

Pak Institutions Prove Their Mettle

Bad for Sharif, but good for democracy

The structures and strictures of democracy seem to work in Pakistan. Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif has stepped down, following Pakistan Supreme Court's ruling disqualifying him for high political office for 10 years on account of corruption. It is likely to shift the institutional balance in Pakistan's politics towards the army, which wields real power. For India, Sharif's disqualification means the absence of a counterpart who was open to spurts of dialogue and diplomacy. But in real terms, Pakistan's India policy, which is closely determined by the army, will remain unchanged.

Despite the instability that could well follow Sharif's removal, the existence of a strong judiciary, one of the pillars of a democratic state, should give hope for Pakistan and its fragile democracy. That, however, is conditional on the court having acted independently, without paying heed to the wishes of the army. Ironically, the court's ruling presents a fork in the path of democratic politics in Pakistan. The absence of a clear and strong successor within the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz, which still retains a legislative majority ahead of next year's elections, remains a cause for concern. The situation could well lead to ruptures within the party. The ruling looks, at first blush, as a boost for cricketer-turned-politician Imran Khan, who has been calling for Sharif's removal since the Panama papers were made public in 2016. Khan has been closely associated with the more radical elements of Pakistani politics, which would weaken with stronger democratic politics.

For a generation now, Sharif has been an influential figure in Pakistan politics dominating the limited space that political parties have in the country. How Pakistan democracy shapes up will depend on what Sharif does next. Despite deep reservations about the manner in which the court handled the case, Sharif has stepped down. He could take a step back and guide his party, work the ruling in his party's favour in the people's court. Whatever the motivations, the Pakistan Supreme Court's ruling on Sharif will leave an indelible mark on the evolving shape of democracy in that country.



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Mandate Disclosure of Beneficial Owner

The Lok Sabha has amended the Companies law, reportedly to facilitate compliance. The Centre can now cap the number of subsidiaries a company can have, and also limit the number of intermediary companies through which investment can be made. The aim is to check the proliferation of shell companies without an operational business. To deem all shell companies as being underhand is not correct. A large conglomerate may, indeed, require to have many holding companies that conduct business separately. So, instead of limiting the number of holding companies, a more sensible way out would be for the government to mandate that companies declare their beneficial owners, following the practice in the UK.

Already, Aadhaar gives every Indian resident a distinct digital identity. The linking of Aadhaar to the permanent account number eliminates duplicate PANs for individuals. Similarly, a unique legal identifier can be instituted for all corporate entities as well. And if every such entity has to disclose its beneficial owner, the ultimate beneficial owner can be tracked down along a chain of holding and cross-holding companies. Having committed to identifying the beneficial ownership of companies, the G20 must get member-countries to adopt the requirement of a unique legal identifier.

Rightly, the amendments raise the threshold for the simple compliance scheme to ₹100 crore from ₹20 crore, making more companies eligible. Easier rules on managerial remuneration — the original law had made the Centre's nod mandatory to raise remuneration of the management beyond prescribed limits — is also welcome. The harmonisation of insider trading rules with those of Sebi makes sense. The government should swiftly notify the rules, to improve corporate governance.

Not many Indian politicians can trump Potus on all three at once

Front-Stabbing Mokita Needs Radical Candour

Politics would do well to take a leaf out of the corporate lexicon once in a while. Several companies abroad have been trying to get their employees to drop semantics and traditional office decorum in favour of acidic plain speak. This has led to the bandying of terms like 'radical candour' and the particularly succinct 'mokita' — a word used by the people of Papua New Guinea to allude to "the truth we all know but agree not to talk about". That both terms have potential political applications is obvious. And US President Donald Trump's new communications director Anthony Scaramucci's recent use of a related term — front-stabbing — should remind political spokespeople in other nations too about their appropriateness in political discourse. The latter, of course, means taking critics head-on instead of resorting to euphemisms and allusions and the current Potus — no respecter of mokita — is nothing if not a front-stabber, prone to radical candour. Not too many Indian politicians can claim to trump Potus on that trinity, but front-stabbing has increased apace in Indian politics as recent incidents bear out. However, the antitheses of radical candour — listed by Silicon Valley 'CEO coach' Kim Scott as ruinous empathy, manipulative insincerity and obnoxious aggression — coexist here as well. That mokita needs to be addressed.

