



Lines of defence

The inclusion of paper audit trails to the EVMs is costly but perhaps unavoidable

In the face of extreme and unreasonable complaints against Electronic Voting Machines by a number of political parties, the Election Commission perhaps had no choice but to have the working of the machines corroborated by a paper audit trail. To have such a facility ready for all constituencies by the 2019 Lok Sabha election is expensive (an estimated ₹3,174 crore) and also unnecessary (paper trails are at best required in a few constituencies to corroborate results). Its request to the Law Ministry to release funds for the procurement of voter-verifiable paper audit trail (VVPAT) machines for the 2019 Lok Sabha election should be interpreted in this context. As many as 16 lakh VVPAT machines will be required and only an urgent release of funds will allow the machines to be ready in time for 2019. It was possible for the EC to brush off the complaints from the Bahujan Samaj Party and the Aam Aadmi Party following their defeat in Uttar Pradesh and Punjab respectively, but it clearly became increasingly difficult for it to ignore the clutch of parties that joined the chorus, some demanding a return to paper ballots.

The EC has repeatedly assured voters that there are enough procedural and technical safeguards to prevent large-scale tampering or manipulation of EVMs. Since 2006, elections have witnessed the use of upgraded EVMs – Model 2 machines, with security features such as dynamic coding of key codes on ballot units and their transfer as messages to the control unit in an encrypted manner. EVMs feature encoded software that is burnt one-time on to programmable chips, enabling them to be used as stand-alone machines rather than computer-connected units, thus preventing any hacking by remote devices. Model 3 machines produced after 2013 have additional features such as tamper detection. The EC has laid down procedural rules of locking and storing EVMs before and after polling, besides functional checks and tests in the presence of representatives of political parties. The addition of the VVPAT machine to the process is to allow for cross-checking of EVM results through a paper audit, completing another layer of accountability to the indigenously produced machines (only the microchip is manufactured outside the country with the machine language embedded on it). Contrary to glib claims about tampering, studies show the introduction of EVMs has resulted in a drastic reduction in electoral fraud (rigging, stuffing of ballot boxes, etc.) and allowed for greater voter participation. Since reverting to the older paper ballot system will be regressive, the only option in the face of the protests is to have a back-up in the form of a paper trail – something that will hopefully put a quietus to the controversy.

Equity in debt

The expert panel's recommendation to review the fiscal responsibility law is timely

The advice of the expert committee to review the Fiscal Responsibility and Budget Management (FRBM) Act of 2003 requires attention, given India's track record. This is all the more so given the born-again political conviction that promises of random largesse to voters is just fine. Excessive and unsustainable borrowing by the government is obviously perverse as it entails a cost on future generations while crowding out private investment. In the past, fiscal irresponsibility has cost jobs, spiked inflation, put the currency in a tailspin and even brought the country to the brink of a default. The possibility of default may have resulted in the liberalisation of the economy in 1991, but the key trigger was irrational public spending on borrowed money in the late-1980s. Less than a decade later, with fiscal discipline faltering and the deficit shooting up to 10% of GDP, the FRBM law was enacted to 'limit the government's borrowing authority' under Article 268 of the Constitution. But the target to limit the fiscal deficit to 3% of GDP (by 2009) was abandoned after the 2008 global financial crisis as a liberal stimulus reversed the gains in the fiscal space, creating fresh macro-level instability. The FRBM Act's deficit target is now only likely to be met next year.

Such damage transmissions from the political economy to the real economy need to be checked forthwith. The committee's proposal to maintain the 3% target till 2019-20 before aiming for further reduction is pragmatic, as the 'extraordinary and unanticipated domestic development' of demonetisation happened during its tenure. Such an event, the committee has said, could trigger an escape clause from fixed fiscal targets in its proposed rule-based framework. Instead of focusing purely on the fiscal and revenue deficit numbers, which should be brought down to 2.5% and 0.8% of GDP respectively by 2023, the panel has called for paring India's cumulative public debt as a proportion to GDP to 60% by 2023 – from around 68% at present. The latter, a simpler measure for solvency purposes, should inspire confidence among rating agencies. Though this has put paid to the government's hope that a fiscal deficit range could be targeted instead of absolute numbers, the Finance Minister has committed to the 3% target for the next two years, from the 3.2% target for 2017-18. A clear fiscal policy framework in tandem with the monetary policy framework already adopted could act as a powerful signal of commitment to macroeconomic stability. The Centre must swiftly take a call on the panel's recommendations – including for a new debt and fiscal responsibility law, and the creation of a Fiscal Council with independent experts that could sit in judgment on the need for deviations from targets. It is equally critical that States are brought on board, as the 60% debt target includes 20% on their account. Their finances are worsening again even as the clamour for Uttar Pradesh-style loan waivers grows.

