

**The Indian EXPRESS**

FOUNDED BY

RAMNATH GOENKA

BECAUSE THE TRUTH INVOLVES US ALL

## STEPPING ON TOES

Centre must step back from its ill-advised move for a total cattle slaughter ban, which threatens to cramp states' rights

THE CENTRE'S ILL-ADVISED move to ban sale and purchase of cattle for slaughter at animal markets across India has nudged sworn political rivals on to common ground. On Monday, Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan wrote to the prime minister and all the chief ministers that the Centre was making a "covert attempt to usurp the powers of the state legislature in the guise of rules under a Central Act". West Bengal CM Mamata Banerjee described the decision as "a deliberate attempt to encroach upon the state's powers". She called it an "attempt to destroy the federal structure of the country" and promised to challenge it "legally". Meanwhile, the Madurai bench of the Madras High Court on Tuesday stayed the ban for four weeks. The court has also asked the Centre and the Tamil Nadu government to respond to the issues raised in a PIL. The issue of federal rights, flagged by both Vijayan and Banerjee and political parties like the DMK, is certain to figure in the court proceedings and the Centre will be hard-pressed to explain its move. Its attempt to smuggle in the contentious political demand for a ban on cattle slaughter by changing the rules under the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act, 1960 may not withstand judicial scrutiny.

Vijayan and Banerjee rightly argue that the Centre's notification amounts to overreach. The notification issued by the Union Ministry of Environment indeed encroaches into the domain of state legislatures. Animal slaughter has been regulated or prohibited by state laws, in response to local social, economic and cultural preferences. The Centre has respected the diversity of aims in legislation because the spirit of federalism demands it. It is ironic that a government under a prime minister who pointedly promised to promote "cooperative federalism" has now sought to upset the balance in Centre-state relations. Prime Minister Modi, who was Gujarat chief minister for over a decade, has on many occasions spoken of the need for the Centre and the states to respect each other's rights and duties. The government's pushing through of the GST, by getting the states on board, is also an illustration of the spirit of cooperative federalism. Earlier, the government's decision to disband the Planning Commission and replace it with a think tank, the Niti Aayog, reflected its belief that the centralised planning process gave limited leeway to the states. The devolution of more tax revenues to the states was seen as a clear intent on the part of the Centre to empower the states. The cattle slaughter notification threatens to undo much of the good work done by the Centre in promoting the principle and practice of federalism.

The Centre must step back and recognise that the opposition from Kerala and West Bengal is a warning. Similar concerns have been raised in the Northeastern states, where, too, bovine meat is part of the diet. Public policy cannot be set without factoring in the country's diversities.

## PICTURE THIS

Why must Chhattisgarh's schoolchildren only look up to images of the ruling political triumvirate?

CHHATTISGARH'S GOVERNMENT SCHOOLS have been directed to install a large mirror and keep nail clippers and a comb handy, so that students can check for themselves how tidy they are. Self-image is indeed important for young people preparing to go out into the world, and putting their grooming into their own hands also teaches responsibility towards oneself. But along with this very welcome self-image, three images which have nothing to do with learning will also be enshrined in school premises — portraits of the president, prime minister and chief minister — ostensibly because students are asked questions about these political luminaries. Logically and fruitfully, they could be replaced by images of Thiruvalluvar, Sugarloaf Mountain and a wombat, since students are also tested for their knowledge of literature, geography and the life sciences.

Back in the 20th century, there was a credible reason for letting the pantheon of the freedom struggle beam down upon students, who were presumed to be preparing to join the project of nation-building. However, in a mature democracy, politics and the people who drive it should be kept out of the schoolroom. Now, pedagogy should be conducted in a culture of openness and enquiry, in which children are encouraged to explore possibilities, instead of restricting them to the narrow tunnel of politically mandated projects. No credible reason remains to overawe students with images of the ruling deities of the political firmament.

The world of knowledge has enough heroes of its own. Are school students familiar with the faces of K.G. Subramanyan, M.N. Srinivas and Meghnad Saha? They should be. Images of pathbreakers like Marie Curie, Johannes Kepler and Rene Descartes grace the labs and libraries of European schools. Indian schools neglect to teach students very much about the Indian stars of the firmament of knowledge, such as Aryabhata, Varahamihira, Sushruta and Kalidasa. By all means, let us have pictures of them put up in schools all over India, and not only in Chhattisgarh. Of the trinity that will preside over the state's schools, only the president stands apart. On Teachers' Day last year, he taught an excellent class on political and constitutional history in a school on the President's Estate in Delhi. But then, his picture will have to be replaced when he demits office in a couple of months, so even that doesn't count.

## OUR MAN IN PANAMA

Manuel Noriega was made, and unmade, by US interests in Latin America

WHEN MANUEL NORIEGA was taken into custody by the US armed forces in 1990, it was to the music of Van Halen's *Panama*, played loudly outside the Vatican embassy where the de facto ruler of the country was hiding. The song was meant to irritate the deposed dictator, rub an erstwhile ally's nose in his defeat. Noriega, who died on Monday at 83, was a symbol for many things: His country, and the tiny strait that made it the centre of intrigue of Latin American politics — often subservient to Cold War machinations of the great powers, particularly the US — and the flamboyant, repressive dictators before him.

