



Imitation registry

Nagaland should take note of the minefield that is Assam's NRC process

Nagaland is following on the footsteps of its western neighbour, Assam, in the task of setting up a Register of Indigenous Inhabitants of Nagaland (RIIN). This is a variant of the National Register of Citizens (NRC) that Assam has adopted with decidedly mixed results so far. Nagaland claims to have watched the process unfold in Assam, followed it closely, and it will now complete the task of identifying and registering indigenous inhabitants in less than five months, by December 10, 2019. This is more or less the kind of time-line that was followed by Assam, which is yet to publish its final NRC a year after the process began. In two months from July 10, Nagaland hopes to have a list of indigenous inhabitants, after which it will be published and time given till October 10 to file claims and objections, before finalisation. It sounds simple, and Nagaland is considerably less populated than Assam. But the Assam experience shows that in the complex demographics of the Northeastern States, it may not turn out that way. As many as 40 lakh people were left out of the NRC listing in Assam, which seemed aimed to filter out 'illegal immigrants'. Indeed, in Nagaland, various local attempts have been made to determine non-locals, non-tribals and non-Nagas, and identify what some people refer to as the 'illegal Bangladeshi immigrant'. Two years ago, a town not farther than 15 km from Dimapur, the largest city and the commercial capital of the State, passed a resolution to place curbs on IBIs and devised ways to prevent them from integrating, living or trading in the town. When such is the situation on the ground, in an already volatile region where the Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act is routinely extended, it is best that Nagaland proceeds with caution in this enterprise. The RIIN should not ultimately become a vehicle to make outsiders of insiders.

The Assam experiment has no clear end-point. Bangladesh has repeatedly suggested that the process going on in Assam is "an internal matter" of India, implying that there is no deportation possibility here. Other than deepening the existing fault-lines in its own State and rendering the situation even more volatile, it is unclear what the Nagaland government hopes to achieve through the exercise. What happens to the people who are in the end found to be on the wrong side of the Nagaland list? The right to appeal and a humane hearing should be in-built in this exercise. The NRC experiment in Assam witnessed extremely divisive political posturing. Other Northeastern states are sure to be watching with keen interest what is unfolding in Assam and Nagaland. Emotive political issues cannot be allowed to drive the compiling of a registry of citizens.

Miles to go

India has some distance to cover before making self-care interventions freely available

Self-care, which mostly happens outside the formal health system, is nothing new. What has changed is the deluge of new diagnostics, devices and drugs that are transforming the way common people access care, when and where they need them. With the ability to prevent disease, maintain health and cope with illness and disability with or without reliance on health-care workers, self-care interventions are gaining more importance. Millions of people, including in India, face the twin problems of acute shortage of health-care workers and lack of access to essential health services. According to the World Health Organization, which has released self-help guidelines for sexual and reproductive health, over 400 million across the world already lack access to essential health services and there will be a shortage of about 13 million health-care workers by 2035. Self-help would mean different things for people living in very diverse conditions. While it would mean convenience, privacy and ease for people belonging to the upper strata who have easy access to healthcare facilities anytime, for those living in conditions of vulnerability and lack access to health care, self-help becomes the primary, timely and reliable form of care. Not surprisingly, the WHO recognises self-care interventions as a means to expand access to health services. Soon, the WHO would expand the guidelines to include other self-care interventions, including for prevention and treatment of non-communicable diseases.

India has some distance to go before making self-care interventions for sexual and reproductive health freely available to women. Home-based pregnancy testing is the most commonly used self-help diagnostics in this area in India. Interventions include self-managed abortions using approved drugs – morning-after pills taken soon after unprotected sex, and mifepristone and misoprostol taken a few weeks into pregnancy – that can be had without the supervision of a healthcare provider. While the morning-after pills are available over the counter, mifepristone and misoprostol are scheduled drugs and need a prescription from a medical practitioner, thus defeating the very purpose of the drugs. The next commonly consumed drug to prevent illness and disease is the pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) for HIV prevention. India is yet to come up with guidelines for PrEP use and include it in the national HIV prevention programme. Despite the WHO approving the HIV self-test to improve access to HIV diagnosis in 2016, the Pune-based National AIDS Research Institute is still in the process of validating it for HIV screening. One of the reasons why people shy away from getting tested for HIV is stigma and discrimination. The home-based testing provides privacy. India has in principle agreed that rapid HIV testing helps to get more people diagnosed and opt for treatment, reducing transmission rates.

A blatant quest to consolidate power

'One Nation One Poll' limits to a single moment the opportunities to judge, evaluate and vote — the essence of freedom



DOLLY DAFTARY

Just over a month after the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) won an absolute majority in the 17th Lok Sabha, Prime Minister Narendra Modi has now urged parties to fall behind his 'One Nation - One Election' (ONOE) proposition: that State and national elections be held at a single point.

