



Different clocks

Changes in the financial year need proper coordination between the Centre and States

Madhya Pradesh has decided to shift its financial year that now runs from April 1 to March 31, to align it with the Gregorian calendar year – that is, January 1 to December 31. The idea is not new and has been floated a few times, before as well as after Independence. Yet, the M.P. government's move is abrupt as there was no hint of this plan when it presented its 2017-18 Budget a couple of months ago. That it was announced less than 10 days after Prime Minister Narendra Modi asked Chief Ministers to 'take the initiative' on suggestions to change the financial year indicates that the desire to be the first to act on his words accounts for the haste. The next State Budget will be presented in December or January, but the State's transition plan for the changeover isn't clear beyond its intent to speed up spending of funds earmarked in its Budget for the 12 months until March 2018, so that they are utilised by December 2017. There have been similar instances of BJP-administered States rushing into reforms where the Centre was reluctant or non-committal – such as labour laws – with little changing on the ground. A fiscal year rejig is not something that can be left to the States alone.

On its part, the Centre had appointed a committee under former Chief Economic Adviser Shankar Acharya on the desirability and feasibility of changing the fiscal year in line with the calendar year, aligning it with the practice in most countries as well as multilateral agencies. Its recommendations are still not in the public domain. The Union Budget was shifted from February 28 to February 1 this year, to ensure that funds are available with ministries from the first day of the financial year. By the same logic, will it be advanced further to November 1 if the financial year starts in January? Otherwise, eager States such as M.P. may start 2018 with a clean slate but will have to wait till February for clarity on the Union government's priorities for the coming year and till April for Central funds. Going forward with different financial years in the States while taking no action at the Centre would be chaotic. It will, in addition, be a fresh nightmare for firms adapting to the Goods and Services Tax regime that will be introduced in the middle of this financial year. Additional uncertainties and differing tax deadlines for States are not likely to enthrone investors. Getting rid of colonial-era conventions may be necessary to make administration more efficient, but it is equally important to think through the reforms and work out a viable sequence. The Centre must make the Shankar Acharya panel report public, and clarify its own road map so that States and taxpayers may align with it.

New-look Hamas?

As the Palestinian group moderates its line, the opportunity for talks must not be lost

The new political charter of Hamas marks a departure from several of its earlier controversial positions, indicating that the Islamist movement is willing to take a more realistic view of the Israel-Palestine conflict. Over the years, Hamas has been criticised by rival Palestinian groups as well as the international community over its original charter and actions. It has shown willingness in the past to live with Israel, but its original charter, marked by anti-Semitic language and unrealistic objectives, was a major point of contention. For example, it vowed to "raise the banner of Allah over every inch of Palestine", called for the "obliteration" of Israel, and repeatedly harped on its fight against the Jewish people. Though the new programme does not supplant the existing one, its key proposals run counter to the old document. Hamas now says it is not fighting the Jewish people but the Zionists, because they have occupied Palestine. Released by the group's outgoing Political Bureau chief, Khaled Meshal, the new charter also insists that Hamas is not a revolutionary group that seeks to interfere in the affairs of other countries. Instead, it is merely fighting for Palestinian rights. More importantly, it is now ready to support the formation of a Palestinian state on the 1967 borders.

Israel has rejected the charter, saying Hamas is trying to "fool" the world. Still, if Hamas actually tones down its rhetoric and takes a more constructive line towards peace, that will be something the international community can scarcely ignore. By accepting the 1967 border for the first time, Hamas has acknowledged the existence of the state of Israel. It may not immediately recognise Israel or give up the right for armed resistance: both steps will be unpopular among its ranks given the historic hostility and the continuing occupation. But the evolution of its position suggests that it is ready for a compromise. Second, with these changes the differences between Hamas and Fatah, the other major Palestinian movement that rules the West Bank, in terms of their approach towards Israel have narrowed. Over time, the disparate approaches between the Fatah and Hamas, not to speak of a violent power struggle between them, had substantially weakened the Palestinian quest for statehood. There were efforts in recent times to bring both parties together to put up a united front against the occupation; it will be interesting to see whether Hamas's new programme goes some way towards achieving this. Hamas released the document a few days before Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas met Donald Trump in the White House. For years, both Israel and the international community avoided engaging Hamas, citing its hardline positions. But it has only grown in strength, making its consent inevitable for any durable solution to the conflict. If Hamas reinforces this message of moderation by addressing concerns about its support to violence, other parties in the conflict have the responsibility to respond constructively.

