



Caution needed

Supreme Court decision on the Rohingya's status must protect those fleeing persecution

The Supreme Court's decision to examine the question whether illegal immigrants are entitled to refugee status needs to be welcomed, but with caution. It is debatable whether the Centre is right in claiming that this has emerged as a substantial question of law in the context of the Rohingya Muslims from Myanmar. For, it is fairly obvious that those escaping persecution in their home country are invariably undocumented. It logically follows that those fleeing conditions of war or conflict will have to be treated as refugees first before their cases can be examined in detail, and deemed fit for deportation as illegal entrants. It will be strange if any court holds that no illegal immigrant is entitled to refugee status. That would amount to a perverse denial of the very existence of refugees as a class. What the government is perhaps looking for is a decision holding that it can choose the class of illegal immigrants it wishes to treat as refugees; and that it can deny that status to any section it deems a threat to national security or is likely to strain local resources. The court's decision to go into the issue, therefore, offers an opportunity to clarify India's approach to the refugee question, which has generally been favourable to vulnerable entrants, but is stridently hostile to the Rohingya.

India is not a signatory to the UN Convention on the Status of Refugees, 1951, and a Protocol adopted in 1967 on the subject. However, since Independence it has by and large adhered to the larger humanitarian principles underlying these instruments. In this backdrop, it is astonishing that the present regime is determined to deport the Rohingya, in utter disregard of the danger to their lives in Myanmar, and in violation of the principle of non-refoulement, the norm that prohibits states from forcibly returning refugees to conditions that caused them to flee their homes in the first place. It will be amoral and unjust if this most vulnerable group from Myanmar's Rakhine state, numbering about 40,000 in India now, is denied refugee status. With the Centre taking a stand against treating them as refugees, a positive ruling is needed from the apex court to prevent their forcible deportation. The government's keenness to deport the Rohingya is rooted in the technicalities of its citizenship law. It defines "illegal immigrant" as any foreigner entering India without valid travel documents, or overstays a permitted period of stay. It rules out giving citizenship by registration to such illegal immigrants. The amendments it proposes to the Citizenship Act do not cover Muslim immigrants and are limited to persecuted Afghan, Bangladeshi and Pakistani minorities. India should work with the world community on the voluntary repatriation of the Rohingya and not besmirch its fine record of humane treatment of refugees by pursuing the deportation option without relent.

Grecian churn

Greece under Mr. Mitsotakis is set for a period of stability and continuity

The verdict in Sunday's Greek elections affords a rare comfort for Europe's centrists, who, arguably with the exception of Spain in April, have of late ceded ground to populist forces. The conservative centre-right New Democracy party of Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis has won 158 out of the 300 seats. The left-wing Syriza party of outgoing premier Alexis Tsipras was left with 86 seats. Critical support for Mr. Tsipras could not be ruled out from MeRA25, the Greek wing of Europe's anti-establishment DiEM25, of ex-finance minister Yanis Varoufakis; it has nine seats. But there is another dimension to this overall sense of political balance and stability in Parliament. Golden Dawn, the anti-Muslim party that ranked third in the last elections, has been convincingly rejected by voters, with less than the requisite vote share to enter the legislature. The potential for mischief from hardline nationalist parties was on display only recently. In January, Mr. Tsipras's government narrowly survived a vote of confidence after Independent Greeks, a coalition partner, withdrew support, refusing to back the renaming of the former Yugoslavian state as Northern Macedonia. Given the influx of immigrants and the refugee crisis, the ruling New Democracy and Opposition Syriza party both have a moral responsibility to consolidate the middle ground. Mr. Mitsotakis has assumed charge under relatively benign conditions. Four years ago, Greece was bearing the brunt of an international bailout, biting austerity measures and a collapsing banking system while on the verge of being ejected from Europe's single currency zone. That prospect is way behind, as the general consensus is that the euro is destined to succeed, for failure would be too costly.

Athens last year managed to exit the €86-billion bailout programme, but conditions in 2019 are far from ideal. Economic growth is at a tepid 2% rate as the population continues to be weighed down by reforms to the once generous pension system and spending cuts to the education and health-care budgets. The roughly 18% unemployment rate is by far the highest in the European Union. Mr. Mitsotakis, the Harvard-educated former banker, is said to be well regarded in the Brussels establishment. The inference is that the economic path of the past four years would not be derailed. The concern for Greeks is over whether Mr. Mitsotakis can navigate what seems a difficult road ahead without overly adding to their woes. Athens's strategic Mediterranean location lends greater heft to the EU's approach on the external policy front. Mr. Mitsotakis must leverage the goodwill he apparently enjoys with Brussels to shape an asylum policy underpinned by enlightened self-interest and humaneness. As Greece makes a fresh start, its leaders should temper the expectations.

