

Lots to Do, Beyond Monsoon Forecasts

India must learn to manage its bounty of water

It is reassuring that as per current data projections, the India Meteorological Department expects the monsoon to be "normal", with likely rainfall put at 96% of the long-term average, with a 5% margin of error. A clearer picture would be available in June, when the El Niño phenomenon, which disrupts global wind flows following warming of the equatorial Pacific, has gathered pace. But the Met office says the Indian Ocean Dipole, also called the Indian Niño, could well counter El Niño and have benign effects here. Welcome as this is, India has to move beyond dependence on a normal monsoon for its well-being.

It is vital that we are better prepared for poor precipitation and consequent stress in the water economy. Given our highly seasonal pattern of rainfall, with 50% precipitation occurring in 15 days, and over 90% of river flows taking place in just four months, we need to boost water storage and harvesting, and recharge groundwater. The way forward is to shore up community-level water storage, such as in tanks, check dams and other local rainwater harvesting and water recharge systems. In tandem, there is much potential to economise on water usage in agriculture, power generation and in industry. What is required is holistic policy design including new seed varieties for water-intensive crops like paddy, and incentives not to grow water-guzzling crops like sugarcane in areas of poor rainfall. We also need to step-up drip-irrigation, especially in arid areas, and allocate more resources for irrigation generally, so as to better cope with the vagaries of the monsoon. Irrigation maintenance needs policy focus.



We need policy for more sustainable water usage and proactively change demand patterns. The policy of gratis power, apart from crippling the fisc, can hugely distort demand and lead to unsustainable 'mining.' Investors can privilege companies that are frugal in their water use and recycle effluents. New technologies for desalination keep cropping up. India must identify low-cost methods. Inter-state sharing of water must become rational, not emotional.

There is much to commend the spirit that Indians must use an Indian language to govern themselves. Votaries of this sentiment cite the example of Russian, Chinese and French leaders speaking in their own language whenever they make an official speech, and wonder why Indians alone hanker after the language of their erstwhile colonial masters. The trouble is, India does not have one single indigenous language that all 130 crore Indians naturally identify as theirs. Hindi and its variants form the mother tongue for 41% Indians. That leaves 59% of India's population speaking other languages, and not just the 21 non-Hindi languages recognised as official. Since laws and rules call for unambiguous precision, English, the language that has evolved to produce separate registers for specialised areas of knowledge or practice, remains the principal language of governance in India. This corresponds with the experience of most former colonies, which continue to use the colonial ruler's language for governance. One country that stands apart

When the Red Light Goes Out of Their Lives

The Modi government deserves kudos for the decision to remove the most visible symbol of India's VIP culture: the flashing red beacon atop the vehicles of the high and mighty. By removing the provision in the central motor vehicle rules that allowed the Union and state governments to permit designated functionaries to use such markers of exalted status, the government has struck a blow for equality. The move will discomfit a tiny minority, but delight the vast majority. It is a low-cost but powerful way of reiterating the present government's stated commitment to reduce the gap between the elite and the subaltern. That makes it a politically shrewd move as well.

Supreme Court lawyer Harish Salve has correctly pointed out that the Cabinet decision to do away with red beacons on top of official cars really needs only 10 minutes to implement, not 10 days. The fact that it took a decision at the very highest level and the provision of a 10-day grace period shows how attached our nation's red beacon-wallahs are to their flashing symbol of power. It will take them more than a week to come to terms with the idea of life without red lights. Or blue, which has been reserved for emergency services. Now, it has become that much harder to stand apart from the hoi polloi, especially when the latter number well over a billion. It will be a scary prospect, and some may need proper counselling about how to cope with their altered circumstances, having had that beacon lighting the way for most of their lives.

This soon-to-be-debauched category will need to think of other ways to assert their importance. Looking on the bright side, more than a few could try cadging study tours abroad this summer to see how politicians and senior civil servants elsewhere manage to do without.

Battlefield beckons the Resident Evil, Tomb Raider and Doom sayer

May the Twiddliest Fingers Win eSports

Who said those joystick-holding, console-wielding gamers, considered once as a subspecies of TV screen-facing couch potatoes, are lazy good-for-nothings, stuck to their PS4s or Xboxes while their more kinetic counterparts indulge in real sports in the great wide open? The Olympic Council of Asia (OCA) has declared that electronic sports (eSports)—the respectable tag given to video gaming—will be introduced as a medal sport at the 2022 Hangzhou Asian Games in China, and as a demonstration sport next year at Indonesia.