A non-state view of Kerala

Why very few of the first EMS government's initiatives have had a lasting impact



PULAPRE BALAKRISHNAN

The Government of Kerala has just concluded an official celebration of the 60th anniversary of the State's Legislative Assembly. In the capital there were photo exhibitions, speeches and a closing ceremony with the Governor presiding. It could not have escaped the citizen's attention that at least some part of the present government's enthusiasm was fuelled by the fact that the State's first ministry was formed by their own united Communist Party of India which was to split into pro-Soviet and pro-Mao factions only later. The focus of the celebration was on that moment in history.

The EMS ministry

Partisanship aside, it is difficult for the citizen to not be inspired by the early days in Kerala. Much is made of the arguable assertion that it was the first instance of a communist government being voted to power. For Indian democracy, what is of far greater significance though is the sheer capability of its leadership, headed by E.M.S. Namboodiripad. It is worth recalling that it had contained C. Achutha Menon, K.R. Gowri, Joseph Mundassery and V.R. Krishna Iyer among others. Namboodiripad himself was Nehru's intellectual equal and the recognition accorded to Kerala in the comity of Indian States is partly related to the sureness that he had displayed in dealings with Delhi.

However, we admire the early leadership of Kerala not merely for the quality of their intellect but also for the sense of purpose that they brought to the task of governance. There had been fresh initiatives in spheres central to the future of the State ranging from education to irrigation. That very few of these initiatives had lasting impact has to do



DEEPAK HARIHARAN

with the inability of the latter-day communists of Kerala to reconcile themselves to creating public assets as opposed to exploiting social cleavage in order to capture the state apparatus. Of course, the State has by now been ruled for an almost equal number of years by a political formation led by the Congress, but its representatives in the State could hardly match either the vision or the energy of their national leadership.

Landmark reforms

Nineteen fifty-seven was indeed Kerala's proudest moment and the pride of place in it belongs to the communists. It was in the sphere of land ownership that they were to leave their mark. Within weeks of coming to power the government had legislated the Kerala Agrarian Relations Bill.

The three main aspects of this legislation were to restrict the maximum land a family could own, transfer to the tenant land leased-in, and invest agricultural labour with ownership rights over dwellings hitherto occupied on sufferance from the landlord. Reform so radical was unheard of anywhere else in India and has not been matched since.

Opposition to the policies of the communists was to come from the landed interests and the caste and religious organisations that ran educational institutions. An agitation termed 'Vimochana Samaram' or 'liberation struggle' was launched and a 'law and order'

problem was manufactured. An opportunity was presented to the Central government, which dismissed the ministry invoking Article 356 of the Constitution.

The moral victory may have been Namboodiripad's but the event may have affected his poise. He was to return as Chief Minister within a decade but had little to show for it. His tenure is remembered mainly for truck and barter with the Muslim League which resulted in the carving out of a district defined by religious count. That this happened within two decades of the Partition of India left millions of Malayalees who had reposed faith in the communists feeling betrayed. It was left to Achutha Menon to take to fruition the provisions of bill that had ushered in the land reforms. Today we are able to see that while the land reforms of Kerala were a defining moment, their impact was more social than economic. The section of the agricultural sector addressed in them had decayed. And, from grain to meat, the State is supplied by the rest of the India.

But socially the impact of the land reforms was salutary. As caste status was closely aligned to land ownership, the redistribution of land was to have a direct consequence for social relations. Kerala's transformation is unparalleled and was achieved without bloodshed. It serves as a beacon on a hill for the rest of India, leaving for all to notice the irony that it is yet ruled, via representation in Parli-

ment, from the most backward parts of this country.

The economy today

The economic consequences of the land reforms are more difficult to establish as their final enactment was to coincide with the onset of the Gulf Boom. The latter provided an opportunity for economic migration. Kerala has faced a shortage of manual labour ever since, resulting not merely in the hollowing out of a sector but possibly a permanent alienation of arable land. This could perpetuate Kerala's dependence on the rest of the world for food, a commodity steadily increasing in price. But there has been no response whatsoever from Kerala's political class to the developments in the food economy. This, even after it has become clear that some of the provisions of the land reforms bill may be a hindrance to progress. Instead it has chosen to whinge about the malevolence of a Central government refusing to promptly despatch grain for the State's public distribution system. Kerala's record of meeting its food requirement is out of line not only in relation to that of the former Soviet Union and China, societies the communists have always admired, but also to what was achieved by the Government of India through the Green Revolution.

