



A thought for today

In the end, rational policy is always good

PAUL KEATING

Think Consequences

SC gives temporary relief but central rules on cattle trade need outright junking

On May 23 the Modi government notified draconian new rules restricting the sale and purchase of cattle at animal fairs. Given how painfully these rules had begun squeezing the country's livestock trade and agrarian economy, not to mention downstream industries like leather processing, it's a relief that the Supreme Court on Tuesday ordered a countrywide stay of this notification, following similar action by the Madras high court. Government told SC that it is considering the various objections and plans to bring in revised rules by August end. But by now it is clear that the May notification is ruinous, with no profit in sight, not even electoral. Instead of pointless patches, it needs outright junking.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi has often noted that cooperative federalism is the key to India's progress and development. But with the May notification the Centre has trodden contentiously onto states' territory – as states are the ones empowered to make laws on preservation of cattle. The fig leaf of preventing cruelty to animals is not fooling anyone either. When the parent law specifically allows slaughter of animals for food how can the derivative notification disallow it for all practical purposes?

If the intention really is to stop the infliction of unnecessary pain and suffering on animals, then the real solution is to encourage modernisation of abattoirs, with regulators enforcing rigorous standards for how livestock is treated. A similar problem exists with the ban on liquor vends within 500 metres of highways, which went into effect in April. SC ordered this ban to combat drunken driving but what that really needs is regular patrolling of highways, alongside faster prosecution of cases and strict punishments for the guilty. Here too the laudable objectives have remained inchoate while the injured investments and job losses are all too painfully tangible. It's therefore welcome that even on this front relief came on Tuesday, with SC paving the way for states to denotify highways passing through municipal limits.

In a country that has just crossed the threshold into middle income and that is straining exceedingly to create jobs for its teeming youth, governments and courts must not be indifferent to how their decrees can wreck industries and destroy livelihoods. Surely that would be a textbook example of cruelty.



Not So Motherly

Malayalam film body AMMA stands badly exposed after supporting Dileep and condoning misogyny

The expulsion of Malayalam "superstar" Dileep, arrested for conspiring to kidnap and sexually assault a woman actor, is hardly a face saver for the Association of Malayalam Movie Artistes (AMMA). The survivor was subjected to multiple instances of victim shaming, exposing lax regard for gender sensitivity in an industry dominated by ageing male actors. The rot in the film industry at the very highest levels also stands exposed.

Dileep had alleged that the survivor was known to the main accused, Sunil Kumar, and should have been more careful striking friendships. Dileep's attempt to tar the survivor's character was blatant, but AMMA shockingly resolved to protect both its "children". In 2015 the survivor had complained about Dileep scuttling her career but to no avail. By resolving to protect the survivor and the suspect, AMMA cut a sorry figure. Another actor sought a lie detector test on her. Two actors, who are incidentally Kerala MLAs aligned with the ruling LDF, thundered at the media for doing its job of asking inconvenient questions. Far worse followed when AMMA president Innocent, an MP, said "bad women" facilitate the casting couch.

Resistance to misogyny has come from within the industry itself. Women in Cinema Collective, a group of women actors and technicians formed after the assault, responded to Innocent: "We have already understood that current social hierarchies are reflected in the cinema field too. Most newcomers face exploitation because of the existence of this hierarchy." The same male actors or their coterie have led AMMA for two decades and must make way for fresh blood. Society has changed and the film industry, like all workplaces, must give working women the equal opportunities and protections they demand.



What's in a rename?

Might as well take this mania to its looniest lengths?

Bachi Karkaria

Improved infrastructure means renaming only, no? Like Henry Ford, civic minders think 'History is bunk'; selective history anyway. Junk the reminders of Mughal rule, British raj, and post-colonial dynasties, and replace them with icons who will help win friends and elections. There's no admissible evidence yet on whether culpable nomenclature leads to such gains, but there is clear and present danger of squandered public funds. Logic might suggest that citizens would rather that money was spent on changing the battered state of those renamed roads, etc. But you must be hopelessly naive, certifiably insane or recently arrived from another planet if you think that either logic or citizens dictate civic decisions. Like the ways of God, they 'surpasseth understanding'. Take Mumbai's most recent renaming spree.