The idea exposes the subversion of democracy. The ONOE puts the nationally incumbent party at an advantage in State elections, a position that the BJP now enjoys. The incumbent can deploy government machinery for State campaigns, a mega persona birthed for a national campaign can be fed into State ones, and a last-ditch sleight-of-hand that wins the Centre may land victories in the States. Perhaps the BJP sees the ONOE as the remedy to the spectre of its losses in Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan in the 18 months before a national win. Perhaps the party would have won in those States in the currents of an exploitative military nationalism launched in February 2019.

Roots in Gujarat

The ONOE catchphrase harks back to a moniker from Mr. Modi's rule in Gujarat, where he introduced the idea of samras village panchayats – samranches selected 'unanimously' or by 'consensus'. First floated in 2002, the idea was repeated in 2006. Samranches command significant resources, wield power, and deliver development

largely through clientelism, echoing the workings of elected leaders at the highest level. Elections give voters the same chance to oust a sarpanch who has skewed the distribution of development, as to expel a ruling party at the State or Centre. Samras gave incumbents an advantage in being reappointed as sarpanch (they were already panchayat leaders, had financial and tactical resources, and were networked with government officials and party actors).

In Dahod, a predominantly Adivasi district bordering Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan where I was doing fieldwork on how panchayats delivered rural development, bureaucrats confided that samras sprang partly from the Gujarat government's failure to respond to the floods in Surat in 2006. The government's incompetence was on display across national TV. Surat could have been the tipping point in a series of anti-people policies, including programmes of purported 'greening' and beautification that had displaced the urban poor, and rural schemes such as Vanbandhu Kalyan Yojana remaining largely unimplemented, with funds later found to be 'unavailable' and the scheme quietly withdrawn.

Panchayat elections were due in December 2006, and Assembly elections in 2007. Political parties mobilise votes for Assembly elections through sarpanches, and as the ruling party, the BJP had close ties with incumbents. Perhaps Mr. Modi feared that new sarpanches would be more equivocal about supporting the party in 2007. Perhaps the act of ousting a panchayat incumbent would make people feel more adventurous about ousting the State's incumbent. The germs of many of Mr. Modi's ideas lie in Gujarat, and their finessed



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forms have been deployed on a national scale since he emerged as the BJP's prime ministerial candidate in 2014. The ONOE is the next point in the Prime Minister's attempt to quash the Opposition that a democratic exercise may throw up.

Why does Mr. Modi seek to reduce the electorate's verdict on his performance to a single point in time? Does another spectre, this time viewed from New Delhi, haunt the Prime Minister: that of multiple disenchanted constituencies (rural voters, the poor, Other Backward Classes, Adivasis, Dalits, religious minorities, and others) voicing their verdict in State election after another, and the domino effect this may have on the 2024 Lok Sabha poll? Assembly polls are due in Haryana, Jharkhand and Maharashtra in 2019, Bihar and Delhi in 2020, and West Bengal in 2021. Assembly elections are related to myriad pressing issues, the result of complex interactions of State and national government policies.

As the BJP enters a second term at the Centre, several crises loom larger than before such as a banking crisis, unemployment, an economic slowdown, agrarian distress, a water crisis, and privatised health care and education systems. Mr. Modi appears to count on the din of a national campaign that the ONOE would invariably

Lessons from Bhutan

The incentive of an enviable income for teachers could mitigate many ills that affect India's education system



LOUIS JUDE SELVADORAY

Bhutan's teachers, doctors and other medical staff will earn more than civil servants of corresponding grades, if a policy recently announced by the country's government is implemented. The new salary scales will benefit about 13,000 teachers and doctors. This is a novel move. No other country has accorded teachers and doctors such pride of place in its government service, both in terms of remuneration and symbolism. Remarkably, the proposal was announced by Bhutan's Prime Minister Lotay Tshering, himself a qualified doctor – which suggests that professional experience informs the policy.

Inspired or fanciful?

Let us examine the policy's educational aspect. Is the proposal part of a coherent strategy, or an inspired announcement that is resolute in intent but likely effete in effect?

The policy's tonal reference is to be found in Bhutan's 12th Five Year Plan (2018-23), published by its Gross National Happiness Commission, the country's highest policy-making body. The commission's strategy to achieve desired national outcomes through educa-

tion opens with the notation, "making teaching a profession of choice". The proposal then is evidently at the core of a larger governmental strategy to achieve the country's human developmental objectives. The decision also comes in the wake of high levels of teacher attrition, especially the best. Clearly, the government has formulated the policy as a styptic to stop the serious haemorrhage.