Since the early 1970s, with integration to the Arabian Gulf region, the State's economy has been tossed about by the currents of globalisation, leaving the political class with barely a grip on its fortunes. Its right wing has merely pandered to special interests in business, of which education has become an arm, and the left wing has multiplied welfare schemes involving disbursement of public money. Over time both the fronts have drifted closer to one another in a bid to come back to power every five years. In the process, the drivers of growth have been stifled. The left has till recently displayed a fierce hostility to private enterprise. This could have been compensated for

by a vigorous public sector. But this was to prove incompatible with pampering of public sector unions for political gain. Nothing signals better the *raison d'être* of the State's public sector than the recent instance of a minister nominating his relatives to their headships, the discovery of which led to his ouster.

The gender deficit

Finally, while Kerala has achieved an impressive levelling across social groups, it has been far less successful when it comes to gender. Political parties are uniformly bereft of women in their upper echelons and female labour force participation is low in Kerala compared to other States. The formation of Pengal Otrumai, a separate trade union by women plantation workers, is very likely the result of their marginalisation in the male-dominated mainstream unions of the State. In fact, the recent actions of a legislator belonging to the ruling Communist Party of India (Marxist) leave one wondering if the party ever intends to shed its patriarchal mindset. In the context of the official drive to clear encroachment on the Munnar hills he is reported to have made derogatory remarks on the conduct of representatives of Pengal Otrumai and threatened the public servant who had led the action. The Chief Minister was muted in his criticism of this legislator who continues to be a minister. The action hardly serves to dispel the perception that Kerala's political class is involved in the privatisation of the State's natural resources.

A future of uncertainty beckons Kerala. Endowed with thrifty people and a bountiful nature, it is far from achieving its potential. The journey to this end depends upon a youth wary of promises of unlimited rights and conscious of the responsibility of offering solutions to their country's challenges.

Pulapre Balakrishnan is Professor of Economics at Ashoka University, Sonapat and Senior Fellow, IIM Kozhikode

The long arc to Ankara

Recep Erdoğan's visit came as a reminder of the heavy lifting needed to fix India-Turkey ties



HARSH V. PANT

It was a visit which had been in the making for quite some time. But when it eventually happened, few in India and abroad took note of it, with the result that nothing much changed as a consequence.

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan was in India earlier this week and tried to give a boost to sagging ties between Delhi and Ankara. His visit came against the backdrop of his narrow win in a referendum on April 16 which gave him sweeping executive powers as President giving rise to fears about a lack of adequate safeguards for democratic rights in Turkey. Given his growing regional and global isolation as he seems intent on dismantling the secular traditions of Turkey, Mr. Erdoğan has been trying use Islamism to shore up his credibility.

His visit to India was also in-

formed by this larger agenda. Ahead of his trip, he had suggested a "multilateral dialogue" on Kashmir, even offering to mediate between India and Pakistan. "We should not allow more casualties to occur. By having a multi-lateral dialogue, (in which) we can be involved, we can seek ways to settle the issue once and for all," he argued.

Line on Kashmir

He said India and Pakistan are both friends of Turkey and that he wanted to help strengthen the dialogue process. But if Mr. Erdoğan's intent was to improve Indo-Turkish ties then this was clearly a non-judicious start given that India has consistently ruled out third party mediation on Kashmir. New Delhi was categorical in asserting that "the issue of Kashmir is essentially an issue of terrorism," and that its disputes with Pakistan must be settled bilaterally.

Not that this was a surprise as Mr. Erdoğan has been a vocal supporter of the Organisation of Islamic Co-operation's position on Kashmir. During his visit too, the only India-



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related terrorism he referred to was the threat from Naxalism. Though he suggested that India and Turkey needed to "work as one to disrupt the terrorist networks and their financing and put a stop to cross-border movement of terrorists", he remained unwilling to acknowledge the cross-border nature of the terror threat that India faces. On India's entry into the Nuclear Suppliers Group, the Turkish stance has been to push for Pakistan's case along with India's.

Mr. Erdoğan has recognised that India-Turkey relations are "significantly behind" their potential and

that the two nations need to work together for a fair world. Towards that end he was willing to support India's bid for a permanent seat in the United Nations Security Council, even as he called for major institutional reforms. But even here the story is complicated as Turkey is a member of the group called Uniting for Consensus which opposes expansion of permanent membership in the Security Council. And this group includes Pakistan.

