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TELLING NUMBERS

60 elephants killed on tracks in 3 years, nearly half in NF Rly

ELEPHANTS KILLED IN EACH RAILWAY ZONE, 2016-18

Northeast Frontier	28
South Eastern	13
Southern	5
Northern	4
North Eastern	4
South Western	4
East Coast	1
South East Central	1

2019 5 elephants killed until June 20

Source: Based on data tabled by Ministry of Railways in Lok Sabha

A TOTAL of 60 elephants died in railway accidents between 2016-18, and 5 in 2019 until June 20, according to figures tabled by the Railways Ministry in Lok Sabha on Wednesday. The number of deaths was 19 and 15 in the first two years, then rose to 26 in 2018.

Northeast Frontier Railway accounted for the highest number of deaths at 28 during 2016-18, or nearly half the total. In each of the three years, the number of elephants killed on in this railway zone, at 9, 10 and 9 respectively, was higher than in any other zone. Of the five elephants killed this year, one was in NF Railway zone and two each in East Coast and Northern Railways.

Railways Minister Piyush Goyal tabled the data in reply to a question on animals, particularly elephants, killed on railway tracks. He presented

separate data that showed over 32,000 animals other than elephants, including lions, leopards, buffalo, and cows, were killed during 2016-18, and another 3,479 in 2019 until June 20. From 7,945 in 2016, the number reached highs of 11,683, and 12,625 in the next two years. West Central Railway (11,489) and North Central Railway (10,927) accounted for the highest fatality counts.

About measures to control the trend, the ministry said an action plan has been formulated by the zonal railways along with the Ministry of Environment and Forests, which includes imposing speed limits, sensitisation of personnel, time-bound clearance of vegetation on sides of railway tracks within railway land, new ramps and underpasses for animals, and fencing.

OTHER ANIMALS SKILLED ON TRACKS

Railway	2016	2017	2018	2019*
Northern	457	445	351	34
North Central	2,283	3,818	4,826	902
North Eastern	649	932	1,146	442
North Western	1,080	1,222	1,476	603
South Central	353	413	460	110
South East Central	125	225	393	118
South Western	0	0	2	4
Western Railway	24	39	45	7
West Central	2,974	4,589	3,926	1,259
Total	7,945	11,683	12,625	3,479

* Until June 20

THIS WORD MEANS ARTIFICIAL GRAVITY

Spacecraft creating own gravity is staple of science fiction. Now, attempts to create it in the laboratory

IN FILMS such as *2001: A Space Odyssey* and *The Martian*, imaginary spacecraft generate their own gravity by spinning around in space. This is artificial gravity, which so far as existed only in science fiction. Now, a team from the University of Colorado at Boulder is working on making such technology a reality.

The researchers are examining ways to design revolving systems that might fit within a room of future space stations and even moon bases. Astronauts could crawl into these rooms for just a few hours a day to get their daily doses of gravity, the university said in a statement.

The statement describes how lead researcher Torin Stark lay down on a metal

platform, part of a machine called a short-radius centrifuge. The platform begins to rotate around the room, gathering more and more speed. The angular velocity generated by the centrifuge pushes Clark's feet toward the base of the platform — almost as if he was standing under his own weight. The university described this as is the closest that scientists on Earth can get to how artificial gravity in space might work.

The group hopes that its work will one day help keep astronauts healthy as they venture into space, allowing humans to travel farther from Earth than ever before and stay away longer.

Source: University of Colorado at Boulder

JOHNSON T A
BENGALURU, JULY 3

ON JULY 1, two Congress MLAs in Karnataka — Ramesh Jharkiholi from Gokak constituency in Belagavi region and Anand Singh from Vijayanagar constituency in Ballari region — tendered their resignations. Technically, the resignations are yet to be accepted by the Speaker of the Assembly. Yet, they have raised fresh questions about the stability of the Congress-JDS coalition government in the state.

What has changed?

The resignations imply that Congress tally in the 224-member strong Assembly falls from 79 (including the Speaker) to 77. While this reduction does not, by itself, rob the current government of a majority — because the coalition enjoys a simple majority thanks to the support of 37 JD(S) MLAs as well as 2 Independents and 1 BSP MLA — yet it signals an opportunity where the principal opposition, the BJP, can turn the tables on the government. One key change brought about by the two resignations is that the effective simple majority mark in the House falls from 113 seats to 112. That's because the overall strength of the assembly is just 222 as against 224 earlier.

How the BJP can upstage the incumbent coalition?

Imagine a scenario where another 13 MLAs belonging to the coalition resign. In such a case, the Congress-JDS coalition tally would fall to 104 seats but more significantly, the overall strength of the House would fall to 209. This, in turn, would mean that the effective simple majority mark would then be 105 seats — exactly what the BJP already has. The BJP would be then able to form the government without being accused of engineering any defections.

How likely is this scenario?

The state BJP, led by former chief minister B S Yeddyurappa, has been keen to dislodge the coalition and form its own government. But the party's central leadership is more intent on playing the waiting game and allow infighting and contradictions in the coalition to bring down the government. While there are as many as 20 disgruntled MLAs in the coalition, especially the Congress party, very few are eager to take the final step of quitting. That's because no one wants another round of elections and the related expenses that doing so entails. The MLAs who have

SUSHANT SINGH
NEW DELHI, JULY 3

THE CONTROVERSY over the Finance Ministry's decision to tax the disability pension of armed forces personnel, which had been criticised by veterans, took a surprising turn on Tuesday when Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman made public an unsigned note that showed it was done on the recommendation of Army Headquarters. The Army note was put out on Twitter by her office, along with a message from her calling it the "response of the Armed Forces on the issue of taxability of disability pension".

What govt notified

In a notification dated June 24, the Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT) under the Finance Ministry had said that "such tax exemption will be available only to armed forces personnel who have been invalidated from service on account of bodily disability attributable to or aggravated by such service and not to personnel who have been retired on superannuation or otherwise".

This created an uproar among veterans who called it against the interests of the armed



The Karnataka Assembly; ruling alliance holds a slender majority. Wikipedia

quit — Ramesh Jharkiholi and Anand Singh — are known to have the money and muscle power to win elections again from their seats. However, this is not the case with most other MLAs. Yeddyurappa, who initially solicited support from rebel MLAs by expressing intent to face fresh elections, has now changed his stance and repeatedly said that a new government will be formed by the BJP without dissolving the current Assembly.

For its part, the Congress-JD(S) coalition is fighting tooth and nail to preserve its government. It has carried out several tactical moves to prevent the BJP from getting into a position of numerical strength in the Assembly. For instance, the coalition recently gave ministerial posts to two independent MLAs to make it harder for the BJP to undermine the coalition. The coalition also appointed a rebel Congress MLA, K Sudhakar, as head of the state pollution board. It has also dangled the carrot of ministerial portfolios through a reshuffle within a couple of months.

Why did the two MLAs quit the Congress?

