## The Indian EXPRESS

❦ FOUNDED BY ❦
**RAMNATH GOENKA**
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## A TICKET TO RIDE

### Delhi's proposal to make metro free for women is welcome. Its success will depend on how stakeholders are brought on board

ON MONDAY, WHILE proposing a subsidy scheme for women travellers in the Metro and DTC buses, Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal alluded to the links between urban mobility and gender equality. "Women will have a choice to travel free in the Delhi metro and DTC buses," he said and reasoned that the measure would cater to their mobility needs. "Women feel unsafe in Delhi and... public transport is considered to be the safest mode of travel," he said. The AAP government's move is significant given that at a little more than 11 per cent, the participation of women in Delhi's labour force is way below the national average of about 26 per cent. The free rides could lead to more women stepping out of their homes for employment. They would also ensure safe travel for the capital's growing number of women students.

The subsidy scheme will inevitably invite questions about financial viability. The free bus and metro travel proposal for women is expected to cost the Delhi government Rs 700 crore approximately on an annual basis. This is a high figure. However, there are compelling reasons, including the global experience with public transit facilities, for the government to subsidise such services. The metro connects the heart of Delhi and most of the NCR's commercial centres with the city's fringes, where a large section of its working class lives. Around 24 lakh people use the metro everyday. But the railway system's ridership has fallen by about three lakh commuters after prices were hiked in 2017, even though it added new routes in these two years. The discourse on the metro's fare structure also needs to be mindful of the Airport Express Metroline's (AMEL) early experiences. Launched in 2011, AMEL operated at less than 5 per cent capacity in its first two years. Reduced fares since 2013, helped to increase ridership and the AMEL broke even in 2016.

The Delhi government has said it will reimburse the ticket revenue lost by the Metro. However, the Delhi government will need to sit with the Delhi Metro Rail Corporation (DMRC), the agency responsible for running the metro, and work out the details of the scheme. The Delhi government's track record on dealing with tricky issues, especially its innovative interventions in urban politics and welfare schemes, has been mixed. While its initiatives on the Mohalla clinics and school education have been exemplary, the AAP government has come a cropper in confronting Delhi's pollution problem — a matter in which it has been called upon to coordinate with more than one agency. It would be best served in taking the DMRC on board while executing its new subsidy scheme.

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## FORGOTTEN LESSONS

### The resignation of Muslim ministers, governors in Sri Lanka reflect a widening faultline

THE RESIGNATION OF nine Muslim ministers and two governors in Sri Lanka is telling of how much and how swiftly the country has changed in the six weeks since the Easter bombings that killed more than 250 people. The attacks were carried out by a group of radicalised Muslims, later claimed by ISIS as its own. Security forces mopped up remnants of the group within days, arresting scores of people with active help from the wider Muslim community, which had long red-flagged the existence of these rotten apples to the authorities but to little effect. But even as this process continues and investigators are probing the networks of the perpetrators, there are other forces at work digging the crack between the majority Sinhala Buddhist community and the minority Muslims, widening and deepening it by the day.

It is unfortunate that the leadership of the country — divided between a prime minister and president who see each other as rivals in the presidential elections later this year, and both threatened by a former president — has done nothing to calm matters. In fact, they have done the opposite, by allowing majoritarian minded Buddhist monks to seize the agenda and dictate terms. Accused by Sinhala Buddhist extremists of "appeasement" of the Muslim community for votes, the present dispensation appears completely to have surrendered to these forces. The first sign was the imposition of a ban on face veils worn by women, then the laissez faire attitude as rioters targeted Muslims. Clearly the top leadership of the country believes that any attempt to stop these majoritarian forces will go against them at the elections. The resignations came after a hunger strike by a monk demanding that the two governors step down because of their alleged links to those who carried out the Easter attacks. The ministers resigned in solidarity, demanding that the allegations be established by due process instead of by word of mouth. Among those who visited the fasting monk was another man in saffron robes, who was in jail for instigating anti-Muslim violence in the past, until he was freed recently following a questionable presidential pardon.

Sri Lanka has been here before. It was the Tamils then, and it took a long and brutal war to learn that majoritarianism is not a workable political model in plural societies, even in those that do not call themselves secular. It is unfortunate that those lessons have been forgotten so quickly.

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## AN ICON, AN ERA

### Ruma Guha Thakurta's contributions as an artist spanned different media, musical genres

A CULTURAL ICON who straddled multiple disciplines with ease, Ruma Guha Thakurta passed away in Kolkata on Monday, aged 84. Over a six-decade film career, Thakurta was a part of some seminal Indian cinema. Her initiation into the arts happened when she trained as a dancer under the acclaimed Uday Shankar at his Almora academy. Thakurta eventually moved to Bombay where she gained immediate eminence. Her debut as an actress had already happened by then, though. When she was just about 10 years old, she starred in Amiya Chakravarty's *Jwar Bhata* (1944), which also marked the debut of Dilip Kumar. She went on to work with some of the biggest names in Indian cinema including Tapan Sinha (*Nirjan Saikate*, 1963), Tarun Majumdar (*Palatak*, 1963), Sunil Bannerjee (*Antony Firingee*, 1967) and, of course, Satyajit Ray. With Ray, she collaborated on *Abhijan* (1962) and *Ganashatru* (1989).

A remarkable facet of Thakurta's ouevre has been her versatility. In contemporary parlance, she would be an exceptional "multi-tasker". Around the time she was establishing her legacy as an actor, she was also creating a reputation as a successful playback singer. From Kamal Majumdar's *Lukochuri* in 1958, featuring two popular duets with Kishore Kumar, who she married, to Dilip Roy's *Amrita Kumbher Sandhaney* in 1982, Thakurta made her presence with her melody too.

Thakurta did not confine her interest in music within the movie industry. She left an indelible mark on the cultural landscape of Calcutta as co-founder of the Calcutta Youth Choir, along with Salil Chowdhury and Ray, in 1958. The Choir, helmed by Thakurta, soon gained acclaim for its performances: From performing in Dhaka at the first anniversary celebrations of the Bangladesh liberation to receiving Nelson Mandela when he visited India and welcoming Fidel Castro in the early-1990s. Thakurta leaves behind a rich history and an extensive body of work that is sure to resonate for long.

