



Burning bright

Peer review and scientific publication can make India's tiger census a global model

If India has increased its population of tigers to an estimated 2,967 individuals in 2018-19, putting behind fiascos such as the Sariska wipeout 15 years ago, it adds to its global standing as a conservation marvel: a populous country that has preserved a lot of its natural heritage even amid fast-paced economic growth. Since the majority of the world's wild tigers live in India, there is global attention on the counting exercise and the gaps the assessment exposes. The National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) has asserted in its report, 'Status of Tigers in India 2018', that 83% of the big cats censused were individually photographed using camera traps, 87% were confirmed through a camera trap-based capture-recapture technique, and other estimation methods were used to establish the total number. Previous estimates for periods between 2006 and 2010 and then up to 2014 indicated a steady increase in tiger abundance. Such numbers, however, are the subject of debate among sections of the scientific community, mainly on methodological grounds, since independent studies of even well-protected reserves showed a lower increase. It is important to put all the latest data, which are no doubt encouraging, through rigorous peer review. Conservation achievements – and some failures – can then be the subject of scientific scrutiny and find a place in scientific literature to aid efforts to save tigers.

There are several aspects to the latest counting operation – a staggering exercise spread over 3,81,400 sq km and 26,838 camera trap locations – that are of international interest, because some tiger range countries are beginning their own census of the cats. Moreover, even developed countries are trying to revive populations of charismatic wild creatures such as wolves and bears through a more accurate outcome measurement. For India's tigers, not every landscape is welcoming, as the official report makes clear. The less accessible Western Ghats has witnessed a steady increase in numbers from 2006, notably in Karnataka, and Central India has an abundance, but there is a marked drop in Chhattisgarh and Odisha; in Buxa, Dampa and Palamau, which are tiger reserves, no trace of the animal was found. It is imperative for the NTCA to analyse why some landscapes have lost tigers, when the entire programme has been receiving high priority and funding for years now at ₹10 lakh per family that is ready to move out of critical habitat. Ultimately, saving tigers depends most on the health of source populations of the species that are estimated to occupy a mere 10% of the habitat. The conflict in opening up reserves to road-building has to end, and identified movement corridors should be cleared of commercial pressures. Hunting of prey animals, such as deer and pig, needs to stop as they form the base for growth of tiger and other carnivore populations. As some scientists caution, faulty numbers may hide the real story. They may only represent a 'political population' of a favoured animal, not quite reflective of reality.

Flee market

Investors seem disappointed with tax measures seen as burdening businesses

The wheels of India's multi-year stock market rally are slowly beginning to come off. Since the Union Budget was presented this month, there has been a palpable change in mood among investors, who in June led a mini-rally in the market as signs emerged one after another that the government led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi would be returning to power at the Centre. The Nifty and the Sensex are down roughly by about 5% since the Budget was presented. Foreign portfolio investors have pulled out over ₹2,500 crore in July, in contrast to June when FPIs made a net investment of close to ₹10,400 crore. Investors who were quite enthusiastic about the prospects of structural reforms that could boost India's economic growth under the second Modi government, have been quite disappointed by the Budget proposals. Among other things, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman imposed new taxes on the "super rich" and on companies that buy back their own shares, and raised the mandatory minimum public shareholding in listed companies (a move that is seen to be against the interests of promoters). Not surprisingly, investors have been taken aback by these measures, which are seen as increasing the burden on businesses.

Even more worrying is the signal that is sent across by the falling stock market. As stock prices discount the future, lacklustre market performance could well be a prelude to the further worsening of general economic conditions in the near term. There is already a significant downturn in sectors such as automobile with major companies reporting falling sales and earnings, and automobile dealers closing down showrooms and slashing jobs. The overall gross domestic product growth, which slipped below 6% to hit 5.8% in the fourth quarter, has also been slowly catching up with the bleak picture painted by high-frequency economic indicators for quite some time. The underlying turmoil in Indian markets becomes evident when one looks beyond the Sensex and the Nifty at the mid-cap and small-cap space that has witnessed significant value erosion since the start of 2018. The small-cap index has lost almost a third of its value since January 2018 while the mid-cap index has lost about a fifth of its value. Interestingly, many industrialists who were previously enthusiastic cheerleaders for the Narendra Modi government have turned vocal about their disappointment at the government not being bold enough in pushing through structural reforms needed to boost economic growth despite the majority it enjoys in Parliament. This suggests the deep sell-off in stocks over the last 18 months may well be a sign of disappointed investors voting with their feet.

