

NEWS ALERT

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LIST OF NEWSPAPERS COVERED

BUSINESS LINE

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ECONOMIC TIMES

HINDU

HINDUSTAN TIMES

INDIAN EXPRESS

PIONEER

STATESMAN

TELEGRAPH

TIMES OF INDIA

TRIBUNE

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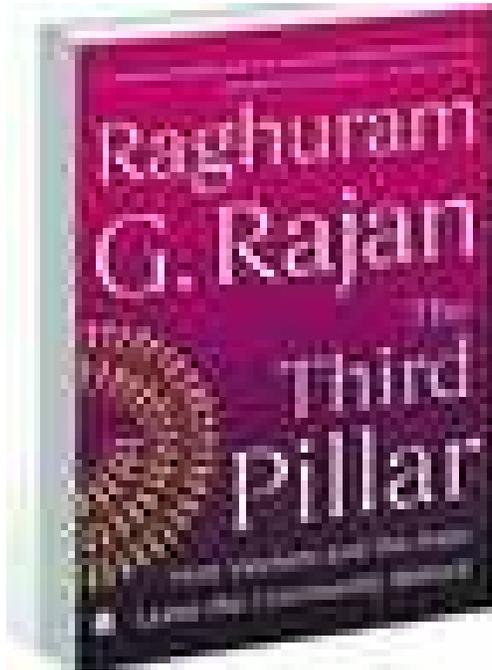
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BOOKS

TRIBUNE, MAR 31, 2019



For a brief while, the clean shaven, youthful and ever-ready-for-a-byte Raghuram Rajan was the poster boy of Indian financial journalism. His abrupt resignation as the RBI governor catapulted his columns and books onto the top of the reading list. If the expectation is of a tell-all tale about the shenanigans in the stately corridors of the RBI's manors in Mumbai and Delhi, Rajan barely touches on that.

In this tome, he acquires the professorial avatar to which he has retreated after quitting the RBI. What follows is a read on the world's economic trajectory, the gradual falling in place of the nuts and bolts of institutions, the arguments in communities and the corridors of power that precede and succeed the changes in the wielding of economic power

and the fascinating tussles at various phases of human history among its actors of the day. Rajan gives the old story of the tussle between the markets and the state a more commonplace and hence easily understandable touch by inserting the subject of communities in the mix. The economic histories and prognosis of the past become more readable and enjoyable when presented as socio-economics with the addition of people and their feelings.



At one point the main actors were the church, the monarch, guilds, the serf and the landowner. Their intertwining gave way to capitalism as we know it. Another turning point is now close at hand. How do we redefine the relationship of the three major players — state, the community and the markets — after the revelations that the mega tech companies were not really treading the straight and the narrow path? Now that the governments, till now sleeping at the wheel, move to punish and

overcorrect, the focus should not be just on the offending pillar — the market — because that will subsequently give rise to cronyism that will be more difficult to correct. Rajan’s solution is a disappointment — push the other two pillars up.

The evolution and foundation theory of capitalism, or in other words the history of socio-economics that originated from the west, has been adequately chronicled. Rajan makes that a little more made interesting with anecdotes and similes. Some aspects and tendencies among communities do have a resonance here in India for instance the resentment against the middle-class elite for insulating themselves against the economic forces they have unleashed. This has given rise to populism which, Rajan argues, at its core is “a demand for respect, and enveloped in the anger of those who feel they have been ignored.” Haven’t we heard this explanation a thousand times before?

Rajan’s brief stay at the RBI should have helped him impose a sub-continental or even Asian perspective to global economic history. In the end, the reader is reduced to an humbled appreciation of the author’s sweeping reading list, his scholarship and the admirable but easy-enough virtue of parking all his arguments in the left-liberal boat whether it is about the dilemmas of immigration, non-tariff barriers and intellectual property rights. However, Rajan’s treatment of these dilemmas is so wide ranging, covering all possible perspectives, that they often give a glimpse into the future of countries on the path of development. For instance Chinese, or even, Indian cavalierism with the western definition of intellectual property rights is not aberrant behaviour. Countries

currently at the global economic high table nursed and pursued similar temptations at a lower stage of developed.

But for the most Rajan has trodden the path of the erudite chela of western economic thought. As for the Indian context, it is too pat. To point out that the Indian businessman is at the lower end of the pecking order, he cites a reception for Barack Obama where Mukesh Ambani was number 83 in the protocol list, after the President's grandson! Could he not have seen the duplicity and hypocrisy of Indian political life while serving in the RBI? The manner in which Ambanis are feted, their appointments with the mighty secured in minutes? Yet, there are nuggets that governments might already be pursuing. Like, construction is the most important sector in the early phase of industrialisation (and the Modi government is majorly sold on the concept).

But in the end, the markets are imperfect, brutal and dehumanising. Rajan to be fair is among the lot that has not lost hope yet. Perhaps the perch of academics obviates the need to soil the hands in the muck and sewage of the everyday world. Yet, as Rajan brings out, today the developed and the developing are two sides of the same coin, in politics as well as in economics.

