

THIS WORD MEANS

PLOGGING

What PM tweeted about: picking up litter while jogging

DURING HIS morning walk on a beach in Mamallapuram on Saturday, Prime Minister Narendra Modi was seen picking up plastic litter, bottles and other items. In a tweet shortly after, Modi announced: "Plogging at a beach in Mamallapuram. It lasted for over 30 minutes."



PM Narendra Modi plogs on the beach on Saturday. Twitter via PTI

"Plogging" is a combination word formed from 'jogging' and 'plocka upp', which is Swedish for 'pick up'. It refers to an emerging international trend, in which someone picks up trash while jogging or brisk walking as a way of cleaning up litter while also taking care of fitness.

The trend was started in Sweden by Erik Ahlström in 2016. During his commute to work, Ahlström would frequently come across litter that would remain on the streets for weeks without anyone picking it up. This prompted him to pick up the trash during his commute and dispose of it. Eventually, he included the clean-up in his daily running and exercise routine.

Thanks to social media and word of mouth, it has gradually turned into an international movement involving both fitness and environmental enthusiasts. Several groups have popped up across Europe, the US, South America, Asia and Africa. In India, the government organised the Fit India Plog Run on October 2,

as part of the Fit India Movement launched by the Prime Minister on August 29. In his *Mann Ki Baat* address on September 29, PM Modi urged people to start plogging for a litter-free India.

According to Ahlström, plogging for half an hour will burn at least 288 calories on an average as compared to 235 calories from regular jogging.

ABHIMANYU CHAKRAVORTY

SIMPLY PUT

Why Lok Sabha is still 543

Amid a renewed debate on rationalising the number of seats, a look at how Lok Sabha's composition is determined, when the number of seats was changed, and why the count now stands frozen until 2026

RITIKA CHOPRA
 NEW DELHI, OCTOBER 13

LAST WEEK, former Union Minister and Congress leader Jitin Prasad said the number of Lok Sabha seats should be rationalised on the basis of population. The composition of the lower House has remained more or less the same for four decades. How is the composition determined, and what are the arguments for and against a change?

Strength of Lok Sabha

Article 81 of the Constitution defines the composition of the House of the People or Lok Sabha. It states that the House shall not consist of more than 550 elected members of whom not more than 20 will represent Union Territories. Under Article 331, the President can nominate up to two Anglo-Indians if he/she feels the community is inadequately represented in the House. At present, the strength of the Lok Sabha is 543, of which 530 have been allocated to the states and the rest to the Union Territories.

Article 81 also mandates that the number of Lok Sabha seats allotted to a state would be such that the ratio between that number and the population of the state is, as far as possible, the same for all states. This is to ensure that every state is equally represented. However, this logic does not apply to small states whose population is not more than 60 lakh. So, at least one seat is allocated to every state even if it means that its population-to-seat-ratio is not enough to qualify it for that seat.

As per Clause 3 of Article 81, population, for the purpose of allocation of seats, means "population as ascertained at the last preceding census of which the relevant figures have been published". In other words, the last published Census. But, by an amendment to this Clause in 2003, the population now means population as per the 1971 Census, until the first Census taken after 2026.

When it was changed

The strength of the Lok Sabha hasn't always been 543 seats. Originally, Article 81 provided that the Lok Sabha shall not have more than 500 members. The first House constituted in 1952 had 497. Since the Constitution provides for population as the basis of determining allocation of seats, the lower House's composition (total seats as



EVMS and VVPATs in Gautam Buddha Nagar, for the Lok Sabha elections earlier this year. Praveen Khanna/Express Archive

well as readjustment of seats allocated to different states) has also changed with each Census up to 1971. A temporary freeze was imposed in 1976 on 'Delimitation' until 2001. Delimitation is the process of redrawing boundaries of Lok Sabha and state Assembly seats to represent changes in the population.

However, the composition of the House did not change only with delimitation exercises in 1952, 1963, 1973 and 2002. There were other circumstances as well. For instance, the first change in the composition of Lok Sabha happened in 1953 after the reorganisation of the state of Madras. With a new state of Andhra Pradesh carved out, 28 of Madras's 75 seats went to Andhra Pradesh. The total strength of the House (497) did not change.

The first major change took place after the overall reorganisation of states in 1956, which divided the country into 14 states and six Union Territories. This meant subsequent changes in the boundaries of existing states and hence, a change in the allocation of seats to the states and Union Territories. So with reorganisation, the government also amended the Constitution by which the maximum number of seats allocated to the states remained 500, but an additional 20 seats (also maximum limit) were added to

represent the six Union Territories. So the second Lok Sabha elected in 1957 had 503 members. Further down the years, the lower House's composition also changed when the state of Haryana was carved out of Punjab in 1966 and when Goa and Daman and Diu were liberated in 1961 and merged with the Indian Union subsequently.

When it was frozen, and why

As per Article 81, the composition of the Lok Sabha should represent changes in population. But it has remained more or less the same since the delimitation carried out based on the 1971 Census. Why is it so?

The population-to-seat ratio, as mandated under Article 81, should be the same for all states. Although unintended, this implied that states that took little interest in population control could end up with a greater number of seats in Parliament. The southern states that promoted family planning faced the possibility of having their seats reduced. To allay these fears, the Constitution was amended during Indira Gandhi's Emergency rule in 1976 to suspend delimitation until 2001.

Despite the embargo, there have been a few occasions which have called for readjustment in the number of Parliament and

Assembly seats allocated to a state. These include statehood attained by Arunachal Pradesh and Mizoram in 1986, the creation of a Legislative Assembly for the National Capital Territory of Delhi, and creation of new states such as Uttarakhand.

Although the freeze on the number of seats in Lok Sabha and Assemblies should have been lifted after the Census of 2001, another amendment postponed this until 2026. This was justified on the ground that a uniform population growth rate would be achieved throughout the country by 2026. So, the last delimitation exercise - started in July 2002 and finished on May 31, 2008 - was conducted on the basis of the 2001 Census and only readjusted boundaries of existing Lok Sabha and Assembly seats and reworked the number of seats reserved for SCs and STs.

