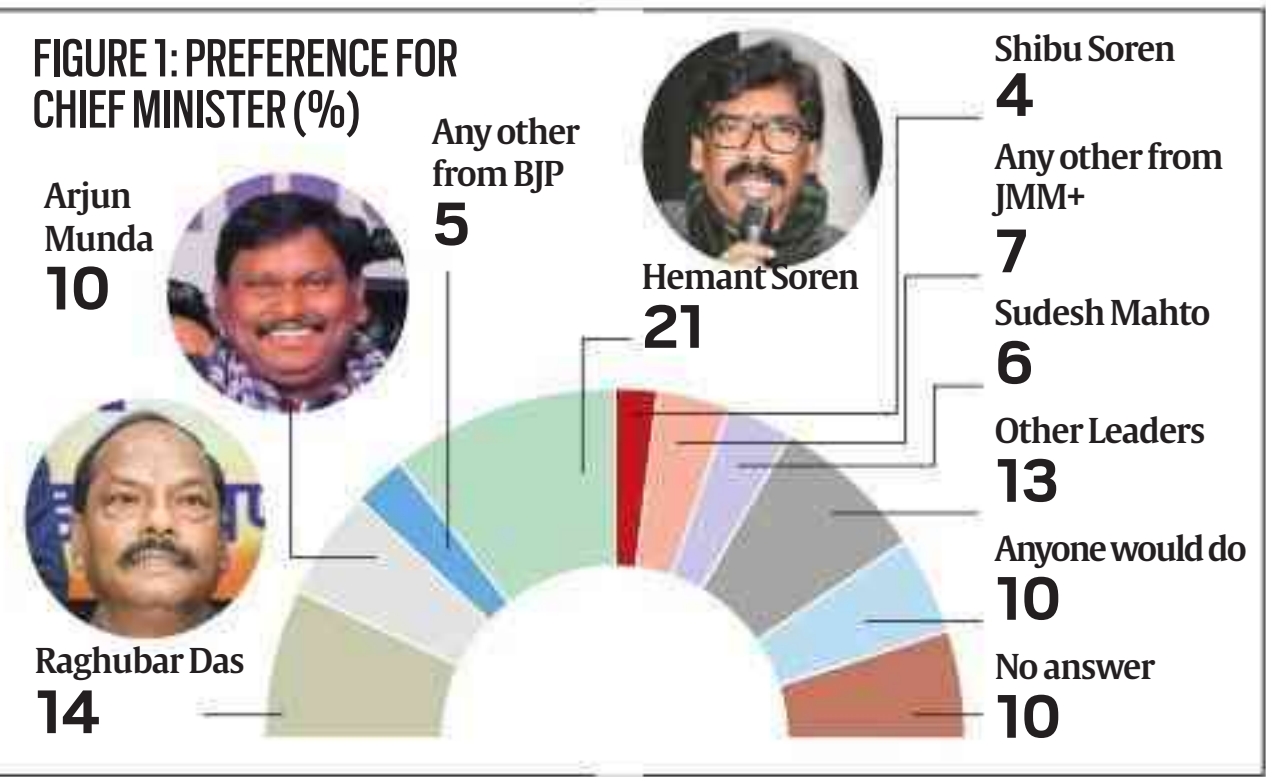


How Jharkhand result fits into a pattern

Data from the Lokniti-CSDS Post-Poll Survey underline the difference in the roles played by local and national factors in determining the outcome. In keeping with recent trends across the country, this Assembly poll saw a focus on local issues and a limited influence of the central leaders of parties, particularly the BJP



SUHAS PALSHIKAR, SANDEEP SHASTRI & SANJAY KUMAR

THE LOSS of an incumbent government is not very dramatic, but losing over 17 per cent of the vote in just six months is indeed deeply troubling for a government. This is what the Jharkhand results have brought about for the BJP. As the post-poll carried out by Lokniti-CSDS (Centre for the Study of Developing Societies) shows, there are many state-level factors contributing to this debacle but, at the same time, the larger impact would still haunt the BJP.

The Jharkhand elections happened when the national scene was becoming more and more heated due to the national-level debate on the question of citizenship. As such, a first temptation would be to see the Jharkhand outcome in retrospect as a response to all-India issues. In order to understand how the BJP lost this election and how JMM and its allies managed to win, it is necessary to dispel this temptation and situate the outcome firmly into the dynamics of state politics of Jharkhand.

No CAA resonance

For instance, did the debate around the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) make any difference? There is very little evidence to indicate this. The last two rounds of voting (fourth and fifth) were held after the debate on the Citizenship Amendment Bill and the passage of the legislation. The BJP won eight of the 15 seats that went to polls in the fourth round. In 2014, the BJP had won 11 of these 15 seats. In the seats that went to polls in the fifth round, the BJP won three of the 16 seats and had won five of the 16 in 2014. Further, the CAA and NRC were rarely mentioned by respondents as a factor that influenced the way they voted. This, despite reports that top BJP leaders did mention this issue in their campaign rhetoric with the Prime Minister defending CAA as “1,000 percent correct”.

Despite the state-specific explanations which we discuss below, the outcome must be rattling for the BJP because while state-level factors caused the defeat, the larger, all-India implications are unmistakable. The Jharkhand outcome fits into a pattern. In consonance with the trends across the country since the Gujarat Assembly elections, state polls have seen a specific focus on local specificities rather than national issues and therefore, influence of the central leaders of parties — particularly the BJP — has been rather limited. More significantly, the voter choices appear to be increasingly different from national to state elections.

Loss of popularity for CM

While all-India narratives did not work, problems faced by voters of Jharkhand might still be the same as those faced by citizens elsewhere. The data emerging from the CSDS-Lokniti Post-Poll Survey in Jharkhand endorse the critical role of local factors and developments in explaining the electoral outcomes in the state. More than four of every ten respondents (43%) in the Jharkhand post-poll survey indicated that economic issues were the most important factor that influenced their voting choice (Table 6). The state government had to bear the brunt of popular dissatisfaction on this account.

Thus, it is important to record that in the post-poll survey, more than half the respondents (55%) expressed their dissatisfaction with the outgoing Raghubar Das government (Table 1). In a sense, the present outcome was pre-destined because at the time of the Lok Sabha elections too, the Raghubar Das government was not at all popular.

At the time of the state election, the ex-

tent of dissatisfaction with the state government increased from 37 per cent in April-May 2019. Five years ago, the post-poll survey done at the time of the 2014 state assembly elections indicated that just over one-third (34%) of the respondents were dissatisfied with the then Soren government in the state.

What is more, no community was actually much satisfied with the state government. Among all communities, net satisfaction with the state government was negative (i.e., more respondents were dissatisfied than those satisfied). With voter dissatisfaction thus spread across the social sections, it would have been a surprise if the BJP had managed to win because past surveys have indicated that an incumbent government which evokes a high level of dissatisfaction from voters is often voted out of power; Jharkhand proves to be no exception in this regard.

No wonder, half the respondents said they did not want the Das government to be given another chance. Only a little over one in every three voters were willing to give the government another chance — incidentally, that is exactly the vote share of the BJP in the election.