Intuiting the correlation, as Bhutan has, between attracting the best talent to a profession and the remuneration it potentially offers is easy. But importantly, is it possible to demonstrate that improving the status of the teaching profession positively influences educational outcomes?

The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) is a worldwide study that measures and compares student ability in reading, mathematics, science and global competence, with financial literacy an option. Accordingly, it ranks educational systems of countries. An independent study led by the economist, Peter Dolton, has demonstrated a distinct correlation between student outcomes in a country, as measured by PISA scores, and the status that its teachers enjoy. The initiative's latest report, Global Teacher Status Index 2018, based on its own surveys across 35 countries, goes on to make a strong case for high wages to improve teacher status.

Policies act as levers that go-



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vernments use to achieve desired results in focus areas. The results of Bhutan's policy, if implemented, will take a few years to emerge for critical evaluation. It is, however, based on credible research.

The fiscal implications

Bhutan already spends about 7.5% of its GDP on education. The fiscal implications of the new salary structure are unclear now. Generally, teachers constitute a considerable portion of government employees. Therefore, governments looking to emulate Bhutan's lead will inevitably be asked questions about the financial viability of such a momentous administrative decision. For instance, the Minister concerned in Tamil Nadu, one of India's better performing States on educational indices, turned down demands of striking teachers for better pension explaining that wages, pensions, administrative costs and interest repayments already amounted to 71% of the State's expenditure. He asserted it leaves little for other developmental programmes.

Can India afford a similar policy?

produce to carry both State and national elections for the incumbent at the Centre.

Similar justifications

Mr. Modi justified samras by citing extreme spending by contestants and a drain on the exchequer, rationales now used to justify the ONOE. This, while proposals for State funding of elections languish, the Modi government introduced the electoral bond scheme in 2017 which renders donors to political parties opaque, and the BJP ran the most expensive campaign in India's history in the 2019 Lok Sabha poll. In Dahod, voters remarked that samras would simply shift contestants' spending from voters to other contestants to take them off the race. In the lead-up to Gujarat's panchayat elections in 2006, block development officers, revenue collectors and local BJP leaders pressured candidates to drop out of the race. Defiant candidates were verbally threatened with jail terms, and defiant villages were threatened with the withdrawal of development schemes.

Despite that, in Mahipura village where I did long-term fieldwork, and many others, contestants rejected samras, knowing that an election rather than 'unanimous selection', accorded legitimate power. A common comeback was 'Why doesn't Mr. Modi implement samras for his own seat?' At the end of the panchayat elections in December, Dahod had one of the lowest samras rates across Gujarat. Incidentally, the district is overwhelmingly rural, resource-poor, and inhabited largely by Other Backward Classes, Adivasis and Dalits. Political freedom must appear particularly hard-won to its denizens. One contestant returned to a block development officer, saying, "Consen-

sus pending consent, else not." Candidates knew that samras gave an edge to an incumbent sarpanch, just as the ONOE would tilt the scale in favour of the nationally incumbent party. Like samras seeks to dismantle the institution of panchayati raj, the ONOE seeks to undermine the institution of a federated government by giving a tailwind to the national incumbent. The question that voters in Dahod posed to Mr. Modi in 2006 inspires another question today: why propose the ONOE a month into an overwhelming national win? Why does the party that has equated punctuated electoral wins with the legitimacy of governance seek to discard punctuated elections?

Thwarting possibilities

'One Nation One Poll' is a blatant quest to consolidate power by limiting, to a single moment, the opportunities for citizens to judge, evaluate and vote – the essence of freedom that an election promises. Mr. Modi announced a 'development fund' of ₹5 lakh to every panchayat in Gujarat that eschewed an election in 2006, roundly seen by the public as a bribe. Of 14,292 village panchayats in Gujarat, about 2,500 are currently samras. A fixture in BJP-ruled Gujarat, samras attempts to minimise the points, in space, of democratic choice. 'One Nation One Election' seeks to minimise these points, in time, to a single dot. The catchphrase is a giveaway, suggesting the goal of a single election for the country, and a single outcome from it.

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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.

Handshake in Korea

U.S. President Donald Trump took everyone by surprise by announcing a sudden meeting with North Korean leader Kim Jong-un and then coming face to face with him in the Demilitarised Zone ("After surprise Trump-Kim meeting, n-talks to resume," July 1). The decision taken by the two countries to resume talks is a positive development, especially after the deadlock in the Hanoi summit earlier this year. Mr. Trump also created history by becoming the first sitting U.S. President to enter the isolated country. Both sides should take substantial steps to bring peace to the Korean peninsula.