With the total seats remaining the same since the 1970s, it is felt that states in north India, whose population has increased faster than the rest of the country, are now under-represented in the Parliament. It is frequently argued that had the original provision of Article 81 been implemented today, then states like Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and Madhya Pradesh would have gained seats and those in the south would have lost some.

TELLING NUMBERS

The link between owning a dog and living longer, newly studied

A NEW study and a separate meta-analysis, published in the American Heart Association's journal, suggest dog ownership may be linked to a longer life and better outcomes for those who have suffered heart attacks or strokes, especially when they live alone.

Researchers compared outcomes of dog owners with those of non-dog owners after they had suffered a heart attack or a stroke. Of 1.82 lakh individuals who had suffered a heart attack, roughly 6% owned dogs; of 1.55 lakh who had suffered a stroke, about 5% were dog owners.

All the patients were Swedish residents. Using Swedish national health data, the researchers compared the health outcomes of dog owners and non-owners after a heart attack or stroke. They found the risk of death following hospitalisation was lower for dog owners, and suggested that this is likely due to increased physical activity and decreased loneliness.

Heart attack patients
 33% lower risk of death for dog owners as compared to non-owners,

among those who lived alone following hospitalisation.

15% lower risk of death for dog owners, among those who lived with a partner or child after hospitalisation.

Stroke patients

27% lower risk of death for dog owners as compared to non-owners, among those who lived alone following hospitalisation.

12% lower risk of death for dog owners, among those who lived with a partner or child following hospitalisation.

The meta-analysis covered 10 studies published between 1950 and May 2019, which together covered 38 lakh people and evaluated dog ownership and all-cause mortality. This analysis found:

24% reduced risk of all-cause mortality among dog owners, as compared to risk of non-owners;

65% reduced risk of mortality after heart attack among dog owners;

31% reduced risk due to cardiovascular-related disease among dog owners, as compared to non-owners.

Source: American Heart Association



SHYAMLAL YADAV
 NEW DELHI, OCTOBER 13

ON FRIDAY, Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal addressed a conference in Denmark through videoconferencing, with the Centre having denied clearance to a trip abroad.

Why clearance

For a foreign trip, public servants need political clearance from the External Affairs Ministry. Amid the controversy around Kejriwal's visit, Ministry spokesperson Raveesh Kumar had said, "We get hundreds of requests for political clearances every month from ministries, secretaries and bureaucrats. A decision is taken based on multiple inputs... It takes into account the nature of the event... It takes into account the level of participation from other countries and also

the kind of invitation that is extended."

Since 2016, applications for political clearance can be made online, on a portal opened by the Ministry. These are processed and clearance issued through coordination among various Ministry divisions.

Previous CMs denied

During the previous UPA regime, the External Affairs Ministry denied political clearance for trips by then Chief Ministers Tarun Gogoi (Assam, Congress) to the US and Israel, and to Arjun Munda (Jharkhand, BJP) to Thailand. Gogoi had wanted to visit New York for a "high level meeting" on April 2, 2012; a note from the Ministry said "...direct correspondence by a diplomatic Mission with a State Government being inappropriate". About his proposed trip to Israel for an event on water and environment technology, the Ministry had said, "Concerned agen-

cies would be hard put to provide special consideration for CM, Assam, both from the substantive and protocol angles."

Debate over protocol

On June 14, 2014, then Civil Aviation Secretary Ashok Lavasa (now Election Commissioner) wrote to then Cabinet Secretary Ajit Seth that the "dilatatory system" of the External Affairs Ministry clearing all proposals for travel abroad by officials should be changed. Seth forwarded the letter to the Ministry; then Foreign Secretary Sujatha Singh wrote back on August 13, 2014. She stressed it was the Ministry's prerogative to decide on the suitability, desirability and level of participation of Indian officials in engagements abroad.

Other clearances

While all public servants need political clearance for foreign trips, different officers

need different additional clearances. Chief Ministers, state ministers and other state officials also need clearance from the Department of Economic Affairs. For Union ministers, after getting political clearance from the External Affairs Ministry, additional clearance is needed from the Prime Minister, whether the trip is official or personal. Lok Sabha MPs need clearance from the Speaker, and Rajya Sabha members from the Chairperson (Vice President of India). For various ministry officers up to Joint Secretary level, clearance is given by the minister concerned, after political clearance. For those above that rank, the proposal needs approval of a screening committee of secretaries. Rules vary according to the duration of the visit, the country to be visited, and the number of members in a delegation. If the foreign trip involves the hospitality of organisations other than those of the UN, then FCRA clearance is needed from the Home Ministry.

The mysterious golden ratio: why is it everywhere, now in human skull?

KABIR FIRAQUE
 NEW DELHI, OCTOBER 13

FOR CENTURIES, the golden ratio has fascinated all kinds of people, not just mathematicians. Physicists and biologists have studied it, architects and artists have used it, and worshippers have described it as a divine design. And through the centuries, the golden ratio has continued to amaze its diverse fans, frequently cropping up at unexpected places.

The latest such place is the human skull. If we draw an arc across the top of the skull and divide it at a key junction over the brain, the two arc-segments are approximately in the golden ratio. This feature was studied recently by researchers of Johns Hopkins University, US, who have reported their findings in *The Journal of Craniofacial Surgery*.

Just a ratio, yet special

The golden ratio can be defined in terms of a line, divided into two unequal segments in a way that their lengths meet a simple condition. When the ratio between these two lengths (the longer segment divided by the shorter one) happens to be the same as the ratio between the entire line and the longer segment, then the line is said to be divided in the golden ratio (see illustration).

For this condition to hold good, the ratio

needs to be 1.61803... with the digits after the decimal going on forever; the golden ratio is what we call an "irrational number". It is represented by the Greek letter phi.

Why should such a ratio be considered special? Aesthetic appeal is among the first of many reasons. Architects such as Le Corbusier have consciously proportioned their works to the golden ratio, or close. So have artists such as Salvador Dalí and Leonardo da Vinci, whose fascination with the golden ratio features in the novel *The Da Vinci Code* and the film based on it.

Interpretations of the golden ratio have not always been objective. Some have related it to their idea of aesthetic beauty in facial proportions, using the golden ratio to describe Audrey Hepburn's face as perfection, and Marilyn Monroe's as close.