CORRUPTION

PIONEER, MAR 26, 2019

Khaitan beneficiary of Rs 850-cr slush funds generated out of Defence deals, says ED

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) on Monday alleged that Delhi-based lawyer and accused in the VVIP chopper scam Gautam Khaitan, has also been a beneficiary of Rs 850 crore slush funds generated out of Defence deals. The ED statement came after the agency filed a prosecution complaint (charge sheet in police parlance) against Khaitan before a Special Court here under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA). "On the analysis of his foreign bank accounts, it was revealed that Rs 850 crore approximately in foreign currencies are received from suspected accounts. Gautam Khaitan has created structures viz companies which are under his control to launder the Proceeds of Crime related to criminal activities such as kickbacks of defence deals, the ED said in a statement. "Khaitan has held beneficial interest/ownership in foreign assets/ company/ account, and did not disclose the same in his return of income filed before the Income Tax Authorities for assessment year 2009-11 to 2019- 20," the ED alleged. Khaitan holds bank accounts either singly or in joint names of his family members as well as corporate structures with beneficial interest in three banks in foreign jurisdiction namely, Barclays Bank, Singapore Bank and UBS Bank.

DEFENCE

HINDU, MAR 27, 2019

Successful anti-satellite missile test puts India in elite club



Interceptor missile being launched by DRDO on Wednesday

PM announces launch in televised address; says it's for peace, not war-mongering

In an incremental advance, India on Wednesday successfully conducted an Anti-Satellite (ASAT) missile test, named Mission Shakti, becoming the fourth country in the world to demonstrate the capability to shoot down satellites in orbit. So far, only the United States, Russia and China have this prowess.

“A short while back, our scientists have shot down a live satellite in the Low Earth Orbit (LEO) at 300 km in space,” Prime Minister Narendra Modi said, addressing the nation around noon.

The satellite downed by the ASAT missile was Microsat-R, an imaging satellite which was launched into orbit on January 24, 2019 using a Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle (PSLV), a senior Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) official said.

India has built the broad capabilities and building blocks to develop ASAT missiles for some time as part of its Ballistic Missile Defence (BMD) programme.

Mr. Modi said the aim of the test was to maintain peace, rather than war mongering.

“A BMD interceptor missile successfully engaged an Indian orbiting target satellite in LEO in a ‘hit to kill’ mode’, the DRDO said in a statement.

A DRDO official claimed that the ASAT missile was a modified exo-atmospheric interceptor missile of the BMD. A LEO of 300 km was chosen to “minimise” debris and it also won’t last more than a few months, the official said.

Anti-satellite weapons provide the capability to shoot down enemy satellites in orbit thereby disrupting critical communications and surveillance capabilities. ASAT missiles also act as a space deterrent in dissuading adversaries from targeting the country’s satellite network.

In March 2011, The Hindu had reported the then Scientific Adviser to the Defence Minister Dr. V.K. Saraswat, who later became the DRDO Chairman, as stating after an interceptor test that India had “all the technologies and building blocks which can be used for anti-satellite missions.”

Meanwhile questions are being raised on the manner of announcement of the ant-satellite capability.

In 2007, a similar test by China at an orbit of 800 km above earth had drawn global condemnation.

This test will make it increasingly difficult for India to present itself as exhibiting more strategic restraint and responsibility than China in matters pertaining to space security, and potentially other areas of defence policy as well, said Frank O'Donnell, South Asia expert at the U.S. Naval War College, in Newport, Rhode Island. “The timing of this test, and the degree of public communications coordination among the Prime Minister’s Office, DRDO, and Ministry of External Affairs, strongly suggests that this test was ordered and conducted for domestic

political reasons with the upcoming elections in mind,” he said, expressing concern on the debris generated which “cannot be controlled in terms of its destination and impact regardless of the MEA statement suggesting otherwise.”

HINDUSTAN TIMES, MAR 29, 2019

No global heat on India’s ASAT missile test

Unlike China, India is seen as a more responsible country that respects international laws and institutions. New Delhi has done well to exploit this image to enlist itself into the elite space powers club



On Wednesday, Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced the successful test of an anti-satellite (ASAT) missile by India. With this test, India has joined a select group of nations which have demonstrated this capability. The last country to do a successful test was China in 2007. The test by China was widely censured by the international community. In contrast, life for India has been much more comfortable after Wednesday's test.

Pakistan's response has been critical, that is, Pavlovian. But China's response has been guarded and it has simply expressed the hope that peace and tranquillity in outer space will be maintained. Most importantly, the response from the United States has been cautiously supportive. In its response to India's test, the US State Department invoked "shared interests in space and scientific and technical cooperation, including collaboration on safety and security in space". While noting its concerns on space debris, the US has taken cognisance of India's statement that the test design addressed debris issues. The reaction of the acting US defence secretary Patrick Shanahan was much sharper on the debris issue but he too avoided blaming India at all. The US is reportedly still tracking the fragments created by India's test.

One of the reasons for lesser concern with India's test has to do with the height of the test. At 300 kilometres, the debris may survive just for months, if not weeks, before decaying. At 800 kilometres, the Chinese satellite debris has already survived for more than a decade and may survive for a few more. Second, unlike China, India is seen as a more responsible country that respects international laws and institutions. New

Delhi has done well to exploit this image to enlist itself into this elite space powers club. India's test — or a future test by any country — may push the global community to enforce a freeze on further tests. India missed the bus when the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) decided January 1, 1967, as the cut-off date for becoming a legitimate nuclear weapons state. When India tested a nuclear device in 1974, the global community responded by developing export control regimes like the Nuclear Suppliers Group which specifically targeted India. The ASAT missile test may just have saved India from repeating old mistake.

EDUCATION

PIONEER, MAR 27, 2019

It's time to re-emerge as global knowledge hub: VP

Vice President Venkaiah Naidu on Tuesday said knowledge is going to be the driver of the Indian economy and will play a vital role in improving the living conditions of people.

