



Powered by a pause

Delays in the Indo-U.S. nuclear deal bring an opportunity to re-examine the energy basket

Ever since it was announced in 2005, the Indo-U.S. civil nuclear agreement has faced one obstacle after another. So this week's news that its operationalisation may be further delayed owing to Westinghouse's financial difficulties and Japan's procedural issues in ratifying the deal with India should come as no surprise. This sets back "work toward finalising the contractual arrangements by June 2017" for six reactors to be built in Andhra Pradesh by Toshiba-owned Westinghouse and the Nuclear Power Corporation of India Ltd. (NPCIL). But India has little control over both circumstances, and rather than seeing them as a setback, the government and officials should use this as an opportunity to re-examine the country's engagement with nuclear energy for future needs. Westinghouse's near-bankruptcy is part of a larger pattern of worldwide cost overruns and delivery delays across the nuclear energy industry. Nuclear manufacturer Areva (in partnership with Mitsubishi) has a similarly precarious position despite hopes of a bailout by the French government. Even Russian supplier Rosatom's Kudankulam units 1 and 2, in the only foreign collaboration now operational in India, were built in double the time budgeted, while units 3 and 4 could see delays. The cost of importing reactors, relative to those based on indigenous design, is another concern. Land acquisition issues remain, along with the need for large water reservoirs for the reactors, which will only grow if the government goes ahead with its plans for 55 reactors of 63,000 MW in total by 2032. In addition, given concerns about a possible tsunami scenario along the Andhra coast, where many of these reactors are planned, the Department of Atomic Energy and NPCIL are looking for options farther inland.

The promise of nuclear power has thus far outweighed all of these concerns, and India has reason to be proud of its technology and determination to look for non-fossil alternatives in its energy planning. However, with rapid progress in technology in other renewable energy sources such as wind and solar power, the collapse of oil prices and the expansion in gas projects as a viable and clean alternative, that promise has dimmed. These could also be more cost-effective for a developing country such as India, as the energy can be made available in smaller units, and then built up, unlike nuclear plants where nothing can be transmitted until the whole plant is complete and attains critical status. Above all, the risk surrounding nuclear safety is yet to be fully mapped, post-Fukushima. A Japanese court ruling holding both the state regulator and the operator responsible for the 2011 triple meltdown has sent sobering signals to the industry. This is the best time for India's energy planners and government to use the breathing space provided by the delays in the Indo-U.S. civil nuclear deal and take a long, hard look at the cost-benefit analysis on the nuclear power balance sheet.

Trust the EVMs

Machine-manipulation charges levelled by some political parties have no real basis

The legitimacy of the election process is a key component of any democracy. When Bahujan Samaj Party leader Mayawati and Aam Aadmi Party convener and Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal alleged that the manipulation of electronic voting machines helped the Bharatiya Janata Party in Uttar Pradesh and the Shiromani Akali Dal-BJP combine in Punjab, they were casting doubts about the legitimacy of the results. While the BSP, through its leader's statements and submissions to the Election Commission, was vague in its complaints, the AAP leader was more specific, suggesting that 20-25% of his party's votes were "transferred" to the Akali Dal due to the EVMs. Complaints about the security of EVMs have been raised over a decade in courts, and the EC has repeatedly demonstrated how the security of the machines cannot be compromised. Indian EVMs, unlike online voting machines that were discontinued in some western countries, are stand-alone, independent electronic units. They record and lock votes only after being trigger-enabled by presiding officers through a control unit. The EC has sought to assure sceptics that the security of the machine is enabled through both technological and procedural means. The wiring-in of software in a one-time programmable chip disallows external manipulation, time stamping of every key pressed allows for monitoring, production testing is done for quality control, and so on. Checks of EVMs along with representatives of political parties, randomised allocation and sealing make the machines tamper-proof before and after votes are cast.

The EC has also sought to increase the use of a voter verifiable paper audit trail (VVPAT) that helps in corroborating the results from the machine, and expects its full implementation by the 2019 Lok Sabha election. The data tallied from VVPAT-enabled EVMs in U.P. in around 20 constituencies in the recent Assembly election corroborated the election results. *Prima facie*, there is nothing to suggest that EVMs have been subject to manipulation. In fact, the use of EVMs has enhanced electoral democracy in tangible ways. Before electronic voting became universal in State and parliamentary elections in 2004, paper ballot-based polling had seen a high incidence of inadvertent invalid voting. A statistical study published in *The Hindu* last year showed that in about 14% of the 35,937 Assembly seats where elections were held between 1961 and 2003, invalid votes were greater than the margin between the winner and the runner-up. In more than 300 constituencies, invalid votes were as high as the votes polled for an effective candidate. The use of EVMs has cancelled out the effect of invalid votes, making the process robust besides keeping it simple and effective. EVMs are here to stay and there is no need to be distracted by politicians who criticise them to explain away their defeat.