The Republic of Panama did indeed produce many bananas, and the dictators that go with the cliché. From the second half of the 20th century, however, it was the narrow strait that made the country, and its rulers, important to Washington. And up to the '80s, both before and after he was head of the government, Noriega was the CIA's man in Latin America. The US was willing to overlook the vast wealth Noriega accrued through drug trafficking, his violent actions against dissenters and the stifling of democracy because he was the conduit for weapons and funds to CIA-backed forces against the Left in Nicaragua, El Salvador, Bolivia and even Iran. But Noriega was playing both sides — helping Cuba as much as the US. When his duplicity came to light, the "war on drugs" took centre-stage in Washington. Noriega turned against the US, declaring war, machete in hand, after citing its interference in the 1989 Panama elections.

Noriega, unsurprisingly, lost the war and spent much of his life since in prison. Noriega was made and unmade by US foreign policy. At another time, in another place, he may have been just another spook, double-crossing his handlers to make a quick buck. But as John Le Carre put it, "In Panama, when you bribe someone, you expect loyalty".



ARVIND P. DATAR

LESS THAN A week ago, the Central government notified rules, many of which are as unconstitutional as they are senseless: A person is prohibited from bringing any type of cattle to an animal market for sale for slaughter. First, why is it unconstitutional? The ban on slaughter of cattle was a politically sensitive issue even before the Constitution came into force in 1950. In the Constituent Assembly, a few members supported a total ban but Rev. Nichols Roy made a cogent argument opposing the move, pointing out the economic consequences of maintaining old and sickly cattle, and that a large number of people consumed beef.

In the end, a partial ban was included as part of the Directive Principles (which represent our constitutional goals) and Article 48 now reads: "The state shall endeavour to organise agricultural and animal husbandry on modern and scientific lines and shall, in particular, take steps for preserving and improving the breeds, and prohibiting the slaughter, of cows and calves and other milch and draught cattle."

Like prohibition, our political history is littered with repeated attempts to totally ban the slaughter of cattle. The validity of such an attempt was first considered in detail in 1959 in the famous Mohammed Hanif Quareshi case. After a detailed discussion on the economic merits and demerits of a total ban, the Supreme Court held that the ban on slaughter of all cows, and calves of cows and calves of buffaloes, male and female, was constitutionally valid but a total prohibition on the slaughter of she-buffaloes, breeding bulls and working buffaloes, irrespective of their age or usefulness, was unconstitutional. Such a ban violated the fundamental right to carry on business of about 2,00,000 butchers in Bihar alone. These persons were mostly Muslims and belonged to the Qureshi community. Significantly, the Supreme Court noted that large sections of Muslims, Christians and Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes consumed beef. It also noted that the practice of creating camps to house old and useless cattle, called "gosadans", was "not at all encouraging".

Bihar and Uttar Pradesh did not give up. They amended their laws and permitted

# Illegal and senseless

The proposed total ban on cattle slaughter goes against Supreme Court decisions on the matter since 1959

slaughter of cattle only after they were more than 20 years old. The laws introduced a host of complex regulatory restrictions which included an appeal to the District Animal Husbandry Officer. The butcher community again successfully moved the Supreme Court which referred to the "almost unanimous opinion of experts that after the age of 15, bulls, bullocks and buffaloes are no longer useful for breeding, draught and other purposes and whatever little use they may have then is greatly offset by the economic disadvantage of feeding and maintaining unserviceable cattle".

After this decision in 1961, the next attempt at a total ban before the Supreme Court was also unsuccessful in 1969. Almost 30 years later, in 1996, another attempt by the Madhya Pradesh government to absolutely ban the slaughter of all bulls and bullocks was again held to be violative of the fundamental right of butchers to carry on their business under Article 19(1)(g). The Supreme Court held that it was "pained" at the successive attempts of the state of Madhya Pradesh to nullify Supreme Court decisions.

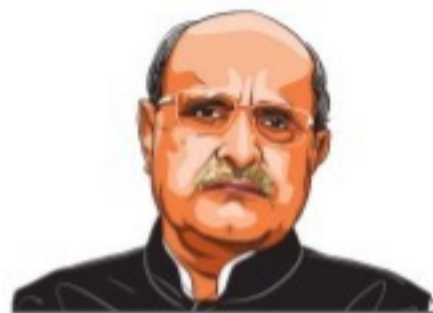
In 2005, a bench of seven judges upheld the total ban on slaughter of cow and cow-progeny and made a valiant but regrettable attempt to justify the ban on aged cattle, observing that cattle never became "useless", at the most, they became "less useful". The court pointed out that such cattle still gave dung and urine, which had wide-ranging utility from biogas to medicinal formulations. Whatever the merits of these arguments, the Supreme Court mercifully confined its judgment to upholding the total ban only to "cow and cow-progeny".