A tough balancing act

Mr. Erdoğan clearly wanted to keep the focus on economic and trade ties as he was accompanied by a large business delegation. At a time when Europe is not so welcoming to Turkey, new markets in Asia are needed. India and Turkey have decided to increase their bilateral trade from \$6.4 billion to \$10 billion by 2020. The two nations are also exploring cooperation in areas such as construction, infrastructure development, renewable energy, and tourism.

What was interesting was not the outcome of Mr. Erdoğan's visit, which was underwhelming as ex-

pected, but how India managed this visit. Not only did India host Cyprus President Nicos Anastasiades just before Mr. Erdoğan's arrival but Vice President Hamid Ansari also recently visited Armenia, a country which accuses Turkey of having killed an estimated 1.5 million Armenians during World War I. Turkey does not recognise Cyprus, the northern part of which is under Turkish occupation since 1974. In fact, the Cypriot President used his visit to ask New Delhi to tell Turkey that the status quo on the territorial dispute on his island nation is unacceptable.

As a major regional power in West Asia, Turkey cannot be ignored by India. But New Delhi is no longer content to allow Ankara to define the contours of this relationship. It is signalling that if Turkey wants to reach out to India, then Indian sensitivities on core issues have to be respected. Otherwise, India too is not short of options.

Harsh V. Pant is Distinguished Fellow at the Observer Research Foundation, New Delhi, and Professor at King's College London

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.

Dealing with Pakistan

The gruesome manner in which some of our soldiers have lost their lives after attacks by Pakistan reiterates the old point – which is that we as a country take things for granted. Pakistan is a country that sustains itself with provocative acts and by unleashing terror. Much of it has to do with headline-grabbing. With Pakistan, India should do the right things at the right time. We should also sanitise up to 2 km of the border so that this area cannot be used to stage attacks on India. For this, India needs to have the will, the gumption and the ability to manage international opinion. When the U.S. can attack Syria and Afghanistan at will with the intention of "putting down terror", why can't we take out the terrorist camps just across the border in Pakistan?

S. KAMAT, Alto Santa Cruz, Goa

■ Pakistan has never been a trustworthy neighbour. One fails to understand what

contribution the institution of SAARC has made to maintain cooperation among its constituent countries *vis-à-vis* fighting terror. Narendra Modi, immediately upon assuming charge as Prime Minister in 2014, made clear his desire for cordial relations in the neighbourhood. But the fact is that since then, ceasefire violations and soldier deaths are on the rise. Even demonetisation – one reason for which was to defeat cross-border terrorism – has not come to his rescue.

A. JAINULABDEEN, Chennai

Handling China

India could well have "cancelled" the official visit of the Dalai Lama to Tawang, positively responding to Chinese sensibilities. The whole world recognises Tibet to be more or less Chinese territory. In response to India's stand, China "retaliated" by giving Chinese names to a few cities in Arunachal. India could well have ignored this

Chinese "prank" but "trumpeted it as a form of cartographic aggression". India did have two great moral moments as a nation state when it gave asylum to Tibetan refugees including the Dalai Lama after the Lhoka uprising in 1959, and to a million Bengalis after the genocide in Bangladesh. But today India is on shaky moral ground. India seeks globalisation of power rather than globalisation of ethics or moral values. Granted, China "has been problematic for India and even for the idea of India, but this subject cannot be treated as a security or a foreign policy problem. India and China are two large land masses, two large nations, two of the oldest civilisations and are constantly confronting each other on almost every issue". Many believe that at every confrontation, it is India that "seems to blink and then go hysterical". It is time to "rescue the Indian reading of China from defence analysts, security experts and technocrats. Let us try to make Chinese

society and civilisation a part of our curriculum. If China is a neighbour, it is time to create a neighbourhood, break the grimness of China watchers and celebrate China".

C.V. VENUGOPALAN, Palakkad

The Karnan case

The tug of war between Justice Karnan and the Supreme Court is dragging on and is unwarranted. The war of 'orders' from each side should end as it shows up the Indian judiciary in poor light. It is time the President stepped in and put an end to this unsavoury episode. All options including impeachment need to be explored, for which the President should appoint a committee consisting of Supreme Court judges to suggest recommendations including impeachment. The government can take a leaf out of Nepal's book.