Ramesh Jharkiholi, a Congressman of long standing, had been angry with the party for over 10 months on account of a dispute with Congress leader D K Shivakumar. The Gokak MLA, who was a minister for a few months in the state cabinet, was eased out after a public spat with Shivakumar and his close associate MLA Lakshmi Hebbalkar (a former state Congress women's unit presi-

forces personnel. The Opposition raised the matter in Lok Sabha on June 28, where Defence Minister Rajnath Singh said the government would look into these changes.

It eventually led to the posting of the Army note by Sitharaman. The note says certain "unscrupulous personnel" have found leverage in the existing system for seeking financial gains through their disabilities. The Army, it says, is concerned about personnel who are boarded out because of disability and need additional financial support. It states that the broad-banding and higher compensation awarded for disability with tax exemption has over the years led to rise in personnel seeking disability, even for lifestyle diseases. "There should be no segregation amongst genuinely disabled personnel. At the same time, those who have found the leverages in the existing system for seeking financial gains through their disabilities, need to be scrutinised and taken to task, wherever necessitated," the note added.

Arguing that remuneration alone cannot compensate for the disabilities of those injured in battle, the note said the service must continue to provide them necessary support during service and after superannuation. "This aspect is being exploited by unscrupu-

lent) over the control of Belagavi region. Jharkiholi was considered to be the leader of a group of eight to 10 Congress rebels before the rebellion was quelled in January. He was replaced with his brother Satish Jharkiholi in the Cabinet last year. The Jharkiholis are wealthy businessmen with interests in the sugar sector in north Karnataka. Ramesh Jharkiholi is, however, reported to have run up considerable debts in his businesses.

Anand Singh is a former BJP MLA who joined the Congress ahead of the Assembly polls in May 2018. He is a wealthy businessman with interests in iron ore mining in Ballari region. He was arrested by the CBI following investigations in large-scale illegal mining in Ballari during the tenure of the B S Yeddyurappa-led BJP government between 2008-2011. Singh, along with former BJP legislator G Janardhan Reddy, is still under trial in the illegal mining case. Singh's business suffered losses after his firm was blacklisted for illegal mining and a lease for an iron ore mine was cancelled by the state government.

Will Karnataka face mid-term polls?

Even though the Congress-JD(S) coalition has been reassuring that the government will complete its full term, it is quite apparent that both parties are also preparing for mid-term polls. For one, both parties have kicked off exercises to revamp their internal party organisational structures. The Karnataka Pradesh Congress Committee has been dissolved with



Anand Singh R Jharkiholi

FACT: 2 CONGRESS MLAS RESIGN

Effective House strength	222
Majority mark	112
Congress + allies	117
BJP	105

SCENARIO: ALLIANCE LOSES 13 MORE

Effective House strength	209
Majority mark	105
Congress + allies	104
BJP	105

only the president and the working president being retained. Congress leader Siddaramaiah is tipped to revive a popular movement to shore up support among backward castes, Dalits and minorities (or Ahinda). The Ahinda movement is widely believed to have helped the Congress come to power in the state with a clear majority in 2013. Some Congress leaders would not mind having the BJP in power for a while in order to allay the damage done to the image of the Congress thanks to its opportunistic coalition with the JDS.

The JD(S) has held multiple meetings of its office-bearers as well as past and present election candidates in an effort to galvanise the party at the grassroots. Chief Minister H D Kumaraswamy has begun carrying out a village stay programme to increase his popularity in the hinterland in the north of the state where the JD(S) has lost ground in the past decade. JD(S) leaders are also planning *padayatras* to reach out to people.

Notwithstanding these efforts, both coalition partners are also wary of the BJP repeating its spectacular performance in the state in the recent Lok Sabha polls if mid-term polls were held. By the same measure, the BJP is confident that it would be able to emulate its stellar performance — it won 26 of 28 Lok Sabha seats — on the back of a Narendra Modi wave. The Lok Sabha results show that the BJP established leads in 177 of the 224 Assembly constituencies in the polls held in April this year.

Why disability pension tax upsets veterans

forces personnel. The Opposition raised the matter in Lok Sabha on June 28, where Defence Minister Rajnath Singh said the government would look into these changes.

It eventually led to the posting of the Army note by Sitharaman. The note says certain "unscrupulous personnel" have found leverage in the existing system for seeking financial gains through their disabilities. The Army, it says, is concerned about personnel who are boarded out because of disability and need additional financial support. It states that the broad-banding and higher compensation awarded for disability with tax exemption has over the years led to rise in personnel seeking disability, even for lifestyle diseases. "There should be no segregation amongst genuinely disabled personnel. At the same time, those who have found the leverages in the existing system for seeking financial gains through their disabilities, need to be scrutinised and taken to task, wherever necessitated," the note added.

Arguing that remuneration alone cannot compensate for the disabilities of those injured in battle, the note said the service must continue to provide them necessary support during service and after superannuation. "This aspect is being exploited by unscrupu-

lous personnel, who have gained from disability benefits provided to disabled soldiers," the note said. The note ends stating that the trend "if not checked at this stage, is a cause for worry", as the Army cannot have large number of personnel with "medical disabilities in the rank and file, when the security challenge to the nation are on the rise".

The other kind of disability

Disability benefits are of two kinds, both permissible under the rules: war injury pension attributable to operational service, and normal disability pension for any disability. The latter includes the so-called 'lifestyle diseases' which can be attributable to or aggravated by stress and strain of service, as entitled under the rules.

While the Army note dismisses the latter as not being favourable to the service, the effect of the stress of military service on a soldier's health is a universally recognised phenomenon. Lawyer and expert in veteran affairs, Navdeep Singh, says that "disability rules in India and other democracies are balanced and work on the presumption of a military service-disability connection".

His contention is based on peer-reviewed research in other democracies that have

shown a direct linkage between military service and so-called lifestyle diseases. These include hypertension, cardiovascular problems and diabetes; these militaries seek to make the lives of their troops more comfortable — as seen in rising payouts for their loss of health. Research also shows a connection between military service and PTSD.

Singh, author of *Maimed by the System* and a member of the expert committee formed on veterans' issues by Defence Minister Manohar Parrikar, wrote on Twitter that the Army's note "not only berates persons with disabilities but is also contrary to rules on the subject, contemptuous to Court rulings, disrespectful of Commissions and Committees which have examined this and against the stated position of the government". He argued that the government should not have taken cognisance of the note as "it unnecessarily creates doubts in the minds of well-meaning personalities".

Other military veterans have a more emotional response, terming the Army note "unbelievable" and "utterly shocking". They argue that if there is a misuse of certain provision, the Army is entitled to take suitable action to prevent that, including disciplinary action against those faking disability instead of punishing everyone.

The Church dispute in Kerala: what SC ordered, government failed to do

SHAJU PHILIP
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, JULY 3

ON TUESDAY, the Supreme Court pulled up the Kerala Chief Secretary over the state government's failure to implement its order of July 3, 2017, on a dispute over the ownership of churches and their properties between Orthodox and Jacobite factions of Malankara Christian Church in Kerala.