The net result is that a total ban on all types of cattle in the latest notification is likely to be held as unconstitutional. It is difficult to comprehend how anyone could have drafted such a notification imposing a total ban in the teeth of a line of Supreme Court decisions from 1959. Or is it another attempt to draft a patently unconstitutional but politically convenient law and leave it to the courts to strike it down? One can always say: "See, we passed the law but these courts always come in our way".

And why is it senseless? First, there is no

And why is it senseless?

First, there is no justification, economic or otherwise, for this total ban. What are the commercial consequences of such a ban? How would it impact the livelihood of lakhs of butchers? What would be the impact on our huge beef exports? And what would it do to the leather trade? Such a drastic decision should have at least required a detailed investigation into the possible impact on all the stakeholders concerned.



K.C. TYAGI

WHEN THE FARMING community across the country lives in precarious conditions, certain statements by members of the Niti Aayog have shocked farmers. The opinion of the members is even more important as the PM presides over the Niti Aayog. The suggestion of bringing agricultural income into the income tax structure was proposed by a Niti Aayog member: Bibek Debroy recently said that the number of taxpayers must be increased by eliminating exemptions on agricultural income. According to him, the removal of exemptions on personal income tax and bringing agriculture under the tax net will increase the government's revenue. This recommendation is part of a 15-year perspective plan circulated among the states at the Niti Aayog's governing council meeting.

Fully aware of its sensitivity, Finance Minister Arun Jaitley had to issue a statement from Moscow; he had to clarify that there is no intention on the government's part to tax agricultural income. He clarified that taxation on agricultural income does not come under the Centre's jurisdiction.

In his article, ("12 reasons why", IE, May 3), Debroy listed certain "facts" supporting his statement. Most of the taxation provisions enlisted by him were either archaic or bizarrely irrelevant. Moreover, he also refused to accept rural and urban disparities in income which, according to him, is an "artificial distinction". Both his assumptions are

not only flawed — they seem ludicrous.

Agriculture's share in India's GDP is around 14-16 per cent while it has 49 per cent of the total manpower and 64 percent of rural manpower. The main reason for a large part of the population being dependent on agriculture is small land holdings and less productive farming techniques. This is why the per capita income of agricultural labourers and farmers is extremely low. According to the State of Indian Agriculture report (2015-16), the number of land holdings of one hectare or less has increased by 23 per cent in a decade. The number of such plots in 2000-2001 was 75.41 million, which increased to 92.83 million in 2010-11.

According to the report, based on the calculations of the 70th round of the National Sample Survey, nearly 9.6 million farmers of the country have 0.5 hectares or less land. The total monthly expenditure of these families is more than their monthly consumption spending. For instance, the number of farmer families holding 0.41-1.0 hectare of land is 3.15 crores. The total monthly income of each such family was Rs 2,145 from farming activities. Earnings from agricultural labour (Rs 2,011), livestock (Rs 629) and non-agricultural works (Rs 462) comes to around Rs 3,102. The total from all sources is Rs 5,247, whereas the monthly consumption expenditure of marginal farmers and households is Rs 6,020. Moreover, agricultural output fluctuates far more than the industrial and services sectors. In this bleak situation, the proposal to tax agricultural income is not only irrational, but also speaks to the gargantuan divide between policymakers and farmers.

Today, there is a perception in farming communities that the Niti Aayog is drafting policies to benefit industry and corporates. Instead of clearing the air, statements speaking of taxing agricultural income affirm such distrust. Where there is a trust deficit, inequality and oppression, there is resentment and violence. The Naxal problem is a quintessential example.

Governance is fundamentally different from management. It requires empathy and moral integrity. The Niti Aayog was envisaged as a "think tank" and tasked with formulating policies and guidelines for the government. It has been said that those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat the same mistakes. If the Aayog does not want to go on the lines of the erstwhile Planning Commission, it must engage in course corrections. A more inclusive approach of policy formulation and dialogue with farmers' organisations, state governments and other stakeholders will strengthen the cooperative federalism envisioned at the foundation of the Niti Aayog.

The writer is a Rajya Sabha MP from the JD(U). Views expressed are personal

## AN ANTI-FARMER PROPOSAL

Suggestion to tax agricultural income shows gap between policymakers, farmers

Today, there is a perception in farming communities that the Niti Aayog is drafting policies to benefit industry and corporates. Instead of clearing the air, statements speaking of taxing agricultural income affirm the distrust of the farming community. Wherever there is a trust deficit, inequality and oppression, there is resentment and violence. The Naxal problem is a quintessential example.

## MAY 31, 1977, FORTY YEARS AGO

### FOOD LIMITS RELAXED

THE DELHI ADMINISTRATION amended the Guest Control Order with immediate effect. Cereal meals can now be served to 100 persons in marriages and funerals and 50 persons in ordinary parties. When the number exceeds the stipulated figure, only four items not containing prohibited foodstuffs can be served. Of these four, only two non-vegetarian dishes can be served. Prohibited foodstuffs are defined as those prepared from or containing cereals or pulses, all sweets and gram and its products. The administration has allowed besan (gram flour) as coating or for preparations of dishes like pakoras, cutlets and kababs. Fruits, papad, chutney, curd,

beverages have also been allowed.

