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TELLING NUMBERS

The extent of groundwater over-exploitation, state by state

GROUNDWATER resources are over-exploited in 1,186 out of 6,881 "assessment units" (blocks, talukas, watersheds etc) in the country, the Jal Shakti Ministry said in reply to a question in Lok Sabha. This was as assessed in 2017, and translates to 17%, or one in every six of these units. All these over-exploited assessment units are in 17 states and Union Territories. Punjab has the highest extent of over-exploitation at 79 per cent of its blocks, followed by Rajasthan, Delhi, Haryana and Himachal

Pradesh, each at 50 per cent or more. Tamil Nadu, which has the highest number of blocks (1,116 firkas), also has the highest number of over-exploited units at 462 firkas, or 40 per cent. In Maharashtra, where the Marathwada region is drought-hit, 3 per cent of the talukas are over-exploited. In Uttar Pradesh with 830 units (820 blocks and 10 cities), 11 per cent are over-exploited. In the eight Northeastern states none of the assessment units (districts and blocks) is over-exploited.

STATES WITH HIGHEST GROUNDWATER DEPLETION, 2017

State	Total units	Semi-critical		Critical		Over-exploited	
		Units	%	Units	%	Units	%
Punjab	138	5	4	2	1	109	79
Rajasthan	295	29	10	33	11	185	63
Delhi	34	7	21	2	6	22	65
Haryana	128	21	16	3	2	78	61
Himachal	8	1	13	0	0	4	50
Tamil Nadu	1,166	163	14	79	7	462	40
Telangana	584	169	29	67	11	70	12
All India	6,881	972	14	313	5	1,186	17

Note: The units assessed are blocks in Haryana, Punjab and Rajasthan; Mandals in Telangana; Districts/Valley in Himachal; Firkas in Tamil Nadu; Tehsils in NCT Delhi Source: Jal Shakti Ministry

THIS WORD MEANS

AREA 51

What is this US facility, where aliens supposedly visit? What to make of the 'plan' by 2 mn people to storm it?

ON SEPTEMBER 20, at 3 am Pacific Daylight Time (3.30 pm IST), some two million people plan — or claim to plan — to storm a US Air Force facility called Area 51. On a Facebook event titled "Storm Area 51, They Can't Stop All of us", two million people have clicked "attending" and another 1.4 million have clicked "interested".

A 38,400-acre facility, Area 51 is in Southern Nevada. Officially known as the Nevada Test and Training Range, Area 51 is part of the Nellis Air Force Base and is used as a training centre for the US Air Force. The name originates from its location of the Nevada map.

CONSPIRACY THEORIES: With the facility shrouded in secrecy, several conspiracy theories have emerged over the years. Several Americans believed it was where the government hid bodies of aliens and UFOs, some believed it was where the government held "meetings" with extraterrestrials, and others speculated it was where the government developed "time travel" technology.

The CIA, according to official documents, has been using the facility since 1955 to develop and test supersonic aircraft and stealth fighter jets. It was only in 2013 that the CIA published declassified documents admitting that the Area 51 is a secret military site. This was following a Freedom of Information request filed in 2005 by Dr Jeffrey T Richelson, a senior fellow at the George Washington University National Security Archive.

THE FACEBOOK EVENT: As the announcement about the planned storming gained popularity online, the US Air



Nevada Test and Training Range. AP

Force issued a statement warning against any attempt to enter the high security premises. "Area 51 is an open training range for the US Air Force, and we would discourage anyone from trying to come into the area where we train American armed forces. The US Air Force always stands ready to protect America and its assets," said the statement, as quoted by *The Washington Post*.

It is unlikely that people will be able to enter Area 51, which is heavily guarded round the clock. The airspace above the facility is also out of bounds for civilian aircraft and special permission is required before flying through its airspace. Those behind the Facebook event, too, have made it clear that they have no intention of entering the facility and it was a mere joke. A pinned post on the Facebook event page now has a clarification: "Hello US government, this is a joke, and I do not actually intend to go ahead with this plan. I just thought it would be funny and get me some thumbs uppies on the internet."

SIMPLY PUT QUESTION & ANSWER

Why aren't cars selling?

Not just cars, sales of trucks, tractors and motorcycles too are down. The NBFC crisis has caused a liquidity crunch, and customers are postponing the decision to buy. What does this mean for the economy?

SANDEEP SINGH & ANIL SASI
NEW DELHI, AUGUST 4

LEADING AUTOMOBILE manufacturers announced a sharp decline of up to 50 per cent in their domestic sales in July with the market leader Maruti Suzuki reporting a 36 per cent drop in sales during the month.

Hit by the liquidity crunch for non-banking financial companies (NBFCs) and a dip in consumer sentiment, July became the twelfth out of the last 13 months in which the auto sector has seen a decline in domestic sales.

Manufacturers are now going for cuts in production, and the industry that is one of the biggest job creators in the country is starting at a deep-rooted slowdown and job losses across its value chain.

Where is the decline?

The drop in sales is happening across all segments. If passenger vehicles sales witnessed a fall of 18.4 per cent in the quarter ended June 2019, the commercial vehicle segment witnessed a 16.6 per cent decline. The two-wheeler segment too, saw a drop in sales by 11.7 per cent during the quarter.

In fact, the 18.4 per cent drop in passenger vehicles sales in the quarter ended June 2019 was the worst quarter for the industry in the last 18 years since Q3 of 2001-02, when sales fell 27 per cent.

Even the tractor industry, which had bucked the broader downturn in the auto sector to post a third consecutive year of double digit growth up until March 2019, has seen a steady slide since then, recording the biggest monthly fall in production in June 2019.

Tractor sales have consistently fallen since March 2019, amidst weak farm sentiment; with volumes seeing a double-digit decline over the past three months, and the worst number of an over 32 per cent decline in production in June 2019.

Why are car sales falling?

Industry insiders feel that while the pressure on NBFCs and the liquidity squeeze in the market is a big factor, the decline in customer confidence is the other factor that is leading to a continuous slide in sales of passenger cars.

According to these sources, a third of the retail sales of Maruti Suzuki — the country's largest carmaker — were funded by NBFCs, and a liquidity crisis for the NBFC sector has



Maruti Suzuki factory in Manesar, Haryana. The carmaker reported a 36 per cent drop in sales in July. Amit Mehra/Express Archive

led to a drop in sales for lack of funding for customers.

Customers are also postponing their purchase decisions due to various considerations, including an expected fall in GST rates, and the hope that the transition from BS-IV to BS-VI may lead to big discounts between January and March 2020. Customers are also expecting discounts in the coming festive season.

However, company officials say that they do not expect the trend to be reversed in the near future.

Why is there a decline in the sales of commercial vehicles and tractors?