The evocative names of several local stations were totally replaced, but least explicable was the extension ordered on that of our most historic hub. In 1996, the 110-year-old Victoria Terminus had undergone a name (and sex) change, emerging as 'Chhatrapati Shivaji Terminus'. Now, not deemed respectful enough, 'Maharaj' has been suffixed, requiring new signs, stationery etc. Does the great Maratha warrior need such a nominal salute to his place in history? If his stature did need enhancing, the 192-metre, mid-sea station will more than make up the shortfall. Why stations only? Mumbai's 'Chhatrapati Shivaji' international and domestic airport must also get the additional title, no? Breaking news: the Shiv Sena has demanded that the city's new coastal road must be named after you-know-whom. Please to include all honorifics from the start, or we'll be saddled with yet another cess for later suffixes.

Shivaji in Mumbai, Netaji in Kolkata, Sardar Patel in Ahmedabad, every city has its own over-propitiated hero. So, why not rename everything in sight after him? Tchah! Forget about citizens getting totally confused by this taxing one-city-one-name regime. When has our inconvenience ever mattered? Accha, but what if the party in power in that state changes? No problem-ji. It can simply appropriate this icon, and transfer all his emotional appeal to itself.

Alec Smart said: "From Veg Air India to Veg All India? We're on that route already."

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All Under A Chinese Heaven

China uses an idealised version of its imperial past to promote a 19th century agenda

Suisheng Zhao



An oft-repeated exhortation in China is "use the past to serve the present." Historical memories are a powerful force that not only bind the Chinese people together and form their national identity but also motivate Chinese leaders to find what they regard as China's rightful place in the world.

What they celebrate is an imperial China reconstructed as the benevolent centre of East Asia, to advance the agenda of China's rise as a return to the harmonious state and to reassure neighbours who worry about the nation's rising threat. The leaders insist that a powerful China can be peaceful.

Following President Hu Jintao's concept of the harmonious world derived from traditional Chinese philosophy, President Xi Jinping has famously said that "the genes" order and "inherited national spirit" determine that "the Chinese nation is a peace-loving nation." He goes on to suggest that the pursuit of peace and harmony is deeply rooted in the spirit and blood of the Chinese people, although millennia of violent history tell another story.

In the meantime, Chinese scholars have reconstructed a benevolent Chinese empire Tianxia, all-under-heaven, based on the royal ethics, or wangdao. This has emerged as a popular way to convey the "Chinese normative principle of international relations in contrast with the principles of sovereignty and the structure of international anarchy which form the core of the contemporary international system," suggests Allen Carlson in the Journal of Contemporary China.

Zhao Tingyang describes Tianxia as a universal system inherited from the Zhou dynasty about 3,000 years ago. The system, maintained by cultural attraction and ruling by virtue, is embodied in the Chinese ideal of perpetual peace.

Yan Xuetong's study determined that ancient Chinese thinkers advised rulers to rely on ethics and use benevolent government to rule the world. Yan distinguishes three types of ethics in ancient China: Royal ethics focused on peaceful means to win the hearts and minds of people at home and abroad. Tyranny,



based on military force, inevitably created enemies. Hegemonic ethics lay in between – frequently indifferent to moral concerns, it often involved violence against non-allies, but did not cheat people at home or allies abroad. Royal ethics was preferred over hegemony or tyranny.

In comparison with western countries that used coercive power to build colonies, the Chinese world order was more civil, attracting admiration from tributary states without use of force. Emphasising benevolent governance, etiquette, peace and denying the imperialistic nature, imperial China and its relations with surrounding regions were far more advanced than the colonialism of western countries.

But recent scholarship in the West suggests that imperial China, like its counterparts, was not uniquely benevolent or uniquely violent. Warfare was constant in imperial China, with regions often in disunion or under foreign invasion. China's ruler during the Yuan dynasty, Kublai Khan, expanded the empire by military expedition, stretching across Central Asia, Burma and Vietnam. The last Chinese dynasty, Qing, expanded

The leaders insist that a powerful China can be peaceful. But whenever imperial China was powerful, it tried to expand frontiers by claiming suzerainty over smaller neighbours. Chinese empire was not shy about military conquest

to unprecedented size, nearly doubling land holdings from the previous Ming dynasty mostly through military force.