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# The North Block Challenge

### Thanks to his proximity to the PM, Amit Shah might be able to restore the centrality of the home ministry

**SUBRATA MITRA**

JUST AS I was beginning to argue that the Union Ministry of Home Affairs — the fixed point around which the politics of the state and the nation revolve — was losing its moorings, Modi 2.0 has delivered a coup de grâce. The appointment of Amit Shah to head this key ministry should go a long way to meet a structural crisis — the policy paralysis in Kashmir, allegations of lynching, and consternation in the Northeast — that had become painfully evident towards the final days of the previous government. Is this going to be a case of the iron fist of the home ministry in the velvet glove of vikas and vishwas? Are we up against a Janus-faced Modi 2.0, sending mixed signals?

Such apprehensions are based on a misconception of how the home ministry and the Indian system of governance actually work. True, the executive decisions of the ministry need the final nod of the home minister. But, in practice, these decisions go through meticulous vetting by the civil service, and are subject to internal checks from other ministries, including, in particular, the Ministry of Law.

A critical perusal of declassified files of the home ministry show how, in an exquisite Indian avatar of the BBC's *Yes, Minister*, seasoned bureaucrats have been able to hem in the excessive zeal of powerful home ministers. The hallmark of the ministry is governance by stealth — a process of generating compliance through the knowledge of rules and mastery of facts, supplemented with persuasion, material incentives and other forms of inducement, tactical posturing, and the application of limited force. The colonial home department had honed this to a fine art which has survived in the entrails of its successor, ensconced in the majestic North Block.

A robust and detailed interview of Shah to *The Indian Express* provides some valuable clues to how the new regime in the home ministry might work out. The punctilious defence of the letter of the law, and the political vision that underpins them are significant pointers. Home, under Modi 2.0, is likely to follow a policy of festina lente — making haste, slowly — but doggedly, and pursue a careful, balancing act.

From its inception, the BJP has set itself on course to transform India into a modern state which it sees as a political entity with a definite body of citizens who are allowed free movement within national territory. The idea appears alluring on the drawing board but its transformation to reality in the sprawling, continental diversity of India runs into immediate roadblocks. The courts, regions, media and civil society are likely to work in unison to moderate the hectoring pace of the regime seeking to cast the country into a new mould. The Ministry of Home Affairs is directly involved with the challenge of the full integration of Jammu and Kashmir with the Indian state and market, preparing a definite roll of citizens who are entitled to state protection and welfare, and to sustain the pace of development. Its mandate of ensuring orderly rule causes it to be indirectly involved with land acquisition, and connecting the state and citizen directly — skipping over the heads of the traditional intermediaries and fixers. On the top of this list of roadblocks that could stymie most political parties in a hurry comes the challenge of devising a bovine policy that can balance the sanctity of the cow with its materiality, and to build a consensus over Ramjanmabhoomi. Regaining the trust of minorities in a charged environment where these issues have become a political slogan for triage of the Indian population into those who are in, and those who are out, is probably the hardest challenge facing the Ministry of Home Affairs.

This is where the role of the Ministry becomes vital for Modi 2.0. Home is the most political of Indian ministries. By constitutional design, it is the keeper of order and has, at its beck and call, vast resources, the public services, the paramilitary and an intelligence network. The home minister sits at the centre of this spider's web of civil servants, spies, paramilitary units and its own transport to ferry them rapidly to the scene of action at short notice. More than mere physical agility, the occupant of this office needs vision; to be in sync with the regime's transformative ideology, and inspire trust. All this amounts to a tall order. Can the MHA deliver?

Looking back, one can see how India's home ministry had risen to this challenge in the past. Vallabhbhai Patel had led both the Ministry of Home Affairs and the States Ministry, which merged with it in 1955, with great vision and resolution. Between them, the two ministries melded fragments of the far-flung country together and gave it the territorial shape by which we know it today. Patel's sobriquet — "Iron Man of India" — stems from his role in this critical juncture which complemented the charismatic aura of Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru. Professional civil servants, who had once been loyal servants of the British raj, served both leaders with aplomb. The post-Independence generations of leaders and civil servants added enormously to this legacy. In consequence, functions like holding the disparate and dispersed political units together within the four walls of a territorial state, making the new wielders of political power accountable to rules and procedures, and developing options acceptable to all stakeholders have remained the main remit of the Ministry of Home Affairs.

The rise of new assertive leaders in the regions, emergence of centres of power like the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) and the NSA, the growing importance of the corporate sector, have affected the centrality in public affairs that home ministry once enjoyed. Thanks to the proximity that the new home minister enjoys to the prime minister and his previous ministerial experience, the ministry, under his leadership, might regain some of the centrality it has lost to its competitors for power and influence.

India today is at a turning point. The country under Modi 2.0 has set its trajectory on the goal of achieving the breakthrough of China, but achieve these results without a political apparatus that folds party-bureaucracy-army-regions into one agency and without the inconvenience of democracy's angry crowds. and its terrible political costs. As things stand, the unresolved structural issues of agriculture, territorial integration of Kashmir and India's Northeast, rights of forest-dwellers threatened by encroaching markets, and the emotive issue of cow protection will continue to plague orderly rule and demand the constant attention of the home minister. With trusted and experienced professionals in four key ministries, a massive mandate and effective party organisation to support its political initiatives, Modi 2.0 might have a fighting chance to deliver on what it has promised. The moment of Narendra Modi's reckoning, is, now.

*Mitra is an Emeritus Professor of Political Science, Heidelberg University, Germany*

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# HERE COMES THE SUN

### Heat-wave action plans can help city administrations cope with the worst of summer

**SUJATA SAUNIK, DILEEP MAVALANKAR AND MAHAVEER GOLECHHA**

WE ASSUME THAT all Indians are used to heat and heat waves kill only an unfortunate handful. The realities of climate change seem to have changed this perception. Data from deaths in Ahmedabad in 2010 showed for the first time that 800 additional deaths occurred during the first week of the heat wave. This was unprecedented. Ahmedabad city developed the first Heat Action Plan (HAP), learning from European and American countries.

A heat-wave action plan aims to provide a framework for planning, implementation, coordination and evaluation of extreme heat response activities in cities/towns that reduces the negative impact of extreme heat on the health of the population. The plan's primary objective is to alert those at risk of heat-related illness in places where extreme heat conditions either exist or are imminent.