### MARUTI AUCTION

THE INCOME TAX DEPARTMENT announced the auction of immovable property belonging to Maruti Ltd, Gurgaon, for the realisation of arrears of income tax against the company amounting to Rs 9.5 lakh. Property to be auctioned includes land and building, machinery and fixtures and fittings belonging to Maruti.

### ASSAM TRAIN TRAGEDY

AT LEAST 120 PERSONS were feared to have died and 100 sustained serious injuries when the engine and four bodies of the 13 U

Tezpur Express plunged into the flooded Beki river. The accident occurred about 112 km from Gauhati around 1.25 a.m.

### YES FOR PRESIDENT ZIA

BANGLADESH PRESIDENT MAJOR General Ziaur Rahman is heading for a massive confidence vote from the country's 3.83 crore voters in the first ever nation-wide referendum, according to unofficial results coming in from interior places. Voters are being asked to answer yes or no to the question about whether they have confidence in "President Major-General General Ziaur Rahman and in the policies and programmes enunciated by him".



# 15 THE IDEAS PAGE

## WHAT THE OTHERS SAY

"Now that the US economic advantage has become less prominent, what Trump wants to do is to 'sell' some of the geopolitical assets in exchange for cash."

—GLOBAL TIMES, CHINA

# Don't just light the fire

Niti Aayog's Draft Action Agenda neither incorporates lessons from experience of incineration plants in Delhi, nor takes note of the many success stories of biomethanation



CITIES AT CROSSROADS

BY ISHER JUDGE AHLUWALIA

THE NITI AAYOG, in its Draft Three Year Action Agenda, has drawn attention to the need for a sustainable plan for solid waste management in Indian cities. However, the Aayog has taken the stand that incineration or "Waste to Energy" is the best option as a sustainable disposal solution for the solid waste of larger cities. The contention is that biogas and composting for waste management generate by-products or residues in large volumes that larger cities will find difficult to dispose of efficiently.

This reasoning is flawed. The Niti Aayog fails to point out that when incineration plants in cities use unsegregated waste to generate electricity, they emit toxic gases as by-products and irresponsibly dispose of these "dangerous by-products" in the air. When we do not have effective mechanisms for monitoring emissions, the health hazard becomes even more challenging. The National Green Tribunal recently levied a penalty on the incineration plant at Okhla in Delhi for its violations of emission norms, but residents in the neighbourhood of Okhla have approached the Supreme Court with a Public Interest Litigation for the relocation of the plant. The Niti Aayog's Draft Action Agenda neither incorporates lessons from the experience of incineration plants in Delhi, nor does it take note of the many success stories of biomethanation in a number of Indian cities, including some large cities.

Incineration technologies require a continuous supply of waste with a sufficiently high calorific value and a low moisture content. Aman Luthra, in a recent article in the *Economic and Political Weekly* (in April) has examined whether these conditions hold in India, using empirical evidence from Delhi. He demonstrates that Indian waste is not suitable for incineration because it has too high a moisture content, leading to low calorific value. The high-tech gasification plant in Pune that I had written about in this column in 2012 ('Clean it like Pune', IE, October 31, 2012) closed down precisely for these reasons. A 2016 study by the Centre for Science and Environment (CSE) finds that the calorific value of Indian waste is 800-1000 kcal per kg; it needs to be at least 2000 kcal per kg to be suitable for incineration.

India's old tradition of *kabadiwalas* and the recycling of paper, glass, plastic, etc., becomes a contributing factor to the low calorific value of our municipal waste. A study by the United Nations Environment Program in 2009 found that India's informal recycling sector "recovers much of the dry, high calorific material leaving a moist residue with high green waste content unsuitable for production of combustible 'fluff' without considerable pre-treatment (that is, drying)". Progressive states like California in the US have established a new recycling goal of 75 per cent by 2020 — should we not be trying to recycle more, rather than move backwards to avoid recycling, and improve the calorific value of the waste we generate, so that the incineration plants can work?

Generating energy from waste is only one aspect of waste management — it is by no means the most efficient or the most economical means of generating energy. The policy focus must not sway from examining the financial and environmental costs and benefits of the different alternatives for waste management. In Waste to Energy, technology is moving fast, regulatory challenges are enormous and the challenges of enforcing emission standards are even greater.

The Niti Aayog has recommended setting



Subrata Dhar

up a Waste to Energy Corporation of India under the Ministry of Urban Development, "which may set up world-class waste to energy plants through public-private partnerships (PPP) across the country". They have invoked the example of the National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) which organises PPP efforts in roads. But the parallel is inappropriate.

First, the land on which highways are built is already owned by the Government of India; there are no acquisition issues. Besides, the NHAI is a well-funded agency which receives the proceeds of the cess on petrol and diesel plus toll revenues. No such revenue is available for a new Central corporation on solid waste management. Will the Ministry of Finance fund this? The land on which plants will be built belongs to urban local governments or state governments. Should the Central government set up a corporation to undertake tasks which are urban local bodies' responsibility? This goes against cooperative federalism.