Lonely and disinterested

Excess focus on bilateralism is leaving India isolated in its larger neighbourhood



HAPPYMON JACOB



DEEPAK KHARICHANDAN

Picture this: China is steadily increasing its geostrategic presence in South, Central and West Asia; there is a China-Russia-Pakistan axis on the rise in Southern Asia; China and Russia are revelling in a new-found rapprochement and aim to fill the geopolitical vacuum bound to be created by the U.S. withdrawal from the region; and, a retired Pakistan army chief is all set to take over as the first Commander-in-Chief of the Saudi-backed Islamic Military Alliance (IMA). Now ask yourself: Which regional power has been missing from these significant developments on the regional geopolitical landscape?

New Delhi's foreign policy establishment and its national security team are either clueless about what is happening in its broader neighbourhood or seem to lack the wherewithal to anticipate, engage and shape geostrategic outcomes in the region and beyond. Or are they simply disinterested? Either way, New Delhi is increasingly looking like a grumpy old man constantly whining about age-old fears, stubbornly unwilling to explore new opportunities and face new challenges.

China-Russia-Pakistan axis

Alliances are natural to international politics and friend-enemy binaries and historical hesitations are often cast aside when such alliances take shape. While China and Pakistan have been allies since the 1960s, China and the Soviet Union weren't the best of friends during the Cold War, nor did they have a great relationship in the post-Soviet days. Pakistan and the Soviet Union were Cold War rivals, and Russia did not, until recently, share a close relationship with Pakistan. All that is changing now, with them

ganging up to undo American dominance in the region, among other things.

The Afghan reconciliation process is a major focus of this new partnership. In a December 2016 meeting in Moscow, they highlighted the importance of seeking a "flexible approach" to dealing with the Afghan Taliban. This is over and above their ongoing individual engagements with the various parties to the Afghan conflict.

Clearly, this new axis of a resurgent Russia, ambitious China and opportunistic Pakistan, in combination with other related developments, will not only diminish U.S. power in the region but could also potentially constrain Indian influence. Sino-Russian relations, through joint military exercises and the Russian sale of advanced weaponry to China, for instance, could hurt India's strategic options globally.

Beijing has traditionally been a reluctant dealmaker, preferring to stick to business instead. Of late, it has overcome this pragmatic inhibition, first by joining the Afghan peace process and now increasingly focussing on West Asia. In a sense, its engagement in regional conflicts is a logical extension of its One Belt, One Road (OBOR) project. Having committed huge sums to the project, Beijing realises that some of its inherent political risks should be reduced by engaging in regional conflict resolution processes, a lesson well learnt from the playbook of great power diplomacy.

Both China and Russia have been

active in the West Asian theatre. Having vetoed U.S.-sponsored sanctions against Syria, they believe that it is necessary to nudge the warring Syrian factions to negotiate. Beijing has also been reaching out to and balancing the various adversaries in the region such as Israel, Saudi Arabia and even Iran, and increasingly talking the language of reconciliation. Also, recall while New Delhi buckled under pressure from Washington to take sides on Iran, Beijing refused to do so.

Compared to the thornier West Asia, engaging South Asia is easier for China given that the smaller countries in the region see it as an infrastructure provider, with deep pockets and without the usual moral science lessons. Bangladesh, one of India's close allies in the region, is likely to attend the OBOR summit in May and may even sign up for it. Chinese interest in Afghan reconciliation stems not only from a security/terrorism angle but also more significantly to ensure the sustainability of OBOR given its importance in providing access to Central Asia.

Russian U-turns

Make no mistake, Russia is looking beyond a reluctant India in South Asia: President Vladimir Putin has no time for diplomatic subtleties and tales about the long history of Indo-Russian relations. Ignoring Indian sensitivities, Moscow has gone ahead with forging strategic ties with Islamabad: from lifting the arms embargo, selling weaponry, discussing the future of Afgh-

anistan, to joint military exercises.

When Russia formally joins OBOR, it will have indirectly taken a position on Kashmir which is not necessarily in keeping with the Indian stand on the issue. If the Russian envoy's remarks at the Heart of Asia conference in December are anything to go by, Moscow is also taking a pragmatic stand on terrorism in South Asia.

