

Vol: 25 | No. 10 | October 2017 | ₹20

# OPINION EXPRESS

[www.opinionexpress.in](http://www.opinionexpress.in)

A MONTHLY NEWS MAGAZINE



## REVIVAL POSSIBLE?

**The decline of the grand old party of India is not in the interest of the country. It must go for collective leadership to fight back**



**BIPL**  
Balaji Infra Projects Limited

[www.balaji.co.in](http://www.balaji.co.in)



[www.dighiport.in](http://www.dighiport.in)

**EDITOR**

Prashant Tewari

**ASSOCIATE EDITOR**

Dr Rahul Misra

**POLITICAL EDITOR**

Prakhar Misra

**BUREAU CHIEF**

Gopal Chopra (DELHI), Diwakar Shetty (MUMBAI), Sidhartha Sharma (KOLKATA), Lakshmi Devi (BANGALORE), Divyash Bajpai (USA), KAPIL DUDAKIA (UNITED KINGDOM), Rajiv Agnihotri (MAURITIUS), Romil Raj Bhagat (DUBAI), Herman Silochan (CANADA), Dr Shiv Kumar (AUS/NZ)

**CONTENT PARTNER**

The Pioneer  
Pratham Pravakta

**LEGAL ADVISORS**

Vishnu Sharma Adv  
Vijai Krishna Adv

**MARKETING DIRECTOR**

Diwakar Shetty

**ADMINISTRATIVE DIRECTOR**

Amit Pandey  
Bal Mukund Gaur

**CORPORATE COMMUNICATION / PR**

Sanjay Mendiratta  
M M Upadhaya

**GRAPHICS & DESIGN**

Writeword Communications (Studio 8)

**PHOTOGRAPHER**

Ratan Shukla

**OVERSEAS MARKETING**

OEMCL Ltd (Mauritius), OEHCL Ltd (DUBAI)

**ADVERTISEMENT / CIRCULATION:**

**Delhi / NCR - Hemant Sharma:** D 239  
Defence Colony New Delhi 110024 INDIA  
Tel - 011 49060350

**Mumbai - Vijay Kalantri - Advisor:** New  
Excelsior BUILDING, 6th Floor, A.K. NAYAK  
MARG, Fort, MUMBAI - 400001 (INDIA).  
Phone: 91 - 22 - 22019265 / 22019160  
FAX : 91-22- 22019764 / 22019760

The magazine is published and printed by Rajiv Agnihotri for Opinion Express Communications & Entertainment Pvt Ltd, from Kumpu Graphic Press 2 Ashok Nagar, Lucknow & printed at Kumpu Graphic Press 2 Ashok Nagar, Lucknow - 226001 Tele : 91-522-4060880 & Nikhil Offset An ISO 9001 : 2008 Certified Company 223, DSIDC Complex, Okhla Industrial Area Phase - I, New Delhi - 110020 Tele : 91-26812316, 26810097, 26810458, FAX:91 45792362 E-Mail : nikhil223@yahoo.com, nikhilg91@gmail.com

**Registered Office:** OPINION EXPRESS HOUSE

24-A Clyde Road, Lucknow-226001 (India)  
Phone: 91-522-4060880  
Fax: 91-522-2208242 # 24x7  
mobility +91 9984437000  
email: info@opinionexpress.in

All disputes are subject to be under jurisdiction of courts in Delhi.

All content published may be subject to copyright, seek written permission to re-produce. Opinion Express is trade mark brand of Opinion Express Communications & Entertainment Private Limited.

## Congress is gradually evaporating from the Indian political scene

**A** genuine center-left national opposition party like the Congress is crucial to the health of our democracy but Congress party is hell bent on self destruction to offer power on platter to BJP. When Prime Minister Narendra Modi, on his campaign trail called for a 'Congress-mukt' Bharat, probably even he didn't imagine that we would be here so soon. The Congress now has just 10 per cent of the seats in the Lok Sabha and rules just 7 per cent of the country at the state level. I do believe however, that a genuine center-left national opposition party is a key to the health of our democracy. For decades after formal independence in 1947, Congress completely dominated the Indian political stage at the national and state levels. Until it was ousted in 1996, the party had held office continuously at the national level with the exception of two three-year terms. Today, the party is shadow of its former self. Its claims to stand for the interests of the masses are in tatters and its bases of support are rapidly dwindling.



The Indian National Congress is a "sinking ship"; many of us have heard that by now. Yet it's a bit astonishing to think how far the political party has fallen. After all, until recently the history of Congress ran almost in parallel with the history of India itself, to an extent where the line between these histories seemed blurred. Leaders of Congress were the leaders of India and a large part of the Indian Freedom Movement owed its existence to this "grand old party," which was not just a political party, but an umbrella organization where different schools of thought used to co-exist together.

From Gandhi to Jinnah, from Nehru to Bose, from Tilak to Gokhale, Congress itself contained people poles apart from each other ideologically. And yet it not only remained as one party, but went on to define the political system itself in India, leading Dr. Rajani Kothari to coin the term "Congress System." The organizational structure of Congress was so deep-rooted and entrenched that it reached to the grassroots level, to the last man, as a part of Gandhian idealism. But Congress couldn't uphold these ideals of working on the ground for as long as the people of India hoped it would. Much of Congress' dominance at the center as well as the state level was due to the fact that people voted in the name of Congress, which had won freedom for the country. People felt almost indebted to the party and continued to bring them back to power in the hope that Swarajya (self-rule) would actually be realized on the ground and the days of Ram Rajya (the idyllic rule of Rama), which Gandhi used to mention in his speeches and writings, would come. People waited for years, but neither Swarajya nor Ram Rajya came about. Instead, the people realized, nepotism and corruption were increasing day by day in the political system. It was not Ram Rajya, but the Raaj of one family — the Gandhi family. The family alone accounts for three prime ministers, who ruled the country for around 37 years, between 2004 to 2014 another ten years of governance in the 21st century was also largely led by the Gandhi-Nehru dynasty.

Surely just blaming Sonia and Rahul Gandhi is unjustified; the entire Congress leadership must take responsibility for pushing incompetent leadership of mother & son leading to a historic collapse of the iconic party in General Election 2014. The Congress has been hijacked by Sonia Gandhi with her certain cronies since 1999 – the intra party elections were ignore and AICC / PCC sessions never took place as per the original constitution of the party. It is a pity that certain section in the Congress party has the moral courage to push for Rahul and Priyanka leadership despite availability of very competent senior leaders in the party. This physiological fear and extreme sycophancy of all experienced leaders will put anybody to shame. Two former Congress Prime Minister late PV Narsimha Rao and Dr Manmohan Singh has successfully demonstrated that they can run the system better than Sonia and Rahul but Congressmen have to believe the fact that party can be run successfully without Gandhi family or the figure of 44 seats will further go down in General Elections 2019.

—Prashant Tewari, Editor-in-Chief

OCTOBER 2017

COVER STORY

## What After Disaster?

Will Congress Grow if Rahul Gandhi Steps Down?

**P 6-19**



**20** Take reform to fuel

**23** Booster Shot

**28** Weathering out the weather catastrophes

**33** Public service and the Pravasi

**40** Cybercity, a vision of Africa's 'smart' future?

**44** Re-assessing the legacy of pv narasimha rao



Tesla Model 3 India launch and price

**P 50**



**P 47**

MUGHAL-E-AZAM ICONIC ON STAGE TOO



# India exposes Pak

## Pakistan cuts a sorry figure at the UN as its ploy to tarnish India through a fake picture gets exposed

OE News Bureau

India exposed Pakistan at the United Nations saying it has callously exploited the picture of an injured Palestinian girl to spread falsehoods about India and divert attention from Islamabad's role as the hub of world terrorism. Paulomi Tripathi, a First Secretary in India's UN Mission, held up the photograph of the body of Lt. Umar Faiyaz, a young soldier from the Indian state of Kashmir who was tortured and killed by Pakistan-backed terrorists, surrounded by mourners, and a picture of Palestinian girl claiming she was Kashmiri.

Tripathi told the Assembly the photograph of Faiyaz "is a true picture" and it "reflects the real pain inflicted by the nefarious designs of Pakistan on India," contrasting it with the fake picture used by Lodhi on Saturday while reacting

to External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj.

The picture of the injured girl that Lodhi displayed was that of Rawya Abu Jom'a taken in July 2014 and published by The New York Times in March 2015 under the caption, "Conflict, Courage and Healing in Gaza," Tripathi pointed out. Caught using a fake picture, a Pakistani diplomat made the bizarre statement that "backing up debates with pictures has backfired" on India while responding to Tripathi.

Tipu Usman, a Counsellor at the Pakistani Mission, told the Assembly, "India is seeking to hide behind a picture."

Asked at his daily briefing if the President of the General Assembly (PGA), Miroslav Lajcak could do anything about fake pictures being used at the Assembly as was done by Lodhi,

his spokesperson Brian Varma said, "I don't think the PGA has a role, but I will look into it."

Tripathi held up both pictures and directed attention to the photograph of the Indian soldier and said, "This is a real picture and not a fake picture of Lt. Umar Faiyaz. A young officer from the Indian State of Jammu and Kashmir, Umar Faiyaz was kidnapped at a wedding reception. He was brutally tortured and killed by Pakistan-supported terrorists in May 2017."

"This is a true picture," she said. "It portrays a harsh reality. A picture of terror emanating from across our borders that the people of India, especially in the Jammu and Kashmir have to struggle with everyday."

"This was the reality that the Permanent Representative of Pakistan sought to obfuscate," Tripathi said.



# What After Disaster?

The decline and decay of the Congress Party is a national disaster. Only collective leadership can revive the grand old party



By Prakhar Prakash Misra

**F**or decades after formal independence in 1947, Congress completely dominated the Indian political stage at the national and state levels. Until it was ousted in 1996, the party had held office continuously at the national level with the exception of two terms collectively expanding over three years. Today, the party is a shadow of its former self. Its claims to stand for the interests of the masses are in tatters and its bases of support are rapidly dwindling.

The Indian National Congress is a “sinking ship”; many of us have heard that by now. Yet it’s a bit astonishing to think how far the political party has fallen. After all, until recently the history of Congress ran almost in parallel with the history of modern India itself, to an extent where the line between these histories seemed blurred. Leaders of Congress were the leaders of India and a large part of the Indian Freedom Movement owed its existence to this “grand old party,” which was not just a political party, but an umbrella organization where different schools of thought used to co-exist together.

From Gandhi to Jinnah, from Nehru to Bose, from Tilak to Gokhale, Congress itself contained people poles apart from each other ideologically. And yet it not only remained as one party, but went on to define the political system itself in India, leading Dr. Rajani Kothari to coin the term “Congress System.” The organizational structure of Congress

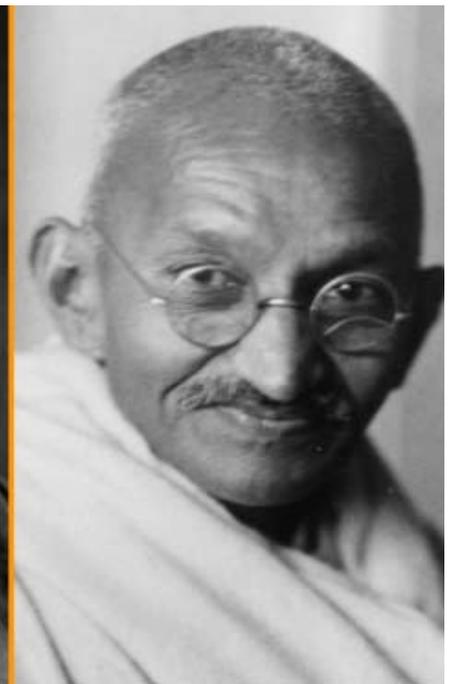
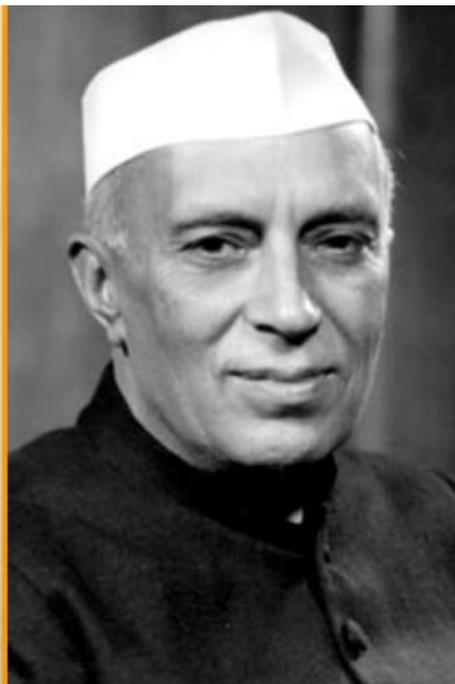
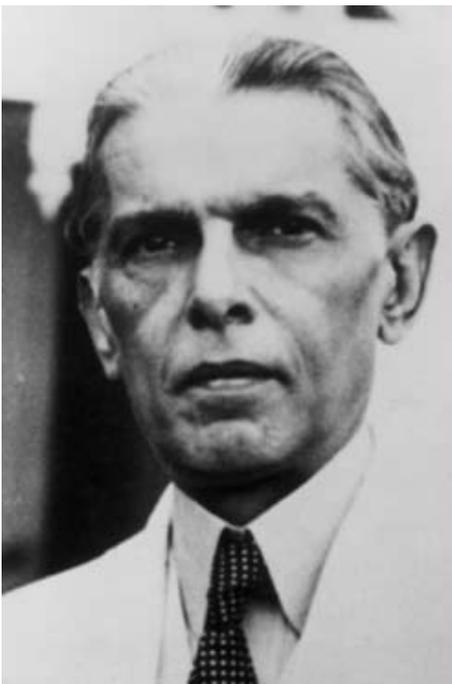


From Gandhi to Jinnah, from Nehru to Bose, from Tilak to Gokhale, Congress itself contained people poles apart from each other ideologically. And yet it not only remained as one party, but went on to define the political system itself in India, leading Dr. Rajani Kothari to coin the term “Congress System.”

was so deep-rooted and entrenched that it reached to the grassroots level, to the last man, as a part of Gandhian idealism.