Giving short shrift to children's rights

In the last three years, important entitlements for children have been undermined by the Centre



JEAN DRÈZE

The recent notification of the Ministry of Human Resource Development, making Aadhaar compulsory for midday meals in government schools, has attracted the criticism it deserves. This notification serves no clear purpose other than to force children to get enrolled under Aadhaar. The government, unfortunately, managed to create the impression that the notification had been retracted, when nothing of the sort has happened.

This is just the latest in a series of attacks on child-related rights during the last three years. A few examples, not exhaustive, are as follows.

No maternity entitlements

First, the Central government has violated women's right to maternity entitlements under the National Food Security Act (NFSA), 2013 for more than three years. Under the Act, every pregnant woman is entitled to maternity benefits of ₹6,000, unless she is already covered by maternity schemes in the formal sector. The Economic Survey 2015-16, in a welcome chapter on "Mother and child", made a strong case for maternal and early-life health programmes, including maternity benefits, noting that they "offer very high returns on investment". Yet, the Union Budget that followed, for 2016-17, did not make any provision for maternity entitlements beyond the pilot scheme (for 53 districts only) initiated by the previous government. This was all the more startling as the Central government had assured the Supreme Court in writing, on October 30, 2015, that this scheme – Indira Gandhi Matritva Sahyog Yojana – would be extended to all districts in 2016-17.

On December 31, 2016, Prime Minister Narendra Modi proudly

announced that pregnant women nationwide would soon be getting maternity benefits of ₹6,000. He projected this as a "new scheme" (sic), without any reference to the NFSA, perhaps hoping that the victims of demotisation would appreciate the gesture. With the Prime Minister finally endorsing maternity entitlements, things started moving after that, but not much: the allocation of ₹2,700 crore in the 2017-18 Union Budget is barely enough to cover a fourth of all births, even with the proposed 60:40 ratio for Centre:State funding. Word has it that the Central government may restrict the benefits to one child per woman, against the law. Further, there is still no sign of the said scheme. Quite likely, the government will take its own time to roll it out, and spend even less this year than the meagre allocation of ₹2,700 crore. So much for maternity entitlements under the NFSA being "a promising opportunity to improve nutrition during pregnancy", as the Economic Survey 2015-16 aptly put it.

No money, no eggs

Second, the Central government is giving short shrift to the Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS), a critical programme that was making good progress until it

was hit by Budget cuts in 2015-16. The initial Budget cut was about 50%. This was so mind-boggling that the government's own Minister for Women and Child Development, Maneka Gandhi, criticised the cuts in public, mentioning *inter alia* that they had made wage payments a "month-to-month suspense". The cuts were partly reversed later on, but, meanwhile, they had done much damage and sent a disastrous signal down the line. State governments were not amused.

For instance, in a letter sent to the Central government on July 15, 2016, the Government of Odisha complained that salary payments to anganwadi workers were held up by Budget cuts, while planned schemes for pre-school education and medicine kits "could not be taken up".

Third, the midday meal scheme is also being starved. Like ICDS, the midday meal scheme received shock treatment in the 2015-16 Budget, with an initial Budget cut of 36%. The allocation for midday meals in this year's Budget, ₹10,000 crore, is still 25% lower in money terms than the corresponding allocation four years ago (in real terms, the decline would be even larger). The Budget cuts, of course, must be seen in light of the fact that the share of States in the

indivisible pool of taxes was raised from 32% to 42% in 2015-16. The question remains why the axe fell so heavily on children – no other schemes were hit so badly in 2015-16, with the possible exception of drinking water and sanitation.

And then there is the issue of eggs. Many State governments are now providing eggs with midday meals in schools (and sometimes also in anganwadis). This is a real breakthrough, considering the high nutrition value of eggs. Had the Central government taken this forward as a matter of national policy, millions of children would be better nourished today. But here is an interesting pattern: most of the major States where eggs are still off the menu in schools and anganwadis are States with a Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) government, and vice versa. The BJP States, it seems, are not willing to antagonise upper caste vegetarian lobbies. No wonder the Central government is maintaining a studied silence on this matter.

Further blows

Fourth, plans are afoot to scrap the Janani Suraksha Yojana (JSY), a scheme of conditional cash transfers aimed at promoting institutional deliveries. Recent data clearly show a surge in institutional deliveries in the last 10 years or so (e.g. from 39% in 2005-6 to 79% in 2015-16 according to National Family Health Surveys), and it would be surprising if this had little to do with JSY. Incidentally, the decline of maternal mortality has also accelerated in recent years. Yet the Central government is now planning to phase out JSY. In a presentation made at Vigyan Bhavan on February 22, 2017, the Secretary, Women and Child Development, explained that JSY would be "subsumed" under the maternity benefit scheme from next year, as the latter provides a "higher amount for institutional delivery". In other words, maternity benefits will be made conditional on institutional delivery, in violation of the NFSA, and further, this linkage will be taken as an excuse to discontinue JSY, even though maternity entitlements and JSY serve distinct

