Be Happy, Share & Help Each Other!!!

SUCCESS IS THE SUM OF SMALL EFFORTS REPEATED DAY IN AND DAY OUT.
~ROBERT COLLIER

The HINDU
Analysis
10th March


Stability in the time of change

- **Intro:** In recent weeks, there has been a flood of commentary lamenting (विलाप) the demise of ‘the liberal rule based international order’; the system that came into being after World War II and has since been led and shaped by the West under U.S. leadership for the last seven decades.
- After the election of Donald Trump as U.S. President that a conviction has grown that the seven-decade-old ‘order’ is dead and change is now upon us.
- This change have been visible in other parts of the world for nearly a decade; at least from 2008 with the global financial crisis.
- History tells us that the wheels of change never stop.
- **Myth of the ‘liberal order’**
- While it is true that there is greater volatility and churning in the world today than before, it is equally true that parts of the world have been going through these changes for much longer.
- What is new is that the tides of change are now lapping at the shores of the Western world.
West Asia has been in turmoil at least since the turn of the century when the growth of jihadist extremism seared itself on the global consciousness with 9/11.

The reordering of Central Asia and Eastern Europe began with the disintegration of the Soviet Union and has now been unfolding for nearly a quarter century.

China’s rise started four decades ago and gathered steam after globalisation.

President Barack Obama was placing China in the category of ‘free riders’, while announcing the ‘US pivot to Asia’!

China’s rise is accompanied- a shift in the geopolitical centre of gravity from the Euro-Atlantic to Asia and the Indian and Pacific Oceans.

Defining the characteristic of this change is a new report by PricewaterhouseCoopers that predicts that by 2040, the E7 (emerging countries of China, India, Indonesia, Brazil, Russia, Mexico and Turkey) will be twice the economic size of G7, the seven major advanced economies!
Continue...

Be Happy, Share & Help Each Other!!!
G7 members
The post-World War II order marked the end of colonialism and was intended to be based on the democratic principle of equality of sovereign states, but this idea quickly fell prey to the realities of the Cold War.

The UN became an arena for the power play between the two superpowers.

By the time the Cold War ended, the institutional structures of the UN were out of sync with the new political reality.

The U.S. became ‘the sole superpower.

The liberal international order was not ‘global’ - ‘liberal and rule based’ only in a small part of the world, the West.
A post-West world

In today’s age of information overdose - a 24/7 news cycle together with the echo chamber of social media has only become easier than before.

This is why at the Munich Security Conference last month, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov aptly described the current change as a shift to a “post-West world”

The biggest challenge of coping with this shift is absence of credible multilateral institutions.

A classic example is NATO, a creation of the Cold War but even today described in the West as a central pillar of Western, liberal order!

The nuclear dimension cast a dark shadow over the Cold War - but the equation in a bipolar world was relatively simpler.

In today’s world, with the focus on Asia and the Indian and Pacific Oceans, the dyad has been replaced by nuclear chains with variable linkages

Developments in North Korea.
Conclusion…

 Ensuring crisis stability
 In addition to deterrence stability, it is vital to ensure crisis stability. This requires communication links and risk reduction mechanisms which need to be designed and made operational sooner rather than later.
 The Cuban missile crisis in 1962 helped drive home the realisation to the U.S. and Soviet leaderships.
 It began the process of the search for strategic stability, arms control and crisis management.
 Today world- it is an age of uncertainty and change which increases the likelihood of crisis escalation.
 A new initiative for a modest degree of stability is needed if the nuclear taboo has to hold.
 Given the growing convergence between the leaders of India and Japan, these two countries are well placed to launch such an initiative.
Open gates

- **Intro:** The ruling of the European Union’s top court giving member-states the right to grant or deny asylum has come as welcome news - refugees desperate to escape the humanitarian catastrophe in West Asia.

- **Judgment:** of the European Court of Justice of the 28-nation bloc Governments should issue humanitarian visas to people at risk of torture and degrading treatment, consistent with their obligations under the European charter on human rights.

- Given the appeal of anti-immigration political parties in three of the founder-member states of the EU that go to general elections this year, the Netherlands, France and Germany.

- This is their moment to stand up for the so-called European values the continent’s leaders have emphasised since Donald Trump’s ascent to the White House.

- A perception that western nations are turning their back on the rest of the world.

