

Yet More Quotas Won't Win Glory

Quota politics only works to fritter away energies

The government of Telangana has raised quotas in government jobs and admission to higher education for scheduled tribes and Muslims, raising the total number of reserved positions to 62% of the total. This will encourage groups elsewhere to renew their quota agitations.

Quotas are not the best form of affirmative action. They fail two key tests of good policy design: they do not incentivise the pursuit of excellence and they reinforce perceptions of backwardness.

The Bharatiya Janata Party opposes quota politics in Telangana, but when it claims that giving statutory status to a commission for backward classes is a sure-shot solution to social and economic backwardness, is it merely trying to replicate the grand success the statutory commissions for scheduled castes and tribes have had in the uplift of these communities?

Now, India is a middle-income economy and can afford to spend enough money to meet the aspiration of anyone who seeks higher education and has the minimum revealed aptitude for it.

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Open Up Petroleum Marketing As Well

It is welcome that public sector oil retailers plan daily revision of automotive fuel prices in five cities from May 1, with nationwide rollout of the "daily dynamic pricing" policy planned later this year.

However, in tandem, it is also vital to reform and overhaul market design for retailing petrol-products. The continuing policy of ring-fencing retail sales of petro-goods exclusively for oil companies is both anachronistic and incongruous.

In parallel, we also need speedy rationalisation of taxes on oil. We need to drop the perverse tax-on-tax and cascading rates across the value chain in oil.

What happens within this mysterious radius? Or, rather, since this is all about preventing bad stuff from happening, what will now no longer happen within this charmed circle?

If fungi are talking to bacterium, do we smell a new medium of communication?

Call This a Whiff of a Conversation

It is spooky to contemplate that everything around us is talking. As if it were not bad enough that all the gadgets in our homes and offices probably carry on secret conversations thanks to the Internet of Things — and plants do the same naturally — now microorganisms have been found to be part of this silent cacophony.

Considering these polyglot organisms vastly outnumber human beings, and there are at least 50,000 distinct terpene compounds found in plants and fungi, and many more in microorganisms, the sheer volume of inaudible communication being conducted everywhere is mind-boggling.

STATE OF PLAY There's a big shift taking place within the BJP. And it's important

The Party, With a Difference



Pranab Dhal Samanta

The BJP is in the middle of the most remarkable transition of a political party in contemporary India. Never before has a party, other than the Congress, commanded such dominating presence across the country.

On the surface, this may appear like an ideological victory, where one way of thinking has stamped out the other. But such an inference completely overlooks wider play of power politics.

Internally for the BJP, it's by now clear that there's no better political mantra than the PM's personal popularity. Which means: find a way to tie any campaign to Modi, from the tie-chavatay and civil polls to national polls.

The reinvention of the BJP under Prime Minister Narendra Modi and party president Amit Shah has hap-

pened along three broad contours where flawless party-government coordination has been at the core of the execution strategy.

The first contour of reinvention has been the growing and unmatched popularity of Modi. He is the first right-wing leader with pan-India appeal, which at this point even rivals strong regional leaders.

When a party seeks votes for a state election in the name of its supramemorial leader and succeeds, one must concede that the party's biggest face inspires credibility among a large section of the Indian electorate.

Development is the other axis on which the new BJP is redefining its presence. Development, 'Sabka saath sabka vikas', does the political trick that secularism may have done for Indira Gandhi.

The third vital axis in this new BJP paradigm is technology. The party has embraced technology to dissolve divisions of old vote-banks.