purposes. Last but not least, Aadhaar is now being made compulsory for all these schemes – midday meals, ICDS (yes), maternity benefits, JSY, you name it. This is being done in the name of curbing corruption, but no credible evidence has been given that identity fraud is a serious problem in these schemes, or that Aadhaar is the best possible solution. Rather, this seems to be part of the blind drive to make Aadhaar ubiquitous and universal, regardless of the possible damage. The imposition of Aadhaar on midday meals and related schemes exposes, once again, the claim that Aadhaar is a voluntary facility. It also shows that the Centre has no respect for Supreme Court orders, and that the Supreme Court, for some reason, does not mind.

These examples suffice, I hope, to illustrate the Central government's harsh treatment of children. Somehow, their well-being is not seen as an important part of the "sabka saath, sabka vikas" project. When I asked a senior official of the Finance Ministry, some time ago, why the 2015-16 Budget cuts had fallen so heavily on children, he said that this pattern had not come to his attention. The cuts, he added, were made in a hurry and the details had not been "thought through". I mention this anecdote because it illustrates how easily children can fall off the policy radar. It is not that anyone is hostile to them, just that they have no voice.

The silver lining is that there is still some action for children at the State level. For instance, Tamil Nadu, Odisha and Telangana have introduced maternity entitlement schemes with their own resources, without waiting for the Central government. However, the indifference towards children at the Centre may percolate to State governments sooner or later. That would be a tragic loss, not just for Indian children but also for the entire nation.

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Turning the clock back

With several bilateral investment treaties lapsing on March 31, FDI inflows could take a hit



PRABHASH RANJAN

Come April 1, the Narendra Modi government would have taken India back to the pre-1991 inward-looking economic era as far as India's approach to bilateral investment treaties (BITs) is concerned.

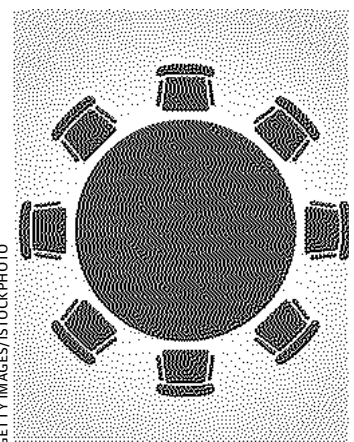
Till the early 1990s, India didn't sign BITs because foreign investment was not considered significant in a statist India. The absence of BITs meant foreign investors couldn't use international arbitration to hold India accountable under international law for any detrimental regulatory overreach. So, when the Foreign Exchange Regulation Act that came into force in 1974 required a foreign company to convert foreign equities into minority holdings of 40%, many helpless foreign companies like Coca-Cola, IBM, Kodak and Mobil either quit India or applied to the government to do so.

In 1991, India lifted its self-imposed economic exile by starting the process of experimenting with the market and wooing foreign in-

vestors. As part of this image makeover, India started signing BITs from the early 1990s. The signing spree continued unabated till 2010 with India inking BITs with 83 countries. However, rattled by many BIT claims brought by foreign investors from 2011 onwards, last year, India unilaterally issued BIT termination notices to 58 member countries. Reportedly, these BITs would lapse on March 31 after the expiry of the mandatory one-year notice period. Although the terminated BITs will continue to be relevant for existing foreign investment in India and Indian investment in these countries for the next 10-15 years due to survival clauses, any new investment, either from these 58 countries to India or vice versa, shall not enjoy BIT protection as was the case before 1991.

BITs and foreign investment

Some argue that foreign investment inflows to India are not dependent on BITs. Two studies question this wisdom. The first, done by Rashmi Banga, examines the impact of BITs on FDI inflows in 15 Asian developing countries including India from 1980-81 to 1999-2000. The study shows that BITs signed by these 15 countries with developed countries had a stronger and significant impact on FDI inflows in these 15 countries. However, BITs signed by these



15 countries with developing countries didn't have much impact on foreign investment inflows. Till the year 2000, out of the 14 BITs India signed, nine were with developed countries. Therefore, BITs had a significant impact on FDI inflows in India, which rose from \$393 million in 1992-93 to \$4,029 million in 2000-01. The second study, a very recent one by Niti Bhasin and Rinku Manocha, considers the impact of BITs on FDI inflows in India from 2001-2012. This study also demonstrates that BITs signed by India contributed to rising FDI inflows in the said period by providing protection and commitment to foreign investors. The significance of BITs in attracting investment was also em-

phasised by Canada's Trade Minister during his recent visit to India. The Minister said that absence of an India-Canada BIT is restricting the scope and volume of investments that Canadian pension funds can make in India.

It is nobody's case that BITs alone determines FDI inflows, but they do play a critical role in mitigating regulatory risks and thus encouraging investors to invest – critical for India, which has a dubious distinction of not being a friendly place to do business in.