Padding up for the next UNSC innings

India must give exceptional weightage to how all Security Council issues have an impact on the subcontinent



KRISHNAN SRINIVASAN

Despite the fact that India has served as a non-permanent member of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) more often than any country other than Japan from the Asia-Pacific Group, it is a matter of satisfaction and a tribute to Indian diplomacy that the Group unanimously decided this year to support India for an eighth second-year term. The elections are to take place in June next year. This means that India's election is assured and its term will run in the calendar years 2021 and 2022.

Fast-changing dynamics

To anticipate what issues will arise during India's tenure two and three years down the road, in the highest decision-making organ concerned with peace and conflict in the global organisation, is clearly problematic. The dynamics of international politics are fast moving.

The Washington consensus of the post-Soviet era, if it ever truly existed, has unravelled in the wake of three factors: tensions between major powers; proxy wars in West Asia, and widespread and scattershot use of threat and economic sanctions by the United States which pursues a militarised foreign policy with a military and intelligence presence in 150 coun-

tries, and 800 bases in 70 nations.

The rise of China and the bogey of Russian aggression are resisted through military and economic measures by Washington, which urges its usually reluctant European allies and others to follow suit. The race is on for supremacy in artificial intelligence, high technology and 5G which will have strategic significance in future decades. In this variable world of incessant jockeying for greater influence among big and medium powers, and where the centre ground for concepts such as strategic autonomy and equidistance has shrunk with rising polarisation between the major powers, there are nevertheless some constants. Whether or not the U.S. President Donald Trump is re-elected, the 'America First' doctrine will endure in some form since it has the support of a sizeable constituency in that country. This makes U.S. foreign policy more transactional, which in turn will generate less traction to the reform process within the UN and the expansion of permanent membership of the UNSC to which India aspires.

India can use its term as a non-permanent member to enhance its credentials as a constructive and responsible member of international society, but an upgrading of its status will have to wait until an indeterminate future date. It may be noted in passing that the inclusion of India, Japan, Germany and Brazil in the UNSC, to which package India is formally committed, will create an even greater imbalance in favour of the West versus the Rest in world affairs.

India is one of the world's big-



FILE PHOTO/AB

gest economies, which even the pessimists cannot deny. Accordingly, its voice resonates and is capable of making a significant contribution during its tenure by emphasising and strengthening multilateralism as a means of making the world safer.

Multipolar focus

India needs to uphold the objective of a multipolar world and counter existing trends towards unilateralism, ethno-centrism, protectionism and racial intolerance. It should seek to protect the World Trade Organisation from American attempts to undermine it, since the WTO's dispute mechanism is a resource for developing countries, as is the work of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, the UN Human Rights Council and other UN bodies despite the U.S. and a few other countries withdrawing support to them. India should attempt to make progress on the non-discriminatory elimination of weapons of mass destruction, protection of the environment against global warming, safeguarding outer space from weaponisation, and enhancing respect for diversity and plurality

The makings of a digital kleptocracy

When data is monetised, as the Economic Survey advocates, it becomes toxic and harms public interest



REETIKA KHERA

Last year, I was denied information requested under the Right to Information Act (RTI) 2005. I had sought the names of agencies empanelled by the Unique Identification Authority of India for an "image makeover" and the expenditure on it. It was denied by invoking the exemption clauses of Sections 8(d) and 8(j), respectively, i.e. the 'commercial confidence, trade secrets or intellectual property' and 'unwarranted invasion of the privacy of the individual'. Apart from the recent RTI Amendment Bill, 2019, there are many ways in which the RTI is being undermined.

In 2017, my co-author and I wanted to check what proportion of beneficiaries receive their pensions or rations using data provided through government portals, for example the National Food Security Act and State social security pensions. We found data without dictionaries, abbreviations that were not spelt out anywhere, figures that were inconsistent across different pages of the same website, and missing or broken links. It took us months to decipher public data. With several caveats about interpreting the results.

