

OPINION

{ OUR TAKE }

Rajnath Singh's statement was an excellent summary. Now build a national consensus.

There were gaps in the speech too, some of it understandable given the sensitive nature of the situation. Mr Singh refrained from asserting that China was currently in Indian territory—which has drawn criticism. But while more details would have been good, this is also a time when the government needs to be given the benefit of doubt because of the complex nature of the crisis. One way to, however, provide more information is to have a closed door briefing for leaders of other parties, which, as a report in this newspaper suggested on Wednesday, is under consideration. The defence minister did well. The government should now build a national consensus to deal with the challenge.

The GBO-5 comes out at a crucial time when, amid the Covid-19 pandemic, the world is being forced to rethink its development objectives and its relationship with nature. Business-as-usual will only plunge the globe into deeper crises, given the complex interdependence of all elements in nature. A stronger CBD framework must push national governments to act and avoid a natural catastrophe that can endanger human lives.

The possible return of the Taliban, backed by Pakistan, is a challenge. But don't count India out.

the chairman of the High Council for National Reconciliation, was categorical that while the military would not be the arbiter of the political process and the goal of peace is to end all forms of war and violence through peaceful means, the military has a constitutional system in the country that would preserve democracy, elections, rights of law, rights of minorities, rights of religious and civil rights. In essence, he underlined the need to preserve the achievements of the 1990 peace agreement. He said, Taliban's deputy leader, tried to strike a conciliatory tone but the military would not be swayed. Preserving religious values and striving for an Islamic system.

India's priorities even as they subtly underlined its reservations. For New Delhi, it is imperative that "the peace process must be Afghan-led, Afghan-owned and Afghan-controlled, respect national sovereignty and territorial integrity of Afghanistan, promote human rights and democracy, ensure interest of minorities, women and the vulnerable, effectively address violence across the country."

India's primary concern emanates from a perceived Pakistani victory in

Today's Afghanistan is not the one the Taliban controlled from 1996 to 2001. Democracy has thrown up new voices, actors, aspirations

managing to bring the Taliban back to political power in Kabul, thereby energising Islamist extremists in South Asia to target India. India's regional security interests could be further undermined if the Taliban let Pakistan use Afghan territory for gaining strategic depth vis-à-vis India. Then there is the China factor. Given its close ties with Pakistan, Beijing would like to ensure that the Taliban sever their ties with Uighur extremists in Xinjiang. In exchange, China might emerge as the economic benefactor of a Taliban-dominated Afghanistan, nudging Pakistan to bring the country into the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor.

These are significant challenges and New Delhi must be cognisant of such pressures. But it should also remain alive to new possibilities as the alignment of interests between India and Pakistan's largest development partner

cannot be easily dismissed; it also remains the most popular country for ordinary Afghans. New Delhi has strong ties with not only the US and Europe, which will be critical for Afghanistan's economic reconstruction long after foreign military forces leave, but also with neighbours such as Russia and Iran, key for Afghanistan's strategic autonomy. The Pakistan question which divides Pakistan and Afghanistan also gives New Delhi significant leverage. It is, therefore, not surprising that the Taliban have been signalling their intent to engage with India. They seem to get the salience of New Delhi in the Afghan matrix much better than many in India.

Harsh V Pant is professor, King's College London, and director of studies, Observer Research Foundation, New Delhi. The views expressed are personal.

The British described India as an ocean of trees. This tree cover was nurtured by village and tribal communities, each family to submit five rules regarding management of forest resources and other civic affairs.

This was the result of a combination of capable tribal leadership and competent and honest officials. CFRs have been granted from 2009 and have led to skill development and community-based employment. Before the Act was in place, young women in Gadchiroli had a taste of the government's ill-conceived skill development plan when they were trained as air hostesses. On completing the course, no airline was willing to employ the women.



India needs to think of an alternative economic paradigm to prevent the distress we have seen this year SANCHIT KHANNA/HT PHOTO

Madhav Gadgil is former professor, Indian Institute of Science where he founded the Centre for Ecological Sciences

The views expressed are personal

Boosting w
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Women's representation in leadership positions has been on a rise in recent years, but not enough to close the economic opportunity gap. The World Economic Forum (WEF)'s *Global Gender Gap Report 2020* reveals that it will take almost a century to achieve full parity at the current pace.

The disparity is particularly striking in India. It ranks 112 out of 153 countries on the overall Global Gender Gap Index. The Covid-19 pandemic seems to have applied brakes in several areas where workplaces were becoming more diverse as well as areas where access to resources across gender had become more equitable. The pandemic has hit the most vulnerable the hardest, making these disparities worse. Oxfam India has estimated that the economic loss from women losing their jobs during this pandemic at nearly \$216 billion.

In these trying times, we need to transform challenges into opportunities.

ities and accelerate the shift towards greater inclusion of women in the workforce and women-led entrepreneurship. Covid-19 is far from over. Work from home is now widely prevalent. There is an opportunity to deploy technology as the new leveller to strengthen women's economic participation. It is heartening to see 34% of Indian IT workforce is women. They could be further provided access to new skills and blended technologies to move seamlessly in the rising sectors on digital platforms – telemedicine, e-learning and e-commerce.

As the Sustainable Development Goals demonstrate, adopting the gender lens properly and creating a culture to provide more opportunities to women requires collaborative and concerted action. We need to do the following.

One, accelerate women's entrepreneurship. Currently, women constitute around 14% of the total entrepreneur base in India. We must accelerate both the quantity and quality of entrepreneurship through capacity building in areas such as branding and marketing as well as facilitate financial and institutional linkages for business support.

Two, increase women in the workforce at all levels of management and leadership.

Women account just 14% of leadership roles and 30% of professional and technical workers. We have not made much progress in terms of leadership roles at the chief executive officer (CEO) level. India has the third-lowest rank in the Asia-Pacific in CEO representation (2%), the second-lowest rank for female chief financial officer (CFO) representation (1%). Ranked 23 globally, India's female representation on boards increased by 4.3% over the past five years to 15.2% in 2019. The global average is 20.6%.

Three, empowerment of women at the micro-enterprise and grassroots levels. Women-owned enterprises can generate over 50–60 million jobs by 2030. Financial reforms must come with a gender lens as micro-enterprises led by women face specific issues that require interventions such as digital and financial literacy programmes, handholding for reliable market access, and a greater network of Self Help Groups (SHGs).

In the 2019 Mastercard Index of Women Entrepreneurs, India ranked 52 out among the 58 countries. We must aim to be in the top 10 over the next few years. There are many reasons for this. First, women are already outperforming their more developed counterparts. Women business owners as a percentage of all businesses account for 38.2%, 37.5% and 36% respectively in Uganda, Ghana and Botswana. With equal access to resources, women-owned businesses in India are no reason why India cannot reach one of the highest levels of women's entrepreneurship.

The road ahead is not easy, and the persistent issues of gender-stereotyping, longstanding inequalities and gender disparities have sharpened on gender lines and in access to resources including food, education and health care. Industry must use its position to work with all stakeholders in championing women's entrepreneurship. For it is not only where women work that economies grow rapidly and countries prosper.

Sangita Reddy is joint managing director, Apollo Hospitals Group and president, Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce & Industries. The views expressed are personal.

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THE EDITORIAL PAGE

The Indian EXPRESS

FOUNDED BY
RAMNATH GOENKA

BECAUSE THE TRUTH INVOLVES US ALL

SORRY, YOUR LORDSHIP

Show vilifies Muslims but prior restraint sets a dangerous precedent when dissent is being criminalised — and courts are fumbling

A BENCH OF Justices D Y Chandrachud, Indu Malhotra and K M Joseph have canned Sudarshan TV headman Suresh Chavhanke's awful show "Bindas Bot" (literally, an exhortation to "Speak Carelessly"). Promoted online with #UPSC_jihad, the show vilifies Muslims, accusing them of a campaign to infiltrate the bureaucracy, and underlines the Union Public Service Commission, by the implication that it offers unfair advantage to the community. Doggy on facts and analysis, it is informed by a "wanton disregard of the truth", as the Supreme Court very accurately observed, and is premised on a denial of the reality of a plural India. The bench called out the show for what it was — hateful propaganda masquerading as analysis. The court was spot on — especially when Sudarshan TV is not alone in this shameful corner. Through the months of the protests against the Citizenship Amendment Act and the National Register of Citizens, and in the initial days of COVID-19, with the exception of a few, TV news channels revelled in an inglorious orgy of partisan deception, vilification and rumour-mongering.

News will be weaponised by those in power when they have willing accomplices in TV studios but prior restraint, as the Supreme Court itself has repeatedly underlined, is a solution that has ramifications as disturbing as the problem it's trying to address. As Solicitor General of India Tushar Mehta wondered in court, to what extent can the media be regulated by other institutions? On August 28, the Court had rightly declined to impose a "pre-broadcast interlocutory injunction" against the offending show. On September 9, the Centre permitted transmission of an episode of #UPSC_jihad, with the caveat that it must not violate the Programme Code. But the week, the bench observed that circumstances had changed and "the drift, tenor and content of the episodes is to bring [a] community into public hatred and disrepute," which violates the Code.

The court's apprehension is legitimate: Hateful memes can spread like wildfire across social media and promote, even incite violence. But, as Justice Chandrachud said, perhaps self-regulation — an acronym it may be — needs to be explored more rigorously. Giving prior restraint the imprimatur of the highest court, the bench sets a dangerous precedent at a time when a lynch mob is just one comment away. Motivated parties would only have to file an objection in court for restraint to be camped, prior to airing the programme, until the matter is heard — and a court could rule for restraint to continue. Since news has a very short shelf life that is counted in hours, a mere allegation made in court could kill a programme. Significantly, the Court took a dig at the News Broadcasters' Association whose remit includes legal, ethical and regulatory concerns. It asked if the body exists only in the form of its letterhead. In that aside, the Court tacitly indicated where one solution may lie.

REGULATORY UNCERTAINTY

SEBI circular on multi-cap funds was avoidable during these uncertain times

LAST WEEK, THE Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) issued a circular specifying that multi-cap schemes of mutual funds must invest a minimum of 25 per cent of their total assets in each large, mid and small-cap category. Until now, there was no such allocation criteria. The guidelines had only prescribed that at least 65 per cent of the investments of such schemes be directed towards equities, giving fund managers the flexibility to allocate funds across large, mid or small-cap firms as per their discretion. A few days later, SEBI clarified that apart from rebalancing their portfolio, these multi-cap funds had other options, ranging from, merging with existing large-cap schemes, to converting these schemes to other categories. While SEBI's directive may have been driven by the desire to ensure that these funds are "true to label", its decision raises several questions: Why curb fund manager flexibility? Won't changing the character of the fund heighten the risk and uncertainty for existing investors? Moreover, are their enough quality small-cap firms to absorb this inflow? If there were such companies available in this segment, wouldn't they have been an attractive proposition for fund managers to begin with?