The Pakistan pivot

The 'global outcast', Pakistan is today an inevitable lynchpin of Southern Asian geopolitics. In a world of realpolitik, norm regress and opportunistic bandwagoning, Pakistan is the new regional favourite. Whether we like it or not, now that Pakistan's generals have waited out the Americans and NATO from Afghanistan, the outcomer of the Afghan conflict will largely be determined by Rawalpindi. This fits well with the Chinese and Russian regional grand strategies. Gone are the days when Islamabad was currying favour with Washington; today, Moscow and Beijing are actively courting it. Normative considerations apart, it is this sense of the big picture that prevents Beijing from acting against Pakistan-based terror groups; irritating India is a side benefit.

For sure, Pakistan has consistently used terrorism as a tool of statecraft, and yet there is a recognition today that it is a pivotal state in addressing terror. Moreover, while the IMA is still in its infancy, we need to look closely at its potential. Will it emerge, even though it is at a moment an overwhelmingly Sunni sectarian force, as a potent regional military alliance in the years to come? What role would Pakistan play in this 'Islamic NATO'? What implications would it have for India?

Head-in-the-sand approach

Amidst such geopolitical reshaping of the region, New Delhi has done precious little to counter them or to propose a collective regional future. The South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC),

which should have been the central plank of India's 'neighbourhood first' policy, is in doldrums today. Having jettisoned SAARC and unwilling to promote other regional initiatives, institutional or issue-based, India continues to prefer unilateralism towards neighbours. The shortcomings of bilateralism in a world hungry for institutions and structures should be evident to us.

The External Affairs Ministry's reactive diplomacy – its unflinching institutional hallmark – is unable to see the wood for the trees in its relations with Beijing. How does, for instance, designating Masood Azhar a terrorist become India's core interest *vis-à-vis* China? Should we allow a terror-monger to determine our relationship with one of our biggest trading partners?

While it is true that the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor will pass through Pakistan-controlled territory that India has claimed, we should find a via media with China on the issue rather than publicly dismiss the initiative. Given that OBOR is a futuristic mega-project, its benefits as well as cross-national and inter-continental linkages, all of which would eventually bypass India, will only become clearer in the years to come. To base our analysis on current cost-benefit calculations in terms of immediate returns and short-term sustainability is missing the big picture. Moreover, our ability to create regional infrastructural arrangements, excluding China and Pakistan, remains limited. In short then, a few decades down the line, India could end up far more isolated: the logical conclusion of an inward-looking political class.

It's time New Delhi focussed on the big picture and avoided puritanical positions while addressing the emerging fault lines on the global geopolitical landscape.

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After the referendum

Turkey feels more and more socially divided, and Recep Erdoğan may not govern to unify



VIJAY PRASHAD

Turkey is a fundamentally divided society. The vote this weekend over a referendum to give the President additional powers and a longer term, showed the extent of Turkey's divisions. The "Yes" vote, a victory for President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, was won with 25 million votes, while the "No" campaign fetched almost 24 million votes. But given the nature of electoral democracy, a fractured verdict will nonetheless mean an expansion of the powers of Mr. Erdoğan and of his ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP). The referendum amends the 1982 Constitution with some significant provisions, such as making the President both the head of state and the head of government, weakening Parliament, the judiciary and the military. Mr. Erdoğan could remain in power – virtually unchallenged – till 2029. Society's divisions will not be reflected in the political sphere.

The AKP, and its far-right ally, the Nationalist Movement Party (MHP), had hoped to commandeer close to

two-thirds of the vote in order to make these changes legitimate. They were not able to get near this margin. Turkey's three largest cities – Istanbul, Ankara and Izmir – voted decisively against the changes. It was rural and small-town Turkey that delivered the votes for the "Yes" campaign. These areas, located in remote parts of Anatolia, have long been neglected by the Istanbul elite and have for the past two decades seen the AKP as their champion. Personal piety is not their only link to the agenda of the AKP, which has pushed against the barriers of Turkey's official secularism. A great deal of pent-up resentment against urban affluence is wrapped up in the support for Mr. Erdoğan, who speaks in the idiom of the small town.