The NBFC liquidity stress has been playing a part in the decline in sales of vehicles across segments, as NBFCs are significant lenders in the tier II and smaller towns.

Tractor sales have been further hurt by weak farm sentiment, the slowdown in the rural economy, and fears of a worse than average monsoon this year. This comes amid the third advance estimates of crop production indicating a slide in rabi production. Kharif sowing has remained weak so far.

Truck sales have been hurt by changes

made by the government in the axle load norms. Industry officials said that a significant decline in the sales of commercial vehicles has been visible ever since the increased axle load has become effective. The industry has been calling for a scrapping policy and other policy support measures to revive demand.

According to data released by the Society of Indian Automobile Manufacturers (SIAM), overall, the commercial vehicles segment registered a decline of 9.53 per cent in April-June 2019 as compared to the same period last year. While the medium & heavy CVs declined 16.60 per cent, LCVs declined by 5.06 per cent during the quarter.

What does this situation indicate?

The sharp decline in sales numbers of the leading manufacturer shows the decline in consumer sentiment and indicates an overall slowdown in the economy. The drop in sales over the last one year has led major manufacturers to cut production, and has put pressure on the overall automotive sector, including the automobile ancillaries.

Last month, Ashok Leyland shut its

manufacturing plant in Pantnagar, Uttarakhand, for nine days until July 24 because of weak demand for commercial vehicles. The plant, which can manufacture 1.5 lakh units annually, was earlier closed intermittently for some seven days between June 17 and June 29.

Tata Motors is learnt to have decided to close its Pantnagar facility in July for a couple of days in order to ensure improvement in productivity.

Maruti Suzuki has cut vehicle production for the last seven months, including in July 2019.

There have already been job losses across the value chain of the automobile sector, including in the dealerships and ancillaries. The continuing decline in sales is now expected to put pressure on manufacturers to cut down on their costs, and reduce headcounts.

And how are two-wheelers faring?

The two-wheeler segment — the more affordable form of motorised mobility and an indicator of consumption demand in the hinterland — has also seen a slowdown.

Hero MotoCorp, the world's largest two-wheeler manufacturer and the market leader in India, Honda Motorcycle & Scooter India, the second biggest two-wheeler player in the Indian market, and TVS Motor Co, all reported a clear drop in dispatches in the months leading up to July.

What happens in the auto segment from here on?

The outlook for the rest of the year will depend on multiple factors, including the progress of the monsoon and the festive season offtake, as well as improvement in the liquidity situation.

Like tractors, the drop in two-wheeler volumes is a key indicator of rural distress. In the two-wheeler segment, motorcycle sales are predominantly dependent on rural India; people in rural areas prefer motorcycles to scooters given their sturdier structure, better performance, and lower operational costs, especially in the economy segments.

The continued sluggishness in two-wheeler volumes is worrying, given that India, despite now being the world's biggest two-wheeler market, still has a very low penetration level of two wheelers. Only about 102 out of every 1,000 people have two-wheelers in India — less than half the penetration levels in Indonesia (281) and Thailand (291).

Why Medical Commission Bill bothers doctors

ABANTIKA GHOSH
NEW DELHI, AUGUST 4

ON THURSDAY, Rajya Sabha passed the National Medical Commission (NMC) Bill that seeks to overhaul the medical education regulation infrastructure. Since then, doctors have struck work in Delhi and other cities. What is the Bill about and why is it controversial?

Bill status

An earlier version of the NMC Bill was introduced during the previous Lok Sabha and later referred to the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Health and Family Welfare. It lapsed with the dissolution of that Lok Sabha. In the current session, the Bill was reintroduced with changes based on the Committee's recommendations. After Lok Sabha passed it, it was sent to Rajya Sabha with two new amendments and passed. It is now headed back to Lok Sabha, where the government enjoys a brute majority.

Licence to practice

Section 32 of the NMC Act 2019 allows the proposed NMC, which will replace the Medical Council of India, to grant "limited li-

cence to practice medicine at mid-level as a community health provider". The Indian Medical Association (IMA) sees it as encouraging quackery. In a letter to Prime Minister Narendra Modi on July 30 calling for the Bill to be redrafted, the IMA wrote: "We are deeply concerned about granting non-medical 'persons connected with modern scientific medical profession', licence to practise modern medicine... This is nothing but legalising and promoting quackery in India... Who will guarantee that these 'legalised quacks' will work in villages only?... National Medical Commission Bill will open the floodgates for licencing 3.5 lakhs 'legalised quacks'. This amounts to 'licence to kill'."

Bridge course

Doctors have expressed concerns about the licence mentioned in Section 32 being another name for a contentious "bridge course". Such a course has been proposed in the original version of the Bill. It would have allowed practitioners of homeopathy and Indian systems of medicine to go on to practice allopathy. In the new Bill, the bridge course has been dropped as per the recommendations of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Health and Family Welfare, which wrote: "The

Committee is of the view that the bridge course should not be made a mandatory provision in the present Bill. However, the Committee appreciates the need to build the capacity of the existing human resources in the healthcare sector, to address the shortage of healthcare professionals so as to achieve the objectives of the National Health Policy, 2017... The Committee, therefore, recommends that the State Governments may implement measures to enhance the capacity of the existing healthcare professionals including AYUSH practitioners, BSc (Nursing), BDS, B Pharma etc to address their State specific primary healthcare issues in the rural areas."

Exit examination

The original Bill had proposed a licentiate examination for doctors, and the IMA had expressed concerns about it then too. The new Bill proposes a single exit exam - the final MBBS exam, which will work as a licentiate examination, a screening test for foreign medical graduates, and an entrance test for admission in postgraduate programmes. It also provides for just one medical entrance test across the country

In the letter IMA wrote: "The Bill condenses final year MBBS exam, Licentiate

exam, and PG NEET into one examination. This effectively removes the opportunity to reappear for PG selection. Moreover, the examination being objective in nature, increases the workload and stress level of the students manifold. Allowing foreign medical graduates to take the same examination will be an injustice... The current system allows medical graduates to practise irrespective of the status of his/her PG NEET."

Arguments in favour

Dr KS Reddy, president of the Public Health Foundation of India and former professor of cardiology at AIIMS, said: "The NMC Bill opens the path to a long awaited reform of medical education... Mid-level health workers like Community Health Providers are very much needed but their training programmes, competencies and roles have to be clearly defined to differentiate them from medical graduates. The Allied Healthcare Professionals Bill, which is to be examined by the Standing Committee, is the right place to position them. A common exit examination is needed for standardisation and postgraduate course selection but must be preceded by a college level testing of practical clinical skills as a qualifier for the theory based NEXT (National Exit Test)."