A.V. NARAYANAN, Tiruchir

Dying with dignity

The article, "In search of

gentle death" (May 4), made one recollect an Indian instance – of staff nurse Aruna Ramachandra Shanbaug of King Edward Memorial Hospital, Mumbai, lying bedridden and in a vegetative state for over three decades after she was molested by a hospital ward boy. Journalist Pinki Virani's desperate attempt to obtain the Supreme Court of India's permission for passive euthanasia failed miserably. We expect both the medical and legal field to evolve new approaches so that terminally-ill patients can be allowed to die without suffering.

V. LAKSHMANAN, Tirupur, Tamil Nadu

■ The ruling by a U.K. court to withdraw treatment to

the baby on the reasoning that the child's ailment has no proven treatment defies logic and falls short of being labelled as unethical in spite of the purported noble intentions of the court. In view of its oddity, the judgment may even be welcomed by legal eagles disconnected with the emotions of close ones losing a dear child. The judgment also goes to show how far courts in general can go in exercising their discretion in case the rights of a person are not protected by the government in spite of provisions to the effect in the Constitution.

V. SUBRAMANIAN, Chennai

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CORRECTIONS & CLARIFICATIONS:

The strapline of a report, "Sharper Fed rate hikes a key risk to Asia", (Business, May 4, 2017) said: "ADB's Sawada also sees risk to Central Asian nations from rise in U.S. oil prices." It should have been U.S. oil output.

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LEFT, RIGHT, CENTRE

Is AAP's promise of an alternative politics over?

AAP as an experiment needs to be carefully watched because it defied the established language of politics



SUHAS PALSHIKAR
taught political science at Savitribai Phule Pune University

Even in its seemingly certain failure, AAP as an experiment needs to be carefully watched because it defied the established language of politics

LEFT AAP was formed in the context of an anti-corruption agitation but its promise touched upon a menu of many broader matters. One was the possibility that ordinary citizens can engage with politics more easily. Another pertained to breaching the elite-mass division in matters of governance, so that democracy would mean citizen engagement in decision-making. These ideas had the

subversive potential of changing the nature of elite-dominated politics in which professional politicians alone call the shots.

New party, old tactics

AAP also offered a vision of pro-people policies as represented by its promises about Delhi's water supply, electricity bills and so on. These ideas did not have any firm ideological lineage but the reference to the nexus between political class and corporate interests gave an impression that the party was interested in reining in corporate capitalism. After nearly four and a half years

of its existence, the party has more or less stopped talking about most of these issues. True, its campaigns during the Delhi Assembly elections of 2013 and 2015 were remarkable for large-scale participation by new entrants to politics. But since then, the party has neither channelled those energies systematically nor has it come up with any new model whereby ordinary citizens can easily engage in party work. Two, after the fiasco of its first government in Delhi and the drama of holding open house meetings with citizens, the party curiously stopped experimenting on the modes of citizen engagement in decision-making. But most notably, its



acerbic attacks on corporates became mute very soon.

Moreover, the infamous conflict among its founding members and the uncivilised way in which dissent was handled in 2015 suddenly made the party look like any other party. With its disproportionate reliance on the image of one leader, concentration of power in the hands of Arvind Kejriwal, the many scandals and controversies that surrounded its Delhi MLAs, the shine of AAP wore out. The disastrous rout in Delhi's municipal elections has added to the gloom surrounding the grand promise of the party. But there is a sense of betrayal

rather than mere electoral failures. The party came into being with the claim that it would usher in alternative politics. That possibility of alternative politics is becoming dim by the day and the lion's share in this development goes to AAP itself. It promised something that it never was prepared for. And yet, many – scholars, hard-boiled observers and lay citizens – invested faith in AAP, perhaps because the promise of alternative politics and imagination lay in the eyes of the beholders.

For long, party politics appeared to have hit a dead end. New parties emerged but never offered a new menu, leading to the situation of 'more of the same'. Since the 1990s, the possibility that BJP's Hindutva would hijack democracy led to tactical considerations instead of qualitative improvements in the form and substance of politics. Hence, when Congress appeared to be clueless about popular aspirations and also became unaccountably unresponsive during UPA-II, AAP held the promise by riding the 2011 wave of public protests. But the sudden rise of the personality cult of Narendra Modi swiftly overshadowed the shine of AAP. That development disrupted the calculations about the propitiousness of the moment when AAP was formed.

But as an experiment, AAP needs to be carefully looked at and watched because it defied the established logic and language of politics based on caste, community and region.