Mutual fund data from various fund houses shows that put together, the total assets of these multi-cap schemes stand at around Rs 1.45 lakh crore. Of this, the mid-cap and small-cap exposure stands at 16.4 per cent and 6.25 per cent respectively. These numbers imply that in order to meet the requirements imposed by the SEBI circular, roughly Rs 40,000 crore will have to be directed from these funds towards mid and small-cap firms. Considering that most of these multi-cap funds, especially the bigger ones, are largely geared towards large-cap companies and that finding liquid enough quality stocks in these segments will be challenging in the present circumstances, it is possible that these schemes, rather than opting for rebalancing, will opt for one of the other options available.

Multi-cap funds were created to provide the fund manager the freedom to move across stock classifications, depending on the opportunity presented. If they have gravitated towards large-caps it is because of the possibility of greater returns. If the pandemic is likely to lead to greater economic concentration, benefiting the bigger firms, then surely fund managers and their investors should have the flexibility to take advantage of these trends. This degree of control by the regulator is odd. It was an avoidable move, that only heightened market uncertainty.

SCIENCE KNOWS

Donald Trump doesn't think so. But being a climate change sceptic could have political consequences

IN ITS 175-year history, *Scientific American* had never felt the need to take a political stand. In 2020, for the first time, the popular science magazine has endorsed Joe Biden for the US presidency. But 2020 is the year of the pandemic, where ignoring the science behind a pathogen has had real consequences in terms of lives and livelihoods. And the head of the most powerful government in the world has decided to blame the victims of a natural disaster in the largest state in his country, coming upon an election. The intensity and frequency of wildfires in California has caused consistent damage in America's most populous, richest and politically significant state. Donald Trump, speaking to people whose homes and natural surroundings have been devastated, blamed the blazes on people and authorities not "taking the forest floor" or "clearing dead timber". When it was pointed out that there is a near universal scientific consensus that both the frequency and intensity of the wildfires has increased due to climate change, Trump stated, "I don't think science knows". The response of his rival for the US presidency has been to label the president a "climate arsonist".

The essence of science is based on the distinction between what David Hume called fact and value — truth and opinion. Confidence is a great thing in a public figure, but politicking what many would think is unpolitically — a natural disaster — Trump may end up being beaten at his own game. "Climate arsonist", though hyperbolic, is bound to have a bit of resonance in the middle-class California suburbs that say their homes and surroundings engulfed in flames and smoke. In fact, blaming an all-pervasive problem like climate change could have helped Trump escape the blame. But he blamed the victims instead. On the heels of his alleged (mis)management of COVID-19, the president's lack of respect for scientific truths might bear a political cost.



JAHANGIR AZIZ

EVEN A CURSORY reading of Brazil's recent history will confirm that the adoption of the all-encompassing cap on government spending in late 2016 was critical in rescuing the economy from the crisis of 2014-16.

After riding the commodity boom of the 2000s, economic mismanagement and a series of corruption scandals pushed the country into an economic and political crisis in 2014-16, which ended the 14-year rule of the Workers Party (PT). During its rule, PT had implemented sweeping social programmes (such as Bolsa Familia) to reduce inequality and eradicate poverty. Although contested, most assessments suggest that these programmes helped in improving living conditions (income, health, and education) of the poor. But with the end of the commodity boom, Brazil's growth faltered and funding these programmes strained macroeconomic management, widened the fiscal deficit, and raised public debt. While the 2013 Taper tantrum was the trigger, the ensuing economic recession, weighed down by corruption scandals, turned into a political crisis ending PT's rule. Inflation, unemployment, and the fiscal deficit all jumped to double-digits.

In an effort to regain policy credibility, the interim government proposed and passed a constitutional amendment in late 2016, which, starting from 2017, capped government expenditure — excluding interest payments but including capital spending — to its 2016 level adjusted each year for the previous year's inflation. This law effectively set a ceiling on government spending at around 20 per cent of GDP that can only be reviewed in 2026. While stringent by the standards of international fiscal rules (that are mostly in the form of restraints on fiscal deficit and public debt), it is almost draconian in the case of Brazil as more than 50 per cent of its spending is mandated by law, leaving little room for even expenditure switching.

The recovery from the crisis has been gradual, especially as most of the needed structural reforms (long changes to the social security system) as promised by the new

India should opt for income support so that pandemic does not turn into a financial crisis

government elected in 2018 are yet to be legislated. But the spending cap set a transparent fiscal anchor that restored macroeconomic stability and in doing so helped to bring down inflation from over 10 per cent in 2016 to around 2.5 per cent and opened the space for policy interest rates to be cut from above 14 per cent to 2 per cent at present.

Yet, despite the demonstrated centrality of the spending cap in securing macroeconomic stability, the government allowed the spending cap to be breached with large pandemic-related additional expenditure including generous income support, especially to the Bolsa-Familia households (roughly equivalent to BPL households in India), which alone can amount to over 4.5 per cent of GDP. Taken together, these measures will raise overall spending to above 28 per cent of GDP and together with the revenue shortfall, will increase Brazil's fiscal deficit from 6 per cent of GDP in 2019 to an astounding 17 per cent of GDP this year.

And the additional spending has helped. Although Brazil's COVID-19 infection rate was about the same as in India in the second quarter (in the last two months the rate has stabilised while that in India has continued to climb), GDP growth collapsed by 33.5 per cent, half of that in India. Indeed, at 67.2 per cent (annualised quarterly rate), the growth collapse in India was the second largest in the world next only to that in Peru. If one looks under the hood, public spending helped to offset some of the collapse in private demand in Brazil but in India it added to the decline. On the back of the continued income support, analysts have upgraded growth in Brazil while further downgrading it in India.

All this discussion about Brazil's economics is to underscore a simple point: There are times when policy needs to lean against the times when it has to bend with the wind. This is the time to do the latter. It isn't that the market has been overly generous towards Brazil. In fact, at present there is palpable market angst about the Brazilian government's budget plan for 2021. If the 2021 budget does not reverse

the pandemic spending, the market will not take it kindly. The ensuing financial crisis will likely unanchor inflationary expectations and force the central bank to raise rates despite the still fragile recovery. On the other hand, if the government brings spending below the cap, the attendant fiscal drag will be substantial. But the central bank can continue to keep interest rates low for longer and strengthen the private sector recovery in 2021 especially as balance sheets will be less damaged than otherwise because of the income support this year.

And this is where the importance of income support lies. It is not so much that it has helped to support demand this year, but that it has protected, to varying degrees, household and SME balance sheets from the extensive damage the pandemic is likely to leave in its wake. Unlike typical EM crises, the pandemic is not an instance of a financial crisis turning into an economic shock because of damaged balance sheets. Instead, it is an economic shock brought on by the failure of the public-health system that can turn into a financial crisis if the damage is extensive.

In India, the debate over fiscal policy has been too focused on demand management. Income support or other government spending can help only modestly in compensating the collapse in private demand until the link between infection and mobility is broken. That's a public health problem. Economic policy cannot compensate for the weaknesses in the public-health system. But appropriate economic measures now can have a much bigger and long-lasting impact when the pandemic has been brought under control and an economic recovery gets underway in earnest. What is needed is ample income support for households and firms now so that the recovery is not hamstrung by excessively damaged balance sheets. Otherwise, the pandemic can easily turn into a financial crisis, delaying the recovery and hurting medium-term growth.

The writer is Chief Emerging Markets Economist, J.P. Morgan. Views are personal

SAFFRON AND SECULAR

Swami Agnivesh's commitment to plurality, rationality within faith never wavered



TEESTA SETALVAD

SWAMI AGNIVESH'S unique persona brought special meaning to the saffron robe. Drawing deep spiritual and metaphysical strength from the faith of the Arya Samaj, a religion that was associated with power and hegemony and had no role in social transformation or justice was of no use to him. Through the 28 years of our association, what would have been the relationship between this Swami and a woman, an agnostic and her partner, Javed Anand, the same?

This is probably best summed up in the tribute that he paid to our monthly magazine, *Communistin Combat* on its 10th anniversary in August 2002, a year after the Gujarat violence of 2002: "The passionate commitment that *Communistin Combat* exemplifies to dislodge the soul of India, countering the cancer of communalism with the antidote of trans-religious solidarity and uncompromising commitment to justice and equality, makes it the foremost bastion of inspired journalism in our times... this association is an engagement of true spirituality."

Swami's journey into Indian public life is best remembered through the efforts of the Bandhua Mukti Morcha established in 1981 that culminated in the *Bandhua Mukti Morcha vs Union of India* judgment, the passing of the law to abolish child labour and further explorations in the courts on the deepening of constitutional rights of the most marginalised. This commitment never wavered and we saw him take this into the dark reaches of Chhattisgarh for peace talks with Maoists in 2010, where he was attacked by a Salwa Judum mob. The experience led him to file an affidavit in the Supreme Court, which

had an impact on the judgment banning Salwa Judum a year later. For those of us battling the corrosive cancer of communalism, it was Swami's vision of Indian society and state as multi-hued and diverse, based on an unflinching commitment to secularism and rationality, that was so special. He stood tall and proud in his Hinduism at the Allahabad Kumbh Mela, opposite the stall of the Vishwa Hindu Parishad, reclaiming a faith that he saw being both militarised and hegemonised. He marched against the practice of Sati in Rajasthan and he argued with his counterparts from other faiths, questioning notions of "Hell" and "Damnation" and exclusive evangelisation. His commitment to rationality within faith never wavered.

In 1998, when the Kalyan Singh government was set to make Saraswati Vandana compulsory in UP's schools, Agnivesh's sharp detraction was unique: "The very humour of the situation becomes apparent when we recall that Saraswati is supposed to be the goddess of learning. UP is a state where illiteracy is endemic. Universal education for all children under 14 years of age, as mandated by the Constitution, has not been a priority with any of the successive governments... Could it be that the insult to the goddess of learning in keeping millions of people illiterate is sought to be compensated by forcing school children to do in ritual what the government won't do in reality?"

No wonder, then, that it is the pallbearers of an exclusivist faith who — intolerant of a powerful symbol in saffron that spoke for a more eclectic Hinduism — who attacked him brutally in Jharkhand in 2018 again, in an attempt at public humiliation, disrobing, even lynching. He escaped narrowly but the damage done to the 80-year-old's health was near fatal.

him brutally in Jharkhand in 2018 again, in an attempt at public humiliation, disrobing, even lynching. He escaped narrowly but the damage done to the 80-year-old's health was near fatal.

Since 2014, he engaged in a direct satire of obscurantist utterances from men in power, even those at the very top. Videos of these speeches drew support in far-flung villages and towns. In one such video, Agnivesh points out, "The PM said that the Kauravas multiplied themselves into hundreds. They, they achieved through stem-cell transplants." Agnivesh mockingly laments: "Such lies, such paganism, such superstitions, and India's PM is perpetuating these! The country will move towards a deep abyss."

The physical attacks did not stop after July 17, 2018. In August, a month later, he was again seriously attacked, even by a woman as he went to the BPL headquarters in Delhi to pay respects to former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee. The last such attack was in Thiruvananthapuram in October last year when Sangh Parivar cadres attempted to manhandle him at a function which the government was also slated to attend.

For this saffron-robed modern-day Swami, the colour of the robes he proudly sported meant sacrifice, purity and commitment. In a life well and fully-lived — one that should be celebrated — he brought a renewed faith in the colour saffron.