- Action on the commitment given at the UN last year to put in place legal pathways for migrants and refugees would mark a beginning.
Be Happy, Share & Help Each Other!!!
Q- Critically analyse steps taken by India and Sri Lanka in resolving the dispute between fishermen of both countries.
Sri Lanka’s fishermen want to assert their right over their own territorial waters, hindered by Indian trawlers.

Every time an Indian fisherman vs Bangladeshi cattle smuggler.

But here is what happens at the beginning of every month and something that is not publicised.

The Sri Lankan Navy Headquarters sends out a consolidated report on Indian fishing craft in Sri Lankan waters. The report for February this year was sent on March 2.

It went to, among others, the Director Naval Operations (Indian) as well as the Director Operations, Indian Coast Guard.

It is also usually marked to the High Commission of India in Colombo and the Sri Lankan High Commissioner in India, who no doubt forwards it to the people he deals with.

The information is quite extensive. In February, the Sri Lankans noticed approximately 835 fishing trawlers/dhows they said were engaged in bottom trawling/poaching.
African pirogue 10-20 metre

Fish gets sucked on board with a pipe; 250 tonnes of fish can be processed in one day.

Length of supertrawler is up to 144 metre

Ship can store more than 6,000 tonnes of fish in freezers on board.

Dead bycatch of endangered sharks, turtles and rays is dumped into the sea.

The boxes of frozen fish offloaded and off for global export.

Giant factory trawlers: How do they operate?
They were sighted in 29 locations well within Sri Lankan territorial waters, closer to the shores of Mullaitivu, Point Pedro, Talaimannar, Vetthlaikeni, Kakerathivu as well as the Delft Islands.

An easy crossing - You could cross the Palk Straits in less than three hours.

Though there are no markers, it is easy enough to know when you are in their waters: every mobile phone comes with a GPS.

In this year, in these three months, the figures are 14 boats and 85 fishermen arrested.

While the fishermen will be eventually released, the boats will be held back.

If they release the boats, they are likely to be found fishing again.

Since the civil war ended, some of the dynamics have changed.

Sri Lankan fishermen want to assert the right over their territorial waters.

If New Delhi can erect fences many hundred kilometres long on both the eastern and western borders and institute shooting as a deterrent policy, why apply another yardstick when it comes to a much smaller neighbour?
Continue...

Be Happy, Share & Help Each Other!!!
GEOGRAPHICAL LOCATION

- Palk Strait
- Palk Bay
- Adam's Bridge
- Gulf of Mannar
Does ‘age’ encompass mental age?

**Intro:** The Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act fails to account for the mental age of the victim.

- A recent case has exposed a lacuna in the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act of 2012, which defines a ‘child’ as a person under 18 years of age.
- The case, which came up before the Supreme Court, concerns a sexual assault victim whose biological age is 40 but whose mental age is six - Cerebral palsy victim
- The court has to decide on whether such a person is a ‘child’ under the POCSO Act.
- The victim was a woman suffering from cerebral palsy since birth.
- A detailed medical report shows that her Intelligence Quotient (IQ) and mental age on eight social adaptive domains specify her overall mental age to be six years.
- Section 2(d) of the Act brackets victims as those whose biological age is under 18 years.
- The aspect of “mental age” of victims has not been considered by Parliament.
This is despite the fact that the Preamble and the Statement of Objects and Reasons of the POSCO Act, as also United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, make it abundantly clear that the clear purpose of the Act is to “protect children from offences of sexual assault” and “to secure the best interests of the child”.

Among the international cases quoted in the Supreme Court, the South African case law of Daniel Johannes Stephanus Van Der Bank v The State (2008) involving the rape of 19-year-old woman who had a mental age of an 8.5 gains significance.

The High Court held that the term ‘age’ also includes the mental age of the victim while granting her protection and justice.
Be Happy, Share & Help Each Other!!!
Multi-phase polls here to stay: CEC

Nasim Zaidi puts it down to parties’ preference for Central police forces

DEVESH K PANDEY
NINTU LAHIRI
NEW DELHI

Chief Election Commissioner of India (CEC) Nasim Zaidi has said that long-drawn-out, multiple-phase polls are here to stay because of the use of Central police forces for the conduct of free and fair polls.