Instead of taking the road less travelled, AAP is widely perceived to have slipped into 'business as usual'



ANJALI BHARDWAJ
is a member of the National Campaign for Peoples' Right to Information

RIGHT The Aam Aadmi Party emerged out of a popular anti-corruption campaign that demanded the establishment of an independent and empowered Lokpal. Top leaders of the party were associated with the right to information movement before donning their politician avatar. It was therefore a natural expectation, when the people of Delhi gave the party a resounding mandate in 2015, that AAP would be a party with a difference, setting the standard for probity in public life.

The last two years, however, have left voters in Delhi disenchanted. Instead of taking the road

less travelled, the party is widely perceived to have slipped into 'business as usual'. The first blow came even before the elections, when the party gave tickets to several candidates with questionable integrity, solely on considerations of winnability. Dissenting voices objecting to the selection of such candidates were unceremoniously removed from the party.

Shady dealings

The departure from alternative politics became even more apparent when after the Assembly elections, like all other parties, AAP refused to come under the ambit of the Right to Information Act. Even

the limited initiative, of disclosing details of funds received and list of donors, was hastily discontinued reportedly because the donors were being harassed for contributing to the party. But then, running a political party transparently was never likely to be an easy task – unfortunately, instead of showing the way, the party chose to succumb. The AAP website persistently shows their donor list as being "Under Construction".

Transforming Delhi

The hope that the AAP government would transform Delhi into the 'transparency capital' of the country has also not come to fruition. A national assessment of websites of



the offices of Chief Ministers revealed that the Delhi CMO, in violation of Section 4 of the RTI law, failed to suo motu provide requisite information.

An audit of proactive disclosure of expenditure of Delhi MLA Local Area Development funds has shown that, in violation of orders of the Central Information Commission, the Delhi government is not displaying boards in constituencies giving information on how the funds are being spent. A recent report by organisations working on the issue of food security in Delhi found that in about 60% of the ration shops audited, information boards that should have been displayed were missing.

The raison d'être of AAP was the resistance of other political parties to submit themselves to scrutiny by setting up an independent and empowered Lokpal.

On the Lokpal

In fact, in 2014 the AAP government resigned from office ostensibly because it had been prevented from introducing a powerful Lokayukta bill in the Delhi Assembly. Ironically, the Delhi Jan Lokpal Bill, 2015 passed by the Delhi Assembly fails to provide sufficient powers and independence to the Lokpal, which is neither financially independent nor empowered to appoint its own staff. The Bill does not even provide the Jan Lokpal a dedicated investigation wing.

Finally, AAP's promise of ensuring peoples' participation in formu-

lating legislation and policies has not materialised. In fact, the Delhi government has failed to even adopt the requirements laid down in the existing national policy on pre-legislative consultation. Important bills, including the Delhi (Right of Citizen to Time Bound Delivery of Services) Amendment Bill, 2015, were not made available in the public domain prior to being introduced in the Assembly, thereby precluding any possibility of public consultation.

The 2015 victory for AAP was a clear vote against widespread corruption and lack of transparency and accountability in the working of political parties. The onus is now on AAP to urgently act and ensure that the unprecedented electoral mandate for alternative politics is not decimated.

Electoral defeat, even in succession, is never ever sufficient cause for the destruction of a party



ASHUTOSH KUMAR
is professor of political science at Panjab University

CENTRE The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) is being written off as a political party by 'apolitical' pundits and parties across the spectrum after the recent losses in the Assembly elections held in Punjab and Goa followed by the municipal elections in Delhi. There are credible media reports about the party facing internal dissension both in Delhi and in Punjab. Are the obituaries being written in haste? Is their grim prognosis referring merely to the electoral fate of the party? Or, are they predicting an

end to the seductive promise of an 'alternative politics' when AAP entered the political arena after the Anna Hazare-led 'India against corruption movement' and decimated two of the most powerful/resourceful parties in their own backyard within two years of its inception? Sifting through these prognostic obituaries in electronic and social media, one finds both strands of thought.

Several handicaps

As for the first, electoral defeat, even in succession, is never the suf-

ficient cause for the destruction of a party. Besides, in Punjab and Goa, the fledgling party managed to secure 24% and 6% vote share, respectively, and held its own against two well-entrenched parties. In fact the pessimism about the long-term electoral fate of AAP has always been there to the extent that its few electoral successes have been considered aberrations and for good reasons.