So you cheered on the Indian women's cricket team last weekend. Are you now ready to do more?

Back in the Dressing Room



Dileep Premachandran

If bandwagon-jumping was an Olympic sport, India would clean up every time. Just look at the reactions to India's women reaching the World Cup final at Lord's last weekend. From the habitually obnoxious, like Rishi Kapoor, to journalists who discovered that women's cricket existed when India won a few games, there's been an unseemly haste to come up with paens in honour of Mithali Raj and her team.

Men who wouldn't go within a mile of reporting on a women's match are suddenly advocates for a women's IPL. Others want the girls to get the same financial rewards that Virat Kohli and his team do. Everyone is now an activist for women's cricket, in much the same way that they once tried to do it Gangnam-style. The one game India hasn't mastered is walking the talk. Last November, when India played West Indies in an ODI series in Vijayawada, Wisden India, where I was then editor, sent a reporter to cover the game. Apart from her, there were two other out-of-towners covering the matches, one of them writing for the official BCCI website. Two reporters, for an international game.

That was still better than the first day of the India-England Test at Wormsley in 2014. It was the first long-format game India were playing in eight years, and I was the only Indian journalist there. Because, you know, we really champion women's sport. In my time at Wisden, we covered every single women's game at the global events. While covering the semi-finals and final at the World Twenty-20 in both 2012 and 2016, I don't recall seeing a single one of these new flag-bearers for women's cricket. For more than three years, we had a dedicated women's page that didn't attract a single sponsor. There was no great push from the management either. No awareness of the bigger picture and our responsibility to the game. "It's great to see the difference television coverage has made," says Snehal Pradhan, whose insightful writing in this paper underpinned some of the best coverage of the tournament. "And I really hope everyone watching this World Cup also demands that India's next bilateral series (which, by the way, we know nothing about) be televised."

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Waiting for the decision

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JEHANGIR RATANJI DADABHOY TATA

JRD, Flying After Excellence



Harish Bhat

In 1992, JRD Tata became the first industrialist to receive India's highest civilian award, the Bharat Ratna. Today, we celebrate the 113th birth anniversary of this extraordinary man, a proud flag-bearer for Indian industry. When he passed away in 1993, the journalist M V Kamath wrote, "In his life, what JRD did was what any pilgrim might have wished to do: go always a little further beyond the last blue mountain, wishing to know what lay there." JRD's travels beyond the last blue mountain produced many world-class institutions, all made in India. During his tenure as chairman of Tata Sons, he led the Tata group into pioneering ventures in automobiles, airlines, chemicals, exports and IT. Many of these ventures have grown

into large, successful, global organisations today. In addition, JRD moulded the Tata group into its modern, professional avatar. When he stepped down as chairman in 1991, handing over charge to Ratan Tata, ET wrote, "Under Mr Tata's leadership, the group has earned a special place in India's corporate life in two important ways. First, it has professionalised management to a degree that few other indigenous business houses have done. Second, it has consistently stayed in tune with national priorities." In doing so, JRD also inspired an entire generation of modern Indian industrialists.

Even as he nurtured a large business conglomerate, what mattered greatly to JRD was the relentless pursuit of excellence. He was a stickler for perfection and detail. For instance, whenever he undertook a flight on his beloved Air India, of which he was chairman for several years, he would promptly note down and communicate even small points of improvement he believed the airline should implement. This memorable excerpt from one of his numerous memos addressed to the Air India



Very OK Tata

management illustrates the point, "The tea served on board from Geneva is, without exaggeration, indistinguishable in colour from coffee... I do not know whether the black colour of the tea is due to the quality used or due to excessive brewing. I suggest that the station manager at Geneva be asked to look into the matter." He also knew that the pursuit of excellence would require the nurturing of great talent. Over 50 years ago, he conceived of the Tata Administrative Service (Tas) as a central leadership cadre for the Tatas. Over the years,

Tas has produced exemplary leaders such as Titan's Xerxes Desai, Tata Tea's R K Krishna Kumar, and Voltas' Sanjay Johri. Today, Tas continues to be a highly sought-after career choice for top-notch MBAs. He also demonstrated exemplary personal courage in his words and actions. In 1932, JRD had piloted the first operating flight of Tata Airlines, flying the aircraft from Karachi to Mumbai. In 1982, on the 50th anniversary of this maiden flight, JRD was 78. Notwithstanding serious apprehensions all around, he insisted on personally re-enacting the golden jubilee of the first flight, piloting the aircraft once again, and landed on the dot in Mumbai.