But Congress couldn’t uphold these ideals of working on the ground for as long as the people of India hoped it would. Much of Congress’ dominance at the center as well as the state level was

due to the fact that people voted in the name of Congress, which had won freedom for the country. People felt almost indebted to the party and continued to bring them back to power in the hope that Swarajya (self-rule) would actually be realized on the ground and the days of Ram Rajya (the idyllic rule of Rama), which Gandhi used to mention in his





speeches and writings, would come.

People waited for years, but neither Swarajya nor Ram Rajya came about. Instead, the people realized, nepotism and corruption were increasing day by day in the political system. It was not Ram Rajya, but the Raaj of one family — the Gandhi family. The family alone accounts for three prime ministers, who ruled the country for around 37 years, while another 10 years of governance in the 21st century was also largely led by the Gandhi-Nehru dynasty.

Despite the challenges, Indira Gandhi, who was mockingly referred to as “Goongi Gudiya,” emerged as a strong and decisive leader, under whose leadership India won a decisive war against Pakistan in 1971. The war resulted in Congress reclaiming its place as the most dominant player in the Indian political system, so much so that its power became increasingly unchecked. In a democracy, a government with unchecked power is quite problematic.

India belatedly learned this lesson. At midnight on June 26, 1975, an emergency was proclaimed in the country by her government, thereby suspending all democratic rights of the people and concentrating all the power in the hands of Indira Gandhi. This was done to subvert the decision given against Indira Gandhi by the Allahabad High Court Bench in the case of fraudulent electoral practices in the 1971 elections. The emergency was the darkest period in India’s independent history. The gov-

---

Despite the challenges, Indira Gandhi, who was mockingly referred to as “Goongi Gudiya,” emerged as a strong and decisive leader, under whose leadership India won a decisive war against Pakistan in 1971. The war resulted in Congress reclaiming its place as the most dominant player in the Indian political system, so much so that its power became increasingly unchecked.

---



ernment had become authoritarian; the opposition was decimated as most political opponents were put behind bars;

the press was under extreme censorship.

The 21-month emergency proved to



be costly for Congress. In the 1977 elections, for the first time, a non-Congress government was formed at the center. Though, the new government, led by Morarji Desai, couldn't stay in power for the full five years, the period was definitely a paradigm shift in Indian politics. Both people and political parties started believing that there could be an alternative to the Congress. However, it took another two decades after the Janata government for a non-Congress party (this time the BJP) to come to power and stay for a full five-year term.

In 2004, Congress made a comeback again in quite an astonishing fashion by defeating the incumbent BJP in power. Congress would spend the next decade fully in control of India's central government. This decade, especially the second half, was marred by corruption. Telecom, railways, coal, land, sports, and various other ministries saw their names tarred under charges of corruption. Popular resentment against the regime grew prevalent among the public due to the increasing corruption within the government and the party's inability to take any affirmative action against it. Then-Prime Minister Manmohan Singh was largely seen as a weak leader, who couldn't take tough action against corrupt members within his party and government.

As a result, the party lost pathetically in the 2014 general elections, where

---

**In 2004, Congress made a comeback again in quite an astonishing fashion by defeating the incumbent BJP in power. Congress would spend the next decade fully in control of India's central government. This decade, especially the second half, was marred by corruption.**

---





it won only 44 seats in the Lok Sabha out of the 543 up for grabs — an all-time low. Since then, the party still hasn't settled into a new role. It has been losing election after election across many states in India. The most notable recent loss came from Uttar Pradesh, the most populated state in India, where the party got just seven seats in an assembly of 403 seats.

Most political observers are of the opinion that Congress lacks a genuine mass leader, of which it used to have in dozens in its glory days. The vice president of the party, Rahul Gandhi, has been somewhat seen as a reluctant politician due to his lack of leadership skills and his inability to win elections. To sum up, the Congress has lost its sheen and doesn't look to be in a position to even pose a challenge to the current BJP regime in the 2019 general elections. If they manage to do so, the party would be pulling a rabbit out of a hat!

Worryingly, the demise of Congress means the demise of a balanced political system in India. Congress and the

---

Most political observers are of the opinion that Congress lacks a genuine mass leader, of which it used to have in dozens in its glory days. The vice president of the party, Rahul Gandhi, has been somewhat seen as a reluctant politician due to his lack of leadership skills and his inability to win elections.

---

BJP, the two most dominant powers, used to balance off each other in Indian politics. With this balance lost, the earlier Congress System is being replaced by a newly emergent "BJP System."

In the upcoming elections, Congress is not expected to make any significant gains, despite growing hostility to the NDA government's program of economic restructuring, which has led to a widening gulf between rich and poor. The failed demonetization decision of Modi government and poor GST implementation has dented the economic

growth in India. The 2% GDP is wiped out due to faulty economic policies of the government. Despite this economic debacle, according to the London-based Economist magazine, even Congress party strategists say the maximum it can achieve is around 90-105 [seats] in 2019. The party could, however, do considerably worse. It is likely to be routed in state elections this year in Himanchal Pradesh, Gujrat & Karnataka, last few Congress ruled states except Gujrat.

Now, however, Congress is desperate for partners and in last election has

accepted a subordinate status in several key states. In its alliance with the Rastriya Janatha Dal (RJD) in Bihar, Congress had to be satisfied with just four of the state's 40 seats in the national parliament far less than the 14 it had demanded. Congress has also forged alliances in Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra and Tamil Nadu. But in the most populous state, Uttar Pradesh, Congress is on ventilator seeking external life support from either Bahujan Samaj Party or Samajwadi Party to survive. Currently, Congress only holds two of the state's 80 seats. In West Bengal, Mamta has virtually hijacked the original Congress party leav-

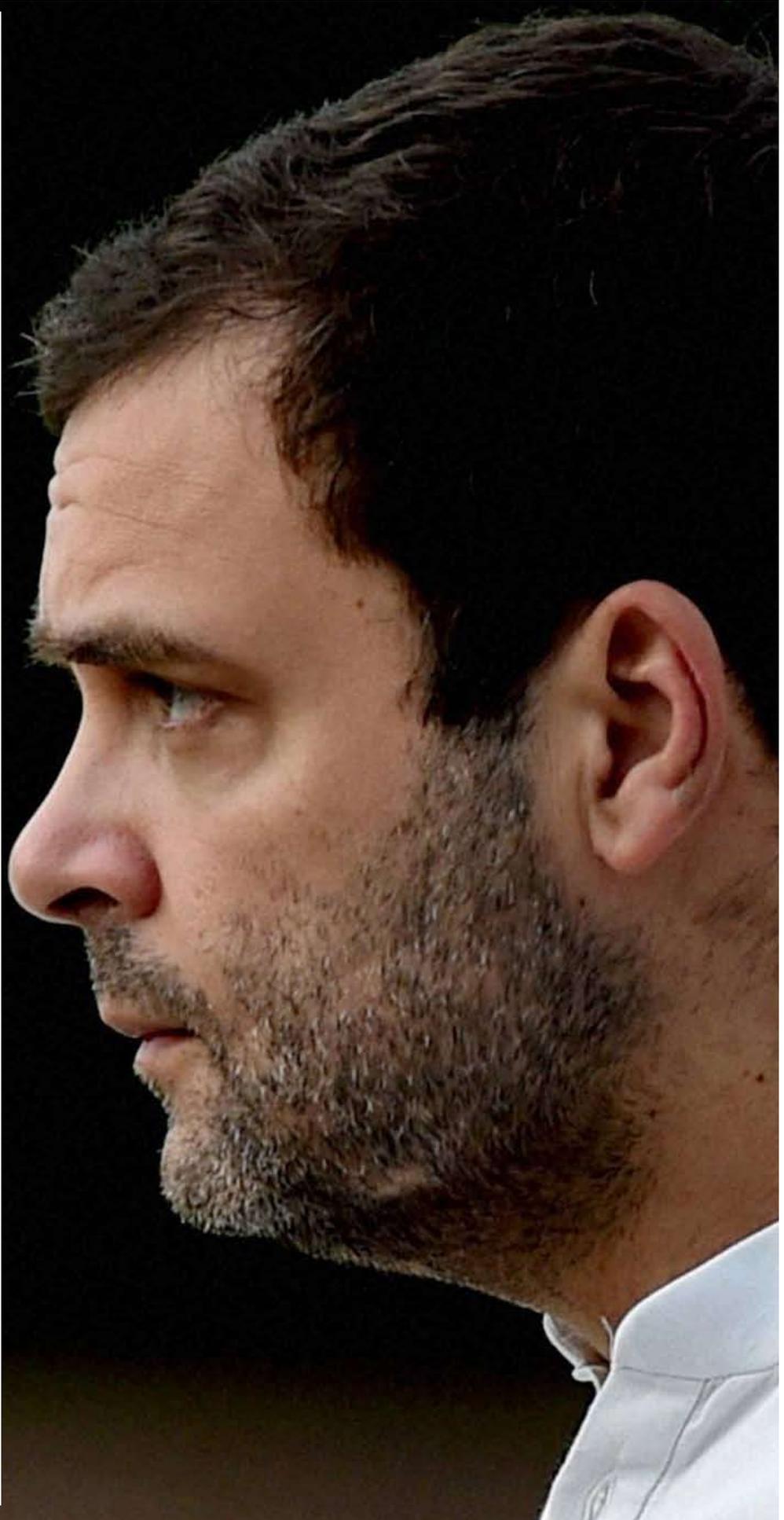
---

Currently, Congress only holds two of the state's 80 seats. In West Bengal, Mamta has virtually hijacked the original Congress party leaving nothing for the grand old party.

---

ing nothing for the grand old party. Today Congress will be approaching General Elections 2019 without any presence in U.P. ( 80 seats ) Bihar ( 40 seats ), West Bengal ( 42 seats ) T.N. ( 39 seats ) & A.P. ( 27 seats ), surely with almost 50% unrepresented seats, Congress can't do miracle in rest of the seats to win with a conversion ration of 100%.

Nothing underscores the party's bankruptcy more than its dependence on the Nehru-Gandhi dynasty. Not only has Sonja Gandhi, the Italian-born widow of assassinated prime minister Rajiv Gandhi, been pressed into leading the party, but her two children have also been enlisted in the campaign.



Her son Rahul is standing as the Congress candidate in the Uttar Pradesh seat of Amethi since 2004, in an effort to lift the party's standing in that state. His sister Priyanka is also campaigning prominently in the seat.

The party's tenuous links to the leaders of the anti-colonial movement Mahatma Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru are all that remain of its claims to represent the interests of the working masses of India. Congress was always a party of the Indian bourgeoisie, which ensured that the vast movement against the British rule never threatened private property and became the means for securing its own privileged position. At the same time, through its leadership of the anti-colonial opposition, Congress established deep political roots and a reputation as a party of progressive change that enabled it to dominate the political stage after the end of the British rule.

Congress's ability to maintain its increasingly tarnished image was a prod-

---

The party's tenuous links to the leaders of the anti-colonial movement Mahatma Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru are all that remain of its claims to represent the interests of the working masses of India. Congress was always a party of the Indian bourgeoisie, which ensured that the vast movement against the British rule never threatened private property and became the means for securing its own privileged position.

---

uct of the peculiar global economic and political conditions that followed World War II. Successive Indian governments were able to maintain a highly regulated national economy, based on import substitution, and make limited concessions to workers and the oppressed masses. In the context of the Cold War, Congress leaders were able to balance between Washington and Moscow, and

with the assistance of the Stalinist bureaucrats, posture as anti-imperialists. India was one of the leaders of the so-called non-aligned movement.

However, in the 1980s and 1990s, the processes of globalization undermined all forms of national economic regulation the sharpest expression being the collapse of the Soviet Union. The impact was no less profound in







India where, in the early 1990s, the Congress government of Prime Minister Narasimha Rao initiated the first stage of market reforms and opened up the country's huge reserves of cheap labour to foreign investors. While a layer of business and the middle class benefitted, the economic restructuring resulted in savage attacks on the living standards of the working class and oppressed masses. The mounting resentment was the main reason for the party's defeat in the 1996 elections.

**No alternative to the BJP:** While it capitalized on the disaffection with Congress, the BJP has implemented the same programme of restructuring since 1998. Foreign investors have exploited India's supplies of low-cost, educated, English-speaking labour to create a range of computing, research and office services, and produce a spurt of growth that has benefitted layers of the Indian middle class. The BJP election campaign in 2004 has centred on a government-funded "India Shining"

---

**While a layer of business and the middle class benefitted, the economic restructuring resulted in savage attacks on the living standards of the working class and oppressed masses. The mounting resentment was the main reason for the party's defeat in the 1996 elections.**

---

media blitz designed to portray the party as bringing India economic growth and international recognition.