A linked factor is the low levels of approval for the incumbent Chief Minister (Figure 1). When respondents were asked an open-ended question on who they would prefer as the Chief Minister after the Assembly polls, just over one of every ten respondents (14%) mentioned the name of Raghubar Das. Hemant Soren’s name was mentioned by over one-fifth of the respondents (21%). This seven-percentage-point gap between the incumbent and his challenger is indicative of



While the BJP had an 8-percentage-point advantage in terms of the Hindu vote, the JMM alliance had an 18-percentage-point lead among the Christians, and a 39-percentage-point lead among the Muslims

how the popularity of state-level leaders could have influenced the electoral verdict.

Modi factor limited

For quite some time now, the Indian electorate has been making a clear distinction between national-level and state polls. The data clearly indicate that national issues could well have been accorded a lower level of priority in the state polls. In an Assembly poll, local factors and the impact of economic factors appear to play an important role. Nevertheless, some attrition in the overall popularity of the BJP is evident. So much so, that even the “Modi factor” played a limited role and voters seemed to have begun to be disenchanted with the central government as well.

Compared to the 2019 Lok Sabha polls, this time

around two of every five of those who had voted for the BJP changed their party choice (Table 3). Among BJP voters, only two of every ten mentioned that they voted for the party on account of Prime Minister Modi (Table 2). Moreover, among the respondents in Jharkhand there has been a dip in the popularity of the central government since it assumed power for a second term.

At the time of the Lok Sabha poll of 2019, three-fourths of the respondents in Jharkhand had expressed satisfaction with the performance of the central government (Figure 2). Now, in the post-poll in Jharkhand, less than half the respondents (47%) expressed satisfaction with the performance of the central government. If at the time of the Lok Sabha polls one-fourth were fully satisfied with the performance of the central government, that number has steeply dipped to one-seventh of the respondents at the time of the Jharkhand assembly polls. If one-fourth were dissatisfied with the performance of the central government at the time of the 2019 Lok Sabha polls, it has increased to close to half the respondents (47%) around the time of the Jharkhand Assembly polls.

The implications of these trends are important. While local factors and dissatisfaction with the state government did play a central role in shaping voters’ choice, the popularity of the Prime Minister or the performance of the central government could not bail out the state government; in fact, the result suggests a more all-round distancing by the voters from the BJP.

Demographic divisions

The BJP breaking its alliance with the All

FIGURE 2: DECLINE IN SATISFACTION WITH CENTRAL GOVT (%)

QUESTION ASKED: Are you satisfied or dissatisfied with the performance of the BJP/NDA government at the Centre?

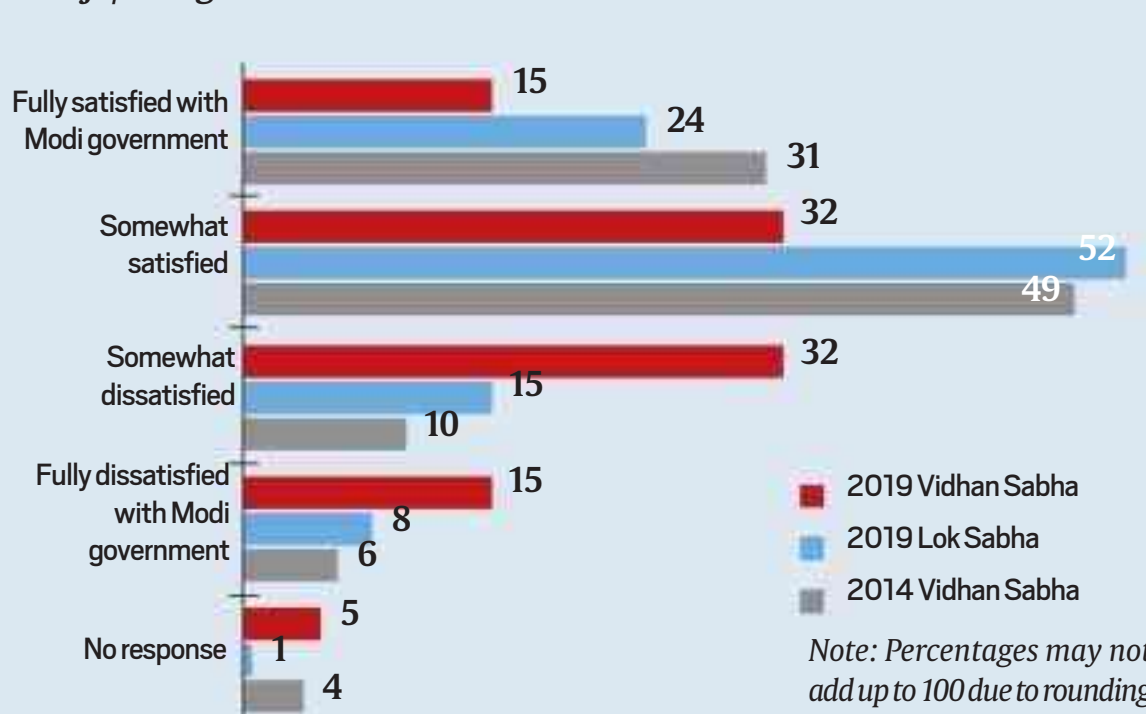


TABLE 1: DAS GOVT ASSESSED FAR MORE NEGATIVELY THAN SOREN GOVT

QUESTION ASKED: Are you satisfied or dissatisfied with the performance of the ruling state government in Jharkhand?

	During 2019 Vidhan Sabha (Das govt)	During 2019 Lok Sabha (Das govt)	During 2014 Vidhan Sabha (Soren govt)
Fully satisfied	13	13	11
Somewhat satisfied	26	48	51
Somewhat dissatisfied	31	27	14
Fully dissatisfied	24	10	20
No response	6	2	5

Note: Figures are percentages & may not total 100 due to rounding

Sample size (N) in 2019 VS - 2700; N in LS 2019 - 648; N in 2014 - 1608

TABLE 2: WHICH OF THESE MATTERED MOST TO VOTERS (%)

	Party	Candidate	CM candidate	Narendra Modi
Voters of JMM+	50	32	12	1
BJP voters	50	18	9	21
AJSU Voters	57	30	5	3
JVM voters	44	42	12	2
Voters of other parties	31	61	3	2
Overall	43	30	8	8

TABLE 6: ECONOMIC ISSUES TOP PRIORITY FOR VOTERS

QUESTION ASKED: What was the single most important issue for you while voting in this election?

Unemployment	18
Rising prices	16
Development and governance	10
Education and health	10
Corruption	9
Basic needs	7
Poverty	6
Political choice-related	4
Crimes and law & order	4
Housing	3
Farmer woes	2
Caste and tribal identity related	2
Terrorism and Naxalism	2
Environment	1
Hindutva-related	<1
NRC and CAA	<1
Other issues	1
No response	5

Jharkhand Students Union (AJSU) could have contributed to splitting the vote and working to the advantage of the JMM-led alliance. If one were to combine the vote share of the BJP and AJSU in the 81 constituencies, it would have been leading in 40 seats. However, this simplistic calculation becomes somewhat irrelevant in the backdrop of overall dissatisfaction with state government.