In case you give out an incredulous snort, remember, your beloved cricket made the grade only at the 2010 Asian Games in Guangzhou. And, yes, the China connection does matter. It is the partnership of the OCA and AliSports, the sports division of the Chinese online retail giant Alibaba, that has plugged in eSports into the second-largest multi-sport event in the world after the Olympics. So, along with the usual field hockey and badminton players, gymnasts, boxers and golfers (no, chess isn't quite spectator sport-worthy yet), there will be contestants fighting for medal glory in categories such as FIFA 2017, Moba (Multiplayer Online Battle Arena) and RTA (Real Time Attack). Did we just hear you say that this was inevitable since the once-in-four-years event is called Asian Games, not Asian Sports?

CURSOR Superior teaching of English alone can put an end to the English-medium delusion

English, for Hindi's Sake



T K Arun

President Pranab Mukherjee recently put his approval to a recommendation of the Committee of Parliament on Official Language, to have ministers and the President deliver official speeches in Hindi, if they can speak Hindi.

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The trouble is, India does not have one single indigenous language that all 130 crore Indians naturally identify as theirs. Hindi and its variants form the mother tongue for 41% Indians. That leaves 59% of India's population speaking other languages, and not just the 21 non-Hindi languages recognised as official. Since laws and rules call for unambiguous precision, English, the language that has evolved to produce separate registers for specialised areas of knowledge or practice, remains the principal language of governance in India.

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One country that stands apart

from this tradition is Indonesia. After gaining Independence from the Dutch, they adopted Bahasa Indonesia. Bahasa Indonesia is essentially Malay, the mother tongue for just about 2% of Indonesians, most of them concentrated around Jakarta.

Indonesia comprises over 17,000 islands, whose inhabitants speak over 700 languages. A little over one-third the population speak Javanese, the language of Java. Yet, Indonesia decided to adopt Malay as their official language, because they did not want to privilege the dominant linguistic group over others. Malay was used by traders who sailed from island to island and everyone understood Malay. So, Malay, sprinkled with words from Sanskrit, became the official language, dubbed Bahasa, derived from Bhasha, meaning language.

Hindi as Link Language

India can learn from the wisdom of modern Indonesia's founding fathers. To privilege one language is to privilege one language group over the rest, creating resentment and revolt: viz the anti-Hindi agitations.

In India, Hindi is the natural candidate to evolve into the link language for all of India. When an auto-parts maker from Ludhiana peddles his wares in Kochi, he speaks neither Punjabi nor Malayalam, but Hindi. Bollywood performs yeoman service in this regard, its everyday Hindustani, rather than the Sanskrit-heavy patois favoured by some, extending its reach every passing day. The thing to do is to let this evolution happen on its own. Forcing Hindi down people's throats is the equivalent of digging up a seed you have planted to see if it has sprouted roots.

What about English, how do we slough off this colonial skin in which we have grown comfortable? The



Sign quanon

re is absolutely no need to. English is the new world language, of business, research and finance. More and more Indians must master the language, not abandon it. The point is that Indians must become at least bilingual. Many Indians seamlessly switch from their mother tongue to Hindi and English and back.

Among the elite and the would-be elite, the danger is neglect of the mother tongue in the pursuit of English. The biggest culprit here is the craze for English-medium education. Indians are, by and large, caught up in a grand illusion that children cannot master English unless they learn history, science and mathematics in English. Housemaids spend whatever savings they make from slaving away at multiple homes to send their little ones to so-called English-medium schools, where their wards are permanently maimed by being forced to learn things in a language they never hear spoken at home. They end up not learning anything—not English, not history, maths or science, and not even their mother tongue.

The only way Indians will get over such English-medium self-harm is to improve the quality of English language teaching. Today, with smartphones and fast data connections that can access rich audio-visual content, this is not difficult at all. German, Dutch and Scandinavian children learn in their mother tongue, but also learn English.

Let It Evolve

But no one learns a language just from the classroom. Children must read books of all kinds, in English, their mother tongue, Hindi. Libraries should figure among approved CSR activities. Books could also include inexpensive e-books.

Once assured that English can be learnt without going to an English-medium school, people would be happy to learn their own language and other disciplines through it.

That process would create the specialised registers languages need for specific disciplines. One can simply borrow technical terms from English, as English borrowed from Latin for much of medicine.

We are okay with Hindi lines from Aamir Khan or Alia Bhat. But Pranab Babu? Spare Hindi, please!

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Hindi is fast emerging as India's shared link language; the task is to not hinder it by using force, even as we step up the quality of English language teaching

WIT & WISDOM

"Follow love and it will flee, flee love and it will follow thee."