The slick media campaign glosses

over the fact that the government's economic policies have led to a widening of the deep social divide between the rich and the vast majority of the population who remain mired in poverty. In seeking to attack the BJP's record, Congress faces a fundamental problem: its policies are no different from those of the government. As a result, its campaign is fraught with contradictions: Congress attempts to convince big business of its ability to continue the open market agenda, while trying to dupe the masses with empty promises to improve their living standards.

**Thus the party's election manifesto boasts:** It is the Congress that launched liberalisation and economic reforms. It is the Congress's policies that made India the world's fourth largest economy by 1998. Moreover, it promises to provide further financial incentives for private investors and to streamline the system for approving foreign investment by making it more transparent.

**Parcel Now**

WORLDWIDE

INNOVATE . DELIVER . HAPPINESS

## BENEFITS & FEATURES

- ➔ Door to Door Delivery
- ➔ Affordable Prices
- ➔ Cater to 205 locations world wide
- ➔ RFID Based Tracking
- ➔ Convenience & Delight
- ➔ Social Security
- ➔ GPS Based Pickup
- ➔ Paperless Transactions
- ➔ Global/Domestic Delivery Network
- ➔ One Stop e-Logistics Solution



 7353373533

[www.ParcelNow.com](http://www.ParcelNow.com)  
[contact@parcelnow.com](mailto:contact@parcelnow.com)

# WILL CONGRESS GROW IF RAHUL GANDHI STEPS DOWN?

Sinking Congress awaits coronation of inaccessible RaGa to survive and challenge Modi

**W**ill he? Won't he? Once, that million-dollar question used to be aimed at Prince Charles, heir-in-waiting to the British throne for the last 65 years. But with many more heirs now in line for what is largely a titular position, the old question has become largely academic. The more crucial question that begs an answer concerns India's erstwhile 'first family', the Gandhis. What the nation really wants to know is when the 46-year-old Rahul

Gandhi will formally take over the reins of the 132-year-old Congress party from his ailing mother Sonia.

Rahul's uninformed spin doctors try and routinely spoon-feed the media with some titbits about his imminent coronation. But with the young Gandhi more conspicuous by his absence than his accomplishments, it's difficult to take those pronouncements seriously. Because, truth be told, neither the active nor inactive members of the coun-

try's second-largest political party know when they will get a fully functional chief. Only the occupants of 10, Janpath are privy to that secret.

It's been seven years since the Congress last held formal elections to choose office-bearers at the central and state levels. Sonia took over as AICC president in 1998 after unceremoniously booting out Sita Ram Kesari in a mid-day coup. She was re-elected in 2001 and 2005. She became party pres-





ident for the fourth time in 2010, and has remained boss since. Fresh elections were due in 2015, but didn't happen. Recently, the Election Commission served the Congress a final warning to hold organisational elections by July 15, 2017, or face the possibility of losing recognition.

Since the Congress has survived under a Gandhi banner for over four decades, this is perhaps the last opportunity for the family to prove its political utility and acceptability. Many fair-weather leaders are already hopping off the sinking ship, and the family is under tremendous pressure to stop the party spinning out of its control. Survival lies in forcing Rahul to pull it out of the dangerously choppy sea. But the question being asked by both old and new Congress leaders and elitist opinion makers is this: Forget capturing power from the Mighty Modi within the next decade, can a Gandhi (Rahul) even drum up a credible opposition to him?

Sonia pushed Rahul into politics and asked him to contest Lok Sabha elections in 2004. He has won from Amethi thrice since then. But the inheritor-in-waiting still needs to erase the public impression of him as a part-time, re-

---

## Since the Congress has survived under a Gandhi banner for over four decades, this is perhaps the last opportunity for the family to prove its political utility and acceptability.

---

luctant leader who performs more vanishing acts than Houdini. As the target of a powerful section of the 'liberal and secular' media who hold him responsible for the rise of Hindutva and its icons in India, Rahul also needs to prove that the Congress is not an ideology whose time has gone but, instead, an idea that can never die.

Rahul was appointed party vice-president in 2013 so that he could lead the party during the 2014 Lok Sabha elections and eventually replace his ailing mother. He was billed as the youngest challenger to Narendra Modi's bid for power, but the truth is his road

shows and rallies delivered fewer seats than the public meetings that he addressed with his mother.

And that could be one of the reasons for delaying the transition from one Gandhi to another. If Sonia could be credited for bringing Congress back into power twice, Rahul has been held responsible for the party's plummeting acceptability in various parts of the country. During the past decade, the Congress has shrunk from controlling two-thirds of the country to less than one-fourth. Even if Rahul does take charge of the organisation, it is going to be a daunting task to put life into an outfit that's gasping for breath.

Consider, for one, the average age of the party office-bearers and other functionaries. They could be competing with the Congress itself. Rahul is the only office-bearer who is under 50. And he's expected to work with a team that's almost double his age. The average age of the 35-member Congress Working Committee, including special invitees, is 73. While 23 (over 50 per cent) are above 70, eight are between the age of 60 and 70. The average age of the six Congress chief Ministers is 72-plus. It is the vice-like group of this generation

that prevents GenNext from taking an active part in running the party affairs.

The old brigade's loyalty to Sonia wins them her protection but the truth is they aren't capable of winning any election or ensuring the party's victory even in their own states.

The debacle in Manipur and Goa, where they couldn't form the government despite getting the largest number of seats, reveals the weakness of the party machinery. A section of the Congress laid the blame on Rahul's doorstep for his inaccessibility. But it also reflects the weakening of the statecraft for which the Congress was famous in the past. For the past few years, the party has been torn between two centres of power. In the absence of a defined role, most of the established leaders in many states have left the Congress and joined the BJP. In fact, some former Congressmen have even contributed to the impressive victory of the saffron party.

At the moment the Congress without a Gandhi is a film without a macho hero. To win at the box office, it has to reinvent and repackage Rahul as a hero who can attract and retain audiences. For that, the young man needs to create his own Congress, much as his grandmother and uncle Sanjay Gandhi did in the early '70s, and his father did in the '80s. Most of the infirmities affecting the Congress today stem from the fact that Sonia didn't create her own Con-

---

**The old brigade's loyalty to Sonia wins them her protection but the truth is they aren't capable of winning any election or ensuring the party's victory even in their own states.**

---

gress, one that would work with her for the success of the dynastic succession.

In India, elections are won if a party has the lethal combination of an appealing Neta (leader) and Nara (slogan). At the moment, the Congress has neither. Instead, it's like an Ambassador car that had to be put to sleep because it couldn't reconstruct its contours or engine to keep up with the competition. Rahul needs to redesign his vehicle of growth and to rebuild it with his team, from the chassis up. But, first, he needs to replace his 'Just Visiting' hat with an 'On Duty' one.

For the past two years, Congress lost badly in Assam, Kerala, Tamil Nadu and West Bengal. The defeats bring the debate over Rahul's leadership. Even though, he has not been made the president of Congress party, everyone knows

that Rahul Gandhi takes the final decision in party.

In politics, it is very important to handle leaders. We see many leaders growing from a region. There will be competition among themselves and at the end, party suffers due to in fights. So it is very important for party head to manage them. Rahul Gandhi has failed in this aspect. In Assam, for instance, his insistence on letting Tarun Gogoi run the state and promote his son as the heir is one of the major reasons behind the party's predicted loss. In the 2011 elections, party leader Himanta Biswa Sarma had proved his credentials as a worthy successor to Gogoi. Rahul ended up thwarting Sarma's ambition and creating conditions for his exit from the Assam unit leading to disastrous electoral consequences.

The infighting in Congress members in Arunachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand have also proved Rahul's weak leadership. Already Congress has lost assembly elections in states like Andhra Pradesh and Maharashtra due to infighting.

It looks like Sonia Gandhi is suffering from Dhritrashtra syndrome. Just like how Dhritrashtra had blind love on his son Duryodhana, Sonia Gandhi's blind love on son Rahul Gandhi may prove costly for Congress. Many top leaders have expressed their dissatisfaction with Rahul to Sonia, however





Sonia Gandhi has given no needs to it and is supporting her son.

A section of Congress believes that Rahul Gandhi's younger sister Priyanka Gandhi should enter politics. Priyanka has campaigned for her mother and brother in past. However she has not been actively involved in party. Party cadres feel Priyanka is better candidate than Rahul Gandhi for leadership. Priyanka seems to have the charm of her grand mother Indira Gandhi. However some party members close to Rahul are against Priyanka becoming the leader. Irony is that people of India are fed up with Dynastic politics and want an experienced team Congress man with good image to lead Congress in next Lok Sabha elections. With the exit of competent leaders namely Pranab Mukherjee, Hansraj Bharadwaj, SM Krishna, late Janki Patnayak, ND Tiwari, late SC/VC Shukla brothers, late Karunakaran, Jaffer Sharif – the void will be difficult to bridge. The present congress leadership has Rahul Gandhi, P Chidambaram, Kapil Sibal, Kamal Nath, Meera Kumar, Anand Sharma, Capt Amrinder Singh, Salmann Khursheed, Ashok Chauhan but the million dollar question is the leader? Who will challenge Narendra Modi in 2019 elections?

Looks like BJP's main campaign of "Congress Mukta Bharath" will soon become a reality. Congress has a government in only one big state of Karnataka. Congress has lost power in almost all other big states. If the party does not

## A section of Congress believes that Rahul Gandhi's younger sister Priyanka Gandhi should enter politics. Priyanka has campaigned for her mother and brother in past.

wake up now, it is sure that the 130-year-old party will collapse further.

Political analysts feel that Rahul Mukta Congress is the only option left for Congress now. Rahul should step down from top post at least temporarily and work for the development of his constituency Amethi. He must keep on pushing the work and legacy of the two tallest Congress leaders namely Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru and Indira Gandhi repeatedly to bring back Congress at the central mainstream of Indian politics. Off course, a collective experience set of Congress leaders must unite to flight the battle with the mighty election machine of Modi Shah combo backed up by RSS. With over 70 years of governing experience including some of the current Congress leaders alive of Indira Gandhi era, no party in India can claim to possess rich and varied talent that INC boast off yet there is a complete vacuum of lead-

ership in the party today. The principle reason of the decay in Congress party is the monopoly of a family that has lost confidence of the masses. Surely, Pundit Nehru and Indira Gandhi were legends and Rahul Gandhi was charismatic to attract voters but Sonia Gandhi and Rahul Gandhi just are not full time politicians. Experienced Congress man must take over the party. It's high time Congress learns from it's past mistakes. Congress is losing it's vote bank to non-BJP parties like JDU, SP, BSP, AAP and RJD. If Congress has to survive, they will have change their style as soon as possible. Party must promote internal democracy, hold regular AICC and plenary sessions, CWC and CPP leaders must be elected by AICC / PCC members, empower state leadership and promote independent PCC structure, work at DCC level by giving extra discretionary powers etc. Today, party is having no grassroots leadership, active cadre, healthy party structure, financial resources, and off course a charismatic leader to carry million of congress men in the next elections.

*(With inputs from various articles published in national and international media. Special thanks to Prashant Tewari Editor-in-Chief Opinion Express and Martand Jha, a junior research fellow at the School of International Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, Delhi)*

# Take reform to fuel

Prices of petrol and diesel will come down if states agree on a mechanism to levy GST for oil products

By Kirit Parikh

**F**uel price, petrol price hike, diesel price hike, indian express news. Apart from the central excise duty, the sale prices of diesel and petrol have increased because of the very high VAT rates imposed by the states.

Many questions are being asked about the consumer price of oil. Why is the price today the same as it was when the crude price was twice as high? Aren't the oil marketing companies (OMCs) making undue profits? Shouldn't they bear the cost of rise in international crude prices? It has been reported that the government has asked the OMCs

to absorb the increase in crude price and not pass it on to the consumers. Shouldn't the government reduce taxes so that consumer price does not change?

I believe that the increase in costs should not be borne by the OMCs but should be passed on to the consumers. The government has, over the years, moved to a policy of marked to market pricing and any backtracking on it is not desirable. It will send a wrong signal to the domestic and international investors that the government's policies are not stable; their perceived risk of investing in India would be higher. International investors have been concerned

about retrospective tax impositions, from which we are just getting out. Any backtracking on the policy could have serious consequences for investments in the economy. Besides, charging the right price to consumers creates incentives for efficiency and will facilitate our move to electric mobility.

Why is the sale price of oil as high as it was when the crude price was twice as high? During that time, the government used to subsidise consumers; the government, OMCs and upstream public sector oil companies were bearing the losses. The level of under-recoveries (the difference between sales realisation and cost of supply — which is the



---

The government has, over the years, moved to a policy of marked to market pricing and any backtracking on it is not desirable. It will send a wrong signal to the domestic and international investors that the government's policies are not stable; their perceived risk of investing in India would be higher.



subsidy to the consumers) over 2002-2003 to 2012-2013 was Rs 25,000 crore for petrol users and Rs 3,38,000 crore for diesel users. If the consumers got a bonanza then, they should not grudge a little extra revenue to the state. In any case, increase in the cost of diesel or petrol does not increase the revenue of the central government as the excise duty is specific, that is, it remains at the same level in rupee terms. Excise rate on diesel is Rs 17.33 per litre and on petrol it is Rs 21.48 per litre. Should the government lower these? I do not see why. It has subsidised consumers too long and there is no justification for doing so now.