A demographic window of opportunity

In India, investing in the laggard States will ensure their role as being the greatest contributors of the future



SONALDE DESAI

Last month, the United Nations released the 26th revision of World Population Prospects and forecast that India will overtake China as the most populous country by 2027. The only surprise associated with this forecast is the way it was covered by the media. Is this good news or bad news? Is it news at all?

Is this news? Not really. We have known for a long time that India is destined to be the most populous country in the world. Population projections are developed using existing population and by adjusting for expected births, deaths and migration. For short-term projections, the biggest impact comes from an existing population, particularly women in childbearing ages. Having instituted a one-child policy in 1979, China's female population in peak reproductive ages (between 15 and 39 years) is estimated at 235 million (2019) compared to 253 million for India. Thus, even if India could institute a policy that reduces its fertility rate to the Chinese level, India will overtake China as the most populous country.

The element of surprise comes from the date by which this momentous event is expected. The UN revises its population projections every two years. In 2015, it was predicted that India would overtake China in 2022, but in the 2019 projections it is 2027. The UN has revised India's expected population size in 2050 downward from 1,705 million in 2015 projections to 1,639 million in 2019 projections. This is due to faster than expected

fertility decline, which is good news by all counts.

Like it or not, India will reign as the most populous country throughout most of the 21st century. Whether we adjust to this demographic destiny in a way that contributes to the long-term welfare of the nation or not depends on how we deal with three critical issues.

Population control

First, do we need to adopt stringent population control policies? History tells us that unless the Indian state can and chooses to act with the ruthlessness of China, the government has few weapons in its arsenal. Almost all weapons that can be used in a democratic nation, have already been deployed. These include restriction of maternity leave and other maternity benefits for first two births only and disqualification from panchayat elections for people with more than two children in some States along with minor incentives for sterilisation.

As demographer Judith Blake noted, people have children, not birth rates and few incentives or disincentives are powerful enough to overcome the desire for children. Ground-level research by former Chief Secretary of Madhya Pradesh Nirmala Buch found that individuals who wanted larger families either circumvented the restrictions or went ahead regardless of the consequences. As one of her informants noted, "The sarpanch's post is not going to support me during my old age, but my son will. It does not really matter if I lose the post of sarpanch."

Second, if punitive actions won't work, we must encourage people to have smaller families voluntarily. There are sharp differences in fertility among different socio-economic groups. Total Fer-



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tility Rate (TFR) for the poorest women was 3.2 compared to only 1.5 for the richest quintile in 2015-16. To get to TFR of 1.5, a substantial proportion of the population among the top 40% must stop at one child.

In western societies, low fertility is associated with the conflict that working women face between work and child rearing and the individual's desire to enjoy a child-free life. Not so for Indian couples. In India, couples with one child do not consume more nor are women in these families more likely to work. My research with demographer Alaka Basu from Cornell University shows that it is a desire to invest in their children's education and future prospects that seems to drive people to stop at one child. Richer individuals see greater potential for ensuring admission to good colleges and better jobs for their children, inspiring them to limit their family size. Thus, improving education and ensuring that access to good jobs is open to all may also spur even poorer households into having fewer children and investing their hopes in the success of their only daughter or son. Provision of safe and easily accessible contraceptive services will complete this virtuous cycle.

Population and policy

Third, we must change our mindset about how population is incor-

porated in broader development policies.

Population growth in the north and central parts of India is far greater than that in south India. What should we do about the old policies aimed at not rewarding States that fail to control population growth? These policies include using the 1971 population to allocate seats for the Lok Sabha and for Centre-State allocation under various Finance Commissions. In a departure from this practice, the 15th Finance Commission is expected to use the 2011 Census for making its recommendations. This has led to vociferous protests from the southern States as the feeling is that they are being penalised for better performance in reducing fertility.

There is reason for their concern. Between the 1971 and 2011 Censuses, the population of Kerala grew by 56% compared to about 140% growth for Bihar, Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh. A move to use the 2011 Census for funds allocation will favour the north-central States compared to Kerala and Tamil Nadu.