Speaking to The Hindu, Dr. Zaidi, looking relaxed after the end of polling for five States on Thursday, said it was the “anxiety” over the use of State police, and the preference for Central police forces by political parties, candidates and even voters that had led to this state of affairs.

“Our elections have become heavily dependent on Central forces as people have their own reservations about the State police. The Commission, therefore, over the years, has come to depend on Central police forces. Our anxiety and the anxiety of political parties that all polling stations should be covered by Central police has led to this situation. There have been examples in the past that voters too feel that to truly ensure an unafraid exercise of franchise, Central forces are required. Keeping all that in mind, there is no way out but to conduct polls in phases,” said Zaidi.

Exit polls show BJP ahead in 3 States

Slight lead for Congress over Aam Aadmi Party in Punjab

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Results of various exit polls released on Thursday showed the BJP doing well in Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Goa and even Manipur, with the Congress and the Aam Aadmi Party locked in a tough contest in Punjab.

However, the numbers given by the exit polls varied widely, suggesting convergence only in broad trends.

In Uttar Pradesh, where five polls - India News MRI, Times Now VMR, ABP Lokniti CSDS, India TV-C Voter and India Today Axis - showed the BJP as leading the race, the saffron party’s projected tally varied from 155 to 279 seats.

The SP-Congress varied from 88 to 160 seats, while the BSP was shown winning just between 28 and 93 seats.

Even as three out of the five polls predicted a hung Assembly with the BJP in the lead, Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Akhilesh Yadav extended a hand of alliance to the BSP, saying in an inter-

D-Day projections

If exit polls are anything to go by, the BJP has an advantage in at least three states in the Assembly elections, with the Congress in the driver’s seat in Punjab.

**U.P.**

*CSDS: Today’s Chankaya* - Axis

BJP: 164-176
INC: 131-139
SP: 71-83
BSP: 20-27

**Uttarakhand**

*CSDS: Today’s Chankaya* - Axis

BJP: 31-33
INC: 21-23
SP: 6-7
BSP: 0-1

**Punjab**

*CSDS: Today’s Chankaya* - Axis

BJP: 32-42
INC: 22-24
SP: 0-1
BSP: 0-1

**Goa**

*CSDS: Today’s Chankaya* - Axis

BJP: 15-25
INC: 0-1
AAP: 0-1

**Manipur**

*CSDS: Today’s Chankaya* - Axis

BJP: NA
INC: NA
AAP: NA

NA - Data not available

Seat projections: Vote share
‘Mothers of Manipur’ vow to continue fight

Demand withdrawal of AFSPA

Thirteen years after their naked protest here against the alleged rape of a 32-year-old woman by Assam Rifles troopers, the “Mothers of Manipur” want their fight to go on till the controversial AFSPA is scrapped.

It was on July 15, 2004 when the 12 elderly women staged the naked protest outside the historic Kangla Fort, then a camp of the Assam Rifles, holding placards that read “Come Indian Army, Rapes Us”, which had shaken the conscience of the entire nation.

“Not borne fruit”
The women, fondly called “Mothers of Manipur”, now say their protest 13 years ago had not borne fruit and so they would continue to fight till the Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act is completely withdrawn.

“We all felt like we are mothers of the hapless girl who had been gang-raped and murdered. The women of Manipur have been the worst victims of insurgency. Both the militant groups and a section of security forces torture women as we are soft targets. Our mode of protest then came from within,” 66-year-old GyanesBWori said.

“We wanted a message to be delivered to the world and the rest of the country that we too have the right to live with dignity and Manipuri women can’t be just raped and killed,” she says.

Fort vacated

Haobam Tombi says although the protest led to the Kangla Fort being vacated by the Assam Rifles and the AFSPA being withdrawn from seven Assembly constituencies, the fight will go on till withdrawal of the law which gives the army enormous emergency powers.


“Fort vacated”

IN ARMY RAUS

While responding to queries of the Right to Food Campaign and People’s Union for Civil Liberties activists, teachers called upon the administration to focus on more nutritious food for the children along with a strong school health programme. They expressed surprise at the very idea of a daily, weekly or monthly authentication process.

Fort vacated

“How can we call this a healthy meal? Children are not being given sufficient food,” a teacher said.

Meat time: Children eating midday meal at the Government Primary School in Chetna Basti, Jaipur, on Thursday.