The Church groups

The Christian population of Kerala comprises Catholic, Jacobite Syrian, Orthodox Syrian, Mar Thoma, Church of South India, Dalit Christians and Pentecostal Churches/groups. The Catholics form 61% of the Kerala's Christian population.

The Malankara Church is a prominent non-Catholic Christian community. The disputing factions, Jacobite and Orthodox Syrian, constitute 15.9% of the Christian population.

The Malankara Church first split in 1912, into the Jacobite and Orthodox groups. The two Churches reunified in 1959, but the truce lasted only until 1972-73. Since then, the two factions have been engaged in battle over ownership of churches and their wealth. Attempts to settle ownership disputes out-of-court have often failed. Faction members have often clashed on the streets too, and both sides have taken custody of several churches depending on which one has local muscle power.

The court ruling

In a dispute running for decades, the

Supreme Court had heard several petitions. The ruling of 2017 came on a petition moved by the Orthodox Church, which demanded that all churches under the Malankara Church be governed as per the Church Constitution of 1934.

Under this, they claimed their right over the management of St Mary's Church, Piravom. In 2017, the Supreme Court upheld the demand of the Orthodox Church. As per that order, the ownership of St Mary's Church at Piravom in Ernakulam district, which is currently held by the Jacobite Church, should be handed over to Orthodox Church, and so should the ownership of 1,064 other churches in dispute.

The state government failed to implement the court order, and the Orthodox Church then approached the Kerala High



St Mary's Church in Piravom, now under control of the Jacobite faction of Malankara Church. Under SC order of 2017, ownership should be handed over to the Orthodox group.

Court seeking a direction to do so. The government made some attempts, which could not move forward because of resistance by

members of the Jacobite Church. On one occasion, the government told the court that if police intervened, there may be bloodshed, loss of life by self-immolation, suicide, or breakdown of law and order. The government also tried an out-of-court settlement, but neither of the two factions budged from its stand.

Meanwhile, the Orthodox Church approached the High Court seeking police protection for its members at two churches that are controlled by the rival group. As the High Court declined to give an order for permanent police protection, the Orthodox group moved the Supreme Court seeking a direction to the state to implement its order of 2017. It was on this petition that the Supreme Court has now pulled up the state government.



WORDLY WISE
NOW, I AM BECOME DEATH,
THE DESTROYER OF WORLDS.
— ROBERT OPPENHEIMER

The Indian **EXPRESS**
FOUNDED BY
RAMNATH GOENKA
BECAUSE THE TRUTH INVOLVES US ALL

THE PM’S MESSAGE

His reprimand to Akash Vijayvargiya — if acted upon— promises to dent a dismal pattern of impunity

PRIME MINISTER NARENDRA MODI’S rebuke to Akash Vijayvargiya, reportedly delivered during the first meeting of the BJP’s parliamentary party after it came back to power at the Centre on Tuesday, was much-needed. Akash, a first-time MLA, and son of powerful general secretary Kailash Vijayvargiya, who had assaulted a public official in Indore a few days ago, was arrested and then feted by his party-men when he was released on bail. Through it all, he remained unrepentant. The PM’s disapproval will undoubtedly puncture his bluster — but it will hopefully do more. It will also pierce a climate of impunity that had been seen to settle down in the first term of the Modi government. In his first tenure, the pointed silences of PM Modi and the BJP high command at critical junctures, their lack of public disapproval or censure at displays of boorish or improper behaviour by lawmakers and members of the party and the Sangh Parivar, had rung loud. The reprimand to Vijayvargiya Junior — and whatever follow-up action the party takes — hold out a welcome promise of a break with a dismal pattern, which only seemed to be reinforced when the PM’s expression of anguish at Sadhvi Pragya Thakur’s outrageous remarks eulogising the Mahatma’s killer was followed by the BJP’s disciplinary inaction.

PM Modi knows well the power of example and the symbol. In his first tenure, he evocatively and imaginatively enlivened and illustrated many of his political messages to the people. Now, action taken against the cricket bat-wielding Vijayvargiya Junior, and also those who applauded his act, can drive the point home not just to the rank and file of the BJP, but also to elected people’s representatives across the political spectrum: That they cannot get away with intimidating and obstructing public officials, that there will be penalties to pay if arrogant lawmakers take the law into their own hands, or are tempted to take a swing at political and constitutional propriety. Of course, in a system governed by the rule of law, it should not take the Prime Minister to draw this line. But in an environment where the systemic restraints and checks are weak, and especially after an election in which the mandate was seen to be, above all, for the PM himself, perhaps his imprimatur is needed on this message to the power-drunk MLA.

It is on the BJP now to respect the PM’s word and sentiment. The party must recognise that it is, in the end, also in its own interest to do so. A significant part of its electoral success is made up of a revolt against the culture of entitlement and lack of accountability that the Congress was seen to preside over at the Centre and that has also congealed on the watch of many regional parties in the states. The BJP can ill afford to be seen to go any farther down that slippery road.

LOSING CONTROL

Both US and Iran are responsible for costly miscalculations that are contributing to escalation

TEHRAN’S ANNOUNCEMENT EARLIER this week that it has breached the 300 kg limit on the stockpile of enriched uranium — special material that could be turned into atomic weapons — marks a significant moment in the breakdown of the 2015 nuclear accord between Iran and the international community. It also increases the danger that the current escalation would lead to a military confrontation between the US and Iran. Washington and Tehran appear to be making political assumptions about each other that could turn out to be terribly flawed. Responding to Iran’s decision, US President Donald Trump said, Tehran is “playing with fire” and promised to persist with the campaign of “maximum pressure” against it. Tehran is saying its breach is not a violation of the 2015 agreement but a response permitted under the accord. Iran says it is ready to reverse the decision if other signatories to the agreement (UK, France, Germany, Russia and China) restore its trading privileges.

The problem, however, is not with the legal niceties. It is the kind of political choices the two sides are making and the apparent absence of any diplomacy towards de-escalation. The Trump Administration chose to withdraw from an agreement that was widely seen as imposing fairly stringent restrictions on Iran’s nuclear weapons programme. That move was animated less by concerns about the technical merits of the accord than a political desire to overthrow the Islamic Republic. Trump and his advisers bet that additional unilateral sanctions targeting Tehran’s oil exports would deepen Iran’s economic crisis and bring the clerical regime to its knees. Although sanctions are biting Iran hard, there is no sign that the regime’s collapse is imminent.

On its part, Iran has been hoping that its threat to undo the agreement, if only incrementally, will mount pressure on the European powers. UK, France and Germany have refused to follow Washington’s lead a year ago on walking out of the agreement. The Europeans want Iran to abide by the terms of the accord. But they have not been able to follow through on their promises to Tehran on finding ways to beat the US sanctions. Notwithstanding their rhetoric, Europe may not yet be ready to confront Trump on Iran. China and Russia have certainly rejected American unilateralism on Iran, but both have many other fish to fry with Washington. They may not be ready to make Iran the decisive breaking point with the US. With no significant political give by either side, Washington and Iran are likely to persist with what they see as “calibrated escalation”. That is a sure recipe for losing control and sliding into a conflict whose outcomes can’t be taken for granted by either side.