However, continuing to stay with a 1971 Census-based allocation would be a mistake. Cross-State subsidies come in many forms; Centre-State transfers is but one. Incomes generated by workers in one State may also provide the tax revenues that support residents in another State. The varying pace of onset and end of demographic transition creates intricate links between workers in Haryana today and retirees in Kerala and between future workers in Uttar Pradesh and children in Tamil Nadu.

Demographic dividend provided by the increasing share of working age adults is a temporary phase during which child dependency ratio is falling and old-age

dependency ratio is still low. But this opportunity only lasts for 20 to 30 years. For States such as Kerala and Tamil Nadu which experienced fertility decline early, this window of opportunity is already past.

As the United Nations Population Fund estimates, over the next 20 years, the window of opportunity will be open for moderate achievers such as Karnataka, Haryana and Jammu & Kashmir. As the demographic window of opportunity closes for these States, it will open for Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and other States that are the last to enter fertility transition. This suggests that workers of Bihar will be supporting the ageing population of Kerala in 20 years.

The focus areas

In order to maximise the demographic dividend, we must invest in the education and health of the workforce, particularly in States whose demographic window of opportunity is still more than a decade away. Staying fixated on the notion that revising State allocation of Central resources based on current population rather than population from 1971 punishes States with successful population policies is shortsighted. This is because current laggards will be the greatest contributors of the future for everyone, particularly for ageing populations of early achievers. Enhancing their productivity will benefit everyone.

It is time for India to accept the fact that being the most populous nation is its destiny. It must work towards enhancing the lives of its current and future citizens.

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Turning down the heat

There is enormous potential in mitigating climate change through forest restoration



SUJATHA BYRAVAN

During the run-up to the Paris climate change meeting in 2015 (COP-21) under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, each country decided the level and kind of effort it would undertake to solve the global problem of climate change. These actions were later referred to as nationally determined contributions (NDCs).

India made a number of promises that would lead to the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions, or mitigation, and actions to adapt to living in a warmer world, or adaptation. Many of its described programmes and plans were intended to enable India to move to a climate-friendly sustainable development pathway. Primarily, by 2030, there will be reductions in the emissions intensity of the GDP by about a third and a total of 40% of the installed capacity for electricity will be from non-fossil fuel sources. India also promised an additional carbon sink – a means to absorb carbon dioxide from the atmosphere – of 2.5 to 3 billion tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent

through additional forest and tree cover by the year 2030. Trees and other vegetation fix carbon as part of photosynthesis and soil too holds organic carbon from plants and animals. The amount of soil carbon varies with land management practices, farming methods, soil nutrition and temperature.

Enhancing green cover

India has yet to determine how its carbon sink objectives can be met. In a recent study, the Forest Survey of India (FSI) has estimated, along with the costs involved, the opportunities and potential actions for additional forest and tree cover to meet the NDC target. Given that forest and green cover already show a gradual increase in recent years, one might use this increase as part of the contribution towards the NDC. Or one might think of the additional 2.5-3 billion tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> equivalent sink as having to be above the background or business-as-usual increase.

The additional increase in carbon sinks, as recommended in this report, is to be achieved by the following ways: restoring impaired and open forests; afforesting wastelands; agro-forestry; through green corridors, plantations along railways, canals, other roads, on railway sidings and rivers; and via urban green spaces. Close to three quarters of the increase (72.3 %)



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will be by restoring forests and afforestation on wastelands, with a modest rise in total green cover.

The FSI study has three scenarios, representing different levels of increase in forest and tree cover. For example, 50%, 60% or 70% of impaired forests could be restored. The total increase in the carbon sink in these scenarios could be 1.63, 2.51 or 3.39 billion tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> equivalent by 2030, at costs varying from about ₹1.14 to ₹2.46 lakh crore. These figures show that the policy has to be at least at a medium level of increase to attain the stated NDC targets.

Natural forests

A recent study in *Nature* by Simon Lewis and colleagues provides insights into what works well with regard to green cover. Locking up the carbon from the atmosphere in trees, ground vegetation and soils is one of the safest ways with

which to remove carbon. If done correctly, the green cover increase will provide many other benefits: it will improve water quality, store water in wetlands, prevent soil erosion, protect biodiversity, and potentially provide new jobs. The authors estimate that allowing land to be converted into forests naturally will sequester 42 times the carbon compared to land converted to plantation, or six times for land converted to agroforestry.