More recently, there has been public furore over the delay in the release of data, for example farmer suicides, suppression of data such as on employment, bungled migration data in the Census, and controversy over the methodology used to calculate GDP growth rates. These data are the backbone of policy making in India.

These three – information obtained through the RTI Act, administrative data and data collected by the statistical machinery of government – are examples of "data as a public good". But these are scarcely mentioned in a chapter so-titled in this year's Economic Survey. Instead, its focus is on the expanding digital footprint of people, falling costs of data generation and storage and the growing data mining industry. The thrust is on how to monetise these data, for example by selling data that we share with the government in trust. Another worrying suggestion is consolidation of our data across various ministries.

Under watch

The view in the Economic Survey is data utopic. In this data-fairlyland, (near) real-time data collection can be a sufficient condition for remedying gaps. If only the officers-in-charge could receive a weekly report about school toilets that do not function, "they can take the required action".

The day after I read this chapter of the Survey, a local Gujarati paper carried news of an e-memo being sent (thrice) to the owner of a scooter for a traffic offence; the scooter had been stolen 10 months ago. The police had spotted the scooter on a CCTV in various localities of the city but were unable to catch the culprits and return the scooter. This anecdote is at odds with the data-fairlyland conjured up in the Survey. In the real world, remedial action on non-functional toilets is more likely to be hampered by a lack of funds, of accountability or an officer, rather than lack of data. Having data/information can only take us that far.

Each time you click on a link, or even hover your mouse over one, your behaviour is being tracked and analysed to understand your preferences and needs and being sold to companies to enable "tar-



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geted" advertising. The fact that it is often not very well targeted is something its proponents prefer to ignore. As a single person I regularly receive SMSes which offer a solution to this problem: "Kya aapke pati aapki baat nahi maante? (does your husband not listen to you?)". Mistrargeting is not always accidental. "Predatory lending" thrives on it. For instance, ICICI functionaries sold insurance policies to unsuspecting customers such as poor Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme workers and Kisan Credit card holders whose premiums it was clear they would not be able to pay. The Survey's data utopia is misplaced.

Data can easily become toxic. The Survey does not tell us this. Ever wondered why you get SMSes offering you companionship ("aao meethi meethi baat karen"), cures for baldness ("ganjapan door karen") or strategies for losing weight ("vajjan ghatayen"). Somewhere along the line, your mobile number and/or email ID got sold in the data market. Even as most of us delete these, others get trapped. A former Chief Justice of India was duped of ₹1 lakh recently as a result of a fraudulent email. In Mumbai, identity fraud was perpetrated by accessing personal data (address, phone number and Aadhaar). In phishing attacks in Rourkela, Odisha, fraudsters called bank customers asking for Aadhaar details to update their ac-

count, but used it to siphon off money. The Survey treats personal data (such as date of birth, mobile numbers and addresses) the same way as data on rainfall, temperatures and road networks.

In the examples above, the fraudsters had to get access to people's data. The Survey is proposing that these be sold for a price. This has already started. In early July, the Union Minister of Road Transport and Highways, Nitin Gadkari, informed Parliament that the department had earned ₹65 crore from the sale of vehicle registration and licence data. Imagine the consequences of your health data being sold to private health insurance companies; or your data on your earnings being sold, or data being used in the way Cambridge Analytica did.

Pakistan and the terror angle

It bears repetition that the growth of India's economy and its democratic system are our best insurance policy; witness what China has been able to get away with in respect of the Uighurs. New Delhi's preoccupation with Pakistan finds its articulation in the subject of international and cross-border terrorism. Although the context is normally couched in general terms, no one is in doubt that the

Indian reference is to Pakistan. The question of an international convention against terrorism has been under discussion in UN committees for many years, and the UNSC will not be the forum for headway on this. India could use its presence on the UNSC's sanctions subcommittee to proscribe Pakistan-based militant groups and individuals. But experience shows that this is frankly of dubious benefit when weighed against the effort expended.

New Delhi will feel in the next few years that its time has come for a major role on the world stage, but big player status will be difficult without India being pivotal in the South Asian region. In this respect, India's regional status is insufficiently credible. Accordingly, on all issues before the UNSC, India must give exceptional weightage as to how they will have an impact on the Indian subcontinent.