India must rise to the occasion and reorient its higher education system, in order to be globally competitive, Naidu said, addressing the 16th convocation ceremony of Indira Gandhi Institute of Development Research here.

Eight PhD, six M.Phil and 29 M.Sc degrees were awarded by the Vice President on the occasion. "The education system should be reoriented by moving away from the colonial mindset; it must teach history in an objective manner as it actually unfolded," he said.

"Education is not only for employment. It should empower the individual with knowledge and wisdom to sift the wheat from the chaff. Access to quality education for all and at all levels is equally essential to ensure inclusive growth and prevent any kind of discrimination," he said. Time has come for India to once again emerge as the global knowledge hub, he said. "For that to happen, the seats of learning, especially the universities, must reinvent themselves as hubs of vibrant intellectual pursuit," he said. While it accounts for less than a fifth of the

GDP, agriculture still remains the main source of employment for nearly half of India's labour force, he said.

PIONEER, MAR 30, 2019

Allahabad HC gives major relief to Siksha Mitras

In a major relief to thousands of 'siksha mitras' who appeared for the Assistant Teacher Recruitment Exam 2019, the Lucknow bench of Allahabad High court on Friday quashed a Government notification fixing 65 and 60 per cent as qualifying marks for general and reserved category candidates respectively.

The order paves the way for the selection of more 'siksha mitras' due to a 2017 Supreme Court direction, asking to give them 25 per cent weightage in the next two consecutive selection processes. Passing the order, the court directed the Examination Regulatory Authority (ERA) secretary to declare the result of the 2019 exam in terms of the Government Order of December 1, 2018 and an advertisement of December 5, 2018.

ELECTION

PIONEER, MAR 23, 2019

Interference in EC schedule only in rarest of rare cases: HC

The Madras High Court on Friday dismissed three PILs seeking to reschedule the April 18 Lok Sabha polls for Tamil Nadu in view of religious festivals and events, saying only in the rarest of rare cases could it interfere in the Election Commission schedule.

Referring to several Supreme Court judgements, a division bench comprising Justices S Manikumar and Subramonium Prasad said, "The apex court has made it clear that Article 324(1) is a plenary provision vesting the whole responsibility of national and state elections on the Election Commission of India (ECI)... The commission has to comprehend the process of election in the entire country, while conducting the elections for Parliament."

It has to take into account the selection of booths, movement of para-military forces throughout the country and several other factors, the court said.

Once the election schedule is fixed, it should not be interfered with, unless some event occurs which was not in the contemplation of the election commission.

It is well settled that the writ court should not ordinarily, except in rarest of rare cases, interfere with the schedule fixed by the ECI, while exercising its jurisdiction, under Article 226 of the Constitution.

PIONEER, MAR 26, 2019

SC for more VVPAT matching in polls

The Supreme Court on Monday favoured increasing the random physical verification of VVPAT slips in the upcoming Lok Sabha and assembly polls and told the EC that “no institution should insulate itself from improvement, including the judiciary”.

It was not the question of “casting aspersions”, rather a matter of “satisfaction” of the electorate, the top court said.

It asked the EC to file response as to whether it can increase the number of sample surveys of VVPAT slips from one in each Assembly segment for the upcoming General and Assembly elections.

The court was hearing a plea filed by 21 Opposition leaders, led by Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu, seeking the VVPAT slips of at least 50 per cent of voting machines in each Assembly constituency be checked randomly in the Lok Sabha elections next month.

A Bench of Chief Justice Ranjan Gogoi and Justice Deepak Gupta asked the EC to file its reply on affidavit indicating the reasons of its

satisfaction that purity of elections can be maintained and is being maintained.

“The Election Commission of India (EC) is fully satisfied that the purity of the elections can be maintained and is being maintained. The Election Commission of India shall indicate the above in an affidavit the basis of satisfaction,” the Bench said.

It added, “The Election Commission of India shall also indicate that if the sample survey can be extended to a higher level...The affidavit shall be filed by 4 pm on March 28. The matter is listed for further hearing on April 1.”

At the outset, the Bench told the Deputy Election Commissioner Sudeep Jain, appearing in person, whether the poll panel can increase the number of random physical verification of VVPAT slips with EVMs from the existing stipulation of only one polling station per Assembly segment. Jain replied that the ECI has adequate reasons to believe that there was no requirement for changing the present arrangement of random matching of VVPAT slips with Electronic Voting Machine for one polling per Assembly segment.

EMPLOYMENT

HINDU, MAR 29, 2019

Proposal for job guarantee scheme in small towns

The proposal, a version of which has been previously presented to the Congress and to a foundation working with other Opposition parties, has been released in a policy paper titled ‘Strengthening towns through sustainable employment’.

With rising unemployment becoming a major poll issue, and several political parties proposing solutions for it in their election manifestos, a group of labour researchers have proposed a national urban job guarantee programme for small towns.

They estimate that the scheme would benefit 3 to 5 crore people and cost 1.7% of the GDP if it covers one adult per household in the 4,000-odd towns that have a population of less than 10 lakh people.

The proposal, a version of which has been previously presented to the Congress party and to a foundation working with other Opposition parties, was released on Friday in a policy paper titled ‘Strengthening towns through sustainable employment’.

The paper has been drafted by Azim Premji University’s Centre for Sustainable Employment, which also publishes the annual State of Working India report.

According to leaked data from the National Sample Survey Organisation (NSSO), unemployment rate is at a 45-year high of 6.1%, spiking to 7.8% in urban areas. There is open unemployment of about 20% among educated youth.