The writer, previously co-editor *Communistin Combat* now co-edits *Sabrangindia* and is Secretary, *Citizens for Justice and Peace*

SEPTEMBER 17, 1980, FORTY YEARS AGO

SALES TAX DISCORD
THE UNION GOVERNMENT'S PROPOSAL to enlarge the additional excise duty net came in for severe attack from state governments. One non-Congress government went to the extent of questioning the Centre's right to discuss the issue that came within the constitutional jurisdiction of the states. The subject came up at the conference of Chief Ministers and ministers in charge of sales tax at Delhi. Although Finance Minister R Venkataraman made it clear that the Centre is not aiming at "wholesale abolition" of the sales tax, the state governments stuck to their stand that placing restrictions on the tax would affect their re-

source mobilisation capacity. They also did not agree with the Centre's position that four more items — vanaspathi, pharmaceuticals, cement and petrochemical products — should be brought under additional excise duty.

TARAPUR IMPASSE
THE US SECRETARY OF State Edmund Muskie had conceded that India would not be bound by the agreement in respect of the accumulated plutonium wastes if the 1963 Tarapur agreement is breached by the US by withholding uranium supplies to the power plant. He also made it clear that India had not issued any threat pertaining

to nuclear waste. The Secretary of State, in fact, brought up the issue to reinforce his appeal to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee to give up its Opposition to the Carter administration's decision to honour the 1963 pact.

GAS POLITICS
Bangladesh Prime Minister Azizur Rahman has said that gas would not be sold to India, "against the will of the people". He told this to a group from the United Peoples' Party who had organised a sit-in at the Secretariat. The protest against the proposed move to sell gas.

THE INDIAN EXPRESS, THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 17, 2020

THE IDEAS PAGE

Our larger China picture

A new national strategy, combining diplomatic and military means, is needed to counter Beijing's strategy to make India submit to its interests



RAJA MENON

SOMETIME IN MARCH-APRIL this year, Beijing started to concentrate troops, armoured vehicles and munitions opposite our posts in Aksai Chin at Galwan, Finger posts and Despang. By May-early June, they had mustered close to 40,000 troops and accompanying artillery and armour. Why 40,000? Maybe we will never know. It is a number too small to take Ladakh, and too large to win a border skirmish. Now that four months have passed since what turned out to be two border skirmishes, we can take a breath, pause and reflect on what it was all about. There has been a healthy and vociferous debate among the thinkers in India and many interpretations have been published in the press and even many more offered outside, among the general public.

Slowly but steadily the interpretations of what happened have coalesced into two schools. One of them, or the first, believes that the Chinese exercise was a territorial snatch in Aksai Chin, which they believe is entirely theirs, accompanied by a "lesson" to the Indians on being what they see as obdurate and aggressive Indian behaviour in not conceding Aksai Chin, and continuing to publish Survey of India maps showing the entire Aksai Chin as Indian territory up to the Johnson-Arday line, or the border with Tibet.

This school's thinking has many obvious flaws. The chief one is that four NSAs have spent something like 20 interrupted years asking their Chinese counterparts the following: One, where does Beijing think the international border lies? Two, what is their version of the IAC in Ladakh? Unfortunately, the contents of the talks by the four NSAs have never been made public, but bits and pieces have emerged sporadically. The first bit of news is that the Chinese want the settlement of the border postponed to "the next generation". Secondly, they are chary of handing over any map showing the Chinese version of the IAC in the West. Militarily, the recent mobilisation of 40,000 troops, artillery and armour has gained them something like 800 metres at the western IAC. Does this make any strategic sense? They might even have obtained that much, and perhaps more, if they had negotiated a settlement at the NSA-level talks. What they have achieved is to force India to move forward three divisions to the western IAC and go through the trouble of supplying them through the winter. So, it is unlikely that Xi Jinping had thought all this out for a tiny extension of their IAC.

The second school of thought in India believes that territory has nothing to do with it. They believe that, as China grows into perhaps the most powerful nation on earth, overtaking the actual US GDP by 2030, Beijing will lay down the rules of world governance. But what if China grows into the way of Beijing's desire to dominate Asia? We contest their entire southern border, refuse to join the Belt and Road initiative, create an anti-China maritime coalition, compete with



C.R. Sankaranarayanan

Africa, are unresponsive of their crackdown on Taiwan, Hong Kong and Xinjiang and move ever closer to the United States. Let us not forget that Chinese political thought has not matured in the crucible of the Enlightenment. They don't read Voltaire, Rousseau, Adam Smith, Descartes, Diderot, Locke, Kant and Spinoza, leading to the concept of establishing a democratic secular republic. However faulty the US record has been since 1991 as the world's hegemon, when China assumes hegemonic power after 2030, we are going to get a nasty surprise. Secularism, democracy and the rights of man will play no part in Chinese foreign policy. Beijing will overturn every international, financial, trade, diplomatic, arms control and nuclear agreement that the world has put together in recent decades. As long as a nation pays "symbolic" tribute to Beijing, China will follow a hands-off policy—as they do with North Korea.

We in India need to conduct a large and vicious debate on Chinese intentions. If it is to creep forward on the international border, mustering overwhelming strength at odd places to surprise us in a strategic ambush, then, stringing 3,50,000 troops along the border to "defend" it is adequate. If the

The competition with China will not lead to war. It is a game of perceptions. What China wants is Indian acceptance of Beijing's benign superiority, and that is a purely Chinese trait, not to be confused with the known rules of international diplomacy. Talking from a position of inferiority will not lead to an equitable solution. But first, a national

"keep us in our place" or make us submissive, need a new national strategy, combining diplomatic and military means.

That military strategy needs another article but is best executed in the Indian Ocean. However, if our national goal is to concentrate on the creation of wealth and growing GDP, thereby limiting our defence budget and pensions to 2 per cent of GDP, let us pro-claim it, tighten our belt, look down and walk softly. Post the Galwan incident, Wang Yi, the Chinese foreign minister has already told 5 Jishankar to forget the territorial dispute and concentrate on "the larger picture". But after Galwan and Pangong Tso we will clearly approach the larger picture from a position of tactical inferiority, unless we develop some punitive capability, which it seems could only be in the Indian ocean. The competition with China will not lead to war. It is a game of perceptions. What China wants is Indian acceptance of Beijing's benign superiority, and that is a purely Chinese trait, not to be confused with the known rules of international diplomacy. Talking from a position of inferiority will not lead to an equitable solution. But first, a national debate.

The writer is former rear admiral in the navy.



MIRINAL PANDE

BEFORE THE proponents of Shuddhi Hindi bop me on my head for using the Urdu phrase Mubarak Ho! instead of the Hindi Badhai Ho! let me clarify that the reason for this phrase to wish our Prime Minister a very happy 70th birthday is that Bollywood has already stolen the traditional phrase, "Badhai Ho!" and given it an avoidable spin.

On your 70th birthday today, you, sir, command a powerful image: An uncommonly honest man, scrupulous about material affairs who has risen from the ranks. An ordinary family in a small town where the men work in factories or tea stalls and women cook and clean for their own family and often for other families too, few sons were lucky enough to complete their education and luckier still to get that coveted college degree. You, Mr Prime Minister, sir, have told us that hard work is also hard earned. True. You yourself have inherited most of your deep insights into human nature, not at Oxford or Cambridge, but in India from your seasoned, kind and wise mentors of the Sangh Parivar.

This reminds me of a story. An arrogant scholar who had studied under metaphysical schools came to the fabled Mullah Nasrudin and expressed his wish to learn from the great teacher since he had spent so much time in studying in the best schools of philosophy. "Mas," said Nasrudin, "you have studied the teachers and the students. What should have happened is that the teachers and their teaching should have studied you."

Mubarak Ho! Modi!

At 70, the prime minister has come to represent the spirit of the times

In the Jewish tradition, 70 is a very significant number. Seventy elders were assembled by Moses on God's command in the desert. Psalm 90:10 allots three scores and ten (70 years) to an age that spells strength. Strength such as this brings a serenity and calm within the heart and leads to a certain detached view of the world. Truth be told, since the ad man Prason Joshi located a certain fake lilac in our country, the nation has glimped that. We have all witnessed your soulful journeys into remote epochs via hill shrines and forests of the beautiful Devbhumi of Uttarakhand.

The trip to the jungles in the Corbett Park was particularly a treat to sore urban eyes. Accompanied by Bear Grylls, you spoke all through in Hindi, translated into English, we were told. Simultaneously by a device planted in Grylls' ears. That and the unfolding images in pristine surroundings set a really holy surreal tone, almost crossing into the territory marked by great painters like Magritte or Chagall. But then harsh political realities cut the dream trip short. As you rushed back to Delhi to meet a crisis, we realised how the Indian economy stands considerably weakened by the pandemic, global climate changes, trade deficits and shrinkage of jobs. But with the wisdom age brings we senior citizens know better. Hasn't (Groucho) Marx sung in *Duck Soup*: "The world is but a stage, my friend, and life is but a game... For whether a man is right or wrong/A woman gets the blame."

Many of your detractors may try to sullay the narrative here by pointing out how the Indian economy stands considerably weakened by the pandemic, global climate changes, trade deficits and shrinkage of jobs. But with the wisdom age brings we senior citizens know better. Hasn't (Groucho) Marx sung in *Duck Soup*: "The world is but a stage, my friend, and life is but a game... For whether a man is right or wrong/A woman gets the blame."

cheek, we let them have it on both cheeks. By abandoning your idyllic trip half way, you turned an "apada" into an "awasa", and ensured that a resounding electoral victory followed at home later.

The nation has learnt much from you since. You have, for example, helped millions of us realise that electorally speaking, God may be said to be in details, but the Mother Goddess lies in questions. So, at each election rally you raise prickly questions about your no-good rivals: Isn't liberalism cowardice? And what about the Lutyens' lifestyle? TRP ratings escalated each time you roared: "Bhaiya, behnon, un logon mein zameen Bharat ka agan! Bhisiachar/vanshaad, etc. tumhe bhi dekha hai ki nahin dekha? Dekha hai ki nahin dekha? Bolo meri baat sahi hai ki nahin?" And till even those who had climbed trees and poles to see you, yelled back, "Ekdam Sahi!". And, as though on cue, a roar went up chanting your name like a mantra.

Many of your detractors may try to sullay the narrative here by pointing out how the Indian economy stands considerably weakened by the pandemic, global climate changes, trade deficits and shrinkage of jobs. But with the wisdom age brings we senior citizens know better. Hasn't (Groucho) Marx sung in *Duck Soup*: "The world is but a stage, my friend, and life is but a game... For whether a man is right or wrong/A woman gets the blame."

Don't let them sully your birthday mood by petty nit-picking. It is you who has also opened gates to popularity on the social media, where what the Germans call the zeitgeist, the spirit of the times, resides. You have also entered young India via the twin popular arenas of cricket and Bollywood. A few joyous photo-ops and you made more youthful and talkative friends there, outstripping even your biggest Bollywood admirer, Big B, or the cricketing legend, M.S Dhoni.