There is, however, a case for adjusting the excise duty rates and make them equal for both diesel and petrol. This can be done in a way that does not change the excise duty revenue of the central government. It will increase the price of diesel by two per cent and reduce the price of petrol by six per cent. The benefits of doing this will be re-

---

**In any case, increase in the cost of diesel or petrol does not increase the revenue of the central government as the excise duty is specific, that is, it remains at the same level in rupee terms. Excise rate on diesel is Rs 17.33 per litre and on petrol it is Rs 21.48 per litre.**

---

duction in distortion, reduced demand for diesel, a fall in demand for diesel-driven vehicles, reduced air pollution, a fall in carcinogenic emissions and a decline in diesel imports. Of course, diesel users such as truckers, farmers, bus passengers and consumers will be affected. However, a recent study carried out at IRADe has shown the impacts to be miniscule and manageable. For example, truck freight rates may increase by one per cent, but the introduction of GST has reduced trucking costs substantially by eliminating the

wait at checkposts for levies such as octroi. A two per cent increase in diesel prices can be easily absorbed and no increase in goods distribution cost may be expected. Thus, there should be no increase in consumer price inflation.

Apart from the central excise duty, the sale prices of diesel and petrol have increased because of the very high VAT rates imposed by the states. These vary from state to state. Madhya Pradesh imposes a VAT rate of 40 per cent on petrol and 32 per cent on diesel. The lowest rates are in Mizoram: 20 per



Since VAT rates are ad valorem, that is, in percentage terms, they accentuate the difference created by excise duties. Thus, when the dealer price of diesel is Rs 30, the excise is Rs 17.33 and the dealer commission Rs 1.67, the cost for the state distributor would be Rs 49. Add to that 30 per cent VAT and the sale price becomes Rs 63.7 per litre ( $1.3 \times 49$ ), more than twice the cost without duty and tax.

cent on petrol and 12 per cent on diesel. Since VAT rates are ad valorem, that is, in percentage terms, they accentuate the difference created by excise duties. Thus, when the dealer price of diesel is Rs 30, the excise is Rs 17.33 and the dealer commission Rs 1.67, the cost for the state distributor would be Rs 49. Add to that 30 per cent VAT and the sale price becomes Rs 63.7 per litre ( $1.3 \times 49$ ), more than twice the cost with-

out duty and tax. Similarly, for petrol with a dealer cost of Rs 31 per litre, excise duty of Rs 21.48, dealer commission of Rs 2.52, and a VAT of 40 per cent, the sale price will be Rs 75.6 per litre — two and a half times the dealer cost.

Since the VAT rates are in percentage terms, whenever the cost of diesel or petrol increases, revenues of states go up. Thus, the states have a scope to reduce their VAT rates so that sale price

of petrol and diesel can be moderated.

Ideally, all states should have a uniform GST rate for diesel and petrol. The states insist on keeping diesel and petrol out of GST as they would suffer a huge reduction in their revenues — the tax on diesel and petrol constitutes the bulk of the revenues of many states. Even with a high GST rate of 32 per cent, the states' share of the tax would be around Rs 5 per litre. Today, however, they get as much as Rs 14 per litre of petrol and Rs 21 per litre of diesel. A mechanism needs to be developed to get the states to agree on the GST for petroleum products. Then the prices of diesel and petrol will come down dramatically.

Before agitating about petrol and diesel prices, the media and the Opposition need to understand the implications.

*(The writer is chairman, Integrated Research and Action for Development (IRADE) )  
Courtesy: The Pioneer*

# BOOSTER SHOT

What can be done to revive India's sluggish economic growth?  
Here's what five economists prescribe

By Mayank Jain

India's economic growth is slowing but can the government bring it back on track? This is what Finance Minister Arun Jaitley reportedly discussed with ministers and officials Tuesday evening. While a concrete plan to address the problem is apparently being developed with Prime Minister Narendra Modi's blessing, a section of the industry and many economists have criticised the government for not being prudent enough to read the distress signs and for treating the slowdown as temporary and transient.

The economy grew by a mere 5.7% in the quarter ended June 2017, extending the streak of falling growth to the sixth consecutive quarter. This has seemingly forced

The economy grew by a mere 5.7% in the quarter ended June 2017, extending the streak of falling growth to the sixth consecutive quarter. This has seemingly forced the government to go try and figure out what went wrong, and how it can be fixed.

- **Hike government spending**
- **Pour money into rural areas,**
- **Cut interest rates,**
- **Refrain from disruptive moves like demonetization**





the government to go try and figure out what went wrong, and how it can be fixed. Distress signals, though, had been flashing for a while: in the first quarter of this financial year, growth fell to 5.7% as against 7.9% in the same period last fiscal year.

All four contributors to economic growth – domestic consumption, foreign consumption or exports, private investment and government spending – are hit by the slowdown. In the first quarter of this fiscal year, domestic consumption fell to 6.66% as against 8.41% in the same period last fiscal; exports as a share of the Gross Domestic Product was down to 19% from 20%; and fixed capital formation decreased from about 31% of the GDP to 29.8%, signalling a slowdown in the industry as well.

As for reasons for this poor showing, Bharatiya Janata Party chief Amit Shah cited “technical reasons” while India’s Chief Statistician TCA Anant blamed destocking by industries in anticipation of the Goods and Services Tax.

Scroll.in spoke to some economists to get a sense of what the government

---

“The argument against fiscal spending is that it will be inflationary, ratings downgrade will happen, interest rates will go up, or debts could become unsustainable,” Ranade said, “but right now, the situation is very dire.”

---

can do to address concerns about the economy and spur growth. Here’s what they suggested.

### **Spend more and forget about ratings**

“The government needs to give economy an immediate boost and fiscal spending is the way to go about it without worrying too much about the consequences because economic growth is in doldrums,” said Ajit Ranade, chief economist at the Aditya Birla Group. Although the government has already spent much of its budgeted expenditure, he argued, it needs to spend more to spur investment and demand in the

economy to push up the growth numbers.

“The argument against fiscal spending is that it will be inflationary, ratings downgrade will happen, interest rates will go up, or debts could become unsustainable,” Ranade said, “but right now, the situation is very dire.”

“We need to do whatever it takes, at least in the short term,” he added. “We also need a weaker rupee; it [strong rupee] is hurting both the exports and the business. Imports are surging and they are eating into the domestic market share. We don’t need ratings, we need growth right now. Ratings are meaningless if you are not growing.”

## Cut interest rates, provide financing and stable business environment

Radhika Pandey, a consultant for the National Institute of Public Finance and Policy, said the key reason behind the slowdown is weak private investment. So, a steep rate cut in the benchmark lending rates is required to allow for monetary policy expansion. In simpler terms, the Reserve Bank needs to cut interest rates for banks, thereby making borrowing cheaper for the industry and spurring investment.

“High real interest rates do not augur well for private investments,” Pandey said. “Given the limited transmission of monetary policy there needs to be a steep cut to have a bearing on private investments.”

The government should also enable non-banking sources of funding for businesses. One of these is offshore rupee denominated borrowing, whereby a firm can borrow money from international markets in the Indian currency, thereby lowering the risk of currency volatility.

---

Pandey also argued for more certainty in the business environment and said businesses can do without shocks like demonetisation. “After demonetisation shock, there is an environment of uncertainty in the economy,” she said. “This inhibits announcement of new projects by the private sector. There should be an environment of certainty that no such disruptive moves would rock the economy in the near term.”

---

Pandey also argued for more certainty in the business environment and said businesses can do without shocks like demonetisation. “After demonetisation shock, there is an environment of uncertainty in the economy,” she said. “This inhibits announcement of new projects by the private sector. There should be an environment of certainty that no such disruptive moves would rock the economy in the near term.”

## Acknowledge the slowdown and spend on rural areas

“The economy is in collapse mode and the government needs to come out publicly and accept it first before trying to fix it,” said Himanshu, associate professor of economics, Jawaharlal Nehru University. “All major indicators point to a slowdown not seen in recent months, so there is something very structural about this and it can’t be solved immediately.”



Himanshu said the government needs to spend more on rural areas. Why? Increasing rural people's incomes can drive up the consumption demand, which in turn will boost the industry. "The best thing will be to spend more money on areas where the demand has slumped to create more demand," he said. "That would be in rural areas, construction sector and the unorganised sector."

He said the government has enough money for this kind of spending. All it requires is political will. "The government should not worry too much about fiscal space, they can definitely manage the fiscal space and spend more," he said. "Right now, one shouldn't be worrying about fiscal situation when the economy is getting into a mess.

"The government should not worry too much about fiscal space, they can definitely manage the fiscal space and spend more," he said. "Right now, one shouldn't be worrying about fiscal situation when the economy is getting into a mess.

Anything that creates more income in the rural areas can help India's growth story. It's not a rocket science."

### **Economy can't be fixed overnight, so don't do shock therapy**

Sunil Kumar Sinha, principal economist at the ratings agency India Ratings, warned that neither the private

sector nor the government can quickly drive up economic growth in the short term. So, the government would do well to see through its reforms agenda without getting distracted by calls from people worried about the state of the economy.

"One needs to have patience to see to it that this process doesn't get derailed, and more and more bad assets





“We certainly believe that we are in a slowdown mode since Q2FY17 and any slowdown that has been prolonged till Q1FY18 is technically not short-term in nature or even transient,” Ghosh wrote in a note published on September 19.

are resolved through reforms like the new bankruptcy law,” he said, adding that the government must adhere to its commitment to limit fiscal deficit to 3.2% of the GDP.

“The fiscal space is simply not available,” Sinha said. “Also, monetary space to really stimulate the economy is also very limited given that the RBI has reduced rates by 200 basis points since January 2015. I don’t see how we can make a difference in the short term to

accelerate the growth. On the contrary, they need not be too perturbed by the low rate of growth and keep taking steps to make economy more resilient and avoid steps like demonetisation. We are realising that without demonetisation, the growth situation would have been much better.”

### **Don’t chase ratings**

Soumya Kanti Ghosh, chief economic advisor to the State Bank of In-

dia, said India needs to stop chasing the “mirage of a ratings upgrade” and focus on spending more.

“We certainly believe that we are in a slowdown mode since Q2FY17 and any slowdown that has been prolonged till Q1FY18 is technically not short-term in nature or even transient,” Ghosh wrote in a note published on September 19. The government should continuously spend more without worrying much about fiscal deficit, he added, but it should keep its net borrowings in check. The note suggests that borrowing more through short-term instruments by the government along with a “concomitant decline in long term borrowings”.

“Honestly, let’s not chase the rating upgrade mirage,” the note concludes. “Remember India has had a solitary net rating upgrade in the last 25 years! Amusing, isn’t it?”

# WEATHERING OUT THE WEATHER CATASTROPHES

Mother Earth is facing its acutest phase of a 'forced metamorphosis' due to a human propelled climate change



By Deana Uppal

Rains battering Mumbai and devastating lives and livelihoods have raised a local administrative quandary but also have addressed a global one too. The weather catastrophes around the world have been wreaking havoc on mankind. While category 3+ storms continue to pound the Caribbean and East coast of the US, droughts have ravaged Australia- here at home an estimated 10 million have been adversely effected by the floods and incessant rains in central and North East India and landslides devastate the hilly states of Uttarakhand, Himachal and J and K. Painful as this grim scenario is, what makes it even more excruciating is attitude of the policy makers world wide which is palpably myopic and disastrous

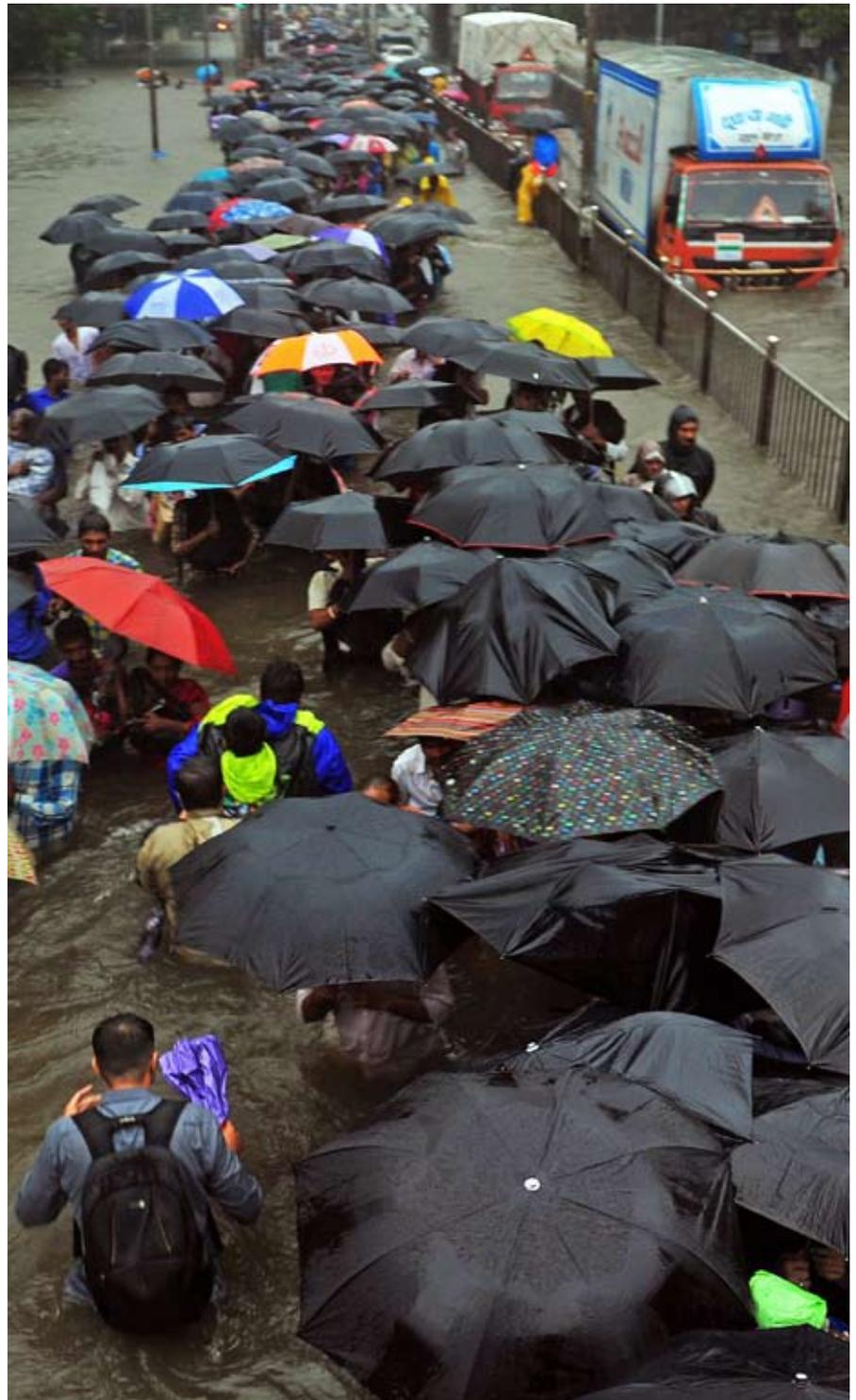
---

Mother Earth is facing its acutest phase of a 'forced metamorphosis' due to a human propelled climate change. The environment and the atmosphere have been altered critically to the point of no return and due to that the weather anomalies will continue to get severe each passing day.