Lotus blooms, soft face tissues

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Tech is the New Tonic

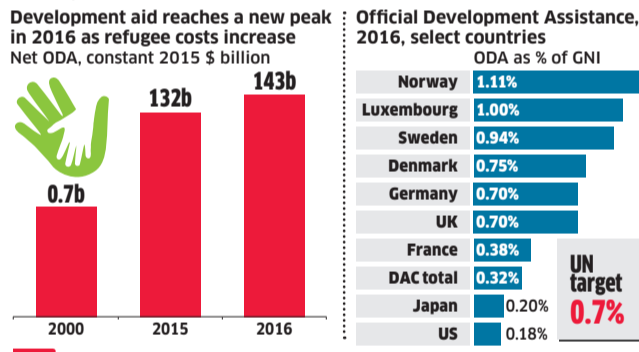
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The BJP has embraced technology to dissolve divisions of old vote-banks. It has enumerated those caste groups that have lost out or suffered from dominance by few

WIT & WISDOM
"In heaven, all the interesting people are missing."
Friedrich Nietzsche, Philosopher

Development Aid

Development aid reached a new peak of \$143 billion in 2016, an increase of 8.9% from 2015 after adjusting for exchange rates and inflation.



But despite this progress, bilateral aid to LDCs fell 3.9% in real terms from 2015, and aid to Africa fell 0.5%

MEME'S THE WORD



RED HERRING

No Way or the Highway



Indrajit Hazra

Sitting here, in an undisclosed location 502 metres away from a National Highway that wishes to remain anonymous, I'm thinking about the Supreme Court order prohibiting the sale of alcohol within 500 metres of national and state highways.

The earlier court order was modified in a March 31 order that lowered the threshold from 500 m to 220 m for towns

way. Glug-glugging half the bottle and returning to the car that he had been driving stone sober earlier. Now drunk as a raccoon, tyres a-squeal he sets out into the night on some NH, swerving and a potential roadrunner of a criminal driving into a tragedy in the making.

Dear God, let me get a drink 501 m away from this highway, which I hope will very soon, inspired by the West Bengal government, be denotified and turned into an 'arterial road'. Cheers.



One for the Road

Citings

Comfortably Numb

SIDHARTHA MUKHERJEE

I want to talk to you today about desensitisation. In my other life, I am an oncologist. Numbness, you might say, is my occupational hazard...

On April 21, 1890, a 30-year-old doctor-turned-writer named Anton Chekhov travelled to Sakhalin Island, a penal colony, north of Japan.

Why did an unusually sensitive and mild-mannered man — delicate of physical and mental constitution — travel to a hostile, faraway island inhabited by thieves, hustlers and murderers? Chekhov's medical training had left him spiritually depleted.

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More to Life Than Deals

SADHGURU JAGGI VASUDEV

If you really want the best deal in life, stop making deals. Yet, your very demeanour should be such that your client is simply bowled over. This is not a trick. The deal will happen if it's necessary; it won't happen if it's not. It is for the well-being of both parties, so it must be needed by both of you.

Let's say you're in love. If you are not fully involved, you will try to strike a deal. Once a bachelor who had been wooing an attractive woman for long mustered the courage to propose to her.

To his delight, he saw sympathetic gleam in her eyes. She nodded in agreement and said, "I think it's a great idea! Can I help you choose a pup?"

However, if your whole life is about making deals, you will be miserable. The devil is always making a deal with somebody. God never made a deal with anybody. God doesn't make deals.

Chat Room

Taxi & Telecom, Now Housing?

The introduction of Reliance Jio brought relief to telecom service consumers who now have an alternative to the incumbents who were charging exorbitant tariffs for calls and data.

SN KABRA

Mumbai

Yogi's Best Shot for UP Schools

Yogi Adityanath has said that schools in Uttar Pradesh need not be closed on the occasion of birth and death anniversaries of leaders.

To remember great leaders, then educational institutions will have to work on their birth and death anniversaries, conduct competitions and activities that can make the students know about them.

S RAMAKRISHNASAYEE

Ranipet

On Governance: AAP & Running

Without being partisan, let not the defeat of the AAP in the Rajouri Garden bypoll in Delhi be construed that it is a spent force. Delhi municipalities have done little to make the city beautiful and secure.

PARTHASARATHY SEN

New Delhi

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