Few takers for the Model BIT

To be fair to the government, it wants to sign new BITs with all these 58 countries based on the new Model BIT adopted in 2016. However, most developed countries have not shown much interest in the Model BIT because instead of striking a balance between investment protection and state's right to regulate, it tilts towards the latter. There are fundamental differences between the Indian approach and the Canadian and European approach to protection of foreign investment, as reflected in the investment chapter of the recently signed EU-Canada Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA). First, the EU-Canada CETA contains a "most favoured nation" (MFN) provision – a cornerstone of

non-discrimination in international economic relations – which is missing in the Indian Model BIT. Second, the Indian Model BIT, unlike the EU-Canada CETA, mandatorily requires foreign investors to litigate in domestic courts for five years before pursuing a claim under international law. Third, the EU-Canada CETA provides protection to foreign investors in situations where the state goes back on the concrete representations it made to lure an investor, which the investor relied upon while investing. The Indian Model BIT is silent on this, thus exposing foreign investors to regulatory risks. Fourth, the EU-Canada CETA talks of pursuing the establishment of a multilateral investment court to settle investment disputes. Will India support such a proposal?

Due to these differences, an India-Canada BIT or an investment treaty with EU looks difficult. Will the Modi government reconsider its BITs policy? If not, we are set to return and remain in the pre-1991 era, ironically, under the leadership of someone who was entrusted with the mandate to deepen economic reforms.

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Letters emailed to letters@thehindu.co.in must carry the full postal address and the full name or the name with initials.

The whipping boy

Earlier, it was poor Chief Election Commissioner who was the target of attack for parties that lost an election. Who can forget how former CEC J.M. Lyndoh was once targeted and accused of helping a prominent political leader for postponing the Gujarat election? Now, it is the turn of the voiceless Electronic Voting Machine ("Poor vote-getters blame the tools", March 27). It was the BJP which endorsed the book, *Democracy At Risk! Can We Trust Our Electronic Voting Machines?*, written by G.V.L. Narasimha Rao, with a foreword by L.K. Advani. The book claims that "the distrust among political leaders of all hues in voting machines is so high that most losers are wondering if

they had been unfairly defeated in polls. It is about time India shunned paperless voting to make its election outcomes verifiable and auditable". It is different matter now that the BJP is on a winning spree and seems to have forgotten about the book.

N. NAGARAJAN,
Secunderabad

Manual scavenging

The article, "An indelible blot on urban governance" (Some editions, March 26), which was also based on a dissertation, was moving as it highlighted the plight of manual scavengers. It is high time the Central and State governments gave serious consideration to the mechanisation of drainage and conservancy work. While the machinery used

in some instances for mopping is satisfactory, much needs to be done to avoid asphyxiation and skin infections. Generation after generation has been inheriting the job as a family tradition, and the time has now come to set the next generation free. Let them find a new life and experience the joys of life. The MS Act 2013 must be implemented in its true sense and spirit.

S. JAHNAVI DEVI,
Thalli, Krishnagiri, Tamil Nadu

Stressed assets

The continuing erosion of asset quality should worry the managements of public sector banks especially as most of it has been brought upon banks as a result of dancing to the tunes of political outfits (Editorial -

"A timely step", March 27). In this context, banks need to radically alter the way they deal with NPAs. Farm loans should be treated like any bank loan and not as a populist venture. There should not be any waiver. The concept of a farm loan as a freebie must be stopped. In case of any natural calamities, relief should be given as a grant. Governments should not push banks into business deals. The merits of these should be decided by bank managements.

K. RAJENDRAN,
Chennai

Fighting TB

This is in response to the article, "Being page" – "TB time bomb: the price of policy inertia", March 26).

The title is misleading as TB is one of the oldest diseases and there is no case of it being a time bomb. The incidence of TB has started falling; so too are cases of MDR/XDR-TB. Second, there is no policy inertia as there are enough diagnostic centres, specialised TB centres, DOTS centres, quality drugs. The real problem lies in the non-reporting of a large number of patients from private practitioners as these patients are not generally counselled well enough to avail of free drugs from public health service centres. Bedaquiline is a new drug and has still not been finalised for general treatment in India. The World Health Organization is also on board. There are

six centres where Bedaquiline is provided to about 600 selected patients who are also under constant monitoring. It is also available for "compassionate access". The government has taken upon itself the task of elimination of TB by 2025, five years ahead of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) target of 2030. The National Health Policy, 2017 has also mentioned the commitment of the government in defeating TB and also the 2.5% of GDP expenditure in the health sector.

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My songs, my royalties

The Ilayaraja-S.P. Balasubrahmanyam controversy puts the spotlight on our miserable record in fostering a fair and sustainable creative ecosystem for songwriters



ACHILLE FORLER

Light, it is said, is the greatest disinfectant and music the greatest healer. The controversy over the legal notice by Ilayaraja to S.P. Balasubrahmanyam to claim royalties for the performance of his songs will serve a greater purpose if it can clarify the confusion on this subject in the minds of music industry professionals and the legal fraternity.