John Gay
Poet

Aviation in 2017

Airlines are expected to ferry almost four billion travellers in 2017 and carry around 55.7 tonnes of cargo, according to latest global projections released by IATA. Worldwide, airlines are expected to take delivery of some 1,700 new aircraft, expanding the global commercial fleet by 3.6%. Here's a snapshot...

Carriers	Net post-tax profits (\$ mn)	Avg profit per passenger (\$)
North American	18,100	19.58
European	5,600	5.65
Asia-Pacific	6,300	4.44
Middle Eastern	300	1.56
Latin American	200	0.76
African	-800	-9.97

Revenue expected: **\$736 billion** (represents a 4.1% net profit margin)

Air cargo accounts for 35% of the total value of goods traded globally

Value of trade carried by air transport in 2017: **\$5.7 trillion** (representing a 4.9% increase over 2015)

\$29.8 billion Global industry net profit expected

MEME'S THE WORD

YOU DONT KNOW ME? I OWN SNAPCHAT!

OK MIRANDA KERR WILL BE MY WIFE!

SEN & SENSIBILITY

Snap At Our Own Heels



Rajyasree Sen

Way back in 2015, Snap Inc CEO Evan Spiegel had allegedly said in a meeting, "This app [Snapchat] is only for rich people. I don't want to expand into poor countries like India and Spain." Two years later, all hell broke loose in India. You've got to give it to us. We may be a little late to the party, but at least we show up.

This unsubstantiated comment was attributed to Spiegel in a lawsuit filed by Anthony Pompliano, who worked at Snap Inc for three weeks before being fired. Snap opened the lawsuit's details to the public earlier this week. As a result of this heinous attack on India by calling us poor—even though we are a developing country—Indians decided to boycott Snapchat and uninstall the app. And if they didn't have it installed already, then install Snapchat and then uninstall it.

So how important is India to the world of Snap and Spiegel? And how much would this Indian satyagraha hurt Snap? In September 2016, eMarketer had estimated that Snapchat derived 95% of its ad revenues from the US. By 2018, a quarter of Snap's ad revenue is projected to come from outside the US.

According to Snap, "On average, 158 million people use Snapchat daily, and over 2.5 billion snaps are created every day." Snapchat reportedly has a user base of four million in India. Most importantly, while reacting to Spiegel's affront of India, we should keep in mind that India has a per-capita income of \$1,700, far behind that of key emerging markets such as Brazil, Indonesia, Philippines, Mexico and Turkey.

Do Indians really think that the economy of a country plays no part in influencing how multinationals decide the

ir global expansion plans? And would we be as appalled if Spiegel had said that Indonesia was too poor a country to enter?

Forget business logic. That the comments by Spiegel are unverified has not stopped the outrage machine. Indians on social media have spent the last couple of days proving that not only are we poor economically, but we are also poor in how we respond.

First, a consolidated social media campaign was begun to downgrade the app on the popular app stores with the hashtags #UninstallSnapchat and #BoycottSnapchat trending on Twitter. The app rating dropped to a 'single star' from a supposed 'five star' on the Apple App Store. But there was a flip side to this move. A bevy of our easily-offended Indians uninstalled Snapchat's app instead of Snapchat's. Poor Snapdeal CEO Kunal Bahl. It wasn't even that Spiegel and he went to the same college, Kunal being a Wharton graduate, the Snapchat CEO having studied at Stanford.



That snapshot kind of backfired, didn't it?

Many hyper-enthusiastic Indians subsequently decided that along with being poor and hard of reading, India should also display our misogyny while standing up for the rights of our country. So, many of this lot, with a social media version of pitchforks and torches in hand, took to writing the most vile and offensive comments to model Miranda Kerr. Why? Because she is engaged to Spiegel.

And, finally, because we are so mindful of ethics, there were Indian hackers who had claimed that they had found a chink in Snapchat's database last year and siphoned details of 1.7 million users, leaked this data on the darknet. Because that makes so much sense.

Violating the privacy of Snapchat's users—even though its users had done nothing to offend India—is, of course, the perfect way to get back at Spiegel's alleged remark against India. Oh, India and the Easily Offended Internet-Friendly Indian! You sure know how to ensure that people will respect India internationally.

Who wouldn't want to do business in a country that seems to have a legion of social media users who appear to lack reason and reading skills, and don't understand the concept of online privacy or possess the ability to respect women? If Spiegel didn't have a low opinion of India before, this loud lot clearly ensured that he does now.