Demosthenes in Fourth Century BC Athens stated that diplomats had "no battleships at their disposal... their weapons are words and opportunities". India's presence on the UNSC will present opportunities to enhance the country's reputation. American policies in India's near-neighbourhood towards West Asia, Russia and China present challenges that can be met only with great skill and delicate balance. India should aim to end its eighth term on the Council with its merit- and legality-based judgments intact and widely respected.

Krishnan Srinivasan is a former Foreign Secretary

ing for jobs, getting health insurance or whether you were speeding, we cannot question them.

Some believe that a data protection and privacy law can, even will, take care of these concerns. Indeed, the Survey merrily assumes such laws to be in place. Given the government's track record on Aadhaar, these laws are unlikely to protect citizen's rights adequately. Further, privacy and data protection laws will face unique implementation challenges in India. This is on account of low levels of tech-digital and legal literacy combined with pre-existing social inequalities which directly bear upon power relations between us (as citizens/consumers) and them (government/corporations).

Jumping on the bandwagon

Even where such laws have been put in place, those societies/economies are grappling with the fallout of corporations whose practices can best be described as "digital kleptocracy". To understand this, take the example of lending and credit scores. The literature documents unscrupulous use of algorithms to identify vulnerable targets such as search histories of single African American mothers in the United States that are used to sell them home or education loans which it is clear they are unlikely to be able to repay. Thus, digital kleptocracy is a means by which rich tech companies mine poor people's data, in fact, steal; in most cases the person is unaware of their data being harvested and used for profit. What the Economic Survey advocates is not only for the government to facilitate such practices but also climb aboard this bandwagon of digital kleptocrats.

Reetika Khera is an Associate Professor at the Indian Institute of Management, Ahmedabad

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.

Cat count

While it is a matter of pride that India's tiger population is nearly 3,000 strong in the backdrop of shrinking forests, we cannot afford to ignore reports of growing man-animal conflict (Page 1, "India has nearly 3,000 tigers, up by a third from 2014 count", July 30). The 'encounter' in Maharashtra last year with Avni the tigress and, more recently, two incidents, the first where a tigress and her cubs were poisoned at Chandrapur, Maharashtra and the second where another tigress was beaten to death by villagers in Pilibhit, Uttar Pradesh, a

few days ago, should set alarm bells ringing. Steps must be taken to find a solution to growing encroachments in wild habitats. The importance of wildlife protection has to be inculcated from primary school level.

M. PRADYU,
Thalikkavu, Kannur, Kerala

■ At last India's national animal has got its due. But what is disturbing is the lack of awareness of the dwindling population of Asiatic lions in Gujarat's Gir forest, which is the last bastion for this species. I hope the authorities concerned will now take

necessary action to protect this equally magnificent animal before it is too late.

C.R. GOPALARATHNAM,
Thillathanam, Thanjavur, Tamil Nadu

■ The tiger could be out of danger, but we must admit that we are failing to conserve other endangered animals. Not a day goes by without reports of elephants being killed in various ways. The problem seems to be more pronounced in West Bengal, Odisha and Assam. Development in Chhattisgarh and Odisha in the form of mining companies is creating disturbances resulting in human-elephant conflict. Tiger conservation must be

an umbrella move to save other species too.

MEJARI MALLIKARJUNA,
Nadigadda, Chittoor, Andhra Pradesh

Unnau case

The Unnau rape case is one where the Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister must ensure justice. The prime accused is an MLA from the BJP, the party in power. CM Yogi Adityanath has done nothing to restore people's faith when it comes to maintaining law and order. Civilised societies cannot allow the fathers of rape survivors to die in mysterious circumstances or have the survivors meeting with a suspicious accident.

Kuldeep Sengar is an embarrassment for the BJP.

MEGHANA A.,
Shell Cove, NSW, Australia

Open House

The joy of reading a newspaper or a book cannot be substituted by online reading. It would be worthwhile to do whatever is possible to ignite the passion for reading among the next generation as participants in

CORRECTIONS & CLARIFICATIONS:

Figure mismatch: The front-page story on tiger census (July 30, 2019) put the number of tigers in India at 2,967. It is correct. The accompanying graphic erroneously said it was 2,976.

A related inside page report on top tiger reserves talked about sanctuaries in 80 States. It should have been 18 States.