Music is an essential component of our human identity. There is no culture without music. This country has been blessed with an unbroken line of musical giants – right from the Sama Veda, the Sangam and the Tamil Saiva saints to Amir Khusro and Tansen through to our own contemporaries like Hariprasad Chaurasia, M.S. Subbulakshmi, A.R. Rahman and countless others – who have woven the various traditions of this country into a musical tapestry that is a marvel to the world.

A fair deal for songwriters

But, to create, one must eat. Under earlier aristocratic and monarchic systems of governments, artists received their livelihood from the patronage of the rulers. Under modern copyright law, whose fundamentals are enshrined in the Berne Convention (1886) to which India is a signatory, lyricists and composers – jointly called songwriters – earn their livelihood through a fair remuneration for any use of their works during their lifetime and 60 years after their death. In other words, royalties are the salary and pension plan of creators and the legacy to their heirs.

This basic principle of copyright law was spectacularly reaffirmed in May 2012 when both Houses of Parliament, in a rare show of bipartisanship, unanimously adopted the amendments to the Copyright Act in the face of fierce opposition from film and music producers. In a letter to thank the Prime Minister for supporting creators, Bharat Ratna Pandit Ravi Shankar stated that he had retained his copyright in all the work he had done abroad but had been unable to retain a single copyright in any work he did in India because



• SATWIK GADE

“every time the record companies would flash the Copyright Act at me”. It is against this backdrop that we must examine Ilayaraja’s action.

The kind of stellar body of work that Ilayaraja has created in the last 40 years should have placed him among the world’s Top 10 wealthiest songwriters, somewhere between Andrew Lloyd Webber (\$1.2 billion) and Mick Jagger (over \$300 million). So one can understand the depth of his frustration – a feeling experienced by all songwriters across the country – when he sees little royalties, if any, from the use of his works even after they become super hits.

Why do Indian songwriters miss out on royalties? Can Ilayaraja prohibit the public (live) performance of his songs? To answer these questions, understanding the role of performing rights organisations (PRO) in the global collection and distribution of royalties is essential.

The importance of PROs

PROs were created in the mid-19th century in response to the impracticality for the owners of music to licence each and every live performance of their songs around the country and the globe. Under this arrangement, songwriters and their publishers would assign/transfer to a PRO – such as the Indian Performing Right Society (IPRS) in India – their right to authorise the public performance of their songs. In return,

the PRO would collect a fee for every musical performance in its country and distribute the money equally between the songwriters and the owner (publisher) after deducting a 15% service fee.

Additionally, the PRO will enter into reciprocal agreements with similar societies around the world, doing the same work in their own territory. Essentially, such agreements say that I give you the exclusive authority to collect the royalties when the music of my members is performed in your country; reciprocally, I will collect whenever music of your members is performed in my country. And we will pay each other.

Under this single-window clearance, the user obtains a licence to commercially perform any music in the world and the royalties collected by the PRO are distributed accordingly. Last year these PROs, representing four million lyricists-composers and their publishers, collected over ₹61,000 crore (€8.641 billion) in 123 countries!

This global system of royalties collection and distribution is regulated by the Paris-based not-for-profit International Confederation of Authors and Composers Societies (CISAC). To become a member and benefit from this global system, a PRO must conform to CISAC’s demanding standards of efficiency, fairness and transparency called The Professional Rules.

Ilayaraja is a member of the Brit-

ish ‘PRS for Music’ and was issued an international identifier no. 619442541. Having divested himself of his performing right in favour of PRS for music, he had therefore no locus standi to issue such a legal notice. Only PRS for Music and its sister societies around the globe have the right to licence the public performance of Ilayaraja’s songs. We must conclude that the celebrated composer received bad advice.

But this begs the question: why would Ilayaraja want to become a member of a foreign society? Because IPRS has a miserable record of service to its members. Its annual income is hardly ₹40 crore, a figure that compares poorly to similar PROs that in 2016 collected ₹225 crore in South Africa, ₹550 crore in Russia or a massive ₹1,825 crore in Brazil. Worse, in 2014 the IPRS surrendered its licence to operate as a legitimate copyright society when it came under investigation by two separate arms of the government. Thereafter its bank accounts were seized by the Enforcement Directorate.

Subsequently, a CISAC audit in 2015 found that IPRS was meeting almost none of its Professional Rules; after two warnings went unheeded, last June CISAC expelled the IPRS for one year. As a result, all royalties collected for the use of Indian music will be held in suspense accounts around the world until IPRS reforms and is readmitted into the CISAC fold.