TALA B. RAGUNATH, Thanjavur, Tamil Nadu

■ The one-to-one meeting augurs well for thawing of relations between the U.S. and North Korea. It is encouraging that both the tough-talking and strong-willed leaders realise that there is no option to the resumption of stalled talks to settle differences and disputes. That the meeting lasted for nearly an hour indicates that it was more than a handshake and a photo-op. The three things that Mr. Trump did – the announcement of creation of a team to resume denuclearisation talks; the downplaying of latest short-range missile tests by North Korea; and the extension of an invite to Mr. Kim to visit the White House – showed his keenness to find some common ground and arrive at an agreement. The Korean peninsula is one of the

potential flashpoints today and any diplomatic step that heralds peace in the region must get international support.

G. DAVID MILTON, Maruthancode, Tamil Nadu

The G20 spectacle

The G20 deliberations did not result in any substantial outcomes ("Among members," editorial, July 1). Mostly, they have only made the participating nations reiterate their stated positions. It is distressing that the leaders couldn't reach a consensus on the important issues of trade protectionism and climate change funding. Even the "very big deal" between India and the U.S. promised by President Donald Trump did not materialise. It is important that preparatory discussions are held prior to

such events. Otherwise, they'll remain grand spectacles for a few leaders to show off.

KOSARAJU CHANDRAMOULI, Hyderabad

Water and voter

Prime Minister Narendra Modi highlighted two important issues in his recent *Mann Ki Baat* programme – water conservation and the need to deepen democracy ("Democracy is our heritage, says Modi," July 1). As regards the first point, there can be no disagreement – many parts of our country are facing water scarcity, requiring people's participation to overcome the crisis. However, it was amusing to hear someone whose party enjoys a brute majority talking about not taking

democracy for granted. The people are not and will not be capable of going against democracy. They cannot snatch away the rights ensured by the Constitution – the political class can. The dark phase of Emergency was possible as the then ruling dispensation, not the people, had taken democracy for granted. As long as the ruling party is mindful of democratic spirit, there won't be any risk to its glory. But as Mr. Modi has rightly said, everyone should be alert enough not to allow it to be dented.

D.V.G. SANKARARAO, Vizianagaram, Andhra Pradesh

Taste of defeat

India's first loss in the Cricket World Cup to favourites England made the weakness of its middle order apparent ("India loses to England,

tastes first defeat of the tournament," July 1). The debate on the 'No. 4' position is yet to be settled, especially following the exit of Vijay Shankar due to injury. M.S. Dhoni's role in the team also needs to be discussed and a potential alternative like Dinesh Karthik can be considered. One's place in the team shall not be reserved just for the sake of advice during referrals to the third umpire. Both the present captain and vice-captain have enough experience to spearhead the team. The bowling side appears alright but inconsistency in the death overs has cost the team dear, including in the match they lost on Sunday.

SATEESH REDDY, K. Nalgonda, Telangana

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Is there a case for free rides for women?

Revenues from appropriately charging personal transport can make public transport cheap



SANDIP CHAKRABARTI
& AKSHAYA VIJAYALAKSHMI

Women may soon get to travel for free on buses and Metro trains in Delhi. This gender-based public transport fare subsidy programme, announced by the Aam Aadmi Party government, has not been tested anywhere in India in the past. Proponents claim that the policy will protect and liberate women. Critics argue that it is financially unviable and unfair. As polarised debates over the intent and impact of the policy continue, it is useful to assess whether this idea, in principle, has any merit.

Subsidies to the disadvantaged
Cities often provide public transport fare subsidies to all or some citizens to encourage them to use public transport, or for easing their travel cost burdens. Singapore, for example, offers a discount to rail commuters who are willing to travel before the morning rush-hour. Public transport is free for residents in Estonia. Luxembourg, with a population of about 600,000, has made public transport free for those under the age of 20. Paris, with a population of over 2 million, has announced a comparable plan. Hong Kong has implemented a public transport fare concession scheme for people aged 65 years or more. Berlin offered women a 21% ticket discount for one day in March this year to highlight the gender wage gap. In India, however, urban transport fare discounts are less common, although concessions for seniors, students, and other socio-economic groups are available for government-operated flights and long-distance railway services.

Fare discounts intend to make public transport truly public as some people are at a relative disadvantage in urban transportation markets due to their unique social, economic, and health circumstances. Article 13 in the United Nations' Universal Declaration of Human Rights recognises freedom of movement as a basic human right. If we consider transportation as a fundamental social need



"Free public transport can bring more women to public spaces, and, consequently, make those spaces safer for women." A Metro train coach in New Delhi. *SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR

and providing mobility for the transportation-disadvantaged as our collective responsibility, then any urban transport policy should include subsidies targeted at the disadvantaged. Specific supply-side investments or fare price discounts to help the disadvantaged travel, conduct activities and prosper are therefore justified. Public transport may even need to be free for some. In this context, let's take the case of women.