Unleashing repression

But this support base was insufficient during two parliamentary elections in 2015, when Mr. Erdoğan hoped to push these changes through a friendly Parliament. Since the Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP) – a Kurdish and Left alliance – won over 10% of the vote, it was able to stymie Mr. Erdoğan's plans. What followed after that defeat set the terms for significant political repression. Mr. Erdoğan's government declared that the HDP was linked to terrorism, opened up



a war against the largely Kurdish southeast of Turkey with the displacement of over 200,000 people and imposed endless curfews on major towns. Visitors to the Turkish city of Diyarbakir might be tempted to make comparisons with the flattened cities of Syria's Aleppo and Iraq's Fallujah. HDP politicians have been imprisoned, with both their leaders, Selahattin Demirtaş and Figen Yüksekdağ, facing hundreds of years in prison.

A failed coup on July 15, 2016 deepened the repression by the state. It was blamed on the U.S.-based Turkish cleric Fethullah Gülen. Almost 100,000 people have been arrested since that coup, and over 100,000 state employees fired from their posts. The purges (*tasfiye*) have not only denuded Turkish society of trained and capable people but have also chilled the atmosphere in the country. Gloom is the mood amongst large parts of the

urban population, which has not experienced this kind of open harassment since the coups d'état of 1971 and 1980. It was as if this failed coup had an aftermath as anti-democratic as the successful coups of Turkey's past.

Curbing democratic processes

It was apparent during the campaign over this referendum that Mr. Erdoğan would prevail. Society is not united behind him, but the state apparatus came into great use. Opposition leaders were arrested – 122 HDP leaders by their count. Campaigners for the "No" vote were accused of being part of the Gülen plot. In the largely Kurdish province of Sırnak, the provincial governor banned the HDP's song "Say No" on the pretext that it would incite "public hate". The popular cartoonist, Musa Kart, spent a hundred days in jail, while Turkey's most respected constitutional law expert, Ibrahim Kaboğlu, lost his job. With 150 media outlets shut down and almost 200 journalists arrested, press scrutiny of these manoeuvres was minimal. Democracy was already curtailed before the referendum. Critics of Mr. Erdoğan warn that Turkey is under "tek adam" rule – one-man rule.

Turkey's High Electoral Board chief Sadi Güven announced that the referendum had passed despite

the numerous complaints of fraud. The Opposition moved the board to reconsider the 1.5 million ballots that raised eyebrows. The margin of victory was only 1.1 million. Intimidation of voters was general. Even supporters of Mr. Erdoğan who had decided to vote "No" – such as editor, Yeni Şafak, and columnist Ali Bayramoğlu – were beaten on polling day. The government dominated the media and prevented the Opposition from making its case against the referendum.

#HayırDahaBitmedi is the new hashtag on social media. "It is not over yet". There is great expectation from half of those who voted that the President must not be allowed to rule as if he has a mandate. No wonder that Mr. Erdoğan's victory speech was uncharacteristically subdued. His Prime Minister, Binali Yıldırım, said of the result: "We are one body. We are one nation." But it did not feel like that. Turkey feels more and more socially divided. Mr. Erdoğan will not govern to unify. That is not his style. His policies – like that of other Strong Men in the Age of Anger – will more ferociously tear at the social fabric of this fine country.

Vijay Prashad's most recent book is "The Death of the Nation and the Future of the Arab Revolution". He is a columnist for the Turkish daily, BirGün

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.

Bribe bid

AIADMK (Amma) deputy general secretary and de facto leader, T.T.V. Dhinakaran, is in the news again for all the wrong reasons ("T.T.V. Dhinakaran charged with bid to bribe poll panel", April 18). The Tamil Nadu politician's alleged link to conman Suresh Chandrashekar, and his alleged attempts to bribe Election Commission officials over reclaiming the party symbol are not only shocking but have also shown the party in a poor light. The allegations are no doubt serious and once again underline the need to rein in politicians who resort to devious means to outwit their opponents.

N.J. RAVI CHANDER, Bengaluru

Jayalithaa case

While B.V. Acharya may be right if a narrow technical

view is taken of the provisions of law, it has to be borne in mind that the ends of justice are higher than the ends of mere law ("Why the Jayalithaa case matters", April 18). There is no point in imposing or recovering a fine from a person who died before the judgment was pronounced.