With almost no community barring the OBCs feeling that the state government did indeed take care of its interests, the JMM-Congress-RJD coalition managed to forge a winning combination of different segments of the society. Thus, in explaining how the BJP lost Jharkhand, it may be useful to look at a few key demographic variations in support for the JMM-led alliance and the BJP (Table 7). There was not much variation in support for BJP if the educational attainment of the respondent is kept in mind. The gap between the BJP and the JMM-led alliance appears consistent across age groups, though the BJP did marginally better among older voters as compared to youth. The real differ-

ence is noticed in terms of economic categories. The BJP did much better among the more affluent voters while the JMM-led alliance performed much better among the economically less privileged.

The tribal vote is a key factor in the state of Jharkhand. Compared to the 2019 Lok Sabha elections, the BJP was able to retain only half the tribal vote in the Assembly polls (Table 4). The BJP vote share fell sharply among the Oraon and other Scheduled Tribes, save the Santhals and Mundas. This factor was critical to the defeat of the BJP and the victory of the JMM-led alliance.

The CSDS-Lokniti post-poll data for Jharkhand also indicate a clear religious divide in terms of support. While the BJP had an eight-percentage-point advantage in terms of the Hindu vote, the JMM alliance had a huge double-digit advantage when it came to the religious minorities and others. The alliance had an 18-percentage-point lead among the Christians, a 39-percentage-point lead among the Muslims and a 12-percentage-point lead among the others (Table 5).

TABLE 3: BJP LOST TWO OF FIVE OF ITS LOK SABHA VOTERS TO OTHER PARTIES, GAINED VERY LITTLE FROM OTHERS’ SUPPORTERS

	Party voted for in Assembly Election 2019				
	JMM-Congress+	BJP	AJSU	JVM	Others
JMM-Cong-RJD’s LS 2019 voter	73	3	2	4	18
BJP’s LS 2019 voter	17	58	9	4	12
AJSU’s LS 2019 voter	7	32	61	—	—
JVM’s LS 2019 voter	29	2	2	60	7
Others’ LS 2019 voter	10	—	2	—	88
Did not reveal LS vote	17	8	14	13	48
Did not vote in LS elections	33	23	7	4	34

Note: Figures are percentages and may not add up to 100 because of rounding off

TABLE 4: COMMUNITY-WISE GAINS & LOSSES SINCE 2014 (%)

	JMM-Congress+ gains/losses compared to 2014	BJP gains/losses compared to 2014
CASTE-COMMUNITIES		
Upper caste	-2	-8
Yadav	+11	-14
Kurmi	-11	-4
Other OBC	+2	-6
Jatav	+1	-2
Other SC	-1	+14
Oraon (Hindu and Christian)	+8	-21
Santhal (Hindu and Christian)	+2	+13
Munda (Hindu and Christian)	-7	+22
Other ST	-11	-13

Note: Although JMM and Congress-RJD contested separately in 2014, the JMM-Congress gains and losses here have been calculated after combining JMM and Congress-RJD vote share of 2014; although BJP and AJSU contested separately in 2019, BJP gains and losses here have been calculated with respect to the BJP-AJSU alliance in 2014.

TABLE 5: THE RELIGION VOTE, AS SHARED AMONG PARTIES

	JMM-Congress+	BJP	AJSU	JVM	Others
Hindu	31	39	9	6	16
Muslim	53	14	5	6	22
Christian	41	23	7	4	25
Other	40	28	9	4	19

Note: Figures are percentages and may not add up to 100 because of rounding off

TABLE 8: BJP RETAINS ONLY HALF ITS ST VOTE SINCE LS POLLS

BJP’s retention of its LS vote	
Communities	
Upper caste	70
Yadav	49
Kurmi	58
Other OBC	65
SC	57
ST	49
Religion	
Hindu	60
Muslim	66
Christian	40
Other	49
Economic classes	
Poor	61
Lower	53
Middle	59
Rich	65
Age groups	
18-25	51
26-35	62
36-45	55
46-55	66
56+	59

Methodology

THE FINDINGS here are from a post-poll survey conducted in Jharkhand by the Lokniti programme of the Centre for the Study of Developing Societies (CSDS). It was conducted from December 2 through December 22, 2019 among 2,700 voters in 108 polling stations spread across 27 Assembly constituencies. The sampling design adopted was multi-stage random sampling. The constituencies were randomly selected using the probability proportional to size method. Thereafter, four polling stations within each of the sampled constituencies were selected using the systematic random sampling method. Of these 35, 25 interviews were targeted. Except in Phase 5, in all other phases the interviews were conducted a day or two after they had voted. The interviews were conducted face-to-face in Hindi using a standardised questionnaire. In order to ensure representativeness, the achieved raw sample has been weighted by Gender, Religion, Locality, and Caste group based on Census 2011 data. The survey was designed, supervised and analysed by a team of researchers associated with Lokniti. The survey was coordinated and supervised in Jharkhand by Harishwar Dayal (Associate Professor, Department of Economics, St. Xavier’s College, Ranchi) and Amit Kumar (Institute for Human Development, Ranchi). It was directed by Prof. Sanjay Kumar of CSDS, Delhi.

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The IndianEXPRESS

FOUNDED BY
RAMNATH GOENKA

BECAUSE THE TRUTH INVOLVES US ALL

TOWARDS JOINTNESS

A Chief of Defence Staff is welcome, points to reform roadmap for future — leading to joint theatre commands

THE UNION CABINET'S approval for the post of a Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) on Tuesday brings to fruition the process set in motion by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in his Independence Day speech when he announced that "... after formation of this post, all the three forces will get effective leadership at the top level". The office of a principal military advisor to the government was first mooted many decades ago but it got a serious push only after the 1999 Kargil War. The Kargil Review Committee, headed by the late K Subrahmanyam, stated the requirement which was fleshed out in detail in 2001 as a substantive recommendation of a CDS by a Group of Ministers (GoM) on National Security in the Atal Bihari Vajpayee government. But the recommendation did not find favour with either the Vajpayee government or the UPA government, largely due to bureaucratic and political resistance to the idea of an all-powerful military commander and also because of the interservice rivalry between the Air Force, the Navy and the Army. Meanwhile, another expert committee, headed by Naresh Chandra, again recommended a top military advisor, not a CDS but a Permanent Chairman of Chiefs of Staff Committee — but it, too, did not see the light of day.

The major task of the CDS, as stated by the government, is to ensure coordination between the three services, especially in matters of defence procurement, besides helping in force structuring of the services to bring in savings and operational synergy. The CDS will prioritise requirements of the three services within budgetary allocations, taking a big responsibility away from the ministry, and has also been tasked to facilitate "restructuring of military commands for optimal utilisation of resources by bringing about jointness in operations, including through establishment of joint/theatre commands". That is an important role, which also points to a reform roadmap for the future — towards the eventual creation of joint theatre commands.