He then spoke of why he chose to undertake the flight. "This flight of mine today was intended to inspire a little hope and enthusiasm in the younger people of our country, that despite all the difficulties, there is a joy in having done something as well as you could, and better than others thought you could." The writer is Brand Custodian, Tata Sons

FOLK THEOREM

The Coat That Nitish Turned



Abheek Barman

For a minute, block the sound bites and drama playing out in Bihar. Ask yourself: what has Nitish Kumar gained from breaking away from the Mahagathbandhan (grand alliance) that propelled him to power two years ago?

During the 2014 Lok Sabha election, the JD(U) ate humble pie. It won just two of Bihar's 40 seats to the Lower House. A Narendra Modi-led wave ensured that BJP and allies swept Bihar, winning 31 seats out of 40, with the BJP accounting for 22 on its own. In 2015, when Bihar voted to elect its chief minister, the BJP had high hopes of riding the Modi wave once again. Instead, the alliance — of Lalu Prasad Yadav's RJD, Kumar's JD(U) and the Congress — thrashed the BJP-led NDA, to capture 178 of 243 seats. The NDA was a distant second with 58. Though the RJD was the single-largest party, Kumar got the CM's job. One of Yadav's sons, Tejashwi, became Kumar's deputy. The alliance — at least in numbers — looked solid. But this Wednesday evening, it broke up dramatically. Kumar is now supported by the BJP as Bihar's CM and Sushil Modi of the BJP is his deputy. Why? Kumar claims that he broke away because the Indian Railway Catering and Tourism Corporation

(IRCTC) did some dubious deals during Lalu Yadav's term as railway mantri in 2004-09. The CBI has charged Yadav, his wife Rabri Devi and son Tejashwi of collusion in this 'scam'. Tejashwi has pointed out that when those deals were allegedly done, in 2005, he was 14. So, after snoozing for 12 years, the CBI suddenly jerked awake. This is likely to be empty noise. Kumar seems to believe that the cleansing waters of the BJP will wash graft off Bihar's map. He's been there before. Kumar won the 2010 assembly elections in alliance with the BJP. Then, he kicked his partner out in 2013, when it was announced that Modi would be the BJP's prime ministerial candidate in 2014. It is also the same Kumar who recently said that he wanted a 'Sangh-mukt Bharat'. Don't be surprised. Nitish Kumar

is, arguably, the most cynical and opportunistic politician of our time. His career, in the late 1970s-early 1980s, began as a socialist, follower of Ram Manohar Lohia and Jayaprakash Narayan. In 1990, Prime Minister V P Singh brought Nitish to Delhi as a junior minister. At the time, Lalu Yadav was in power in Bihar. In 1994, he split with Yadav and formed the Samata Party with George Fernandes, one year before Bihar assembly polls. This outfit was decimated by Yadav, who swept the 1995 polls. A few years after the Babri Masjid riots of 1993, Kumar quietly sidled up to the BJP. During 1998-2004, when Atal Bihari Vajpayee was prime minister, Kumar was on his Cabinet as agriculture minister and railway mantri. Even after 2002's horrifying riots in Gujarat, Kumar had no qualms about sticking to his ministries. In 2003, Kumar propped up Fernan-

des as the frontman of the new JD(U). He became chief minister of Bihar two years later, with BJP support, in 2005. That done, Kumar and Sharad Yadav shoved Fernandes out of the party in 2007. After 10 years as CM, Kumar realised that his Teflon-coated image was wearing thin. He broke with the BJP in 2013, and tied up with Lalu Yadav and the Congress to come back to power once more in 2015. Opportunists have their eyes peeled for the main chance. What does Kumar gain by aligning with the BJP? He remains CM, just as he was last week. So that can't be a reason for breaking the coalition.