Even in the matter of citizenship, you have injected vast changes. Under the rule of the law as spelt out by our Constitution, we had been told we were equals. But the amendments to the British Epidemic Diseases Act of 1897, and a timely promulgation of the Epidemic Diseases (Amendment) ordinance, has ensured that in these difficult times, for our own sake, we must be treated as unequal when need be. The word "police" has once again been made synonymous with its Middle French meaning that is government. The state of Uttar Pradesh, as always, leads here from the front by example.

So a grateful nation wishes you a very happy 70th birthday with lines from a birthday poem by Samuel Johnson: "Wealth, Sir John, was made to wander, Let it wander as it will; See the jockey, see the pander, Bid them come and take their fill."

The writer is former chairperson, Prasar Bharati.

WHAT THE OTHERS SAY

Several months into the pandemic, it should not be beyond the capacity of ministers, in partnership with the NHS and others, to meet the current, more modest demand for tests.

—THE GUARDIAN

Building a new India

In six years, PM Modi has transformed the narrative within the country, and outside it



YOGI ADITYANATH

"RAJAKALASA Kaman"—the timeless wisdom that Bheeshma Ratham passed on to Yudhishthira in the "Shanti Parva" of the Mahabharat—may seem esoteric in spirit, but it carries a message. It means a ruler is never a slave of circumstances, but creates them by his acts. The sad story of India since Independence has been of a lacklustre leadership pushing the nation into anarchy, insecurity, social disharmony, crisis of faith and unavailability of the basics. If this was the internal condition, on the world platform, the country failed to command respect from its peers. Fortunately those circumstances have now been consigned to the past and a new India has emerged. In six years, our illustrious Prime Minister Narendra Modi has turned India into a nation to reckon with.

Since Independence, the leaders kept talking about the last man in the last line, but it is only now that the fruits of welfare endeavours and infrastructure have actually reached the common man. The unique journey from "Antyodaya" to "Kashtrodaya" was made possible by the sheer compassionate persona of Modi, who comprehended the ethos, mindset and sentiment of the masses and linked them to nationalism. This, indeed, was an example of channelising the power of masses into nation building.

The Prime Minister has united the poor, youth, farmers and women into a single unit and upheld the slogan of "Sabka Saath, Sabka Vishwas". Be it Beti Padhao-Beti Bachao or the Ujjwala Yojana, welfare schemes have been created to benefit the last man in the line and to instil in women a sense of self-pride and self-reliance. How can one forget the abolition of triple talaq. With this one act, the PM, on behalf of the nation, bestowed honour on women and restored their fundamental rights.

In the last six years, a string of welfare schemes were introduced to establish a new regime of social justice and public welfare. Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana was one such scheme, through which the government subsidised houses for the poor and down-trodden—about three crore houses were built. As many as four crore families benefited through the ambitious Har Aisi Kisi Bhi scheme. Eight crore has connections under PM Ujjwala Yojana were distributed to women below the poverty line. It was the first instance someone had thought of saving women from carbon-induced diseases.

As many 12 crore farmers were honoured with Prime Minister Kisan Samman Yojana, over 23 crore were linked to the Mudra Loan Yojana and 50 crore people were benefited by the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana.

The PM Crop Scheme, PM Agriculture Irrigation Scheme, MSP, Kisan Samman Nidhi provided solace to farmers, who had been neglected for years. He galvanised the youth of this country and made them self-reliant

and self-sufficient by launching Skill India, Stand Up India, Start Up India, Make In India and Mudra Yojana, which also gave economic impetus to the country.

The sustained efforts of the Prime Minister has led to our great country re-establishing its mythological, cultural and spiritual traditions. India received global recognition through Nanami Gange, Vishwa Yoga Day, laying of the foundation stone of Shri Ram temple at Ayodhya, and the conduct of a grand Prayag Kumbh. It took a superhuman effort for Modi to get Yoga recognised by the United Nations, which declared June 21 as International Yoga Day. Over 200 countries are now following this great cultural and spiritual tradition of our country. Over 24 crore devotees experienced the religious and spiritual grandeur of Prayag Kumbh. Under the guidance of the Prime Minister, it turned out to be "Divya Kumbh Bhavya Kumbh", which made UNESCO tag it as "intangible heritage" of humanity.

The country had been facing security challenges for the past several decades. The Prime Minister has thwarted all these challenges and laid the foundation of a powerful Bharat. With the "Look East" policy, the PM brought infrastructural benefits to the Northeast and through "Act East Policy", the region could accrue the advantages of proximity to East Asia. Articles 370 and 35 that had been haunting Indians for decades were abolished. With this, the Prime Minister reaffirmed the idea of "Ek Bharat, Shreshtha Bharat". In both the Northeast and Kashmir, there is now an atmosphere of peace and harmony and people have become development oriented.

In international relations, the PM has taken "friendship" with "friends" to new heights, while the enemies were handed a strong message. While keeping the country's sovereignty and security in the focus, the PM has given due importance to dialogue, compassion, co-operation, activity and partnership in the foreign policy. The neighbouring country against whom we carried out a surgical and air strikes in retaliation, cannot even dare to look at us. At this point, superpower USA considers India as its strategic partner and Europe wants to establish economic and defence cooperation with us.

It is Uttar Pradesh's good fortune that Kashi, the ancient city of Baba Vishwanath, is represented in Parliament by the Prime Minister. In the last six years, Modi has referred to Kashi as "My Kashi", which has gone a long way in giving new dimensions to its culture and spirituality. Kashi's ghats, temples and most importantly, Baba Vishwanath Dham are symbolic of the PM's personality and body of work. His keen eye for detail and constant monitoring of development projects in Kashi is inspirational. The way he interacts with booth-level workers to social, cultural, spiritual and business organisations, sends out a positive message.

Let myself be blessed to have got a leader, mentor and guide in our beloved PM Modi, a person with unmitigated righteousness, unquestionable sense of service towards mankind and overwhelming sensitivity. I pray to Shri Ram that Modi continues to grace our lives forever.

The writer is Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

PENALISING FARMERS

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, "Wrong way out" (IE, September 15). The central government once again prohibited exports of all varieties of onion with immediate effect as prices trebled in a month. The government should have allowed restricted export of onion. Such market interventions with a complete ban are wrong because producers are losing their share in the international market. India's share has already come down to 40 per cent from 80 per cent. A six-month ban on onion export had ended only a few months ago. If such practices continue, the international market will not rely on India. The ban will affect the farmers the most—the government's anti-farmer side is now showing.

Sanjay Chopra, Mohali

COMPLICATED PEACE

THIS REFERS TO the article, "Two theatres of peacemaking" (IE, September 15). Establishments within the US military intervention in Afghanistan following the 9/11 terror attack, the Taliban and Afghan government are sitting down for peace talks in Doha. While the peace negotiations will be tough, the Islamist group and its Pakistani benefactors do seem to have the upper hand. After all, Pakistan has never given up on cultivating Afghanistan as strategic depth against India. But India enjoys huge goodwill among the Afghan people. And many within the Taliban have been wary of Pakistan and make common cause with

IDEAS
ONLINE

● PRADHAN SEVAK
OF NEW INDIA
PRABHAT JHA

● LIMITS OF A
LIMITED WAR
SAJID FARID SHAPOO

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Pakistani Pashtuns in opposing Islamabad's oppressive policies.

Vandana, Chandigarh

KANGANA'S MUTINY

THIS REFERS TO the article, "Establishments within the US military intervention in Afghanistan following the 9/11 terror attack, the Taliban and Afghan government are sitting down for peace talks in Doha. While the peace negotiations will be tough, the Islamist group and its Pakistani benefactors do seem to have the upper hand. After all, Pakistan has never given up on cultivating Afghanistan as strategic depth against India. But India enjoys huge goodwill among the Afghan people. And many within the Taliban have been wary of Pakistan and make common cause with

Sangeeta Kampani, Delhi

ANALYSIS

Indic Traditionalism & International Environmental Law: Tangible realities and ideation strategies

Noted historian Ian Morris, in his incredible works on Civilisational Economics, focuses on the nativity of geographical realities that cause industrialisation, mercantilism and other phenomena. Even within the Indic parameter, it is possible that we understand and transform the operational basis and considerations of how the targets can be achieved. Sustainable development is a more overarching and discoverable conception in international environmental law.

OPINION

ABHIVARDHAN



Civilizations have an inherent connect towards the conception and relativity of its commitments in any period. Currently, while civilizations have transcended from monarchies and empires to democracies (in most of the cases), it is important to note how the legal and ethical commitments of every civilization would relatively transform. India is no different to any of it. However, while civilizations emerge and globalization is transformed, it is very important to realize that the nature of implementation and fulfillment of such commitments cannot be deemed as ethnocentric, whether by a top-to-down legal approach, or whether by contemporaneous but out-of-touch policy or metaphysical gestures. No law and policy can survive civilizational and rational issues in a contemporary post-modern age, where it is proposed to adopt 'globalist' or too much generalist standards over issues related to either environment or cybersecurity. Environment issues, like technology - are politically consensual and motivated. It always depends on the balance struck and obviated.

Let us understand the conception of Indic traditionalism to deal with the issue of environment protection in the Indian context. Indic traditionalism refers to a plethora of schools of thought in Indian jurisprudence, anthropology and philosophy. Indic traditionalists believe that the conception of law and politics must have a naturalized and geographic purpose, which fits the nativity of cultures and social orders created in the state. Experts such as Sanjeev Sanjay, Subhash Kak & David Frawley have often regarded this as a cultural-geographic way of understanding issues of economics, environment, rule of law and others. Unlike socialism and capitalism,

where profit and power are at the centre of action, the Dharmic way of protecting environment is - in line with the European model of Kuznets curve, where once developed countries attain relevant economic growth, they can optimise their developmental activities to focus on ecological solutions.

The Indic view is proposed to be better and effective than the Western view towards ideas such as Responsibility to Protect, Sustainable Development and Carbon Taxation in International Law in this work, due to the reasons as enumerated:

- The Indic worldview is not expansionist and thus, does effectively discriminate power and competence with sheer and clear dissection, even within the ambit of law;
- Since competence and responsibility are essential for post-civilizational democracies (even post-colonial in the case of the Global South), it is clear to state that the discourses and analyses on issues related to human rights shall not be based on ideological, physical or metaphysical obscurantism;
- The Indic worldview does not reckon itself as the best and final means to endorse solutions, nor any worldview has been. Instead of calling out competitiveness as experimental, within the Indic worldview, we must look at the problems in different worldviews and considerations holistically, with a sense of positive conviction.

In the realm of environment law, Indic traditionalism focuses on a cultural-geographic conception of natural law, unlike a meta-physical and imaginatively materialistic conception of Catholics & Protestants, Communists and Islamists. The Indic worldview does not focus on extreme group capitalism to defy natural order, neither it can rely on socialism to deprive individuals and communities from their indigenous economic liberties. Since, many civilizational texts are lost, and some of them are traceable and observable, it would be better to assume that the Indic worldview cannot be dogmatic. However, the propensity and reasonability of interpretations should

always be idea-centric and practical. Vedic philosophers have analyzed wide-ranging texts and rituals which glorify various elements of Nature such as Mother Earth (Prithivi), atmosphere (Bhuvah), air (Vayu), space (akash), water (Aapa), and fire (Agni), all together known as *Pancha Mahabhutas*. The notion that Earth being the sustainer of all life and that human activity should not devastate the equilibrium of the Vedas. Swami Vivekananda also focuses on the Vedic view as a quote by him speaks clearly:

Man is first to be saved; he must be given food, education and spirituality.