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Focussing on the critical years of a child’s life

What the draft National Education Policy omits in its chapter on early childhood care and education



The draft National Education Policy starts its opening sentence with a hitherto little-known fact: “The learning process for a child commences immediately at birth.” Many believe that children start learning only in school. It is true that language and numerical proficiency, and analytical skills, are attained in school, but the foundation for such a learning capacity is laid much earlier, and it happens without our knowledge. Higher cognitive functions attain their peak of growth between the ages of one and three – before school education begins.

However, the next sentence of the draft says, “Evidence from neuroscience shows that over 85% of a child’s cumulative brain development occurs prior to the age of 6”. This is grossly inaccurate because the global focus for optimal brain development is on the first 1,000 days of a person’s life (*The Lancet*, 2007). Stretching the window of opportunity to six years is a mistake. This wrong understanding leads to misplaced priorities for a nation to boost its human development potential.

Laying the foundation
These 1,000 days are when rapid and dramatic changes take place in the brain and fundamental cognitive and interpersonal skills are developed. The centres for vision and hearing in the cerebrum develop between the second and fifth months of one’s life. In these areas, the formation of nerve connections peaks by the fourth month, and is followed by a gradual retraction or “blooming and pruning” until the end of the preschool period. Similarly, the centres for language and speech proficiency develop maximally between the sixth and tenth month even before the child’s speech and language makes any sense to us. Even as a toddler, a child’s spoken vocabulary increases significantly.
Pregnancy and infancy are important periods for the formation of the brain. This is when the foundation is



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laid for the development of cognitive, motor and socio-emotional skills. Apart from genetic determinants, environmental determinants play an equally critical role in shaping personality. In essence, an infant is born with the capacity to learn, but how much and what all the infant can learn is influenced by the environment.

The drafting committee of the National Education Policy should have consulted a paediatrician or developmental neurologist on what needs to be done in the first 1,000 days. The policy has rightly categorised early childhood education into two parts. The first focuses on children below the age of three years; the second on children aged three to six years. While Anganwadi centres target children in the second category, the section on Early Childhood Care and Education up to three years is sketchy and inadequate. It only mentions health and nutrition services for both mothers and children. Take-home ration that is provided for children up to three years by the Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) scheme only helps physical growth; it does not provide psychosocial stimulation for development. That responsibility is left entirely to the parents or family members.

The section on expansion and strengthening of facilities for early childhood education states that “the

care and educational requirements of 0-3-year-olds in the region would continue to be handled by neighbourhood Anganwadis”. That is a tall order. Children below three are not enrolled in the daily services of the ICDS centre. They stay at home.

Filling the gap
This gross design defect in the architecture of the ICDS has existed since its inception in 1975. Policy directions and strategies for “care concept with early stimulation for child development” are lacking in the ICDS. The solution is to have an additional worker trained in care and stimulation for child development in every Anganwadi. New workers will impart psychosocial stimulation for the development of the brain through five sensory organs of the body, i.e., eye, skin, ear, nose and tongue. The intensity and frequency of flow of these signals during early childhood determines the level of intelligence and mental development attained. The baby’s explorative learning and storage of such inputs into the brain takes place every moment of her early life. Her storage capacity is expandable and enormous. The baby also derives analytical conclusions based on which she develops value systems and character.

Apart from breastfeeding, cleaning the baby, giving oil massages and applying lotion adds to her under-

standing of love and care through tactile and pressure stimulation. Carrying the baby and rocking her provides her security.

From two months of age, the baby starts to interact socially. Playing with the baby with toys or by using facial expressions improves her social interaction skills. The baby recognises where sounds originate, the voice of her mother, and her own name by six months of age.

Showing the baby the colours of the sky, flying birds, fluttering butterflies and domestic animals improves visual stimulation. Songs, soft music and sweet talk stimulate the auditory areas of the brain. Making the child feel the softness of flowers, leaves and cheeks adds to her sensory learning. These are all not a waste of time, but good investment for a child’s development.

By the time the child is two or three, she will be asking a volley of questions: who, when, what, why, how. Often the questions and answers are repeated but the child does not get bored. Stories stretch their imagination.

Parents and caregivers do not have sufficient time earmarked for the care of their children. More than money, they must invest time for the development of the child. Working parents offload this responsibility to grandparents or domestic workers or leave their children in care centres or crèches. But these places don’t have qualified or trained staff to provide scientific care.