A THING OF BEAUTY

Rohit Sharma’s craft may have hidden the fact that his numbers showcase a growing maturity

ROHIT SHARMA’S BATTING leaves you with impressions, not details. So even as his fans would struggle to recollect his 104 against Bangladesh — or any of his four hundreds this World Cup — stroke by stroke, they would vividly remember the unhurried rhythm of his exquisite late cut, or the crack of a drive than rang from his bat, or the flowing arc of those strokes.

The stress on beauty has been a blessing and a curse for Rohit. Blessing, because graceful batting is increasingly a relic. Curse, because the phrases his fans use to evoke his style — languid brilliance, casual panache, lazy elegance — all include adjectives that can be taken down and used by the prosecution. His relaxed charm and easy smile compound the offence. He’s not the one to mope after losing. Hence, Rohit has been verbally dispatched to the gallows and hung for what seemingly comes across as casualness, the self-destructive proneness to smell the roses.

The beauty of his strokes is also distracting, in that it buries the revelatory numbers. However irrefutable the statistics are, they are a footnote, almost incidental to how we judge him. In the last three years, he has emerged as great a batsman as Virat Kohli. The latter has scored 4,420 runs in 68 games since the stroke of 2016. Rohit’s corresponding numbers are 3,987 in 70. Considering that he’s an opener, and takes on the risk of a moving new ball, those are numbers that are worth their weight in gold. Both have scored an equal number of centuries too (18). The century conversion rate is something Rohit has worked on. Since the turn of 2016, he has scored 18 in only 70 games. Before that he had managed eight in 143 games, highlighting a soaring maturity. He has smoothened the brazen edges, eschewed risk-prone strokes like the cover drive in the first hour of his innings, and is less impatient. It’s time we remembered Rohit’s numbers as much as we do the beauty of his strokes.



RAJAT KATHURIA

IN THE YEARS following the liberalisation of the telecom sector in India that began gingerly in 1994, the biggest barrier to private entry was a licence or the right to operate telecom services under the Telegraph Act. Licences were scarce since the government had limited their number in the same manner that licences were controlled pre-1991. So, when India allowed private players in telecom, potential investors showed extraordinary exuberance by committing huge sums of money to obtain a licence. And for several good reasons. Competition was limited to two private operators, telecom services were constrained everywhere in the country, and therefore, there was a huge addressable market.

Unfortunately, the revenue enthusiasm of the private entrants was belied, not least because tariffs for the new services were set at impossibly high levels. The Rs 156 per month rental and Rs 16.80 per peak minute tariffs encouraged subscription but not usage. Revenues did not materialise and besides, the incumbent public sector monopoly made life hard for the private sector entrants.

In 1999, the government took a “brave” decision in favour of the sector. On a collective plea by private operators, the government agreed to reduce their licence fee burden that threatened business continuity. The sector successfully migrated to the revenue-share licence fee regime that continues today. It was a courageous call then that allowed the sector to resurrect itself from the overhang of irrational bidding. The massive growth of telecom that followed vindicated the government’s decision to migrate to a licence fee regime based on a percentage of revenue. Evidence shows that the government too has benefited. Some still take the view that private entrants should have been made to pay what they bid and that they got away.

A similar predicament confronts the sector today. It is in the grip of a severe financial crisis. The migration package has been in place for two decades. Meanwhile, spectrum or airwaves that make services possible, were unbundled from the licence in 2012. This was a significant change in the operating conditions of telecom operators and one that has gone largely unnoticed. Licences are now available on tap — anyone who wishes to offer telecom services can get one. But, there’s a catch. The binding constraint is imposed by the availability of spectrum — with-

Government needs to assist the telecom sector to facilitate a smooth transition to 5G

We find the rules and the reserve prices for the upcoming spectrum auction including radio waves for 5G mobile services issued by TRAI to be incompatible with the goal of facilitating competition and market growth. In brief, the reserve prices are too high, reflect an extractive mindset, ignore the prevailing circumstances within the sector and run the risk of losing money for the government, while indefinitely compromising India’s 5G adoption ability.

out it, the licence is not worth the paper on which it is printed. Thus, the effective barrier to entry is now spectrum and not the licence. How spectrum is assigned will determine the nature and extent of competition in the market, and facilitating it is one of the primary mandates of regulators.

In this backdrop, we find the rules and the reserve prices for the upcoming spectrum auction including radio waves for 5G mobile services issued by TRAI to be incompatible with the goal of facilitating competition and market growth. In brief, the reserve prices are too high, reflect an extractive mindset, ignore the prevailing circumstances within the sector and run the risk of losing money for the government, while indefinitely compromising India’s 5G adoption ability. Luckily, the Department of Telecommunication (DoT) has returned the recommendations to TRAI for reconsideration. We hope that it will. The other positive development is that the new minister has set up a committee under the telecom secretary to review levies on the sector.

This is not a brief for India’s much-vaunted and at the same time vilified telecom sector. It is a recognition that the industry’s debt levels have burgeoned, due in part to the enormous amounts paid for spectrum and other regulatory charges, and in part due to competition from technological disruptions via apps which have put pressure on traditional revenue streams. There are also the sectors’ own indiscretions somewhere along the way, but let’s keep that aside in the larger interest of what’s at stake.

Regulatory bravado would advise that it is an operator problem, and if they bid high or did not anticipate or accommodate technology, they ought to deal with it. And that’s the point of this piece. Give the sector a chance to deal with circumstances, but with a little bit of help. Just like in 1999.

The year 2010 was a watershed moment in the life of Indian telecoms. Until then, spectrum was administratively assigned, and thereafter by auctions. The pre-2010 administrative assignment of spectrum suffered from lack of transparency, favouritism and avoidable scandals. The Supreme Court thus ordered the government to auction spectrum for “all times to come”.

Telecom auctions have unquestionably had their advantages. Usage has become efficient and the government has generated

substantial revenue. When combined with other fees such as for licences and spectrum usage charges, the government has collected Rs 4,84,198 crore since 2010-11. This amounts to over 28 per cent of the cumulative non-tax revenue receipts of the government during this period.

But auctions are also risky and the outcomes depend upon its design. The reliance on high reserve prices could be counterproductive and could result in unsold spectrum, delayed services and a permanent loss of revenue for the government. This has happened in the past. Bidder turnout, market conditions and the choice of auctioning agent are all important. We currently follow a simultaneous multi-round ascending auction method, which could be designed to produce high revenue for the government, and the auctioneer (if auctioneer fee is linked to the auction outcome), but at a cost to the sector. If this is done for the upcoming 5G auctions, India could well miss the 5G bus, or even come under it.

If the Supreme Court’s diktat endures for “all times to come”, we must learn to conduct spectrum auctions that balance transparency in allocation and revenue expectations for the government. The combinatorial clock auction is a popular alternative that has been tried elsewhere to reduce risks and improve efficiency. On the other hand, if we could infuse trust in administrative assignment and link spectrum allocation to market development, it can be the elixir the sector needs.