HOW CAN INDIA PERCEIVE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT UNDER INDIC LENS?
Sustainable Development Goals of 2030, like the Millennium Development Goals - have been predicated on imaginative basis of humanist outlook towards the international community. More or less, the predicated understanding of the UN targets has been proposed with good faith, with no successful implementation till date. Noted historian, Ian Morris, in his incredible works on Civilizational Economics, focuses on the nativity of geographical realities that

1. That since power and competence are separated, the scope of the sustainable development goals is to be considered within the sovereign considerations of states, and policies cum solutions must be tailor-made, not internationalized until the approach is geographically cogent;
2. That a top-to-down approach to policy solutions does not serve the purpose of SDGs, and would threaten the cause of international environmental law;
3. Trust is an important consideration, but instead of discussing climate crisis and its mediation, it would be more appropriate to focus on the globalization of the economic liberties and environmental necessities of the state, which are based on open, fairly bargained and politically consensual aspects of environmental problems;
4. Implementation reforms cannot be based on mere judicial overreach or review. It is seriously imperative that while a freer basis of democracy and dialogue is given, it must be based on the notion of responsibility.

The internalisation of economic liberties is another interesting reality that can be met through globalisation. We must remember that China used globalisation to uplift the middle class under Deng Xiaoping. The problem with the current establishment under Xi Jinping is that his BRI project and the string of pearls render debt trap and hostage diplomacy. However, it does not support any generic benefit to the Chinese people because the Chinese Communist Party has lost the cultural-geographic capabilities of the Chinese state due to its socialist policies.

cause industrialization, mercantilism and other phenomena. Even within the Indic upfront, it is possible that we understand and transform the operational basis and considerations of how the targets can be achieved. Since sustainable development is a more overarching and discoverable conception in international environmental law, let us understand that India does have its own limitations in terms of implementation and pause to lead to environment protection, it is with humble submission that the Indic take or worldview does not ignore the problems and fall-

and not attractive and technocratic liability. Let us discuss some of the important sustainable development goals, and their targets in the Indic context, to understand the fallacies and probable solutions that can be provided in order to lead towards better and transformative solutions:

- With respect to SDG 7 - which espouses emancipation of clean energy, India can enforce solar, geothermal and nuclear energy to lead towards better and cost-effective solutions. Even PM Modi inaugurated the Rewa solar plant amidst the COVID19 pandemic and emphasized on the One Sun One World

One Grid initiative. However, a cost-benefit analysis is strictly necessary so that it does not become an economic failure like the Belt and Road Initiative by China. At the same time, India can focus on clean energy based on the characteristics of its ecological diversity and geographical abundance. However, having a rendition of renewables cannot combat climate change, and therefore, the principal usage of nuclear, solar and geothermal power must be based on support and self-prosperity considerations, which can be a good starting point with utmost humility.

- SDG 9, which is central to industrial development, entrepreneurship and innovation, is a great opportunity the Indian state has to achieve. The current socialist establishment which is wrongly enforced by a 42nd Amendment Act in the Indian Constitution is an obstruction to India's economic and ecological development. Even the interpretations by the Hon'ble Supreme Court on ecocentric environment laws, especially by Justice Radhakrishnan, is good on paper, but on implementation, does not merit any support to the conception and practice of rule of law in economics and development. It is therefore important that India's innovation strategies are not

ternet, based on the doctrines of Arthashastra by Vishnugupta Chanakya; and (3) conflict economics, ideology economics, or any means of economics, which defies the autonomy, integrity and dignity of any economic liberty exercised by an individual, a company or any other entity (legal).

- SDG 16 on Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions, for example can be achieved. However, the Indic worldview does not believe in the micromanagement of law and order circumstances. Regionalization and federalism are already within the ambit of the Indian Constitution from Arts 245 to 254. To expand its purpose, the socialist estimate of governance and administrative law, inherited from common law democracies such as the British (colonial) must be removed and replaced with better governance initiatives. However, a top to down approach will fail as it always has, and thus, it does not serve the cause of a rules-based international order. Instead, like the Gujarat Model, state governments in India can make a good example of competitive federalism, with a special focus on collective and cultural liberties, while maintaining the scope of individual liberties by removing the dichotomous behavior asserted by Western scholars across

various domains, and has transformed in capitalist economies. However, there are some conflicting behaviours that most of the principles of international environmental law certify, which is important to be understood.

- International Environmental Law does not discriminate between issues of power and competence. Inducing a strictly technocratic conception of green criminology does not render any solutions to the problematic behaviour of liability frameworks;
- IEL instruments cannot internalize the rule of law issues that exist separately in the Global North countries and the Global South countries. While in the Global North regions, the issue is more related to the influence of corporatism over the corrosion of the geographic and civilizational originality of the regions, the Global South faces economic and skill issues at large. Immigration, excess volunteerism and too back. This is the reason why the CCP has to face the middle income trap, which they can never overcome until 20-30 years or maybe more. India's globalization therefore must not be sensitive, but conscious - so that at communitarian levels, judicial overreach is avoided and better anthropological interpretations are done to serve both ecological and economic causes. Mainstreaming economics is one of the failures of American capitalism, and it must be taken into consideration anyways.

The hyphenation of environment policies and ideological manifestos is one of the failures of American capitalism, and it must be taken into consideration anyways.

- The post-modern approach of international environmental law cannot be based on climate activism, extreme veganism and cultural Marxism. If radical legal principles are made and implemented, then it would not be just some top-to-down approach imposed on indigenous economies, but it would also not support the cause of IEL, leading to its bitter collapse, which is possible even in the case of multilateral bodies such as the IPCC, WHO and UNICEF.

The Indic worldview therefore at an international level, can be based on the following underpinnings:

1. Foreign Relations and Eco-diplomacy;
2. Internalizing economic liberties;
3. Prevent hyphenation of environment policies and ideological manifestos;
4. Foreign Relations and Policy issues define but not enforce the peremptory norms of IEL. Therefore, a smooth transformation of IEL can be based on by seeking the diversification and lubrication of imple-

CAN INDIC TRADITIONALISM OVER ECOLOGY ISSUES TRIUMPH INTERNATIONAL REGULATIONS?
The approach of international law towards envi-

mentation mechanisms in various countries. There cannot be globalized approaches to appropriate ecological solutions. Sustainability can be based on autonomy of profit and trust, therefore protecting economic liberties, and harmonizing the environment. The internalization of economic liberties is another interesting reality that can be met through globalization. We must remember that China used globalization to uplift the middle class under Deng Xiaoping. The problem with the current establishment under Xi Jinping is that his BRI project and the string of pearls render debt trap and hostage diplomacy. However, it does not support any generic benefit to the Chinese people because the Chinese Communist Party has lost the cultural-geographic capabilities of the Chinese state due to its socialist policies. Cashing support does not mean you can cause development schemes that can pay you back. This is the reason why the CCP has to face the middle income trap, which they can never overcome until 20-30 years or maybe more. India's globalization therefore must not be sensitive, but conscious - so that at communitarian levels, judicial overreach is avoided and better anthropological interpretations are done to serve both ecological and economic causes. Mainstreaming economics is one of the failures of American capitalism, and it must be taken into consideration anyways.

The hyphenation of environment policies and ideological manifestos is one of the failures of American capitalism, and it must be taken into consideration anyways.

No jurist can define top-to-down policies, which cannot serve proper and realistic causes. The best examples can be taken from the Kyoto Protocol, which again lacks at implementation, and enforces standards. In most of the cases, the focus on the equality of outcome is given. In reality, the equality of opportunity is lost the most. The Indian civilization has the inalienable right to earn some equality of opportunity, which must be internalized and free. If a civilizational level, equality of opportunity is granted, then it is for sure that solutions to international environmental law are not far trodden.

Abhivardhan is Chief Executive Officer, International Policy issues define but not enforce the peremptory norms of IEL. Therefore, a smooth transformation of IEL can be based on by seeking the diversification and lubrication of imple-

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REVIEW

MASERATI'S FIRST SUPERCAR IN 15 YEARS BRINGS F1 TECH TO A ROAD CAR

The Italian supercar brand says that the newly developed 3,000 cc V6 Nettuno engine transfers to a road car a technology previously found in Formula 1. It churns out a massive 630 horsepower with torque figure of 730 Nm. And it's mated to an 8-speed dual clutch transmission.

SHAMS NAQVI
NEW DELHI

Italian supercar brand Maserati has marked a new chapter in its over 100-year-old journey with the unveiling of the MC20. The mild-hybrid machine is the first Maserati supercar in 15 years and is celebrating the Maserati's return to racing. In fact, MC in MC20 stands for Maserati Corse, which is Italian term for racing and 20 denotes the year of the launch which is 2020. The car was shown for the first time to the world in Modena, the iconic headquarters of the company. Maserati says that the MC20 is a car with worthy aerodynamic efficiency, which conceals a sporty soul.

ENGINE

Maserati says that the newly developed 3,000 cc V6 Nettuno engine transfers to a road car a technology previously found only in

Formula 1. It churns out a massive 630 horsepower with torque figure of 730 Nm. And it's mated to an 8-speed dual clutch transmission. Those big numbers mean that the car can achieve the speed from 0-100 km/hr acceleration in under 2.9 seconds and a top speed over 325 km/hr. This Nettuno engine also signals Maserati's return to producing its own power units after a hiatus of more than 20 years. The MC20 is an extremely lightweight car at under 1,500 kg and thanks to its power output of 630 hp it comes out best in class in weight/power ratio, at just 2.33 kg/hp. According to the company this was achieved through the use of choice quality materials, exploiting all the potentials of carbon fibre without any sacrifices with regard to comfort.

RIDE AND HANDLING

The MC20 has a double-



wishbone suspension system with active shock absorbers. The short spindle semi-virtual double-wishbone layout is used on both front and rear axles. The company says this suspension type ensures the best performances in terms of handling and ride comfort. A button in the centre of the driving mode

selector enables the driver to adjust the suspension. Pressing the suspension button makes the suspensions more comfortable and less stiff. This is particularly useful on uneven ground, since it gives the driver a sporty yet comfortable driving experience. The car has five driving modes, selected using the

selector in the centre of the tunnel, WET, GT, SPORT and CORSA. Each one is identified by its own colour: WET green; GT blue; SPORT red; CORSA yellow; ESC OFF orange.

DESIGN

Aerodynamics had a fundamental role in sculpting the forms of the car. Nothing

is purely ornamental, if Maserati is to be believed. There is a reason for every stylistic feature, either aerodynamics or cooling. And they didn't even feel the need for a movable spoiler, which the company says would have detracted from its form. The deflector on the door completes the line of the wheel arch, while

keeping the air flow glued to the car. The only concession is perhaps the butterfly doors. But then they enable much easier access to and from the cabin, and also show off the carbon fibre cockpit, the aerodynamics and the completely unmasked front wheel. The doors are opened by a push-button from the inside and have sensors to warn of obstructions. The front grille is rather different from Maserati models of the past and combines a bare carbon fibre lower part with a body colour top. The front wing is without the three air vents that were a signature feature of Maserati models but which would be pointless here, since the engine is mid-mounted. However, they reappear on the rear window.