The fact remains, however, that the golden ratio frequently shows itself in nature, whether directly or indirectly (through its cousins called the Fibonacci numbers). To cite a few examples, the golden ratio appears in the seeds of sunflowers, the scales of pineapples, the arrangement of petals on a rose, DNA structures, the anatomy of the heart — and has now turned up in the human skull.

The newest appearance

In the days before computerised scans became the norm, neurosurgeons would

WHAT IT MEANS, WHERE IT HAS SHOWN UP

Golden Ratio ϕ : $\frac{C}{B} = \frac{A}{C} = 1.618...$

$\frac{BI}{NB} = \frac{NI}{BI} = 1.6$

1: THE GOLDEN RATIO
 When a line is divided into two unequal segments, they are in the golden ratio if they satisfy the equation shown (above).

2: THE HUMAN SKULL
 In the arc drawn over the skull (right), the two segments as demarcated by the bregma are in the golden ratio.

Source: Johns Hopkins University

themselves carry out measurements on the skulls of their patients. One such measurement is the distance from the base of the nose (nasion) to the bump at the back of the head (inion).

Measuring this arc in his patients, Dr Rafael J Tamargo of Johns Hopkins observed a trend. At a junction called the bregma, which is the meeting point of two important connective tissue joints, the arc was di-

vided into two sub-arcs that respectively accounted for 61.8% and 38.2% of the total arc length.

Tamargo realised that these fractions were in the golden ratio. "That's how my interest started," he said over the phone.

For the new study, Tamargo and colleague Dr Jonathan A Pindrik, his co-author, examined the head CAT scans of 100 patients. Indeed, they found, the two sub-arcs

on either side of the bregma are in a ratio that approximates the golden ratio.

Only in humans

For comparison, Tamargo and Pindrik carried out the same measurements in 70 skulls of six other mammals, part of the collection of the Smithsonian Institution National Museum of Natural History in Washington DC. This time, the division was

not in the golden ratio of 1.61.

Yet a trend appeared to emerge here too. The closest to the golden ratio was found in the skulls of lions (measured ratio 1.74), followed by tigers (1.77), before deviating further and further for rhesus monkeys (1.86), domestic dogs (1.91), blue monkeys (1.95) and finally eastern cottontail rabbits, in whose skulls the ratio was a distant 2.25.

In the limited sampling, it appeared that the more sophisticated the mammal, the closer the measured ratio was to the golden ratio. It is unclear, the research paper said, why the golden ratio emerges in the human skull and not in those of lower mammals.

The mystery endures

The golden ratio is alternatively called the golden mean and the divine ratio. Its frequent appearances in nature have driven claims that it is the work of a divine design. With its emergence in the human skull, can it fuel further the idea that the ratio has mystical attributes? Tamargo described that as a difficult question to answer.

"I am limiting myself to reporting what I have found. But I think it is unavoidable to wonder why this number appears in nature so frequently," he said. He described various examples of its appearance, then added: "Some people have said that this ratio may be the signature of God in nature."



The Indian EXPRESS

FOUNDED BY
RAMNATH GOENKA

BECAUSE THE TRUTH INVOLVES US ALL

AFTER MAMALLAPURAM

The longer Delhi takes in getting its own act together, the harder its China challenge gets

INCREMENTAL PROGRESS and sustained dialogue have been the main features of the engagement between the leaders of the two countries since the late 1980s, when the two sides began to normalise the relationship that went into a deep chill following the border clashes of 1962. A third feature of recent times, marked by increasing tensions between the two countries on a range of issues, has been the strong political commitment of the two sides to prudently manage their differences and prevent them from becoming disputes. The second informal summit at Mamallapuram near Chennai, between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the Chinese leader Xi Jinping, has followed a similar script. And if you are a diplomat, you might add a fourth feature to India-China political encounters. An air of informality has begun to leaven the dull rigidity that used to define them. Modi, always insistent on adding some colour to diplomatic events and holding them outside Delhi, took Xi to Ahmedabad in 2014, Goa in 2016, and now to Mamallapuram.

The Modi-Xi summit that took place amidst the visual beauty of Mamallapuram was, of course, not expected to produce big breakthroughs. The leaders don't negotiate on complicated issues but only review the state of the relations, set a direction to their ministers and officials. Given the depth of differences on the boundary dispute, Kashmir, China's protection to Pakistan against international pressures on dismantling its terror infrastructure, and Beijing's opposition to Delhi's membership of the Nuclear Suppliers Group, it was entirely reasonable for the two leaders to focus on areas that are amenable to progress. One of those areas is economic cooperation. Following the discussion on India's concerns about trade deficit that has reached unsustainable levels, Xi has agreed to set up a high-level political mechanism to find ways to enhance India's access to China's market. Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman will lead the Indian side.

According to the Indian officials, there was no discussion on other controversial issues such as Kashmir that are troubling the relationship so deeply today. Before the summit, Delhi had affirmed that the issue is an internal one and the PM will not engage on Kashmir unless Xi raised it. Delhi's strategy, quite clearly, is not to get rattled or complain about China's harmful actions, but to look for advances in the bilateral relationship wherever possible. On the face of it, India's approach seems to impose few costs on China. Implicit in this strategy, however, is the proposition that Delhi will do what it needs to counter Beijing's unhelpful moves. This, in turn, demands an active effort to reduce the widening power gap with China. Put another way, diplomacy alone can't resolve India's China challenge; it can at best manage it for the moment. The answer lies in accelerating India's own economic development, modernising its security structures, and strengthening cooperation with neighbours and building strong partnerships with major powers. The longer Delhi takes in getting its act together, the harder the challenge gets and less credible its feel-good engagement with China.

IN HIS COMPANY

A new report confirms men continue to dominate India Inc. Private sector needs to do more to ensure diversity, equality

INTERNATIONAL societies were brands, "diversity" would certainly be the buzzword for India. But so would hierarchy and inequality. The CS Gender 3000 report, released last week by the Credit Suisse Research Institute, is yet another pointer to the woeful lack of equal or even adequate representation of women in the upper echelons of corporate India. According to the report, India's female representation on corporate boards has increased by 4.3 percentage points over the past five years to 15.2 per cent this year. But this growth is well below the global average of over 20 per cent. India also has the third-lowest rank in the Asia Pacific region with regard to female chief executive officer representation (2 per cent), as well as the second-lowest rank for female chief financial officer representation at just 1 per cent.