Neither is going to be easy. But when the problem is knotty, so are the solutions. We must recognise that spectrum is the new entry barrier or the manifestation of market power. No operator should be allowed to hoard or capture it. Large amounts need to be assigned on reasonable terms for 5G services to maximise the technology’s potential. And we need to do it concurrently with the rest of the developed telecom markets. Else we will play catch up, like we did for 2G, 3G and 4G. And there will be no next time. The time to act is now. Else Ghalib’s lament, *Hum ne maana ki taghful na karoge lekin, khaa ho jayenge ham tum ko khabar hote tak*, (I know you may not neglect me/ but it may be too late by the time you act) might just ring true.

The writer is director & chief executive, ICRIER. Views are personal



RAMENDRA SINGH

ARTICLE 15, starring Ayushmann Khurana, is an incisive statement against the caste system. At least that is how upper-caste audiences, or anyone who has not been at the wrong end of the caste hierarchy, would feel after watching the film. Still, a few voices have come forward against the logic of having a Brahmin hero as a torchbearer against the system that Brahmins created. But as expected, not many seem disposed to accept this argument.

That this kind of argument has always been less favoured among a certain section can be seen from the clear preference of the privileged urban upper classes (easily interchangeable with upper castes) for Mahatma Gandhi over B R Ambedkar, and the parties like the Congress and BJP over the BSP and RJD.

“It’s the privileged who should challenge privilege,” argues the film’s director, Anubhav Sinha. Now, this could be read as a fair argument or a condescending one, depending on which side of the debate you are on. As we know, politics and culture shape one another. And Bollywood can work as a guide to Indian politics, at least on caste.

Bollywood, for all its progressive appearances and stances, has remained an industry by the upper classes and for the upper classes (and upper castes). There is no need to point out that Sinha and his co-writer, Gaurav Solanki, belong to upper castes as do Khurana

ART FROM ABOVE

‘Article 15’ highlights once again the need for more diversity within Bollywood

Bollywood, for all its progressive appearances and stances, has remained an industry by the upper classes and for the upper classes (and upper castes). There is no need to point out that Sinha and his co-writer, Gaurav Solanki, belong to upper castes as do Khurana and most other actors in ‘Article 15’. This is one of the reasons why the understanding of caste in Bollywood remains limited. For the most part, the film industry has been happy to keep any reference to caste at bay.

and most other actors in *Article 15*. This is one of the reasons why the understanding of caste in Bollywood remains limited. For the most part, the film industry has been happy to keep any reference to caste at bay. Historically, heroes have been upper castes (both Muslim and Hindu) in real life as well as reel life. Kumar, Khanna, Kapoor, Sharma, Singhania were some of the “casteless” surnames for most characters. *Article 15*’s Ayan Ranjan is in that mould. With the exception of some attempts in parallel cinema, surnames like Jatav, Pasi, Kori, Kushwaha, Yadav, Nishad are hard to find both among characters, and in the opening credits.

In the last few years, some attempts have been made to tackle caste, but often through an upper-caste prism. In *Sonchiriya*, a film released earlier this year, there is a sequence in which dacoit Phuliya (apparently inspired by Phoolan Devi), who stands against Thakurs helps the Thakur gang that is on the verge of elimination, having lost its leader and gotten divided into two factions. In this encounter, Phuliya asks a Thakur woman, Indumati Tomar, who is travelling with Thakur gang, to join her group. Tomar, who is running away from an abusive family, reminds her that she is a Thakur, a reference to the caste of Phuliya’s enemies. Phuliya reports that the caste of a woman is separate from all other castes and sits at the lowest position in the caste hierarchy.

This dialogue seems to be aimed at showcasing that women across the social strata face atrocities and discrimination. But this entire episode also looks a little farcical because the women from the so-called lower castes face not just more atrocities but also harsher ones. What happened to Phoolan Devi was as much, if not more, about feudal upper-caste violence as it was about misogynistic patriarchy. Women from the dominant castes do face similar issues but not the same issues. Dalit women are not just victims of their gender but also of the social status of their fathers, husbands and brothers.

Any expectation of change in this approach largely depends on how diverse and inclusive the film industry becomes. While it is not impossible for an upper-caste filmmaker to deal with the issue of caste in a realistic manner, their attempts till now have not been able to reach the maturity that films like *Fandry* and *Sairat*, by Dalit filmmaker Nagraj Manjule, have.

About 50 per cent of Indian population consists of the people who are categorised as Other Backward Classes (OBC), and this includes backward Muslims. Yet, in a nearly century-old film industry, we have perhaps just one OBC star — Rajkumar Rao. One can only guess how long we will have to wait for a Dalit star.

Singh is a Mumbai-based screenwriter

JULY 4, 1979, FORTY YEARS AGO

MNF ATTACK IGP

THE UNDERGROUND MIZO National Front activists, in response to the rebel leader Laldenga’s call to revive the insurgency and drive out all non-Mizos, last night made an abortive attempt on the life of the Inspector General of Police, Ved Marwah, and the deputy inspector-general of police, R S Chopra, in the heart of curfew-bound Aizawl. A gang of Mizo rebels, armed with automatic weapons sniped at a police convoy, including the IGP’s jeep, while it was proceeding to the police control room at 10 pm. The police party immediately took cover and returned the fire. The IGP and the remaining members of his convoy escaped unhurt.

NO SOVIET PRESENCE

BRITAIN’S FOREIGN SECRETARY, Lord Peter Carrington, deplored Soviet intervention in Afghanistan which, he said, was similar to Cuban involvement in Africa. He was replying to a question at a Delhi press conference at the end of his two-day visit to the capital, during which he held discussions with Indian leaders on a wide range of international and bilateral issues. He also said that a stricter immigrant policy was distinctly on the cards in Britain: This was consistent with the manifesto of the Conservative party. However, he assured questioners that Indian immigrants resident in Britain would be given all the rights enjoyed by British nationals.

AIR CHANNEL

RADIO LISTENERS CAN look forward to the introduction of AIR’s national channel in a couple of years. Preliminary work on it has already begun with the selection of the location of two transmitters of one megawatt each at Nagpur. These will form the nucleus of a set of super-power medium transmitters to be located in different parts of the country. The present plan is to have a single-megawatt medium-wave transmitter each in Delhi, Patna and Bangalore. Even in the Fifth Plan, there was a scheme to set up a new transmitter at Nagpur for the national channel but it was given on technical grounds.