---

when it comes to planning and execution. Mother Earth is facing its acutest phase of a 'forced metamorphosis' due to a human propelled climate change. The environment and the atmosphere have been altered critically to the point of no return and due to that the weather anomalies will continue to get severe each passing day. Mankind and all life forms will face the flak of these disruptions. The solution to this diabolical predicament has come in form of a feeble symptomatic response by mankind, which seems to be satisfactory only in digits but a disaster on ground.

We need a paradigm shift in our concept of development- a migration from the current anthropocentric model to an all encompassing and holistic one which treats the Earth and nature as living entities. Secondly eco- sensitive



zones should be identified across the globe and recognised as international heritages, and a no tolerance for human interruption policy should be followed in this zone. For example the higher zones of Himalayas, which are not only a magnet for the monsoon and thus control the weather of the entire subcontinent, but also are the fountain head of the rivers that nourish close to 1 billion people- should be declared a zone for no massive constructions. Thirdly a joint eco task force for the protection of the environment should be established by

all nations, with more teeth to this force than what the current conventions on climate change impart, because as per experts by 2025 the world would have more than a billion climate refugees. Lastly and most importantly a holistic environment education should be made compulsory in the schools, where the value of interconnectedness present in the web of life and how to protect and preserve it must be taught to the future generations

*(Writer is an Indo- British Model & Entrepreneur)*

# STRONG OFFICER AND SOFT GENTLEMAN

A legend in uniform and also out of it, Arjan Singh is an example well set and will remain an inspiration for the future generations.



**F**ourth generation in the defence forces, hero of seven wars, Indian Air Force (IAF) chief at a young age of 48, someone who gave away all his earnings worth Rs 2.5 crore in charity, mostly to widows of martyrs, three decades in uniform — god does not make a man like Arjan Singh anymore. When he walked into the sunset at the ripe old age of 98, he was as ramrod straight as he was all those decades back when he saved the crucial town of Akhnur from the Pakistanis to give India victory in the 1965 war. Called upon to foil Pakistan's Operation Grand Slam targeting Akhnur, and asked how long we would take to provide air support, he is famously said to have stated, "just give me an hour" and struck much within that time. Folklores around his flying manoeuvres are still the subject of discussion at the IAF table talks. To remain so relevant even after 48 years after retirement is a legend in itself.

Arjan Singh is one man who gave life some lessons all his own and inspired generations of our men in combat zones on how to be nonchalant with

## Obituary

raw courage, a trait he sported with elan all through his myriad missions. He was a soldier's soldier, a man with vision, propeller of team-ship and someone who was totally involved in the betterment of his juniors. During his tenure with the IAF which he joined as a tender 19-year-old from Lyalpur, he flew 60 different aircraft and has the singular distinction of having led the fly past on August 15, 1947, the day India got independence. Much of the credit of modernisation of the IAF and its cache of aircrafts and professional flyers goes to Singh. But even much after his retirement in 1969, this man of action but very few words lived a life well conducted. Ramrod straight till the last day, Singh was a long retired soldier who did not live just in memory but in classrooms of all the three Armed Force services as a warrior with a unique brand of bravery. Retirement saw him conducting the nation's business as Ambassador of Switzerland, Kenya and The Vatican. As Delhi's Lt Governor, he performed his civil duties with the gumption of a committed soldier. While Singh was a household name during the war days, it is astonishing how even 48 years after retirement he continues to



During his tenure with the IAF which he joined as a tender 19-year-old from Lyalpur, he flew 60 different aircraft and has the singular distinction of having led the fly past on August 15, 1947, the day India got independence. Much of the credit of modernisation of the IAF and its cache of aircrafts and professional flyers goes to Singh.

be widely known and the only "Marshal of the Indian Air Force". He matched his working distinctions with very many philanthropic activities which helped the needy. Not many may know, but he and his wife Teji who sadly passed away on his birthday six years ago, used up all their money to launch a special fund for wards of non-combatants of the IAF.

Indeed, a friend, philosopher guide, this officer and a gentleman! The saying goes: 'There are old soldiers, there are bold soldiers but there are no old bold soldiers.' He was an exception.

Indian forces are blessed to have a giant to draw inspiration and plan the strategic roadmap to secure our country from ever hostile global environment.

# OUR OWN WTC

World-class trading centre to come up at Nauroji Nagar soon

By SS Nagar

The national Capital will have a state-of-the-art World Trade Centre soon. The Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (HUA)'s engineering and construction wing National Buildings Construction Corporation (NBCC) will construct a 'world trade centre' at Nauroji Nagar. The NBCC has obtained a licence to develop a commercial project at Nauroji Nagar as 'World Trade Centre'. In this complex, there are 12 commercial towers, spanning over 3 million sq ft area. This project is expected to be completed by 2020. This has announced by NBCC's Chairman and Managing Director Anoop Kumar Mittal on Wednesday.

Of 12 towers, NBCC in June this year sold nearly 3 lakh sq ft office space in an upcoming commercial tower at Nauroji Nagar for Rs 1,100 crore to five companies — PFC, HDFC, HPCL, SIDBI and Energy Efficiency Services. The per sq ft rate at which this commercial tower has been sold is even higher than the price of office space in Connaught Place, the heart of the national Capital.

"We have got the licence from WTC, New York recently to develop the Nauroji Nagar commercial hub as World Trade Centre (WTC). The World Trade Centres Association (WTCA) has given licences for the development of 21 World Trade Centres in the country. Redevelopment of Nauroji Nagar has been approved by WTCA for World Trade Centre license in June 2017," NBCC's Chairman and Managing Director Anoop Kumar Mittal said. The company expects a realisation of about Rs 12,000-13,000 crore from sale of these 12 towers. "Revenue generation for all the seven colonies developed in Delhi is being done by NBCC and the total generation is pegged at over Rs 32,000 crore," he said.

"The construction of world trade centre is the part of the redevelopment plan of Nauroji Nagar area," he said. The Government has decided to redevelop seven colonies in New Delhi. All these are Government employees' colonies located in Sarojini Nagar, Netaji Nagar, Nauroji Nagar, Tyagraj Nagar, Srinivaspuri, Kas-

Of 12 towers, NBCC in June this year sold nearly 3 lakh sq ft office space in an upcoming commercial tower at Nauroji Nagar for Rs 1,100 crore to five companies — PFC, HDFC, HPCL, SIDBI and Energy Efficiency Services. The per sq ft rate at which this commercial tower has been sold is even higher than the price of office space in Connaught Place, the heart of the national Capital.



turba Nagar and Mohammadpur.

So construction cost for all these colonies will be Rs 32,000 crore and out of that Rs 25,000 crore worth of works will be executed by NBCC and Central Public Works Department (CPWD) will execute the remaining projects, which are smaller in size, worth Rs 7,000 crore. NBCC will execute the Nauroji Nagar, Sarojini Nagar and Netaji Nagar projects. The model followed here is Government will not invest any money and there will not be any budgetary support for construction of these projects. NBCC will generate this money (Rs 32,000 crore) by selling a part of the property in Sarojini Nagar and Nauroji Nagar. First, NBCC's business is for Rs 25,000 crore on which we will get 8

per cent project management charges. At present five WTCs are operational at Mumbai, Bengaluru, Pune, Noida and Kochi. Mittal said the company would soon put on sale more commercial towers in this project.

The WTCA stimulates trade and investment opportunities for commercial property developers, economic development agencies, and businesses looking to connect globally and prosper locally. There are over 300 world trade centres spread in 90 countries. NBCC, which is under the administrative control of Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs, is present in three main segments — Project Management Consultancy (PMC), Real Estate Development and EPC Contracting.

# PUBLIC SERVICE AND THE PRAVASI

By allowing Overseas Indian Citizens to appear for UPSC exams, government could broaden the pool for recruitment

**A** recent government decision has the potential to blur the difference between public and private recruitment. All public recruitment agencies [UPSC, Staff Selection Commission (SSC), Railway Recruitment Board (RRB), RBI, armed forces, paramilitary, public sector banks, public sector enterprises] will use the Ministry of Labour and Employment's NCS (National Career Service) portal to disclose scores/rankings of candidates in the final stages of recruitment processes. Courtesy NIC, there will thus be an integrated information system for public

---

As a candidate, when I fill out an application form, I have the option of opting out of the disclosure scheme. If not, my data are there on the portal for other private and public sector agencies to use. As an applicant, I may have got through to final stages, but may not have been able to clear the last hurdle for whatever post I applied for.

---

recruitment agencies. This will have all the details about a candidate.

As a candidate, when I fill out an application form, I have the option of opt-



ing out of the disclosure scheme. If not, my data are there on the portal for other private and public sector agencies to use. As an applicant, I may have got through to final stages, but may not have been able to clear the last hurdle for whatever post I applied for. In that event, my data can be used by other recruiters. Take the railways. Not long ago, there was an announcement about a little more than 18,000 non-technical posts and more than nine million applied and were tested. (Sure, all 9 million don't qualify for final stages, but that's not relevant.) Subsequently, railways advertised for 2,54,587 non-technical posts. Within the public segment, there is a wealth of application and testing information and the private sector routinely complains about the lack of people with requisite skills. If an initiative matches excess demand in one with excess supply in the other, it can only improve the efficiency of the intermediating function.

Who is entitled to sit for the UPSC examination? I don't mean academic eligibility, age, or number of attempts,

---

For non-Indians, the Government of India has to issue an eligibility certificate. This doesn't necessarily have to be produced at the time of taking an examination, but must be produced before the appointment letter is issued. For public office and public appointments, all countries, India included, have a requirement that the person must be a citizen.

but nationality. For the Indian Administrative Service (IAS), Indian Police Service (IPS) or Indian Foreign Service (IFS), the candidate must be an Indian citizen. For other services, the candidate can be a citizen of Nepal, Bhutan, a Tibetan refugee (who migrated before January 1, 1962), or a person of Indian origin who has migrated from Pakistan, Burma, Sri Lanka, East African countries (Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Zambia, Malawi, Zaire, Ethiopia) or Vietnam with "the intention of permanently

settling in India".

For non-Indians, the Government of India has to issue an eligibility certificate. This doesn't necessarily have to be produced at the time of taking an examination, but must be produced before the appointment letter is issued. For public office and public appointments, all countries, India included, have a requirement that the person must be a citizen. There are several different ways to become an Indian citizen — before the commencement of the





Constitution, by birth, by descent, by registration (Section 5 of the Citizenship Act), by naturalisation. “Intention of permanently settling in India” and the consequent “eligibility certificate” sound vague and discretionary and are often reflective of historical legacies. Public office and public appointments should have the requirement of being an Indian citizen, not only for IAS, IPS or IFS, but all services. When? At the time of taking the examination or time of issuing the appointment letter? Since the Pravasi Bharatiya Divas in 2006 (and preceding amendment to Citizenship Act in 2005), there is a category known as Overseas Citizen of India (OCI). The former PIO (person of Indian origin) system has gone.

OCIs have several privileges — multiple entry, multi-purpose life-long visas, exemption from foreigner registration requirements, parity with NRIs (except in the purchase of agricultural land and plantations). Progressively, there has been more liberalisation — parity in inter-country adoption, domestic air fares, entry fees for wildlife sanctuaries (2007), employment, parity in entry fees to national monuments and museums (2009), easier proof of residence (2012). However, OCI doesn't mean dual citizenship, at least not from an Indian perspective (the UK has a dif-

---

**If a person is selected, an appointment letter will be issued only after the existing citizenship has been renounced in favour of Indian citizenship. This is the kind of announcement that can be made at the Pravasi Bharatiya Divas in 2018.**

---

ferent view).

Therefore, there are three rights OCIs don't possess today — the right to vote, right to public office and right to public appointments. But given the distinction between taking an examination and the issue of an appointment letter, why shouldn't OCIs be allowed to take UPSC exams? Logically, it is an appealing idea. If a person is selected, an appointment letter will be issued only after the existing citizenship has been renounced in favour of Indian citizenship. This is the kind of announcement that can be made at the Pravasi Bharati-

ya Divas in 2018.