Through the exemplary leadership of Maharashtra's Public Health Department and the Nagpur Municipal Corporation, the Nagpur Regional HAP has coordinated between Nagpur and four neighbouring cities, creating the first regional approach to heat wave planning in India. Based on a scientific approach using climatic data and health data, the threshold temperature for Nagpur has been identified as 43°C (109.4°F) for a heat alert day (orange) and extreme heat alert day

(red) for temperatures of 45°C (113°F) or greater. Nagpur has also identified particularly vulnerable populations, such as children and the elderly. There has been tremendous publicity about the HAP in Nagpur. Other cities like Gondia, Chandrapur, Nanded, Jalgaon are following suit. Citizens are actively involved with the HAP and have carried out awareness marches. These cities are also using social media platforms such as WhatsApp to spread awareness and document the actions taken.

Nagpur formulated its heat action plan with technical inputs from the Indian Institute of Public Health Gandhinagar (IIPHG) and the support of the Natural Resource Defence Council (NRDC) in 2016. Since then, the Nagpur Municipal Corporation has been using this plan to provide information to citizens and keeping track of heat stroke patients.

As global warming and rising temperatures are affecting communities and regions, particularly in central India, it has become imperative to support city administrations to prepare, activate and update their HAPs with each season and develop capacity both in handling periods of extreme heat as well as making communities both aware of and resilient to the impacts of the changing climate.

Recently, Nagpur has also been identified by the Department of Science and Technology under the National Mission on Strategic Knowledge for Climate Change (NMSKCC) for the development and testing of a robust and scientific Heat Action Plan. Under this initiative, a more scientific approach will be incorporated into the city's existing HAP. Climate data from the last 15-20 years will be correlated with the mortality and morbidity data of Nagpur city to prepare a heat stress index and city-specific threshold. Vulnerable areas and population will be identified by using GIS and satellite imagery for targeted actions. A system will be developed for monitoring the implementation and measuring the impact of heat action plan in mortality and morbidity.

The need for an active plan operated by city corporations, which involves all the key stakeholders in the city — not just the civic departments but various associations, civil society organisations and media — to operate an HAP is the hallmark of a prepared community which can offset the worst impacts of heat waves. Providing quality healthcare, particularly to the young and elderly, in a timely fashion is a key component and test of such a plan.

*Saunik, IAS, is currently Takemi Fellow at Harvard University, Mavalankar is director, IIPHG and Golechha is with IIPHG. Views are personal*

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## JUNE 5, 1979 · FORTY YEARS AGO

### UP HARTAL OFF

THE NINE-DAY-OLD HARTAL by traders in Uttar Pradesh was called off after a negotiated settlement with the chief minister. The call for a "Bharat bandh" tomorrow was also withdrawn. The finance minister, Madhukar Dighe, pleaded his ignorance to the agreement reached between the chief minister and the representatives of the UP Udyog Vyapar Mandal as he was not associated with it during the negotiations, which started last night and concluded this morning. The decision for the withdrawal of the strike was announced in the Vidhan Sabha by Chief Minister Banarasi Das, and, later, by the general secretary of the mandal, Jagdish Arora.
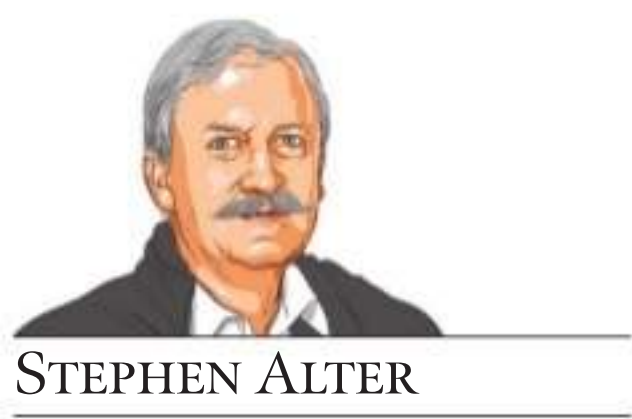
### ALL PARTY EFFORT

PRESIDENT N SANJIVA Reddy said in Trivandrum that if democracy was to be strengthened in a multi-party system like the one in India "all parties must sit together and tackle all major issues". Laying the foundation stone of the new Rs 3 crore four-storey legislature complex of Kerala, he said the country's parliamentary system had worked and survived successfully all these years, because the Congress ruled the country continuously for nearly three decades. That position of the Congress is now gone and in this "test period", different political parties must sit together and tackle major problems facing the country.

### MOROCCAN AFFAIR

INDIA MAY NOT pursue the Moroccan ambassador affair further. The ministry of external affairs had said in a statement that the government has lost "all confidence in the desire or ability" of the Moroccan ambassador in Delhi, Abdulhaq Saadani, to promote Indo-Moroccan relations. But there is also a desire not to precipitate things. In fact, the minister of external affairs, Atal Bihari Vajpayee, had not seen the statement before it was issued. Not that the government condones the impetuous observations of the Moroccan ambassador on the condition of Indian Muslims, but it is felt that perhaps the matter could have been tackled differently.

# Fatal ascents

Mountaineering is a perilous, sometimes fatal, pursuit. For those who take part in this sport, it is a risk they accept as part of a transcendent and sometimes tragic fascination for high places

### STEPHEN ALTER

NEWS FROM THE Himalaya this climbing season has been grim. In addition to the recent deaths on Everest, Kanchenjunga, Makalu and Nanga Parbat, eight climbers are now missing and presumed dead on Nanda Devi East, in Uttarakhand. Though it is too early to be sure, from initial reports they seem to have been buried beneath an avalanche. The leader of this team was Martin Moran, an experienced mountain guide, based in Scotland, who focused his attention on peaks in Garhwal and Kumaon. While most of Moran's ascents were commercial climbs, with clients paying him to help them reach the summit, his approach to mountaineering was, in many ways, the antithesis of what is happening atop Everest these days.