The new idea of India

Clean government led by a charismatic and strong PM has redressed trust deficit between citizens and elites



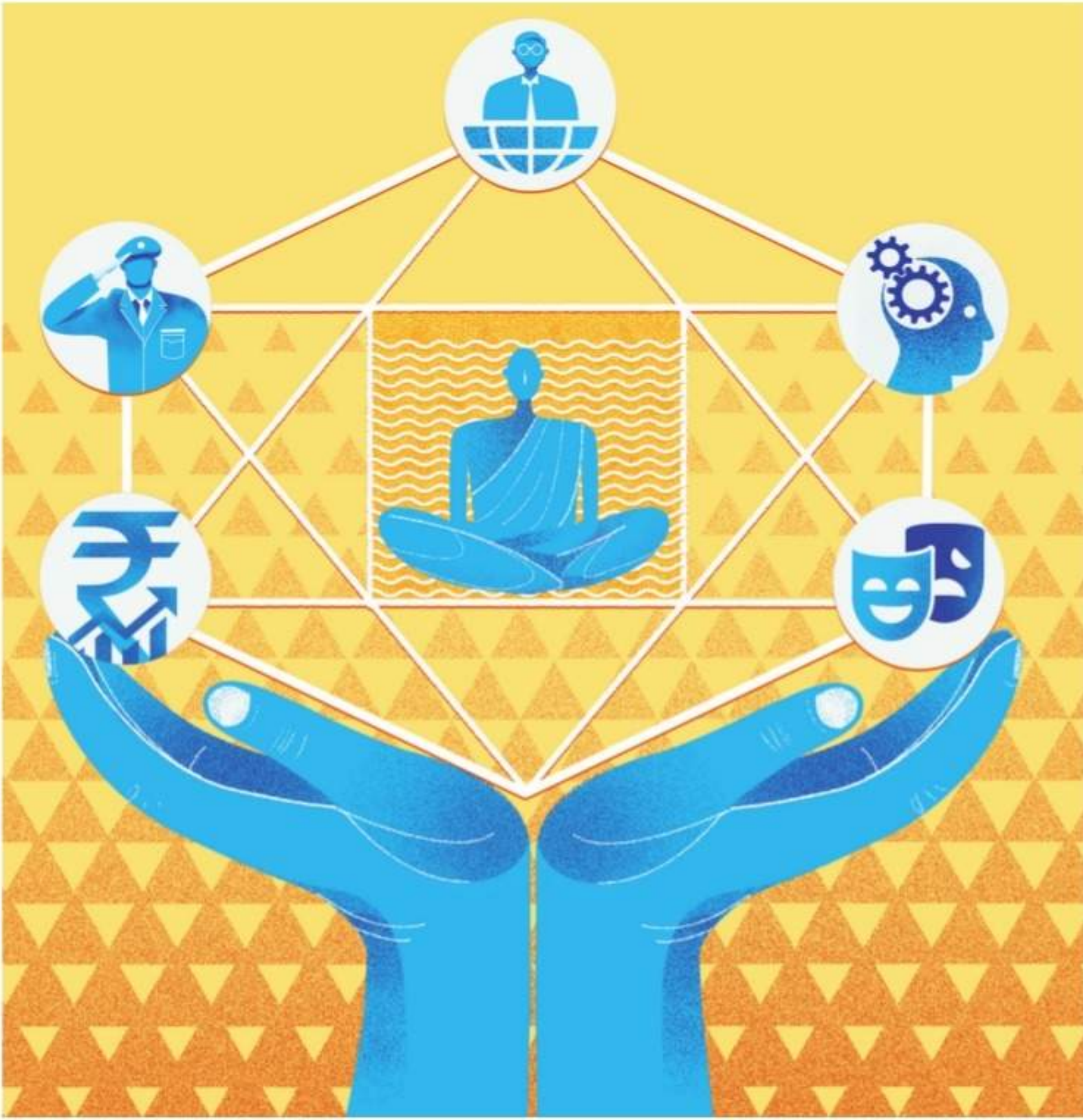
LAST YEAR, I co-curated the Pondicherry literature festival (PLF). Scheduled for August 17-19, after Sri Aurobindo's birthday on August 15, this was the first event of this scale and magnitude in the erstwhile French enclave and still picturesque Union Territory. Alliance Française de Puducherry, whose then president was my co-curator, had offered us venues as well as support. The Lt Governor of Puducherry, Kiran Bedi, had herself blessed the event and agreed to host the inaugural at Raj Niwas, a beautiful colonial mansion.

Just when everything seemed to be moving along smoothly, we encountered a series of unaccounted setbacks. Five political outfits, including some Dravidian and left parties, called for a suspension of the festival, even threatening disruption if we went ahead. The Alliance Française developed cold feet, pulling out at the last minute. On August 16, India's beloved former prime minister and a significant literary figure in Hindi, Atal Bihari Vajpayee, passed away. A three-day national mourning followed. That put paid to central government ministers and dignitaries coming to the PLF as scheduled. Events in the Raj Niwas and the French Consulate had to be cancelled. Almost miraculously, the Sri Aurobindo Society generously helped us with the venues. Our lunches and dinners at heritage properties in the white town were widely appreciated. All the other events including press conferences, book releases, readings, interactions with the public worked out better than expected. The festival was a huge success, with thousands of footfalls, not to mention stimulating panel discussions and lively interactions.

This long prelude is meant to highlight one important point. We titled the festival, "Bharat Shakti: The Pondy Lit Fest". What did we mean by Bharat Shakti and why did we select it as our title? Bharat Shakti refers to the rise of India as predicted by Sri Aurobindo. In a remarkable booklet called *Bhawani Mandir*, written in 1905 when he was in Baroda, Aurobindo urged Indians to throw out the British as an act of devotion to the nation as the Mother Goddess, Bhawani Bharati. Aurobindo also wrote a beautiful, rousing poem in Sanskrit by the latter title. In another essay, 'Is India Civilised?', he declared: "India is the Bharata Shakti, the living energy of a great spiritual conception, and fidelity to it is the very principle of her existence. For, by its virtue alone she has been one of the immortal nations, this alone has been the secret of her amazing persistence and perpetual force of survival and revival." Powerful words, indeed.

But political freedom was only the first step. We had a long way to go to catch up after a thousand-year interregnum of decline and degradation. If India was to progress rapidly, take her rightful place as a world leader, we would need not just good, but extraordinary leadership. We have had to wait for over a hundred years after Aurobindo's prediction for a leader like Narendra Modi. Modi, of course, has a Vadodra connection too, winning with a huge margin from that constituency in 2014. Besides, he is also an admirer of one India's greatest princes, Maharaja Sayajirao Gaekwad, who was also Aurobindo's employer.

Modi's elevation to the post of India's prime minister in 2014, I have argued in sev-



Suvajit Dey

eral of my writings, is a watershed moment for India. To my mind, only he has understood the idea of Bharat Shakti and is therefore the best instrument to confirm and fulfill Aurobindo's augury. When Modi visited the Ashram and Auroville on February 25, 2018, I was fortunate to be present and cover the event. Before his address at Bharat Niwas, Auroville, he came forward to the edge of the stage and bowed to the audience on all sides. I was struck by the rare combination of humility and confidence, coupled with an inordinate sense of mission to lead India to new heights.