NARESH GUPTA, Chennai

On triple talaq

The BJP is raking up contentious issues such as triple talaq to keep the communal cauldron boiling. While we are appreciative of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's resolve "to save Muslim sisters from injustice", we want him to match it with his resolve to save Muslim brothers from attacks by right-wing Hinduva zealots. Practising a religion of one's choice is a fundamental right. The

practice of triple talaq is a part of Shariat. Both these facts combine to rule out the state's interference in the personal law of Muslims. Islam cannot be singled out as a religion biased against women. Gender discrimination and gender inequality are embedded in all religions. The BJP did not consider even one Muslim woman fit to be fielded as a candidate in the Uttar Pradesh election. Needless to say, its concern for Muslim women in distress smacks of hypocrisy. Reform has to happen organically from within a religious community ("Muslim sisters should get justice: PM", April 18).

G. DAVID MILTON, Maruthancode, Tamil Nadu

Unrest in Kashmir

The PDP-BJP government which was formed with great fanfare seems to have

failed miserably in Jammu and Kashmir. The BJP government at the Centre appears to be so focussed in its aim of achieving a Congress-free India that it has left Kashmir to burn. Though it may sound odd, perhaps the Prime Minister should try to form an all-party government in Kashmir. It would at least stop various parties from indulging in a blame game and help in confidence-building measures with the people of the Kashmir Valley. Such an exercise will also send out a signal to Pakistan that India is united as far as Kashmir is concerned.

N. NAGARAJAN, Secunderabad

■ Tying a man to the bonnet of a vehicle and driving him around the city is an inhuman act. What is worse is that he was used as a

human shield. Is not the Indian Army destroying human values? Is it not tarnishing the image of the Army as an institution and also giving anti-national elements intent on creating more trouble in Kashmir a stick with which to beat India? There must be a quick investigation and swift punishment awarded.

AMANATULLAH, Sitamarhi, Bihar

■ Before talking about the Geneva Convention we need to look at both sides of the picture. If the Indian Army has been accused of and criticised for using Mr. Dar as a "human shield" what are the stone pelters doing there everyday? Aren't they violating the Geneva Convention by using women and children as human shields?

DEVANSHI MOHAN DWIVEDI, Allahabad

Man versus animal

The rise in man-animal conflicts can be linked to extreme conditions that cause drought and in turn a loss of vegetation, deforestation and also crop loss. Humans are also increasingly encroaching into forest areas ("Understanding crowd dynamics", April 18). The government should undertake steps such as fencing off forest areas and increasing manpower in our forest departments. Communities near forests should also approach forest officials when there are signs of man-animal conflict. Joint efforts in reducing conflict must include village communities, the forest department, the police and wildlife experts.

VAJJI HEMA SUNDAR, Bobbili, Andhra Pradesh

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THE WEDNESDAY INTERVIEW | ARVIND KEJRIWAL

‘There is no negativity about AAP’

The Delhi Chief Minister on the Aam Aadmi Party’s reverses in recent State elections, EVMs, and the upcoming Delhi municipal polls

AMIT BARUAH AND SIDHARTHA ROY

Delhi Chief Minister and Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) convenor Arvind Kejriwal has sparked a debate on electronic voting machines by alleging that the recent elections to the Punjab, Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand Assemblies were rigged. He also contests the argument that AAP has become unpopular in Delhi and points to all the work his government has done in the city. Excerpts from an interview at the Chief Minister’s residence on 6, Flag Staff Road:

A lot of people are asking this question: how come EVMs were okay in 2015 when AAP won 67 of 70 Delhi Assembly seats, and now have a flaw?

A lot of new evidence [about EVMs] has come in during the last four months. When you say that we did not question EVMs when we got 67 seats, we did not question the victory of the BJP in several States at that time. They [the BJP] won the Lok Sabha elections; we didn’t question that because no evidence was available.

In the last four months, there have been many reports in States that had gone to the polls about so-called EVM malfunctioning. I see it as tampering. If the Election Commission had inquired into these incidents and given a credible report, people’s confidence would have been restored.

In Pune, an independent candidate says that he did not get a single vote. Where did his vote go? Where did his family’s vote go? The votes of his friends, where did those go? He should have got 30, 40 or 50 votes at least.

If Voter-Verifiable Paper Audit Trail (VVPAT) machines were attached with all EVMs, would you be satisfied?

My suggestion is that VVPAT should be made compulsory. Suppose there are 100 Assembly constituencies, 15-20% of constituencies should be randomly picked at the time of counting and [EVM results be] compared with [counting of] VVPAT

[slips]. Then you can say the results are okay.

Does the defeat in the Rajouri Garden Assembly seat show that the AAP is losing its popularity?

The feedback that I got from Rajouri Garden is that our former MLA, Jarnail Singh, had done a lot for the Sikh community. He wanted to contest the elections in Punjab and the party also decided that he should fight. People got very angry with this [decision] and it did not go down well with the voters there.