There is no government system to take care of babies of poor families or of mothers who go to work for a daily wage. The experimental project of Fulwari, or community-managed crèches in Chhattisgarh, is one answer to this gap. Policymakers may have a look at Fulwari for replication.

The 86th Amendment of the Constitution 2002 and Section 11 of the Right to Education Act also mandate public provision of early childhood care and education. Interestingly the policy states: “Universal access to quality Early Childhood Education is perhaps the best investment that India can make for our children’s and our nation’s future”.

K.R. Antony is a former Health and Nutrition Specialist, UNICEF, India, and former Director, State Health Resource Centre, Chhattisgarh

A leaf out of Yunnan’s book

The province in China offers some ideas for the Northeast in the areas of connectivity, border trade and ecotourism



ASHISH KUNDR

The Northeast, positioned as the gateway to ASEAN, lies at the heart of India’s ‘Act East Policy’. Development of the region, so far a domestic policy concern, has now been aligned with national strategic and economic objectives. The underlying assumption is that trade across the borders will usher in economic prosperity to this hitherto neglected frontier. It would be useful to draw comparisons with China’s approach in Yunnan, a ‘bridgehead’ to South and Southeast Asia, as part of its ambitious Belt and Road Initiative.

Similarities and differences
Yunnan and the Northeast have much in common: populations of a similar size, mountainous regions, diverse indigenous communities, a rich natural resource base, huge hydropower potential and historically lower levels of development. Yunnan shares a 4,000 km-long international border with Myanmar, Laos and Vietnam. The Northeast abuts China, Myanmar and Bangladesh over a length of 5,000 km. Yet, behind these apparent similarities lie stark contrasts in economic reality.

The GDP of Yunnan is about \$265 billion, of which tourism contributes nearly a quarter. Trade across the land border of Yunnan with ASEAN is in the range of \$14 billion, half of which is with Myanmar. In contrast, the combined GSDP of the Northeast is approximately \$65 billion. A restrictive regulatory regime (Inner Line Permit for domestic tourists and Restricted Area Permit for foreigners) poses entry barriers. Indian border trade with Myanmar (through the sole functional custom station at Moreh) has hovered around \$50 million for several years. This calls for a closer look at three crucial aspects: connectivity, border trade and ecotourism.

The Northeast is catching up in air, rail and highway connectivity, though it lags behind Yunnan. Kunming, the headquarter of Yunnan, has a flourishing international airport. For the first time, all eight States of the Northeast have at least one functional civilian airport, with efficient internal connectivity via Kolkata and Guwahati. International flights to Dhaka have commenced from Guwahati recently, and flights to Bangkok and four more cities of ASEAN are in the pipeline under the UDAN scheme. Yunnan has a rail network connecting cities like Beijing,

Shanghai and Guangzhou. The rail footprint in the Northeast is weak, though the Railway Ministry has announced its intent to ensure internal rail connectivity by March 2022. Yunnan has an impressive highway network providing city to port connectivity. The Northeast has seen a spurt of public investments in national highways and bridges, with remarkable results in the last few years, though internal roads remain a challenge.

Yunnan has a well crafted trade strategy, while border trade across the Northeast has been sluggish. The Ruili Border Economic Zone is the main hub for facilitating Yunnan’s trade with Myanmar. Ruili city has transformed from being a sleepy border town to a thriving economic zone. China is now aspiring to develop an economic zone with Myanmar between Ruili and Muse. The project aims to develop core infrastructure and invite private investment for manufacturing, processing, trading and warehousing. The Zokhawthar land customs station in Mizoram has fragmented infrastructure and barely sees any formal trade. Trade across the integrated check post at Moreh in Manipur has shown promise. Absence of robust internal connectivity, infrastructure for logistics, warehousing and processing has hampered meaningful trade. Ambitious transnational projects, such as the Kaladan multi-modal transit transport project, have also been slow to take off on account of niggling land acquisition problems.

Building blocks
Yunnan has experimented with some imaginative approaches for ecotourism embracing local communities. Ecotourism in Xishuangbanna has been anchored in ‘ecological villages’, showcasing the culture, architecture, customs and cuisine of the Dai ethnic community. The villagers partner through land leasing arrangements with companies, allowing tourists to catch a glimpse into the Dai way of life. Nagaland has made a good beginning with the Hornbill festival, but there are opportunities in other States too. Following this path would help encourage private investment in tourism infrastructure. Tourism revolving around ecology, culture and ethnicity would ensure that there is no disruption in the tribal way of life and contribute to the economy.