The assault case against a rapper, and the US gov't's curious interest

NEHA BANKA
KOLKATA, AUGUST 3

AN ASSAULT case against American rapper ASAP Rocky, tried in Stockholm, has captured the public imagination with celebrities including US President Donald Trump campaigning for his release. On Friday, on conclusion of a trial conducted in the Stockholm District Court since July 30, Rocky was released from jail, with the court allowing him — and two others tried — to leave Sweden ahead of the verdict on August 14. Rocky has since reached the US.

What is the case about?

The alleged assault happened on June 30 and charges were formally pressed after three weeks in detention. ASAP Rocky, 30, whose given name is Rakim Mayers, and his associates Bladimir Corniel and David Rispers pleaded not guilty to charges of assaulting a 19-year-old resident of Stockholm.

Video footage published by the tabloid Aftonbladet appeared to show Rocky and his associates fighting with two men. As the video circulated, clips were posted on ASAP Rocky's Instagram account showing a security guard telling locals to stop following the artist. This was to publicly provide Rocky's version of the events, to show that Rocky and his associates had been acting in "self-defence". Rocky went on to perform at the Smash Festival in Stockholm, only to be arrested that evening.

How did the case proceed?

On July 25, the rapper was formally charged by Swedish prosecutors who said the "events in question constitute a crime... despite claims of self-defence and provocation." They said Rocky and his associates "deliberately, together and in agreement" hit the alleged victim with a bottle.

During a trial hearing on August 2, prosecutors asked the court for a six-month sentence for Rocky. Presiding judge Per Lennerbrant ordered Rocky and his associ-



Rapper ASAP Rocky outside the Stockholm court last week. IT News Agency via Reuters

ates to be released from detention pending the final verdict.

Rocky missed scheduled performances in Norway and Poland, throwing into jeopardy his plans of performing live across Europe to

promote his 2018 album, 'Testing'. Rocky's lawyer, Henrik Olsson Lilja told The New York Times in an interview that a Swedish court had determined Rocky to be a flight risk and had hence decided to extend his detention. Rocky appealed his detention in the Supreme Court of Sweden, which rejected it.

Why is there so much interest?

The conversation surrounding the case has had less to do with the alleged assault than with the government and celebrity campaign on his behalf. While he was in detention, US politicians held a press conference on July 17 and called for the State Department and the embassies of the US & Sweden to work to free him.

On Friday, two leaked documents surfaced on Twitter. One of these was written by Robert O'Brien, US Special Presidential Envoy for Hostage Affairs, addressed to the Swedish Prosecution Authority on July 31, days before the trial in ASAP Rocky's case ended. In fact, US media reported that

O'Brien was in Sweden to monitor the trial. In his letter, O'Brien wrote that the US government "wants to resolve this case as soon as possible to avoid potentially negative consequences to the US-Swedish bilateral relationship", implying that diplomatic relations between the two nations would face "negative consequences" if ASAP Rocky's assault charge was not resolved quickly.

The second leaked letter dated August 1 showed the response by Sweden's Prosecutor-General, Petra Lundh to O'Brien's letter. "No other prosecutor, not even I, may interfere with a specific case or try to affect the prosecutor responsible. Furthermore, when a person is charged and the case is brought before a court, only the court can decide, during or after the trial, whether or not to release the person or decide on supervised detention," wrote Lundh.

How has President Trump been involved in the case?

The decision to send the government



The Indian EXPRESS

FOUNDED BY

RAMNATH GOENKA

BECAUSE THE TRUTH INVOLVES US ALL

NEW DELHI, OLD LINE

Once again government at Centre sends message to Valley: It alone will decide, give no explanations

WHAT HAS unfolded over the last few days in Kashmir flies in the face of the claims by the NDA government, and Prime Minister Narendra Modi himself, of winning over Kashmir with love, dialogue and good governance. It is the government's responsibility to reassure the people in times of crisis. But on full display since August 2 is exactly the opposite. Through a series of orders, some of them half-denied, and some implemented despite denials — the evacuation of NIT students, for example — the government has contributed to the spread of panic and uncertainty in the Valley and in the minds of other Indians, almost as if this was the intention. Most astonishing of all was the abrupt cancellation of the Amarnath Yatra, citing a terrorist threat emanating from Pakistan, and the swift evacuation of tourists and pilgrims from the Valley. Callously, the order asking them to leave immediately did not address the apprehensions of the people of Kashmir, thus conveying the crude and brute message that the government was not concerned about them, even as they rushed to petrol pumps and ATMs to stock up. Only weeks earlier, officials had been eager to project the situation in the Valley and at the LoC as much improved, with cross-border infiltration having come down drastically. The U-turn may be based on fresh information, and it is true that the Centre must have the room to take decisions for reasons not always in full public view, but calling off the pilgrimage to Amarnath is virtually an admission that the government cannot prevent terrorist attacks. This, despite the security presence in the Valley, and a new and technologically advanced security deployment specially designed for the pilgrimage.

Over the years, the yatra has become synonymous with the Centre's assertion and demonstration of control over Kashmir. But here is a government that sends in more troops to the Valley, but at the same time, sends out the message that even with close to 4,50,000 troops there, it cannot offer security to pilgrims. In the absence of credible information, all manner of rumours — that plans are afoot to trifurcate J&K, or do away with the state's special constitutional status, among others — have spread. The silence of the government and the top echelons of the party has been conspicuous, especially given that its leaders communicate ceaselessly on social media on other matters.

Whatever lies behind the government's decisions of the last few days — whether it is preparation for contentious and polarising constitutional change, or a strategic assertion of statehood in response to the cosying up of the US with Pakistan towards a deal with the Taliban in Afghanistan — the fallout in the Valley cannot be good. That the government has chosen not to offer any explanations even to the leadership of the two main parties, who command a following among Kashmiris in their own right, is a mistake. Showing separatist politicians their place is one thing. But making a show of contempt for mainstream politicians is ill-judged. Any gains New Delhi has made in the past in the Valley have depended heavily on widening the stakes in peace and increasing the number of stakeholders. Now, an unfortunate impression is gaining ground that the Centre is again narrowing and centralising the decision-making process. Without the support of the Kashmiri people, Delhi's disconnect with the Valley can only increase.

CURE IN PROGRESS

New medical authority to replace MCI is welcome. But it will have to connect several dots, learn from past experiences

SEVERAL MEDICAL emergencies in the past five years, including the AES outbreak in Bihar in June, have shone the light on the deficiencies of India's healthcare sector. It's clear that the country lacks quality medical professionals at the panchayat and district levels. Medical research in the country has not kept up with the changing disease burden. Dogged by several controversies in the past 15 years, the internal regulator of the medical profession, the Medical Council of India (MCI), has failed its mandate of "ensuring excellence in medical education". The National Medical Commission (NMC) Bill — passed by the Rajya Sabha last week — that envisages an overhaul of the country's medical education system, therefore, promises to address a critical challenge. However, the 25-member NMC, that will take over the regulation of medical education from the MCI, will need to connect several dots to fulfil its promise.