Women in India travel far less than men, and this has significant impacts on their education, employment, and enjoyment. A study in Delhi found that college girls, compared to boys, chose lower ranked colleges with safe and reliable transport access. Similarly, an estimated 60% of women workers in India choose to work from home or at a place which is less than a km from home, according to the 2011 Census. The remaining working women tend to rely excessively on public transport, according to a World Bank Study conducted in Delhi. An RTI application revealed that, in 2013, only 13% of Delhi driving licences were issued to women. These findings are suggestive of gender differences in travel choices and patterns.

Wage discrimination, gender segregation in employment, and household labour divisions contribute to gender inequality in transportation. Because men's jobs are considered to be more valuable, they tend to own the household vehicles and com-

mute privately. This lopsided rationing of household transport budgets also results in women taking longer commute options to save on expenses. When Delhi Metro hiked fares last year, around 70% of women surveyed in a study suggested that they would have to choose a less safe travel option for work, or travel less. Compromises on education and jobs for travel purposes is one of the reasons for women earning less than men, leaving the workforce, and consequently being more cash-poor than men. Finally, limited money to travel also means that women are willing to forgo hospital visits, significantly affecting their health.

There may be a case for free or discounted public transport for women. A subsidy like this is most likely to benefit women who might consider taking up jobs for which they are better suited but are further away from home. Women can engage in a range of activities that promote their well being. Free public transport can therefore bring more women to public spaces, and, consequently, make those spaces safer for women.

The high cost of free rides
Two questions remain. Who will pay for the subsidies aimed at the transportation-disadvantaged? And will such subsidies make it difficult for public transport to achieve its other major goal – reducing car use and cleaning up the air?

To address these questions, we

must first recognise that personal motorised vehicle travel is highly subsidised globally, including in India. Believe it or not, driving is cheap. Car and motorised two-wheeler users are not required to pay for the full costs their travel choices inflict on society in the form of traffic congestion, environmental pollution, and distortions in urban form. Promotion of cleaner fuels and vehicle-sharing can reduce but not eliminate the costs. Indian cities must consider pricing interventions such as congestion charges, mileage-based road use charges, parking charges, and higher petrol taxes so that private driving costs better reflect full social costs. London and Stockholm, for example, have been charging for congestion for over a decade. Such measures, in addition to discouraging driving, can help governments generate funds for expanding, improving, and operating relatively cleaner transportation alternatives such as public transport. Better public transport service is key to getting people out of cars, reducing air pollution, and making cities more liveable. It is possible that revenues from appropriately charging personal motorised travel will be sufficient to make travel by public transport cheap or free for the transportation-disadvantaged, without any additional public subsidy requirement.

Even if free public transport for women makes economic sense and seems fair, would all women support the policy? Informal surveys conducted after the Delhi government's announcement suggests that women are divided in their preference for the policy. Women who feel this policy treats them as lesser citizens should have the choice to opt out. Whether a free public transport pass for women should be income-based is unclear; means-testing for a public transport fare concession programme may not be worth the effort.

Finally, this debate is not for Delhi alone. It's time that all Indian cities crafted efficient, effective, fair, and context-specific public transport policies. Men and women do not enjoy equal freedom to move in India, and policymakers should act.

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Whither the Congress Party?

Weeks after its electoral drubbing, the party is yet to reflect on why it is so out of sync with 'New India'



SMITA GUPTA

The Congress's many critics have long revealed the 'dynasty'. Many supporters, too, have expressed their discomfort with the dominant role played by the Nehru-Gandhi family in the party. Now, after the Congress's debacle in the general election again, party faithful have begun to question the advisability of Rahul Gandhi staying on as president.

Mr. Gandhi, on his part, has asked the Congress Working Committee (CWC) to select someone who is not from the 'family' as his successor. He has not withdrawn his resignation after members of the apex body, expectedly, asked him to take it back. But the frontal organisations have not mobilised any show of support for him, nor have party veterans nudged them to do so. Belatedly, some Congress functionaries resigned after Mr. Gandhi apparently expressed surprise that no one else was willing to take responsibility.

Contrast this with the situation in 1999, when Sonia Gandhi withdrew her resignation after party workers organised hunger strikes and wrote letters to her in blood.

However, despite the lack of enthusiasm for Mr. Gandhi, there has been no movement towards selecting a successor even as State elections in Maharashtra, Jharkhand and Haryana loom large. Over the last few days, Mr. Gandhi has met leaders of these States, and Chief Ministers of Congress-led States amid the continuing suspense over the presidency. Though this is a historic opportunity to change the party's dynast profile, there is no queue of contenders for the top job or behind-the-scenes efforts to place an alternative leader. The party appears paralysed.