New midday meal norms ‘inhuman’

Teachers and Anganwadi workers in Rajasthan have spoken out against the Centre’s recent decision to link the midday meal scheme to Aadhaar, saying it would completely disrupt the process of food distribution and teaching and learning.

They said it would create an “inhuman culture” where children would be denied food due to exclusion through biometric.

While responding to queries of the Right to Food Campaign and People’s Union for Civil Liberties (PUCL) activists, teachers called upon the administration to focus on more nutritious food for the children along with a strong school health programme. They expressed surprise at the very idea of a daily, weekly or monthly authentication process.

Classroom hunger

PUCL-Rajasthan president Kavita Srivastava said here on Thursday that the activists, during their conversation with the government school teachers and principals, found them agitated at the concept of making Aadhaar mandatory for children.

Some teachers gave instances of classroom hunger and stunted children coming to their schools.

As the children coming to the government schools are from economically weaker sections, mostly Dalits and minorities, schools generally ensure that the little siblings who come with the older children are also fed.

“If the machine does not match biometrics of a child, the child will be made to stand outside and sit in a corner watching others having their meals? Won’t it be inhuman?” asked a teacher on the condition of anonymity.

Learning process

The teaching-learning process will also be disrupted, as the day would be over in the exercise to authenticate an average of 200 children in each school.

While one-time production of identity on enrolment was found justified, Ms. Srivastava said the teachers were mostly arguing for a more nutritious meal.

“If milk, paneer and eggs are supplied, children will be ensured of quick and direct proteins and other micro-nutrients,” said Ms. Srivastava.
Shigmo festival to begin from March 14

PRAKASH KAMAT

Goa's biggest Hindu folk festival, Shigmo, will begin on March 14 and will continue in various rural areas over a fortnight. Different days have been earmarked for celebrations in different parts of the State. The festival has become an important annual event on the State's tourism calendar. A statement issued by the State Tourism Department said thousands of tourists are expected to visit, to witness the spectacular Shigmo parade.

The float parades will begin at Ponda, Central Goa, on March 14. Panaji will witness these parades on March 18. The floats are elaborately built and depict scenes from mythologies. The parades consist of traditional folk and street dancers; dancing on the tunes of lord tadas, flutes, and other instruments played in the procession along the streets that are lit up with colourful décor.

It was traditionally celebrated as the homecoming of the warriors who had left their homes and families at the end of Dusshera to fight invaders. Pandurang Phaldesai, former member secretary of the State-owned Goa Kalatali Academy, and an expert on the State's folk music and dances, said the word Shigmo has its roots in Prakrit word Sugimato meaning post-harvest celebration.

Mr. Phaldesai said, "The festival marks celebration of harvesting of crop and also coincides with Holi."

Ancient copper coins found in central Kashmir

Over 800 coins dating back to 11th, 12th Century discovered in Budgam district

The coins belong to the period of the Vashakara and Lohora dynasties. Special Arrangement

For the first time, ocean floor between Visakhapatnam, Srikakulam clearly mapped

For the first time, ocean floor between Visakhapatnam, Srikakulam clearly mapped

By SUMIT BHATTACHARJEE

Scientists of CSIR-National Institute of Oceanography (NIO) in Visakhapatnam are an exciting lot. They have found three new canyons, forming a major canyon system in the depths of the Bay of Bengal, close to Kovdava in Srikakulam district.

The finding has been epoch-making for 50 years and the first time, they have clearly mapped the ocean floor between Visakhapatnam and Srikakulam by sending over 32 high density beams to the depths of the sea.

Canyon systems are generally formed by the flow of river water into the sea and can be as old as the river system, which is close to 23 million years. But what makes our find interesting is that we could locate and clearly map a new system in the Bay of Bengal off the coast of Visakhapatnam and after nearly five decades, said the acting director of NIO, S. Prassanna Kumar.

The last canyon systems off the Visakhapatnam coast were discovered in 1963 by American geologist E.C. Lal of the U.S. Navy Electronics Laboratory, who was carrying out marine studies at Andhra University. The data was collected on board research ship Anton Bruun.

Huge canyon

According to P.S. Rao, Chief Geologist on board RV Sindhu Sunkarp, the new canyon system is very huge and was probably formed by River Kandwara. The depth of the canyon varies from about 90 metres at the starting point to about 2,800 metres at the deepest point, and it extends to about 50 to 70 km deep into the sea.