A just ecosystem for all

Lastly, songs must be registered in every PRO of the world. This is the responsibility of the music publisher or, in its absence, of the PRO in the country of origin of the songwriter. We find that only 180 songs of Ilayaraja are registered in the U.S., only two in France, none in Germany... so even after the organisers of S.P. Balasubrahmanyam’s concerts pay royalties to a PRO, this money cannot reach Ilayaraja if his songs are not found in its database.

Only an efficient and transparent IPRS can foster a fair and sustainable creative ecosystem for all players, big and small, newcomers and established songwriters, to take the musical talent of India to global heights.

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Reclaiming public spaces

Eve-teasing leads to restrictions on women’s mobility



SONALDE DESAI

Walking through a rural market in Myanmar recently, I was shocked to see it dominated by women vendors and buyers. In rural Indian markets, particularly in the north, women vendors are few and shoppers are frequently accompanied by men. The India Human Development Survey (IHDS) of over 42,000 households across the country, organised by the University of Maryland and the National Council of Applied Economic Research (NCAER), shows that in 33% of the households, all the food shopping was done by men, and 22% of the women did not go to a local kirana shop alone. This is quite an omission given that the primary cooks in 98% of these households were women.

Women’s reluctance to venture alone into public spaces such as kirana shops spills over into more serious areas. Over 30% of the women surveyed said they would not go to a local doctor or health centre alone. Anecdotally, many doctors said that mothers wait too long to bring a sick child to a health centre; they wait until their husbands come home.

Reporting sexual harassment

This exclusion of women from public spaces is an integral part of Indian life; yet we have no way of knowing how pervasive sexual harassment is as it is missing from our daily conversations. We will probably never be able to find data that tell us how many women have faced some form of harassment. However, the IHDS statistics reveal a pattern. In 2004-05, when male respondents were asked how often women/girls are harassed in their neighbourhoods, 14% said that this happened at least sometimes, while 20% of the women in the same households reported the prevalence of harassment in the same neighbourhoods. In 2011-12, when the same households were interviewed again, the proportion of male respondents reporting harassment increased to 21% and women to 31%.

Many elements of these statistics are noteworthy. First, the question was about harassment in neighbourhoods where young women usually live close to their harassers (who are acquaintances or neighbours and not unknown perpetrators). Thus, the figure of 20-30% women reporting harassment is quite high. Second, women seem to consistently report more harassment than men in the same households/neighbourhoods. This suggests that either women don’t tell men in their families about incidents of harassment or men are unwilling to acknowledge and talk about it. Third, reported harassment in-

creased sharply between 2004-05 and 2011-12, by nearly 10 percentage points. It is not clear whether there is an increase in harassment or a greater willingness to talk about it.

Data, however, offer us little clue on where the harassment is concentrated. Although female residents of metro cities in 2011-12 reported more harassment in their neighbourhoods (39% versus less than 30% in villages and small towns), harassment is reported in almost all areas and affects both the rich and the poor. There are few studies of actual experiences of harassment, and among studies that exist, under-reporting remains a serious challenge. However, the consequences of sexual harassment on the way families and young women view their options, places they can travel to, and spaces they can occupy have more to do with perceptions of safety than the experience of violence. Women who live in neighbourhoods where they don’t perceive the possibility of sexual harassment are 1.33 times more likely to be comfortable going to a health centre alone than those who live in neighbourhoods where harassment is pervasive.



GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCK

Day-to-day aggressions that women and girls face in their own neighbourhoods is not violence perpetrated by strangers; it is the aggression young men visit upon women who share their community. Craig Jeffrey, formerly of Oxford University, who has extensively studied young men in Meerut College, notes that many young men, especially those unemployed, seem to feel that they are entitled to aggressively express their masculinities through what they euphemistically call ‘eve-teasing’. Eve-teasing is not harmless as it leads to restrictions on women’s mobility and shuts them out of public spaces.

Laws against eve-teasing and sexual harassment are necessary but not sufficient to address this challenge. The 2017-18 Budget committed to setting up Mahila Shakti Kendras in rural India. Can we re-emphasise the ‘shakti’ part of this mandate and strengthen these institutions? Young women must be prepared to reclaim their lives from harassment and young men must be taught to take pride in a masculinity that stands in solidarity with women.

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SINGLE FILE

The mistrust of science

Despite assurances that it is safe, the India-based Neutrino Observatory project continues to hit roadblocks

SHUBASHREE DESIKAN



The National Green Tribunal on March 20 placed in abeyance the environmental clearance given to the India-based Neutrino Observatory (INO) which was to come up in the West Bodi Hills in Theni district in Tamil Nadu. This was in view of the objection raised by an

environmentalist group regarding the distance of the project from a wildlife sanctuary. Initially slated to come up near Masinagudi, the project was moved to Theni because of objections that it was close to an elephant corridor. Ever since the INO got approval from the Ministry of Science and Technology, it has been drawing flak from activists despite repeated assurances from scientists that it is unlikely to harm the environment or affect the livelihoods of the people around the site.