The government will appoint 20 members of the new regulatory body. This has not gone down well with the Indian Medical Association (IMA). Controversies over the MCI elections and the agency's tarnished record have, no doubt, exposed the frailties of self-governance. But the IMA's fears of further compromise in standards are not unfounded, given that past experience shows that the party in office often rewards its loyalists whenever the government arrogates to itself the task of constituting a body of professionals. The search committee mandated by the Bill to recommend the names of the NMC's non-elected members must, therefore, go strictly by the new agency's credo: "Enforcing high ethical standards in medical services".

Clause 32 of the Bill provides for granting "limited licenses" to 3.5 lakh community health providers (CHPs), who can then operate at the primary healthcare level and prescribe preventive medicines. Given the dearth of MBBS doctors in rural and far-flung areas, this measure could fill a major void in the country's healthcare system. The IMA, however, apprehends that the move would "result in quackery", especially because the Bill does not delineate the qualifications of the CHPs. Past initiatives to integrate CHPs in the healthcare systems of states have produced mixed results, at best. For instance, the Chhattisgarh government's scheme — launched in 2001 — to place such medical practitioners in the state's healthcare system lasted only four years. Courses introduced for CHPs did not get the required traction because the students were reportedly not sure of their career path. Assam has had similar experiences with CHPs. The process of framing rules of the new legislation should, therefore, be attentive to such experiences.

What investors really want



VIKRAM S MEHTA

Modi 2.0 must move the needle towards meeting necessary conditions for incentivising investment

BUSINESS SENTIMENT IS grim. Few corporates have the financial capability to invest; even fewer the desire. The reasons are several but the common thread linking all corporates is a concern about the direction and predictability of the policy and regulatory environment. There is a lack of confidence in the ability of the leadership to convert the political promise of "ease of doing business" into bureaucratic performance. There is a "trust deficit". The government will have to bridge this deficit to realise its economic growth strategy.

The government's objective is to grow the economy to USD5 trillion by 2025. Given that the current size of the economy is USD2.7 trillion, this means it will have to grow at an annualised rate of 8 per cent over the next five years. This is a credible, albeit ambitious, objective. It has been achieved before and there is no fundamental or structural block to securing such a rate again. The twist is investment. Growth cannot be sustained at the 8 per cent level without reversing the current declining trend in private investment (and exports). This fact has been acknowledged by the Chief Economic Adviser in the Economic Survey and by the FM in her budget speech. Both have stressed the need to revive "animal spirits" to catalyse the virtuous cycle of investment, jobs, productivity, exports, consumption and growth. Investment is the centrepiece of their growth strategy.

The question, therefore, is: What must be done to resuscitate investor sentiment? At a macro level, the answer is clear.

Investors look for macroeconomic stability and a supportive regulatory and policy environment. They are incentivised to invest when inflation is under control, the fiscal deficit is within prudential limits and the external account is broadly in balance. They want connected and efficient infrastructure and the easing of supply side "factor market" constraints. This means expeditious processes for land acquisition, flexible and unshackled labour policy and deepened capital markets unlogged from the choke of NPAs. They also want competitive tax rates, simplified procedures and transparent and fair mechanisms for dispute resolution.

These are well known and frequently articulated necessary demands.

The issue is whether these are sufficient. Is this all that is required to spur investment? I am not so sure. I believe there is a subtler condition that needs also to be met. The corporate leader must believe that promise will indeed convert to performance. His subjective preference is a non-quantifiable but important driver of investment decisions.

I was involved with a large multinational for many years. What struck me was that investment decisions were often driven by personal perceptions. The investment proposals were, of course, subject to rigorous economic and geopolitical analysis. Empirical data was gathered on the market, competition, costs, prices and regulations. Scenarios were built to capture the consequences of the unexpected. Sensitivity analysis was carried out to define the range of possible outcomes. But when the analysis was finally presented for a decision, the discussion often focused on the intangibles of geopolitical, bureaucratic and regulatory risk. And the decision was often driven by the leadership's perceptions of these risks than by the hard numbers presented to them.

I was at the helm of the company at a time when China was the flavour of the international investor community. I found myself continually battling perceptions. People knew more about India than China. But what they "knew" about India was mostly negative. Their perception was it was tangled in an undergrowth of red tape, bureaucratic encumbrance and regulatory uncertainty. On the other hand, what they knew about China was positive, albeit limited. They did not understand the investment environment. They did not speak the language; and Chinese culture was an enigma. But they "knew" China offered a huge market with massive potential. This perception (and, of course, reality) was an important determinant of the final decision.

India also offered a large market and potential but unfortunately perception militated against a positive decision. On at least two occasions, an investment proposal for India was turned down in favour of a project in China even though the projects were similar and the earning power of the former was

higher than that of the latter. The reason was the subjective predilections of the corporate leaders.

UPA 2 will be remembered for the ignominy of corporate scandals. The telecom and coal scandals showed up the nexus between corrupt politicians and opportunistic businessmen. It was crony capitalism at its worst. The banking crisis has its genesis in this nexus. Modi 1.0 broke this nexus decisively. It ended what Raghuram Rajan has referred to as "relationship based capitalism" in which the quid of corporate "hospitality" was exchanged for the "quo" of political favours. It redefined the nature of engagement between government and business. Today few, if any, corporate houses can be confident of extracting favours from the political leadership.

Modi 2.0 should carry forward this reset in the terms of engagement. It runs no risk in forging a collaborative relationship with business. There might have been a public backlash had it sought such a relationship in the aftermath of the scandals that shook the UPA government.

Modi 1.0 moved the needle somewhat towards meeting the necessary conditions for incentivising investment. The GST, RERA, the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Act, the improvement in the "ease of doing business" index, digitisation etc were welcomed by the business community. More was expected but the initiatives were appreciated. Modi 2.0 should now push this needle further.

Business and government occupy different spaces. But they have interlocking interests. The walls separating the two should therefore be perforated. The FM has called for such a perforation. She made explicit in her budget speech the government's interest in bringing private industry into a partnership relationship with it. She should follow that up with assurances that government does not regard every businessman as a tax dodger; or every business as bent on gaming the system. That, instead, it wants to build a relationship based on trust and mutuality of interest.

The writer is Chairman and Senior Fellow, Brookings India



SURBHI GUPTA

SISTERHOOD OF SURVIVORS

We need more shows that place the experiences of women at their centre

IT'S ALMOST TWO weeks since the second season of *Big Little Lies* came to a close. The disappointment of viewers is pretty well-known. The second season was somewhat tame compared to the first season that opened and ended with a murder. Apart from the stellar cast that includes Oscar-winning actors Nicole Kidman and Reese Witherspoon, what drew attention towards the mini-series was that it had women and children at the centre of the narrative, with the men mostly playing side roles. When I first heard about the show, it seemed like just another story with a murder mystery — perhaps with desperate housewives. But the seven-episode long first season was an essential watch because it threw light on issues we all know of — domestic violence and sexual abuse, school bullies and pregnancy from rape — but rarely talk about.

