



## The Indian EXPRESS

FOUNDED BY  
RAMNATH GOENKA

BECAUSE THE TRUTH INVOLVES US ALL

### FACE THE DELUGE

Floods in different states raise questions about understanding of monsoon, preparedness to deal with rivers in spate

THE SOUTHWEST MONSOON has left a trail of destruction this year. Nearly 500 people have reportedly lost their lives in Kerala, Karnataka, Maharashtra, Gujarat, Assam and Bihar. In Kerala, which experienced its worst deluge in a century last year, more than 80 people have lost their lives in five days since August 8. In neighbouring Karnataka, the toll stands at 48. Northern Karnataka, which was facing drought like conditions in May, is now under water. According to Chief Minister BS Yediyurappa, the state is witnessing its worst floods in 45 years. In Maharashtra, more than 40 people have lost their lives in Sangli and Kolhapur districts, while the Marathwada and Vidharbha regions are reeling under a drought.

The floods this year have drawn attention to the changing dynamics of the southwest monsoon. Take the case of Kerala. According to India Meteorological Department (IMD) data, the state recorded a more than 25 per cent deficit in rainfall between June 1 and August 7. But Kerala has nearly made up the deficit in the past five days. Palakkad district has received 80 per cent excess rainfall after August 8. Wayanad and Thrissur have also experienced sharp departures from normal rainfall, with an excess of nearly 40 per cent. Similarly, on August 8, Karnataka received nearly five times the rainfall the state receives in a day. Kodagu, the state's worst flood-hit district, received 460 per cent above normal rainfall between August 5 and 11. In fact, monsoon rains in the past five years have followed a pattern: A few days of intense rainfall sandwiched between dry spells.

The focus this year, as in the past, has been on providing relief to the flood-affected. But questions must also be asked about the ways states prepare for, and deal with, floods. The vagaries of weather, for example, demand cooperation between states that share a river basin. This year, Maharashtra and Karnataka bickered over opening the gates of the Almatti dam on the river Krishna. By the time the two states agreed over the amount of water to be discharged from the dam's reservoirs, the damage was already done. The floods also drive home the urgency of focusing on nature's mechanisms of resilience against extreme weather events. Policymakers and planners have shown little inclination to place wetlands, natural sponges that soak up the rainwaters, at the centre of flood control projects. Flood governance in the country has placed inordinate emphasis on embankments. But the floods in Bihar and Assam showed — for the umpteenth time — that these structures are no security against swollen rivers. Of course, what is true for the Western Ghats states may not hold for Assam and Bihar. But the message from the floods this year is clear: There is a need to revisit the understanding of the monsoon and find ways to deal with its fury.

### IN CHINA'S COURT

How it addresses protesters' escalating demands for autonomy and democracy in Hong Kong will be a critical test

OVER NEARLY THREE months, the protests in Hong Kong have evolved from a movement with a specific thrust — against a proposed law that would allow people accused of certain crimes to be extradited to the Chinese mainland — to a wider expression of public anger at the Chinese state's curbs on democracy and the city's special status within the People's Republic. For its part, the Chinese government's patience with the financial nerve centre coming to a standstill appears to be wearing thin. Over the weekend, the spokesperson for the Chinese government's Hong Kong and Macau Affairs office said that with Hong Kong protestors turning "radical" and using "dangerous tools to attack police officers", "the first signs of terrorism were beginning to appear".

The move towards labelling pro-democracy protestors as anarchists, radicals or terrorists by the Chinese government holds, for many, a disturbing augury. Since they began in June, the protests in Hong Kong have consistently been compared to the 1989 demonstrations in mainland China, which culminated in the Tiananmen Square massacre. With the unprecedented cancellation of all flights from Hong Kong airport on Monday, the movement now threatens to bring economic activity in the global financial hub to a standstill. The protests at the airport were in response to the partial blinding of a protester by a projectile used by the police, among other incidents of alleged brutality. Carrie Lam, Hong Kong's chief executive, has warned of the protests going "down the path of no return", hinting at an imminent confrontation with the Chinese authorities.

What is at stake in Hong Kong is the adaptability of the Chinese state apart from its moral, ideological and administrative ability to keep the promise it made to Hong Kong. In 1997, it was decided that China would be "one country, with two systems", and Hong Kong would continue to enjoy its autonomy. That promise has been eroded, for example, by refusing to allow direct elections for the chief executive's post. Despite China's accession to the original demand — scrapping of the extradition law — the protests show no signs of fizzling out. With China's rise as an economic and military superpower, and with the surveillance technology at the state's disposal, repression through coercive might is certainly an option. But brutality as policy triggers retaliation: After Hong Kong police used tear gas and rubber bullets to quell the protesters, they responded by the sporadic throwing of bricks and acts of vandalism. A country with superpower ambitions, which is negotiating massive international investments through the Belt and Road Initiative, can ill-afford to look incapable of delivering on the promise of federalism and autonomy.

### ONE BOTTLE VODKA

A group of Ukrainian and UK researchers has spun off the spirit of Chernobyl, but Russians may have mixed feelings

IF YOU WANT to curl up with a copy of the Nobel Prize-winning *Voices from Chernobyl* in one hand, leaving the other free to curl itself around something refreshing, your time begins now. Atomik vodka is not on the market yet, but it will be. Only one bottle of this "artisanal moonshine" exists, and currently the only way to consume it is to admire photographs of it tastefully laid on a bed of hay in a wooden box. But the company that distilled it expects it to attract fearless drinkers everywhere, and will plough back the profits into the welfare of the Chernobyl Exclusion Zone, the circle with a radius of 30 km around the Chernobyl nuclear power plant, made off-limits after the meltdown of 1986.

Atomik vodka is distilled from grain and water sourced from the disaster zone, and strikes out beyond the brief of a British-Ukrainian project to study the uptake of radioactivity by living systems from scorched earth. Actually, it pushes the principle of the experiment to the limit, because a distillate can be assumed to contain a greater concentration of radioactive material than the feedstock. But Atomik vodka is safe to drink, and has been okayed by the Ukrainian authorities, in whose territory the exclusion zone falls.

The safety rating of the drink would not deter the adventurous, who are attracted by labels. Spirit-sellers cottoned on to this long ago in the age of exploration, when Caribbean rum was sold under the colourful name of "kill-devil". The world is going to love the dangerous glamour of Atomik, but what of Russia, the mother lode of vodka? Chernobyl is still in their race memory, and something atomic just went bang in the north, killing five scientists and maybe creating a mini-Chernobyl. The Russians may have mixed feelings about Atomik.