The Credit Suisse report merely confirms what has long been known anecdotally: Apart from a few high-profile corporate leaders, by and large, the upper echelons and even senior management positions in the private sector continue to be dominated by men. In fact, at the time of intake, there is far greater gender parity, but the number of women reduces exponentially as we move higher on the pyramid of corporate hierarchy. The report, which surveyed 3,000 companies across 56 countries, also found that, globally, the number of women in leadership has doubled — a fact that makes India's poor performance all the more stark. The countries that lead the table — Norway, France, Sweden and Italy, for example — either have formal quotas or informal targets for gender parity in place. India's private sector, though, has long resisted government-imposed quotas for affirmative action.

Since Independence, various attempts have been made to resolve the contradiction between India's diversity and its inequality, from reservation in government jobs and educational institutions, to the 25 per cent quota for students from economically weaker sections in private schools. The private sector's resistance to legislation that circumscribes it in matters of hiring and promotion is understandable. Yet, there can be no case for the continuing glass ceiling that women, as well as other marginalised social groups, face, at different levels and in several arenas. Given that the private sector — formal and informal — accounts for over 95 per cent of the labour force, corporate leaders and boards must seriously consider institutionalised mechanisms to ensure diversity and equality. Any case for government regulation is best stymied by proactive action from companies themselves. And, in an era that values innovation and new perspectives in business more than ever before, keeping half the population from roles that could allow them to change the nature of India Inc can only be counterproductive in the long run.

FREEZE FRAME

E P UNNY



SANJAYA BARU

Xi's 100-year promise

Mahabalipuram dialogue was part of a striving for more balanced India-China ties

EVERY PRIME minister since Rajiv Gandhi has tried to bridge the trust deficit between India and China first created by the 1962 war. No one has had to do this more than Prime Minister Narendra Modi in the era of not just 24x7 television but instant social media coverage. Diplomatic engagement of this sort in these times has perforce to be a spectacle. If the Howdy Modi "walkaround" with United States President Donald Trump was one kind of spectacle, the "talkathon" at Mahabalipuram with Chinese President Xi Jinping was of another kind. However, it would be mistaken and churlish to view these events as mere spectacles. Prime Minister Modi has mastered the art of in-your-face diplomatic engagement not just in the world of new and instant media, but one that is increasingly characterised by a multipolar balance of power.

The 1962 war was caused in part by differences over delineating the border between two newly created republics. It was also occasioned by Jawaharlal Nehru's hubris and Mao Zedong's desire to show India its place. Resolving the border issue is key to bridging the trust deficit. However, over the years, two other issues have come up — China's relations with Pakistan and the large deficit in bilateral trade.

Responding to India's closer relations with the US, at a time when US-China relations have deteriorated, China has developed its own risk-mitigation strategy by strengthening its partnership with Pakistan. While India does not appreciate the China-Pakistan nexus, it also recognises the fact that China is not the only country that uses Pakistan to keep India off balance. All major powers have done so, and continue to do so.

If India can warm up to a Trump who is willing to chat up Imran Khan and flirt with the Taliban, why should it get all shirty with a Xi who does the same? Pakistan offers itself willingly to the highest bidder. No one will help India remove Pakistan from its equation with the world if India itself will not do enough to achieve that objective.

A second factor that added to the trust deficit has been the trade deficit. While India supported China's membership of the

World Trade Organisation, it feels China used the multilateral trade regime to acquire access to the Indian market without providing equal access to China's. This is only partly correct. India's inability to export more to China is part of an overall lack of global competitiveness that requires solutions at home. However, by erecting non-tariff barriers in products where India has a competitive edge, China has contributed to a view in India that it seeks to "de-industrialise" India. In contributing to this view, China has politicised an essentially economic issue. The new high-level bilateral economic and trade dialogue agreed to at Mahabalipuram should help bridge this deficit.

India's priority in seeking good relations with China is no different from her interest in seeking good relations with other global powers — to secure a global and regional environment conducive to India's own economic development.

When Chinese interlocutors have sought my explanation for closer US-India relations I have always insisted that India seeks the same level of engagement with the US that China already has — given the US's more developed business-to-business and people-to-people relations with China.

Despite the trade war, the US still buys more from China than from India. Better US-India government-to-government relations are a more recent phenomenon triggered by China's rise, the challenge of jihadi extremism and the prosperity of Indian Americans in the US. It remains to be seen how invested the US would be in India's long-term rise.

Over the past decade, India has slowly come to terms with the widening power differential with China and is building defences to deal with it. The best defence remains a stronger, more productive and competitive economy built on the foundations of a better educated and skilled people. While India does its homework, stable and predictable relations with China would help. Through the Wuhan and Mahabalipuram conversations, and others that will follow, India seeks precisely this objective.

Many Indian analysts object to China's

unhelpful role in India's desire to seek membership of the United Nations Security Council and the Nuclear Suppliers' Group.

But China is not the only major power that likes to keep the door to exclusive clubs closed to aspiring members. As for India's membership of NSG and the nuclear deal, US support was entirely due to President George W Bush Jr who over-ruled naysayers within his own administration and the US Congress to favour India.

If Modi can turn Xi into a friend, like Manmohan Singh turned Bush around, China too may change its stance. Which is why the new informal format for the Modi-Xi dialogue is important. It is President Bush who wiped out decades of distrust between India and the US. Can Xi do that for India-China relations? Trust between nations must begin at the very top.

By speaking of a "hundred year plan" for cementing relations between two ancient civilisations, Chinese President Xi Jinping has made two points. First, he situated the current phase within the long history of our civilisational engagement. Second, he made the important point that it would take time for a more balanced relationship to get established between China and India given the extant power differential caused by China's spectacular rise since the beginning of this century.

The next decade is, therefore, crucial for India. It has to regain economic momentum and strengthen its own human and strategic capabilities as a modern, knowledge-based nation. China's power flows precisely from these attributes.

The Modi-Xi engagement must be viewed as part of a multi-polar engagement with all major powers — including the US, European Union, Russia and Japan — aimed at enabling India's resurgence. Given Xi's 100-year perspective, both countries have to learn to live with year-to-year bumps while journeying together towards a new Asian Century.