While environmental issues, if they do exist, must be tackled with utmost care, at the heart of these objections is also fear and mistrust of science and scientists.

Doubts range from questions of safety to the questionable potential for application of neutrino physics. Are neutrinos likely to harm people when they strike them? Will the tunnels made for the observatory be used to store nuclear waste, given that the Department of Atomic Energy is funding the research? These and other questions have been addressed and answered in the negative by scientists. It is a fact that neutrinos from the sun are falling on us by the trillions every second. As for nuclear waste, storing radiating material will spoil all the chances of detecting neutrinos, which interact rarely.

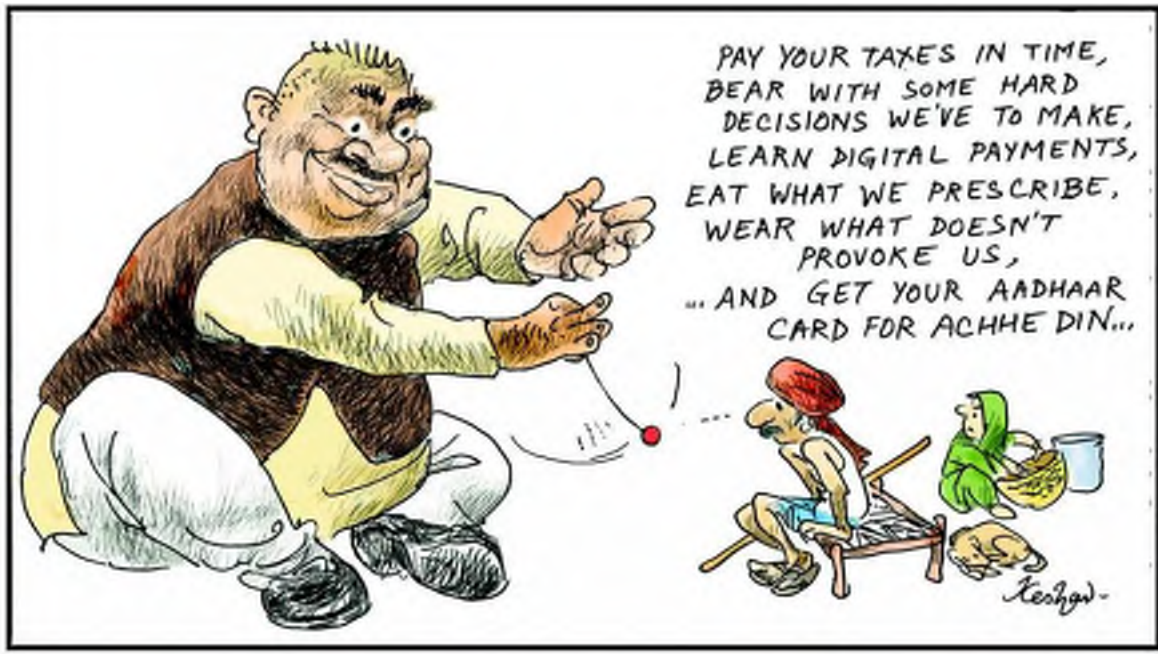
Usefulness of scientific research

This brings us to the usefulness of research. Basic science faces many questions today, and the hardest relates to its usefulness. If Newton had pursued strictly utilitarian research, he may never have sat under that apple tree and discovered the laws of gravitation. This means mechanics as we know it would not have existed – no cars, artificial satellites, or elevators. Srinivasa Ramanujan’s equations are being used to study black holes today. Did he even envisage this when he wrote them?

We cannot say at the point of invention how useful a discovery will be. Yet, we can certainly imagine and speculate how useful the science may be. Former President Abdul Kalam had written in this newspaper about how neutrinos could be used to sniff out signs of nuclear proliferation from a remote location. Also, with respect to dark matter – a hitherto undetected form which, along with dark energy, is believed to constitute 95% of the universe – he guessed how neutrinos could help in this search.

Additionally, there is the growing field of neutrino astronomy. Just like we have optical and radio astronomy, which reveal to us certain zones and constituents of the universe, we can literally widen our horizons with neutrino astronomy. Like radio astronomy, neutrinos can reveal exotic facets of the universe.

The INO project is good old science; rather than shying away from it, we must embrace it and assert our stake in it.



CONCEPTUAL Mutually Assured Destruction/Geopolitics

Mutual assured destruction (MAD) is a doctrine of military deterrence which holds that a full-scale use of nuclear weapons by one side against another is a non-starter if the other side also possesses the capability of nuclear retaliation. In effect, any such conflict would result in the complete annihilation of both. Coined by analyst Donald Brennan in the 1960s, the doctrine held through much of the Cold War, which prevented direct face-offs, the rivalry playing out instead through smaller proxy wars around the world and a severe arms race.