In his memoir, *Higher Ground*, Moran reflects on the career he chose: "Mountain climbing, in its finest guise, is a triumph of human spirit over the shackles of convention. It is spontaneous, thrilling, occasionally reckless, and it bucks the norms of society. The profession of mountain guiding introduces a strand of commercialism that can easily corrupt the ethos. Yet, he sought to preserve that ethos and the free-spirited adventure of climbing, even as he did his best to ensure the success and safety of those he guided.

I was fortunate enough to meet Moran on two occasions, once at the Himalayan Club's Annual Seminar in 2016 and a year later, when he was invited to give a presentation at the Mussoorie Mountain Festival. At both events, Moran spoke with passion and common sense about the need to steer alpinists away from 8,000-metre peaks. He argued that there are plenty of other mountains to be climbed in the Himalaya, all of which offer exceptional challenges and rewards, regardless of their relative prominence or altitude.

In an article published in the *Indian Quarterly* in 2017, titled, "The Joys of the Unknown," Moran wrote: "Ever since the first ascents of the highest peaks of the world, the mainstream media has presumed that there is nothing worthwhile left to explore in the Himalaya. How wrong they are! ...Mountaineering in the Himalaya has been an active sport for 125 years, yet many peaks of lower altitude are still unclimbed." He was one of a small but dedicated band of professional alpinists who seek to explore and celebrate these relatively unknown, unvisited summits.

Despite his many accomplishments, Moran was not given to bravado or sensationalism. The stories he told contained plenty of excitement and drama, as well as a keen appreciation for the overwhelming beauty of mountain landscapes. But he was a calm, self-effacing narrator, who recounted the dangers and delights of climbing without hyperbole or exaggeration. After listening to him describe various expeditions he led on mountains like Kamet, Panwali Dwar and Cheepaydang, as well as a tough traverse of Traill's Pass, I remember saying to a friend that if I were ever to try climbing again (after two failed attempts), Moran would be the kind of guide I could trust. At the same time, this was wishful thinking on my part, for he chose his clients carefully, making sure they had the skills, experience and fitness required. Unlike the fixed-rope escalators and oxygen-deprived queues on Everest — images of which have dominated social media over the past couple weeks — Moran and his clients often broke new ground and traversed fresh routes in remote, uncrowded terrain.

Nanda Devi East is a treacherously unyielding mountain to climb. Rising 7,434 metres above sea level, it is only 382 metres lower than the main summit to the west, the second highest point in India. The eastern turret of the Nanda Devi massif was first climbed in 1939 by a Polish expedition. Tenzing Norgay, who reached the top with two French climbers in 1951, rated Nanda Devi East the most challenging ascent of his career, including Everest. In 2015, Moran had attempted the peak once before, a climb that he describes in his memoir. After working their way up a ridge of pinnacles, he and his partner had no choice but to turn back. "Huge cornices forbade us to venture on the crest and we were forced on to the western flank where convex slopes slipped away into an abyss." Realising that it was suicidal to go on, his team retreated to Base Camp from where they went on to make the first ascent of a nearby peak, Changuch (6,322 metre).

Rescue operations are still underway to try and find the missing climbers but as each hour goes by our hopes diminish. Nobody can deny that mountaineering is a perilous, sometimes fatal, pursuit. For those of us who do not take part in this sport, there is a temptation to question and decry the seemingly foolhardy motives of those who ascend into lifeless zones of ice and rock. When accidents occur, family and friends of lost climbers suffer most, experiencing the anguish of a sudden death far away in some isolated, inaccessible place. Each of the eight climbers who have disappeared leave behind loved ones who will mourn their passing and wonder if something might have saved them. But for those who are gone it was a risk they accepted as part of a transcendent and sometimes tragic fascination for high places.

Moran returned to Nanda Devi East this year at the age of 64, for his second attempt on the mountain. After hearing that he and his clients were missing, I took his memoir from the bookcase and leafed through its chapters until I came to a quote from Goethe's *Faust* that he uses as an epigraph. It seems to sum up the mountaineer's quest:

*Oh, if I had wings to lift me from this Earth,/ To seek the sun and follow him!/ Then I should see within the constant evening ray/ The silent evening world beneath my feet,/ The peaks illumined and in every valley peace,/ The silver brook flow into golden streams/ No savage peaks nor all the roaring gorges/ Could then impede my godlike course.*

*Alter's new book, Wild Himalaya: A Natural History of the Greatest Mountain Range on Earth will be published this summer*

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*C R Sasikumar*

# Fixing the education system

Government can demonstrate its willingness to deal with the learning crisis by adopting the draft new education policy

### MADHAV CHAVAN

EDUCATION, IT MAY be said, is no rocket science. But, it has taken an astrophysicist and former head of the ISRO, as the head of a committee, to produce a refreshingly new draft education policy. Of course, there will be debates, and controversies. But, having worked for over two decades to improve the foundational skills of children, it is good to see a policy document that recognises the "severe learning crisis" and emphasises in no uncertain terms that it has to be dealt with.

To quote from page 64 of this rather elaborate document "..our highest priority must be to achieve universal foundational literacy and numeracy in primary school and beyond by 2025".

"The rest of the Policy will be largely irrelevant for such a large portion of our students if this most basic learning (reading, writing, and arithmetic at the foundational level) is not first achieved." The document says, "If action is not taken soon, over the next few years the country could lose 10 crore or more students — the size of a large country — from the learning system and to illiteracy." Grim, as the warning is, the government will underscore the severity of the crisis and show its willingness to deal with it by adopting the policy.

An important part of this policy is its thrust on early childhood education. Policy documents over the past decades have listed all the familiar reasons why early childhood education is important to build a foundation. But the draft policy lists concrete steps to overcome issues of universal access to quality early childhood education beyond the ICDS network. It says, "...the availability of free and compulsory quality pre-primary education for all 3-6 year olds will be included as an integral part of the RTE Act".

Further, the policy proposes to restructure the 10+2 education structure into a 5+3+3+4 structure so that the five years from ages three to seven or till the end of Std 2 are seen as one "foundational stage". This is a welcome recommendation. The next two stages, of three years each, are "preparatory" and "upper primary", first ensure the acquisition of foundational skills and then their development. These stages are not only consistent with the development of children, but they are also useful to meet the overall goal of ensuring basic learning outcomes stage-by-stage. Such stage-wise restructuring to achieve learning outcomes will be important if the government extends the RTE Act to children between the ages 3 and 18 as the policy proposes.