New find: S. Prassanna Kumar explaining the discovery of a new canyon system in the Bay of Bengal.

K.R. DESHPANDE

New find: S. Prassanna Kumar explaining the discovery of a new canyon system in the Bay of Bengal.

K.R. DESHPANDE

New find: S. Prassanna Kumar explaining the discovery of a new canyon system in the Bay of Bengal.

K.R. DESHPANDE

New find: S. Prassanna Kumar explaining the discovery of a new canyon system in the Bay of Bengal.

K.R. DESHPANDE

New find: S. Prassanna Kumar explaining the discovery of a new canyon system in the Bay of Bengal.
Paid maternity leave extended to 26 weeks

Bill a humble gift to women: Minister

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI
Calling it a ‘humble gift’ to women in India, Labour Minister Bandaru Dattatreya welcomed the Parliament nod to the Maternity Benefit (Amendment) Bill, 2016. Women working in the organised sector will now be entitled to paid maternity leave of 26 weeks, up from 12 weeks. The bill will benefit about 1.8 million women.

The new law will apply to all establishments employing 10 or more people, and the entitlement applies only up to the first two children. For the third child, the maternity leave entitlement will only be for 12 weeks. The Maternity Benefit (Amendment) Bill, 2016, was passed by the Lok Sabha on Thursday, months after the Rajya Sabha approved the measure that takes India to the third position in terms of the number of weeks for maternity leave, after Canada and Norway, where it is 50 weeks and 44 weeks, respectively.

‘We made history today’

“I am very, very happy that we have made history today. This will help thousands of women and lead to much healthier children,” said Maneka Gandhi, Minister of Women and Child Development. She acknowledged that ensuring organisations will implement the Bill by providing mothers the 26-week leave, and making provisions for a creche, will be an uphill task.

“This is my humble gift to women, a day after the world celebrated the International Women’s Day,” Mr. Dattatreya said, after a debate that lasted four hours.

Punjab varsity develops new Bt cotton varieties

VIKAS VASUDEVA
CHANDIGARH
Punjab Agricultural University in Ludhiana has announced that it has developed the country’s first genetically modified varieties of cotton — the seeds of which could be reused by farmers with no commercial restrictions, resulting in savings on repeat purchases every season.

“The Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) has identified three Bt cotton varieties — PAU Bt 1 F1861 and RS2013 - for cultivation in Punjab, Haryana and Rajasthan. They [ICAR] have asked us to put up a proposal on release of these varieties,” PAU Vice-Chancellor Baldev Singh Dhillon told The Hindu.

Dr. Dhillon said the notification on these varieties could be out by next month after ICAR’s scheduled meeting, and the process of multiplying the seeds would, meanwhile, start. “We expect that by next year we will be able to distribute a few seeds to farmers for sowing. In the subsequent year, we will distribute seeds on a large scale,” he said.

CrytAc gene at work

“PAU Bt 1 and F1861 were developed by PAU, while RS2013 was developed at the Jhansi Agricultural University (RAU), Bilancer. While the PAU Bt 1 was completely developed at PAU, the F1861 and RS2013 were converted to Bt version by Central Institute for Cotton Research, Nagpur. All three varieties carry the CrytAc gene imparting resistance against bollworm complex,” a PAU statement said. The genetic modification involves introduction of the Bt bacterial gene that codes for a protein which kills the bollworm cotton pest.

Dr. Dhillon said, with these varieties, farmers would not have to buy costly Bt cotton seeds every year. “The farmers can keep their own harvests for next year’s sowing,” he said.

Cotton is the only GM crop allowed to be cultivated in India. Punjab alone needs around 20-25 lakh packets of Bt cotton seed which amounts to about ₹225 crores. The price of these varieties will be much lower than current Bt cotton hybrid seed, and it can cut cultivation costs,” he said.
No change in India’s stance on UNSC veto

Will accept no-veto rule for first 15 years

SUHASINI HAIDAR
NEW DELHI

India is ready to accept a United Nations (UN) permanent Security Council seat without using a veto for the first 15 years, the MEA confirmed here on Thursday.

Answering questions on the stand taken by India’s Ambassador to the UN on Wednesday where he addressed the General Assembly’s Inter Governmental Negotiations on behalf of Brazil, Germany, India and Japan (called the G-4), MFA spokesperson Gopal Baglay said there had been “no change in the government’s position” on securing veto power at the UNSC, but India did not wish to “impede” the process.