Note that security clearances are necessary before any public appointment is made. So security concerns are non-sequitur. If PoK or CoPoK (China occupied Pakistan occupied Kashmir) residents wish to take the UPSC examination, so be it. In the process, they will learn something about India. More seriously, Pakistan is outside the ambit of OCI. On occasion, there has been lateral entry into public service at senior levels by people who were PIOs, not NRIs. They renounced their existing citizenship and became Indian citizens. But these were isolated instances, on ad hoc basis.

Lateral entry increases competition and the broader the catchment area, the better. It is unlikely that a large number of OCIs will wish to take UPSC exams. Given the nature of the exam, it is unlikely that many will qualify, even if they wish to. Even then, from the competition point of view, why not broaden the base? From the appointment point of view, becoming an Indian citizen and imbibing things Indian are easier at an age of 25 than they are at an age of 55. We have done it on ad hoc basis at age 55. Let's do it more systematically at an age of 25.

***(The writer is member, Niti Aayog. Views expressed are personal)***  
***Courtesy - The Pioneer***

# LONDON UNDER ATTACK

Fighting terror with terror is failing drastically



By Deana Uppal

**A**nother terror attack jolted Europe and it was London again, not long after the incident in Catalonia, Barcelona. Western Europe has been an easy target for terror mongers in the past few years with a spate of scattered incidents being reported. And, if some sources are to be believed India is under the radar of the ISIS too while the terror group has openly confessed its desire to target Europe. This has bred a feeling of uncertainty in Eu-

rope and has instilled fear among citizens and governments. While, it is not hard to trace the roots of such acts of violence the sporadic nature makes it hard to predict and prevent them.

International powerhouses like The United States of America with their constant meddling in other nation's affairs for oil or for geopolitical gains have brought down stable regimes and have set in motion the wheel of unrest and chaos particularly in west Asia. A commingling of ideological and cultural differences, politics and largely

the fear of alienation has contributed to the rise of groups like ISIS, which have bombed trains, public spaces, structures all around the world. Talking of the ISIS particularly, how the volatile state of affairs has ravaged Syria, Iraq and neighbouring areas and how actively people across continents have joined forces paints a grim picture with dangerous undertones. Tracing the journey from the past one can logically attribute volatility in Middle-East and West Asia to politics of isolation and extraneous intrusion by western countries spe-



cifically the United States of America. The refugee crisis is a grave example of the looming instability in these areas. There have also been reports and stark evidences of funding for terror groups coming from trade with nations in the middle-east and the role of diverse factors in its growth like oil trade in the black market. Influencing young men and women into joining these groups isn't difficult as the feeling of not being a part of the existing society gives birth to vengeance. Many conspiracy theories and rumours have indicated that the birth of ISIS and its actions are in fact a western ploy to fulfil selfish interests. Lately, there has been a sustained and concerted effort to weed out Islamic State from Syria and Iraq which has helped take back large swathes of land from ISIS's control. The estimated strength of ISIS is now close to just a few thousand people and limited to smaller areas. However, concerns have been raised about a scattered effort by Islamic State personnel due to its gradual disintegration courtesy of the intensive group effort by international players. While, there has been an influx of people from different countries, Indian Muslims have been responsible and have vociferously voiced their anguish against the indoctrination and heady radicalisation that has divided the world. As claimed by the Indian

---

**It is a paradox that while claims of being connected to everyone on the globe by the 5th degree are made, there is increasing isolation on the lines of religion, culture, race, ethnicity, etc.**

---

Government, there have been negligible recruitments from India by the ISIS and India has largely remained safe from ISIS's clutches. India has the second largest Muslim population and has been able to maintain harmony which indicates that terrorism is not about any specific community, religion, ethnic background, etc. and does not stem from that.

It is a paradox that while claims of being connected to everyone on the globe by the 5th degree are made, there is increasing isolation on the lines of religion, culture, race, ethnicity, etc. Divisive ideas are cultivated in impressionable minds through radicalisation and the promise of a great future gives a sense of purpose to live in an unac-

commodating world. There is evidently a pattern of isolation, violence, counter violence and consequent instability behind terrorism. Eliminating terrorism altogether seems like a long shot, rather a fancy dream; inspite of, sufficient ground gained by pushing ISIS back or be it by declaring Pakistan a safe haven for terror groups or any other positive step for that matter. Counter violence is only a superficial response to an age old problem, the causes of which lie deep down and so do the solutions. Governments along with the UN and other stakeholders need to come together for a sustained dialogue with an empathetic resolve to build inclusive societies focusing on achieving the sustainable development goals. As dialogue and conversations have long been the basis of any process that aims to resolve problems and build peaceful societies. Providing safe havens to refugees who are victims of terrorism can be a great step towards inclusive development and a manifestation of humanitarian concern. Isolating ourselves from the problem which has deep roots and complexities surrounding it can further foment the crisis that looms large in forms of cross border disputes, radicalised groups demanding a caliphate, or statehood/nationhood movements.

***(Writer is a Indo-British Model & Entrepreneur)***

# LEMON SECRETS

I drank lemon water every day for 2 weeks to see if its health benefits were true. Here's what I found

Dr Vivek Dubey

**H**umans have been experimenting with tonics since the beginning of time. From the fountain of youth to alkaline water to kale juice, we're always searching for that magic potion that will restore health and wellness, ward off illness, and make us look and feel 10 years younger. But what if that potion isn't so mysterious? What if it's just... lemon water?

Lemon water has been touted as a health and wellness aid for years by some MDs, clean living advocates, and, of course, celebs like Gwyneth Paltrow. And unlike packaged juice cleanses that supposedly brighten your skin and age you backwards, lemon water won't break the bank. It's cheap, it's easy, and it seems safe (as long as you don't try to exist on lemon water alone)—but does it really work wonders?

Some proponents of lemon water claim that it aids digestion, detoxifies the liver, erases age spots, speeds up your metabolism, helps with depression and anxiety, relieves heartburn, wards off cancer, and reduces inflammation. I was skeptical that it could do all those things, but I figured if it does even a few it would be pretty great.

I've had lemon water here and there over the years, of course, but I decided to drink two cups a day for two weeks to see if it would have any noticeable impact. Here's what I learned.

## Complexion perfection?

Lemons are high in antioxidants, which help prevent cellular damage and ward off free radicals—including those that lead to wrinkles and other complexion issues related to aging. (That's

why so many skin serums contain antioxidants like vitamin C, and why dermatologists say it's a good idea to eat more antioxidant-rich foods.) I wasn't expecting miracles, and I didn't find them. But by week two I started to notice a slight improvement in my skin. A few trouble spots had cleared up, and when I looked in the mirror my complexion did seem to be less dull and more vibrant.

## Tummy tamer?

Health-conscious friends of mine are always claiming that lemon water—especially warm or hot lemon water—can help with digestion and cut down on bloat. And experts do say that the citric acid in lemons can supplement your natural stomach acids to help you break down food. I also learned that lemon water is a surprisingly decent source of potassium, a mineral that helps keep sodium levels in check. (Not that I was drinking it straight, but half a cup of lemon juice has about 125 mg of potassium compared to about 211 mg in a banana.) So maybe it would also combat salt-related fluid retention? At first I wasn't sure if my lemon water habit was doing anything, but after a few days I noticed I was less bloated.

## Cold fighter?

Citrus fruits like lemons are high in vitamin C, an antioxidant that research suggests may help ward off colds and reduce inflammation throughout the body.

You would probably have to drink a lot of lemon water for a long period of time to really notice a difference in inflammation, and it's tough to gauge the impact of lemon water on your immune system over a short period of time. That said, I didn't get sick during my two-week experiment. (If you're looking to boost your vitamin C intake, add this immune-boosting smoothie from Prevention Premium to your daily meal plan.)

## Weight-loss aid?

A study in the *Journal of Clinical Biochemistry and Nutrition* found that polyphenols in lemon peel prevented mice from putting on extra fat during a 12-week period. In two weeks I lost a single pound, which may or may not have been due to the lemon water. In my





case, I suspect it mostly helped with motivation. After starting my day with something as healthy as lemon water, I felt more inclined to stick with workouts, eat clean foods, and pass on caloric drinks like orange juice and soda.

### **Mood booster?**

In addition to all of the physical benefits, lemon water has been touted as a balm for lifting your spirits—a claim that brought out my inner skeptic. If lemon water could truly pull you out of a funk, they would bottle it and sell it for about 200 times the price. That said, maybe it was the pound I lost or just the confidence that came from sticking to a health-focused plan for two weeks, but I did feel, mentally, just a little bit lighter.

As for my internal organs, it's a bit of a mystery. I have no way to gauge whether or not my liver was “detoxified” or my digestive system really improved. But here's hoping that any change it had on my body was a positive one.

# CYBERCITY, A VISION OF AFRICA'S 'SMART' FUTURE?

Ebène Cybercity was built 15 years ago to create a modern working environment for Mauritians and bring a hi-tech hub to this island nation. So does it offer a roadmap for Africa - or a warning of problems ahead?



**A**s the fruit bat flies, it's only 300 metres from Cyber Tower 1 to the massive food court and commercial centre that was built to service Ebène Cybercity – the hi-tech office community on the outskirts of Mauritius's capital, Port Louis. But walking from the ostentatious lobby of Cyber Tower 1 to the shops and restaurants can take 20 minutes – if you don't get lost along the way. The fastest route by foot bisects car parks, traverses overgrown vacant lots, and stumbles over temporary walkways past some of the biggest businesses on the island.

Both an urban planning disaster and – for many proud Mauritians – the very definition of modern office life, Cybercity was first proposed by the government in 2001 as a high-tech hub, and now houses almost 25,000 mostly educated, middle-class workers during the week. While the development can be criticised for a shocking lack cohesiveness, poor public transport, limited parking or even difficult access by foot, its creation did bring many aspects of modern connected life to Mauritian workers.

Like other local observers, Macbeth says that despite its many design flaws, the project did what it set out to do: cre-

---

Both an urban planning disaster and – for many proud Mauritians – the very definition of modern office life, Cybercity was first proposed by the government in 2001 as a high-tech hub, and now houses almost 25,000 mostly educated, middle-class workers during the week. While the development can be criticised for a shocking lack cohesiveness, poor public transport, limited parking or even difficult access by foot, its creation did bring many aspects of modern connected life to Mauritian workers.

---

ate a modern working environment in the African island state, while ameliorating traffic conditions in the capital, Port Louis.

Built on sugar cane fields roughly 15km to the south along the M1 (one of two modern highways that bisect the country) and completely disconnected from the surrounding urban fabric, Cybercity was promoted as a leap into the future for Mauritius. Despite its many flaws, the 64-hectare campus boasts high-speed internet – which just a half

a decade ago was a rarity in the country – backup electricity generators to bridge frequent power cuts, and networking systems to guarantee that big businesses can stay online constantly. Despite the island's geographic distance from mainland Africa, the hub is so well connected that it hosts the African Network Information Center, the internet registry platform for the entire continent.

“It's actually a whole ecosystem of facilities: intelligent buildings, air con-



ditioning and electric backup,” says Koomaren Chetty, CEO of Business Parks of Mauritius (BPML), the company founded by the government to create and run Cybercity.

The initial phase of the project in 2001 – the building of the 12-storey Cyber Tower 1 – was designed, engineered and built by Indian companies, with financing for the project covered by loans guaranteed by the Indian government, in what Chetty calls a “turn key” construction. But when BPML commissioned a second building a few years later, they used local architects and construction companies – heralded at the time as an example of the Mauritians’ ability to learn quickly from foreigners.

Now in its second decade, Cybercity highlights an important difference in planned urban growth between developed and developing countries. As the world’s cities grow and intelligent urban design becomes a global discipline, a vision of this tiny African island’s future demonstrates that the concept of a smart city is far from standardised.

“In Europe when we talk about smart cities, we think of revitalisation of existing cities,” says Bertrand Moingeon, a professor at HEC in Paris who

---

**The initial phase of the project in 2001 – the building of the 12-storey Cyber Tower 1 – was designed, engineered and built by Indian companies, with financing for the project covered by loans guaranteed by the Indian government, in what Chetty calls a “turn key” construction.**

---

studies urban development in Mauritius. “But in many places in Africa, including Mauritius, so-called smart city developments actually do the opposite: they create exclusive urban cities far away from the dust, chaos and inequality of the existing cityscape,” Moingeon explains. “It goes against social inclu-

siveness.”

Moingeon agrees: “What we could wish for Africa is that they really develop the most recent model of smart cities,” he says, referring to the latest European and North American developments of the concept, which emphasise social and environmental improvements. For example, in Ijburg – a brand new part of Amsterdam built on reclaimed river land – daycare centres, university spaces, schools, civic spaces and high-end properties were deliberately built together with the aim of creating community spaces that would be shared by people of different social-economic backgrounds and ages. There is very little urban planning, in terms of amenities, parking and pedestrian areas

Ongoing growth of Cybercity (several new buildings are in the early phases of construction), keeping track of vacancy rates, which officials peg at somewhere between five and 15%, and overall gross floor area, which is given at roughly 200,000 sq metres, is difficult. However, judging by the parcels of land left vacant at the centre of this city, not everything has gone according to plan.