Surprisingly, the Niti Aayog is silent on the segregation of wet waste from dry waste at the source of generating waste. Incentives for segregation and a penalty for non-segregation must be the first action point of any agenda on municipal solid waste management. Solid Waste Management Rules (2016) are a significant improvement over the Municipal Solid Waste Rules (2000) in emphasising the need for the enforcement of segregation and recommending change in municipal by-laws which allow for cost recovery in the collection of waste segregated at source and imposing a penalty for non-segregation. The Niti Aayog has missed an opportunity to build on this opening. Even though it is often claimed that incineration can take unsegregated waste, segregating biodegradable waste and inert waste also helps improve the calorific value of dry waste.

About half of the solid waste generated in Indian cities is biodegradable. If this is segregated at source, it can be collected and delivered at a local biomethanation plant for anaerobic processing. Unlike composting, in which biogas is released into the environment, biomethanation allows the capture of biogas which can be used for cooking or for electricity generation; it also produces liquid fertiliser. For example, NISARGRUNA technology for biomethanation was developed by Sharad Kale, a professor at the

The Niti Aayog has taken the stand that incineration or 'Waste to Energy' is the best option as a sustainable disposal solution for the solid waste of larger cities — the contention is that biogas and composting for waste management generate by-products in large volumes that larger cities will find difficult to dispose of efficiently. This reasoning is flawed. When incineration plants in cities use unsegregated waste to generate electricity, they emit toxic gases as by-products and irresponsibly dispose of these in the air. The National Green Tribunal recently levied a penalty on the incineration plant at Okhla in Delhi for its violations of emission norms; residents of Okhla approached the Supreme Court for the plant's relocation. The Niti Aayog neither incorporates lessons from incineration plants in Delhi, nor does it note the many success stories of biomethanation in Indian cities.

Bhabha Atomic Research Centre at Mumbai. It is being used in Pune, Matheran, Chennai, Kalameshwar, Mumbai, Coimbatore and several other cities. Small-scale plants in individual localities are operating with a capacity to treat anywhere from 0.5 to 20 tonnes per day of biodegradable waste. There are also a number of other companies providing biomethanation solutions for segregated municipal solid waste, for example, Green Power Systems and Mailhem.

If this practice can be replicated across the board, 50 per cent of the waste in urban India does not need to be hauled over long distances to waste to energy plants and landfills, resulting in significant savings on transport. At present, 20 to 30 per cent of the municipal government's budget on solid waste is spent on transporting waste.

The decentralised strategy for treating biodegradable waste is as much relevant for large cities as for small. Individual households, housing societies, Resident Welfare Associations and bulk generators, like hotels and *sabzi mandis*, should be at the centre of the movement to get segregation going — only biodegradable waste generated in the area must be processed in the local plant; the waste must be delivered to the plant in closed containers and processed within a specified short period, while the biogas and liquid fertiliser must be used to derive environmental benefits.

This has been demonstrated to work. I saw the Matheran plant in operation where all the hotel biodegradable waste of this tourist town is processed without any odour and the biogas is used for lighting street lamps. In an ongoing review of the biomethanation plants in Pune, S.P. Kale, the head of the Symbiosis Centre for Waste Resource Management in Pune and the Pune Municipal Corporation are working to strengthen the system of technical monitoring and strict maintenance.

I must compliment the Niti Aayog for including action points on these important but complex issues in their Draft Action Agenda. They must follow up with extensive consultation with subject experts, stakeholders and practitioners in state governments and urban local governments.

The writer is chairperson, ICRIER, Delhi, and former chairperson of the high-powered expert committee on urban infrastructure and services

# The sting of Zika

Cases in Ahmedabad reveal the health-care system's failure to use data to protect the public



ANITA KAR

THE MANNER in which we learnt about the Zika virus cases being found in India was so odd that we must demand more information. The taxpayer's money is spent on surveillance and routine disease data collection activities in India. This data is so poor though that we depend on estimates and extrapolations and the data collected through hard work is hardly ever used in real time.

This is what was illustrated by the Zika virus activities where municipal authorities in Ahmedabad were unaware of the results of the Acute Febrile Illness surveillance and several other cities. Small-scale plants in individual localities are operating with a capacity to treat anywhere from 0.5 to 20 tonnes per day of biodegradable waste. There are also a number of other companies providing biomethanation solutions for segregated municipal solid waste, for example, Green Power Systems and Mailhem.

Public resources were used for establishing the surveillance system. Thousands of samples were collected, screened and then sent for confirmatory testing, all of which costs money. The purpose of this expenditure was and is to provide timely information to local agencies, so that they can implement mosquito-control measures and stop Zika virus transmissions. Being informed about Zika cases months later is not something we should congratulate ourselves on — it reflects a waste of surveillance activities and the public resources invested in setting these up.