A discernible focus on the development of the Northeast has yielded results in the last few years. Now is the time to empower the States to build blocks. Taking a leaf out of the experience of Yunnan could provide a template for the transformation of this frontier.

Ashish Kundra is an IAS officer currently working with the Government of Mizoram . Views are personal

The Odisha model

Other States could take a cue from Odisha, which has empowered women politically and financially

ANANYA BEHERA

It is widely acknowledged that women’s empowerment helps in the achievement of critical development goals. If there are a greater number of women in politics, there is a concomitant increase in the level of attention given to gender-specific policy and planning. However, the number of women taking leadership roles in India is rather small compared to the global average. The representation of women MPs in the 17th Lok Sabha has seen an improvement from 11% in 2014 to 14% in 2019, but it is still lower than the world average of 24.3%. In 2019, 715 women candidates contested the Lok Sabha election, while the number of men who contested stood at 7,334.

Odisha may be seen as one of the underdeveloped States in the country and a laggard in terms of some human development indicators. However, other States could take a cue from the Odisha government’s model for women’s empowerment. The Biju Janata Dal (BJD)-led State government was among the first to reserve 50% of seats in Panchayati Raj institutions for women. Further, Odisha Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik nominated women for one-third of the seats in Lok Sabha election. Thus, seven candidates out of 21 fielded by the party for the 2019 election were women. The success rate among the women candidates was higher than for men, as five out of seven won the elections.

The power of self-help groups
Besides empowering women politically, the BJD government has been organising women into self-help groups in order to empower them economically ever since the BJD assumed power two decades ago. As of now, Odisha has six lakh self-help groups with seven million women under its flagship ‘Mission Shakti’ programme. The programme aims at empowering women by helping them start income-generating activities. The self-help groups are linked to the Odisha Livelihoods Mission and Odisha Rural Development and Marketing Society. Members of the self-help groups are encouraged to sell products at fairs and exhibitions

organised by the State round the year. This gives them an opportunity to travel across different parts of the State and gain greater exposure. The State government had announced an interest-free loan of ₹3 lakh in January 2019 to each of the self-help groups. This amount was increased to ₹5 lakh just before the general election. The Women and Child Development Department has been rechristened as the Women and Child Development and Mission Shakti Department.

The nomination of Pramila Bisoi, a self-help group leader, by Mr. Patnaik as a candidate for a Lok Sabha constituency might have come across as a surprise to many. But it could be seen



LINGARAJ PANDA

as a deliberate and strategic move to bring self-help group members to the forefront of public life. The decision also sent the signal that rural women can also aspire to reach higher echelons in politics.

Many sops
In a bid to win the trust of women and also to empower them, the Naveen Patnaik government has announced several sops like smartphones, award of work contracts, and higher entitlements in the State’s health insurance scheme, arguably superior to the national level scheme, Ayushman Bharat. The State government has announced an accident insurance scheme for all members of self-help groups. It is no wonder that all this has paid rich dividends and helped propel the BJD to its fifth straight term.

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DATA POINT

Why India migrates

In India, most men migrate for work while most women migrate after marriage. However, some States, especially those in the northeast, don’t follow this trend. By **Sumant Sen and Niharika Pandya**

A Migration for work among male migrants and relocation after marriage among female migrants are relatively low in most of the northeastern States
B After the Northeast, the States in the western and southern regions witnessed relatively lower migration rates of men for work. The States in the south also recorded low migration rates of women post marriage
C The eastern States recorded some of the highest male migration rates for work
D In every State, < 1% of female migrants moved for education. On the contrary, in all the States >1% men migrants moved for education. Relocation for education was more pronounced in the northeastern States
Close to 10% male migrants in Meghalaya moved out due to marriage while Manipur saw the highest female migration rates for work
Source: Census 2011

The table shows the % of migrants in each cohort. For instance, 26.1% of J&K’s total male migrants moved out for work while 49.51% of U.P.’s female migrants moved after marriage