# The Constitution test

India has a constitution but Centre's move on Kashmir poses questions about constitutionalism



FAIZAN MUSTAFA AND JAGTESHWAR SINGH SOHI

IN FRAMING A government which is to be administered by men over men, the greatest difficulty lies in this: You must first enable the government to control the governed, and next, oblige it to control itself. The main purpose of the constitution is constitutionalism, the concept of limited powers. Constitutions are a social compact between the state and people. We need to ensure that the exercise of governmental powers should be controlled in order that it is not destructive of the values it was intended to promote. If the last century saw the death of God, currently we are experiencing the death of constitutionalism. The sudden abrogation of Article 370, like the imposition of Emergency in 1975, is nothing short of the sad demise of constitutionalism.

All societies are by nature authoritarian, and governments even more so, particularly if they have massive majorities in Parliament. Today most western constitutions, including that of the US, are only ostensibly about rights and limitations; in fact, they are about power and control. Article 370 was a shell that had long been emptied. The successive Presidential Orders issued under Article 370, in fact, gave special status to the Centre. So, what has been gained by its abrogation is not clear.

The state is a necessary evil and an instrument of exploitation in the hands of those in power. It can be termed as the march of God on earth when it operates within its allotted sphere and upholds people's liberties.

Constitutionalism is the anti-thesis of authoritarianism. Having a constitution does not mean that we have constitutionalism as well. Several communist and Islamic countries had constitutions without constitutionalism. Hitler, too, had the Weimar Constitution. Constitutionalism tries to limit the power of constitutional authorities through doctrines such as rule of law which, as opposed to rule by law, ensures equality before law, equal protection of laws to all and non-arbitrary exercise of power. To ensure that too much power is not concentrated in one hand or organ, we have the doctrine of separation of powers between the three organs of state — the legislature, executive and judiciary. Distribution of powers ensures that the Centre does not become too powerful and power is shared with the states. Under asymmetric federalism, special status is given to some states due to peculiar historical and cultural factors to limit the power of the Centre in those states. All fundamental rights are negative restrictions on the power of the state.

Federalism is the basic structure of the Constitution and it means sharing of power between the Centre and states. Since the Kashmir assembly would have opposed bifurcation of the state into two UTs, we did not hold assembly elections along with Lok Sabha polls. Now currently the state is under President's rule, and Parliament has exercised the powers of the assembly. This means we have gone against the spirit of the Constitution and made it a plaything.

As the state enjoys monopoly of power, the greatest danger to fundamental rights comes from the state. Kashmiris, rather than getting personal liberties and freedom under Article 21 and freedom of speech and movement under Article 19, are experiencing detention and censorship. Even the Supreme Court does not see any urgency to guarantee these fundamental freedoms and has asked to wait for two weeks. Are we back to *ADM Jabalpur* (1975)? After the 44th constitutional amendment of 1978, rights under Article 21 are non-derogable and cannot be denied even during emergencies.

The opening words of our Constitution are "we the people", not "we the government of India". As the people's representatives too may go against the Constitution, we have given the power of judicial review to constitutional courts to strike down a law if it violates the constitution and a constitutional amendment if it impinges on its "basic structure".

The Instrument of Accession signed by Raja Hari Singh on October 26, 1947 and accepted by India on October 27, 1947 with a promise of plebiscite, was an exercise of limiting powers of the central government in respect of J&K. The framers of the Constitution incorporated these restrictions on the Centre's powers in Article 370. Article 370 thus limited the power of the Centre by laying down that in extending central laws on matters provided in the Instrument of Accession, mere consultation with the government of J&K would be enough but on matters not conceded to the Centre by the Instrument of Accession, concurrence of the state government will be required. Article 370(3) further laid down that the President may, by order, modify this Article or order that it will cease to operate. But such an order could be issued only with the concurrence of the constituent assembly of J&K. After the dissolution of Kashmir's constituent assembly on January 25, 1957, this option was no more available to the president. Ideally, the matter should have first been referred to the apex court for advisory opinion.

We have now used Article 370 to insert a new clause in Article 367 and then invoked this clause to convert the constituent assembly of Kashmir into a legislative assembly of a Union Territory. This is a blot on constitutionalism. Similarly, sounding a death knell to all principles of representative democracy, we have treated the governor as the government of the state. While governments repre-

sent the popular will, it is an open secret that governors are agents of the Centre.

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The President of India, too, like Fakhruddin Ali Ahmad, has not kept in mind that he had taken an oath under Article 60 "to preserve, protect and defend the constitution". He should have at least consulted the Attorney General and other experts before signing the orders and assenting to the J&K State Reorganisation Bill. Zail Singh did not sign the Postal Bill even though Rajiv Gandhi had 400 plus MPs in Lok Sabha.

Nobody has even bothered to examine the delicate international law angle in this controversy. The right of internal self-determination cannot be claimed by a minority in a country. But the denial of internal political freedoms may lead to a claim of external self-determination by secessionist elements. The UN High Commissioner for Human Rights in its 2018 and 2019 reports did recommend to us to "fully respect the right of self-determination of the people as protected under international law". Keeping the intricate international dimensions in mind, PM Modi in his address to the nation spoke like a true statesman and assured Kashmiris about their political rights in electing their representatives.

The BJP has argued that Article 370 was temporary though the Supreme Court did not say so. Unlike Article 369 and SC/ST reservation in Parliament and assemblies, it did not mention any time limit. Having abrogated Article 370, we should forcefully defend our action. Our courts can examine the constitutionality of this abrogation but we cannot permit any other country to raise this issue. Gandhiji said the ends do not justify the means. Even conceding that the time for the abrogation of Article 370 had come, it could have been done in a more democratic and humane manner.

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## LAW AND INJUSTICE

Instead of a separate law on triple talaq, Centre should have framed a just law for all



RAZIA PATEL

THE MUSLIM WOMEN (Protection of Rights on Marriage) Bill 2019, now a law, has been hailed as a victory for gender justice by Law Minister Ravi Shankar Prasad and other supporters of the Bill. The question is: Will this law really provide justice to Muslim women? To answer it, we need to inspect the Bill's content as well as the intention with which it has been brought in.

The issue of triple talaq is definitely real in India. For decades, many Muslim women activists have been engaged in a struggle to change discriminatory family laws. The agenda had been holistic, covering not only one form of talaq but traditions like halala and polygamy and demanding a more comprehensive "gender just law". The intention was to bring Muslim women into the gamut of secular family laws, which are applicable to all other women from all religions in India. However, the current Act is a far cry from such an objective.

The Bill has many flaws. Its first provision says: "Any pronouncement of talaq by a Muslim husband upon his wife, by words either spoken or written or in electronic form or in any other manner whatsoever shall be void and illegal." In fact, such a practice had al-

ready been declared unconstitutional by the Supreme Court in its judgment on August 21, 2017. The SC had sought legislation in support of its judgment and the law would have been sufficient with just this one section. However, the government has included unwarranted criminal provisions in the Bill.