In an electoral democracy like India with its diversity, a party in order to be electorally successful needs to have a strong organisational structure, a clearly identifiable ideology on key social and eco-



nomical issues and also a core socioeconomic constituency.

Then, a party having national ambition needs also to have a set of credible State/regional-level community-based leadership. AAP has faltered on all these counts, and so is prone to electoral failures. That AAP represents some form of an alternative mode of politics lies in its very 'exceptional' origin and existence. First, AAP owes its inception to a movement that was led by and supported overwhelmingly by the rising urban middle classes, a rarity in contemporary India. Second, AAP is also an 'original' party in the

sense that unlike other 'new' parties neither was it the result of a split from an existing party nor was it set up by an ambitious leader leaving his larger party, more often than not from a powerful community. Third, it is also difficult to bracket AAP into neat categories of national; secular /religious; conservative/radical. Fourth, AAP stands apart for its conscious attempt to reach out to larger electorates cutting across long-established patterns of partisan social alignment or cleavages in India.

Anti-establishment stance

The party has done it by projecting itself as anti-establishment, taking on some of the most powerful segments of society on the issue of cor-

ruption in high places. It has relentlessly run a campaign against the corporate sector, big business groups and media and business tycoons, something no other party has dared or would dare to do, given the political economy of electoral finance. As a trade-off, the party has faced the wrath of the media, especially the electronic media that is increasingly controlled by powerful interest groups.

The significance of AAP, despite its limited electoral presence and chequered successes, lies in its insistence on probity in public life. The AAP has clearly been a trend-setter of a 'new' mode of politics, forcing rival establishment parties to take note and follow.

SINGLE FILE

The scale of progress, so far

Is the process of a voluntary national review of Agenda 2030 helpful?

PRADEEP BAISAKH



Agenda 2030, a comprehensive development agenda, was adopted in the United Nations General Assembly by member states on September 25, 2015. It is ambitious enough to address several socioeconomic concerns and make the development process inclusive.

However, since it's not binding on member nations, there is apprehension that it may end up becoming another of the Millennium Development Goals, which were only partially achieved. The High-level Political Forum comprising the political representatives (heads of states or ministers) of the members meets every July at the UN in New York to review progress on Agenda 2030. The Voluntary National Reviews (VNR), – voluntary and country driven – form the basis of this review.

The UN website says: "The voluntary national reviews aim to facilitate the sharing of experiences, including successes, challenges and lessons learned, with a view to accelerating the implementation of the 2030 Agenda." In 2016, 22 presented their performance review on sustainable development goals (SDGs). This year, 44 nations including India have volunteered. The themes of review this year are Goals 1, 2, 3, 5, 9, 14 and 17 of Agenda 2030, respectively.

The process in India

In India, the process is led by NITI Aayog, Research and Information System for Developing Countries, a think tank attached to Ministry of External Affairs, and the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation. Civil society is anxious as it wonders whether it will have a say in the official VNR report. Consultations on the larger agenda of SDGs and on particular themes such as gender are being held by inviting civil society, private groups and other stakeholders at the national and State levels. The outcome will be fed to the process of making the VNR. It is understood that the government will highlight its key achievements such as Swachh Bharat, financial inclusion, etc. The government has already identified existing programmes and policies which are linked to different goals under SDGs. Sources suggest that the government has also sought inputs from civil society, especially to the VNR process. It's not clear whether the inputs of civil society organisations (CSO) will be part of the government report or will form an annexure. However, Indian civil society led by Wada Na Todo Abhiyan (WNTA) – an umbrella CSOs' platform – has geared up for a shadow report on SDGs.

Is the VNR process an effective mechanism to review SDGs? Ingo Ritz, director of GCAP, a global campaign on poverty and inequality, says: "In the HLPF 2016, the governments tried to show that they already do very well. There was no reflection about problems, challenges or what policies should be changed to achieve the SDGs." A closer look at last year's VNR by nations gives a clear impression that they presented only a rosy picture of their performance.

Pradeep Baisakh works with a global civil society organisation, Global Call to Action Against Poverty (GCAP). Views expressed are personal. E-mail: 2006pradeep@gmail.com



CONCEPTUAL
Value investing
FINANCE

A style of investing based on exploiting gaps between the fundamental (or intrinsic) value of securities and their market price. Value investors believe that the price and value of securities will converge over time, providing opportunities to buy or sell them appropriately. Further, they look for a sufficient 'margin of safety' between price and value to reduce the risk of loss in an investment. Benjamin Graham, the father of value investing, introduced the idea to the world through his famous coauthored 1934 book, *Security Analysis*. Warren Buffett, Phil Carret, Charlie Munger, and Peter Lynch are some of its most successful practitioners.