In his submission Ambassador Syed Akbaruddin had said that India and other G-4 countries were ready to accept a moratorium on using the veto.

“While the new permanent members would as a principle have the same responsibilities and obligations as current permanent members they shall not exercise the veto until a decision on the matter has been taken during a review [expected after 15 years],” Mr. Akbaruddin said. “The

Sri Lanka to scale back Hambantota port deal

The Chinese-built port is making losses

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
COLOMBO

Sri Lanka is to scale back a profitable but controversial deal to sell a deep-sea port to a Chinese company after widespread protests, the Ports Minister said Thursday. Arjuna Ranatunga said the government was renegotiating the sale of the debt-laden but strategically-located Hambantota port.

It had hoped to transfer an 80% stake to the China Merchants Port Holdings on a long lease, but the proposed deal met with opposition from residents in the southern town of Hambantota and some members of the ruling coalition.

“We have proposed several changes [to the original draft agreement] and we will end up with a situation which is far more favourable to the institution,” Mr. Ranatunga told reporters in Colombo, referring to the Sri Lanka Ports Authority.

He did not give details, but official sources said the SLPA wanted to reduce the period, and ensure overall security of the port remained in its control.

The port, built during the former president Mahinda Rajapaksa, has become a white elephant with revenues insufficient even to pay salaries of staff.

The new government, which came to power in January 2015, has been trying to renegotiate terms of its $8-billion Chinese debt, which includes the construction costs of the Hambantota port.
Leaders must tell voters not to take bribes, says CEC

‘The Election Commission is seeking to make it a cognisable offence as under current laws police cannot take action’

DEVEshi K. Pandey
Nistula Herbar

At the end of the Assembly polls in five States, Chief Election Commissioner Nasim Zaidi spoke to The Hindu on electoral funding, bribery of voters and multiple-phase elections.

We are at the end of the Assembly polls in five States, with Uttar Pradesh having just completed them. Are lengthy polls desirable?

Overall, the elections have passed off smoothly, and contrary to all expectations and precedents, in a peaceful manner. Regarding the seven phases in U.P., we would also like to have had it in three, four or five phases. Our elections have become heavily dependent on Central forces as people have their own reservations about the State police. The Commission, therefore, over the years, has come to depend on Central forces and police forces. Our anxiety and the anxiety of political parties that all polling stations should be covered by Central police have led to this situation. There have been examples in the past that voters too feel that to truly exercise an unfettered exercise of franchise, Central forces are required. The anxiety in mind, there is no way out but to conduct polls in a phased manner off systematically. It can be condensed to six or even five phases, but not less than that. I must add here, that our voters have shown unprecedented enthusiasm, so they are, at least, not fatigued by the length of the polls.

The polls took place right after the decision by the government to denounce certain currency notes. Has that currency squeeze affected voter turnout by cash and kind?

Leaving aside the policy of demonetisation, and purely from the [Election] Commission's point of view, this set of elections has seen an unprecedented number of seizures of all manner of inducements to the voter. If you total cash, liquor, drugs, bullion, it crosses Rs 350 crore, a three-fold increase over 2012 when we seized around Rs 100 crore worth of stuff. Liquor worth Rs 86 crore has been seized during these polls.

What do you attribute this to?

Our enforcement was 24/7, our people worked in three shifts; therefore, I feel that there has been an increase in the volume of these goods seized during these polls. I am only looking at it from the Commission's point of view and have no comment to offer on the possible effects of demonetisation.

Three senior political figures, Chief Ministers of Delhi and Uttar Pradesh Arvind Kejriwal and Akhilesh Yadav and Defence Minister Manohar Parrikar, all said during these polls that people should accept bribes but vote for them.

What is the net output of all this?

The Commission has always urged political parties that all of them have to work with us in curbing pecuniary inducements to vote, and although the matter with regard to these three leaders are closed, the Commission would continue to urge not to use these words. Leaders, if they are speaking against this practice, must speak against it unequivocally and not even refer to accepting a bribe tangentially. The common man might see it as a validation of the bribe, and therefore leaders must speak out against accepting bribes unequivocally, without dissembling.

Are the laws dealing with electoral bribes sufficient?