Another study in *Science* by Jean-François Bastin and colleagues estimates that it is possible to add 0.9 billion hectares of canopy cover worldwide, potentially mitigating up to two-thirds of historical greenhouse gas emissions. This would then prevent or delay the worst impacts from climate change.

Restoration type is key

Taken together, these studies indicate that while there is enormous potential in mitigating climate change through forest restoration, the amount of carbon stored depends on the type of forest restoration carried out. The most effective way is through natural forest regeneration with appropriate institutions to facilitate the process. Vast monocultures of plantations are being proposed in some countries, including in India, but these hold very little carbon; when they are harvested, carbon is released

as the wood is burned.

Besides, some of the trees selected for the plantations may rely on aquifers whose water becomes more and more precious with greater warming. Such forms of green cover, therefore, do not mitigate climate change and also do not improve biodiversity or provide related benefits. India, therefore, needs first to ensure that deforestation is curtailed to the maximum extent. Second, the area allocated to the restoration of impaired and open forests and wastelands in the FSI report should be focussed entirely on natural forests and agroforestry.

While using a carbon lens to view forests has potential dangers, involving local people and planting indigenous tree varieties would also reduce likely difficulties. Instead of plantations, growing food forests managed by local communities would have additional co-benefits. Once natural forests are established, they need to be protected. Protecting and nurturing public lands while preventing their private enclosure is therefore paramount. Active forest management by local people has a long history in India and needs to expand to meet climate, environmental and social justice goals.

Sujatha Byravan is a scientist who studies science, technology and development policy

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Letters emailed to letters@thehindu.co.in must carry the full postal address and the full name or the name with initials.

Reining in hate

The law-enforcers being mute is what ends up emboldening the fringe to tease, torment and even take a toll on lives (Editorial page, "The growing power of the lumpen", July 10.) The episodes of lynching are a blot on the face of a free, democratic India. If the new slogan of the government, 'Sab ka saath, Sab ka vikas, Sab ka vishwas' is to have any meaning, quick steps need to be initiated to win back the trust of all who are being targeted.

C.V. ARAVIND, Bengaluru

Those from the minority community are beaten up, forced to chant a religious slogan and, then lynched. What response do such incidents evoke in the hearts of the right-thinking Indian? Strong and peaceful protests are needed. The government

has worked on predictable lines: first denial, then symbolic arrests, later customary baills, protracted trials with endless adjournments and, finally, a much-delayed conviction, if at all. Public memory is short and a young son lost. Who will compensate his family for the irretrievable loss? So far no senior minister or even the Prime Minister has spoken out consistently to reassure the minorities. Civil society must make its presence felt especially as the Opposition is in disarray.

Dr. KURUVILLA VARKEY, Oddanchatram, Dindigul, Tamil Nadu

Malnutrition trap

The chest-thumping around the vision of a \$5 trillion economy for India has no meaning if it doesn't touch the poorest and the deprived in a positive way (OpEd page, "The malaise of malnutrition", July 10) The grim fact that only 16% of

funds allocated under POSHAN Abhiyaan was used by governments betrays the sheer insensitivity of the authorities towards the malnutrition-afflicted. The cascading tendency of a transmission of poverty from mother to children continues, which is proof enough that the government's efforts have had only peripheral impact.

AYYASSERI RAVEENDRANATH, Aranmula, Kerala

The inherited dehumanising poverty explains the persistence of malnutrition on a large scale. Children born in impecunious circumstances suffer the most from malnutrition. It is all the more reason for governments to intervene to provide adequate nutrition to all. Funds for food to all yield great returns and help in unlocking the full potential of citizens besides

strengthening the workforce. Governance can be termed 'good' only when it banishes hunger and starvation. The poor must also be valued like the rest of the population since attaching less value to their lives is one unstated reason why their nutritional needs are not taken care of as they should be.

G. DAVID MILTON, Maruthancode, Tamil Nadu

What about recycling?

Ever since the Union Budget laid out the path for electric vehicular transportation, there has been debate on how this will affect the automobile industry and its associated peripheral markets. However, there has been little debate on the importance of (lithium) battery recycling and the issue of tackling solid waste. If EV technology is to have a bright and sustainable future in India, there has to be a complete product lifecycle

system in place. Recycling must go hand-in-hand with market, production and job opportunities.