It was local. It has nothing to do with popularity and will have no impact on the MCD [Municipal Corporation of Delhi] elections. There is a lot of positivity about the work done by the AAP government.

Then what is the reason for negativity?

There is no negativity about the AAP in Delhi. On the contrary, the BJP has sucked the MCD dry in the last 10 years. Garbage and mosquitoes are everywhere in the city. There is negativity for the BJP; they are the ones facing anti-incumbency after holding power in the MCD for the last 10 years.

I want to tell your readers that if you vote for the BJP, then you can be sure that the garbage will remain as it is. You will not be able to get rid of mosquitoes, dengue and chikungunya.

Basically, the AAP government controls four departments: electricity, water, education and health. We have done lots in these four



Delhi CM Arvind Kejriwal at his residence in New Delhi. ■ V. V. KRISHNAN

A lot of new evidence [about EVMs] has come in during the last four months.

government as a springboard for national politics.

In Delhi, 400 units of electricity cost ₹1,370; in Gujarat where the BJP is power, it costs ₹2,700. In Bombay, where the BJP is in power [it costs] ₹4,000. So, the point is that people are looking towards Delhi and how it’s being governed. Either these parties should reform themselves or people will say let AAP come to power.

Recently, the CBI has begun a preliminary enquiry against one of your Ministers, Satyendar Jain. One of your Ministers was also charged with possessing a ‘forged’ degree. Are you satisfied with your choice of people?

There cannot be any company or organisation where 100% of the people are

sadhus or mahatmas. Our party is growing; people are joining. But our party is different from others in that if any evidence is available, we take action against the individual concerned.

But they spread lies – four FIRs have been registered against Manish [Sisodia, Deputy Chief Minister], and you will laugh when you hear of their contents. One FIR says that we gave an ad to Facebook without issuing a tender. Are there four Facebooks in the world, how can you issue a tender?

Such types of false cases have been filed against us.

AAP came to power and prominence through the anti-corruption agitation. Years down the line we still don’t have a Lokpal.

The Delhi Assembly passed the Jan Lokpal Bill, for which we had fought, as soon as it was prepared. The Centre is

not passing it; it is sitting on it.

Do you think the anti-corruption movement that was there has now retreated into the background?

I say that the issue is important. Even today people are tired of corruption. In Delhi, when our 49-day government was formed, we had cracked down on corruption, which people remember till today. Again our government was formed and in the first three months we cracked down (on corruption) through the Anti Corruption Branch (ACB) but the Central government snatched away our ACB. The Central government’s message is this: either vote for BJP or if you give your vote to any other party, we will not let their government run.

This is not right for the country, democracy and the people. Despite ACB being snatched away, we brought in so many reforms in our system through computerisation that the latest report of CVC says that in the Central government, corruption has gone up by 67% but in the Delhi government, 81% corruption has been reduced.

Are personalities more important than policies in our country?

Individuals do matter and personalities matter in politics. But if issues are sidestepped due to personalities, that is very dangerous.

Is the personality of Arvind Kejriwal today more important than AAP?

That is not true. In AAP, we take all decisions collectively.

What lessons have you learnt from the Punjab and Goa elections?

The lesson that we have learnt is that something has

to be done about EVMs... We couldn’t have lost the elections in Punjab.

So you are saying it was a rigged election?

It was a completely rigged election. Three States, U.P., Uttarakhand and Punjab, all three have been very badly rigged.

Do you have any evidence?

All the things that are coming out now. There are 15 [AAP] volunteers each have been working for the past six months and where we have got just two votes. Those 15 volunteers are saying where have our votes gone, where have our family’s votes gone?

The Central government’s message is this: either vote for BJP or if you give your vote to any other party, we will not let their government run.

Will you be contesting elections in Gujarat, Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh?

At this point it is too early to say. At present all our energy is devoted towards the municipal elections.

You have had contacts with Nitish Kumar, Mamata Banerjee and other national leaders. Will there be a grand opposition alliance ahead of the 2019 elections?

Saying anything about 2019 at present is difficult because we live by the day. Let us see what happens in the coming days.

There have been a lot of differences with the Central government and you have demanded full statehood. In the current

scenario, is the city of Delhi a workable proposition?