The policy recommends community and volunteer participation in collaboration with schools to overcome the current crisis. Schools generally work in isolation from the community they serve. Not making parents and the larger community partners in the child's learning process aggravates the learning crisis, at least in the early years. Although, setting up of school management committees is mandated by the RTE Act, they are not expected to become a part of the teaching-learning process. This policy seems to encourage voluntary action. The document also talks about encouraging philanthropic initiatives to help mobilise resources. Together, these two create an interesting picture.

The chapters on early childhood education and elementary school education appear to be more concrete than the chapters on the next levels of schooling or higher education. Perhaps this is because desired outcomes for early stages of education are easier to pin down than those for the next levels of education.

The data on the learning crisis in higher educational levels is not well-defined. There is a need to understand the crisis in secondary and higher education beyond the percentage of dropouts, the gross enrollment rates or the failure rates in examinations. Examination and assessment reforms are referred to, but clearly, more on-ground experimentation is needed before these can be concretised.

Integration of vocational training and a general emphasis on "learning to learn", along with lowering the burden by cutting out some parts of the curriculum, while focusing on the core, have been discussed for some years now. I am not sure we have enough experience to execute such initiatives. Though time is fast running out, we need to undertake a honest evaluation before initiating far-reaching changes. I recall reading the National Curricular Framework 2005 document, with similar enthusiasm, more than a decade ago. But, after a point you start wondering how much of this is really going to be feasible?

The context set in the early parts of the document is that India will be or aspires to be the third=largest economy in the world by 2030. "To do this, we will need a knowledge society based on a robust education system, with all the requisite attributes and characteristics in the context of changes in knowledge demands, technologies, and the way in which society lives and works".

This need for a knowledge society has been often articulated over the last two decades but we have not been able to deal with the learning crisis. Do we have the will, the financial resources, and the pool of human resources to deal with it now?

There is an addendum to the policy called "Make it Happen". It outlines the issue of financing in detail. In short, the projection is that the expenditure of the government on education, which is at 10 per cent of all public expenditure today, will need to be doubled. The "learning crisis" is very deep. The education system — public and private — has been deteriorating rapidly and has affected the quality of our human resources. If this trend is not reversed, the dysfunctional system will become more and more expensive but will not deliver the goods. It will require a huge commitment and conviction to make it happen.

*The writer is co-founder of Pratham. Views are personal*

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### VIEW FROM THE RIGHT

#### SPEAKING OF NAYSAYERS

THE EDITORIAL IN *Organiser* says the naysayers are still not willing to change. The likes of Amartya Sen are bent on bringing some obscure Western category of plurality to negate the popular mandate. The award-wapsi brigade and the larger project of breaking Bharat in the name of "lynchistan" are back in action. It adds that many more *Time* magazine stories and secular media stories about Narendra Modi being a divider and selective outrage over certain crimes, giving them a communal colour, will keep emerging. "In 2014 itself, they could not accept the fact that despite spitting so much venom globally about Bharat and a leader emerging from the soil and soul of Bharat turned out to be victorious against them. The shock of 2019 is even bigger. So now the strategy is to question the very edifice of democracy, the election process and outcome itself. Their perennial hatred for Modi and his school of thought is one reason for their continuous negativism. At the same time, the real problem lies elsewhere, and that is their non-Bharatiya understanding of Bharat," the editorial reads.

The editorial further says the mandate of 2019 is all about breaking the traditional frameworks of understanding electoral politics in Bharat. It adds that if three speeches of Prime Minister Modi, the ones he delivered at the BJP headquarters, the Central Hall of Parliament and the at Varanasi, are taken as a reference point, the problem with "the colonised intellectuals" could be understood. Modi, in his victory speech, did not only talk about the paradigm shift in electoral politics but also said there were only two castes — the poor and those who wants to lift them out of poverty.

#### A NAYA CONGRESS

AN ARTICLE IN *Organiser* says the time has come for a Naya Congress. The article says a pall of gloom has descended on the Congress headquarters after the Narendra Modi-led BJP's resounding victory in the elections. Referring to Rahul Gandhi's offer to resign from the party president's post at the first meeting of the Congress Working Committee after the results were announced, the article says, "In what is being seen by critics as a drama, Rahul has insisted on quitting notwithstanding efforts by leaders including his mother UPA chairperson Sonia Gandhi and sister Congress general secretary in charge of Eastern UP Priyanka Gandhi Vadra to persuade him to withdraw his resignation". It adds added that some Congress leaders are seeking to project the move as proof that the party was not dynastic as is perceived and Rahul, therefore, wanted a non-Gandhi to take over the reins of the party. The article further adds that Rahul reportedly took potshots at certain top leaders who worked exclusively for the success of their sons who were contesting the polls and not for the party candidates. "But critics wondered whether being a dynast himself, was Rahul being fair to his party colleagues? Why in the first place did he allow them to get party tickets and if they were indeed only focusing on their wards, couldn't he have ticked them off during the campaign itself? But the bigger question is whether Rahul is running away from responsibility and is looking for scapegoats?... Is he displaying mature behaviour by refusing to meet leaders like Gehlot (Ashok) and Sachin Pilot and even address newly elected Members of Parliament?" The article says the million-dollar question is, can the Gandhis then remain the ceremonial head and nurture a capable and futuristic leadership or will it only lead to another power centre akin to the National Advisory Council headed by Sonia Gandhi during the prime ministerial tenure of Manmohan Singh? "In that case, are they looking for another puppet, another yes man, another accidental Congress president? If so, the party stares at a bleak future," the article says. It further says the journey for the Congress must begin with playing the role of a constructive opposition, which is critical for the success of any democracy. "The time has come for a Naya Congress," the article concludes.

#### REFLECTING LALU

A REPORT IN *Panchjanya* says RJD supremo Lalu Prasad, who is admitted in RIMS hospital, Ranchi, is upset and anxious after his party's worst-ever performance in Bihar. Lalu did not part of an election in Bihar for the first time in 42 years. Since Lalu became chief minister in 1990, the "M-Y" combination (Muslims and Yadavs) had become an important part of politics in Bihar. Lalu gained the support of Muslims in 1990 by stopping the rathyara of L K Advani. Lalu did no extraordinary work for "M-Y" combination to stay in power, but sheltered *goonda* elements. The article claims there is resentment against Lalu's son Tejashwi Yadav because of his style of working and speaking.