The disappointment over its plot aside, in its second season, *Big Little Lies* was still a powerful reminder that we need more shows that put the experiences of women at the centre. And they work with audiences, who having crossed over the #MeToo wave, are more aware and sensitive.

The first season, aired in 2017, turned out to be prescient. Just six months later, the Harvey Weinstein scandal brought the hitherto hushed-up reality of sexual abuse and

harassment in Hollywood into the open. And there were ripples all over the world, including India. We were witness to the abuse Celeste (played by Kidman) faced at the hands of her husband Perry. In season two, he isn't there and she misses him. There is a poignant scene when the therapist asks Celeste to remember the abuse, and she does so painfully and quietly. The therapist asks her to imagine what if her best friend Madeline (played by Witherspoon) experienced the same trauma. This time, she explodes with rage and fury.

Moments like these make the show telling. It's a chilling exposition of the fact that sexual abuse often comes hand in hand with gaslighting — a phenomenon in which the abuser makes the victim question her own reality. For someone who is on her way out of an abusive relationship, the aftermath can be hard. It is normal to think of the past with a tinge of nostalgia — that comes from a belief that "it couldn't have been that bad".

The show gives a face to different types of mothers — the one who sacrifices her career, the one who doesn't want to, the single mother and the soccer mom. And we aren't asked to judge any of them. Mothers can be competitive, it is natural for them to want the best for their children. We did belittle petty

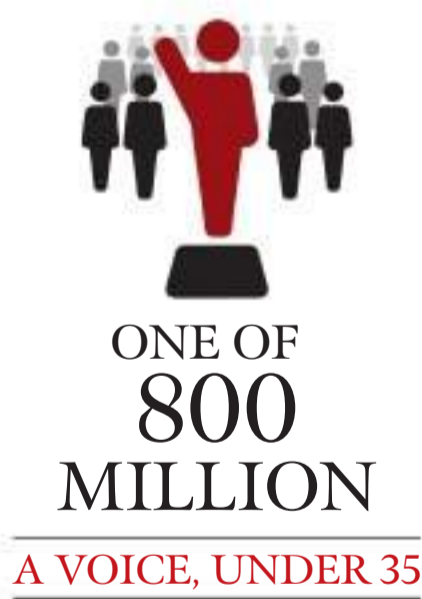
arguments and rolled our eyes when Madeline snapped at people. But the show is a reminder that we must stop sneering at such "flawed women", and take notice of the friendships they strike. This season was an ode to female solidarity and sisterhood.

The show takes the issue of mothering further with a courtroom drama for the custody of Celeste's twin boys. She was subjected to a witch hunt, when the photographs of her sexual relations with various men, outside the realm of her home, were used to judge her as a mother.

Big Little Lies also has Jane, essayed by Shailene Woodley. In season one, there was an air of mystery to her. She had recently moved to Monterey in California and found herself surrounded by the "rich people's club". Her world revolved around her son Ziggy, who, it was later revealed, was born out of rape.

Woodley's character gives weight to the second season. While cinema has dealt with sexual assault and rape, a conversation between the mother and her eight-year-old son about such violence is still rare. Woodley also translates the hesitation victims of assault face with intimacy in a manner that is touchingly human.

surbhi.gupta@expressindia.com



The show gives a face to different types of mothers — the one who sacrifices her career, the one who doesn't want to, the single mother and the soccer mom. And we aren't asked to judge any of them.

FREEZE FRAME

EP UNNY



AUGUST 5, 1979, FORTY YEARS AGO

CONG UNITY TALKS
KARNATAKA CHIEF MINISTER Devraj Urs has conveyed to Maharashtra Chief Minister Sharad Pawar that if he is serious to bring about unity among Congressmen in the state, he should step down from his present position. A source said that Pawar might make a statement after the state legislature was prorogued towards the end of the next week. He also said that there was a possibility that unity talks might be resumed after the Bangalore session of the pre-split AICC to be held on August 18. A source said that Vasant Rao Patil and Nasikrao Tirpude, Congress and Prajatantra Congress leaders respectively, had made in abundantly clear

that there could not be any progress in the unity talks unless "Pawar climbs down from power".

IIAS, SIMLA TO STAY
WITHOUT YET GOING into the long-term education policy, the new government is considering immediate steps to change a few decisions of its predecessor. The Indian Institute of Advanced Studies at Simla is likely to stay. The Desai government had decided to wind it up by September 1, following an expert committee's report that the performance of the institute was below expectations. This recommendation was, however, challenged by many scholars who argued that the origi-

nal objectives of the institute — to be like Princeton or the All Souls' College at Oxford — were all right but they had gone awry because of too much governmental control.

IA PLANE CRASHES
AN INDIAN AIRLINES Avro-10 flight coming from Pune to Bombay carrying 41 passengers and four crew members, crashed on a hill at Kiroli village at about 9 pm. (According to UNI, all 45 persons are feared to have been killed). The aircraft was on the radar screen up to 11 miles from Bombay airport. After this, it suddenly vanished. Soon after 9 pm, a truck driver stated to have informed the Mumbai police in Thane district about the crash.

11 THE IDEAS PAGE

WHAT THE OTHERS SAY

“The end of the INF nuclear treaty is a bad step that could be followed by a worse one.”
— THE GUARDIAN

Helpless in Unnao

State institutions have been complicit in denying justice to the victim



Prakash Singh

THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE system of the country is “virtually collapsing” and “as it is slow, inefficient and ineffective, people are losing confidence in the system”. This was stated by the Justice Malimath Committee (2000-2003), which had been constituted to recommend reforms in the criminal justice system. Thanks to certain lobbies, the salient recommendations of the Committee were never implemented. Meanwhile, the system continues to go down a slippery slope.

There could be no greater indictment of the system than the fact that the Supreme Court had to intervene in a case of alleged rape to ensure that justice was done to the victim. Under normal circumstances, it should have been possible for the matter to be disposed in a satisfactory manner at the thana level. However, there was complete failure at all levels of administration, particularly in the police.

The facts about the Unnao case are as follows. A minor girl is gang-raped, allegedly by an MLA, Kuldeep Singh Sengar, his brother and accomplices, on June 17, 2017. The police register a case of kidnapping, but the MLA is not named in the FIR. On April 3, 2018, her father is brutally assaulted, allegedly by Sengar’s men, for refusing to withdraw the complaint. The police, in a bizarre twist to the case, arrest the her father for alleged illegal possession of firearms. She attempts to immolate herself outside the chief minister’s residence on April 8, 2018. The very next day, her father dies in judicial custody. There is widespread outrage. On April 12, three days after her father had succumbed to the injuries, four days after her attempted suicide and more than nine months after the gruesome incident, a case of rape is finally registered against the MLA under the IPC and Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act. The MLA is not arrested even at this stage, and the case is handed over to the CBI.