The proposal suggests a two pronged approach to address this jobs crisis. Workers who have not completed Class 12 would be eligible for 100 days of guaranteed employment each year at ₹ 500 per day. Those who have education beyond Class 12 would be provided apprenticeship work, mostly in monitoring and surveying for public offices, schools, hospitals and other institutions, and paid a stipend of ₹ 13,000 per month for a contiguous period of five months.

“For me, it is a purposeful political choice that the effective rate of pay will be ₹ 500/day irrespective of the level of education,” said Rajendran Narayan, one of the authors of the paper. “It’s going away from the reductive notion of what is skilled versus unskilled work...Construction work also requires a lot of skill.” He also emphasised that apart from creating public assets such as traditional city infrastructure, the scheme proposed a new set “green jobs” which would create and restore the urban commons such as lakes, parks and waste land. Another set of jobs will address the urban “care deficit” and provide carers for children, elderly and disabled.

The proposal recommends an 80:20 split in funding between Centre and states, with wage payment made through urban local bodies. The annual estimated programme budget would range from 1.7 to 2.7 % of GDP depending on whether employment is guaranteed to one adult from every household or every adult resident.

CSE researchers have presented their proposal to the Congress party, as well as to the Samruddha Bharat foundation which is coordinating policy discussions among opposition parties for a possible common minimum programme.

“In principle, it is a good idea, but there is still a question of feasibility,” said Congress MP Rajeev Gowda who has reviewed the proposal and is involved in drafting his party’s poll manifesto, which will be released on April 2.

The Congress government of Madhya Pradesh has just started implementing its own urban jobs programme, and the Nationalist Congress Party has included a similar programme in its election manifesto.

“In the current fiscal scenario, it may not be possible for a government to implement both a basic income scheme and an urban jobs guarantee scheme,” admitted the paper’s lead author Amit Basole. “I’m not opposed to minimum income, but an employment guarantee scheme is preferable as it also creates public assets,” he added, pointing to the success of MGNREGA, the rural jobs scheme, as an example.

ENVIRONMENT

HINDUSTAN TIMES, MAR 30, 2019

States must invest more in climate adaptation plans

Mainstreaming can be incentivised from both bottom-up as well as top-down. The Centre can play a stronger role in creating institutions that can support sectoral and state-Centre collaborations and finance the integration of climate change into the daily functioning of states and sectors



More than five years ago, an unprecedented deluge, estimated to have been over 440% above normal, caused massive devastation in

Uttarakhand. These rains led to glacial lakes bursting, resulting in flash floods and landslides. The government's estimate of human loss was 800 but this may be too conservative; other estimates pegged human casualties at 6,000, along with 9,200 livestock loss (affecting livelihoods), and 3,320 houses and property damaged in the floods.

At first glance, the culprit seems to be the heavy rainfall but experts agree that the magnitude of the disaster increased manifold because of illegal construction along the floodplains and burgeoning hydropower infrastructure. Although Uttarakhand is known to be a disaster-prone state, it was not prepared for this scale of event.

These types of weather anomalies seem to have become more frequent and extreme in recent times. In 2016, many southern states faced the worst drought in 40 years. In 2017, almost half of India, including the food bowl states of Punjab, Haryana, Maharashtra and Madhya Pradesh, faced drought-like conditions. More recently, the effects of excess rain were evident in the flooding in Kerala in 2018.

In response to these extreme weather events, states have now begun incorporating climate impacts into their budgets, programmes and policies. This integration of climate information into policies, programmes, and plans is known as “mainstreaming”. It has several co-benefits, including protecting important development gains from being undermined by climate change and ensuring that future development succeeds despite climate change impacts.

Some states and ministries have been leading the way in integrating climate considerations into their daily functioning. In 2013, Madhya

Pradesh (MP) published its first State Action Plan for Climate Change (SAPCC) with the theme *Integrating Concerns – Converging Possibilities*. The process of developing this SAPCC was highly collaborative; it created sectoral and interdepartmental working groups and engaged a range of stakeholders. One of the by-products of this process was that the Department of Animal Husbandry became increasingly aware of the impacts of extreme heat on the livestock and the milk supply of the state. Since 2010, the department had been witnessing a decrease in milk production; the SAPCC process linked them with experts that established the connection between this decrease in production and increasing temperatures.

They began phasing out the existing stock of exotic cow species, which had formed the bulk of the livestock in MP because they tend to provide higher milk yields, and replacing them with indigenous species which generally produce lower yields than imported species but continue to produce yield even in high temperatures. They also developed and invested in climate-resilient breeding programmes, improving fodder quality and availability, and research and training on breed improvement and disease identification.

The floods were also a wake-up call for Uttarakhand, and in 2014, the state developed its SAPCC entitled *Transforming Crisis Into Opportunity*. The forest department partnered with others to pilot an initiative focusing on increasing the climate resilience of forest-dependent communities. The project increased water storage and access for communities and helped diversify their crops and cropping methods.

It also initiated efforts to regenerate forests, including interventions such as increasing forest cover density and soil control measures.

However, the scale at which such efforts are occurring is too small. There are means by which states and sectors can better incorporate climate considerations into their work more quickly. These include using existing funding streams to intentionally support adaptation, as the department of animal husbandry did in MP, and building capacity and institutional memory to enable implementation and sustained action, as the forest department in Uttarakhand did by involving gram panchayats and van panchayats at all stages of the project.