*Compiled by Lalmani Verma*

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## HAS SALAH HELPED MAKE LIVERPOOL RESIDENTS MORE TOLERANT OF ISLAM?



Mohamed 'Mo' Salah, one of the world's best footballers, helped Liverpool win the UEFA Champions League final on June 1. *AP*

THE EGYPTIAN and Liverpool Football Club player Mohamed Salah has not only been cheered by Liverpool's predominantly white fans, but has also become the subject of a chant that goes: "If he scores another few, Then I'll be Muslim too… Then sitting in a mosque, is where I wanna be…" (*The Indian Express*, June 2).

The incredible popularity of Salah has led to researchers from Stanford University's Immigration Policy Lab to raise the question: Can exposure to successful celebrities from an often stigmatised group reduce prejudice towards that group? They suggest that it can. They draw this conclusion after observing that Salah's presence has inspired Liverpool fans to become less Islamophobic in general.

The researchers describe three ways in which they have reached their conclusion.

■ First, using a counterfactual hate crime rate, they found that Merseyside county (where Liverpool is housed) had a 18.9% lower hate crime rate after Salah was signed, relative to the expected rate had he not been signed. The decrease is larger than in other counties; moreover, the decline is hate crimes is sharper than in any other crime category.

■ Second, the researchers analysed 15 million tweets by followers of prominent clubs in the English Premier League. Generating a counterfactual anti-Muslim tweet rate by fans of other teams, they found that the proportion of anti-Muslim tweets by Liverpool fans after Salah joined was 53.2% lower than the expected rate had he not joined Liverpool (3.4% versus 7.2% of tweets related to Muslims).

■ Finally, they conducted a survey experiment among 8,060 Liverpool fans. The results suggest that exposure to Salah may reduce prejudice by familiarising fans with Islam. "Priming respondents with information about Salah's religious practices boosted the belief that Islam is compatible with British values by around 5 percentage points, compared to the baseline rate of 18% among the control group," the report said.

## SINKING DEEP INTO NATURE

TO HIS 150,000-plus followers on Twitter, the English writer Robert Macfarlane supplies a daily 'Word of the Day': names of flowers, insects, features of nature, descriptors of the weather and atmosphere — often quaint and pretty, but mostly words you'd struggle to actually use while speaking or writing. In a review of his new book, *Underland: A Deep Time Journey*, The New York Times called Macfarlane a "fetishizer of archaic and offbeat language", whose "interest in weirdness, linguistic and otherwise, is always on display".

Still only 42, Macfarlane has already written several earlier books — *Mountains of the Mind, The Wild Places, The Old Ways, Landmarks* — about nature, climate, landscapes, mountains, hiking, people, languages, and places. He is seen as an inheritor of the intellectual tradition of naturalist-authors John Muir and Richard Jefferies, as also of John McPhee, Rebecca Solnit, and Roger Deakin. Macfarlane's *The Lost Words: A*

*Spell Book* with illustrator Jackie Morris, is a cultural phenomenon in the UK, described by its publisher as a project that "conjures lost words and species back into our everyday lives".

*Underland* tells stories of underground explorations — of fungi that live beneath forests in England, catacombs in Paris, a part subterranean river in Italy, and sinkholes in the Slovenian highlands. In the book's final sections (which he calls "chambers"), Macfarlane visits Finland, Norway, and Greenland. "Why go low? It is a counter-intuitive action, running against the grain of sense and the gradient of the spirit," he says.

The *NYT* review picks out a "typically crunchy sentence" on what he finds under the Earth: "Philip Larkin famously proposed that what will survive of us is love. Wrong. What will survive of us is plastic, swine bones and lead-207, the stable isotope at the end of the uranium-235 decay chain."

# BSP minus SP, between the lines

While calling off the alliance with SP, BSP chief Mayawati has blamed an erosion of SP's Yadav votes. The fact, however, is that BSP did gain from the alliance in the Lok Sabha polls. What explains the announcement?

**RAVISH TIWARI**
NEW DELHI, JUNE 4

THE BIGGEST political alignment ahead of the Lok Sabha elections — the *gathbandhan* between the Samajwadi Party and the BSP — unravelled Tuesday with BSP chief Mayawati's unilateral announcement that the party would go solo in bypolls to 11 Assembly seats later this year.

### Gains & losses

Mayawati has attributed the alliance's poor showing to the drifting of Yadav votes away from the SP. She has referred to SP strongholds Budaun, Firozabad and Kannauj, lost by members of SP chief Akhilesh Yadav's family. SP leaders, too, concede that their candidates did trail in Assembly segments dominated by Yadavs, but add this is not a trend that could be generalised to blame SP.

A comparison of the BSP's vote shares in 2014 and 2019 in the 38 Lok Sabha constituencies it contested, however, reveals that the BSP candidates gained substantially in every seat except one (Fatehpur Sikri). This gain could not have been possible without SP supporters backing Mayawati's candidates. Field reports during the campaign in Fatehpur Sikri, on the other hand, would suggest that the choice of the BSP candidate pulled the vote share down below the 2014 share as some Opposition votes also rallied behind the Congress's Raj Babbar.

Trends also show that the 2019 vote shares of BSP candidates in 11 seats —Saharanpur, Bijnor, Nagina, Amroha, Meerut, Bulandshahr, Ambedkar Nagar, Ghosi, Salempur, Jaunpur and Machhlishahr—was more than the combined vote share of SP and BSP in these seats in 2014. Seven of 10 seats won by the BSP are from this set. SP leaders claim that the BSP could not have won seats like Jaunpur, Ghazipur and Lalganj near the Prime Minister's constituency, Varanasi, without SP's Yadav supporters voting for BSP candidates.

### The politics

Mayawati's stated reason was carefully worded on two counts. First, while blaming the dwindling of the SP's Yadav support base, she did not blame the Muslim support base of the SP's Muslim-Yadav (MY) coalition. Second, she kept a window open for a possible future alliance and did not attack Akhilesh Yadav.