The writer is Distinguished Fellow, Institute of Defence Studies & Analysis, New Delhi

WHERE DO I BELONG?

For a migrant to Delhi, obtaining legal identity is a tough ask



SAIKAT BOSE

BEFORE I MOVED to Delhi, a friend told me, "You are moving to the city of migrants and djinns". All this while I believed I am the migrant, now I am not sure.

I have been living in Delhi for over five years. I built a career here, made some of my best friends here and I love this city in a way in which I don't love my hometown. But can I prove I live here? No, I cannot. For nearly a year now, I am caught in a circular process to procure a proof of residence in this city. But for all the talk of uniting the country so that people can settle anywhere they want, our system is still tuned to exclude, not include.

I have linked my phone number to my PAN, my PAN to Aadhaar and my Aadhaar to my bank account. Every time I link two "identities", something else pops up. Every day, I, the citizen, am trusted less. But I, on the other hand, am expected to trust the government without doubt, without questions.

To open a bank account in Delhi, you need a Voter ID, an Aadhaar or a driving licence with your local address as proof of residence. Interestingly, to get your Aadhaar or Voter ID address updated or to apply for a driving licence, you need a bank statement with a Delhi address. How to get one without the other is a question there are no answers to.

Most government websites for documents like the Aadhaar mention rent agreement as an acceptable address proof, pro-



vided it is registered. This means it has to be made at a court. Most house owners, however, prefer a notary agreement, primarily for two reasons — it is cheaper and it has little legal value and won't help the tenant in case of a dispute. Tenants do not have much to say about this. In any case, they are not asked.

But while the government does not accept a notary rent agreement as a valid document, it does nothing to stop their use and a useless piece of paper is handed over everyday to hundreds of people.

Another document that government websites identify as a proof of residence is a landline telephone bill. A relic, the landline has a way of making us realise its importance from time to time — sometimes as a valid document and at harsher times, for its operability during a clampdown.

I happen to have a landline number from a private service provider, courtesy a broadband connection. When I offered that as a proof of residence, I was told only a BSNL landline bill would be accepted.

It was heartening to know that while the company's financial challenges and its employees' struggles to make ends meet do not receive much attention, its document continues to be held in high regard. Anyway, the private service provider's bill did not help my case.

When a landlord refuses rent receipts to his tenant for filing HRA claims, the latter forges his signature and makes a fake receipt. In many cases, that is his first act of fraud. If any Indian is asked what is the central question in his mind at this point, the answer, in most cases, would be linked to identity.

A significant aspect of such a frustrating system is its potential to breed corruption. When an individual keeps going in circles but does not get work done, he will eventually head towards touts. When a landlord refuses rent receipts to his tenant for filing HRA claims, the latter forges his signature and makes a fake receipt. In many cases, that is his first act of fraud.

If any Indian is asked what is the central question in his mind at this point, the answer, in most cases, would be linked to identity. Who is he? Which side is he on? Where does he belong? Can he prove he belongs?

And if I, living in the capital with all means of communication at my disposal, cannot prove that I belong here, I can only wonder how those who have not heard from their loved ones in two months can feel or prove that they belong. How can those on the verge of being declared foreigners because their names are not on a list prove that they belong, to their family, state and country?

In the Smart Cities of our Digital India, papers are still believed more than voices. And, there are two places where what is written, or not written, about a person is believed more than what they say about themselves — the prison and the asylum. Don't know which one we are in.

saikat.bose@expressindia.com

OCTOBER 14, 1979, FORTY YEARS AGO

JANATA LOSES SIKKIM

THE SIKKIM JANATA Parishad, led by a former teacher and relentless political campaigner, Nar Bahadur Bhandari, seemed to be heading towards capturing power in the state on October 13 night with the Janata Party facing a rout in the polls. There had been widespread expectation that the Janata Party would be able to win the largest number of seats. The present trend, however, indicates that the expectation was baseless. The parishad took 11 of the 18 seats declared till late night on October 13 and inflicted a stunning blow on the Janata Party by defeating its state unit president and former chief minister, Kazi Lhendup Dorji.

KERALA GOVERNMENT

THERE WILL BE no change in the Congress decision to support the Kerala coalition headed by C H Mohammed Koya. Both the Congress president's emissary, Chandrajit Yadav, who had discussions in Trivandrum with Congress leaders and the KPCC President A K Antony, made it clear that the party stood committed to supporting the alternative government. Both the leaders, however, also said that the efforts for the unity of left-democratic forces would be pursued vigorously. Yadav told newsmen after his discussions with state leaders that "I am not persuading Congressmen in Kerala to reverse their stand. I am here only to under-

stand the situation."

PAKISTAN IS PUZZLED

OBSERVERS THINK THAT political developments in Pakistan are suspended and the nation is somewhat puzzled. Military ruler General Mohammad Zia-ul-Haq's relentless efforts to ensure "positive results" have given rise to fears that parliamentary elections set for November 17 might be postponed indefinitely, the constitution abrogated and "total martial law" imposed. Pessimists see no elections forthcoming. They recall that the general had once declared if a "certain situation arose he would seek a direct vote for himself.



THE IDEAS PAGE

WHAT THE OTHERS SAY

"The high-level visit to China by the top political and military leadership of Pakistan has yielded some positive movement in this country's attempts to draw international attention to the atrocities...in...Kashmir." — DAWN

On the edge

As world stares at recession, there is need for coordinated policies by major economies. But credibility of multilateral forums is dwindling



PRAVAKAR SAHOO

THE ANNUAL data for the last two years, and also quarterly numbers on world economy, trade and capital flows suggest that the world economy is on the edge of a recession. World GDP was at 3.8 per cent in 2017, fell to 3.6 per cent in 2018, and is now projected to be 3.2 per cent in 2019.

The two major groups — 39 Advanced Economies (AEs) and 23 Emerging Economies (EEs) — have been experiencing downturn for the last two years. While AEs are projected to grow at 1.7 per cent in 2019 from 2.4 per cent in 2017, EEs are set to experience 3.8 per cent growth in 2019 from 4.8 per cent in 2017. Though the IMF projects a better picture for AEs (3.5 per cent) and EEs (4.5 per cent) in 2020, it is difficult to predict given the geo-political uncertainty, escalating trade war between US and China, and lack of consensus among the G-7 and G-20 member countries to push world trade and growth. Investors are worried about the slump and that is clearly reflected in capital flows and stock markets across the countries.