While the CDS will provide principal military advice to the government, he is not the commander of all the armed forces in the country — a far cry from the Commander-in-Chief of the British colonial era. In fact, the government made it clear that "CDS will not exercise any military command, including over the three service chiefs, so as to be able to provide impartial advice to the political leadership". It also means the dilution of the 2001 GoM recommendation which had envisaged the CDS as a single-point military advisor — not limited to principal advisor — to the government. Not only is there no concentration of power, he will be functioning as the secretary of a department within the ministry, while being at par with the three service chiefs in military status and rank. Some teething problems can be expected in the beginning but things are bound to fall in place as norms, processes and rules are worked out between the three services, the CDS and the defence ministry. It will require the navigation of entrenched institutional interests, hierarchical powers and military traditions, to lay the foundations for a strong and functional CDS.

THE RIGHT COUNT

National Tiger Conservation Authority acknowledges need for greater transparency in census. Now, bring in peer review

EVER SINCE THEY slumped to an all-time low of around 1,400 in 2006-2007, India's tiger numbers have increased. The last Tiger Census Report, released in July, put the population at 2,967, a 33 per cent increase over 2014 when tigers were last enumerated. But the achievements in conservation have been clouded by doubts over the counting methods. In September, an investigation by this paper revealed that the last tiger census had over-reported the population by 16 per cent. Following that investigation, the National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) — which along with the Dehradun-based Wildlife Institute of India (WII) conducts the tiger census — has taken the first step towards introducing correctives. It has admitted the necessity of "bringing more scientific robustness to the exercise".

In the 1970s, when India embarked on Project Tiger, conservation authorities sought to identify every tiger in the wild from its paw print. But scientists criticised this method as highly subjective and riddled with the possibilities of duplication. Their fears came true in 2005, when this newspaper reported that the Sariska National Park in Rajasthan had lost all its tigers — an year before, pug mark surveys had claimed that all was well at the reserve. Since 2006, tiger audits have relied on camera traps, they have estimated the animal's prey base and tried to gauge the health of the tiger's habitats. All this has helped the NTCA and WII to arrive at more realistic numbers. But doubts over methodology have persisted. The quality of camera traps has been a major issue in several reserves and scientists have contended that the NTCA and WII have not devised sound protocols.

The last tiger census, however, invited questions. It counted under-age cubs, methods used to identify the uniqueness of an individual animal were given short shrift and the problem of duplication resurfaced. These have led to renewed demands by scientists for transparency in the census operations. In the past, the NTCA has stonewalled such demands. It is heartening, therefore, that it has finally acknowledged the need for "accountability". However, it is disappointing that the agency has dismissed calls to subject the tiger census procedures to peer reviews. Without passing this credibility test, India's greatest wildlife protection success story will not have a place in scientific literature. Worse, tiger conservation will continue to be linked to attempts to score political points.

WHERE I AM

North Pole is shifting, and Google Maps may not work as well anymore. It's time to re-navigate the city

IN THE LAST few years, the only time street names have mattered, really, is when they are being changed. And as they are burdened with the onerous task of rewriting history and fulfilling the demands of a majoritarian politics, their primary purpose has been lost. Since the advent of Google Maps and other navigation systems on the smartphone, the name of a place is no longer the marker it once was — a pleasant, if obviously artificial, voice guides you along the way. A sense of direction — like the memory for phone numbers — has been outsourced to technology. Now, it appears that it's time to go back to navigating by direction, not dictation.

The North Pole, it turns out, is shifting eastwards at an unprecedented pace. About 15 years ago, this would have made little difference to the daily lives of people and even Google Maps relies largely on satellite imaging, which is mostly unaffected by this shift. But now, in addition to its implications for industries and sectors that rely on the magnetic north — airports, defence, drilling — it will affect smartphones as well. Most contemporary phones have three magnetic sensors that tell the direction the user is facing. This feature could be compromised with the pole shifting, and people would be, quite literally, direction-less.

Learning to navigate by memory, and, more importantly, asking for directions may not be a terrible development. In fact, in India, it is a necessary skill. The spate of frequent internet shutdowns means that Google is of erratic help across cities in India. And since Section 144 of the Criminal Procedure Code (deployed recently with increasing frequency) ensures that no more than four people gather at a time in one place, there is the joy of an illicit pleasure to the simple act of asking for directions.



SOUMYA KANTI GHOSH

THE RELEASE OF second quarter GDP data and the subsequent revision by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) of its own growth estimate for the year has brought the spotlight firmly back on the issue of reviving growth. Even as the government and the RBI collectively battle the slowdown, its extent has left most of us befuddled. The question, therefore, is: Is a turnaround in sight?

First, the world has fundamentally changed since the onset of the global financial crisis. India and China accounted for 19.1 per cent of world GDP in 2018, as against 9.1 per cent in 2008. India's GDP has jumped 2.3 times, while that of China jumped 3 times since then. Over the same period, while India's per capita GDP has increased by 102 per cent, that of China's has grown by an even sharper 182 per cent. Clearly, while we have done well, we could have done even better if we take China as the benchmark. But, what is more important is that as a nation, our aspirations have increased manifold.

The GDP numbers convey a serious policy predicament on the fiscal front. Take, for instance, the gap between gross domestic product (GDP) and gross value added (GVA), which reflects indirect taxes, net of subsidies. A higher gap (higher GDP and lower GVA) could simply mean that while indirect taxes are growing, government transfer payments like subsidies have been stagnant because of fiscal compulsions. In the context of the current fiscal, it is imperative that the government clears the fertiliser subsidy at the earliest so that the system is unclogged.

This has been the trend in earlier years as well when the gap between GDP and GVA has been as high as 80 basis points on some occasions, peaking in the third or fourth quarter as the government tried to maintain the delicate trade-off between fiscal discipline and growth. During such apparent trade-offs, the point we conveniently forget is that it is only growth that leads to adherence of revenue targets, and hence fiscal prudence. Fiscal policy in India has often been painted as the

Governments must ensure policy continuity, refrain from creating sector-specific uncertainty

The Monetary Policy Committee's decision not to hike rates, though surprising, clearly defines the limited role of monetary policy in the context of the current growth conundrum. It needs to be emphasised that when we are facing a quadruple balance sheet problem (corporates, banks, NBFCs and households), rate cuts will only increase household leverage and in such a scenario, they might not work unless accompanied by counter-cyclical fiscal policy measures.

mother of all villains (populist dole-outs like loan waivers have not helped either) and the obsession of the markets with a 3 per cent deficit target has led to unrealistic, unjustified and irrational exuberance in the debt markets.

Interestingly, we must remember that contrary to popular perception, rating agencies are concerned about growth and the recent S&P episode only underlines this. Thus, we must chase growth and strictly avoid using fiscal policy targets to satisfy bond market traders. Further, by repeatedly emphasising that we will stick to the mandated fiscal deficit target during a year when growth poses a serious challenge, it makes one prone to non-transparent and non-credible fiscal rules that markets will not believe in.

Second, the Monetary Policy Committee's decision not to hike rates, though surprising, clearly defines the limited role of monetary policy in the context of the current growth conundrum. It needs to be emphasised that when we are facing a quadruple balance sheet problem (corporates, banks, NBFCs and households), rate cuts will only increase household leverage and in such a scenario, they might not work unless accompanied by counter-cyclical fiscal policy measures.

Now, coming back to the question that we asked at the beginning of this piece, let me present some interesting facts.