Fear of retribution
The lack of democracy in the party's functioning has meant that no Congress member has the courage to propose a name, lest he or she be later singled out for retribution. The example of Jitendra Prasada, who had once contested against Sonia Gandhi for the presidency, is being cited in this context. If a president is to be named from outside the family, that person must have the family's blessings. The fact is that the Congress has been so hollowed out, ideologically and organisationally, that the family has become the party, and the party the family. Worse, today, the family cannot decide on a common course of action. There is also a sense in

the CWC that poor leadership is the overwhelming reason why the Congress is in such a sorry state – and that it is up to the family to clean up the mess.

Ms. Gandhi, of course, continues as chairperson of the Congress Parliamentary Party; and five-time West Bengal MP Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury, who is unlikely to challenge the family's authority, has been made the party's leader in the Lok Sabha. Given the belief in the Congress that the family is the glue that holds it together, many party seniors feel that Ms. Gandhi should once again take over the reins. She may have run out of ideas, but still enjoys wide respect within the party. But can she transform a family enterprise into a democratic modern party?

In 2014, the Congress was reduced to an all-time low of 44 Lok Sabha seats. Since then, there has been little visible effort to revamp the party organisation, give it a direction or marshal its forces for the serious, sustained ideological battle it clearly needed to embark on. Senior leader A.K. Antony's report in August 2014 had blamed the media for the party's defeat. However, a series of structured discussions in end-2014 led neither to a blueprint for revival nor a reorganisation of the Congress.

In end-2017, a reluctant Mr. Gandhi finally took charge of the party. Under him, the Congress reduced the BJP to less than 100 seats in Gujarat and regained Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh and Rajasthan, but failed to build on those victories. In the election this year, the party suffered a wipe-out even in these four States.

No analysis this time
This time, even the mandatory 'Antony Committee' has not been constituted. Instead, there has been in-house name calling. Mr. Gandhi has faced criticism for relying on data crunchers rather than on political professionals. There has been no analysis of why the party fared so poorly, on whether the Congress is out of sync with the 'New India' that Prime Minister Narendra Modi is building, on trying to understand why there has been a rightward shift among voters, or why a young leader like Mr. Gandhi cannot attract the 18-40 years demographic.

Regardless of who eventually heads the Congress, the next leader's first task must be to let all the voices in the party be heard. The 'Grand Old Party' deserves more than a stick of glue – it needs a transformational leader who has the confidence to hear all the bad news, and then find a way forward – if it does not want to wither away.

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Violation of reservation in top posts at universities

They occupy only around 1% of top teaching posts

ANISH GUPTA & AALEYA GIRI

The introduction of the Central Educational Institutions (Reservation in Teachers' Cadre) Ordinance, 2019, which is meant to "provide for the reservation of posts in appointments by direct recruitment of persons belonging to the Scheduled Castes, the Scheduled Tribes and the socially and educationally backward classes, to teachers' cadre in certain Central Educational Institutions established, maintained or aided by the Central Government", redresses the anomaly found in the recruitment of Other Backward Class (OBC) candidates at higher levels of teaching positions.

The ordinance indicates that reservation to OBCs shall be provided at all levels of teaching, leaving no space of misinterpretation by some universities that had arbitrarily restricted reservation for OBCs to the level of 'Assistant Professor'.

However, recent advertisements by 13 central universities are in clear violation of the ordinance. Of these, only Allahabad University and Dr. Harisingh Gour University have followed fully the reservation policy by earmarking positions for OBCs at all levels, while the Central University of Kashmir has reservation at all levels except that of 'Professor'.

Representation of OBCs
Further, even after a clarification issued by the Ministry of Human Resource Development last month, only the Central University of Himachal Pradesh issued a revised notification providing OBC reservation at all levels of teaching.

Curiously, while the Indira Gandhi National Tribal University – Amarkantak has reserved positions for 'Economically Weaker Sections' (EWS) at the levels of 'Associate Professor' and 'Professor', it has no reserved positions for OBCs. The Tata Institute of Social Sciences, which is known for its commitment to issues related to social justice, too has no reservation at higher levels of teaching positions. The rapidity with which

the Central University of Rajasthan has almost reached the last step of recruitment is questionable.

Though OBCs account for about 50% of the country's population, their representation in all faculty positions in all central educational institutions is only 9.8%. According to a recent report by the University Grants Commission, only 13.87% of positions at the Assistant Professor-level in central universities were occupied by OBCs. The representation became almost negligible at higher levels, i.e. those of Associate Professor and Professor, accounting for just 1.22% and 1.14%, respectively.