INTERIORS

The cabin gets a digital rear-view mirror that is designed without a frame. Images

are transmitted by a rear-view camera and helps in increasing the driver's visibility. The multimedia interface has 2 screens inside the car, the digital cluster and central display, which are similar in shape and size. The car also comes with a new Maserati Connect programme. A navigation system ensures that the driver always has the latest traffic information in real time, as well as constantly updated maps. The multimedia system also enables activation of Amazon Alexa services or a Wi-Fi hotspot inside the cabin. The car is also equipped with a 6-speaker premium sound system as standard and with a 12-speaker sonus faber high-premium sound system as optional. The car will enter into production in 2021 and only time will tell if it enters India or not.

Shams Naqvi is Senior Editor at carandbike.com.

TECH & YOU

APPLE UNVEILS LATEST PRODUCTS, HOLDS BACK IPHONE 12



RICH KAPOOR

September and tech giant Apple have had a long correlation. This year is not different. Apple made some big announcements and introductions in its latest array of products. It launched the Apple Watch Series 6, Apple Watch SE, iPad 8th Gen, and iPad Air (2020) during an event. The company also unveiled its Apple One subscription bundle service. It also announced that iOS 14, iPad OS 14, and watchOS 7 will be released. Due to the pandemic the iPhone 12 launch has been delayed but we can be expecting it sometime next month.

WATCH SERIES 6

The biggest highlight of the Ap-



ple Watch Series 6 is the ability to measure blood oxygen saturation. For the very first time, Apple brings a watch in the PRODUCE (RED) variant alongside a few other colour options. Apple Watch Series 6 also has a new Solo Loop, which has a single band with no clasp. It is made of silicone and is being launched in seven colours. There is a very catchy Braided Solo Loop as well. The Apple Watch Series 6 ships with the S6 processor. Apple Watch Series 6 comes with an improved always-on display, faster and brighter than the pre-

vious. The watch comes with various watch faces including GMT, countdown, memoji face, among many others. The new Apple Watch comes with 10 sports modes.

WATCH SE

Apple Watch SE comes with all fitness and health features. Using the same Series 6 chipset, it also gets Apple Watch Family Setup, which allows you to pair multiple Apple Watch devices to the same iPhone. Watch Series SE runs on WatchOS software like the new Watch Series 6.

FITNESS+

Apple has launched a fitness service called Apple Fitness+, which is targeted at Apple Watch users. Keeping in mind that the new normal is more at home, this option can come very handy. It allows you to choose workouts from the catalogue of videos that can be played on iPhone, iPad, or Apple TV. You can track and monitor your workout alongside. There would be multiple routine options and they would be refreshed weekly. It integrates with Apple Music so you can enjoy your own music. It is not available in India right now.

IPAD 8TH GEN

Adding to the announcement was iPad 8th Gen. The iPad now gets a much faster and capable chipset. A12 Bionic chip,



the form factor of the iPad Air like its predecessor. The iPad 8th Gen also supports Apple's Smart Keyboard cover and Apple Pencil.

NEW IPAD AIR (2020)

iPad Air gets an all new look. Redesigned body the borders



are flatter which helps place the second-generation Apple Pencil easily. Apple iPad Air (2020) also includes support for USB-C, single 12MP rear camera, 7MP

front sensor, magic keyboard. iPad Air (2020) comes with the new A14 Bionic chipset. Apple says the iPad Air (2020) offers 40% better CPU performance and 30% better graphics performance than the previous iPad Air.

APPLE ONE

One subscription for all services. That is what Apple One is all about. Apple One can be used for all 6 services. It can be used by your Apple family and they continue to have private access to each service. It is a more economical way for using the services.

PRICE

In India, the Apple Watch Series 6 (GPS) is priced at Rs 40,900 while the Watch Series 6 (GPS + Cellular) is priced at Rs 49,900. It prices the Watch SE (GPS) at Rs 29,900 and Watch SE (GPS + Cellular) at Rs 33,900. The India prices of the Apple One plan include the individual plan with Apple Music, Apple TV, Apple

Arcade, and 50GB of iCloud storage which is priced Rs 195 per month. The family plan with Apple Music, Apple TV, Apple Arcade, and 200 GB of iCloud storage costs Rs 365 per month and can be shared with up to six family members.

The new iPad (8th generation) will have a starting price in India at Rs 29,900 for the Wi-Fi model and Rs 41,900 for the Wi-Fi + Cellular model in 32GB and 128GB configurations. The device will be compatible with Apple Pencil (1st generation) priced at Rs 8,500 and the Smart Keyboard Folio at Rs 13,900. The new iPad Air will be available in October at Apple authorised resellers. The Wi-Fi models of iPad Air will be available with a starting price of Rs 54,900 and Wi-Fi + Cellular models start at Rs 66,900. The compatible Apple Pencil (2nd generation) is priced Rs 10,900, while the Magic Keyboard is sold separately at Rs 27,900 and Smart Keyboard Folio at Rs 15,900.

IN BRIEFS

FUJIFILM LAUNCHES INSTANT CAMERA IN INDIA FOR RS 10,999

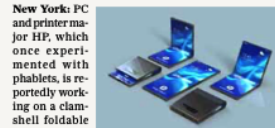
New Delhi: Japanese photography and imaging major Fujifilm on Wednesday launched its Instax Square SQ1 instant camera for Rs 10,999 in the India market. This is an analog, square camera that creates square format instant prints at 1.5 times the size of its Instax mini counterparts. The camera will be available in terracotta orange, glacier blue, and chalk white on Amazon and Flipkart from 24 September. "At Fujifilm, we believe that capturing moments that evoke nostalgia has become even more imperative in today's time,



as it truly seizes the moment for our consumers and spreads joy to their daily life," Masaki Zenko, Head of Instax division and Senior manager of Photo Imaging division, Fujifilm India said in a statement. With the 'Instax Square SQ1', the company has introduced a minimalist, user-friendly square design with key features such as automatic exposure and one-touch selfie mode.

HP PATENTS CLAMSHHELL FOLDABLE PHONE LIKE GALAXY Z FLIP

New York: PC and printer major HP, which once experimented with phablets, is reportedly working on a clamshell foldable smartphone similar to the Samsung Galaxy Z Flip. The company patented a design for such a smartphone with the WIPO (World Intellectual Property Organization) and the patent was approved last month, reports LetsGoDigital. The HP patent describes a technology for applying flexible screens to mobile devices such as smartphones, tablets or computers. Although similar to the folding method of the Samsung Galaxy Z Flip, the HP patent describes it as 'using a movable hinge that can be folded in different positions' and is not limited to folding in half. However, it is not necessary that HP would launch such a product in the market. In 2016, HP Inc unveiled Elite x3, a 5.96-inch touchscreen device that ran Windows 10 Mobile and supported Continuum, a feature that allowed the device to be attached seamlessly to a separate screen, mouse and keyboard.



ONEPLUS Q1 TV SERIES NOW AVAILABLE ON FLIPKART

New Delhi: Chinese brand OnePlus on Wednesday announced the expansion of its portfolio on Flipkart with the launch of Q1 TV series. The Q1 series comes in two variants featuring 55-inch 4K-resolution QLED panels, largely with the same specifications. The only difference between the OnePlus TV Q1 and Q1 Pro is the presence of a built-in motorised soundbar on the more expensive unit. "Consumers can purchase the premium OnePlus TV Q1 series on the Flipkart website and app," the company said in a statement. The TVs also support

Dolby Vision and sound formats up to Dolby Atmos, along with support for the HDR10 high dynamic range format. The OnePlus Q1 series runs Android TV 9.0 that comes with OxygenPlay, a curated content service built into the TV. OxygenPlay features movies and TV shows from Hungama Play, Eros Now, and Zee5, the company said.



GOOGLE UNVEILS NEW MEET HARDWARE FOR EFFICIENT VIDEO CHATS

New Delhi: Google has partnered with Lenovo to launch a new Meet hardware lineup for video conferencing at the post-pandemic workplaces. Called 'Google Meet Series One', the new hardware includes a camera, soundbar with eight mics and touch-screen remote. 'Series One' comes with the best of Google AI built in. People can join meetings touch free with their voice, enjoy studio-grade audio through enhanced noise cancellation, and benefit from smart capabilities like automatic participant framing," said T.J. Varghese, product manager at Google. Series One offers TrueVoice, a multi-channel noise cancellation and voice amplification technology that minimises distractions. The Smart Audio Bar uses 8 beam-forming microphones and the largest kit configuration can process up to 44 channels simultaneously.

OUR VIEW

MY VIEW | HERE, THERE, EVERYWHERE



A tax that the country should axe right away

Relieving investments in start-ups of our tax on long-term capital gains, as proposed by a parliamentary panel, would help them attract funds. Let's relieve equity portfolios of it, too

A seconomic forecaster cast a darker shade of gloom over our growth prospects this fiscal year, we need a surge of investment in businesses to counter a covid-19 crisis and create jobs. Thankfully, there is plenty of capital around on the lookout for big returns. India needs to make the most of such money. Towards this end, a parliamentary panel headed by Lok Sabha member Jayant Sinha has proposed the abolition of long-term capital gains (LTCG) tax on investments in start-ups made by collective investment vehicles, such as angel funds, alternative investment funds and limited liability partnerships. In a report tabled in Parliament on Tuesday, the committee sought the suspension of that tax for "at least the next two years". This basic proposal should be adopted forthwith, as our start-up ecosystem needs a spur, though not just for a limited time frame, but for good. It should be applicable to all investors, not just a chosen few. New business ventures have a high rate of mortality, and, in general, big risk-takers deserve big rewards. However, there are many low risk-takers who bear that burden as well. Let's relieve them of LTCG too.

It is well known that a country's entrepreneurial verve often depends on its tax policy. India's grisly framework has long been criticized for perverse incentives that result in a variety of market distortions. From wealthy individuals to investment firms, many domestic investors have been wary of funneling funds into start-ups because of uncertainty over cashing out with rewards that justify the risks borne. This has squeezed the access our entrepreneurs have had to local seed finance. Consider this, India's LTCG tax on the sale of

listed shares—levied if sold after a single year of purchase—is 10% on the gains made, while the same on unlisted stock is 20% and that too, with "long term" defined as at least two years. Then there is a surcharge of 25-37% to be paid over and above that tax on unlisted shares, a charge that foreign investors need not pay. Is it any surprise that some 80% of our start-up money, as the panel's report says, comes from abroad through venture capital and private equity funds? We should have the same rules for all classes of investors. Relieving them of LTCG worries may also offer another major benefit. It could crush an incentive for striking overseas deals that involve the transfer of stakes in equity-holding vehicles off our local tax radar. This would allow clearer patterns of ownership to emerge.