Take the case of the growth challenges that the auto industry is facing in India. Strangely, it seems that the auto industry globally is facing a structural dilemma. Even though sales have been falling across almost all emerging and developed economies, the SUV segment has belied all doomday predictions and continues to expand. India has been no exception. Our in-house study, based on a stratified sample of the SBI portfolio, reveals that car sales are income agnostic across regions, age and gender, as more and more car buyers, in every population group, are showing a preference for high-end

cars. This finding provides food for thought for car makers looking to adjust to changing demand preferences.

In a related study, our customer behavioural analysis of a large portfolio of individuals, who used SBI cards to buy online products from Flipkart and Amazon, during the festive season, reveals an even more interesting trend. We observe a significant latent demand among consumers. The median spends of people in tier II and tier III cities, spread across states like West Bengal, Punjab, Andhra Pradesh, that have a population size of not even 1 per cent of Mumbai, were close to 40 per cent higher than that of Mumbai and other metro cities. Thus, the current slowdown in demand could be largely attributed to consumers holding back spending because of uncertainties.

Since we have talked about uncertainties, we must also emphasise how to remove them. First, we must refrain from creating sector-specific uncertainties in areas like telecom through contradictory policy statements. Any potential setback in the telecom sector could hold back consumption spending further. This will negate any impact of a counter-cyclical fiscal push in the forthcoming budget.

Second, the states of Maharashtra, Uttar Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Gujarat, Rajasthan, West Bengal, Madhya Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh and Telangana together account for around 16.8 per cent of the global GDP (in purchasing power parity terms). We strongly recommend that these states maintain policy continuity, especially when the political regime changes. For example, rather than opting for measures like farm loan waivers, which lead to problems of moral hazard that impact credit culture, measures should be undertaken to improve agricultural productivity. Alternatively, can we not enact a law to preserve policy continuity?

The author is Group Chief Economic Advisor, State Bank of India. Views are personal

PROTESTS AND AFTER

Real remedies are beyond political and institutional realms, require societal efforts



NAMAN PUGALIA

ANGER IS AMONGST the most powerful of emotions. It is also ephemeral. Therefore, how the sentiment is channeled across time and space determines how its incidence will eventually be judged — as an enduring celebration or as mere frustration. We have been furious often, but have failed consistently in harnessing our rage for sustainable change. Hopefully, the current clamour over citizenship is different.

In 1979, the Mandal Commission was established with a mandate to identify socially or educationally backward classes of India. Though its report, which advocated reservation, had been completed in 1983, the V P Singh government declared its intent to implement the report in August 1990. This led to widespread student protests including self-immolation by Rajiv Goswami, a student of Deshbandhu College in Delhi. While the dispossessed rallied for reservation, the privileged defended their privilege. Since then, there have been political, administrative and judicial efforts to increase access for the marginalised by way of reservations. However, caste-based discrimination has only worsened outside the walls of institutions that grant symbolic space.

In 2010, the self-immolation of Tunisian, Mohamed Bouazizi, triggered the Arab Spring — a series of anti-government protests across the Islamic world. The early hopes that these movements would end corruption, increase political participation, and bring about greater economic equity collapsed in the wake of the counter-revolutionary moves by foreign state actors in Yemen and of the Saudi-UAE linked military deep state in Egypt, the regional and

international military interventions in Bahrain and Yemen, and the civil wars in Syria, Iraq, Libya and Yemen.

In 2011, the India Against Corruption movement evoked widespread resentment against corruption. Given the subject's secular appeal, campaigners came from across socio-economic strata and geographies. On December 27, the government passed the Lokpal and Lokayukta Bill 2011. Among the several outcomes of the protracted agitation was a hope that the venality of the state and its arms would end. Yet, graft at all levels continues unabated.

In 2012, in the aftermath of the Delhi sexual assault case, millions of Indians poured onto the streets across the country. A legislation — the Criminal Law (Amendment) Act, 2013 (Nirbhaya Act) — was passed by both houses of the Parliament in March 2013. It provided for amendments to the Indian Penal Code, the Indian Evidence Act, and the Code of Criminal Procedure, 1973 on laws related to sexual offences. For good measure, we got a Nirbhaya Fund too, for schemes that would improve women's safety. Yet, women's safety continues to be a distant dream.

What was common across all these episodes? Each of these initially had at least two kinds of participants — those who were impacted by the event and those who were sympathetic to the cause. In most cases, the former continue to suffer and persist, while the latter moved on. In many of the cases cited above, the revolutionaries sought institutional and specifically, legislative responses; they gave up too easily. The causes warranted additional societal efforts.

In 2019, people across the country have rallied against the Citizenship Amendment Act on the grounds that it discriminates against Indians based on religion. At least 24 lives have been lost in the protests. Among the remedies that have been sought, the ones trending call for a rollback and for state governments to reject it. Sloganeering apart, will these steps truly end religion based discrimination? Legislative changes may be necessary, but they will be woefully insufficient in altering mindsets.

Based on the evidence from India and elsewhere, our grim reality points to a few lessons that the current crop of rebels must bear in mind. Rallying for causes needs a consistent critical mass in an attention-deficit world. Will the movement have enough votaries to sustain it when the news cycle changes? Seeking legislative answers as magic bullets is the surest way to prematurely lose our battles. Real remedies may be above and beyond the political and institutional realms.

The current uprising points to growing national consciousness. It seems to be saying that on discrimination, we have had enough and we want our voices to be heard. What we are yet to discover is whether the revolutionaries will do enough. Do they have the strategy and stamina it takes to defend an important term in the preamble of our Constitution, and move beyond it, towards creating a deeper resistance enterprise?

The writer is founder, WalkIn. He previously co-founded, FourthLion Technologies, a political campaign planner

DECEMBER 26, 1979, FORTY YEARS AGO

NO SECRET PACT

JANATA PARTY LEADER Jagjivan Ram denied that there was any secret understanding between the Congress and the Janata Party, as being speculated in some circles. Asked if his party would form a government at the Centre with the help of Congress after the elections, Ram commented: "Where is the question of forming such a government? We (Janata Party) are getting a majority and will form the government." When his attention was drawn to Devraj Urs's statement admitting his party's mistake in joining the Charan Singh Cabinet, Ram said the Congress President had indeed made a sensible statement.

ASSAM ALLIANCE

THE ASSAM PRADESH Congress is understood to be going ahead with an alliance with the Janata Party to form a government in the state despite the high command's directive to defer the matter till the general elections are over. The leader of the state Congress legislature party, Sarat Chandra Sinha, is said to have informed Congress president Devraj Urs that the PCC had decided to form a coalition government in Assam because of the peculiar situation in the state. Meanwhile, the leader of the Janata-Congress coalition, Golap Borbora, said that he had not yet contacted Governor L P Singh to stake his claim to form a government.

X'MAS IN TEHERAN

FOUR WESTERN CLERGYMEN held tearful Christmas services with the American hostages in the US embassy. They said they were told there were only 43 captives, that they met all of them and they were in "good shape" even though some were suffering psychologically. They also said they were assured by the captors — who filmed the services — that they would be allowed to pick up messages from the hostages and convey them to the hostages' families. The clergymen added they would release the hostages' names. "As far as we could tell, and on the physical side you can tell, they are in good shape," Reverend William Sloan Coffin said.