The next provision talks about punishment of the husband with imprisonment up to three years and a fine. This is, in itself, a contradiction. If triple talaq has no legal validity (by virtue of the SC verdict), how can you punish it? Also, the personal laws of all communities are civil matters. This is the first time that criminal provisions are being laid out in matters of marriage and divorce.

The next provision talks about the husband providing a subsistence allowance. How can a jailed person provide money? Further, the woman in a case of triple talaq, will receive no support from her in-laws, since she will be seen as being responsible for putting her husband in jail.

There are existing laws which protect Hindu women and those from other communities in cases of domestic violence. Instead of this new law, in case a husband insists on triple talaq by unlawful means, he could have been

booked under the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act. A common gender-just law could be a solution, rather than separate religion-specific laws. The BJP has batted for a common civil code since decades. Ironically, when the time came, they opted for a sharia-based law.

Currently, there is a sense of apprehension in the Muslim community, given the backdrop of mob lynching and the talk by political leaders of imposing the National Register of Citizens not only in the Northeast but across the country. The fear is that the triple talaq law will be used as a tool to harass men from the community.

The way in which the Bill was passed in the Rajya Sabha is also a concern. Many members who opposed it in the debate helped the BJP by remaining absent during voting. This was irresponsible and shows apathy towards issues concerning Muslims.

This law will only serve the political purpose of the BJP. Affected Muslim women will continue to suffer. In fact, the law will add to their suffering.

Patel is chairperson, Muslim Mahila Sanvidhan Hakka Parishad

## AUGUST 14, 1979, FORTY YEARS AGO



**MORVI FLOOD DEATHS**  
THOUSANDS ARE BELIEVED to have perished in the industrial township of Morvi and nearby villages in Rajkot district, but the state administration is uncommunicative on the situation in the disaster-hit area. Bodies of the flood victims are submerged under debris which it might take a long time to remove. Vultures were seen swarming the streets, which were littered with corpses. According to a young man returning from Morvi, a hospital with 200 patients and doctors and the police quarters were washed away. Newspapers carried reports with estimates of deaths ranging from 1,000 to 25,000, but were unable to get details about

the situation as the teleprinter communication with Rajkot remained cut off.

### BSF SHOOT ORDER

THE BORDER SECURITY Force, which is policing the Indo-Bangladesh border is under orders to shoot at sight if the non-Bengali Muslims from Bangladesh carry out their threatened long march and enter Indian territory tomorrow, according to reports from border areas. The BSF has made all arrangements to meet any eventuality, the reports added. The West Bengal government home secretary, Rathin Sen Gupta, told reporters that "the entry of the marchers into Indian territory will have to be stopped and the BSF

will take necessary action."

### No RBI STRIKES

THE UNION CABINET decided to repeal the controversial ordinance relating to strike by Reserve Bank employees. It allowed another ordinance impounding the compulsory deposits for one year to lapse. With the prorogation of the last session of Parliament, these ordinances would have lapsed even otherwise. However, with today's decision, the new coalition government has allayed the apprehensions voiced by the leftist parties. The Cabinet has authorised Finance minister, H N Bahuguna, to discuss the CDS matter with trade union representatives.

# Reading the slowdown

To arrest it, a coordinated policy response, addressing both structural and cyclical factors, is needed



Soumya Kanti Ghosh

THERE ARE CURRENTLY three issues that beg answers from policy makers. First, what are the reasons for the current demand slowdown? Second, whether the current slowdown is structural or cyclical and third, whether banks have stopped lending and are causing a disruption in demand. Let us address them one by one, in the reverse order.

The slowdown in demand is a fact, but the consensus that banks are not extending enough credit to help us navigate through the current slowdown is misplaced. This is a false narrative as Economics 101 suggests a bi-directional causality between economic growth and credit off-take. Thus, a growth slowdown will percolate into a credit slowdown and not vice-versa. However, let us momentarily digress from Econ 101 and just validate whether banks are extending credit, particularly retail credit, as we are in the midst of a consumer slowdown, if we go by indicators like car sales.

Here are the numbers. For the three year period ended FY19, incremental bank credit to the economy was at Rs 20.3 lakh crore, of which agriculture received Rs 2.3 lakh crore, services Rs 8.8 lakh crore, retail/personal received Rs 8.3 lakh crore (housing was at Rs 4.1 lakh crore) and industry got Rs 1.5 lakh crore. In the comparable period, GDP expanded by Rs 36.5 lakh crore. In Q1FY20, retail loans have continued to expand at Rs 46,000 crore (bank credit, though, has shown a de-growth of Rs 1.3 lakh crore, led by industry) even though some segments of retail loans like vehicles have indeed registered a negative growth revealing lack of demand and other cyclical issues afflicting the auto sector.

What does all this imply? Incremental bank credit doubled the pace in FY19 as compared to FY17. The slowdown in bank credit, if any, is primarily the result of credit to industry, that first declined in FY17, barely managed a positive number in FY18, but has somehow picked up pace in FY19 (ten times larger vis-à-vis FY18). This is the result of several structural reforms and disruptions, apart from deleveraging and asset quality issues beginning in FY16. It is thus foolhardy to blame bank credit for the current demand disruption. It is, rather, the lack of demand for bank credit which is causing the slowdown.

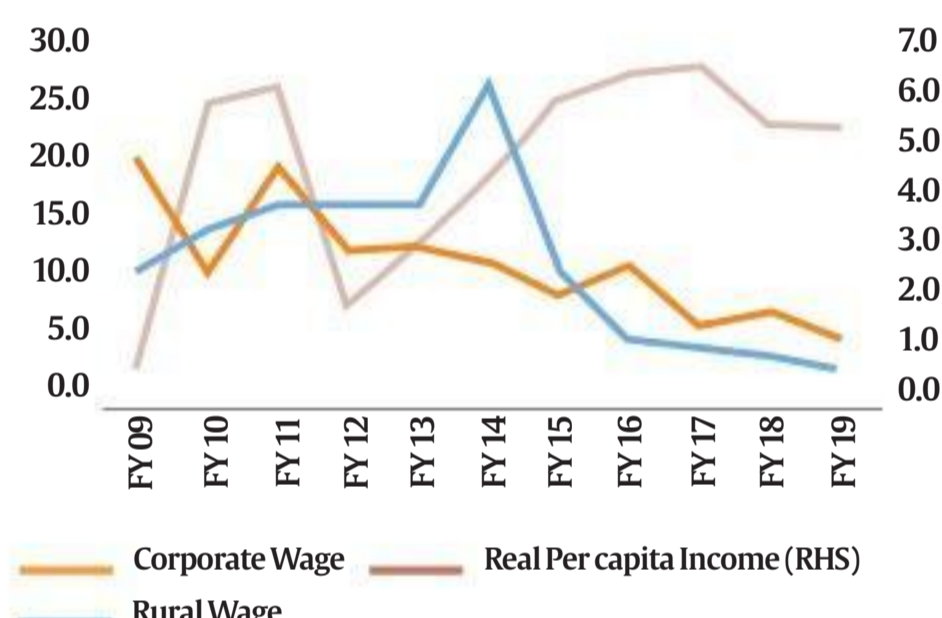
This brings us to the first and second question of the reasons behind the current demand slowdown and how to label it: Structural or cyclical or both? This labeling is important, as a structural slowdown would imply macro reforms, ignoring business cycles, while a cyclical slowdown would mean unleashing counter cyclical policies. We believe the current slowdown is a combination of both structural and cyclical.