Under Modi, India has progressed more, in the real sense of the word, in five years than possibly in the whole of its previous six decades. This great transformation cannot, of course, be measured merely in economic terms, although the figures indicate that our growth rate is amongst the highest and inflation is certainly the lowest since Independence. In addition, access to government services and schemes, whether the Jan Dhan Yojana, Ujjwala, Saubhagya, Swachh Bharat, etc, has been unprecedented. A clean government led by a charismatic and strong prime minister with ministers and officials who deliver has redressed the trust deficit between the citizenry and the ruling elites. The concomitant rise of India on the world stage, thanks to the Modi doctrine, has led to a quantum leap in the respect accorded to India.

Furthermore, the improvement of both national security on the borders and reduction in crime, lawlessness, and violence on the home front suggest an era of peace and stability. Last but not the least, a new pride in our identity, culture and heritage, especially

The new nationalism that Modi 2.0 represents is Bharat Shakti in its manifold dimensions: The augmentation of India's hard power through military prowess, economic empowerment, and determined diplomacy on the one hand, combined with Soumya Shakti, the soft power of culture, spirituality, yoga, cuisine, couture, and so on, on the other hand.

among Hindus, has ended the self-loathing and civilisational inferiority complex plaguing us for centuries.

Winning 303 seats indicates a resounding pro-incumbency mandate. Not to be confused with populism, this is clearly a sign of Modi's and the BJP's genuine popularity. In contrast, "Nyay", the grossly ruinous "jumla" of the Congress, was a typical example of harmful populism which, luckily, Indian voters did not fall for. Modi earned his mandate and popularity by delivering on good governance and development. Moreover, after the 2019 verdict, the signalling so far has not been belligerent or triumphalist Hindu nationalism, but inclusive Hindutva. The new government has also tried to reach out to all sections of the populace, not just Hindus, with special schemes for their education, upliftment and the safeguarding of their rights.

To me, therefore, the new nationalism that Modi 2.0 represents is Bharat Shakti in its manifold dimensions: The augmentation of India's hard power through military prowess, economic empowerment, and determined diplomacy on the one hand, combined with Soumya Shakti, the soft power of culture, spirituality, yoga, cuisine, couture, and so on, on the other hand. Together they add up to nothing less than India's rejuvenation, renewal, and rise. This may sound hyperbolic or over enthusiastic. So be it. But the mood of the nation is certainly upbeat. Even if not every Indian is chanting, "Modi hai to mumbai hai", a vast majority of us certainly believe it.

The writer is director, Indian Institute of Advanced Study, Shimla. Views are personal

WHAT THE OTHERS SAY

"The awkward end to the match has been just as much of a dampener for Pakistani fans who in a rare instance had backed India against England to brighten their own team's chances of reaching the semi-finals."

—DAWN

Our electricity future

The poor must be included as change agents in the roadmap for clean energy

ASHWINI K. SWAIN, ANNA AGARWAL & PARTH BHATIA

THE UNION POWER minister has reasserted the government's commitment to an electricity future with uninterrupted supply for all, increasingly from renewable energy sources. Simultaneously, institutional rearrangements are being pushed to enable a transition to this future. Will the poor be a part of this electricity future, with reliable supply and from cleaner sources? The answer depends on how they are placed — as welfare beneficiaries or change agents.

Making the poor a part of this electricity future will require a shift in India's approach to electricity access, away from "redistributive welfareism" that prioritises subsidised costs for the poor at the cost of quality of service. In a policy note produced at the Centre for Policy Research — "Beyond Poles and Wires: How to Keep the Electrons Flowing?" — we suggested an agenda going forward.

The immediate priority is to better target central aid for the poor. We identify three ideas that build and improve existing programmes, and should be prioritised by the Ministry of Finance in making budgetary allocations. All are important for ensuring the welfare of the poor.

Shifting agricultural demand to solar energy is a justifiable goal. It helps the farmers with day-time supply, reduces seasonal peak for discoms, and reduces subsidy burden on the discoms and states. Despite sustained central aid for solar pumps, only about two lakh units are deployed. Slow uptake is caused by farmers' inability to pay their share, states' reluctance to contribute their share and delay in subsidy payment inflating the costs.

Earlier this year, the government approved the 'Kisan Urja Suraksha evam Utthaan Mahabhiyan' (KUSUM) with Rs 34,422 crore central aid which seeks to harness 25.75 GW solar capacity for agricultural use. KUSUM offers 30 per cent of benchmark cost as central aid and requires the states to match with 30 per cent subsidy. The farmers can finance another 30 per cent of the cost, which will be paid through monthly instalments, and they have to make a one-time payment for the remaining 10 per cent. Given the state of agrarian distress, farmers who have already invested in pumps have neither the incentive nor the ability to pay their share. The monthly instalments are an additional burden.

The way forward must build on a partnership of the beneficiaries, including the Centre, the states, discoms and farmer communities. Maharashtra chief minister's Solar Agriculture Feeder Programme provides a useful template. This model eliminates fiscal burden on farmers and assures reliability of supply with grid connectivity. Moreover, it retains the control on supply duration to manage groundwater withdrawal, which is lost in standalone solar pumps. The Centre must put focus on scal-

ing this scheme, with state-specific approaches and targets. Central aid for micro-irrigation may be clubbed with solar pump schemes for better water-energy efficiency.

Phase II of the Grid-Connected Rooftop Solar Programme, approved in February 2019, with Rs11,814 crore aid, seeks to incentivise consumers and discoms to deploy 22 GW solar capacity. Enhancing central aid to 40 per cent of benchmark cost is a commendable step. But prioritising 1-3 KW systems misses out the poorest. Around half of Indian households consume below 50 kWh per month and have a load below 0.5 KW, which can be met through 1 KW solar systems. The Centre must redesign the fiscal support, targeting this consumer group. This group has the highest subsidy demand (per kWh), which is partly borne by the states. But they have little incentive or capability to pay the capital costs.

By prioritising systems up to 1 KW the scheme can reach more beneficiaries with the allocated amount. The Centre should offer a higher aid for these systems, and require the states and discoms to share the remaining costs. The consumers' contribution will include the space and unskilled maintenance, but no upfront costs. While both states and discoms gain from reduced recurring subsidy demand, discoms recover their investment through a regular tariff.

The evolving demand scenario will be as critical as supply sources to India's electricity future. Electricity demand in the residential sector will be largely driven by cooling needs, especially in light of increasing temperatures. Fan as a basic cooling option has mass usage, including low-income homes. About 40 million units are sold every year in India, which will get a boost by the 26 million households electrified under Saubhagya. Total fans in use are projected to double reaching nearly one billion in the next 20 years. Fans account for about one-fifth of residential electricity consumption, second largest after lighting.

Commercially available efficient fans consume 30 per cent less electricity. Yet, this potential is overlooked. Interventions to promote energy-efficient fans have not made much progress. Only 10 per cent of ceiling fans sold are energy-efficient rated and only half of them are five-star rated.