The Ideas Page

State incapacity and NRC

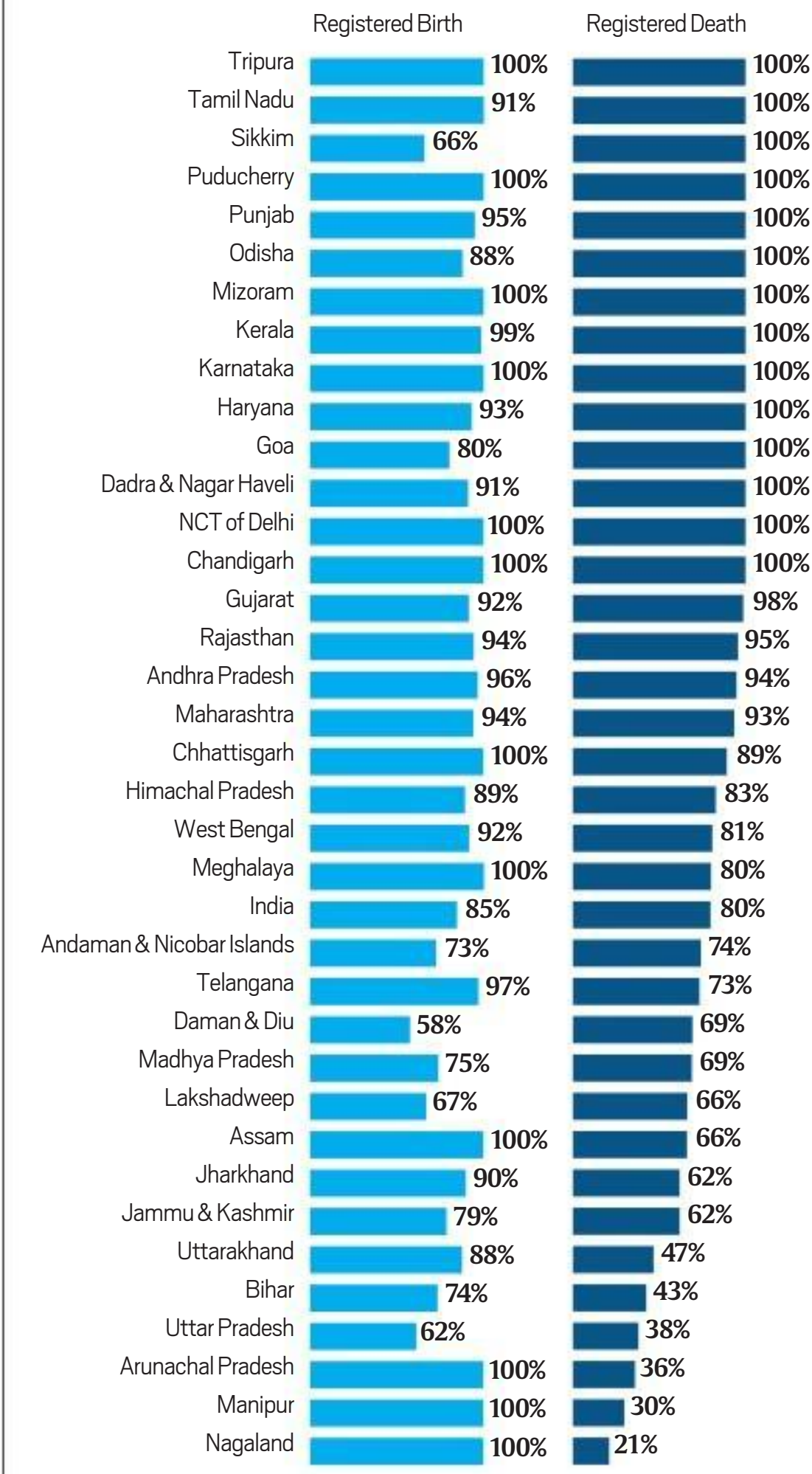
Existing government infrastructure is not conducive to launch such an operation. It will lead to chaos, confusion and exclusion of the weakest and poorest sections of society



MUDIT KAPOOR AND SHAMIKA RAVI

WHILE DEFENDING THE Citizenship (Amendment) Act (CAA), 2019 in Parliament, the Union home minister announced that the government will launch a countrywide NRC very soon. This has led to an ideological divide, and a fiery debate across the country. It is worth noting that the Citizenship Act of 1955 has a provision (point 14A) where: One, the central government may compulsorily register every citizen of India and issue a national identity card to him. Two, the central government may maintain a National Register of Indian Citizens and for that purpose establish a National Registration Authority. Three, on and from the date of commencement of the Citizenship (Amendment) Act, 2003, the Registrar General, India under sub-section (1) of section 3 of the Registration of Births and Deaths Act 1969 (18 of 1969) shall act as the National Registration Authority and he shall function as the Registrar General of Citizen Registration. However, in contrast to the important normative question of whether the central government should launch an NRC or not, it is perhaps more important to look at the positive question of whether the central government has the capacity for such an ambitious undertaking. A faulty implementation of the NRC could create a human rights issue of unimaginable magnitude. To understand issues related to the central government's capacity to launch an NRC, we focus our attention on the most important activity of the Registrar General of India under the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) — the implementation of the Registration of Births and Deaths Act of 1969, whereby every birth and death in the whole of India is to be compulsorily registered. Registration of birth is the right of every child and is the first step towards establishing a legal identity. It was envisaged under this Act that the Civil Registry System (CRS) would be “the unified process of continuous, permanent, compulsory and universal recording of the vital events (births, deaths, still births)”. Closer inspection of data from the MHA report on Vital Statistics of India based on the Civil Registry Systems, 2017 reveals several shortcomings, which are a harbinger of the challenges that the government will face in the implementation of the NRC. First, there are large variations in registered births and deaths across states. For example, in large and less developed states such as Uttar Pradesh and Bihar, 62 per cent and 74 per cent of the births, respectively, were registered, while only 38 per cent and 43 per cent of the deaths, respectively, were registered. Overall in India, 85 per cent of births and 74 per cent of deaths were registered. Some of the Northeastern states, such as Nagaland, Manipur, and Arunachal Pradesh have less than 40 per cent of deaths that are registered. Even in Assam, which has 100 per cent of birth registration, only 66 per cent of the deaths are registered. This clearly reflects the acute poverty of infrastructure across

FIGURE 1: REGISTRATION OF BIRTHS AND DEATHS, ACROSS STATES AND UNION TERRITORIES, 2017



states to implement the constitutionally mandated Registration of births and deaths Act of 1969. Unfortunately, this also suggests that the NRC implemented under present conditions will disproportionately hurt the vulnerable and weaker sections of the society. (See Figure 1) Next, to understand the nature of the exercise, we look at the registration of deaths of a particularly vulnerable group — children less than a year old. They are vulnerable because they depend on adults for all their needs and do not have adequate political representation. They are, therefore, neglected by society and the state. This apathy is reflected in their registration numbers. We estimate by using data from the sample registration system (SRS) and comparing it with data from the CRS, that only 19 per cent of infant deaths are registered. In some large states like Bihar, less than 1 per cent of infant deaths were registered, in Uttar Pradesh it was merely 4.3 per cent. Even in states that report high levels of social development, such as Kerala and Tamil Nadu, merely 62 per cent and 58 per cent of infant deaths were registered. This clearly reflects the impoverished nature of the state to address the

In contrast to the important normative question of whether the central government should launch an NRC or not, it is perhaps more important to look at the positive question of whether the central government has the capacity for such an ambitious undertaking. A faulty implementation of the NRC could create a human rights issue of unimaginable magnitude.