Some of the panel's other ideas seem less doable. It wants pension funds and insurers, for example, to invest in private equity funds that can then fund start-ups. Done poorly, this could spell risk-return and asset-liability mismatches. Meanwhile, start-ups are grappling with a regulatory initiative to see that public share offers—the chief way for early-stage investors to cash out—made abroad are followed by local public issues, with all the extra listing criteria of Indian bourses needing to be met. Dual listing could deter start-up funding if it becomes harder for such firms to go public. Sure, the abolition of LTCG tax will help. But the Centre should also rid listed equities of this levy on gains of over ₹1 lakh. With bank deposits currently paying less than inflation, liquid equity portfolios are real for millions of relatively risk-averse retirees and elderly folk (among others) who have to rely on their rising expenses. Surely, they deserve a break too.

The reckless brinksmanship of Boris Johnson as Brexit nears

The problem goes beyond the British prime minister's move to violate an international agreement



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Borderless Europe is a great achievement, one which was scarcely imaginable when World War II ended. Such is the power of the Schengen Agreement, which makes borderless travel possible within continental Europe, that Britain—which had sought exemption from it to retain control of its borders when it was part of the European Union—conceded that point to keep the border between Northern Ireland (part of the UK) and the Republic of Ireland open, complying with the Good Friday Agreement of 1998, which had ended three decades of sectarian violence.

More than 3,600 people had died during the 30-year period known as "the Troubles". During its worst moments, explosions in British cities were not uncommon. One reason London has fewer garbage bins for acts of its citizens is that the Irish Republican Army sometimes placed bombs in them.

But peace got its chance. Protestant (many of them Unionists) and Catholic (many of them Nationalists) politicians managed to put aside their bitter differences and peace prevailed, though it was often disrupted by violence. Last year, Lyra McKee, a young journalist, was killed while she was reporting on a riot in the city known as Derry or Londonderry, depending on your politics. Politicians across parties mourned her death. Peace is fragile anywhere, and in

Northern Ireland, especially so. Maintaining that peace is crucial, which is why when Britain negotiated an orderly departure from the EU, the "Irish Question" proved difficult. European politicians were adamant—rightly so—in backing Ireland, which wanted assurances that the spirit of the Good Friday Agreement—open border would be respected; British politicians wanted to get the job done with; and Americans, who had helped broker the peace talks, were watching the negotiations. Even in divided America, there is bipartisan support for an open border between Ireland and the UK.

Eventually, a compromise was reached. But just as there are hardcore extremists among Irish nationalists, who are accused of killing McKee, there are hardcore English nationalists, who—metaphorically at least—want to blow up the Brexit agreement, even if it means taking down the Good Friday Agreement with it.

And so, like the guest who doesn't know when to leave, Brexit is still sprawled on the sofa in the middle of Britain's crowded living room. While the UK left the EU in January, it needed to put in place agreements on trade, citizenship rights, and people's movement, so that in late December, when the departure is formal, the transition is as smooth as possible. The deadline is getting closer, and the British are nowhere near a domestic consensus of what they want. And so British Prime Minister Boris Johnson has done what he knows best—bluff and go to the brink, saying if there is no agreement by 19 October, he is out. On Monday, he won a Parliamentary vote in the context of national law—the withdrawal agreement that his government had signed with the EU.

The move makes little sense. It was Johnson's government that had signed the withdrawal agreement; that agreement is less than a year old; its effects are not even known; and erecting any kind of border risks tensions in Northern Ireland.

Johnson is not known to be a "details man", and when he became prime minister, he realized the complexity of negotiations that lay ahead. The withdrawal agreement lets the traffic of goods between Britain and Northern Ireland be checked, so as to stop smuggling across an open border that could violate any UK-EU trade deal. Northern Irish hardliners who want to remain in the UK were incensed, but British parliamentarians ignored their tantrum.

The months since have been difficult for all countries, busy as they are combating the pandemic. Much time has been lost and the UK has not concluded a trade deal, which would hurt British exporters, in particular farmers, since EU tariff on farm imports is stiff, to protect European farmers. Johnson also wants to make it harder for European fishing trawlers to ply in British waters, and oddly for a Conservative, he wants to subsidize industries. Johnson's "technical changes", Britain's minister for Northern Ireland admits, would violate international law. All former prime ministers—Conservative and Labour—have criticized Johnson.

Johnson, it appears, wants people to believe this is a mere debating ploy. Bluff or not, Europeans—the Irish most of all—are understandably livid. So are Americans, with whom the UK wants a free trade deal, which will be a long chess match, and US lawmakers seem to think that tearing apart the Good Friday Agreement is akin to opening gammon.

On Monday, Britain's parliament passed Johnson's proposed changes, although a few members abstained, a couple of officials resigned, and the government is also looking at a vote of no confidence. Former Labour leader Ed Milliband witheringly ridiculed Johnson, who swallowed and left the House early, as if he was late for an appointment. Nobody mind the agreement; that agreement is less than a year old; its effects are not even known; and erecting any kind of border risks tensions in Northern Ireland.

10 YEARS AGO



JUST A THOUGHT

Every time we've cut the capital gains tax, the economy has grown. Whenever we raise the capital gains tax, it's been damaged. It's one of those taxes that most clearly damages economic growth and jobs.

GROVER NORQUIST

MY VIEW | WORLD APART

Why Reliance Retail isn't quite the sure bet it's seen to be

RAHUL JACOB



is a Mint columnist and a former Financial Times foreign correspondent.

Even as it fitfully embraces modernity, India remains a country of perpetual myth-making. For the past few years, the world of e-commerce and internet start-ups—a story-telling business worldwide where projections of endless exponential growth take precedence over revenues and operating profits that boring old-world companies must live by—has been grafted onto India's gift for tall stories. The breathless coverage of unicorns becoming decacorns captures headlines, while the cash-burn or value destruction of \$2.5 billion by Indian e-commerce last year and the fact that Facebook derived a single-digit share of its revenues from Indian ad revenues, as a Goldman Sachs July report observes, "Low income levels result in customers being very price-sensitive. The biggest question remains how, if ever, will India's internet become increasingly monetized."

Months of deal-making and rumours of deal-making of Reliance Retail was thus bound to compete with *Pastal Lok* as the

most emblematic Indian serial of 2020. Fresh from the acquisition of Future, Reliance Retail received a \$1 billion investment from Silver Lake in early September for a 17% stake. Carlyle is now reportedly poised to make a \$2 billion investment. Unconfirmed reports last week that Amazon might pay \$20 billion for a 40% share in the company led me to ask Arvind Singhal, who heads Technopak, India's leading retail management consulting and research firm, why the world's largest e-commerce company would seek a passive stake in a competitor. "It makes no sense to me at all," said Singhal. Given the repeated policy interventions of the Narendra Modi government in the e-commerce sector to prevent, say, deep discounting by foreign companies, Walmart, which has an erratic international record, is more likely candidate to hedge its bets on Flipkart, he said. The *Economic Times* reported that in the second quarter, Amazon passed Walmart's Flipkart in mobile phone sales, a critical segment for e-commerce in India, for the first time.

Mukesh Ambani's Reliance group is certainly hard to bet against, given its track record of agile deal-making this year alone with Facebook, Google and a host of foreign private equity investors. Telepathy for the

concerns of New Delhi helps as well. Just last year, Ambani said at a business summit in Gujarat that India's data must be owned and controlled "by Indian people and not by corporations, especially foreign corporations". In April, after securing \$5.7 billion from Facebook for a 10% stake in Reliance Jio, "Mr

Ambani struck a warmer tone as he welcomed one such global corporation, a "friend of the Indian people", Facebook, "the Financial Times" regularly reported. Remarkably, Reliance Jio is both profitable and has 400 million subscribers paying an average of \$2 a month and signed up for the least expensive data plan in the world.

Whether this record of ambition and execution in telecom is a solid foundation for the e-commerce success of Jio Mart and broadly of Reliance Retail remains to be seen. Reliance Retail both dwarfs its nearest brick-and-mortar competitor, Dmart, and is growing much faster. But, its share of the country's organized retail market means that Reliance Retail's growth is partly

dependent on the Indian middle class and India's economy growing as fast as in previous decades. As I had argued in this paper in October before the pandemic tipped India's economy into something akin to a depression, with income shocks for just about everyone except the very rich, the Indian middle class is not growing (https://bit.ly/3knuT1u).

Reports late last month that JioMart's corner shop kirana partners increased order flows to four times of their pre-lockdown numbers on a base that is tiny in the context of national organized retail trade, is part of a global trend. Amazon in the second quarter of 2020 saw its net income rise 100% but still remains heavily dependent on web services for its profits. Significantly, Silver Lake's investment in JioMart coincided with the Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy reporting that 21 million salaried jobs have been lost after India's late-March lockdown.

Reliance's success hitherto has also largely been in businesses that serve other large entities, rather than consumers—or in telecom, where service expectations are low. As K. Vaitheswaran, author of *Falling to Succumb*, his account of co-founding India's first e-commerce business in 1999, points out, "The service levels in telecom are modest. E-commerce is different." Vaitheswaran, who is now a co-founder of affirm marketing health drink, Again, tried JioMart some weeks ago. A couple of items were out of stock or expired, he reports. "It's a shock to the system. It remains unresolved." Vaitheswaran, who is now a co-founder of affirm marketing health drink, Again, tried JioMart some weeks ago. A couple of items were out of stock or expired, he reports. "It's a shock to the system. It remains unresolved." Vaitheswaran, who is now a co-founder of affirm marketing health drink, Again, tried JioMart some weeks ago. A couple of items were out of stock or expired, he reports. "It's a shock to the system. It remains unresolved."

Grocery remains highly fragmented in India, is much more complex online than selling books or clothes, and is "hyper-local" says K. Ganesh, a former head of BigBasket. Even formats like supermarket chains are just a fraction of India's total grocery spend. Once the pandemic is behind us, conversion to online grocery sales may stall because Indian consumers prefer looking at vegetables and fruit closely before they buy.

In far more tech-savvy China, traditional markets account for about two-thirds of all grocery sales. With 75% of Indian consumers having an annual income of less than \$2,500, according to Goldman Sachs, and the prospects of rising incomes looking bleak, the projected online bonanza for Reliance may prove at best a mirage.

THEIR VIEW

Rationalize regulatory overlaps to unleash our digital economy

Policy coherence will prevent confusion and provide the soft-touch regulation necessary for the growth of digital markets



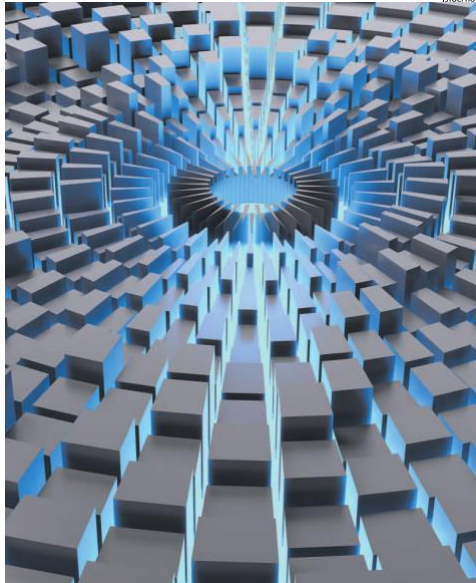
VIVIAN SHARAN & MOHIT KALAMATTIA
are public policy consultants at Koan Advisory Group, New Delhi

Digital businesses in India are staring at the prospect of control by no less than six regulators, as the state attempts to govern new technology. An expert committee on non-personal data (NPD) was the latest to suggest the creation of an NPD Authority, a new supervisory body that will enable data sharing and enforce data requests. This is in addition to a recently notified Central Consumer Protection Authority (CCPA) whose remit would grant it oversight of digital businesses, and the current government's proposals to create a regulator for personal data as well as e-commerce. India also has a sector-agnostic anti-trust regulator, the Competition Commission of India (CCI), and a telecom regulator that seems to see itself as a future licensor of digital applications.