From this perspective, Peter Perdue argues that the techniques used by the Ming and Qing dynasties to legitimise their rule over subjects and claim superiority over rivals were not radically different from those of other empires. Citing comparative history studies that point to substantial similarities of the Ming and Qing to the Russian, Mughal and Ottoman imperial formations, or

even to early modern France, Perdue suggested that the concept of "colonialism" could be usefully employed to describe certain aspects of Qing practice.

Imperial China had to use military force to defend and expand the empire because its territorial domain, defined loosely by cultural principles, was not always accepted by its neighbours. Following the policy of fusion and expansion, whenever imperial China was powerful, it tried to expand frontiers by claiming suzerainty over smaller neighbours. The expansion, however, often met with resistance. Chinese empire was not shy about military conquest.

Sun Tzu's Art of War was thus written during a time when, as Kevin Rudd said, war was a permanent condition: "The bulk of Sun Tzu's work is how to prevail in a conflict against another state or states by either non-military or military means. Taken in insolation, it can be interpreted as meaning that conflict and war represented the natural and inevitable condition of humankind."

There is nothing wrong with looking to China's past to help understand China's future. But Chinese intellectuals and political leaders are engaging in selective remembering, often reconstructed history to advance the government's political agenda and justify its concept of justice and view of China's rightful place in the world.

Historical discourse has, therefore, become extremely politicised in China. Chinese elites, therefore, often draw contradictory policy agendas from the study of history. On the one hand, Chinese leaders present an idealised version of imperial China to support the claims of China's peaceful rise and, on the other, take the lesson that imperial China's collapse was because its strength was not enough to defend its existence. Chinese elites have called for China to follow the law of survival, with the weakest eliminated, to become the strongest again.

Reconstruction of China's imperial past to advance the contemporary agenda of its peaceful rise has, ironically, set a 19th century agenda for 21st century China – intended to restore the regional hierarchy and maximise security by expanding influence and control over its neighbourhoods.

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How India's family planning programme places well-being and unlocking the potential of women at its centre

J P Nadda



The story of India in the 21st century has been one of extraordinary growth and innovation. We have revolutionised the data and information industry, and we produce medicine cheaper than anywhere in the world. We eliminated polio under incredibly challenging circumstances. But India has not even come close to reaching her full potential, because we have only leveraged half of our resources into that effort. We've yet to unlock much of the potential of the other half: India's women.

Only when India's women are on an equal footing with India's men will we be the nation we want to become. The government has already taken significant steps to provide health and development to women.

In India, though maternal and infant mortality have dropped precipitously in recent years, 200 women still die every day in child birth. Part of the problem is that not all pregnant women have easy access to the best ante-natal care. The Pradhan Mantri Surakshit Matritva Abhiyan, which was launched late last year, guarantee-

es every woman in her second or third trimester free ante-natal care by private doctors at designated hospitals all over the country on the 9th of every month.

More than 50 lakh women have been given quality ante-natal checkups under this scheme. More than 56 lakh pregnant women have been immunised under Mission Indradhanush and the MAA campaign, through awareness and counselling, continues to promote better health and nutrition to mothers and children at community level.

The government has introduced three new contraceptive methods into the health system, including injectables and a once-a-week pill

Family planning is one of the most critical and long standing health programmes in India. Here too India has made impressive progress, with the fertility rate dropping from 2.7 to 2.1 over the last decade. But even today 31 million married women are not using any contraception at all; about two thirds of the rest are using sterilisation, which is



effective but doesn't help women delay their first pregnancy or space their later children at healthy intervals.

As a result, too many women are either having more children than they want, having children sooner than they want, or not leaving enough time between children for their bodies to recover fully from pregnancy. Realising this massive gap, the government has introduced three new contraceptive methods into the health system, including injectables and a once-a-week pill, so that more and more women will be able to plan their families.

Among those women who do get pregnant, almost half are between the ages of 15 and 25, so we're also starting an intense

awareness campaign aimed at this age group to make sure that they know the contraceptive options and feel empowered to exercise them. A complementary campaign will target men, since contraception isn't always a choice a woman can make on her own. The better men understand family planning, the more supportive they're likely to be when it comes to planning their families together with their wives.

The need for better contraception and ante-natal care is not spread evenly around the country. A quarter of India's mothers who live in the poorest areas are twice as likely to see their babies die than the rest.