After paying for the surveillance, it is also the right of the public across the country to know what happened after the cases were identified. Were epidemiological investigations conducted in the families and neighbourhoods from where the cases were reported in order to check if there were additional cases in the area? Was special care taken for pregnant women in that area?

As taxpayers who supported the surveillance, we also have a right to know why the information on the Zika cases reached us through an international agency, and not through our own health ministry? Was this because there was a long turnover period for processing samples, so that by the time the results were known, the patients had recovered and resumed routine activities?

If this were the case, we can ask whether epidemiological protocols were available to support laboratory surveillance? Could the reason for withholding information have been the health ministry's past experience with poor health communication and its disastrous consequences? The so-called plague outbreak in Surat in 1994 created major panic amongst the public, having a catastrophic impact on the country's economy.

Communication strategies were strengthened during the avian influenza outbreak, and the so-called swine flu pandemic. But withholding information in order to prevent the population from panicking goes against the cardinal rule of public health, which states that people

should be empowered with knowledge, so that they can protect themselves. Public surveillance, which informs and seeks the cooperation of patients, their families and the country at large could have been a better form of engagement.

The taxpayer's money routinely goes to fund data collection for major diseases in the country. There are multiple disease control programmes and collecting data is a major activity, sometimes requiring heroic inputs from grassroot-level workers. The purpose of data is for planning health activities; how these large volumes of data are used for routine decision-making remains a mystery, although the data does appear, a year or two later, in the form of reports.

There is an Integrated Disease Surveillance Project. What data it integrates is difficult to decipher, and what its role is in making data available for use by busy medical officers remains equally unfathomable. Data collection uses taxpayers' money, and when the data is not used for improving people's health, this is a waste of public funds. Incomplete or poorly collected data is even more damaging as it can give wrong information for health planning activities.

The root of this malaise is the inability of successive governments to demonstrate strong public health governance and leadership. The health system is fragmented into the public and private sectors, further fragmented by practitioners of modern and traditional medicine. Medical associations and pharmaceutical companies override public voices trying to make sense of exorbitant medical bills. Government stewardship of this whole system is essential, to listen, regulate and bring about a cohesive health service that can provide care to the people. India has enough technical resources and expertise. But the critical role of the government in demonstrating leadership and guiding disharmonious participants is essential.

A review of disease surveillance systems is required, not only to make this entire system relevant, but also to appreciate the hard work of data collection which is done by lower-level functionaries. Government stewardship should correct poor compliance from private sector healthcare providers. Instead of the lacklustre initiatives that have been implemented, a strong and decisive health ministry can convince the private sector on the need to join the national effort.

It is not easy to track a virus in a billion-plus population — but not acting after obtaining information is a criminal waste of resources. It reflects the health ministry's failure to execute a key public health function — protecting the population from health threats.

The Zika surveillance sadly takes us back to the same old situation. Despite having all the competencies and capabilities, we find ourselves ready to be lectured by international agencies on the fact that the sole purpose of surveillance and disease data collection is for action.

The goal is not to haphazardly collect data, but to use this data for protecting the health of the population.

The writer heads the school of public health at Pune University

## LETTER TO THE EDITOR

### FOOD IS PERSONAL

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'Ban-wagon effect' (IE, May 30). It is high time we end this irrational blather about whether beef is more secular than pork, etc. One's diet is a personal matter, yet there are unbelievably high levels of mutual intolerance regarding dietary preferences in our multicultural nation. Religious and political leaders of every hue, within and against the government, are using dietary issues to whip up anger. No legislation can quell this hatred; only community leaders can bring rationality back to the masses.

R.P. Subramanian, Delhi

### LIBERATE WOMEN

THIS REFERS TO the article, 'Unimportance of triple talaq' (IE, May 29). It is unfortunate that triple talaq is being politicised. However, it isn't "an insignificant practice". It is one of patriarchy's harshest tools and women must be liberated from oppressive practices.

Kumar Prabhakar, via email

### KID GLOVES

THIS REFERS TO the report, 'Data analyst claims CBSE marks inflated again' (IE, May 30). In the name of guarding our children's interests, there is all around us the completely illogical marks "moderation" policy, inflating scores. Clearly though, lowering the bar of success does no good to children in the long run.

Vijai Pant, Hempur

### LETTER OF THE WEEK AWARD

To encourage quality reader intervention, The Indian Express offers the Letter of the Week award. The letter adjudged the best for the week is published every Saturday. Letters may be e-mailed to [editpage@expressindia.com](mailto:editpage@expressindia.com) or sent to The Indian Express, B-1/B, Sector 10, Noida-UP 201301. Letter writers should mention their postal address and phone number.

THE WINNER RECEIVES SELECT EXPRESS PUBLICATIONS

### NO NUMBER GAME

THIS REFERS TO the article, 'Renewing the community' (IE, May 30). I agree that while the number of victims of triple talaq may be minuscule, that is no reason to skim over the injustice. Triple talaq is condemnable not just because it endangers a woman's financial security but it also gives her husband superior rights in the matter of divorce.