The Commission is seeking to make bribing a cognisable offence. Cognisability is required because when you lodge an FIR today and under the current laws, police cannot take action, we will have to go back to the courts to do that. In this regard, the Ministry of Home Affairs, our pursuance has circulated a Bill seeking to amend certain sections of the IPC relating to making bribing a cognisable offence. As a part of that, we have proposed the enhancement of punishment for the offence as well. Therefore, as far as individual voters are concerned, it is part of the legislation coming in, individual matters will be dealt with very quickly. The EC will continue to pursue an earlier proposal of ours about countermarking elections if there is a widespread bribing of voters, based on material evidence and reports of returning officers. That too is under consideration of the government.

Will the Centre's decision to cap the limit on anonymous cash donations to Rs 2,000 bring about transparency in party funding?

We had, in the past, made a proposal that the amount of donation that remains anonymous should be brought down to Rs 2,000,000. We understand it is now part of the Finance Bill. It is a good beginning and to this extent, the anonymity of donations will decrease. However, there is a counter view that Rs 2,000-limit will also be missed. But, as and when those instances come, we will deal with it.

What about electoral bonds? Is it being said that it is not going to bring any transparency?

As far as electoral bonds are concerned, we have learnt that it is part of the Finance Bill, but we don't have the outlines of this scheme. How it can be implemented, if it is going to reduce the anonymity, we welcome it.

What is the Election Commission’s view on state funding of elections?

Our view is that state funding can come only subject to certain deep reforms in the entire system. It can be a stand-alone proposal. We have said that there is a need to reform the functioning of political parties, a need for institutional democracy [of the parties], for decriminalisation so that sources of money are also told. There should be complete transparency of the funding of political parties and any other means of black money getting into the political system or in the hands of candidates.

The PM has proposed simultaneous elections. What is the need for this?

It is a huge logistical exercise, but surmountable under certain conditions.

In nine months, our people worked in three shifts, therefore, I feel that there has been an increase in the volume of these goods seized during these polls. I am only looking at it from the Commission’s point of view and have no comment to offer on the possible effects of demonetisation.

The Commission is seeking to make bribing a cognisable offence. Cognisability is required because when you lodge an FIR today and under the current laws, police cannot take action, we will have to go back to the courts to do that. In this regard, the Ministry of Home Affairs, our pursuance has circulated a Bill seeking to amend certain sections of the IPC relating to making bribing a cognisable offence. As a part of that, we have proposed the enhancement of punishment for the offence as well. Therefore, as far as individual voters are concerned, it is part of the legislation coming in, individual matters will be dealt with very quickly. The EC will continue to pursue an earlier proposal of ours about countermarking elections if there is a widespread bribing of voters, based on material evidence and reports of returning officers. That too is under consideration of the government.

Will the Centre's decision to cap the limit on anonymous cash donations to Rs 2,000 bring about transparency in party funding?

We had, in the past, made a proposal that the amount of donation that remains anonymous should be brought down to Rs 2,000,000. We understand it is now part of the Finance Bill. It is a good beginning and to this extent, the anonymity of donations will decrease. However, there is a counter view that Rs 2,000-limit will also be missed. But, as and when those instances come, we will deal with it.

What about electoral bonds? Is it being said that it is not going to bring any transparency?

As far as electoral bonds are concerned, we have learnt that it is part of the Finance Bill, but we don't have the outlines of this scheme. How it can be implemented, if it is going to reduce the anonymity, we welcome it.

What is the Election Commission’s view on state funding of elections?

Our view is that state funding can come only subject to certain deep reforms in the entire system. It can be a stand-alone proposal. We have said that there is a need to reform the functioning of political parties, a need for institutional democracy [of the parties], for decriminalisation so that sources of money are also told. There should be complete transparency of the funding of political parties and any other means of black money getting into the political system or in the hands of candidates.

The PM has proposed simultaneous elections. What is the need for this?

It is a huge logistical exercise, but surmountable under certain conditions.
EASE OF DOING BUSINESS: CONSTRUCTION PERMITS

Delhi and Mumbai have made it lot easier now.
51 other cities with million plus population to do so soon.

HOW IT IS EASIER & SPEEDIER NOW?