Growth and trade go hand in hand. In fact, the spectacular growth of the world economy between 2003-2008 till the Global Financial Crisis (GFC) was well supported by world trade. However, world trade growth has been shrinking since 2017 — it fell to 3.7 per cent in 2018 from 5.5 per cent in 2017 and is projected at 1.6 per cent in 2019. The growth of trade volume for AEs is projected to be 1.6 per cent in 2019 from 4.4 per cent in 2017 whereas for EEs trade is expected to grow at 1.5 per cent in 2019 from 7.4 per cent in 2017. Though the IMF has forecasted an upward projection for world trade in 2020, there is great uncertainty due to the ongoing US-China trade war.

Individually, the world's top 10 economies are slowing down. While the US, the largest economy of the world, has a projected growth of 2.3 per cent in 2019 from 2.9 per cent in 2018, China is growing at its slowest pace in the last three decades — thanks to the US-China tariff war affecting trade worth billions of dollars. Though different factors have been at play resulting in slow growth in each of these big economies, a global slump in the manufacturing sector, weak global sales in automobiles and electronics, and a drop in business confidence — owing to uncertainty in trade and investment — are facilitating the continuous slide.

For example, Germany, the world's fourth largest economy, relies heavily on automobile exports to the US and China. The British economy is shrinking mainly because of the fears of a chaotic Brexit without cutting a deal to protect its trade. Italy's downward trend is due to high unemployment, weak productivity, huge debt and regular political upheavals. Brazil is undergoing high unemployment and weak industrial production.

As the US-China tariff war is escalating — especially in the last few months

with both countries resuming and dropping the bilateral talks intermittently — the world economy is undergoing immense uncertainties. And, as Bloomberg reports, this uncertainty could lower world GDP by 0.6 per cent by 2021. A solution to the tariff war looks like a bleak possibility — even as the US puts conditions on China, such as resolving the mass protests in Hong Kong. The protests, on since June 2019 in Hong Kong, Asia's financial hub, are denting the confidence of investors and businessmen. Hong Kong's GDP and exports have been worst affected in FY 2019 due to setbacks in Asian manufacturing, trading and investment.

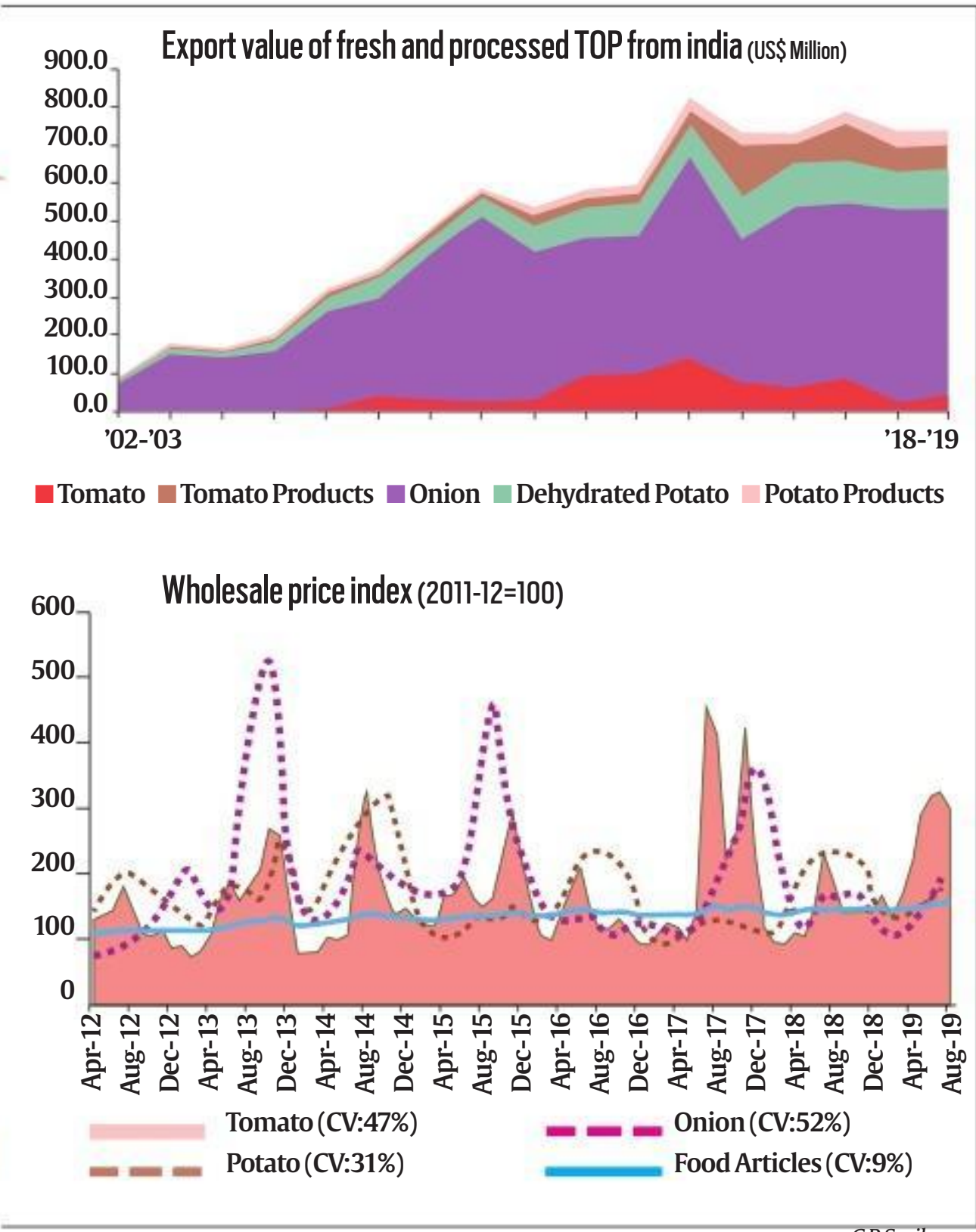
Further re-imposition of US sanctions on Iranian oil not only affected Iran's economy and price levels, leading to a weak currency, but it also led to disruptions in the supplies of oil and oil price volatility. Both India and China, the two largest energy consuming countries in the world, are badly affected, as both countries are among the largest importers of Iranian crude on favourable terms. All these uncertainties are supplementing the already existing difficult situation in the Indian economy, that is, lack of aggregate demand. Though the US-China tariff war gives an opportunity for Indian exports to export more to both countries, we have failed to capitalise so far.