Bharti Garg, Delhi



## VIEW FROM THE RIGHT

### EUROPE'S LIBERAL FIX

THE EDITORIAL IN *Organiser* takes note of the "dilemma of European liberals" in the aftermath of the recent terror attack in Manchester. They cannot easily "address the causes of religion-based terror" as the "misplaced concept of pluralism and mindless execution of refugee policies as a vanguard of liberalism" is "encouraging" separate identities based on radical ideologies. "The liberal intellectuals of Bharat who have been following their European masters since the time of the British are caught in the same dichotomy," it says.

The Indian intellectuals "glorify anti-nationals and take pride in branding nationalists as conservatives". "They forget the fact that Bharat has its own ethos of liberal values that is essentially Hindu," it says. Noting that "any ideology or religion that says 'Mine

is the only way' in not in tune with our national philosophy", it adds that "such monotheistic and semitic ideas of religion cannot be allowed to be imposed in the name of tolerance against the tradition of acceptance". It argues that "unless the European liberals and their followers in Bharat understand and respect the non-European roots of liberalism, terror will keep striking us and we will keep responding with liberal sermons".

### ANOTHER KASHMIR

THE COVER STORY in *Organiser*, 'Aspirational Kashmir', questions the root of terrorism in the Valley and says that "lack of development or particular religious identity" cannot be "the sole basis for separatism". It criticises "some leading media houses", who "in the last few weeks", have "tried their best to create the perception that India is on the verge of losing Kashmir". Refuting this perception, the story talks about a "busy morning on the famous Dal Lake Road", where "schoolchildren in their beautiful uniforms were waiting for their school buses, exactly like other parts of the country". It quotes a Class X student who says that, "I want to be

a cricketer. My only dream is to play for India." About the stone-pelters, he said, "Their number is limited and they are nobody to decide the fate of all Kashmiris. I am against this stone-pelting and bandh".

Making a similar remark on stone-pelters, another student, whose "favourite actor is Hrithik Roshan", says that "our parents have given us a good upbringing". "We have always been told" that we have to "remain away from any kind of the distractions prevalent in the Valley," he says.

It cites instances of many such students and youths, including girls who participated in "a Taekwondo competition". They aspire to be bureaucrats, sportspersons, fashion designers. The story underlines that the media "propagates a fake discourse about Kashmir". "Thirty per cent of Kashmiri journalists are funded by Pakistan and the Gulf," it alleges, attributing this to "a senior Jammu and Kashmir police officer".

### TULSI OR KABIR

THE COVER STORY in *Panchjanya* slams those leftist writers who, as they compared two Indian medieval poets, pushed "Rambhakt Tulsidas" behind Kabir. "Is it appro-

priate to evaluate one poet on the yardstick of the other?" it asks. How fair is it to declare a poet revolutionary on the basis of some of his couplets? "A planned game was played to downgrade Tulsidas," the report claims while noting that Acharya Ramchandra Shukla had given prominent place to Tulsidas in his history of Hindi literature. However, Hazari Prasad Dwivedi challenged Shukla's contention and proved Kabir a "revolutionary poet". Dwivedi ignored Tulsidas, and as his disciples dominated Hindi literature in subsequent decades, they all tried to establish the superiority of Kabir.

It cannot be denied that Kabir was used for ideological purposes and benefits," it says. In the attempt to establish Tulsidas as a traditionalist, some writers "grossly insulted" him by terming him an advocate of the caste system, anti-women and anti-Shudra.

Similarly, his notion of "Ram-rajya" indicates equality for all. A "similar game was played with (Suryakant Tripathi) Nirala," the article says, underlining that the articles he published in the journal *Kalyan* were not included in his anthologies.

Compiled by Ashutosh Bhardwaj

# 16 EXPLAINED



## SOCIAL INTELLIGENCE

If Trump & members of his admin weren't compromised by their Russia contacts already, they certainly are by their constant lies about them.

**GARRY KASPAROV**  
former World Chess champion; 343.2K TWITTER followers

# To counter OBOR, India and Japan propose Asia-Africa sea corridor

The two governments hope that the project would be cheaper option and have a smaller carbon footprint when compared to China's One Belt, One Road (OBOR) initiative. AVINASH NAIR explains

PRIME MINISTER Narendra Modi made the pitch for developing an Asia-Africa Growth Corridor (AAGC), with support from Japan, while addressing the annual general meeting of the African Development Bank (AfDB) in Gujarat's capital of Gandhinagar last Tuesday, May 23.

The next day, both the Indian and Japanese governments presented a "vision document" for the project that is largely meant to propel growth and investment in Africa, by curtailing the ever-increasing presence of the Chinese on the continent. More concrete details on this corridor are expected to emerge when Prime Minister Modi and his Japanese counterpart Shinzo Abe meet later this year.