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ACT ONE
A push for Advance Care Directives

The petition on Article 21 and a patient's medical care

KRISHNADAS RAJAGOPAL
In India, the law is not clear as to when a person really dies.

Section 46 of the Indian Penal Code defines 'death' as the 'death of a human being'. Section 2(b) of the Registration of Births and Deaths Act, 1969 does not recognise brain stem deaths. So, hospital authorities continue to sustain the patient till his heart ceases to beat. But the Transplantation of Human Organs Act, 1994 says that if a person is willing to donate his organs, his brain stem death is certified and recognised.

Should a patient be left to the vagaries of these contradicting laws in the final moments of his life?

Four petitioners who are professionals have moved the Supreme Court for the right of a person to plan the course of his own treatment or Advance Care Directives, to avoid being subjected to any kind of medical treatment which violates both physical and personal dignity during the last moments of life. This also includes

the right to choose to not seek to receive and obtain any kind of medical treatment.

The proposed Medical Treatment of Terminally Ill Patients (Protection of Patients and Medical Practitioners) Bill which was put up for public comments has not been finalised or presented before Parliament till date. But the draft law only addresses the issue of euthanasia and not the right of a person to refuse treatment under Article 21 (right to life) of the Constitution.

The right to life entails the right to decide one's future medical care in the advent of a terminal illness, they argued. "Nobody can insist upon [the] patient taking invasive treatment in preference to alternative medication. Equally, it is entirely upon a person to decide whether to take any treatment at all".

The petitioners argued how the fundamental right to choose one's medical treatment or even to decide to deny oneself any

treatment is confused with euthanasia or other forms of attempts to suicide. "It is submitted even if the result of not taking treatment is enhanced likelihood of death (for nobody can predict with certainty) it does not amount to an attempt to commit suicide if a person who is affected with illness, declines treatment," the petition said.

They contended that as long as a person has the capacity to decide, it is the will of the patient and that alone should decide treatment, the extent of the treatment, the form of the treatment and also the right to completely refuse any kind of treatment. Equally, a patient has the right to terminate at any point of time treatment which he considers unacceptable for any reason.

They wanted the Supreme Court to judicially declare a legal framework for Advance Care Directives. A bench led by Chief Justice of India J.S. Khehar has asked the Ministry of Health to consider their petition.

FROM THE HINDU ARCHIVES
FIFTY YEARS AGO MAY 5, 1967

Development of nuclear technology

India cannot sign the draft nuclear non-proliferation treaty, which in its present form, was unacceptable to India, as it was discriminatory, and would lead to a monopoly not only of nuclear weapons, but also of nuclear technology. This is understood to have been made clear to-day [May 4, New Delhi] by the External Affairs Minister, Mr. M.C. Chagla, at a closed door meeting of Congress MPs. Many members who spoke said that there should be no bar to India's development of nuclear technology. Mr. Chagla is also reported to have said that the issue of a guarantee against nuclear attack, which was being explored, was not a quid pro quo for signing the treaty. The two things were quite apart. Even if there were nuclear safeguards, it should not preclude India from developing nuclear technology.

A HUNDRED YEARS AGO MAY 5, 1917

Cruelty to birds

At the Bombay High Court Mr. Justice Bachelor recently decided a case under the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act (Act XI of 1890) in which the learned judge had to acquit the accused person on the ground that the provisions of Section 3(b) of the Act were not wide enough to cover the specific act of cruelty for which the accused had been prosecuted. According to the facts found by the learned judge, the applicant purchased certain storks or saras and was conveying them by train from Indore to Kolhapur. They were young birds and prior to applicant's purchasing them their eyes had been sealed or stitched up in accordance with the practice which appears to be prevailing in India as it certainly prevails or used to prevail in England. At the Poona station it was noticed that the birds' eyes were thus stitched up and were bleeding. This led to a complaint and conviction of the accused by the magistrate on the ground that the practice was a cruel one. The learned judge who heard the appeal had to consider whether this particular form of cruelty was provided by the Section under which the prosecution was launched.

DATA POINT

Piggybacking to space

Foreign satellite launches by India reached a peak in February this year when ISRO sent into space 101 of them in one go. The space organisation has now successfully put into orbit 180 satellites belonging to 21 countries