With the BSP having emerged a bigger

gainer than the SP in the elections, this provides it an opportunity to bolster its credentials among the state's sizeable Muslim population as a more bankable party than the SP. Her remarks also sought to project that Yadavs are not as solidly behind the SP as Dalits are behind the BSP. The suggestion that Yadavs are not a cohesive unit in challenging the BJP can potentially create a wedge in the SP's MY bank, in favour of the BSP.

Mayawati, for her part, has been trying to make further inroads into the Muslim base. She tried fielding the highest number of Muslim candidates in the 2017 Assembly elections, though it did not yield results.

Assembly elections in UP are due only in 2022, leaving both sides a long time to regroup. They would be hoping for anti-incumbency against the Yogi Adityanath government, but if the BJP appears to be strongly placed, the two parties may need to collaborate again. That explains why Mayawati has kept a window open by avoiding any remarks critical of Akhilesh Yadav.

### Limitations of arithmetic

Mayawati's repeated references to "base votes" underlined the limitations of the alliance's ambitions of upsetting the BJP in UP, which contributes 80 seats to Lok Sabha. The fixation with this arithmetic was obvious from their call to the electorate during the Lok Sabha campaign as well. "*Ek bhi vote na ghatne paye, ek bhi vote na batne paye* (Not a

single vote should go waste, not a single vote should be split)," was the slogan the SP-BSP-RLD alliance used in trying to consolidate a Muslim-Yadav-Dalit-Jat combine.

The results are a testimony to the failure of this arithmetic against the chemistry of BJP. While the BJP increased its vote share from 42.63% (2014) to 49.56%, the BSP-SP-RLD combine slipped from 42.98% (2014) to 38.89% – a difference of over 10 percentage points.

A comparison with the anti-BJP realignment's success in the Bihar Assembly polls in 2015 can offer pointers to what was missing in the UP alliance in 2019. While the RJD-JDU-Congress alliance (*mahagathbandhan*) in Bihar in 2015, too, was based on the arithmetic of votes against the BJP-led NDA, the *mahagathbandhan* additionally had chemistry in the form of goodwill for Nitish Kumar as the chief ministerial candidate.

Bihar's arithmetic-plus-chemistry formulation was reflected in the campaign. While RJD leader Lalu Prasad campaigned against the BJP on the issue of reservation arithmetic, Nitish campaigned on a governance platform, focusing on promises.

In contrast, the "*Ek bhi vote na ghatne paye, ek bhi vote na batne paye*" chant of the SP-BSP alliance appeared to be centred only on the arithmetic of "base votes". This proved an inadequacy that alliances in Karanataka (Congress-JDS) and Jharkhand (Congress-JMM) have learnt the hard way in 2019, along with the SP-BSP alliance in UP.



SP and BSP overcame years of political rivalry to collaborate against the BJP. *Archive*

### FROM 2014 TO 2019, BSP GAINED AT ALL SEATS EXCEPT ONE

| Constituency | 2014 | 2019 |
|---|---|---|
| Saharanpur | 19.67 | 41.74 |
| Bijnor | 21.7 | 50.97 |
| Nagina | 26.06 | 56.31 |
| Amroha | 14.87 | 51.41 |
| Meerut | 27 | 47.8 |
| G Buddha Nagar | 16.53 | 35.46 |
| Bulandshahr | 18.06 | 34.82 |
| Aligarh | 21.4 | 36.71 |
| Agra | 26.48 | 38.01 |
| Fatehpur Sikri | 26.18 | 16.2 |
| Aonla | 19.1 | 40.27 |
| Shahjahanpur | 25.62 | 35.46 |
| Dhaurahra | 22.13 | 33.12 |
| Sitapur | 35.58 | 38.86 |
| Misrikh | 32.58 | 42.25 |
| Mohanlalganj | 27.75 | 42.51 |
| Sultanpur | 23.98 | 44.45 |
| Pratapgarh | 23.2 | 34.83 |
| Farrukhabad | 11.8 | 34.72 |
| Akbarpur | 20.85 | 29.86 |
| Jalaun | 23.57 | 37.47 |
| Hamirpur | 18.03 | 29.96 |
| Fatehpur | 28.26 | 35.24 |
| Ambedkar Nagar | 28.29 | 51.75 |
| Kaiserganj | 15.55 | 32.58 |
| Shrawasti | 19.88 | 44.31 |
| Domariyaganj | 20.88 | 39.27 |
| Basti | 27.06 | 41.8 |
| Sant Kabir Nagar | 24.79 | 40.61 |
| Deoria | 23.77 | 32.57 |
| Bansgaon | 26.02 | 40.57 |
| Lalganj | 26.01 | 54.01 |
| Ghosi | 22.48 | 50.3 |
| Salempur | 18.68 | 38.52 |
| Jaunpur | 21.93 | 50.08 |
| Machhlishahr | 26.66 | 47.17 |
| Ghazipur | 24.49 | 51.2 |
| Bhadohi | 25 | 44.87 |

*BSP's vote shares in per cent. Compiled by Lalmani Verma and Piyush Aggarwal*

# Nipah in Kerala: last year, this year, what next

**ANURADHA MASCARENHAS**
PUNE, JUNE 4

A YOUTH from Ernakulam district in Kerala has tested positive for the Nipah virus infection, a year after a similar outbreak in the state had claimed 17 lives. The infected patient this year has survived for more than 10 days now, and health authorities are hopeful that this latest outbreak would be contained soon. The infected patient has been isolated, and everyone he had potential contact with in the last few days is being screened.

### The virus

Nipah virus causes a so far incurable infection in human beings, which can sometimes be fatal. The infection is generally transmitted from animals to human beings, mainly from bats and pigs. Human-to-human transmission is also possible, and so is transmission from contaminated food.

The natural host of the virus are fruit bats of the *Pteropodidae* family and *Pteropous* genus, widely found in South and South East Asia. However, the actual source of the cur-

rent infection is not yet known, said Dr D T Mourya, director of Pune-based National Institute of Virology (NIV), which is at the forefront of efforts to contain the virus. Scientists are currently working on finding the epidemiological link of the outbreak.

First identified in 1999 in Malaysia, Nipah virus infections have been detected quite frequently in Bangladesh. There have been a few incidents of infection in India earlier, apart from last year's outbreak in Kerala.