First, what are the structural factors that might have resulted in the current demand deceleration? We believe that the most crucial factor that is reinforcing the demand slowdown is slow growth of both corporate (a proxy for urban wages) and rural wages. The corporate wage (based on financial data of 4,000 to 5,000 companies) which used to grow in high double digits (peaked at 21.4 per cent in FY09) post the crisis is now down to single digit growth, as corporates are more conscious of costs in the midst of a massive deleveraging cycle. In a similar vein, rural wages have also declined from double digit growth rates (peaked at 27.7 per cent in FY14) growth till FY15 to less than five per cent in the last three fiscals. Clearly, this high growth phase was unsustainable (a deadly cocktail of wage-inflation nexus). However, the bottom line is the subsequent decline in wage growth and structural changes have resulted in stagnating per capita income growth (in

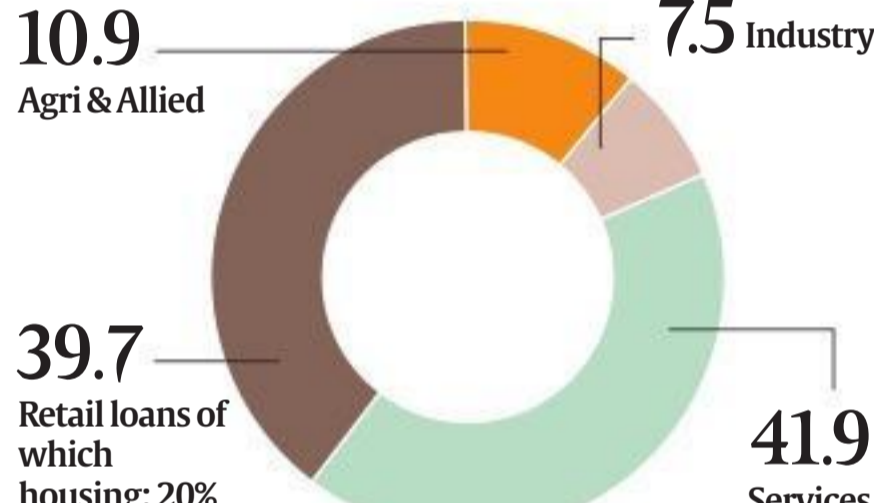


CR Sasikumar

### WAGE & INCOME GROWTH (% YOY)



### SECTOR WISE SHARE (%) IN INCREMENTAL BANK CREDIT DURING FY17-19: RS. 20.3 LAKH CRORE



real terms) and hence to keep the consumption expenditure at the same level, household savings also declined.

Of particular interest is the decline in household savings. Our research shows that this decline is attributed to current high real interest rate (RIR), stagnating per capita income (after touching a peak in FY17) and dependency ratio. In particular, the high RIR has two opposing effects on private savings. The first is the substitution effect, in which savings increase as consumption is postponed to the future, and the second is the wealth effect in which savers increase current consumption at the expense of saving. According to our results, the wealth effect in India dominates the substitution effect resulting in a savings decline. The higher real interest rate tends to increase the lifetime income of lenders and thereby encourages consumption and discourages savings. However, such an increase in consumption is being outstripped by other factors that are inhibiting its growth like per capita income.

Clearly, there are a host of structural factors that are holding back current consumption. A decline in wage growth resulting in lower savings is a result of conscious policy decisions to correct macro imbalances. But it has resulted in consumption taking a hit.

It is naïve to say that there are no cyclical factors. For example, to solve the NBFC crisis

First, what are the structural factors that might have resulted in the current demand deceleration? We believe that the most crucial factor that is reinforcing the demand slowdown is slow growth of both corporate (a proxy for urban wages) and rural wages. The corporate wage (based on financial data of 4,000 to 5,000 companies) which used to grow in high double digits (peaked at 21.4 per cent in FY09) post the crisis is now down to single digit growth, as corporates are more conscious of costs in the midst of a massive deleveraging cycle.

and the recent tax imbroglio, we need more confidence building counter-cyclical measures. In a similar vein, private investment is currently a significant laggard in total investment. The share of the private sector has declined from 50 per cent during the 2007-14 period to 30 per cent during 2015-19 in new projects investments (in value-terms). A possible increase in capacity utilisation (currently at 76.1 per cent) can happen only if we simultaneously address the sector-specific issues in order to boost demand of bank credit. One such sector is the MSME, where delayed payments of receivables for MSMEs need to be monitored. Similarly, to improve transmission in MCLR, both the asset and liability side of bank balance sheets need to move simultaneously, and that is already happening.

We must end on an optimistic note though. India can become a \$5 trillion economy by FY25, based on an assumed 12 per cent nominal GDP growth and a five per cent depreciation in the rupee. Remember, China doubled its GDP in four years and quadrupled it in eight years. India remains a promising growth story — taking continuously shorter spans to add each subsequent trillion dollars of GDP. For this to continue, a coordinated policy response, both cyclical and structural, is a must.

The writer is group chief economic adviser, State Bank of India. Views are personal

## WHAT THE OTHERS SAY

"Indian excesses have been continuing against the Kashmiris for decades, but many economically powerful Muslim states - particularly the petrodollar-fuelled Arab sheikhdoms - have rarely shown an inclination to highlight Kashmir's plight internationally." —DAWN

# Call of the wild

PM Modi's 'Man vs Wild' appearance had a deeper plan, will benefit Uttarakhand tourism



Anil Baluni

THE LATEST EPISODE of Discovery's popular series *Man vs Wild*, hosted by Bear Grylls, presented an altogether unseen facet of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vivid personality. The nonchalant manner in which PM Modi enjoyed his adventurous trip sans any security cover, that too deep inside the world-famous Jim Corbett National Park, left millions of viewers of this superhit series in India — and across the world — spellbound.

But people who have had a personal acquaintance with Modi know well that the adventure show was not a regular television programme — some deep thought process must have gone behind its conceptualisation. Whatever Modi does is not without a purpose: His real plans behind this mega show will be revealed in the months to come. But one thing is obvious: When Modi decided to appear with Grylls, the idea must have been much beyond sharing his personal experiences and his brush with Mother Nature.

The timing of the show is itself significant, as the entire world today is trying to find a way to stop global warming, and save the earth's species from extinction. And we have seen how our prime minister has led the world from the front in this realm during the Paris climate change summit in 2015.