Although states have been leading efforts on mainstreaming, state governments and sectoral ministries need to be better prepared for these events. They have an opportunity to better integrate adaptation rapidly and at scale through the revisions of the SAPCCs that are currently underway. The MP and Uttarakhand examples showcase the importance of the SAPCCs in terms of both the process as well as the final plans in facilitating mainstreaming. However, mainstreaming can be incentivised from both bottom-up as well as top-down. The Centre can play a stronger role in encouraging sectors to collaborate to contend with climate impacts, create institutions that can support sectoral and state-Centre collaborations, and provide financing for efforts to integrate climate change into the daily functioning of states and sectors.

Ayesha Dinshaw is manager, Climate Resilience Practice, WRI India

The views expressed are persona

FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS

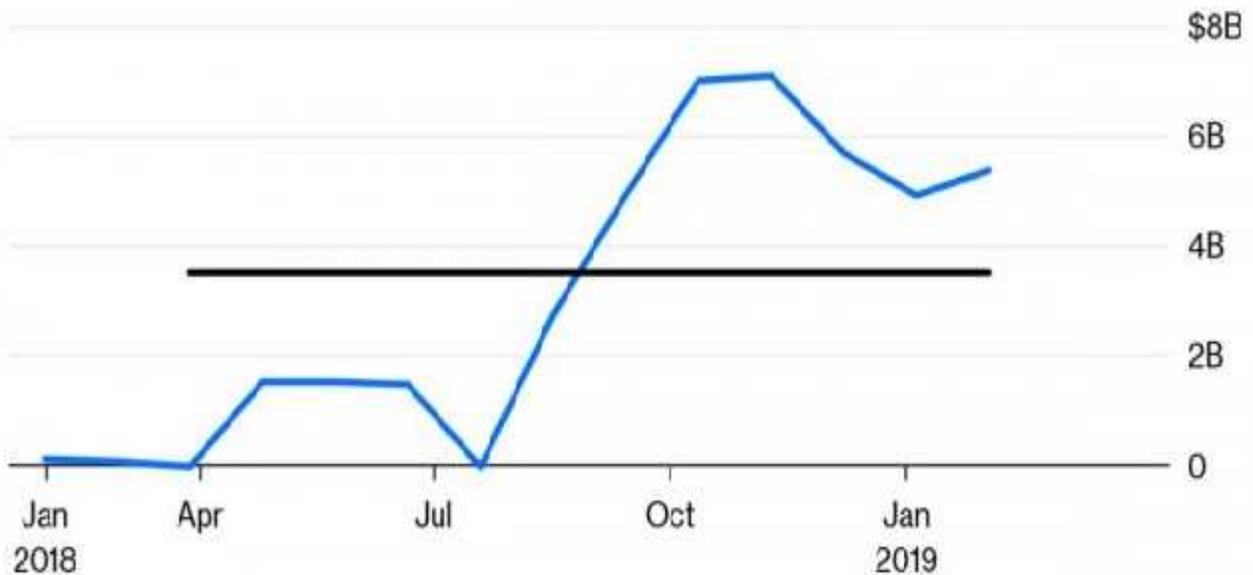
HINDUSTAN TIMES, MAR 24, 2019

RBI is full of surprises these days

Buyer of First Resort

India's central bank has pumped \$42 billion into the banking system in the current financial year by buying over 70 percent of net government bond issuance

- ✓ Reserve Bank of India's open market purchases of government bonds
- ✓ Average monthly purchases for FY2019



Source: Bloomberg

BloombergOpinion

Several theories explain why India's new RBI governor took his boldest step yet. Little attention has been paid to the consequences. Last week, Governor Shaktikanta Das made an unexpected tweak to the Reserve Bank of India's (RBI) traditional management of longer-term liquidity in the banking system: by buying and selling government bonds. India's currency, sovereign-debt and credit markets were all caught off-guard by the announcement of a three-year, dollar-rupee swap. The RBI will buy \$5 billion check for Essar Steel India, lest the rupee strengthens from an oversupply of greenbacks. That payment should be coming in now that the Ruia family, former owners of the bankrupt asset, is almost out of legal options to prevent the sale.

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

HINDUSTAN TIMES, MAR 30, 2019

The making of a Modi doctrine in foreign policy

While excessive moralising and equivocation were the hallmarks of the earlier era, the prime minister has introduced a dash of vim into Indian foreign policy

Over the past five years, analysts have bickered over how much of a divergence the Narendra Modi administration has exhibited in foreign policy. As with all things Modi, opinions seem to lie at both ends of the spectrum with plenty of room in the middle.

On the one hand are those who believe that the prime minister has merely tinkered with the policies of his predecessors and there is nothing remarkable about Indian foreign policy in this era of “Hindu nationalism” — the pragmatic elements of running a state has tamed the exuberant rhetoric of the Modi and his foreign policy team.

On the other hand are those who see a distinctly new foreign policy path being charted out by this *yugpurush* (the greatest in one’s era) of a prime minister. A sea change in attitude is posited in relations with India’s neighbours and partners, and incidental events are fielded as evidence of a Modi doctrine that fundamentally alters the basic structure of Nehruvian foreign policy.

A closer study of Modi's foreign policy indicates a third position — of a desire to not repeat the errors of the past, yet constrained by a hidebound bureaucracy and the intellectual shortcomings of India's foreign policy apparatus. More out of necessity than design, the Modi administration has chosen a gradual divergence from India's non-aligned past but promises a much greater variance to come.