The CBI arrests Sengar on April 13, 2018, but the travails of the aggrieved family do not end. The family is said to have sent 35 written complaints to the police and administration over a period of one year, saying they would be targeted by the henchmen of the jailed MLA. But police do not take any effective action. On the contrary, they register an FIR against the woman, her mother and uncle on December 27, 2018 for having submitted forged documents to show that she was a minor at the time of the alleged rape. On July 12, 2019, the woman and her relatives send letters, among others, to the Chief Justice of India, alleging that the MLA had threatened them

with dire consequences if they did not settle the sexual assault case with the accused. And, on July 28, 2019, the car in which the woman was travelling is rammed by truck under suspicious circumstances. Her two aunts are killed. The woman and her lawyer, who was also in the car, suffer grievous injuries. The security personnel provided to her inexplicably did not accompany her during the journey. The truck’s number plate was found defaced. The woman is presently struggling for life.

Sengar, who was in the BSP and then in the Samajwadi Party before getting elected on a BJP ticket in 2017, is in jail, hoping to be released on bail one day and then, perhaps, acquitted for want of evidence.

The handling of the case by UP Police has been, to say the least, disgraceful. The sequence of events clearly brings out that the local police was hand in glove with the politician, trying to protect him at every stage and causing harassment to the woman and her family. Senior officers in the home department cannot escape responsibility either. The case dragged on for nearly two years. There was enough time to diagnose the problem and take corrective action. However, that was not done. Supervision was inexcusably lax and complicit. It was regrettable on the part of the police to have said, even before forensic examination, that the car crash prima facie seemed to be an “accident”.

The CBI has not covered itself with glory either. It is true that the agency filed chargesheets as far back as July 2018 — one charging the MLA with abduction and rape and a second one charging four people of the murder of the woman’s father. A third chargesheet was filed against the legislator for planting weapons on the woman’s father. The CBI should have taken steps to ensure that important witnesses were not intimidated, much less eliminated. And why could trial in the chargesheeted cases not begin?

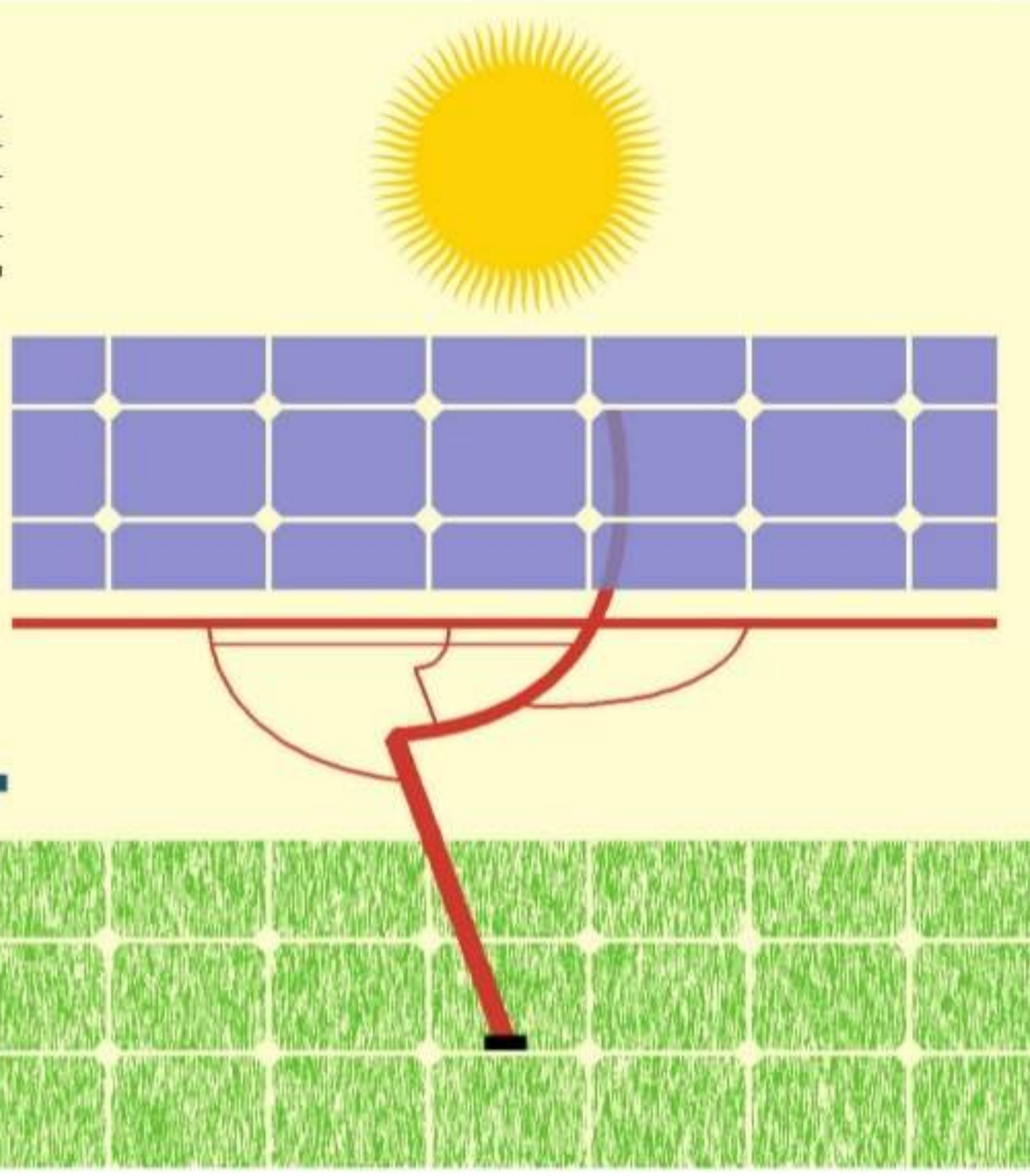
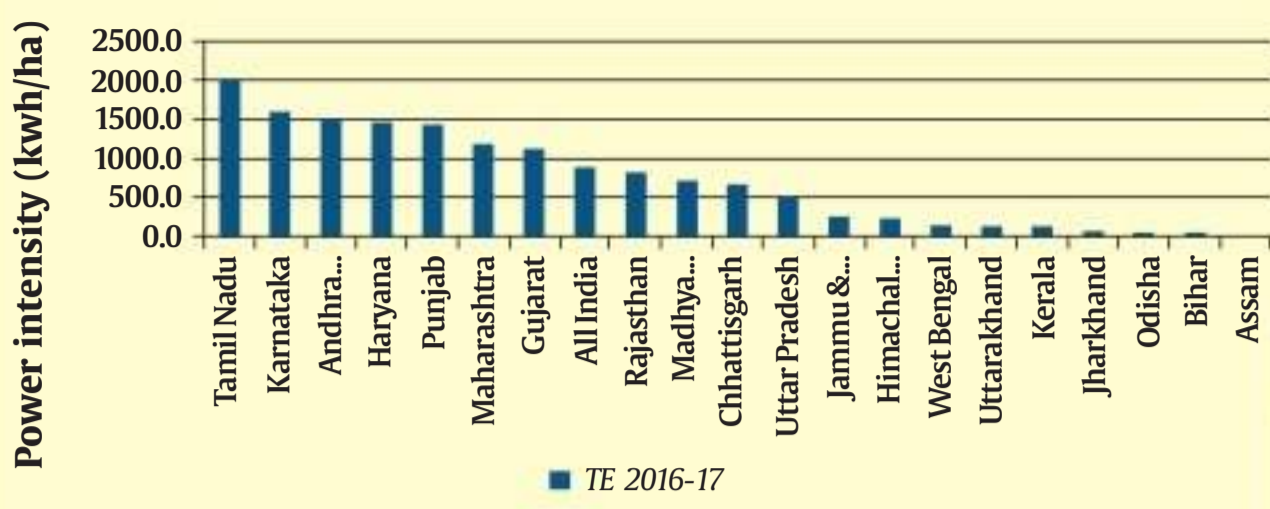
Fortunately, the Supreme Court issued a slew of directions on August 1, transferring the trial of rape and other related cases to Delhi and ordering that the trial be completed within 45 days. It has also directed the CBI to complete investigation into the accident case in 14 days and ordered the UP government to pay an interim compensation of Rs 25 lakh to the survivor. The CRPF has been asked to provide protection to the victim, her family and the lawyer.