Technology has catalysed fundamental changes over the last decade, resulting in new digital channels of creative expression, communication and knowledge formation. These developments have precipitated the need for new governance frameworks to guide transitions and respond to market failures. Meanwhile, digital businesses innovate to compete and survive, and consequently their functions and capabilities change rapidly. Some of the largest technology companies today didn't exist a few decades ago, and they differ starkly from their traditional counterparts. Conventional governance frameworks are not agile enough to keep up.

India lacks a unified and coherent strategy to govern the transformational potential of digital markets, and this has resulted in confused policy-making. For instance, the proposed NPD Authority is expected to supervise data-sharing arrangements between businesses and government. Large digital businesses that collect or process data can be mandated to share it, ostensibly to foster greater competition or evidence-based policymaking. However, a similar provision appears in the Personal Data Protection Bill, 2019. Section 9(2) empowers the personal data regulator to provide "any personal data anonymised or other non-personal data". The e-commerce regulator proposed under the recent draft e-commerce policy has analogous powers, reportedly.

The principle of a level-playing field between large and small businesses is a common feature of calls for regulation. Kris Gopalakrishnan, chairman of the committee on non-personal data, has stated that "the most important thing is making this data available for many people to innovate and create new businesses". Network effects, which are digital market corollaries to economies of scale, are the main barriers to fair competition in digital markets. Like large-scale physical enterprises, data enterprises profit from their size because they can reach more consumers and business partners.



However, the presence of such barriers is also subject to anti-trust assessments by the CCI, based on detailed economic and legal investigations.

Jurisdictional overlaps are seen elsewhere in regulation too. The CCPA will oversee misleading advertisements online, as well as the disclosure of personal information to third parties. In other words, the CCPA can also investigate and penalize businesses for violation of a data protection framework (Section 18 read with Section 2(47)(ix) of the Consumer Protection Act, 2019). The last publicly available draft of the National E-Commerce Policy proposes similar measures. An e-commerce regulator will naturally have to enforce such provisions.

Our executive rules that demarcate supervisory boundaries of government departments also remain ambiguous. For instance, the department for promotion of industry and internal trade is entrusted with all matters related to e-commerce, as per an amendment to the allocation of business rules in 2018. However, the administration of the Information Technology Act, 2000, which provides legal recognition to e-commerce, rests with the ministry of electronics and information technology.

If jurisdictional confusion persists, disputes are likely to follow. Illustratively, the Supreme Court had to settle a high-profile conflict between the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India and CCI in

2018. Such disputes are problematic because they erode economic value and trust in the supervisory capacity of the state. According to the Economic Survey of 2018-19, an increase in policy uncertainty could reduce investment growth in India for about five quarters. The Survey noted that "reducing economic policy uncertainty is critical because both domestic investment and foreign investment are strongly deterred by increases in domestic economic policy uncertainty". India must avoid creating any constraints on private investment and chart a clear path for a trillion-dollar digital economy.

India requires a "whole of government" approach to rule-making to address institutional challenges raised by technology. This involves increased dialogue and coherence among government bodies. Multi-stakeholder consultations and the promotion of self-regulation by the industry are equally necessary for light-touch governance that incentivises innovation. Other good practices include regulatory impact assessments and international cooperation to address the cross-border dimensions of technology. Above all, the accountability of new institutions is critical to improve the quality of regulation. This is a necessary stepping stone on the country's journey to becoming a digital superpower.

These are the authors' personal views.

MINT CURATOR



The Queen of England is currently the constitutional monarch of Barbados. *Reuters*

Barbados set to break free of the British crown

Barbados has announced its intention to remove the Queen as its head of state and become a republic by November 2021. A speech written by its prime minister, Mia Mottley, quoted a warning by the Caribbean island nation's first premier, Errol Barrow, against "loitering on colonial premises". Reading the speech, governor-general Dame Sandra Mason said: "The time has come to fully leave our colonial past behind. Barbadians want a Barbadian head of state. This is the ultimate statement of confidence in who we are and what we are capable of achieving. Hence, Barbados will take the next logical step toward full sovereignty." The country gained its independence from Britain in 1966, though the Queen remains its constitutional monarch and head of state.

The Guardian

Highway plan alarms pyramid conservationists

Egypt is building two highways across the pyramids plateau outside Cairo, reviving and expanding a project that was suspended in the 1990s after an international outcry. The Great Pyramids, Egypt's top tourist destination, are the sole survivor of the seven wonders of the ancient world and the plateau is a UNESCO world heritage site. The highways are part of an infrastructure push spearheaded by the country's powerful military and championed by President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi, who is building a new capital city to ease the population pressure on Cairo. The northern highway will cross the desert 2.5 kilometres south of the Great Pyramids. The southern one will pass between the Step Pyramid of Saqqara—the oldest one—and the Dahshur area, home to the Bent Pyramid and the Red Pyramid.

The Sydney Morning Herald

UK Space Agency pushes for orbital awareness

New approaches to tracking satellites and debris in orbit are to get a boost from the UK Space Agency. UKSA is giving over £1m to seven firms to help advance novel sensor technologies and the smart algorithms needed to interpret their data. Finding better ways to surveil objects moving overhead has become a high priority issue. With more and more satellites being launched, there's growing concern about the potential for collisions. A big worry is the burgeoning population of redundant hardware and junk in orbit—some 900,000 objects larger than 1cm by some counts, and all of it capable of doing immense damage to, or even destroying, an operational spacecraft in a high-velocity encounter. The projects being supported by UKSA come from a mix of start-ups and more established companies.

BBC

The middle-age benefits of teenage popularity

Many of us hope to escape who we were in high school... But a growing body of research suggests that how popular you are in adolescence has a link with psychological and physical health decades later. Thirteen-year-olds who weren't very popular with their peers growing up, a new study released Tuesday has found, seem to have a heightened risk of developing circulatory system disease in later life. This includes higher risk for conditions such as narrowed and hardened arteries and abnormal heartbeat that affect the normal functioning of the heart and blood vessels. "Although not many realize it, peer status is one of the strongest predictors of later psychological and health outcomes, even decades later," said Mitch Prinstein from the University of North Carolina.

CNN

Fleeing suspect dumps a winning lottery ticket

A suspect in Georgia left his good luck behind when he abandoned a winning lottery ticket while fleeing sheriff's deputies. The Cherokee County Sheriff's Office says the man had a Georgia Lottery scratch game card worth \$100 when he ran away during a traffic stop on Interstate 75 on Monday. In a Facebook post, he offered his congratulations and invited him to claim the ticket at its office in Canton about 40 miles (64 kilometres) north of Atlanta. The man, who was not identified, was later taken into custody, sheriff's spokesman Capt. Jay Baker told the Atlanta Journal-Constitution. Baker said the man was nervous in a vehicle that was pulled over for a tag violation, and he ran into the woods. The lottery ticket was in a backpack that also had methamphetamine, according to Baker.

AP

THEIR VIEW

The value of letting observers into Indian boardrooms

M. MUNEEB & RALPH WARD



M. MUNEEB & RALPH WARD
are, respectively, co-founder and chief evangelist at Medici Institute, and publisher of Boardroom Insider.

More and more start-ups in the US and Europe have board observers, but we hardly see many in Asia, perhaps because regulatory clarity is in short supply. Yet, as large enterprises try to imbibe the culture of start-ups in this era of covid disruption, they too could benefit from board observers as a way to drive growth.

Regulatory obstacles, if any, should be set aside to induct observers along with board directors in the larger interests of all stakeholders. This could also help solve various hassles between investors and promoters. An observer is just that special someone who is allowed to participate in board meetings with full access to all the information, including the minutes of previous meetings, that is available to directors, but she or he has no vote. Typically we see this in startups, and the rights of observers are specified in a shareholder agreement and separate non-disclosure pact, the kind typically signed by private equity and venture capital investors or significant minority shareholders. An

observer can also be brought in for specific strategic purposes.

When there are a multitude of investors with comparable investments, and insufficient board seats, observers could be drafted as a way to strengthen investor confidence. Big established companies don't usually need this, but they may be well served by doing it for their independent subsidiaries in sunrise and high-risk businesses. It could also help prepare the next rung of executives for board roles.

Usually, the right to become an observer is given to a substantial investor who insists on one or more board seats. This is especially helpful in the case of start-ups. As and when more investment flows in from multiple venture capitalists, observers can be taken on. But it's not just to satisfy all key investors with seats that observers act as a solution. Such appointees could also guide the company on matters critical to its success, just as directors do.

Board observers can provide new perspectives on business strategy and bring in fresh thinking for the company's apex body of governance to gain from. Moreover, when a start-up has a representative of an investor group as an observer, it tends to find it easier to go for the next level of fund infusion.

What better way to raise funds than from the same set of investors? It sure beats going about hunting for fresh ones.

Experts may argue that since an observer has no fiduciary responsibility, he or she can't be trusted with the confidential data of a company. This should be resolved with a firm agreement that binds them to the same confidentiality and non-disclosure clauses as regular board members. Besides, observers can be excluded from board meetings on issues that could have conflicts of interest, or when sensitive discussions must be held on, say, litigation, etc.

One of the tech services companies we were involved with was in talks with a private equity (PE) firm for funding. For the promoter-technocrat who had set up this firm, this was a big move. He even agreed to board representation for the PE firm, but the latter also asked for a board observer right. He was a bit disturbed and sought our advice on how to handle this. This is a typical of issue faced by most entrepreneurs.

Investment firms usually seek a set level of formal board representation, but occasionally, they also want their observers to attend board meetings, receive information, and take part in discussions. Part of their objective is to bring in expertise and train own executives in specific functional roles. While this seems harmless enough, in the small boardroom of a start-up, an observer can punch above his weight, as they say in boxing. If a private board has an informal observer, then proceedings do not always depend on strict voting numbers a split vote is often seen as a bad sign.

What matters more is a business leader's ability to direct discussions. An observer may be able to dominate at this, and that then depends on strict voting numbers a split vote is often seen as a bad sign. What matters more is a business leader's ability to direct discussions. An observer may be able to dominate at this, and that then depends on strict voting numbers a split vote is often seen as a bad sign.

Many seasoned executives advocate fewer investors on a company's board (and that includes observers) because it risks a loss of entrepreneurial focus. We don't subscribe to this argument, as we believe that observers can be trained in their roles and could add significant value to an enterprise.

Done with clear rules, it could overcome a scarcity of board seats and also aid a firm's governance

The best bet for the aforesaid promoter, faced with an investor insisting on observer rights, was to hold out for clearly written rules on what the observer could and could not do. There are several observer rights one