This is how we lose the high ground—if we ever claimed to have it in the first place. Combating Spiegel's comments with facts and data proving that India is indeed the leprechaun standing with a pot of gold at the end of the 'poor' rainbow would have made sense. Although that would require the Easily Offended Indian to number-crunch and string a complete, non-abusive sentence together.

It's far easier to hack and violate the privacy of innocent users and to hurl abuses at Spiegel's fiancée instead. We may not be economically bankrupt, but thanks to many online Indians, we sure are teetering on the edge of ethical and moral bankruptcy.

Citings

Managing Strategy

MICHAEL BUCY ET AL

From the beginning, organisations should assume that most initiatives will be worth a lot less than they think. Moreover, most of the companies in our sample fell short of their initial goals and needed an additional round of idea generation.

And, they had to be careful about allocating management time, so that smaller initiatives got their due—they accounted for about half of the programme's value, but they could get lost in a focus on only the biggest projects. Organisations must resist the temptation to spread their most effective leaders too thin. Three initiatives were the typical burden a leader could shoulder at once.

Engaging more of the organisation as potential initiative owners allows each initiative to get the support it needs without overburdening a few high-performers. Reporting must be prioritised as well. Too many milestones in initiative plans can create unnecessary burdens; most programmes try to capture too many metrics—and usually fewer than 30% end up actually being used.

Most initiatives were at least somewhat delayed in implementation. But organisations could reduce delays with judicious planning of milestones, supplemented by weekly actions... The transformations we examined all followed a similar pipeline approach for tracking initiatives. The stages of the pipeline begin at level zero—or "LO"—with the collection of as many ideas as possible, regardless of feasibility or size.

From "Keeping Transformations on Target"



Insatiable Appetite

HEMPRABHA CHAUHAN

Ignorance breeds desire and desire prompts us to actions, good and bad. Good actions bring punya, making us eligible for enjoyable experiences. Bad actions cause paap, or sin, subjecting us to suffering and sorrow. Both, however, are bondages of the jiva and cause us repeated birth and death, with enjoyments and sufferings intermingled according to our deeds.

To overcome ignorance and desire, the Gita propounds the doctrine of Nishkama-karma: work without desire for the fruits of action. When there is total surrender and work is done without desire, we receive God's grace.

Desires arise from illusion and ignorance. Philosophers have pointed out that the problem of illusion coexists with a state of ignorance. But when we are illumined, the ignorance vanishes. If one were to honestly report the experiences of the world, one would say, "All these things are mere shadows." Swami Vivekananda once wrote in a letter, "Everything in the Universe appears to me now like pictures hanging on the walls of a room."

To a person who has attained to that state, the entire universe is a two-dimensional affair; there is no concrete reality. Just shadows. And even these, after a time, become obliterated. So, desire nothing but God. Work honestly without desire. This world is good so far as it helps one access the higher world. Otherwise, all ends in illusion and ignorance.

Chat Room

No Quality in Quality Jobs

Apologies the Edit, 'Fully-Manned State. Effective Governance' (Apr 19), bribing those in the selection chain is unavoidable: bribing is merit-neutral; everyone has to pay for getting in. This affects the quality of choice and deprives the meritorious poor of an opportunity. Besides, work and living conditions in semi-urban and rural areas deter women candidates from taking up jobs like teachers, police, nurses and doctors. This limits the sources of recruitment and promotes compromise on quality. Lastly, most of these jobs call for a high degree of professional competence and commitment. It is safer to leave these positions vacant than filling them up with half-qualified personnel.

Y G CHOUKSEY
Pune

Make Fuel Costly on Sundays

Starting May 14, petrol pumps will remain closed on Sundays to reduce fuel consumption. 'Though a good move, this may lead to long queues on Saturday and black marketing on Sundays. Instead, on Sundays, fuel can be made available at a premium with exceptions for essential services like ambulance. One hopes for pollution-free Monday mornings, and the flora and fauna would bless the fuel conservation move.



TS KARTHIK
Chennai

UPA 2 & UK PM: Telling Contrast

This refers to "Theresa May Chases Early UK Polls in Gamble for Brexit Unity" (Apr 19). Under conflicting postures adopted by other parties over Brexit, she had to take a firm decision to steer the politico-economic agenda. Congress of UPA II had its similar moment: with two more years to go, major scams were emerging. Had it sacked a couple of ministers, its own and of allies, precipitating a mid-term election, it would have put on a halo of pious probity and saved itself the ignominy in 2014. While it lost out on pragmatism and political finesse, the UK PM has exhibited both, to the surprise of friends and foes.

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