The Supreme Court has been trying to depoliticise the police. It gave directions which, if sincerely implemented, would have insulated police from external pressures. Why are the states being allowed to trifle with them? The apex court needs to introspect if the monitoring and implementation of its directions has been adequate.

Similarly, the Witness Protection law has yet to be passed by the Centre. It has been on the anvil for several years. It should be enacted without further delay.

The writer is chairman, Indian Police Foundation

POWER INTENSITY IN INDIAN AGRICULTURE (KWH/HA)



CR Sasikumar

In the shade of solar trees

Helping farmers produce solar energy can help realise the government’s target of doubling farmers’ incomes



FROM PLATE TO PLOUGH
BY ASHOK GULATI

IN JULY, TWO interesting things happened that can help Indian farmers to a large extent in augmenting their incomes. First, the Union Finance Minister (FM) in her maiden budget speech asked why the annadata (farmer) cannot become the urjadata (producer of solar power). Second, in Parliament, the agriculture minister for state, responding to a question on the prime minister’s promise of doubling farmers’ income (DFI) by 2022, admitted that the existing set of policies cannot double farmers’ real incomes by 2022.

I welcome and appreciate this honesty, although the prime minister may still be optimistic about fulfilling his dream of doubling farmers’ income by 2022. I have been saying this for the last two years through this newspaper column that it is almost impossible to attain this goal by 2022 with the set of policies that the government has adopted. They will not achieve even half the target. The remaining four years till 2022-23 require real incomes of farmers to go up by 13-15 per cent per annum. But, as they say, nothing is impossible in this world, so here is my single suggestion to move in that direction.

But, before that, let us quickly recapitulate the debate on this slogan of doubling farmers’ income given by the PM in Bareilly in February 2016. The PM said it is his “dream” to double farmers’ income by 2022. It was followed by the setting up of a committee headed by Ashok Dalwai in April 2016. The Committee clarified real incomes will need to be doubled over seven years (over a base income of 2015-16), which requires a growth rate of 10.4 per cent per year. The Committee submitted its final report in September 2018. It comprises of 14 volumes

(almost 3,000 pages) and 619 recommendations. These volumes contain a wealth of information, but I doubt any government can implement 619 recommendations even in five years. My humble submission to our friend Ashok Dalwai and his team is that they will do a great national service if they bring out a summary of 14 volumes in 20-25 pages, and prioritise just five to 10 recommendations from a laundry list of 619.

But, let us get back to the FM’s statement on the annadata becoming the urjadata. This one policy has the potential to double farmers’ incomes within a year or two. How? Here are the details.

The PM has also set a target of producing 100 GW of solar power by 2022. He wants the country to be one of the frontrunners in the International Solar Alliance for clean energy. So far, the model that has been adopted to develop solar power is inviting bids from large business players. And big players did enter, ranging from Mahindra and Mahindra to the Adanis and so on. Some of them, who entered early into power purchase agreements (PPA) with state governments, had to burn their hands when the costs came down and state governments forced them to revise the costs of PPA downwards, upsetting their economic calculations. But this model of generating solar power was not very inclusive. The land is locked for solar panels for almost 25 years, and the benefits go only to a few investors.

The alternative model is to help farmers produce solar power on their lands, making annadata an urjadata. After all, farmers occupy the largest chunks of land in this country. This model will be much more inclusive and can help augment their incomes significantly. There are two variants of this: One, replace all pump-sets, especially diesel ones, with solar pumps and the excess power generated through solar panels can be purchased by state governments at a price that gives the farmer a good margin over his cost of producing solar power. Second, encourage farmers to grow “solar trees” on their lands at a height of about 10-12 feet in a manner that enough sunlight keeps coming to plants below. Under this variant, the farmer

can keep growing two irrigated crops as he has been doing, but the solar tree generates a lot of excess power that can be purchased by the state government. The power generated under the second variant is multiple times more than under the first variant, and therefore the income augmentation can also be several times more than under the first variant.

At ICRIER, we did a global survey on this and found that it is being practised in many countries from Japan to China to Germany, and India is ripe for this. The problem is of mobilising enough capital to instal these solar trees. In one acre you can have 500 solar trees in such a manner that even tractors can move through those and farmers can keep growing their normal two crops. It does not impact their productivity as there is ample sunlight coming from the sides for photosynthesis. The second pre-condition is that the state should be ready to do the power purchase agreement.

The current LG of Delhi, Anil Bajjal, got excited about this idea and wanted to implement it in Delhi’s agri-belt as a demonstration plot. After several meetings with him and his team, the Delhi government actually announced a policy to that effect. As per their calculations, 500 trees can be put on an acre of farmer’s land; the investment in solar panels (trees) will be done by other business people. The only thing that the farmer has to assure is that for 25 years he will not convert his land to other uses. The economic calculations suggest that farmers can be given Rs one lakh/acre per annum as net income, with a six per cent increase every year for the next 25 years. This can easily double their income. He does not have to mobilise capital for solar panels. That is done by other business, who also make profit in the process.

