Stone House' [in Coonoor], accorded Rao Bahadur Govindan, Assistant Director of Fisheries, an interview. The latest development of the west coast fish industry is of inaugurating schools for the children of fishermen and a school for training teachers for these schools is to be opened at Calicut with Mr. G. Menon, B.A., B.L., late of Zamorin's College as headmaster. Sir Frederick Nicholson, who originated the fisheries in 1905 and held the post of Honorary Director, has resigned. He has consented to act as Superintendent of Fisheries on the West Coast, periodically inspecting them and to advise the fishermen of the latest scientific appliances. Mr. Hornell, Marine Biologist and who was Superintendent of Shank and Pearl fisheries in Tuticorin, is now the Director on a salary of Rs. 1,200.

CONCEPTUAL

Regret theory

ECONOMICS

This refers to the theory that while making decisions under uncertainty, apart from the possible benefits of their decisions, people also take into account the likely regret that they will experience in case their decisions fail to yield the expected benefits. Further, the delayed feedback that people receive about what they should have done after failing to achieve the desired benefit can cause them to experience regret. Regret theory was first developed by British economists Graham Loomes and Robert Sugden in their 1982 paper "Regret theory: An alternative theory of rational choice under uncertainty".

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