The sharpest example of this small yet radical foreign policy shift is seen in India's ties with Israel. For decades, even after the establishment of full diplomatic relations in 1992, New Delhi treated Jerusalem like a mistress, accepting favours without recognition. Modi pulled the curtains on the relationship with a stand-alone trip to Israel in 2017 but his embrace fell short of being wholehearted as India continued to vote against Israel in the United Nations and maintains its embassy in Tel Aviv. Moreover, India has kept up its paeans to solidarity with the Palestinian people, which serves little purpose other than being an annoying vestige of Gandhian moralpolitik.

In some ways, the relationship with the United States is even more intriguing. Most of the foreign policy commentariat accepts that America is India's most important partner in the foreseeable future, yet there remains in New Delhi a symbolic sliver of stubborn anti-Americanism. As India makes bigger, more sensitive defence purchases from American vendors, enters into logistical agreements with the US military, and resuscitates the Quad grouping that also includes Japan and Australia, it still sits with Russia and China in a trilateral that is at odds with the rest of its strategy. New Delhi's ambivalence sends mixed

signals to international capitals about Indian intentions and its reliability as an ally in case the balance of power shifts for the worse in East Asia.

A third major departure from Nehruvian guidelines has been in the Modi government's handling of the threat from Pakistan and its terrorist proxies. Like its predecessors, this administration too has used diplomatic pressure against Islamabad, arguably with greater success, yet has not hesitated to use military force against terrorist camps across the border and called Islamabad's nuclear bluff at least twice while remaining open to peace initiatives.

On the other security front, with China, India stands far behind in most benchmarks of development and power. In preparation for the worst eventuality, Modi has focused on substantially improving infrastructure near the border without concern for Beijing's sensibilities. This has been a glaring weakness in all previous administrations' resolves since 1947 that this administration has ameliorated. A glimpse of the new ease on the infrastructure front was seen during the standoff at Doklam. At the same time, India has been less hostile than the West to Chinese business to avoid provocation and to encourage a fruitful conversation.

It is true that India under Modi has kept all doors open in its dealings with foreign powers in a manner that some might misconstrue as more non-alignment. The prime minister has not substituted inaction for recklessness, understanding the arguments for India's behaviour so far. However, it is in the boldness of his actions that a new picture emerges that not only outlines a different mode of thinking from the moribund Nehruvian school of Indian foreign policy but clearly indicates the early makings of a Modi doctrine.

While excessive moralising and equivocation were the hallmarks of the earlier era, the prime minister has introduced a dash of vim into Indian foreign policy. Modi's interjection, however, is no novel creation — it is merely the country's awakening to machtpolitik in international affairs and a desire to wield some of it. To this end, the administration needs a vibrant community of aides, bureaucrats, and researchers free of old ideological commitments to consider the full implications of its bold new policies. It is this lack that has so far inadvertently camouflaged the Modi administration's foreign policy intentions and led many to underestimate the potential of what has passed over the past five years.

Jaideep A Prabhu is a researcher in diplomatic history

The views expressed are personal

POLICE

PIONEER, MAR 27, 2019

SC: ‘Very very serious’ revelations made by CBI in status report

The Supreme Court on Tuesday termed as “very very serious” the revelations made by CBI in its status report relating to the recent interrogation of the then Kolkata Police Commissioner Rajeev Kumar in connection with the Saradha chit fund scam case.

A Bench headed by Chief Justice Ranjan Gogoi said it cannot “close its eyes” if some “very very serious facts” are disclosed to it and directed CBI to file an application seeking appropriate relief against Kumar, who had earlier headed the state SIT to probe the chit fund scam.

The Bench, which also comprised Justices Deepak Gupta and Sanjiv Khanna, granted 10 days to the probe agency for filing the application. Kumar and others can respond to the plea seven days thereafter.

The top court refused to drop the contempt proceedings against the West Bengal DGP, the chief secretary and Kumar.

It was hearing the CBI’s contempt application against various senior officials of the West Bengal Government on the ground of non-cooperation in its probe and alleged tampering of evidence including call data records (CDRs) of key accused and Sardha group CMD Sudipta Sen and Debjani Mukherjee. The court, which had earlier directed CBI

Director to file an affidavit giving details about the alleged contempt committed by West Bengal cops and others in the case, perused the reply of the CBI chief and the fresh status report, pertaining to quizzing of Kumar.

“We have gone through your (CBI’s) status report. There are something very very serious,” the Bench said.

The Bench asked Attorney General KK Venugopal, representing CBI, to file an appropriate application as it cannot pass any order on the prayers as they were part of the sealed cover report to which the other side has no access.

“File an application or an affidavit, if you want to press for your reliefs. We cannot act unilaterally and the other side has to be heard,” the bench said. “We are not passing any order. File an application and give the other side an opportunity to reply,” the Bench said. Senior advocate AM Singhvi, appearing for West Bengal officials, opposed the liberty being granted to CBI to file an application against Kumar.

“While considering the contempt matter, suppose some very very serious things come to our notice then, should we close our eyes to that,” the Bench said while asking CBI to file the fresh plea.

At the outset, Venugopal referred to the reply of the CBI Director and alleged that the West Bengal police has not been cooperating with the probe, providing incomplete and tampered with details to the probe agency.

He said the CDRs, provided by the state police, of the key accused to the CBI were matched with those provided by the mobile service providers and various discrepancies were found in them.

Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, also appearing for CBI, said that there has been serious breach of the apex court order asking State police to cooperate in the investigation.

POLITICS AND GOVERNMENT- DELHI

PIONEER, MAR 24, 2019

AAP Govt moves SC seeking larger Bench

The AAP Government on Monday moved the Supreme Court seeking constitution of a larger Bench to expeditiously decide the issue of control over administrative services in Delhi.