- One stop solution
- Simplified single online application. No manual submission
- Automatic online fee calculator
- Online digitally signed building plan approval
- Online common request for completion certificate
- No need for any personal visits
- Colour Coded Zonal Maps for all NOCs like AAI, NMA etc.
- GIS based plot wise guidance for NOC available online
- Online payment to avoid physical visits
- About 30 processes reduced to 8
- No need for several affidavits. Now, only one undertaking
- No need to run to different agencies for NOCs. All integrated
And finally...
Building plan approval in less than 30 days and completion/occupancy certificate in less than 21 days.

Ostriches lived in India once

Chas found in DNA extracted from 25,000-year-old fossilised eggshells

R. Prasad

Based on a DNA analysis of a fossilised eggshell fragment of ostrich, Indian researchers have for the first time found molecular evidence to confirm the presence of these birds in India more than 25,000 years ago.

Scientists found 92% genetic similarity between the fossil eggshell samples and Struthio camelus, an ostrich species found in Africa. The results were published in the journal PLOS ONE.

Eggshell fragments of ostrich discovered from India before have been studied using morphological features, which is insufficient to confirm that ostriches may have lived in India. This is the first time that molecular evidence indicating their presence has been obtained.

The ostrich sample analysed has close proximity to the African ostrich species and underlines the movement of these birds between India and Africa before the Indian landmass drifted away from Africa.

Eleven fossilised eggshell samples from eight archaeological sites in Rajasthan, Gujarat and Madhya Pradesh were studied. DNA was isolated from five samples and a tiny portion (43 base pairs) of a highly conserved mitochondrial region was amplified and then sequenced from one of the samples.

The other four samples had less than 30 base pairs and hence were not included in the study.

Scientific challenges

"We could amplify only a small portion of the DNA as the sample was highly degraded. It is scientifically challenging to isolate DNA from ancient samples. And in this case, the samples were exposed to hostile environment," says Dr. Kumarasamy Thanagaraj from the Centre for Cellular and Molecular Biology (CCMB), Hyderabad, one of the authors of the paper.

"It is very difficult to study ancient DNA as it is often broken into small fragments. So we could amplify only a smaller overlapping DNA fragment," Dr. Thanagaraj says.

"We are happy that we could get this much information considering that the sample was very old and not well preserved," he adds.

This is the first time that long term DNA preservation in fossil eggshell collections from tropical environments, as seen in India, has been studied.

"Eggshells are a better substrate than bones for preserving ancient DNA. The inorganic crystalline structure of the shell minimises microbial contamination," says Sonal Jain from the Department of Biotechnology, Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Roorkee, the first author of the paper.

"X-ray diffraction and electron backscattering diffraction studies helped in finding which eggshells were good and which were bad. The shells are made of calcium carbonate. If calcium changes to magnesite, and there is more magnesite, then the sample is more degraded," says Ms. Jain.
Ukraine to grant visa-on arrival for Indian tourists.
Donald Tusk re-elected EU president
An Australian lake has turned a vivid pink in a startling natural phenomenon.
The result of green algae at the bottom of the lake at Westgate Park on the outskirts of Melbourne responding to high levels of salt and changing colours
The Election Commission of India is an autonomous constitutional authority responsible for administering election processes in India.
The body administers elections to the Lok Sabha, Rajya Sabha, state legislatures, and the offices of the President and Vice President in the country.
The Election Commission operates under the authority of Constitution per Article 324, and subsequently enacted Representation of the People Act- Part XV of the Constitution
The Commission has the powers under the Constitution, to act in an appropriate manner when the enacted laws make insufficient provisions to deal with a given situation in the conduct of an election.
The **free rider** problem is a **market failure** that occurs when **people take advantage of being able to use a common resource, or collective good, without paying for it**

- As is the case when **citizens of a country utilize public goods without paying their fair share in taxes.**

**PricewaterhouseCoopers** is a multinational professional services network headquartered in London, United Kingdom. It is the second largest professional services firm in the world, and is one of the Big Four auditors, along with Deloitte, EY and KPMG.

The **Palace of Kangla** is an old palace at Imphal in Manipur (Kangleipak).

- It was situated on both sides (western and eastern) of the bank of the Imphal River.
- But now it remains only on the western side of the bank.
- Only the ruins remain now- Kangla means "dry land" in old Meitei.
- It was the traditional seat of the past Meitei rulers of Manipur.

'Kangla' was the ancient capital of Manipur from the ancient times down to the year 1891 AD.
India
States and Union Territories

- State Capital
- Union Territory Capital