In such a scenario, when the world economy is staring at a recession, it is increasingly important to strive for international cooperation through forums like the G-7 and the G-20 to revive world trade and growth, like they did after GFC. Though the G-7 leaders called for boosting globalisation through efficient and fair trade, there is no such commitment to arrest protectionist measures. In fact, they also expressed concern on how to safeguard the rule-based trading system led by the World Trade Organisation (WTO) through reforms and modernisation, improve intellectual property protection and a quicker settlement of trade disputes.

Crucially, the G-7 leaders made a commitment to reach an agreement that simplifies regulatory barriers to trade and modernises international taxation within the framework of the OECD in 2020. The US and China, at the G-7 forum, also recognised the importance of bilateral talks to resolve trade issues rather than slamming tariffs on the opposing country or by pressurising businesses of the home country by withdrawing operations from the opposing country.

The world economy is on the edge of a recession that can affect the standard of life of billions of people through jobs, wages, price stability and uncertainty. Though it is not a crisis situation like 2008, there is an urgent need for international cooperation for globalisation, resolution of trade conflicts and the peaceful resolution of geo-political uncertainties. Moreover, there is a need for coordinated fiscal and monetary policies by major economies, like the G-20 members adopted after GFC. But unfortunately, the credibility of even the G-20 and WTO is at stake. So who is going to save the world economy?

The writer is a professor at Institute of Economic Growth (IEG), Delhi University



C.R. Sasikumar

Time to TOP up

Tomatoes-onions-potatoes face extreme price volatility. Addressing it requires sustainable solutions, not temporary ad hoc measures



FROM PLATE TO PLOUGH
BY ASHOK GULATI AND HARSH WARDHAN

LAST MONTH, ON September 13, when onion retail prices crossed Rs 40/kg in Delhi, the government was hyperactive and imposed a minimum export price (MEP) of \$850/tonne. Later on, as prices went further up to Rs 50-60/kg, stocking limits were imposed on traders and exports of onions were banned. It created problems in neighbouring countries, especially Bangladesh, inviting a sharp jibe from the visiting Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina on how this ban, without any notice, affected her cooking and how she had to instruct her cook to prepare all vegetables without Indian onions.

But, now, when tomato retail prices have gone beyond Rs 50/kg across the country, what will the government do? Will PM Hasina have to cut down even Indian tomatoes from her cooking, and be forced to turn to China? Anytime, the same situation may arise in the case of potatoes. Such knee jerk reactions like export bans or stocking limits on traders only show the hollowness of our policies. We can certainly do better in addressing large price volatility of basic vegetables.

Tomatoes-onions-potatoes (TOP) are the three basic vegetables that face extreme price volatility and the government often finds itself on the edge in fulfilling its dual objectives of ensuring remunerative prices for farmers and affordable prices for consumers. Figure-1 presents the wholesale price index of TOP since 2012. With a coefficient of variation (CV) of 52 per cent, onion is the most volatile, followed by tomato (47 per cent) and potato (31 per cent). Potato is the least volatile because of higher processing-to-production share (7 per cent) than onions (3 per cent) and tomatoes (1 per cent), and also because of large storage facilities for potatoes. In fact, of the total 8,000 plus cold storages in India, 90 per cent are used for storing

potatoes. But tomatoes can't be stored for long. The current spike in tomato prices is due to lower supply from major tomato producing states like Maharashtra and Karnataka owing to heavy rains.

The government had announced "Operation Green-TOP" with an allocation of Rs 500 crore in its budget of 2018. The idea was to build value chains of TOP on the lines of "Operation Flood" (AMUL model) for milk in such a way that will ensure a higher share of consumer's rupee goes to farmers and stabilises their prices. The scheme is nested with the Ministry of Food Processing. But, so far, progress is tardy. The AMUL model is based on large procurement of milk from farmers' cooperatives, processing, storing of excess milk in skimmed milk powder form during the flush season and using it during the lean season, and distributing milk through an organised retail network. Milk does not pass through any APMC, involves no commissions, and farmers normally get 75-80 per cent of the consumer's rupee, as per AMUL's claims.

But TOP are mostly traded in APMC markets, with layers of mandi fees and commissions, and farmers get less than one-third of the consumer's rupee. In a forthcoming ICRIER-NABARD study on "Deconstructing Value Chains of Tomatoes, Onions and Potatoes", we estimate the farmer's share to be 32.1 per cent, 29.1 per cent and 26.6 per cent of a consumer's rupee for TOP respectively. This cries for massive reforms in APMC.

For stabilising retail prices of fresh TOP, and ensuring a higher share of the consumer's rupee to farmers, policy makers need to focus on three things. First, ample storage for buffer stocks has to be created. While potatoes and onions can be stored, repeated stocking limits on onion traders discourages private investments in modern cold storages. For inviting large private investment in storages, the Essential Commodities Act has to go. If the government feels that traders are colluding to rig the market, then the Competition Commission of India should look into it. The government banning exports or imposing stocking limits is not a solution.

Second, increase processing capacities for TOP. Since buffer stocking for tomatoes is not possible, processing remains the only solution. For this, the GST on tomato puree and juice should be reduced from 12 per cent to 5 per cent. Milk and most milk products attract 0 to 5 per cent GST. To propagate the use

of processed products (tomato puree, onion flakes, powder) among urban and bulk consumers (hospitals, schools, armed forces), the government should run campaigns in association with industry organisations, as was done for eggs. Most of the advanced countries use large quantities of processed tomatoes and onions, which can be stored conveniently. India needs to have time bound targets to process and export at least 10-15 per cent of TOP production. While India exports 10-12 per cent of onion production in fresh and dehydrated form, it exports less than 1 per cent of tomatoes and potatoes production (see Figure-2). It is time that India starts using these relatively new products, like dehydrated onions, tomato puree, shredded potatoes and frozen tikkis/french fries, the way they adopted milk powder, ginger-garlic paste, and frozen peas.