SREENJY C.M., Thalassery, Kannur, Kerala

Elephant repellent

Elephants are afraid of bees and there are numerous case studies across the world to show that the world's largest land-based animal is terrified of the tiny insect. While a bee sting does not affect the thick hide, it is the stings to the elephant's most sensitive areas, namely its trunk, mouth and eyes, that hurt the most. Research has shown that in Africa, placing beehives every 30 m or so is effective in keeping 80% of African elephants away from farmland. A paper in *Current Biology* (2018), titled "Wild Sri Lankan elephants retreat from the sound of disturbed Asian honey bees", has shown that the Asian elephant is also scared of

bees. Therefore, using bees has potential as a control strategy in Sri Lanka, India, Nepal and Thailand.

Beehive fences are gaining popularity in Africa, costing a fraction of what an electrified fence would, according to an NYT article. Farmers also have a new source of income from selling honey besides boosting the role of bees as top pollinators. As far as the strategy of sound amplification is concerned, which has been elaborated in the report, "Honour for 'Plan Bee' that helped save jumbos" (July 10), the fact is that elephants are smart and quickly learn that the threat from a recording of buzzing bees is unreal. Therefore investing in the real thing works best as a few stings reinforce its efficacy.

NADIKERIANDA CHINNAPPA, Bengaluru

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Nehru and the Kashmir quandary

The former PM erred in having too much confidence in the sense of justice of his successors



D. SHYAM BABU

Union Home Minister Amit Shah earlier this month held India's first Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru, responsible for the country being deprived of one-third of Kashmir. Except for those who deify Nehru, most others readily agree to the obvious fact that Nehru was not infallible. However, it is ironical Mr. Shah and his party, the Bharatiya Janata Party, focus on an area of Nehru's alleged culpability – his handling of the Kashmir question – on which the latter perhaps deserves their indulgences and empathy.

What must one, then, think of when one thinks of Kashmir? Is it a stolen land? Or a symptom of Hindu-Muslim rivalry? Or a case of cross-border terrorism? Or perhaps a battleground for two nuclear rivals?

Kashmir is all these and much more. However, there are some aspects to the muddle that have been ignored for far too long.

Nehru, the Kashmiri Pandit

First, given Nehru's well-known secular credentials, we tend to treat him as less of a Hindu, if not looking at him as an outright anti-Hindu. In reality, on Kashmir, he acted not only as a Hindu determined to protect his co-religionists, but as a Kashmiri Pandit.

In 1947, the immediacy of the crisis in Kashmir – the procrastination of Maharaja Hari Singh to join either India or Pakistan and Pakistan's invasion of the state – dictated that Nehru and the Government of India do everything to prevent the impending genocide of the Hindus in Jammu and Kashmir.

Wouldn't a secular Nehru have also acted in a similar way? Indeed. But a secular Nehru would have liberated the rest of Kashmir, including Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK), as well. Because India could either claim the whole of Jammu and Kashmir or nothing. Ignore, for the time being, the purported reluctance of Indian Army to proceed further due to the operational constraints that forced Nehru to agree to a ceasefire.



A measured handshake: Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru with Kashmir's Maharaja Hari Singh in Srinagar in May 1948.

Further, if one were to examine Nehru's actions in solely communal terms, one wouldn't be able to visualise a better strategy for the Hindus in the State than the one he chose. It must surely have crossed Nehru's mind that if he liberated PoK, it would create a situation where Hindus in Jammu and Kashmir were further relegated to a minority.

Here, it is not difficult to count the benefits of Nehru's calibrated inaction. A unified Jammu and Kashmir would have meant that even a brilliant gerrymandering of political topography would not have helped the Kashmiri Hindus. Hence, the BJP's criticism of Nehru's actions comes across as ironical.

The Hyderabad parallel

Prior to 1947, Jammu and Kashmir and Hyderabad State were mirror images of each other: an autocratic ruler from a minority community having put a heavy yoke on the majority population.

We are far too willing to accept the gory details of Hyderabad Nizam's misrule but squeamish in shedding a similar light on Kashmir. This has distorted our understanding of the Kashmir problem in two ways.

One, the current angst among the Kashmiri Muslims is explained away as the people's anti-India sentiments or the machinations of Pakistan.

There is truth in both explanations. But they also mislead us into believing that the Kashmir problem started after 1947. The fact is that the cross-border terrorism started much before the Partition of the subcontinent when Muslims in British India used to slip into the princely State of Jammu and Kashmir in solidarity with fellow Muslims, who were getting a raw deal from their ruler. Had we been cognisant of this fact, we would have focussed more on good governance and ensuring basic liberties to the people in Kashmir.