“It lacks an urban fabric – there is



very little urban planning, in terms of amenities, parking and pedestrian areas,” says Abbas Currimjee, an architect and developer in Mauritius. To Currimjee, the problems plaguing this artificial city are less about the actual buildings and offices they contain, and more about the project as a whole. The modern office buildings are serviced by an outdated public transportation system. Photograph: Christopher Schuetze

Indeed, despite the fact that most of the office buildings are at least 10 storeys tall, the overall density of the project appears lower than the single-story residential neighbourhoods that are common here on the island. Much like the cacophony of architectural styles on display, individual buildings vary in the degree of modernity and comfort – and some exude a kind of shabbiness associated with a humid climate, poor ventilation, badly functioning air conditioning and the overwhelming smell of food.

During even the lightest rain showers, the awning covering the exit of Cyber Tower 1 – arguably the showpiece of the project – funnels a steady gush of water on to the driveway leading up to the building with such ferocity that even cars avoid it.

On those rainy days, the shortage of parking and difficulties accessing the crowded public transport come to the fore. Instead of the sleek transport hub promised in future iterations of the smart city here in Mauritius, decidedly old-fashioned, high-floored diesel buses career from one one street-side bus stop to next, leaving the crowds of well-dressed office workers running for cover.

Urban development has become a political hot potato on this island of almost 1.3 million inhabitants. Now in its second decade, Cybercity and the government’s involvement is coming under scrutiny as a new administration has announced the creation of several new smart city projects around the island – including the construction of Heritage City, a 115-hectare suburb that would house most of the nation’s government buildings as well as extensive housing for government workers.

The new government, in place since the end of 2014, has loudly rolled out the concept of smart cities, which it prescribes as a “cure all” for everything from a sagging construction sector to a means of attracting highly trained foreign workers and their capital. The label is currently associated with half a dozen (unbuilt) projects on the island, of which Heritage City is the only one



the government is spending large sums of public cash on.

“We don’t need to make new cities, we need to make our cities smarter,” says Aadil Ameer Meea, one of seven socialist MPs who form the official opposition after a recent election routed the ruling labour party. Meea, who represents a district in the capital, says that instead of putting money into new developments such as Heritage City, Port Louis itself needs to be refurbished and upgraded. Though not officially part of Cybercity, the headquarters of the Mauritian Commercial Bank took its inspiration from the planned community

While much political discussion is focused on where Mauritius would get money for the new, ambitious project – the government is proposing covering a good part of the projected £563 million construction costs by taking a loan from Saudi Arabia – observers warn of the lessons learned from Cybercity. “Of course we are inspired by what has been done elsewhere – we are not inventing the wheel,” says Gaetan Siew, who chairs a technical committee that certifies these smart-city projects, bestowing them with hefty tax breaks and other incentives.

While the other projects are less ambitious in scope than Heritage City and Cybercity, and are privately funded, they all are decentralised enclaves that focus on a “live, work, play” concept, green electricity and services. According to Siew, just as Heritage City is centred around government, other smart city projects are meant to be linked to other themes, creating liveable “knowledge hubs”. “Density is linked to sustainability,” he adds.

Back in his office in Cybercity, Chetty acknowledges the development’s shortcomings and explains he has a plan in place – under the title “Smart Commu-

nity” – to bring stakeholders together to pay for the creation of community spaces that would allow the various buildings’

In the 1970s, the World Trade Centre stood beyond the edge of the city and convinced the world that Dubai was open for business. But Meea points out that market demand seems largely missing from the plan to redevelop the island. Unlike most African countries, Mauritius’s population remains steady. There are roughly 10,000 marriages a year in this tiny country, hinting that barring a massive influx of foreigners, demand for new neighbourhoods will be limited.

As commuters still get stuck in morning traffic on the way to the shabby but functional capital, they have plenty of time to ponder the lessons of the island’s landscape. To the right stands an empty sugar field, which if all goes to plan, will soon be the modern, convenient and efficient Heritage City. To the left stands Cybercity, reminding them that buildings do not always make communities and those urban developments cannot create work for everyone.

However the key to concept project success remains ability of the government to create jobs, Mauritius government pushed itself for the being the IT hub in Africa a decade ago but the follow up was lethargic. The initial planning was great but gradually the successive governments failed to attract high end talent from global IT space leading to the slowdown of the domestic IT related investments. The concept projects namely cyber city can thrive only when the parallel growth in the sector is pushed by the government and private sector.

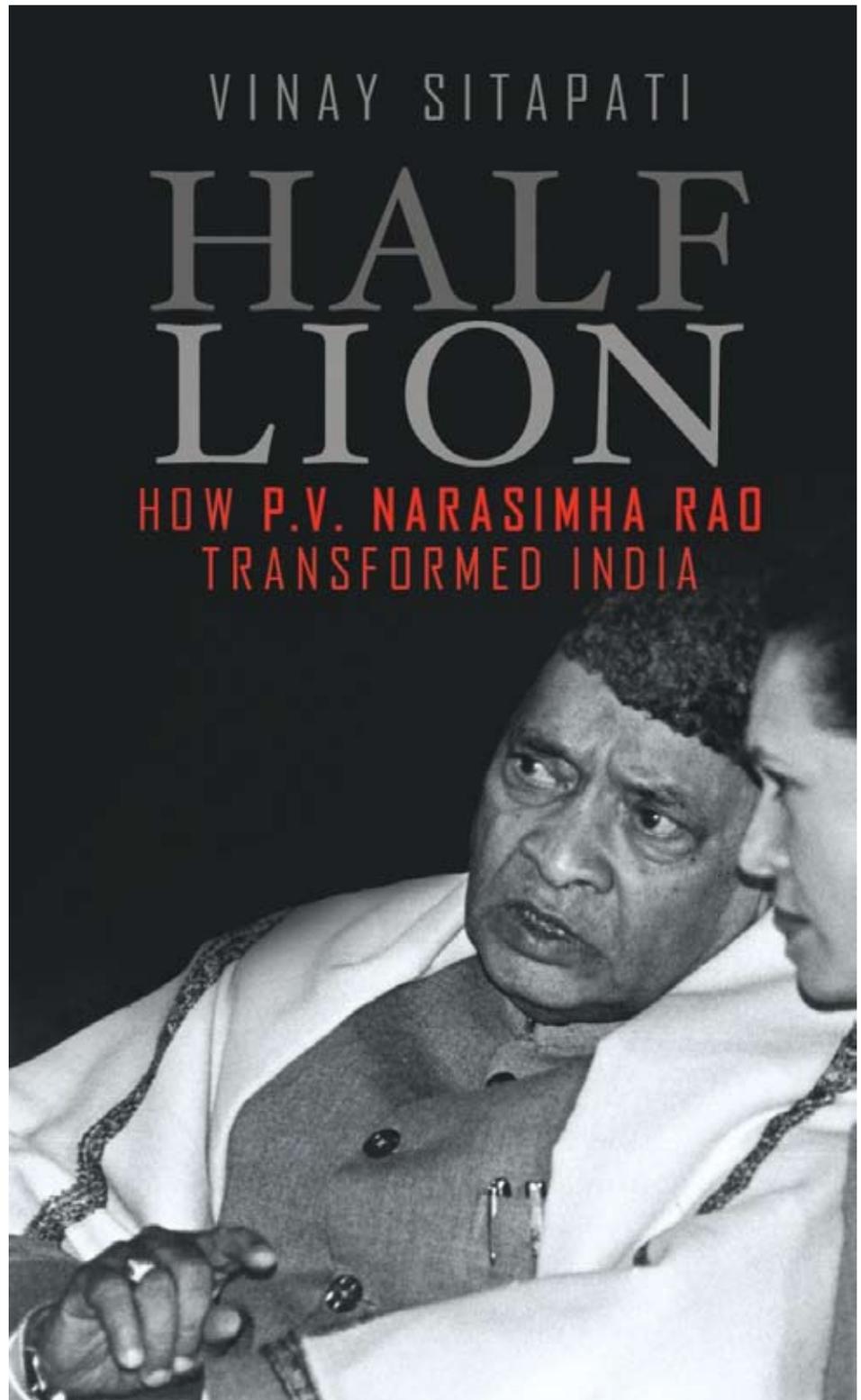
*(Courtesy The Gaurdian  
-Christopher F Schuetze in Port  
Louis & Inputs from Rajiv Agni-  
hotri in Mauritius)*

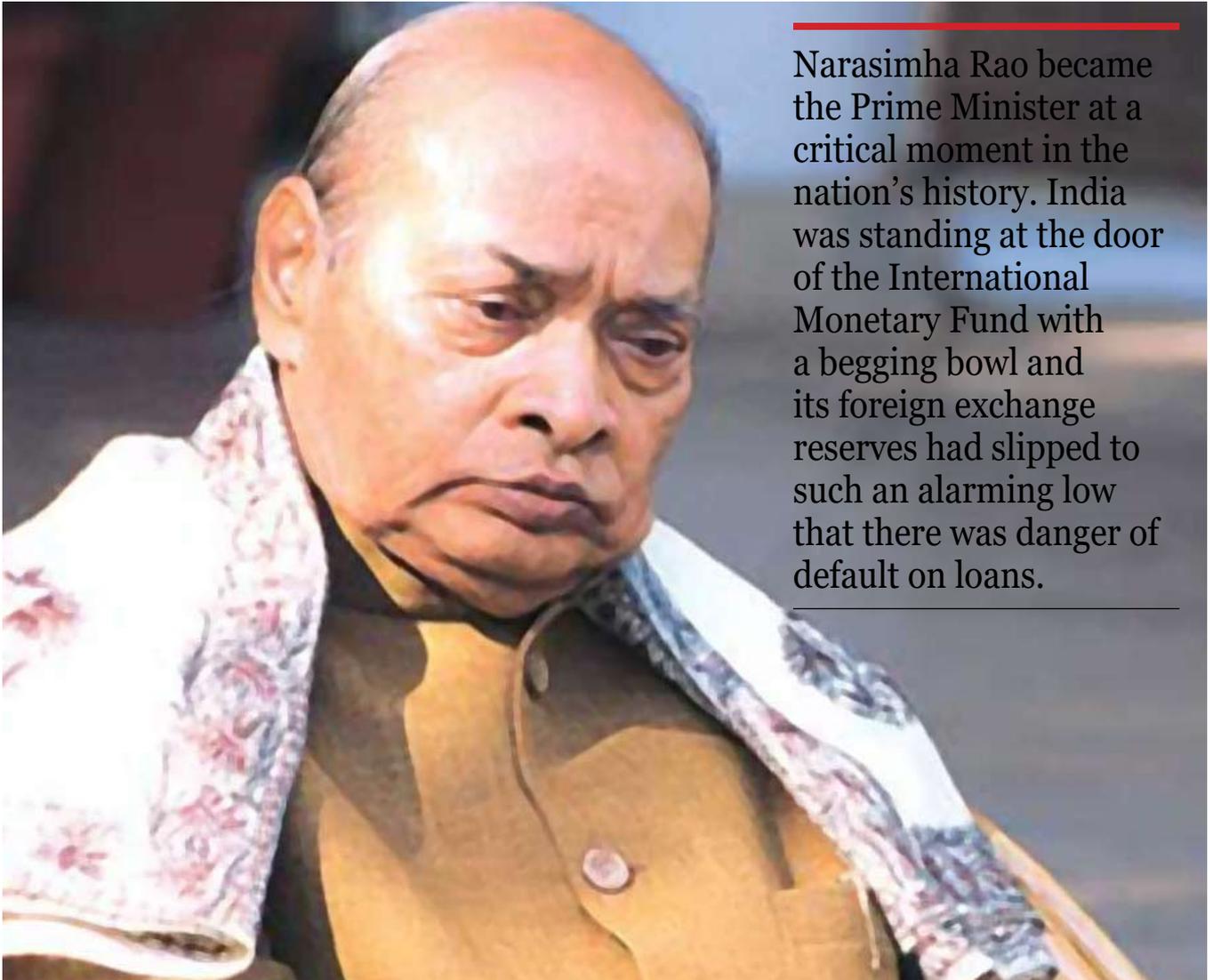
# RE-ASSESSING THE LEGACY OF PV NARASIMHA RAO

Vinay Sitapati's book, *Half Lion: How PV Narasimha Rao Transformed India*, seeks to restore the Prime Minister's place in the pantheon of great Indian leaders. He has enough evidence to demolish false accusations against Rao

**T**he bane of modern Indian history is the unconscionable distortions injected into it by historians owing allegiance to the Marxist and Nehruvian schools. This has resulted in a string of untruths being bandied about for decades about personalities and events both in the pre and post-independence eras.

Such is the grip of these two schools over academia that even after free-thinking historians, who are not prisoners of ideology, exhumed many truths that negated the mythologies palmed off by these palace historians, misrepresentations continue to permeate the text books and lectures in schools and colleges.





---

Narasimha Rao became the Prime Minister at a critical moment in the nation's history. India was standing at the door of the International Monetary Fund with a begging bowl and its foreign exchange reserves had slipped to such an alarming low that there was danger of default on loans.

---

Subhash Chandra Bose, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, BR Ambedkar, Syama Prasad Mookerjee, Rajendra Prasad are some of the names that immediately come to mind of national leaders whose contributions have been deliberately ignored and who have been victims of the falsification of history. In more recent times, a prominent victim of the machinations of these two schools is PV Narasimha Rao, one of India's most cerebral and successful Prime Ministers who saved India's unity and integrity and pulled the country out of an economic rut during 1991-1996 and put it on the high road to growth.

The purpose of the so-called scholarship by entrenched academics from these two schools has been three-fold: One, to present members of the Nehru-Gandhi family as near faultless individuals who were deeply wedded to the core values of the Constitution and who sacrificed everything for the country; two, to present all their contemporaries as petty individuals with petty goals and with questionable commitment to

constitutional values; and, three, credit all national achievements to members of this family and all failures to others.