Through Grylls' show, he once again tried to underline how Indians are intertwined with nature, and are deeply in love with Mother Earth. He explained to the world the Indian philosophy of "vasudhaiva kutumbakam" (the world is one family); and, how we believe in "sarve bhavanatu sukhinah, sarve santu niraamayaha, sarve bhadrani pashyantu, maa kashchit dukkha bhagbhavam" (May all become happy, may all be free from illness/ May all see what is auspicious, may no one suffer). We all pray to Mother Nature.

Let's not forget that when the Lok Sabha polls were coming to an end, PM Modi's visit to Kedarnath, a place which is very close to his heart and which he has never missed a chance to visit year after year, was much talked about. When the holy shrine bore the brunt of devastating floods in 2013, he was shaken to the core. Since then he has made every effort to ensure that Kedarnath's glory is restored. Today, the entire Kedarnath valley, particularly the shrine, has virtually risen from the ashes due to the determined efforts of Modi.

The regular visits Modi has made have not only speeded up the restoration and rebuilding of Kedarnath, but have also restored the faith of the masses. Gradually, the entire shrine complex has regained its

grandeur under the guidance of the prime minister. This has also led to an influx of visitors to Kedarnath and other old shrines in Uttarakhand. This year a record 11 lakh visitors are likely to pay their obeisance at Kedarnath before the holy shrine closes for winter. This number — it used to be around seven lakh in earlier years — has seen a remarkable increase. Faith has prevailed against all odds.

One interesting aspect related to Modi's visit to Kedarnath is about his stay at a stone cave where he meditated. Today, I am flooded with queries from across India, and also abroad, from people showing keen desire to stay in the "Modi cave" — the name it has got after the prime minister's stay — for meditation. And all this is due to Modi's charisma.

A similar effect is likely to be witnessed in Jim Corbett after the airing of the *Man vs Wild* episode. The transformation of Uttarakhand from the land of religious tourism into a haven for adventure and nature tourism is inevitable. Uttarakhand will soon become the most sought-after destination for adventure and wildlife. We will see, in the months to come, Jim Corbett National Park taking a big leap in the tourism sector in India and abroad.

Modi has a unique way of making things work. One of the shining examples of it is the world's tallest statue, "Statue of Unity", dedicated to the "Iron Man of India", Bharat Ratna Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, which has come up at a remote location in Gujarat. Now, every month, lakhs of visitors are travelling to this place which has led to a complete transformation of the region: This has given a fillip to the local economy and created new avenues for jobs.

It is with this extraordinary vision that Modi works towards the development of society. So, when he set a target of developing all-weather roads in the difficult terrains of the Uttarakhand Himalayas in record time, and decided to invest Rs 10,000 crore to construct 570 km of roads under the Bharatmala project connecting bordering and remote areas of Uttarakhand to the national mainstream, his vision to ensure speedy development of Uttarakhand was crystal clear. Today, the Uttarakhand hills are being connected through the rail network also.

Since I belong to Uttarakhand, I have been witness to the transformation that the state is undergoing under the direct supervision of Modi: You have to visit the state to experience these changes. For Uttarakhand and its people, Modi is a true "vikas purush", a "karamyogi". I firmly believe that what is true for Uttarakhand is true for the rest of the country. Since 2014, India has been undergoing social and economic transformation. Time and again Modi has broken myths, walked on the path his predecessors shunned, and taken decisions which were considered impossible. India, and the world, are fast realising the mettle Modi is made of.

The writer is head, BJP media cell, and Rajya Sabha MP

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### IN DEFENCE OF 370

THIS REFERS TO the article, 'Creation of order' (IE, August 12). The Constitution (Application to Jammu and Kashmir) Order, 1954 has been amended multiple times. The spirit of Article 370 was more honoured in the breach than in observance. The mainstream leadership in the state did cultivate a psychological barrier in the mind of the people, but similar emotive appeals have been made by other regional parties as well to foster their political space vis-a-vis national politics.

Sudip Kumar Dey, Kolkata

### HARD TEST AHEAD

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'The external test' (IE, August 13). New Delhi has to plan an effective strategy to counter all the allegations of Pakistan on Kashmir. It has to firmly convince international organisations that all allegations of Pakistan on Kashmir are baseless. The external test is a tough challenge for the government. It will require the government to pursue a firm stand regarding the integrity of Jammu and Kashmir.

Sanjay Chawla, Amritsar

THIS REFERS TO the editorial 'The External test' (August 13). With Pakistan upping the ante and threatening to move UNSC, India cannot afford to dismiss the issue without complete damage control exercise. Article 370 at best was a temporary provision and the government has every right to change it. India must understand that the task of maintaining peace in Kashmir and bringing the average Kashmiri into mainstream India will be a challenge. The success of the abrogation of the Article will hinge over it.

Bholey Bhardwaj, Mumbai

### 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

### CONG RESET BUTTON

THIS REFERS TO the article, 'Ringing in the old' (IE, August 13). When Rahul Gandhi declared that none of the Nehru-Gandhi family members would take up his role after his resignation, we thought that at last there would be a change of guard: A non-Gandhi would be at the helm. However, once more, after being at the helm for 19 years, Sonia Gandhi was given this responsibility. Politically and otherwise, things have changed drastically in the last few years. It will be a litmus test for Sonia Gandhi, especially in the forthcoming state elections. Whether she would be able to hold her workers and leaders together would be keenly watched.

Bal Govind, Noida

possible possible" and "fulfilled the expectations of crores of Indians".

### REDEFINING SWARAJ

THE ORGANISER Independence Day special issue has an essay by RSS General Secretary Manmohan Vaidya on the organisation being "nothing but the execution of the visions for revitalising spirituality and society before political change exhibited in the writing of Swami Vivekanand, Rabindranath Tagore and B R Ambedkar". This has been the "soul of Bhartiya nationalism" and the reason why "RSS finds resonance across the regions". Vaidya writes that RSS founder KB Hedgewar believed that "for freedom to be realised it was essential that mental, spiritual and social awakening needs to take place alongside". Tagore, he says, wrote in "Swadeshi Samaj" that a "welfare state is not our Bhartiya tradition". Vaidya blames the welfare state for the spread of Christianity and Islam during the crusades to lands where people were dependent on the state.

Compiled by Krishn Kaushik



## VIEW FROM THE RIGHT

### REMEMBERING SUSHMA

ORGANISER AND *Panchajanya* remember senior BJP leader and former foreign minister Sushma Swaraj, who died on August 6. Both the publications have multiple pieces on her. In *Organiser*, editor Prafulla Ketkar writes that Swaraj was "not just in appearance, but even in qualities she was as Bhartiya womanhood personified". He writes: "A typical saree wearing, relatively short with big Bindi and strong Sindoor, (Swaraj) proudly carried her Bhartiya identity at global stage."