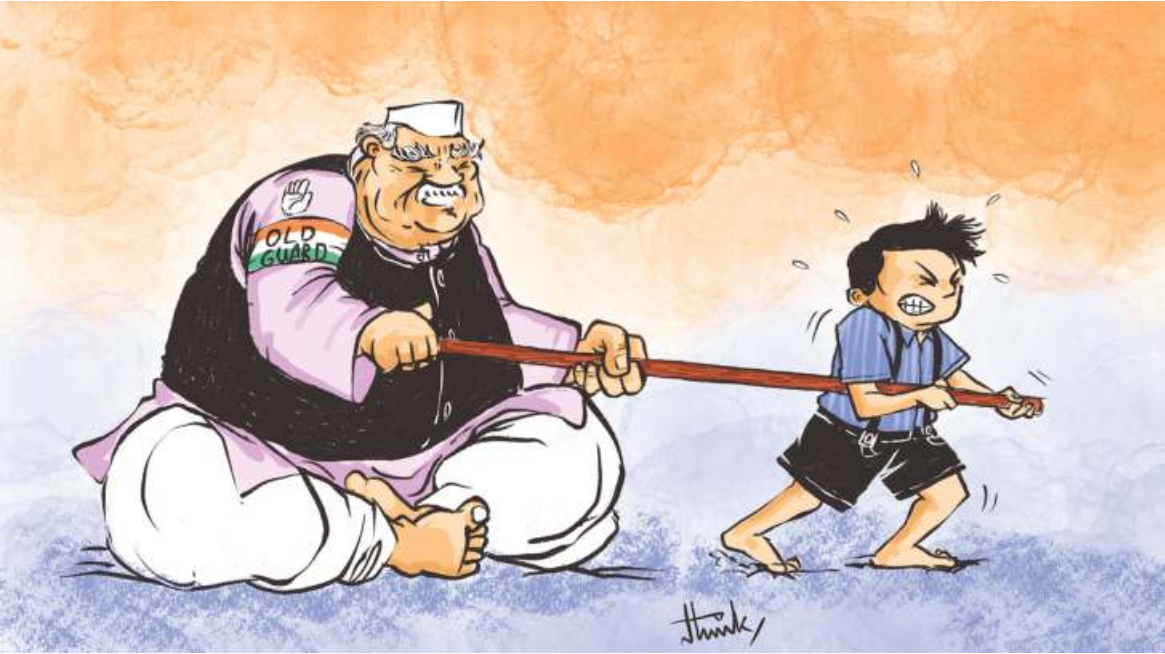
Noticeably, the representation of OBCs was less than that of Muslims at higher levels of teaching. Certain communities of Muslims are recognised as OBCs, and if we exclude them, the representation of non-Muslim OBCs in the institutions would become negligible.

In case of violations
Generally, the decision-making power at universities rest upon the Professors and Associate Professors. Professors, who play a significant role in the recruitment process, at times misinterpret the constitutional provisions.

Even if a violation is found, the maximum a court does is to order a correction to the institution's advertisement, without awarding any compensation to the petitioner or punishment to the violators. Moreover, legal procedure is tedious and hence is generally avoided.

Noticeably, implementation of reservation for SCs, STs and OBCs in higher educational institutions funded by the Centre was delayed for more than 15 years after the announcement, while the same for EWS was done within a month of the announcement. Such differential treatment results in imbalanced representation of a social group at higher levels of teaching and decision-making.