In the present state, who is suffering? Delhi is suffering, its people are suffering. I will give you one example. In last year’s Budget we had allocated around ₹250 crore for putting up lights at all dark spots in the city that are very unsafe for women. The MCD, run by the BJP, passed a resolution that they would not allow poles to be put up on MCD roads with Delhi government’s money... We had passed ₹1,500 crore so that all houses in Delhi get tap water, and water tankers should be done away with... They [BJP corporators] passed a resolution that they would not allow pipelines to be laid on MCD roads. They also passed a resolution that no MCD work would be done through the MLA fund. This is dirty politics.

There is no democratic control over [Delhi] Police and Delhi Development Authority. The L-G has all the powers and the L-G is not accountable to anyone. This is dictatorship. Elected government has no powers. Have you ever heard that an elected government has no powers?

I challenge the BJP to tell us if they have done one good thing in MCD in the last 10 years... Why is it important that AAP should win MCD? Not because we want to win any election but we want to clean Delhi. Cleaning a city is not rocket science... Float an international global tender and many companies will come for cleaning the city. Solid waste management is something from which you can earn money and on the contrary they are spending money on it. I’m confident that within one year of coming into power in MCD we will spruce up Delhi. So people should vote for AAP to clean up Delhi.

For the full interview please see <http://bit.ly/kejriwalintv>

SINGLE FILE

Impoverished tales

What is it like to be powerless in a powerful country? The Pulitzer Prize honours books about the poor

SUDIPTA DATTA



Last year, a layered displacement story, told by a man in “two minds” and of two countries, Vietnam and the U.S., won the Pulitzer Prize for fiction. In Viet Thanh Nguyen’s *The Sympathiser*, the unnamed narrator and protagonist begins by saying he is simply able to see “any issue from both sides”. This year, the top non-fiction prize has gone to another story of displacement, this one America-grown. Harvard sociologist Matthew Desmond’s seminal work on displacement, *Evicted: Poverty and Profit in the American City*, won for being a “deeply researched exposé that showed how mass evictions after the 2008 economic crash were less a consequence than a cause of poverty.”

Like Katherine Boo who moved into Annawadi slum for three years for her book on Dharavi, *Behind the Beautiful Forevers: Life, Death and Hope in a Mumbai Undercity*, which was a Pulitzer non-fiction nominee in 2013, Desmond lived in a trailer park in 2007-08 in one of the poorest Milwaukee neighbourhoods to take notes of life in that part of the country.

What he heard were stories of heartbreak and utter despair, with people paying most of what they had on rent, and generally falling behind on everything else. Most were at the mercy of two landlords, like the single mother Arleen and her two boys, who tried to make do with a \$628-a-month welfare cheque. The problem was that \$550 of that amount went in rent – and there was perpetual fear of eviction. Desmond followed eight families and brought out their desperate stories.

Inequality in the U.S.

In the run-up to the U.S. presidential elections, when elite America and the world were wondering why Donald Trump appealed to so many Americans, another book tried to shed light on America’s poor. J.D. Vance, who grew up in the rust belt, in an “Ohio steel town that has been haemorrhaging jobs and hope as long as I can remember”, recorded it in *Hillbilly Elegy: A Memoir of a Family and Culture in Crisis*. It tried to explain why poor working class White America was so disenchanted with Washington.

Desmond’s book provides another view of one of the most urgent issues facing America, that of vast inequality, and what it is to feel powerless in the most powerful country in the world. This year’s Pulitzers seem to have made it a point to honour journalists and organisations which wrote about the marginalised and dispossessed.

For example, the Pulitzer prize for investigative reporting went to Eric Eyre of Charleston Gazette-Mail, for exposing “the flood of opioids flowing into depressed West Virginia counties with the highest overdose death rates in the country” in the face of “powerful opposition”, not least from pharmaceutical companies. Then again, the drama prize went to Lynn Nottage’s *Sweat*, set in a Pennsylvania factory town which had seen vast job cuts. This is her second Pulitzer, having won in 2009 for her play ‘Ruined’.



CONCEPTUAL

Theory of Mind

PSYCHOLOGY

To have a theory of mind (ToM) is to realise that others have minds like yours. Elementary as that sounds, it’s a question that has engaged philosophers, evolutionary psychologists, and researchers of schizophrenia and autism. Experts assumed that humans were the only species to have a ToM, but it has emerged that not only primates, but parrots, crows and even rats have recently shown the ability to grasp the ‘I know that you know that I know’ loop that underlies social relationships. A broken ToM can result from damage to specific brain regions and also informs research into the neurology of empathy.