In *Panchajanya*, editor Hitesh Shankar writes that she was "undefeated". In the backdrop of her death on the same day as the government read down Article 370, Shankar says that Swaraj's "life journey

came to an end as the promise was fulfilled". He mentions that the promise of abrogating Article 370 was "in the hearts of its cadre, in the roots of the party" since the days of Jana Sangh.

### SETTLING KASHMIR

THE EDITORIAL in *Organiser* on the reorganisation of the erstwhile Jammu and Kashmir state says that though the RSS and BJP "since Jana Sangh days", and "many nationalists were clear that Article 370 and its misuse in the form of 35A... are at the root of most of the problems in J&K, larger social awareness was not there". "Multiple frauds at electoral and constitutional level were incurred in the name of the 'special status' given by the temporary provision" and that "barring a few families", the abrogation is the "real swaraj" from the "72 years of misgovernance": the freedom from election rigging, discrimination, infiltration and underdevelopment". It adds that the work of "giving a greater touch" to all the people of the two new UTs is the "real task at hand".

Another article says the "onus is on the

government to 'win the hearts and minds of all Kashmir Muslims'. The article addresses Kashmir's Muslims. It says: "Wake up, oh the blind men of Hindostan! Particularly those cronies belonging to the Congress Party Dynasty! Deracialisation (sic) of Kashmiri Muslims is a Himalayan challenge. No one can deny the mood of the nation and also those in the Jammu and Ladakh regions, applauding the bold decision by Modi-led NDA government." It says Kashmiri Muslims must "understand that they should not allow Srinagar and other towns and villages (from Paradise to Hell) to undergo the same fate as infrastructure damage in 16 towns and cities across Syria". It also adds: "At the same time, Kashmiri Muslims must also realise that India is unlike the US, Kashmir is also unlike Afghanistan. Indian troops are not aliens like the US troops in the Middle East. India's patience, punishment withstanding capability and resilience is far greater than Pakistan and its cronies in India."

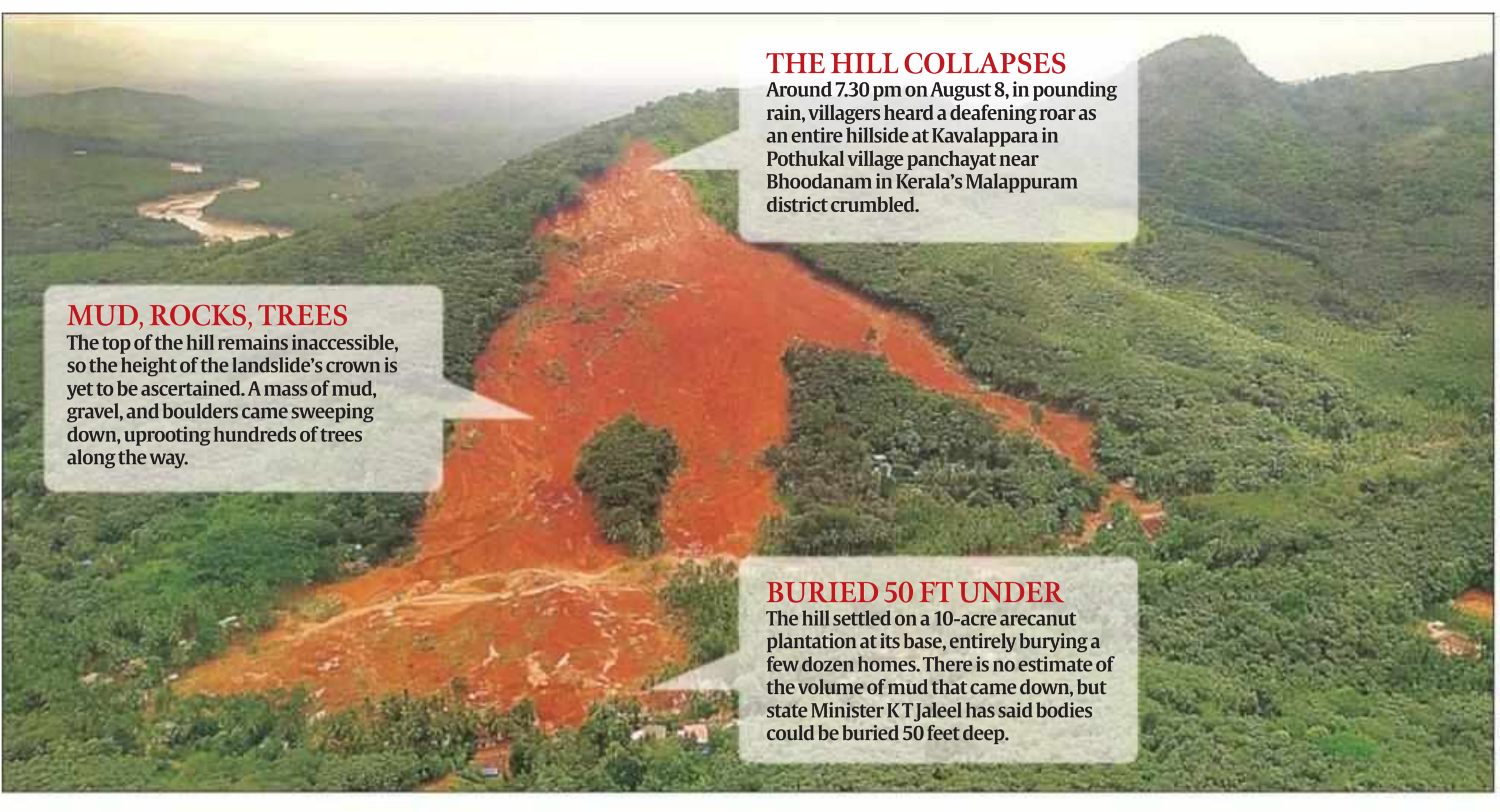
*Panchajanya* claims that "removal of Article 370 was the demand of the times" and the Modi government has made the "im-

# How a hill in the Western Ghats buried a part of a village in Kerala

Almost 60 people are feared dead in Kavalappara, buried alive under layers of mud and rocks. It is the worst tragedy in Kerala's devastating monsoon so far this year



**THE AREA**  
The landslide at Kavalappara occurred a couple of hours after another in Puthumala in neighbouring Wayanad district. The two landslide sites are on either side of a section of the ecologically sensitive Western Ghats, close to Tamil Nadu's Nilgiri district. Water coming down the hills at Puthumala becomes the Chulika stream, which meanders through gorges and valleys to emerge as the bigger Chaliyar river, which flows by Kavalappara. On August 8-9, the Chaliyar inundated several towns along its banks.