A Bench headed by Chief Justice Ranjan Gogoi told the Delhi Government counsel that it will look into the matter.

The apex court had on February 14 referred the issue of control of services to a larger Bench after delivering a split verdict.

The two-judge Bench had said the Centre should have the final word on posting and transfer of bureaucrats in the national Capital administration, but their disagreement on finer details resulted in a split verdict and the matter got referred to a larger Bench.

The Bench, which was called upon to decide on six vexatious issues pertaining to a long-running feud between the Central and the national Capital Governments, had given a unanimous verdict on the remaining five counts and had ruled that the Delhi Government's Anti-Corruption Branch (ACB) cannot probe the Centre's employees in corruption cases. Out of six contentions issues, the Delhi Government had won in three and lost to the Centre on two critical aspects of investigating power to

probe central government employees and for setting up of enquiry commissions.

While it left for a larger bench to conclusively decide who will have control over administrative services in the national Capital, the apex court had unanimously ruled that the power to appoint enquiry commissions would rest with the Centre as "there is no 'State Government' in the Union Territory and the State Government (for this purpose) shall mean the Central Government".

In its 202-page verdict, the court had, however, held that the elected Delhi Government will have the right to appoint public prosecutors, to decide land revenue matters and also to appoint or deal with electricity commission or board.

RESERVATION

HINDU, MAR 28, 2019

SC to hear pleas on 10% economic quota on April 8



The petitioners have claimed that economic reservation violates earlier Supreme Court judgments.

The Supreme Court on Thursday said it will hear pleas to step in before government bodies like the railways, one of the largest public sector employers, implements 10% economic quota to make "massive appointments".

Appearing before a Bench led by Justice S.A. Bobde, senior advocate Rajeev Dhavan, leading the arguments for petitioners led by NGOs like

Janhit Abhiyan and Youth for Equality, said the court should stay the implementation before it is too late to put the clock back.

"Massive appointments will take place... There is indeed a certain degree of concern. Railways have already indicated that it (10% economic quota) will be implemented," Mr. Dhavan submitted.

He indicated the government should not seem reluctant to address the issue whatever may be the outcome of the General elections. The need to address the after-effects of the economic reservation is urgent.

The court agreed to hear the petitions on Monday next. "You address the issue then," Justice Bobde addressed Mr. Dhavan. On March 11, another Bench led by Chief Justice Ranjan Gogoi had indicated the petitions may be sent to a Constitution Bench.

The court is concerned with Mr. Dhavan's argument that the economic reservation violates the 50% reservation ceiling limit fixed by a nine-judge Bench in the Indra Sawhney case. Further, the 1992 judgment had barred reservation solely on economic criterion.

In a 6:3 majority verdict, the apex court, in Indra Sawhney, held that "a backward class cannot be determined only and exclusively with reference to economic criterion".

"It may be a consideration or basis along with and in addition to social backwardness, but it can never be the sole criterion. This is the view uniformly taken by this Court..." Justice (retired) B.P. Jeevan Reddy wrote for the majority on the Bench. It had also capped reservation at 50%.

After a gap of 27 years, the Constitution (103rd Amendment) Act of 2019 has provided 10% reservation in government jobs and educational institutions for the "economically backward" in the unreserved category.

The Act amends Articles 15 and 16 of the Constitution by adding clauses empowering the government to provide reservation on the basis of economic backwardness. This 10% economic reservation is over and above the 50% reservation cap.

The government, in a recent affidavit, justified to the apex court that the 10% economic quota law was move towards a classless and casteless society.

The Centre said the amendments were in tune with past decisions of the Supreme Court which called for the “attainment of economic equality as the final and only solution to the besetting problems” of our country.

The Constitution (103rd Amendment) Act of 2019 was “necessitated to benefit the economically weaker sections of the society who were not covered within the existing schemes of reservation, which as per statistics, constituted a considerably large segment of the Indian population”.

The government said the law was meant to benefit a “large section of the population of 135 crore people” who are mostly lower middle class and below poverty line.

“Article 46 of the Directive Principles of State Policy commands that the State should promote with special care the educational and economic interests of the weaker section of the population and protect them from

social injustice. In the country's higher educational system, private unaided institutions play an important role providing education to over 1.34 crore students in various programmes. It is therefore essential that the socially and economically weaker section gets access to these facilities as mandated in the Constitution," the government justified.

TAXATION

HINDU, MAR 31, 2019

Govt extends PAN-Aadhaar linking deadline to September 30

However, it is mandatory to quote and link Aadhaar number while filing the return of income w.e.f. April 1, 2019

The government on Sunday announced that the deadline for the linking of Aadhaar with PAN has been extended to September 30, 2019.

Those looking to file their income tax returns on or after April 1, 2019 will still have to quote their PAN while doing so.

"It has been reported in some sections of the media that those PANs which are not linked with Aadhaar number by March 31, 2019 may be invalidated," the government said in a statement. "The matter has been considered by the Central government and now the cut-off date for intimating the Aadhaar number and linking PAN with Aadhaar is September 30, 2019 unless specifically exempted."

The statement added that the Aadhaar number should be quoted while filing income tax returns from April 1 onwards.

"Notwithstanding the last date of intimating/linking of Aadhaar Number with PAN being 30.09.2019, it is also made clear that w.e.f. 01.04.2019,

it is mandatory to quote and link Aadhaar number while filing the return of income, unless specifically exempted," the government said.

This is the sixth time the government has extended the Aadhaar-PAN linking deadline.