This could be a replay of Kumar's 2013 katti with the BJP. Kumar may have assumed that in 2014, the BJP would be the largest party but fall short of a majority. In that case, Nitish figured he'd have a chance to become a 'compromise PM'. That, alas, did not happen. Today, by allying with the BJP, Kumar has blown any chance of making it to the top job on Raisina Hill. Even if the BJP falls short of a majority in 2019, Narendra Modi, not Nitish Kumar, will be its PM. Kumar can continue to sulk in Patna. On the other hand, if an anti-BJP coalition gets close to the numbers, and has to settle for a consensus PM... After Wednesday's antics, the last person the coalition will look at is Kumar. Meanwhile, back in Patna, the BJP holds all the cards. So it can, and will, call the shots. Kumar, having ditched all his other allies and friends, has little option but to play along. In all probability, he'll be a puppet CM, with little chance of ever becoming PM.



Here, topi pehno



the speaking tree

The Road to Freedom

RAJESH B GAJABI

Freedom is understood as the absence of physical and mental boundaries or restrictions. Physical freedom is when you enjoy freedom of movement. Mental freedom is when you are free to choose and make your own decisions.

Both of the above freedoms are external. True freedom, however, is internal. In the external freedom, although we seem to make our own choices, in reality, the decision-making apparatus, the mind, has itself been formed through many layers of societal influences in the form of ego. It's like the man who says that he is completely free to do anything so long as his wife approves everything. The presence of a "master" means the absence of freedom.

In external freedom, you feel free in each playing 11, that means between 40 and 60 Indian players to make up bare-bones squads. Anyone who watched India struggle through the last three editions of the World Twenty20 will tell you that there simply isn't that kind of strength in depth. The biggest disservice we could do to the women's game would be to start a league that quickly became a yawn-fest because many of the players were just making up the numbers. Better, instead, to invest in grassroots developments and boots-on-ground reporting so that the girls who emerge get the attention they deserve. That shouldn't just be once in four years.

When a machine is well-lubricated or oiled, an engineer or mechanic refers to the parts being 'free', meaning they now have little or no friction in movement. Similarly, in true freedom, once the ego that causes friction is removed, the conscious mind comes in direct contact with the Universal Self in a smooth and almost effortless manner.

Citings

Managing Deal-Making

COREY KUPFER

In my experience — and I've been doing this for 30 years — people fail in negotiations... because of the things that come up with them emotionally or internally. Ego is a big one. It can show up in that boisterous, "I know better, I'm not listening" way... The best negotiators you see not only have that clarity but they'll be able to maintain detachment. And what detachment means is that if you and I are negotiating a deal, I probably have a preference we get the deal done. Otherwise, why am I spending my time talking to you? But ultimately, I need to be detached about the outcome.

Needs to say, "Hey, what are the objectives that I've gotten clear about during my clarity process? Can I meet those objectives in this deal that I'm negotiating with you? If I can't, that's okay. No hard feelings. You're not a bad person. It's just that your objectives and my objectives don't happen to meet at this time." The first thing I would say to people is, "Listen. Before you go into a negotiation, take the preparation time that you need." Too many people skimp on that. For some people, the way they get centred, the way they get connected to their truth in life, is maybe they meditate, or they pray, or they go out for a run, or they speak to friends and bounce their ideas back and forth. Some people are more analytical. They do spreadsheets, and they figure it all out.

From "How You Can Become a Better Negotiator"

Chat Room

You Still Live in Our Hearts

It is heartening to note that the government has inaugurated people's President A P J Abdul Kalam's memorial at Ramswaram. As one reads the dates on Kalam's tombstone, October 15, 1931-July 27, 2015, one recalls the poem, 'The Dash, by Linda Ellis. In between the dates of birth and death, there is a dash. What really matters is how well we live in that dash. Kalam is a perfect example. He lived a simple life, contributed to science and society, inspired the nation with his 'kalam' (Hindi for pen), and spread the message of happiness. Let us not forget that there isn't much time left for us to fulfil Kalam's Vision 2020.

TS KARTHIK Chennai