MORE ON THE WEB



Kingfisher Airlines crisis: Timeline

<http://bit.ly/kingfishertimeline>

NOTEBOOK

Beyond the classroom

An 11-year-old’s contribution to an initiative to build toilets

TANU KULKARNI

The education ‘beat’, which I cover, invariably yields stories about academic performances, admissions and Board examinations – all the rungs in a ladder that children have to climb to achieve some measure of “success”. But Suchitra K.P.’s story was an exception, of how a young girl went beyond the classroom to make a difference.

I met Suchitra, an 11-year-old girl from a remote village in Kamarahalli, Chamarajanagar, one of the most backward districts in Karnataka, who was the face of the district administration’s campaign after she urged families to build toilets in their homes so that her classmates could go to the bathroom with dignity.

The story I wrote about Suchitra’s contribution to the initiative was published three days before International Women’s Day. While scores of read-

ers and officials reached out to me to learn more about her, Suchitra herself was unaware that the story had been published that day. She got no phone calls or messages, which made me wonder whether I had added any value to her life by writing about her.

Then the Delhi Commission for Women took note of the story and decided to felicitate her on Women’s Day amidst stars like wrestler Sakshi Malik. When her mentor Hephsiba R. Korlapati, who was earlier the CEO of Chamarajanagar, called me and told me this, I was delighted. “Will she go?” I asked. “Will her parents allow her to travel alone? What will she talk about at the function?”

To say that Suchitra was thrilled is an understatement. She called me later – not to talk about the award but about what she was going to experience. “Thumba khushi aagide akka. Vimana nalli ho-

gthini Delhi ge (I am very happy, sister. I am going to travel by flight to Delhi),” she said. It was going to be her first time on an airplane.

She told me what clothes she had packed and the transport arrangements for her first trip outside Karnataka. In Delhi she visited India Gate, a monument she had only seen in textbooks. She also told Ms. Korlapati that she had read the story of Neerja Bhanot, the brave air hostess, and how she wanted to become one.

Suchitra continues to receive calls from organisations and individuals across the country and has a packed schedule. On April 17, for instance, several delegates from an NGO visited her village to study her success story.

And when I find myself crumbling under the weight of deadlines or questioning why I do what I do, I think of Suchitra’s story.

FROM The Hindu. ARCHIVES

FIFTY YEARS AGO APRIL 19, 1967

China’s interest in Nagaland problem

China has become involved in the 14-year-old conflict between the Nagas and the Indian Government, says a news story in the Observer, London. This development, long feared by India and friends of the Naga cause, has been confirmed in New Delhi and Peking. A Peking broadcast has announced that the “Naga people in the eastern part of India have strengthened their armed struggle against the reactionary Indian Government.” It then gave a series of detailed reports of Naga operations against the Manipur Rifles in Jiribam and against a ‘loyalist’ Village Volunteer Force in Tamenglong.

A HUNDRED YEARS AGO APRIL 19, 1917

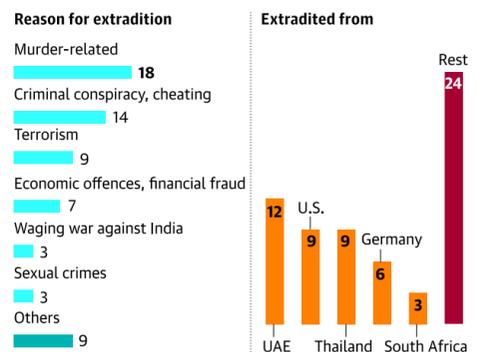
Mr. Gandhi’s mission

News has been received here from Motihari, the headquarters of the district of Champaran, in North Behar that Mr. M.K. Gandhi, who has gone there on a mission to investigate into the relations between the planters and their tenants, has been served with a notice under Section 141 of the C.P. Code by the District Magistrate to leave the district and that Mr. Gandhi has refused to obey these orders until last night. There was no summons issued against him until this morning. Mr. H.S.L. Polak came here last night on being informed by Mr. Gandhi of what was happening and after consultation with Mr. Hasan Imam with whom he stayed, he left for Motihari with the Hon’ble Mr. M. Haque and others.

DATA POINT

A look at extraditions

A total of 63 fugitives have been extradited by foreign governments, mostly from the UAE, to India from 2002 to 2016. Most of them were extradited for charges related to murder or terrorism. Six of those extradited were foreign nationals



As on December 7, 2016
SOURCE: MEA, GOV.IN