This shameless and continuous glorification of one political family makes one wonder whether our academia secretly pines for a return to monarchy. Seen in the context of this fraudulent output by these historians, specially in the capital's universities, Vinay Sitapati's *Half Lion: How PV Narasimha Rao Transformed India* — comes as a breath of fresh air.

Narasimha Rao became the Prime Minister at a critical moment in the nation's history. India was standing at the door of the International Monetary Fund with a begging bowl and its foreign exchange reserves had slipped to such an alarming low that there was danger of default on loans. Rao picked up Manmohan Singh as his Finance Minister and began the noble task of dismantling the socialist economy that Jawaharlal Nehru and Indira Gandhi had thrust on the country. He opened up the economy, liberated it from the

licence-permit raj, unshackled the entrepreneurial instincts of millions of Indians and invited foreign investments into various sectors.

These decisions brought about a spectacular turn around in the economy, restored hope among Indians and gave them the confidence to take on the world. He also pulled Punjab, which was engulfed by secessionist forces, from the brink and saved the unity and integrity of India. Instead of acknowledging the man's phenomenal contribution, the Nehru-Gandhis and academics and writers hovering around this family, have falsely accused him of damaging India's secular fabric and of being complacent in the fall of the Babri Masjid in Ayodhya. Having pinned this monstrous charge on him, they hope this will wipe out his phenomenal contribution to the country. One scholar even spread the story that Rao was napping while the Masjid was being demolished. Another said he was "doing puja" while the demolition was on.

Sitapati's scholarly book covers a



whole range of issues from Rao's early days to his tenure as a Union Minister, his prime ministership, the challenge on the economic front, the crisis in Punjab and elsewhere, the nuclear policy and the fall of the Babri Masjid. For want of space, this column will confine itself to just the Babri Masjid issue.

The author throws up enough evidence to demolish the false accusations made against Rao regarding his conduct on December 6, 1992, the day the Masjid was demolished by Hindu zealots and in the weeks and months preceding this event.

Sitapati makes some telling observations. He shows how Rajiv Gandhi succumbed to Muslim fundamentalism and overturned the Supreme Court verdict in the Shah Bano case, banned Salman Rushdie's *Satanic Verses* and then began Hindu appeasement by un-

locking the Ram Temple in the Masjid premises for Hindu prayers and thereafter sending his Home Minister, Buta Singh for the Shilanyas ceremony for construction of the Ram Temple.

As regards the build up to the demolition of the Masjid, Sitapati shows how the Union Cabinet was unwilling to impose President's Rule in Uttar Pradesh prior to December 6, merely on the suspicion that the BJP Government in the State would not protect the structure. Article 356 of the Constitution cannot be invoked on assumptions. The Cabinet Committee on Political Affairs (CCPA), that considers such issues, met five times in November alone and held the view that the situation did not warrant imposition of central rule. The State's Governor too sent in a report just five days prior to the demolition that he had no apprehension regarding failure

---

The author throws up enough evidence to demolish the false accusations made against Rao regarding his conduct on December 6, 1992, the day the Masjid was demolished by Hindu zealots and in the weeks and months preceding this event.

---

of constitutional machinery.

The law and order situation, specially on the communal front "is satisfactory", he declared. Yet, Rao ensured massive deployment of central forces near the disputed structure prior to December 6. These forces could be called in within minutes, if there was danger to the structure, but the call would have to be taken by the State Government, because ensuring law and order was the responsibility of the State not the Centre. There was also the worry that the Supreme court may quash a presidential order based on presumptions. Thus, the situation that prevailed just prior to the demolition was that "the Supreme Court, the State Governor and law Ministry officials, all seemed against Central rule".

That is why after the demolition, Pranab Mukherjee told partymen "all of you were members of the Cabinet and some of you were members of the CCPA. All decisions were taken in the meetings of the Cabinet and the CCPA. Responsibility is collective; the onus cannot only be on the Prime Minister or the Home Minister." Sitapati, who had access to Rao's personal papers, takes us through this narrative that presents facts that negate the spurious tomes that have been churned out on this issue until now. There is lots more to this book, but that will have to wait till later.

Half Lion is the first scholarly effort to correct the distortions that have crept into our understanding of social and political developments in India over the last three decades. It also seeks to restore Narasimha Rao's well-deserved place in the pantheon of great Indian leaders

# MUGHAL-E-AZAM AZAM ICONIC ON STAGE TOO

After four seasons and 60 shows, stage musical Mughal-e-Azam is in town to wow Delhiites. **SHALINI SAKSENA** of The Pioneer unfolds the bigness of this magnum opus

**F**or all those who don't know anything about this classic, here is some information. It was the play Anarkali, written by Imtiaz Ali Taj way back in 1923 and staged hundreds of times before it was released as a Bollywood film by K Asif, starring Prithviraj Kapoor, Dilip Kumar

on August 5, 1960. Though historians questioned its historical accuracy, the film became the highest-grossing Bollywood film (Rs 55 million), a distinction it held for 15 years.

In 2004, the movie was re-released, in colour. The opulence was such that even today, most remember the mir-

rors, Madhubala and the iconic number Pyar Kiya Toh Darna Kya... To recreate the movie on any other medium would be a disaster, director Feroz Abbas Khan was told. "The day I had decided to stage Mughal-e-Azam as a stage musical, people looked at me with scepticism. They felt it would be a decisive



mistake. Mughal-e-Azam is a legacy of memories. And memories are fragile so one needs to tread carefully. If you disturb these, the reaction would be strong. I have done this with great respect to K Asif. If I had made a film, the comparison would have been direct. But since I am doing it in a different medium, I have unburdened the idea of who is acting in the play. The actors sing and perform live, it is not a recording. All I have done is keep the memories alive and add a few more," Khan tells you.

In the process, he has created a completely new theatre experience. "Even in theatre, it had to match the scale, grandeur and quality of the film. The Shapoorji Pallonji Group (owners of the movie) and the National Centre for the Performing Arts (NCPA) wanted that it should have the same scale and imagination as of the movie," Khan says.

It was an uphill task even for Khan who is known for works like Tumhari Amrita and Mahatma vs Gandhi. The challenge here was to get so many live performers together and put out a show in just two-and-a-half months. "I was constrained by time. But I had an extra-ordinary team and collaborators to bring it all together," Khan says. This team includes choreographer Mayuri

---

In the process, he has created a completely new theatre experience. "Even in theatre, it had to match the scale, grandeur and quality of the film. The Shapoorji Pallonji Group (owners of the movie) and the National Centre for the Performing Arts (NCPA) wanted that it should have the same scale and imagination as of the movie," Khan says.

---

Upadhya and designer Manish Malhotra who has designed the around 600 costumes used in the show.

Upadhya, a Bharatnatyam dancer and director of Bengaluru-based Nritarutya Dance Collective, feels that the challenges are innate to the title. "The biggest one was to create a team. I didn't want to use my own team as I wanted to go with pure Kathak and maintain the authenticity. To audition 200-250 dancers from all over the country, choose from them and ensure that they are in sync with each other was a challenge," Mayuri says. Pyar Kiya toh..., the sheesh mahal and the dance steps were retained. But it was only after listening to MS Subbalaxmi that the inspiration came to her for choreographing

Pyar Kiya...

"One can cheat through the camera in a movie. On stage, it is always about truth. But risks need to be taken. In the song Pya Kiya.... the magic is in Madhubala's eyes and her ada, not steps. But on stage, the challenge is that the actor has to sing and dance and move with a lot of energy. There was need to keep the audience glued in," Mayuri tells you.

Then there were discussions on costumes with Manish, especially for Pyar Kiya... The song is the defining moment of this musical. Mayuri hopes that through musicals like this, people get an experience — whether it is watching a movie or a dance recital that changes their lives forever. "Musicals are entertaining and have artistic value and fla-





your. Musical dramas should be just a trend but something that stays with you forever. I am glad we have finally woken up to this," Mayuri says.

When went to seek Shapoorji Paltonji Group director Deepesh Salgia's go-ahead, his only demand was that the musical should be as grand or grander than the film. "When Feroz narrated the concept, I told him it had to be 10 times the scale of what he had then envisaged. That would be mandatory if my Group will become a part of this musical. The response thus far has been in our favour, a work of art watched by thousands last year," Salgia adds. "People want entertainment. As long as the show is great, it will be loved. The skill lies in storytelling and not the format," Salgia adds.

Khushroo Suntook, NCPA chairman, says he came aboard when Feroz was looking for a venue and told them he also needed a partner. "We agreed because we had not done anything on such a large scale. The show has the best artists from India and global technological props," he adds.

But to bring this musical to Delhi was not easy for lack of a venue to stage such a grand show. Even for Jawaharlal Nehru Indoor Stadium, the entire setup had to be done from scratch which incurred crores. "It's not about profit for this artistic venture," Suntook says. Perfection is such that for every lead artiste, there is a back-up. Also, as the show-makers are doing more than one show a day, there is could be need for another person to take over.

---

**For Anarkali, Priyanka Barve and Neha Sargam have been roped in and for both it is a lifetime opportunity. "It is a nerve racking but exciting and unforgettable experience for a singer, artiste," says Sargam, a singer, dancer and actor with singing being her first love. Hailing from Bihar, she comes from a musical family.**

---

For Anarkali, Priyanka Barve and Neha Sargam have been roped in and for both it is a lifetime opportunity. "It is a nerve racking but exciting and unforgettable experience for a singer, artiste," says Sargam, a singer, dancer and actor with singing being her first love. Hailing from Bihar, she comes from a musical family. Acting never entered her mind till one of the producers approached her for a TV show Chand Chhupa Badal Mein on Star Plus. After TV, came theatre.

Barve has a similar journey. "When

I was offered this role, I did not want to give so much time to the show. But after six months, Feroz sir wanted to discuss it again. I had seen Phantom Of The Opera when I was 21 and was blown away by its grandeur. When I realised that this show too would be at that large a scale I decided not join," Barve says.

The costumes designed by Manish Malhotra are heavy and rich, sometimes difficult to lift. "But now that we have done four seasons and I am used to it," Barve says. Her favourite parts are Pyar Kiya... and Khuda Nigehbaan Ho Tumhara. The first is something she waits for as an act. "There is this energy and transformation that takes place in Anarkali. She is scared of Akbar but here, in this song she has a devil may care attitude and expresses her love for Salim. The second song is touching," Barve tells you.

Director Khan is happy with non-Bollywood leads and feels having stars from films "would have been a disaster," Khan opines. "A theatre actor can go into cinema but for a film actor to get into theatre is next to impossible. I had a girl from TV who was excited about the show. But the first day she came half-hour late and that was her last day. The discipline of theatre, the integrity with which you have to work since it is live, is crucial. In theatre, you work with humility," he says. But viewers will not be disappointed, whether it is Pyar Kiya... with the mirrors sequence or any other aspect of the show. "It is a visually stunning musical," Khan says.

# TESLA MODEL 3 INDIA LAUNCH AND PRICE

By Somnath Chatterjee

**E**lon Musk is on a mission and India is part of it. In short with the Model 3, Tesla plans to spread its wings and gain more customers and entry into more markets. Elon Musk says he plans to build half a million of the new Model 3 cars every year. The Model 3 then is the most important car Tesla has ever made and in India we will see it by end of next year or early 2019. In India the Model 3 will initially come in CBU form which means with duty added the price would be Rs 40 lakh and that is on par with its rivals such as the BMW 3 Series and Audi A4.

The Model 3 though as expect is completely different from any conventional car. The styling follows the approach of its bigger sibling—the Model S, its clean and unfussy with a short rear, swoopy coupe like roofline and a clean front. It is distinctive but the interior is shockingly simple yet also effective. It is clean along

with a 15.4-inch screen being the centerpiece plus there is no start/stop button on the car or even door handles! You can start the car by the Tesla app on a mobile phone or the valet key. The Model 3 is quick too with a 0-100 km/h time of less than 6 seconds and delivers 350 km on a single charge and the long range model delivers 500 km. Of course it is dripping with all kinds of tech and features including the autopilot feature.

For India, the question is charging as currently the superchargers which charge the Tesla in 30 mins are not there in India and it would be too early to expect them by 2019 also thus you have to use conventional charging but even then with one charge your regular day to day use would be met. So yes Tesla is finally coming and Model 3 would be the car however the date has been pushed back owing to huge demand for its main markets.

*Courtesy : Motor Trend India*





**GST made Easy**  
**One solution does it all**  
**Karvy WOW Devices**



**Karvy WOW 10TGST with  
Vodafone Connectivity Pack**

Price : ₹ 17,999 (Taxes extra)  
EMI option available  
Karvy ASP & GSP Solution  
Accounting Package

**Karvy ASP & GSP with  
Vodafone Connectivity Pack**

Price : ₹ 3,599 (Taxes extra)  
Microsoft Azure Cloud Storage (24 months)  
Dashboard Reporting  
Advance Mismatch Tracking

 **KARVY**  
**SimplyFile**  
Services to simplify GST filing

**Sciknow Techno Solutions Pvt. Ltd.**  
Millennium House, E-48/9, 11nd Floor  
Okhla Industrial Area, Phase II  
New Delhi - 110 020, INDIA

Visit us : [www.getwow.in](http://www.getwow.in)  
Write to us : [getwow@karvy.com](mailto:getwow@karvy.com)  
Contact us : +91-75171 50001





**Shapoorji Pallonji**

**ENGINEERING &  
CONSTRUCTION**