Third, direct buying by organised retailers from farmer producer organisations (FPOs) through contract farming, bypassing the mandi system, should be encouraged. Like dairy cooperatives, TOP cooperatives and retail outlets like Safal across the country should be opened. With over 400 Safal outlets across Delhi-NCR, onions are being sold at Rs 25/Kg when retail prices are hovering between Rs 50-60/Kg. A similar thing could have been done for tomatoes. However, this will require value chain development starting with market reforms along with overhauling the infrastructure of existing APMC mandis in the country. With crumbling infrastructure, many APMC mandis are running over their capacity. Our visit to the Kolar mandi, one of the largest tomato mandi in the country, spread over 20 acres, revealed that the operations of the mandi have spread to adjoining areas. For better functioning, it requires at least two to three times more land and much better infrastructure. These reforms and investments can be undertaken on a public-private partnership (PPP) basis, commissions can be reduced, contract farming can be encouraged, along with setting up of private mandis for better efficiency.

The government needs to find a sustainable solution for price stabilisation of TOP, rather than taking temporary ad hoc measures. It is time to TOP up.

Gulati is Infosys Chair Professor for Agriculture and Wardhan is consultant at ICRIER

Tomatoes-onions-potatoes (TOP) are the three basic vegetables that face extreme price volatility and the government often finds itself on the edge in fulfilling its dual objectives of ensuring remunerative prices for farmers and affordable prices for consumers.

VIEW FROM THE NEIGHBOURHOOD



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

APPRAISING CHINA

CHINESE PRESIDENT Xi Jinping's informal summit with Prime Minister Narendra Modi has led to an appraisal of the Sino-Indian relationship, at least within India. But Xi's planned visit to Nepal, as well as the high-level Pakistan delegation that visited China, have both made headlines in neighbouring countries.

The Kathmandu Post, in its October 11 editorial, takes a careful view of Nepal-China relations, but it is fairly critical of Beijing on two counts. First, to point out that the economic development promised by China has borne little fruit: "[Prime Minister] Oli has time and again dangled the carrot of Chinese support to win over the public, promising a cross-border railway connecting Kathmandu with Kerung. However, little of what was promised has materialised. None of the nine projects identified under the Belt and Road Initiative has moved forward..."

Second, the editorial points towards China's dubious human rights record: "For all its economic might, China remains a one-party state with a poor human rights record. Under Xi, the Communist Party of China has cracked down on Uighurs and has provoked Hong Kong into full-blown rebellion."

The editorial in Dawn, on the same day, is also an appraisal — of the fruits of the high-level delegation's visit to the country. The positives, as far as the editorial is concerned, are some mild symbolic gains in terms of condemning India's actions in Jammu and Kashmir, which it welcomes.

On the most substantive issue — CPEC — though, the editorial is less full of praise: "The second phase of CPEC, which envisages the inflow of vast Chinese investments from the private sector into Pakistan, has been stuck for almost two years now. Progress is also at a standstill on an agreement on financing arrangements for the main railway upgradation project known as ML-1."

DEBATING JIHAD

While there appears near-unanimous agreement in the Pakistan press over New Delhi's actions in Kashmir, geopolitical analyst Aneela Shahzad in an article in The Express Tribune on October 10 asks: "Are we ready for a strife that will drag our youth into a holy nuclear Jihad? Is this what we expected of the PM? Has he not been too swift in going from an 'ambassador of Kashmir' to a war-fanatic?"

She asks difficult questions on the Kashmir issue from the Pakistani perspective. On the one hand, the country is not ready for war, nor is it desirable as a moral goal. On the other hand, New Delhi's actions have not been affected by Pakistan's aggressive diplomacy, trying to bring international pressure on Kashmir. This is the conundrum currently facing Pakistan, and one that is unlikely to resolve itself.

RIVER GAINS, LOSSES

Nazrul Islam, economist and founder of Bangladesh Environment Network, in an article in The Daily Star on October 9, talks of the country's river-water sharing agreements signed with India during the recent visit by PM Sheikh Hasina: "There was hardly any concrete progress toward meeting Bangladesh's concerns regarding shared rivers. This is disappointing when many parts of the country's west adjoining the Padma River are experiencing unprecedented flood, the root cause of which is the Farakka Barrage. India regulates the gates of this barrage in winter in a way that diverts water, causing siltation, encroachment, shallowing, and other harmful morphological changes, which reduce the carrying capacity of the Padma River..."

He asks the governments of both countries a "transit in exchange for rivers" formula, as a win-win situation for both.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

FOCUS ON FARMS

THIS REFERS TO the article, 'The wrong way out' (IE, October 8). The writer has correctly pointed out that higher government spending and not tax cuts are the need of the hour. But the issue is which sector should the government spend on? We have forgotten that India is an agrarian economy. We need foreign expertise in agriculture and food storage, which we neglect and expect private enterprises to bail out the economy through manufacturing. Developing agriculture as an industry and eliminating middlemen is needed.

KV Benaje Kumar via e-mail

SAFETY VALVES

THIS REFERS TO the article, 'The test in protest' (IE, October 10). Social media is fueling a new kind of nationalism. Such a nationalism works in the interest of the ruling party. And it helps to keep dissent in check. It affects farmers, labourers and Dalits. The government seems to have found ways to curb their dissent.

Ranjit Shinde via e-mail

RSS'S DECEIT

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'RSS replay' (IE, October 10). RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat tried to clarify the organisation's stand on instances of

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.

lynching, and attempted to disassociate the Sangh from any kind of mob violence. He even denied charges of Islamophobia against it. But the role of vigilantes and the religious right has been bought to light in recent incidents of lynching. The chilling murder of Pehlu Khan and other such hate crimes have largely been recognised as the handiwork of elements emboldened by the RSS's Hindutva push. The RSS has hardly made any efforts to allay the fears of minorities. Hate mongering BJP MPs like Sadhvi Pragya Thakur continue to spew venom.

P.L.Singh, Amritsar