The Centre should extend financial aid to expand and expedite the National Energy Efficient Fan Programme, with some cost-sharing for low-income households. It will reduce highly subsidised consumption and thus help the discoms reduce their subsidy burden, while helping the poor to access basic cooling facilities. With the rising incidence of heatwaves, making efficient fans affordable for the poor has welfare benefits and contributes to the sustainability agenda.

India's electrification programmes have always targeted the poor, but as welfare beneficiaries. These suggestions are a step towards empowering them to be change agents in shaping the electricity future.

Swain and Agarwal are fellows, and Bhatia is a senior research associate at the Centre for Policy Research

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

LISTEN TO PM

THIS REFERS TO the report, 'PM on Vijayvargiya Junior: No matter whose son, behaviour unacceptable' (IE, July 3). In an obvious reference to the incident where BJP National General Secretary Kailash Vijayvargiya's son, Akash, had beaten up a municipal corporation official, Prime Minister Narendra Modi has said that misbehaviour and arrogance is unacceptable. The vital question is whether the BJP leadership will listen to Modi and set an example by expelling the power-drunk Akash Vijayvargiya.

M C Joshi, Lucknow.

ASSET QUESTION

THIS REFERS TO the article, 'The budget's dilemma' (IE, July 3). Public assets cannot be properly utilised with a lackadaisical attitude. BSNL has spilled the beans about the government's apathy towards it vis-a-vis Jio. Also, we have so much fragmented land without proper records. A recent heavy industry ministry report states that about 90 per cent of PSUs barely generate any surplus capital and yet, the government is still clinging to these. Smarter monetisation of public assets requires serious brooding.

Isha Shukla, via email

NO PROXIES

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'After the hand-pump' (IE, July 3). If Sunny Deol has no time to attend to his foremost duty of serving the people, why did he contest the Lok Sabha polls? During the 2009 polls, too, a silver screen hero, af-

LETTER OF THE WEEK AWARD

To encourage quality reader intervention, The Indian Express offers the Letter of the Week award. The letter adjudged the best for the week is published every Saturday. Letters may be e-mailed to editpage@expressindia.com or sent to The Indian Express, B-1/B, Sector 10, Noida-UP 201301. Letter writers should mention their postal address and phone number.

THE WINNER RECEIVES SELECT EXPRESS PUBLICATIONS

ter becoming an MP, created a record of sorts — maximum days of absenteeism from the House.

Arun Malankar, Mumbai

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'After the hand-pump' (IE, July 3). MP Sunny Deol's act of delegating his parliamentary duties to Gurpreet Singh is devoid of sense. He should realise that after winning the elections he is not expected to behave like a film star but function as an MP. He cannot shirk his responsibilities.

Sanjay Chawla, Amritsar



VIEW FROM THE RIGHT

SHAH IN THE VALLEY

THE EDITORIAL in the latest issue of *Organiser* discusses the recent visit by the Union Minister for Home Affairs Amit Shah to Jammu and Kashmir, and Hurriyat Conference's yet another call for dialogue. *Organiser* says that the Hurriyat's call for talks is at the behest of Pakistan, which hasn't demonstrated any progress against terrorism emanating from its soil, and praises the Indian government's zero tolerance towards domestic and international terrorism.

The editorials states: "For the first time in the last thirty years, the separatists did not give a call for Bandh when any Union Minister is visiting the Valley. Is it a change of heart for the Hurriyat? Why is Hurriyat looking for a dialogue option now? And is there any scope for 'dialogue' with the perpetrators of violence? These are the fundamental questions we should address while addressing the issue."

It does not trust the Hurriyat though and mentions that the body has "not changed its stand, and still considers Pakistan as a party

to the dialogue process in contrary to the legal and political position of Bharat". It credits India for isolating "the masters of Hurriyat in Pakistan", who, it says, are facing a "severe economic crisis". It says the "Pakistani stooges" have used the "Ramzan ceasefire and around Amarnath Yatra" to "engage in some form of dialogue and use it for some regrouping to perpetrate violence". It asks India to ignore the offer of dialogue and says that the Hurriyat do not hold any ground in the Valley, nor does it "represent the true voices of J&K". It quotes Syama Prasad Mokerjee saying "no compromise on the fundamental issue of complete integration of J&K" to be followed as the "cardinal principal" by India.

Panchajanya too has a piece on Hurriyat's offer for talks. The Hindi magazine says that "experts believe that Hurriyat has done it out of compulsion because people are not willing to believe them anymore" and "to prevent themselves from becoming irrelevant, Hurriyat is being forced to kneel in the changed scenario".

LYNCHING CONSPIRACY

PANCHAJANYA HAS devoted its editorial space to raise doubts about the lynching of Tabrez Ansari in Jharkhand, wondering if the communal tones it has been given is part of a conspiracy. "At the first instance, there are two sides to the incident," it says. Then laying

out both the sides, *Panchajanya* mentions that first, "people taking law into their hands," and second, "a death, which is suspected to be a murder". It wonders if the possible murder was at the hands of the "police or the society... or could it be someone else?"

The magazine then succinctly provides the facts of the case saying that while Ansari was beaten up on the suspicion of theft, "but he had not suffered serious injuries". Though the police and the people are blaming each other, it says, then asks for a proper inquiry. "It should be brought to attention," it says, that Ansari's death "has given those who indulge in politics of violence and animosity an issue of their choice". Rather than seeing this crime as a crime, *Panchajanya* states that "it has been given the colour of "Muslim ut-peedan" or Muslim oppression.

It compares Ansari's murder to other incidents of violence where the victims were Hindu and comments "it is easy to intensify a crime by dividing it on the lines of sections, religion or caste, but solving them is tougher". It wonders if society is losing faith in the justice system or obstacles in the path to justice have given birth to anger. It says the so-called intellectuals who see issues of beef, etc are as dangerous those who take up the role of "Robin Hood" and take action on the spot.

MOOKERJEE TRIBUTE

THE COVER story of *Organiser* is on Syama

Prasad Mookerjee, the founder of Bhartiya Jana Sangh, which preceded the BJP. Mookerjee's 66th death anniversary fell on June 23 and the report starts from BJP acting president JP Nadda's recent comment that "the whole country demanded an inquiry into Dr Mookerjee's death" but was ignored by the first prime minister, Jawaharlal Nehru. "It was not just Nehru but Sheikh Abdullah, who was the main culprit in this suspicious death got away with this colossal injustice done to the illegally detained political prisoner who stood for the unity and integrity of the nation". The package quotes from several stories printed in the magazine at the time of Mookerjee's death in 1953.

It also reprints a piece authored by Mookerjee himself, a couple of months before his death in Srinagar titled "Let Nehru pause and ponder". In the article, focusing on Kashmir, Mookerjee wrote that no unit had the right to secede from India. He says: "Our objective is not only to espouse the cause of the people of Jammu and Kashmir but also to resist the increasing intolerance and megalomania of the present leadership in Delhi and Srinagar which, if unchecked, may sound the death knell of democracy in India. Through sacrifice and suffering and peace resistance we expect to rouse the consciousness of the people before which the proudest dictator must bend."

Compiled by Krishn Kaushik