**MUD, ROCKS, TREES**  
The top of the hill remains inaccessible, so the height of the landslide's crown is yet to be ascertained. A mass of mud, gravel, and boulders came sweeping down, uprooting hundreds of trees along the way.

**THE HILL COLLAPSES**  
Around 7.30 pm on August 8, in pounding rain, villagers heard a deafening roar as an entire hillside at Kavalappara in Pothukal village panchayat near Bhoodanam in Kerala's Malappuram district crumbled.

**BURIED 50 FT UNDER**  
The hill settled on a 10-acre arecanut plantation at its base, entirely burying a few dozen homes. There is no estimate of the volume of mud that came down, but state Minister KT Jaleel has said bodies could be buried 50 feet deep.

**RAINING DEATH**  
Malappuram meteorological subdivision got 189.4 mm rain from August 1 to August 7, 66% more than the normal 114.3 mm. On August 8, the Nilambur rain gauge station, the one nearest to Kavalappara, recorded the highest rainfall of that day in Kerala.  
**At least 59 people from 43 families are feared dead. 23 bodies had been recovered until Tuesday evening**

**HOURE EARLIER**  
17 people from 7 families died after a landslide washed away 10 acres of land in a private tea estate in Puthumala in Meppadi village panchayat of Wayanad district. 53 houses, a mosque, a temple, a shop and two estate-quarters vanished under mud and rocks. The crown of the landslide was 800 ft high. Wayanad meteorological subdivision got 252.3 mm rain from August 1-7 — the most in Kerala during this period, and a 37% departure from the 184.5 mm normal.

REPORTING: SHAJU PHILIP  
Photo: IAF

## SIMPLY PUT

# West well stocked with water, South is short

Reservoirs exceed normal levels for this stage of the year after heavy rain in Maharashtra and Gujarat, way below normal in rain-hit Kerala and Karnataka



The Koyneshwar temple on the bank of the swollen Koyna river, in Karad, Maharashtra, on Tuesday, PTI

**ANJALI MARAR**  
PUNE, AUGUST 13

AMONG THE four states that have experienced extremely heavy rainfall this month, the status of water stored in their reservoirs is vastly different. Nationwide, the 103 reservoirs monitored by the Central Water Commission (CWC) had stored 76.845 billion cubic metres (BCM) by August 8, or 47 per cent of their live storage capacity. This was below last year's storage at this stage (97 per cent) as well as the 10-year average (97 per cent).

In Gujarat and Maharashtra, storage in the 35 reservoirs has surpassed the 10-year average (considered normal), following incessant rainfall over the Western region since the start of August, according to the latest live storage report issued by the CWC, with figures updated until August 8. On the other hand, although coastal Karnataka and north Kerala too have had heavy rainfall over the last fortnight, the water stock in reservoirs in both two Southern states is still below normal for this time of the year.

Southern Gujarat, and western and southern Maharashtra have had heavy rainfall, which has led to floods in Kolhapur, Sangli, Satara districts of southern Maharashtra. The Western region has 35 reservoirs, in Maharashtra and Gujarat. The current live storage in the 35 reservoirs is 17.40 billion cubic metres (BCM), which is 54 per cent of their live storage capacity of 32.31 BCM. Last year, the live storage during this period was 35 per cent, the CWC report said. The 54 per cent also surpasses the 10-year average storage of 46 per cent.

In the Southern region are 32 reservoirs under CWC monitoring, with a total live stor-

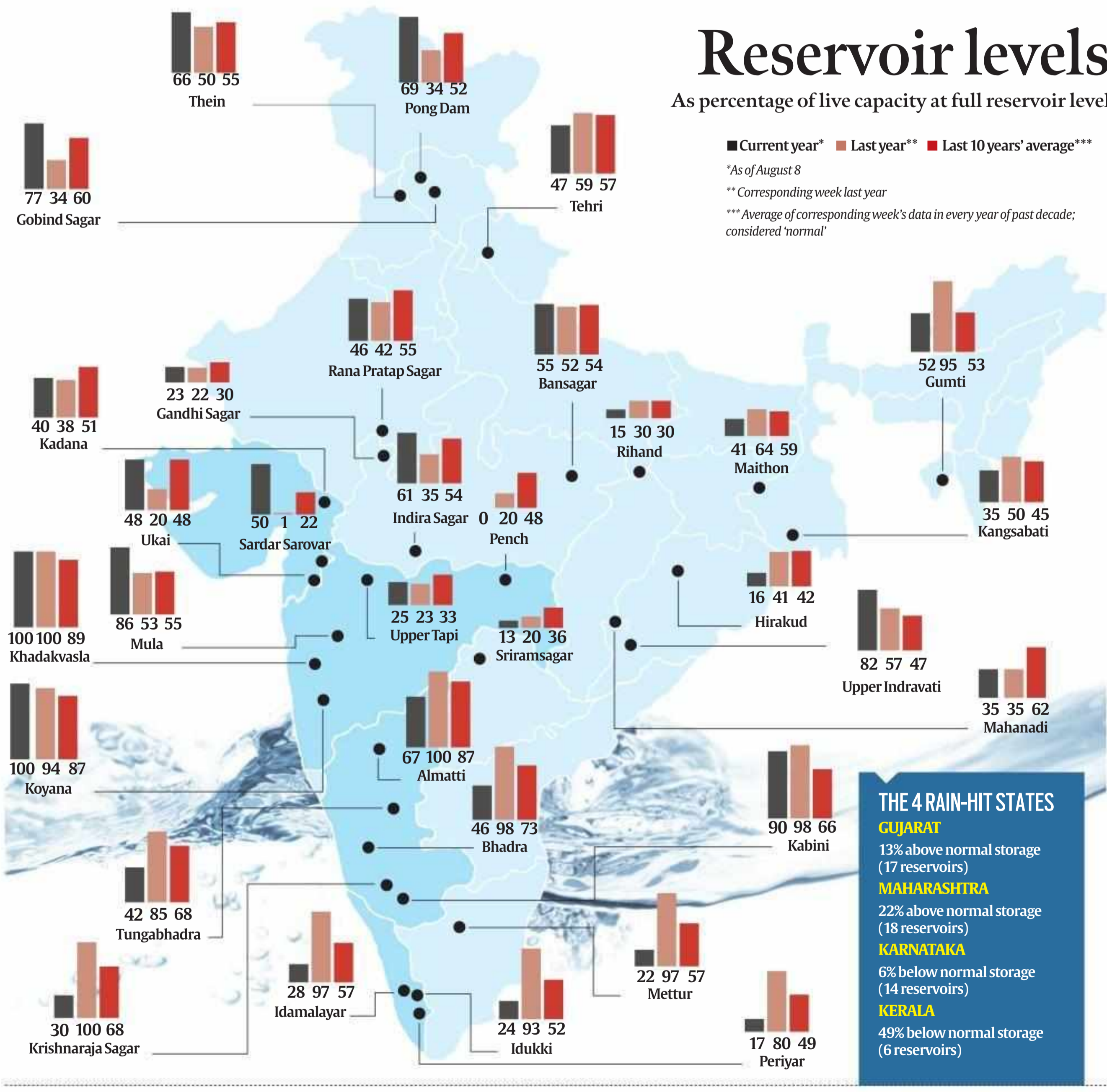
age capacity of 52.10 BCM. As of August 8, the total live storage available in these reservoirs is 21.83 BCM, which is 42% of total live storage capacity. This is below the storage during the corresponding period of last year (62 per cent) as well as the 10-year average for the corresponding period (50 per cent).