Two, after its accession into India, Jammu and Kashmir was pushed into adopting democracy whereas it never had the institutions, the cultural temperament and the robust civil society so essential for democracy to take roots and flourish. Recall how Hyderabad State (now Telangana) suffered for decades from left-wing extremism which was a counter to its feudal set-up.

Leaving aside a few honourable exceptions like the princely States of Travancore, Baroda and Kolhapur, most areas under native rule prior to Independence proved to be fallow for democracy, whereas British India enjoyed a whiff of rules-based governance.

Understanding the parallels between Hyderabad and Kashmir would give us a whole new way of dealing with the root cause of the problem,

rather than just its symptoms. The Maharaja's delay in choosing between India and Pakistan prompted Pakistan to resort to military intervention. That its troops were dressed up in mufti should not distract us from that fact.

On a fire-fighting mode

After accepting the Maharaja's instrument of accession, Nehru's main task was to secure the safety of Hindus, especially in the Valley. Having accomplished his goal, he had to end the war at a time and place of his choosing. How else could he have achieved it without going to the United Nations?

He was right in his likely assessment that Hindus wouldn't be safe in Pakistan and Muslims would be better off in India. His assessment was proved right during his time. But the fire-fighting nature of Nehru's actions in 1947-48 should have been additionally followed up with measures of restoration and rehabilitation, keeping Kashmir's history and culture in context.

Nehru and India had three policy options at their disposal during the initial years of the problem. They were: a) Use the window of opportunity to relocate Hindus away from the Valley; that would have avoided communal strife though democracy would have taken more time to fructify; b) Usher in secular and liberal democracy which would take care of the interests of everyone; or c) Put in place an autocratic system that would be managed from New Delhi.

The first option (evacuation) was never attempted as the government thought it was not necessary and the Centre was supposed to be following the second option (democracy) but de facto ended up following the third one (direct rule).

Unfortunately, for Nehru, taking possession of Jammu and Kashmir – minus the 'one-third' – was an end in itself but not the beginning of a long process of integration. Further, he had too much confidence in the superiority of India's liberal polity, which he believed Kashmiris would happily embrace. He also had too much faith in the sense of justice and equanimity of his successors. His faith proved to have been misplaced.

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Deepening #MeToo

A year after an actor inspired women to speak up against harassment, it's critical to assess the gains and challenges



DAMINI CHOPRA

In the mid and late-1800s, social movements in Europe for equal rights for women threw up the word 'feminism', which traces its origins to French. The suffrage movement in Britain in the early part of the 20th century was another component of women's fight for equality across the world.

Over the years, this fight has gained momentum, often with varying goals depending on the cultural traditions and the degree of prevalence of patriarchy in different societies. Various instances have inspired women to collectively get together and assert their rights – to create a combined voice that strongly advocates the impending need to view them as equal to men.

In the current world, there are strong stances that women are taking to support causes, such as the #MeToo movement that started in the U.S. and took down power-players like Harvey Weinstein and Roy Price and is now a force to reckon with in India.

Why it is needed

The abuse of power by men in high offices has been an open secret. Many women across industries have been subject to lewd remarks, suggestive behaviour and assault – and have often been penalised for rejecting such advances.

Tanushree Dutta's decision, in September 2018, to speak out against her alleged exploiters from a decade ago gave courage to many women to be able to openly speak up against bullies who coerce them into compromising situations.

Many other women have been empowered by the #MeToo platform to be able to take on powerful bullies. A big boon for feminism, #MeToo has also given women a tool against oppressors in influential positions. As sexual harassment is considered a serious offence when proven beyond reasonable doubt, the men stand to lose their sources of income as well as public reputation. Social media has, thus, been a huge platform in helping women to be able to express their ordeal as well as find solidarity and support.

A corollary to the same is the apparent misuse of these tools by some for personal agendas.

Many women are choosing to lash out at ex-lovers and blame them for harassment. Consent is imperative in every relationship; however, a mutual relationship (irrespective

of the state of it) cannot be comparable to exploitation of women employees at workplaces by men in senior positions.

Settling personal scores

Former Chief Justice of the Bombay High Court, Sujata Manohar (who was part of the bench that penned the Vishakha guidelines against sexual harassment at workplaces), observed that many women were misusing the #MeToo movement to shame men on social media and to settle personal scores. Adding allegations of a personal nature dilutes the essence of a very powerful and necessary movement.