That is why we launched Mission Parivar Vikas on World

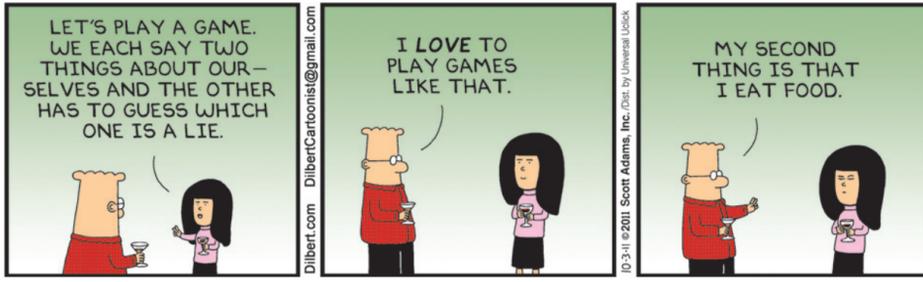
Population Day on Tuesday, doubling down our efforts in 145 districts in 7 states – districts responsible for half of the country's infant deaths – for intensive improvement in family planning and ante-natal care services.

As part of this Mission we want to ensure that supplies are available at all facilities at all times for which we are developing a robust Family Planning Logistics Management Information System. This is a web and mobile based decision-making tool to monitor and manage the flow of contraceptive supplies – to reduce inventory fluctuations – and improve the programme's effectiveness at all public health facilities.

We estimate that in 2017 nearly 137 million women in India are using modern method of contraception. As a result of this usage, 39 million unintended pregnancies will be prevented, nearly 12 million unsafe abortions, 16 million total births and 43,000 maternal deaths will be averted. We firmly believe that family planning is critical for our nation's economic development, and is a big step towards growth, equality and sustainable development that opens the door to opportunity and prosperity for women and families.

The writer is Union minister, Health and Family Welfare

dilbert



There Are No Boundaries For Cosmic Beings

John Melhuish

We read in the Aitareya Upanishad that upon entering the material world and the body, 'Purusha', the conscious soul, asks: "If utterance is by speech, and life by breath, vision by the eye, hearing by the ear, and thought by the mind, then who am I?"

So who am I? Who are we? Are we mere earthlings trapped on this small planet struggling for survival and identity? Or do we amount to more than this? Although we are physically restricted to the surface of this planet by the force of gravity, we also happen to live in this solar system and Milky Way galaxy; we are inhabitants of the cosmos.

As such we should not feel uncomfortable or embarrassed in acknowledging ourselves as citizens of the universe - cosmic beings. Then, we no longer think in terms of our earth-

bound identity, we instead open our minds, and begin to think from a cosmic perspective. By recognising ourselves as cosmic beings we expand our vision and sphere of understanding beyond the trivialities of everyday earthly life. We begin to see life from a much wider cosmic perspective.

Bertrand Russell said, "Philosophical contemplation enlarges not only the objects of our thoughts, but also the objects of our actions and our affections; it makes us citizens of the universe, not only of one walled city at war with all the rest. In this citizenship of the universe exists all true freedom, and liberation from the thralldom of narrow dogmas and fears."

When all is said and done, this is exactly what we are. We emerged physically from the primeval swamp millions

of years ago; it is now time that we free ourselves again and emerge from the quagmire of doubt and confusion that blights our modern world.

We are the living consciousness of the cosmos. It's time that we acknowledge this, and realise that we are not at the end of our journey but are entering a new and exciting phase of human evolution.

I truly believe a cosmic destiny awaits us; if we listen carefully we can hear it calling from the stars. If human consciousness on earth is one of the first seeds of 'active Self-consciousness' within the universe, then we are duty bound to consciously encourage that seed to germinate and flourish to its full potential. This is our ultimate purpose, to

extend the outreach of human consciousness, and play an active role in the evolutionary 'awakening' of the universe.

So however we might perceive ourselves, and no matter how humble our role in life might be, over and above our earthbound identity, we are in reality, amazing cosmic beings. I believe it is now our 'moral duty' to live up to the very high standards demanded of our cosmic status; to settle for anything less would be to do ourselves and the cosmos a great disservice.

So if you should feel, as we all do from time to time, that life is nothing more than a struggle for our daily bread; then lift your eyes skyward, look up to the endless stars, and recognise the greater purpose of your life. The 'Purusha' within each one of us is truly a citizen of the universe. 'This' is who we are!

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