WATER RESOURCES

TELEGRAPH, MAR 24, 2019

The Brahmaputra as a new model of democracy and development

A river is a rite of passage, a flow of narrative few men understand. It connects past and present, upstream and downstream, links creation myths to everyday history. A river is a composite of time in a way Heraclitus did not understand. You cannot step into the same river twice because I am never one at any time. I am composite, a collage. I have no one form because I am so many incarnations. It is crucial to understand the link between time and the river because I am not past, present or future. I am each of them and all of them simultaneously. It was Raimundo Panikkar in his *Rhythms of Being* who understood time and the river when he says this narrative does not take place in linear time but it is Kairological, I am simultaneously past, present and future. I only make sense in the simultaneity and multiplicity of time.

Unlike the Ganges, I am not Hindu. I am more a dialogue of religions, a mosaic of creation of myths. All religions from Buddhism to Hinduism to all the animisms treat me not as a possession but as a commons of imaginations. I am a perpetual combination of elements, both eternal and perennial. To recognize me you have to announce all the thousand names that I carry along. The very names testify to my diversity. I am Tsangpo, Narichu, Tanjoo Khampa, Tamyak, Sangchen, Chimbo, Siang

Dihang, Shyama, Sema, Singla, Tilao Taluk. To summon me you have to name me and in naming me you add to my diversity. Other rivers feel confused with a few names, but it's my diversity of names that makes me belong to all and no one. I am the Brahmaputra. I sometimes wonder why there is no Linguistic Survey of Rivers. As I flow, cascade, grumble, I become a thesaurus of words, a flow of imaginations. With my tributaries as dialects, I am a cornucopia of languages. I translate myself so I am, a perpetual flow of imaginations. Christian gods never understood language caught between monolingualism and monotheism. Their oneness distanced by the many, my oneness summons the many. I am multilingual, multicivilizational, multinational so that I am.

The river was nature's first novel feeding on folklore and myth. Even my colour has its own creation myths. My name is associated with the great sage Parasurama who, after committing matricide, washed his hands in my waters. Lohu is literally in the thick blood which stains me. More secularly, during the rains my waters have a ruddy tinge, because of a heavy sediment of red soil. My gender as one of few masculine rivers evokes my size, the masculinity of my currents; I am mammoth in size and gargantuan as an imagination. Yet for all my sacredness and masculinity, I lack the purity of the Ganges. I am more sacred for the tribals, for the ethnic communities. In many ways, I am a synecdochal river as my tributaries stand for me. There are a few creation myths about me in folk mythology, I am my tributaries. Part for whole, many instead of one, I command a different kind of comprehension, my tributaries helped to scale me. Thus, for all the tribals, I am a smaller river. I emerge more as a modest collection of folk tales than one dominant creation myth. I am the only river scaled down by folk tales to

the insanity of localities. A cascade of folk tales adds up the river of myth. I am a quilt patch of folk tales rather than one monstrous myth. There is a message there, the gods realizing my size scaled me down from one Aryan myth to a collection of local folklore. I become modest through my folk tales, more human as I flow through different localities. The modesty of my narrative has to be scaled up to sense the gargantuan power in me. It is a game gods play with rivers.

One of the biggest problems a river faces is not the people who live by it but those who study it. As Panikkar says, you live a myth. You take it for granted. Its familiarity is you. It is a horizon. Logos demands rationality, science and I always eluded the scientist as explorer. For him a river is landscape. It demands the contours of objectivity, history and measure. Explorers never understand a river; they only measure it. For them a river is not a labyrinth, a mystery, it is a puzzle which must be solved if I am to be left at peace. Orientalism, at least, left behind a sense of mystique while geography turned the river into an anatomy class, skeletal, vertebral and a trifle prosaic. Finding my origin is the stuff of a National Geographic class, the explorer bores me. Yet it creates the stuff of storytelling from James Hilton to the lost myths of Tibet. A confusion of geographers adds to the myth of the river. For the British I was an obsession. Controlling the Brahmaputra meant controlling the people who lived along the river. This idea that conquest and knowledge go together I find loathsome. They created their own chimeras, that the Brahmaputra originated in the tallest waterfall in the world. Geography fails as an attempt to sanitize myth; a river must be allowed to retain its riddles. A sense of the elusive is important for civilization.

I am surprised that people call Ganges a river. A river with 600 dams across it cannot be a river. It does not flow, it stumbles, as Swami Sanand, the one-time dean of civil engineering at IIT, Kanpur points out. A river needs to flow unimpeded, without the punctuation marks of pollution and progress. The Brahmaputra has to offer a new model of democracy and development.

There is one myth that India does not understand. If Ganges is a myth of unity, I the Brahmaputra, embody the polysemy of diversity. I am my 57 tributaries in the north bank and 33 on the south. As a highway of migration, I am a melting pot, not the way the Americans understand it. I am a multiplicity of races, tribes, ethnicities, ecologies. To talk about me you have to enact me, and in enacting me you enact the differences that make me. I am my differences. I offer no cheap consolations of unity or uniformity. You cannot map the ethnic migrations around me like geological layers. I am a fraternity of differences, dialogues, livelihoods, ecologies. Any river is a metaphor, I offer myself as a metaphor for India. In my differences I am. No national anthem, no myth of Ganges can capture that. As difference in motion I sustain myth while I create history. The Northeast is not a margin. It evokes the centrality, the power of a new myth of India which South Asia needs. To ask for less is to suffer for a rivulet of thought as the most gigantic of rivers flows by.

The author is an academic associated with Compost Heap, a network pursuing alternative imaginations

For Limited Circulation