Further, a lot of women anonymously share stories about their harassers but refuse to take further legal or police action. This raises questions on the ingenuity of their claims. In a recent example, an aspiring actor filed a complaint against a noted director, but then withdrew it.

Such actions not only allow the men in question to go scot-free, but also cast a shadow on the veracity of the victims' claims. If an untoward incident did occur, the sufferer must be willing to follow the proper channel to lodge a complaint and seek support for the same. It takes immense courage for a survivor to come out in public and relive her ordeal, and she must be believed and supported.

In such an atmosphere, false claims by a few women cast a net of suspicion on all allegations. Using social media to name and shame an alleged perpetrator just to settle a personal score under the garb of #MeToo is a disservice to women who genuinely need the aid of the movement.

To achieve a balance, it is important fairly assess each situation while taking a neutral approach in dealing with both the parties involved – the man and women.

This article does not attempt to undermine the need for women to assert themselves. Neither does it aim to question the legitimacy of all the complainants rallying behind the #MeToo movement. It only aims to argue that as we propose to create a more equal society, we must not let the oppressed assume the role of the oppressors. While there are great tools at our disposal, they also come with great responsibility.

For #MeToo to retain its moral clarity, it is important that we now look at ways to strengthen the processes at workplaces and the legal framework in general, so that cases of sexual harassment are speedily settled, and not left to a 'she-said-he-said' aftermath that extends the trauma of the innocent women and, sometimes, the men concerned.

Damini Chopra is an actor

A case for nutrition counselling

It is a low-cost measure that offers lifelong benefits

BJORN LOMBORG
SHIREEN VAKIL

The Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) scheme is one of the world's largest programmes for early childhood care and development. Now, a new study suggests that nutrition and health counselling delivered under the programme's auspices is one of the best possible investments that can be made by any government.

This timely, non-partisan report is by India Consensus, a partnership between Tata Trusts and Copenhagen Consensus, which has undertaken a first-of-its-kind analysis of 100 government programmes. These were identified by NITI Aayog for their role in supporting India's efforts to achieve the Global Goals.

The Global Goals have a dizzying array of 169 targets, such a long list that no country on Earth can achieve all of them. That's why the unique India Consensus economic analysis approach is vital: it adds new knowledge about costs and benefits. This way, it can be clearer which programmes achieve the most good for every rupee spent.

Researchers have identified twelve programmes that have phenomenal benefits for every rupee spent. Among the top programmes is nutrition and health counselling.



The average cost of counselling sessions for each woman was estimated at ₹1,177 and ₹1,250 for Andhra Pradesh and Rajasthan respectively. Based on previous studies, it is estimated that counselling leads to a 12% reduction in stunting. This leads to better cognitive skills.

Quantifying the benefits

Quantifying the increase in earnings shows that the per unit benefit for Andhra Pradesh and Rajasthan comes to ₹71,500 and ₹54,000.

What these figures mean is that the investment generates returns to society worth ₹61 and ₹43, respectively, for every rupee spent. While the analysis will differ for other States, these results show that nutritional counselling is a phenomenal investment. It's relevant to note that these figures take into account the challenges of nutrition counselling: it's a relatively difficult intervention to implement and ensure that every person is reached. But even if India's implementation problems were worse than other countries studied by researchers, it is unlikely to make the investment less impressive. The take-away point is that, among all the ways that the Indian government

is spending money to achieve Global Goals targets, adding additional resources to nutrition counselling would be a phenomenal investment.

The preliminary results of this analysis show that there are many policies that can achieve amazing outcomes. If India were to spend ₹50,000 crore more on achieving the Global Goals, focussing on the most phenomenal programmes identified so far by India Consensus would create extra benefits for India worth ₹20 lakh crore – more than the entire Indian public consumption.

With returns like that at stake, there are compelling reasons to look favourably at approaches including nutrition counselling.