Given that power consumption per hectare in Indian agriculture is still very low (see graph), this holds great promise for several poorer states. Can the Modi government unleash this revolution of solar power and double farmers’ income?

The writer is Infosys Chair professor for Agriculture at ICRIER

In one acre you can have 500 solar trees in such a manner that even tractors can move through those and farmers can keep growing their normal two crops. It does not impact their productivity as there is ample sunlight coming from sides for photosynthesis.

VIEW FROM THE NEIGHBOURHOOD



A weekly look at the public conversations shaping ideas beyond borders — in the Subcontinent. Curated by Aakash Joshi

KASHMIR CENTRESTAGE

BETWEEN DONALD Trump’s claim that Narendra Modi asked him to “mediate” the Kashmir dispute, and the new NDA government’s seeming determination to abrogate Section 35A and Article 370, as promised in the BJP’s manifesto, Kashmir is front and centre in the discussions in the Pakistani media. A cursory reading between the lines of newspaper editorials and opinion articles makes the conundrum for Rawalpindi and Islamabad clear.

On the one hand, as Moonis Ahmar puts it in an article in The Express Tribune, “Pakistan must be careful while accepting American mediation offer on Kashmir, as it will question Pakistan’s stance that the Kashmir conflict needs to be resolved according to the aspirations of the Kashmiris and as per the UNSC resolutions.” But, there appears to be an argument in favour of international interference (or mediation, depending on your point of view), articulated by Dawn in its editorial: “The fact is that unless the Kashmir issue is addressed, peace in the subcontinent will be a distant dream. And it is also a fact that bilateral attempts to address the Kashmir question and restart dialogue have hit a brick wall, thanks mainly to Indian arrogance and intransigence.”

Two developments over the last month seem to be affecting the discourse in Pakistan around Kashmir. First, is the claim by Trump that Modi asked him to intervene in Kashmir. Trump’s statement, despite the vehement denials by New Delhi’s foreign policy establishment, seems to have energised the commentariat in Pakistan into encouraging the internationalisation of the Kashmir issue. Second, New Delhi’s policy stance in the Valley seems to provide some fodder for this endeavour. The decision to re-imagine the constitutional, federal structure of Kashmir vis a vis the Indian state, and the demographic insecurities and concerns that engenders as well as the accusations of human rights violations by Indian security forces, seem to be one of the justifications of the first aspect of the narrative.

ROHINGYA DILEMMA

SINCE The influx of Rohingya refugees to Bangladesh, the media in the country has been critical of Myanmar for its treatment of the Muslim minority community, as well as called for the repatriation of the refugees back to Rakhine State. However, as the July 25 editorial in The Dhaka Tribune shows, the issue is far from a simple one. It welcomes the arrival of “high-level delegation

from Myanmar to convince the Rohingyas to return home” but acknowledges that “sadly, the overall task remains more complicated than one of simple persuasion”.

The editorial contends that “recent satellite images” show that Myanmar is ill-prepared for the refugees to return home and that the country is still not open to human rights organisations, journalists and international watchdogs.

The editorial argues: “Ethnic cleansing operations on a scale that took place in Rakhine state cannot and should not be swept under the rug, and it is a duty of the whole world to ensure that justice is served for the crimes that were committed. It may seem convenient to ignore the humanitarian complexities of the Rohingya crisis in favour of a speedy solution, but Bangladesh has so far not taken the easy way out, sheltering a million refugees while our own resources are stretched to breaking point. We cannot just give up on these refugees now.”

TRIPLE TALAQ LESSONS

SINCE The Easter terror attacks in Sri Lanka, the country’s Muslim minority has been under siege, and at the receiving end of the state and security forces’ unwelcome attention. Ameen Izzadeen, a Sri Lankan journalist and activist argues in The Daily

Mirror on August 2 that there are lessons to be learnt for the country’s Muslims from the criminalisation of triple talaq in India.

The article begins with recounting how in Islam — in both the Quran and the Hadith(s) — the practice of triple divorce in one sitting is a legal and religious violation. In Sri Lanka, like in India, Muslims “are embroiled in a debate over Muslim Marriage and Divorce Act (MMDA) reforms. The reforms are called for because the law and the lacuna in it bring misery to Muslim women, instead of offering them the law’s protection.”

Izzaden argues that religious leaders in Sri Lanka must begin the process of reforms in marriage laws, making them more gender-equal, lest they give the state an opportunity to interfere in the community’s affairs. The article acknowledges that by and large, religious leaders of the community are progressive and “civic-minded”, yet there are some moulvis that are resistant to reform. To them, he says: “The Muslim scholars who entertain fears about MMDA reforms must realise there is nothing un-Islamic about setting 18 as the minimum age for bride and groom. Overhauling the corrupt Qazi court system is also an Islamic duty. They need to realise their opposition to reforms is in conflict with the country’s constitution and several progressive laws.”

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

MORALITY, POLITICS

THIS REFERS TO the article, ‘A familiar despair’ (IE August 1). The week long political drama in Karnataka came to an end with the BJP-led government coming to office. Political analysts have been criticising these developments. But this is not the first time that such a development has taken place. The main reason of this phenomenon is the lack of morality in public life. To single out the Karnataka case as a case of political debasement is unfair.

Ravi Mathur, Ghaziabad

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

DIGNITY MATTERS

THIS REFERS TO the article, ‘Taking down patriarchy’ (IE, August 1). The writer notes how abolishing triple talaq will give “real freedom to Muslim women who were subjugated to exploitation and terror”. Sure we have laws that prohibit dowry and other such diabolical practices but are we really a dowry/domestic violence-free country? Real freedom doesn’t merely comprise laws but the ability and freedom to step out of oppressive conditions. The new law surely takes away the absolutely unacceptable right of a man to divorce his wife at his convenience by simply uttering three words but does it guarantee a woman a life of dignity and respect?

Devanshi Bhati, Delhi

APT PANACEA

THIS REFERS TO the article, ‘Healthcare is ailing’ (IE, August 2). The National Medical Commission is not a one stop solution for all the ails of the medical and hospital sector. But it is still a step in the right direction. There are differences of opinion of some of its provisions. But those

should be sorted out amicably. We all want medical education in our country to be world class, and to stop the brain drain in the medical profession. Balancing out the poor patient doctor ratio is equally critical. The provision for community doctors in the new NMC bill would go a long way in meeting this requirement.

Bal Govind, Noida

LOVE OF FOOD

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, ‘Eat, pray, love’ (IE, August 2). Zomato has taken a principled stand that none has the right to communalise food or the business of catering. This refreshing,

SS Paul, Noida