Patients either show no symptoms of the infection, thereby making it difficult to detect, or develop acute respiratory problems, or encephalitis that often becomes fatal.

The World Health Organization (WHO) says the infection has been found to be fatal in 40% to 75% of the infected patients. There is no treatment available as of now, either for humans or animals, nor any vaccine.

### The previous outbreak

Last year's outbreak was confined to two districts, Kozhikode and Malappuram. Studies by NIV have revealed that a particular kind of fruit bat, *Pteropus spp*, was most likely the source of human infection in 2018. Research

led by NIV scientist Pragya Yadav suggested that this particular strain might have been circulating in the local bat population.

The newly detected case in Kerala, authorities believe, could actually be a result of intensified preventive and containment efforts after last year's outbreak. There has been an increased awareness and vigilance in the community. According to Dr Mourya, this helped in early detection this time.

### Not just in Kerala

Nipah virus has been found in other parts of India earlier. The first outbreak was in 2001 in Siliguri, where more than 30 people were hospitalised with suspected infection. Another outbreak happened in 2007 in Nadia of West Bengal. Again, over 30 cases of fever with acute respiratory distress and/or neurological symptoms were reported, five of which turned out to be fatal. Last year, after the outbreak in Kerala, doctors tested samples from suspected cases in Karnataka, Telangana and Maharashtra. All of them tested negative.

### Can it spread?

As of now, scientists feel the current out-

break is likely localised, like last year's. So far only one suspected sample has tested positive. More people showing symptoms are being screened and so are people in physical contact with them.

A study by NIV, published last month in the journal *Emerging Infectious Diseases*, reported that the risk for asymptomatic infections (in which the infected person does not show overt symptoms) was higher among people with a history of exposure to body fluids of infected patients as compared to those who only had physical contact with the patient. After the study, the NIV advised extreme care for healthcare workers and caregivers — double gloves, fluid-resistant gown, goggles, face shields, closed shoes and similar other protective gear — and a limited number of visitors to the patient.

People who have had close contact with a patient are considered to be at potential risk. These include people who have slept in the same household , have had direct physical contact either with the patient or a deceased who had an infection, or have touched the blood or other body fluids (saliva, urine, sputum) of the patient during illness.

# Elected on more than one seat: what the law and Constitution say

**S K MENDIRATTA**

THE FIRST session of the 17th Lok Sabha will commence on June 17, and Rajya Sabha is scheduled to meet on June 20. Some of those who won in the elections were elected from more than one constituency; some were already members of either Rajya Sabha or the legislature of a state. These MPs must vacate one of their seats — because under the Constitution, an individual cannot simultaneously be a member of both

Houses of Parliament (or a state legislature), or both Parliament and a state legislature, or represent more than one seat in a House. What are the procedures and timelines for effecting this?

### Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha

If a person is elected simultaneously to both Rajya Sabha and Lok Sabha, and if he has not yet taken his seat in either House, he can choose, within 10 days from the later of the dates on which he is chosen to those Houses, the House of which he would like to be a member. [Article 101(1) of the Constitution read with Section 68(1) of The Representation of the People Act, 1951]

The member must intimate his choice in writing to the Secretary to the Election Commission of India (ECI) within the 10-day window, failing which his seat in Rajya Sabha will fall vacant at the end of this pe-

riod. [Sec 68(2), RPA 1951]. The choice, once intimated, is final. [Sec 68(3), RPA, 1951]

No such option is, however, available to a person who is already a member of one House and has contested the election for membership of the other House. So, if a sitting Rajya Sabha member contests and wins a Lok Sabha election, his seat in the Upper House becomes automatically vacant on the date he is declared elected to Lok Sabha. The same applies to a Lok Sabha member who contests an election to Rajya Sabha. [Sec 69 read with Sec 67A, RPA 1951]

At least five winners of the Lok Sabha elections — Amit Shah (BJP, Gandhinagar), Ravi Shankar Prasad (BJP, Patna Sahib), Smriti Irani (BJP, Amethi), Kanimozhi (DMK, Thoothukkudi), and Anubhav Mohanty (BJD, Kendrapara) — ceased automatically to be members of Rajya Sabha on May 23, the date on which they were declared

elected. Legally or technically speaking, however, they became members of the Lower House only on May 25 — when the ECI issued the 'Due Constitution' notification for the new Lok Sabha under Sec 73 of the RPA 1951.

These MPs were, therefore, not members of any House for a day — May 24.

### Elected on two Lok Sabha seats

There is no one in this category in the new Lok Sabha. Under Sec 33(7) of RPA, 1951, an individual can contest from two parliamentary constituencies but, if elected from both, he has to resign one seat within 14 days of the declaration of the result, failing which both his seats shall fall vacant. [Sec 70, RPA, 1951 read with Rule 91 of the Conduct of Elections Rules, 1961]

### State Assembly and Lok Sabha

Under Article 101(2) of the Constitution (read with Rule 2 of the Prohibition of Simultaneous Membership Rules, 1950, made by the President under this Article) members of state legislatures who have been elected to Lok Sabha must resign their seats within 14 days "from the date of publication in the Gazette of India or in the Official Gazette of the State, whichever is later, of the declaration that he has been so chosen", failing which their seats in Lok Sabha shall automatically fall vacant.

There is some confusion about the "date of publication… of the declaration" in the gazette.

Sec 67 of the RPA, 1951, says that "the returning officer shall report the (election) result to the appropriate authority and the Election Commission,… and the appropriate authority shall cause to be published in the Official Gazette the dec-

larations containing the names of the elected candidates".

However, Sec 73 of the Act provides that the ECI shall publish in the gazette the names of all elected members in a notification, called 'Due Constitution' notification, whereafter Lok Sabha shall be deemed to be duly constituted.

The ECI issued the 'Due Constitution' notification on May 25; therefore, members of state legislatures who have been elected to Lok Sabha must resign their seats within 14 days of that date, i.e., on or before June 8. The late Gurcharan Singh Tohra chose to retain his seat in the Punjab legislative Assembly despite having been elected to Lok Sabha in 1999, whereupon his seat in Lok Sabha was declared vacant.

*(S K Mendiratta served with the Election Commission of India for more than 53 years)*