Of the two Southern states that have witnessed very heavy rainfall, the storage in the 14 reservoirs of Karnataka is 6 per cent below normal. In the six reservoirs of Kerala, storage is as much as 49 per cent below normal for this time of the year. Of the 32 reservoirs in the entire Southern region, as many as 19 have reserves that are below 40 per cent of full level. The lowest deficit is in Telangana, where the two reservoirs (not counting combined projects with Andhra Pradesh) are 62 per cent below normal. Tamil Nadu's six reservoirs are 55 per cent below normal.

As in the Western region, Northern India's six reservoirs, at 69 per cent of their total live storage capacity (12.4 BCM of 18.01 BCM), too, have exceeded the corresponding storage at this time last year (39 per cent) as well as the 10-year average for this stage of the monsoon (56 per cent).

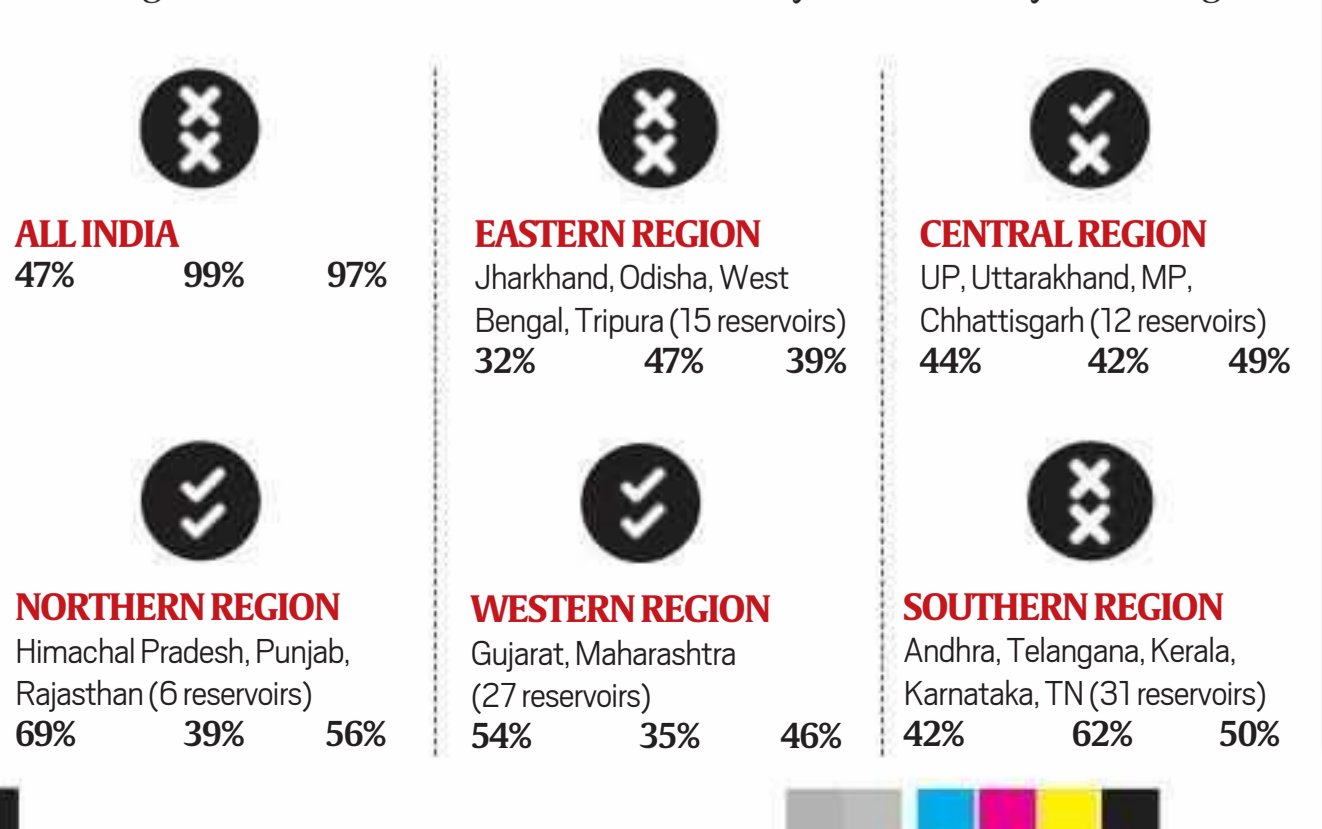
In Central India, the 14 reservoirs are at 19.13 BCM, or 44 per cent of total live capacity (43.11 BCM), which is better than last year's corresponding status (42 per cent) but lower than the 10-year average for this period (49 per cent). With less than two months of the monsoon season remaining, Uttar Pradesh's reservoirs are at 54 per cent below normal.

In the Eastern region, the 16 reservoirs are at 6.09 BCM, or 32 per cent of total live capacity (18.83 BCM), which is lower than last year's corresponding status (47 per cent) as well as the 10-year average for this period (39 per cent).



**THE 4 RAIN-HIT STATES**  
**GUJARAT**  
13% above normal storage (17 reservoirs)  
**MAHARASHTRA**  
22% above normal storage (18 reservoirs)  
**KARNATAKA**  
6% below normal storage (14 reservoirs)  
**KERALA**  
49% below normal storage (6 reservoirs)

### REGION BY REGION: HOW FULL ARE RESERVOIRS



### REGION-WISE FILLING POSITION AS PERCENTAGE OF FRL

	100%	81-99%	51-80%	41-50%	40% & below
North	-	-	4	2	-
East	-	1	2	6	7
West	2	8	4	4	17
Central	-	-	5	1	8
South	-	3	7	3	19
Total	2	12	22	16	51

### BASIN WISE STORAGE POSITION

**BETTER THAN NORMAL (average storage of last 10 years):** Indus, Narmada, Tapi, Godavari and West Flowing Rivers of South  
**DEFICIENT:** Ganga, Mahanadi & Neighbouring East Flowing Rivers (EFRs) and Cauvery & neighbouring EFRs.  
**HIGHLY DEFICIENT:** Sabarmati and Rivers of Kutch  
**CLOSE TO NORMAL:** Mahi and Krishna