FIGURE 2: REGISTERED INFANT DEATHS, ESTIMATED INFANT DEATHS, ACCORDING TO LARGE STATES, 2017

State	Registered Infant deaths (A)	Estimated Infant deaths (A)	Ratio (%) (A/B)
Andhra Pradesh	9115	27123	33.6%
Assam	3372	30718	11.0%
Bihar	840	97438	0.9%
Chhattisgarh	8779	22677	38.7%
Gujarat	16093	38070	42.3%
Haryana	5481	17219	31.8%
Jharkhand		22520	
Jammu & Kashmir	2131	4458	47.8%
Karnataka	10832	27445	39.5%
Kerala	3176	5103	62.2%
Maharashtra	16951	36390	46.6%
Madhya Pradesh	11359	92468	12.3%
Odisha	11868	32201	36.9%
Punjab	2455	9218	26.6%
Rajasthan	10435	68001	15.3%
Telangana	5390	18426	29.3%
Tamil Nadu	9730	16650	58.4%
Uttarakhand		5981	
Uttar Pradesh	10204	236387	4.3%
West Bengal	13035	34509	37.8%
India	165494	858929	19.3%

identity of the voiceless. We also found a strong negative correlation between infant mortality rate and proportion of infant deaths that were registered. States that have poor infrastructure in registering infant deaths also have a significantly higher infant mortality rate. Given India's commitment to the Sustainable Development Goals, it is imperative upon the state to accurately account for all infant deaths. In light of the severe capacity constraint, if the NRC is to be ever launched then the first step for the MHA should be to strengthen the existing infrastructure to account for at least every birth and death within the country. An unintended consequence of this could be its immediate effect on health and safety policies, which are significantly hampered by the non-availability of regular and reliable data, in particular on deaths. At present, the existing infrastructure is not conducive to launch an NRC. It will only lead to chaos, confusion and exclusion of the weakest and the poorest sections of society. Kapoor works at ISI and Ravi with Brookings India

WHAT THE OTHERS SAY

“The US and Western political and public opinion elites should realize that the Western political system is unleashing negative energy that is splitting society. They should try to prevent such Western political logic extending to the outside world.” — GLOBAL TIMES, CHINA

Refugee to citizen

CAA will not take away anyone's citizenship, only seeks to confer dignity and rights to the persecuted



ARJUN RAM MEGHWAL

THE HISTORIC CITIZENSHIP Amendment Act (CAA) has come into effect across the country following a gazette notification on December 12. This moment signifies the continuous struggle of many visionary leaders and freedom fighters. With the CAA, a long-pending demand for relief to persecuted religious minorities has been met. Recalling two incidents from history will be useful to understand the importance of the CAA. Following the 1971 Indo-Pak war, Rajasthan faced an influx of around one lakh refugees comprising people from the Sodha Rajput, Meghwal, Bheel, Charan, Maheshwari and Sindhi communities. The Simla Agreement signed by the then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi and President of Pakistan, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, sought to bring about the withdrawal of troops and exchange of prisoners of war. Atal Bihari Vajpayee rushed to Shimla during the five-day summit and pleaded with Indira Gandhi to take a tough stand and insisted that “sacrifices made by the Javans should not be surrendered at the negotiation table”. The Bharatiya Jana Sangh led by Vajpayee opposed the return of refugees to Pakistan on the Simla Agreement's terms and took out a march to Indian occupied territories of Pakistan in Gadrja city in July 1972. During Vajpayee's stay at Gadrja Road, Barmer, which was the focal point of the agitation, thousands of refugees joined hands with him. Atalji, along with the volunteers, walked five to six kms from Gadrja Road in India to territory India had occupied in Pakistan and assured the persecuted minorities and Dalits a dignified life in India. He stayed in the House of Kojhraj Maheshwari, visited the refugees' camp and assured the refugees that they will be allowed to stay in India. Tarun Rai Kaga, a former MLA from the Chohtan constituency in Rajasthan was one such Dalit who had come to the Gadrja Road camp in 1972 from Chachro township in Tharparkar district, Pakistan. The NDA-I government of Vajpayee conferred special rights to district collectors in Rajasthan and Gujarat to decide on citizenship requests made by Hindu and Sikhs refugees. The tale of the erstwhile Mohata Palace (now Jinnah House) in Karachi reveals the various shades of the hostile attitude of Pakistan's leadership towards religious minorities. Shiv Ratan Mohata, a successful Marwari entrepreneur from Bikaner, had built the palatial house in the seaside neighbourhood of Clifton in Karachi for his wife. At the peak of World War II, leaders preferred to visit London via Karachi for meetings related to Independence and Partition. The founder of Pakistan, Muhammad Ali Jinnah, used to stay at Mohata Palace during these visits. During one such occasion, Jinnah told Shiv Ratan Mohata that he will have to vacate the magnificent building after Partition. Mohata's numerous requests that he be allowed to retain his palace were refused by Jinnah.

Shiv Ratan Mohata spoke about his exchange with Jinnah to his brother Ram Gopal Mohata, a very simple, affluent and spiritual personality of Bikaner. He told Shiv Ratan that, “if the king cannot take care of people of his region, we should not live there” and suggested that he leave Pakistan immediately. After Independence, Shiv Ratan Mohata settled in Mumbai and his Mohata Palace became the Jinnah House of Karachi. After Jinnah's demise in September 1948, the palace was handed over to Fatima Jinnah. In the 1950s, Shiv Ratan Mohata wished to have Jinnah House in Mumbai for Mohata Palace under the government's provisions for exchange of immovable properties. He got the then chief minister of Bombay state, B G Kher, to recommend his case to Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru. But his efforts were unsuccessful since Jinnah had told Nehru not to give his property to anyone. The historic occasion of the CAA brings a sigh of relief and smile to every person who was affected by Partition — from affluent business families like the Mohatas of Bikaner to Dalits like Tarun Rai Kaga and lakhs of other unnamed individuals. From time to time, various political parties, including the Congress, have voiced the cause of persecuted religious minorities. On November 15, 1950, while replying to the discussion on the motion of thanks to the President's address in the provisional Parliament, Prime Minister Nehru, referring to Syama Prasad Mookerjee's statement said: “I am perfectly prepared to agree with him (Mookerjee) that the situation of the displaced persons is very far from desirable”, and added that “there is no doubt, of course, that people who have come to India, those displaced persons who stay in India, are bound to have citizenship. If the law is inadequate, the law should be changed”. During a discussion on the Citizenship Amendment Bill in the Rajya Sabha on December 18, 2003, the then Leader of Opposition, Manmohan Singh, demanded a liberal approach towards religiously persecuted refugees. Rajasthan Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot, in his previous tenure, wrote to the then Union Home Minister P Chidambaram on the plight of Pakistani Hindus and Sikh migrants. Assam Chief Minister Tarun Gogoi had submitted a memorandum to the then Prime Minister, Manmohan Singh, on April 20, 2012, pleading that Indian citizens who had to flee due to persecution and discrimination on religious ground at the time of Partition should not be treated as foreigners. Even Prakash Karat, the then CPM general secretary, had written to Manmohan Singh in May 2012 regarding the citizenship problems of Bengali refugees. When the Modi government showed the courage to address this daunting issue, the Opposition parties are trying mislead the people. The CAA is about inclusion and not exclusion. It has nothing to do with Indian Muslims. The Act is not meant to take away anyone's citizenship, but it will confer citizenship on persecuted minorities. The Act will ease the lives of Partition refugees and provide them a dignified life by allowing them access to the government's welfare schemes. The writer represents Bikaner in the Lok Sabha and is Union Minister of State for Heavy Industries, Public Enterprises and Parliamentary Affairs