MORE ON THE WEB

‘How can airlines ban an MP from flying?’
bit.ly/2n9sA2b

ABSTRACT

More than just words

How the use of some words reveal our coping mechanisms

JACOB KOSHY

Studies show how the use of small words like ‘you’ and ‘I’ can reveal how communication is much more than just the sum of words exchanged. Researchers at the University of Michigan reported the results of an experiment in which they tested the contexts in which Americans use the word ‘you’. In the journal *Science*, Ariana Orvell, Ethan Kross and Susan A. Gelman, in their paper titled “How ‘you’ makes meaning”, note that ‘you’ is used more often than ‘I’ to cope with negative experiences or to share an insight.

The researchers conducted nine experiments with 2,489 people to understand why people use ‘you’ to not only refer to specific others, but also to reflect on their own experiences. “When people use ‘you’ to make meaning from negative experiences, it allows them to ‘normalise’ the experi-

ence and reflect on it from a distance,” said Ms. Orvell, a doctoral student in the Department of Psychology and the lead author of the study, in a press statement.

For example, “you win some, you lose some” would indicate that a person has failed in a situation, but using the word ‘you’ would mean that this could happen to anyone. “Or saying that ‘when you are angry, you say and do things that you will most likely regret’ might actually explain a personal situation, but the individual attempts to make it something many people relate to,” Ms. Orvell said.

Researchers asked participants to write about a personal experience: 201 were asked to make meaning from a negative event, 198 were asked to relive a negative event, and 203 were simply asked to write about a neutral experience. Those in the first group used the generic ‘you’ more in their essays

(46% used the word at least once) than those in the second ‘relive’ group (10% used the word at least once) and the ‘neutral’ group (3% used the word at least once). Using the generic ‘you’ led people to view the event as more distant, the researchers found.

Psychology Today (PT), a popular webzine, reports that the use of ‘you’ interests several researchers. Megan Robbins, a psychology professor at the University of California, Riverside, listened in on conversations between 52 couples coping with breast cancer. She found that the frequent use of ‘I’ and ‘me’ by the care-taking spouse and of ‘you’ by the person with cancer indicated a healthier marriage. “It says a lot about the relationship during a trying time. It was an indicator that the couple thought of themselves as a team – not exclusively focusing on the patient,” she told *PT*.

FROM The Hindu ARCHIVES

FIFTY YEARS AGO MARCH 28, 1967

Serious situation on food front

The Union Food Minister, Mr. Jagjivan Ram said to-day [March 27, New Delhi] that a serious situation was likely to develop on the food front in the next few months. The present tentative estimate of food production, he said, was only 76 million tonnes, at least 13 million tonnes less than what it was in 1964-65 and only 3.7 million tonnes more than what it was in 1965-1966. The food crisis could be met only by the Centre and the State Governments working together with a sense of urgency, common sharing and national purpose, Mr. Jagjivan Ram told Parliament in a review of the food situation.

A HUNDRED YEARS AGO MARCH 28, 1917

Alleged forging of note

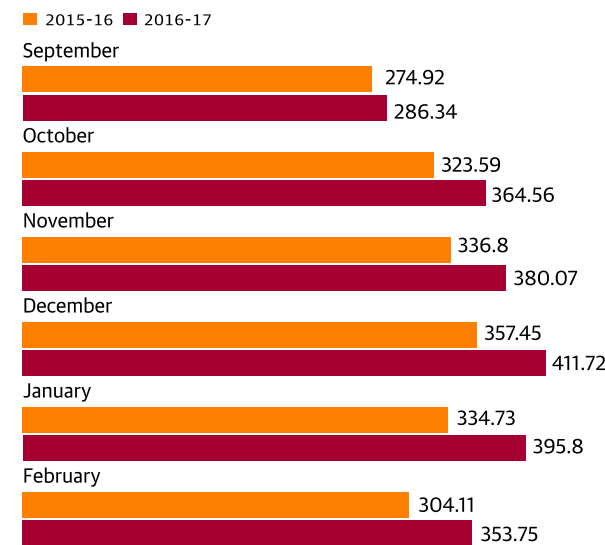
Sir Leslie Miller and Mr. Chandrasekhara Iyer at the Chief Court yesterday [Bangalore, March 28] disposed of a criminal appeal preferred by Nanjundappa, a trader of Shimoga, against the order of the Sessions Judge of Shimoga who convicted the appellant on charges of attempting to use as genuine a forged note of Rs. 100 and of possessing a forged note under Sections 489 B and 489 C of I.P.C. and sentenced him to five years and two years rigorous imprisonment respectively, sentences to run concurrently.

DATA POINT

Surge in earnings

Since the implementation of flexible pricing in Rajdhani, Duronto and Shatabdi trains in Sept. 2016, there has been an increase in railway earnings for these trains compared to the previous year

Month-wise comparison of railway earnings (in ₹ cr.)



SOURCE: MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS, RAJYA SABHA ANSWERS