Bjorn Lomborg is president of the Copenhagen Consensus Center. Shireen Vakil heads the Policy and Advocacy unit of the Tata Trusts



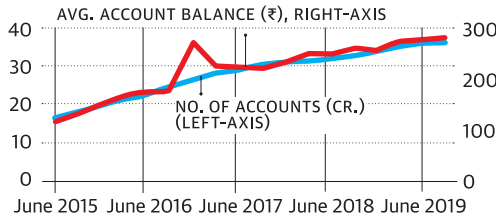
DATA POINT

Banking up better

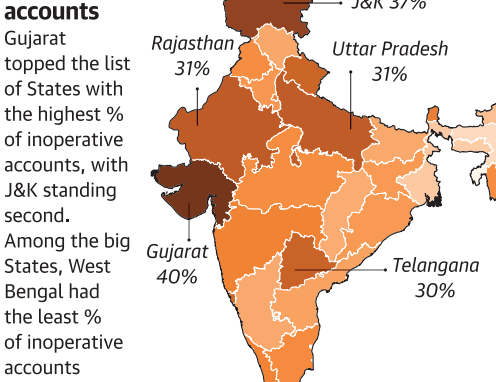
The cumulative account balance in zero-balance bank accounts opened under the PM's Jan Dhan Yojana scheme crossed the ₹1 trillion mark on July 3. The average balance in each account now stands at ₹2,787. However, as of December 2018, 23% of the accounts were inoperative. By Varun B. Krishnan & Sumant Sen

Rapid climb

The number of accounts and the average account balance have steadily increased. Just after demonetisation, there was a sudden surge in the average account balance

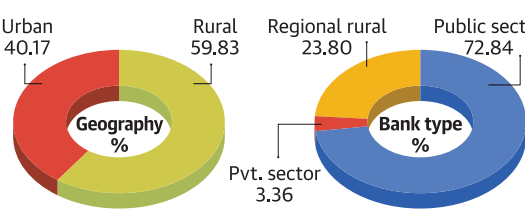


State of accounts



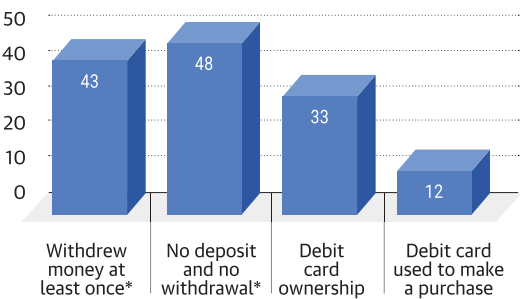
Where the accounts are

Six out of 10 Jan Dhan accounts are in the rural areas and close to three-fourth are in public sector banks. Private sector banks account for just 3.4% of these accounts



Measure of usage

While the country has made big strides in providing institutional access to the unbanked, a large share of people are not making use of the banking facilities, according to the Global Financial Index put out by the World Bank in 2017



\*In the year preceding the survey. Above numbers in percentage, for 2017. Respondents were aged 15+ and had a bank account

FROM The Hindu. ARCHIVES

FIFTY YEARS AGO JULY 11, 1969

Immigrants to Malaysia

Malaysia to-day [July 10] tightened its immigration regulations and called on all non-citizens above 12 years of age to call at the Immigration Office before September 15 to furnish fresh particulars about themselves. There are an estimated 700,000 non-citizens among Malaysia's 10 million population, nearly a quarter million of them are Indians. The more rigid immigration regulations which will come into effect next Tuesday [July 15] is part of the emergency declared in the country when racial riots broke out on May 13. The regulations known as Essential (Modifications of Immigration Laws) Regulations 1969 were gazetted to-day [July 10] and will remain in force for the duration of the emergency. The new regulation requires travellers to leave Malaysia only at authorised points. Under the present regulations, travellers are only required to enter the country at such points but could leave from any spot. Authorised points are airports, ports, Johore causeway and immigration and customs check points at the Malaysia-Thailand border in Kedah and Kelantan.

A HUNDRED YEARS AGO JULY 11, 1919.

Chamber on Currency Crisis.

The Committee of the Indian Merchants' Chamber and Bureau in Bombay, submitting to the Government of India their views relating to exchange and currency questions, strongly urge the fixity of exchange with-in gold points and suggest the introduction of a token coin, valued at two rupees or three, in which the percentage of silver shall be so small that there may be no appreciable loss even when silver is seventy pence. They also advocate the issue of coins to an unlimited extent. A point which the committee desire most to urge is the penalising of Indian Exports by the raising of exchange and the undue advantage which it gives to imports from foreign countries. The committee advocates the strengthening of a gold exchange standard, believing that a gold exchange standard has proved from the beginning disastrous to the country, and that in gold standard only lies its salvation. In order to make gold standard a success, the Committee recommend that establishment of a gold mint in India on the same terms as those given to the British dominions. Both the gold standard and paper currency reserve should be entirely located in India. Council Bills must be sold meanwhile for stated amounts.