SATISH K SHARMA

MY FATHER, WHO was a religious teacher in the 7th Grenadiers during the 1965 India-Pakistan war, wrote a tribute in verse for the soldiers of his battalion who were killed in action in the Khemkaran sector. As a child, I was fascinated by this poem and felt particularly sorry for one soldier who died when shrapnel hit his exposed head. The jawan had, apparently, lost his helmet earlier in the battle and could not get a replacement immediately. He was marching ahead with nothing but a towel as protection when the enemy shell exploded near him. Twenty-four years later, on May 7, 1989, in the town of Mangrol in Junagadh district, 10 people, all Muslims, were killed in police firing as a direct result of a police officer not wearing a helmet on law and order duty. Apparently, an Eid procession of Bin-Tablighi Muslims was passing through a route disputed by the Tablighi Muslims. As the procession neared the Tablighi locality, a hail of stones from the rooftops of houses lining the street greeted it. When the sub-divisional police officer (SDPO), who was leading the police bandobast came out of his jeep to assess the situation, a piece of rock, hit him on the head. He fell down, bleeding profusely. The police thought he had been killed. It unnerved the force which, in sheer panic, fired more than 120 rounds causing 10 fatalities. The SDPO survived but if he had been wearing a helmet, the loss of lives

Whose head is it, anyway?

The problem with Gujarat government's decision to relax the helmet rule

could have been averted. I have personal knowledge of this incident because, I was rushed to Mangrol post haste (“Report your departure to state police control room in 1 hour”, said the terse radio message) as a young assistant superintendent of police to replace the injured officer. For the next one-and-a-half years — the time I was there — not a single incident of stone throwing happened and much of my time went in coping with the judicial enquiry which had been ordered into the police firing. In the end, the enquiry exonerated everyone but I learnt a lesson — ensure that every police officer wears a helmet during bandobast duty. The helmet came to haunt me again, but in a different context. On the August 28, 1990, my 25-year-old brother-in-law, Manish, was riding his motorcycle in the late evening on an empty road in New Delhi. The anti-Mandal agitation was at its peak. Some rioters had placed a large garbage bin in the middle of the road. Manish could not see it and his motorcycle crashed into the huge bin. He suffered a fatal head injury. When police came to the scene, they found the helmet on the handle of the bike. The accident triggered a set of events that changed the lives of my family forever. A year later, on July 22, 1991, as a deputy commissioner of police, I was supervising the bandobast of Tazia procession at Mandvi —

the city square of the walled city in Vadodara. The atmosphere was tense because the city had seen a long spell of communal clashes. Yet, all seemed to be going well when suddenly, instigated by provocative sloganeering, some miscreants from the adjoining Hindu locality started throwing rocks at the procession. There was immediate retaliation from the other side and the street turned into a battleground. As we tried to control the situation, a big piece of rock landed on my forehead. Fortunately, I was wearing the helmet and the visor was down. It saved my head, but on deflection, the rock hit my left collar bone and fractured it. I was shaken but happy that the elementary precaution saved my life. In 2017, out of 1.47 lakh road accident fatalities in India, 36,000 victims were helmetless two-wheeler riders. It works out to an alarming figure of 98 per day. The otherwise law-abiding citizens of Gujarat are not only averse to wearing helmets but it is also a sensitive issue with them. A helmet is one “inconvenience” they do not want to put up with. During my tenures of three years each as commissioner of police at Vadodara and Surat, I could not enforce the helmet rule with any degree of success. How can you when nine out of 10 bike riders violate it? We would challan thousands of bike riders but the vio-

lators ran into lakhs. However, in recent months, as a consequence of strict enforcement and a stiffer penalty one could see much better compliance. But it clearly did not go down well with people. Bowing down to the public outcry, the Government of Gujarat decided to relax the helmet rule substantially. Now, it is no longer mandatory for two-wheeler riders to wear protective headgear in eight metropolitan city areas of Ahmedabad, Surat, Vadodara, Rajkot, Jamnagar, Bhavnagar, Junagadh and Gandhinagar and all 160-odd municipal towns of Gujarat. The decision has been welcomed all over Gujarat. Indeed, one could argue that enforcement is not the only way by which police can ensure better traffic discipline. The authorities still have the option of launching a massive state-wide education-cum-awareness campaign. One only hopes that considering the number of lives, especially young lives, at stake, such a campaign will start sooner than later. But while that happens, the question one wants to ask the two-wheeler riders of Gujarat is this: If you don't wear a helmet, whose head is at risk? The writer is a retired IPS officer and former commissioner of police, Surat

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

DISTORTED PICTURE

THIS REFERS TO the article, “In citizenship debate, a related question — that of Sri Lankan Tamils” (IE, December 24). In response to the question “What do the refugees from Sri Lanka expect from the government?” it is stated that “they expect citizenship of India — because they fear persecution and violence at the hands of the Colombo government and the Sinhala Buddhist majority”. In my view, the article attempts to create a negative image of Sri Lanka by depicting it as a place where the government, and Sinhala Buddhist majority will persecute the Tamil refugees if they return. There is no basis for the fears. In fact, the government welcomes voluntary repatriations, and arrangements are in place to resettle such refugees when they return. A large number of Sri Lankan refugees from Tamil Nadu have returned to Sri Lanka and no incidents of persecution against them have been reported so far. Austin Fernando, Sri Lanka's High Commissioner to India

ATAL FOREVER

THIS REFERS TO the article, “Firm policy, gentle politics” (IE, December 25). Atal Bihari Vajpayee was a courageous person with a soft heart. Resisting US pres-

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.

sure, he declared India a nuclear power. He is indeed comparable to Swami Vivekananda as an orator. Barad Krishnapalsinh, Ahmedabad

CARTOON EXPLAINS

THIS REFERS TO E P Unny's cartoon on December 25. It has managed to explain what a thousand words could not. Between the NPR, NRC and CAA, hapless citizens are being tossed around and eventually dumped into the wastebin. Barad Krishnapalsinh, Ahmedabad