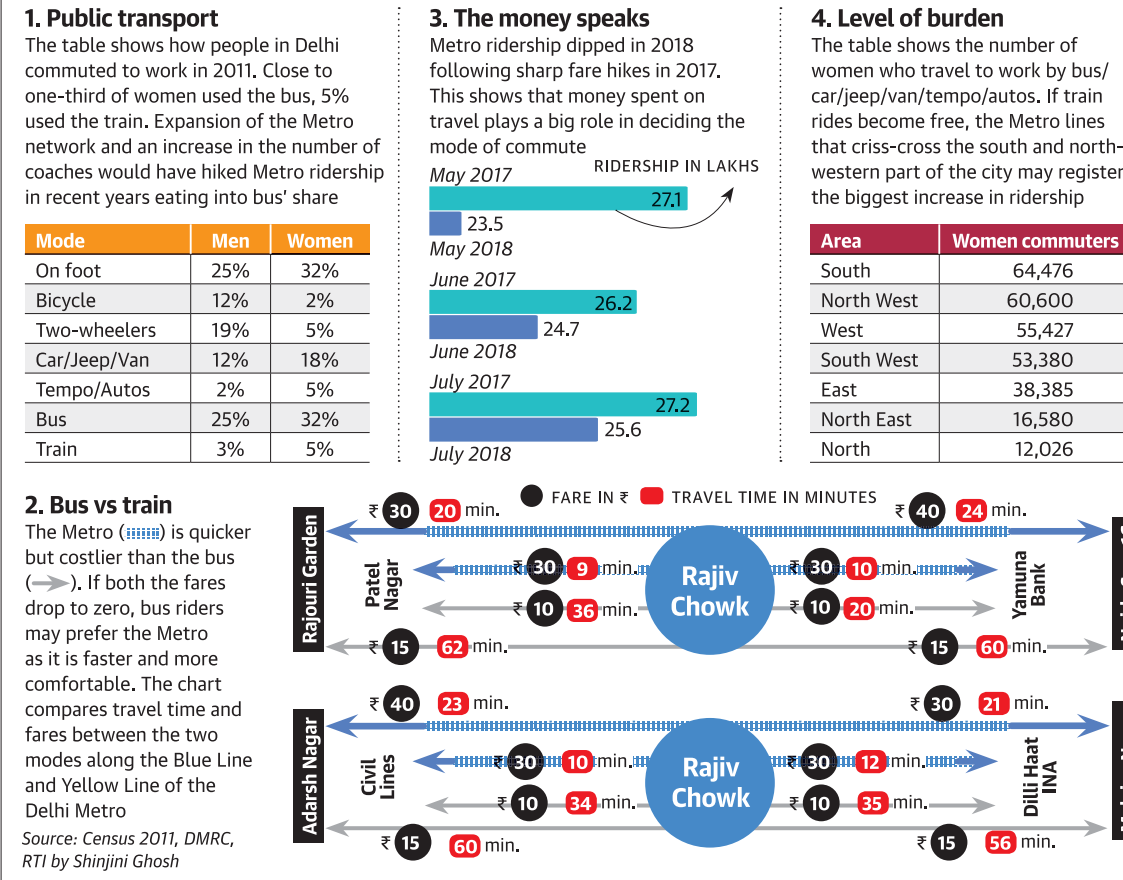
Anish Gupta and Aaleya Giri teach at Delhi University. Views are personal



DATA POINT

Moving to Metro?

If the AAP government's proposal to make public transport free for women in Delhi comes into effect, a significant number of women who commute to work by bus instead of the more expensive Metro train may start using the Metro, data indicate. By **Sumant Sen** and **Vignesh Radhakrishnan**



FROM THE HINDU ARCHIVES
FIFTY YEARS AGO JULY 2, 1969

Charles crowned Prince of Wales

Queen Elizabeth to-day [July 1] placed a gold coronet on the head of her eldest son, Prince Charles, formally appointing him Prince of Wales and heir to the throne. The moment was the high point in an ornate ceremony by which the Queen presented the 20-year-old Charles to the 2,800,000 people of Wales as their own Prince - and as the future monarch of over 850 million subjects in Britain and the Commonwealth. Before an illustrious gathering of 4,000 in medieval Caernarvon Castle, and an estimated television audience of 500 million, the crowned Prince knelt and placed his hands between those of the Queen, clad in dazzling yellow. The Queen also placed a golden ring on her son's finger symbolising unity with Wales, handed him a golden rod, symbolising temporal power, and then wrapped an ermine cape round his shoulders, buttoning it in motherly fashion. After crowning him, the Queen and Prince exchanged the kiss of fealty - a tradition dating back to the middle ages to symbolise the recognition of loyalty.

A HUNDRED YEARS AGO (FROM THE ISSUE OF JULY 3, THERE HAVING BEEN NO ISSUE ON JULY 2)

On the Indian Situation.

A public meeting was held in the Town Hall [in Nagpur on July 1] under the auspices of the Provincial Congress Committee Provincial Association and the Home Rule League, Dr. Gour, President, Nagpur Municipality, presiding. Resolutions (1) strongly protesting against the Viceroy's decision refusing to suspend the executions of accused in the Punjab trials under Martial Law and appealing him to reconsider his decision, (2) endorsing practically the All India Congress Committee's resolution cabled by the Hon'ble Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya and requesting the provincial land holders' constituency to reelect Rao Bahadur Bishun Dutt Shukul for the Imperial Council recognising his services in protesting against the passage of the Rowlatt Act were proposed and carried unanimously. [Separately], at a meeting held last Sunday, the Central Provinces National Liberal Association deeply deplored the decision of His Excellency the Viceroy in declining to postpone the execution of death sentences passed by the martial law commission pending intended appeal to the Privy Council and also protesting against the undeserved punishment on Mr. Kalinath Roy, editor of the 'Tribune'.