State	% of male migrants—			% of female migrants—		
	Work	Marriage	Education	Work	Marriage	Education
J&K	26.1	0.98	3.91	3.32	35.88	<1
Himachal	43.39	1.45	3.63	3.32	53.18	<1
Punjab	37.33	1.66	1.92	3.15	59.99	<1
Uttarakhand	53.17	1.15	2.46	3.07	55.75	<1
Haryana	38.21	2	2.19	2.15	68.76	<1
Delhi	33.3	1.4	2.11	3.98	45.94	<1
U.P.	55.82	1.04	1.49	4.04	49.51	<1
Sikkim	29.35	2.15	13.02	4.29	56.55	<1
Arunachal	22.36	0.91	14.56	3.16	40.39	<1
Nagaland	24.95	1.34	7.34	4.82	37.24	<1
Manipur	32.02	1.23	14.96	12.36	23.33	<1
Mizoram	12.49	0.91	6.35	4.15	12.91	<1
Tripura	31.92	1.71	4.68	2.84	54.53	<1
Meghalaya	29.17	9.55	5.34	4.87	50.25	<1
Assam	43.34	2.31	3.3	6.57	47.14	<1
W.B.	54.56	2.14	1.89	4.48	63	<1
Jharkhand	51.09	3.54	3.72	4.09	70.06	<1
Bihar	54.97	1.11	2.48	4.11	49.28	<1
Odisha	57.62	1.75	1.46	6.11	57.76	<1
Chhattisgarh	46.61	3.01	2.26	8.93	57.7	<1
M.P.	45.35	2.53	2.02	4.12	65.44	<1
Goa	30.11	1.79	3.93	5.09	53.38	<1
Rajasthan	39.9	1.67	1.63	2.86	60.14	<1
Gujarat	32.84	1.95	2.49	2.99	50.94	<1
Maharashtra	32.65	2.14	1.43	3.67	52.9	<1
A.P. (united)	42.27	2.98	3.18	5.72	51.06	<1
Karnataka	35.99	3.41	1.61	5	41.6	<1
Kerala	42.96	2.34	4.81	9.17	36.86	<1
Tamil Nadu	42.95	5.03	1.53	7.23	44.42	<1

The **Hindu**.
FROM THE ARCHIVES
FIFTY YEARS AGO JULY 31, 1969
Nixon visits Saigon

The American President Mr. Richard Nixon paid a fleeting five and three-quarter hour visit to Viet Nam to-day [July 30] which included nearly four hours of consultations with Government leaders in Saigon. He was the first American President to visit the capital city [Saigon] since the war started. Mr. Nixon, accompanied by his wife, flew in from Bangkok and was taken to the Presidential Palace in Central Saigon by a fleet of helicopters. Amid the strictest security precautions Saigon has ever seen, Mr. Nixon had one-and-a-half-hour-long talks with President Nguyen Van Thieu, a working lunch and 75 minutes in private talks with Vice-President Nguyen Cao Ky. Just before leaving, Mr. Nixon delivered a speech on the steps of Independence Palace in which he said: “We have gone as far as we can or should go in opening the door to peace and it is time for the other side to respond.” Twenty minutes before the President arrived in Saigon, all international telecommunications were cut off and were not restored until well after he had left. In his speech, which was broadcast live over South Viet Namese Radio, Mr. Nixon said Mr. Thieu’s latest initiative to hold elections with the Viet Cong was an offer “as generous as any ever made in the history of warfare.”

A HUNDRED YEARS AGO JULY 31, 1919.
Punjab Riots.

In the course of a statement to the press, Swami Shradhanand, vice president of Seva Samiti, praying for funds to undertake the organisation of relief of sufferers from recent disturbances in the Punjab says [as reported from Lahore]: The Samiti has so far got about Rs. 6000, almost the whole of which has already been pledged and every fresh case of relief imposed additional liability on the Samiti. The rush of persons seeking relief is so great that unless a prompt response is made to the appeal there is a grave risk of our work being hampered if not stopped. I therefore earnestly request all generous donors to immediately remit their contributions to me. While the Punjab was passing through a crisis, other provinces could only look on with helpless sympathy. An opportunity is now offered to various provinces to come to the rescue of the distressed in the Punjab and by their generous support show their profound sympathy with our fellow countrymen in the Punjab in their hour of need.