### What is Asia-Africa Growth Corridor (AAGC)? How will Japan and India contribute to the project?

The AAGC is an attempt to create a "free and open Indo-Pacific region" by rediscovering ancient sea-routes and creating new sea corridors that will link the African continent with India and countries in South-Asia and South-East Asia. The project stakeholders hope the sea corridors will be "low-cost" and have "less carbon footprint" when compared to a land corridor. For instance, under the AAGC, there is a plan to connect ports in Jamnagar (Gujarat) with Djibouti in the Gulf of Eden. Similarly, ports of Mombasa and Zanzibar will be connected to ports near Madurai; Kolkata will be linked to Sitwe port in Myanmar. India is developing ports under the Sagarmala programme specifically for this purpose. Apart from developing sea corridors, the AAGC also proposes to build robust institutional, industrial and transport infrastructure in growth poles among countries in Asia and Africa. The idea is to enable economies in Asia and Africa to further integrate and collectively emerge as a globally competitive economic bloc.

Japan's contribution to the project will be its state-of-the-art technology and ability to build quality infrastructure, while India will bring in its expertise of working in Africa. The private sector of both countries are expected to play big role by coming together to form joint-ventures and consortiums, to take up infrastructure, power or agribusiness projects in Africa.

### Where did the idea of AAGC originate?

The proposal for an AAGC was first mentioned in the joint declaration issued by prime ministers Modi and Shinzo Abe in November 2016. The declaration included their intention to work jointly and cooperatively with other countries to promote development of industrial corridors and networks in Asia and Africa.

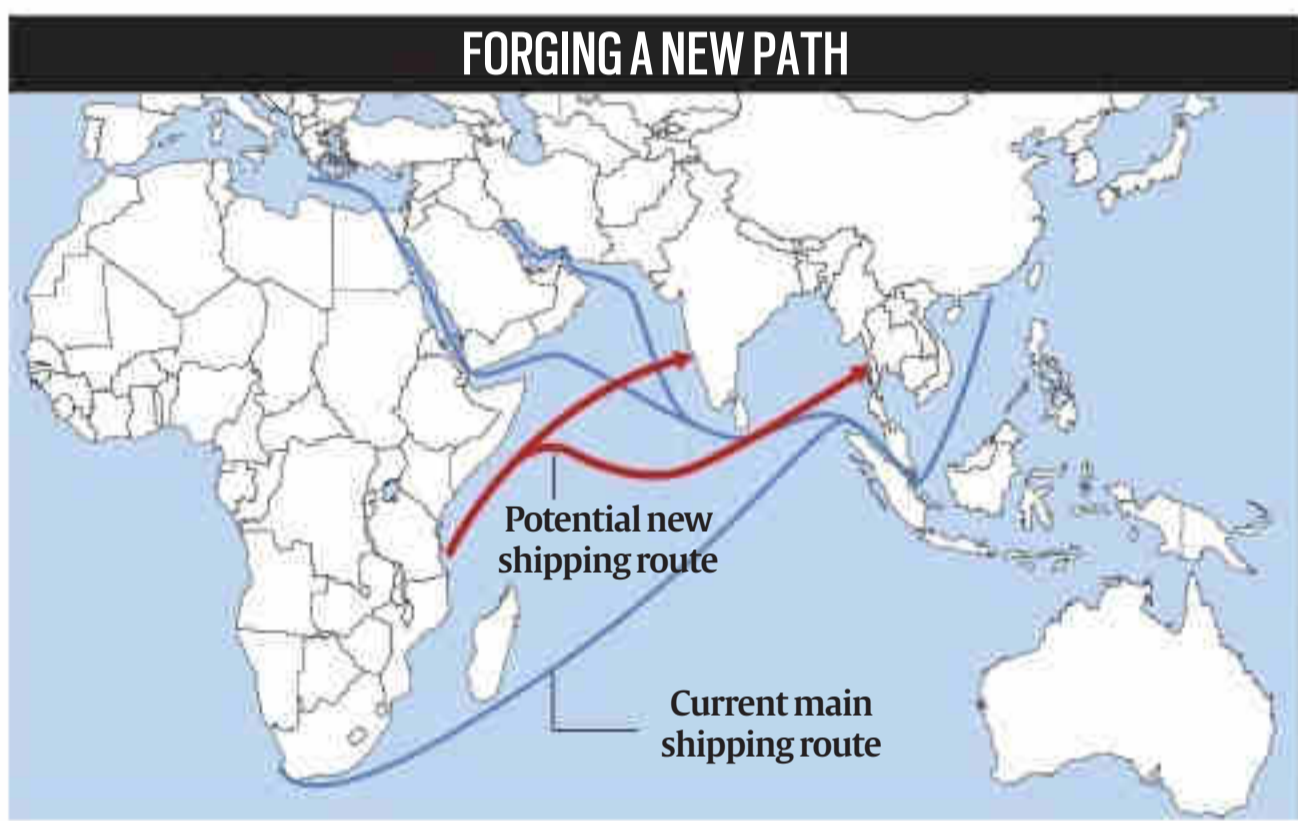
### What is the AAGC vision document? Which institutions were behind its creation?

A 30-page booklet, the AAGC vision document was unveiled by the Indian and Japanese government officials at the African Development Bank (AfDB) annual general meeting held at Gandhinagar on May 24. It is just a broad framework for the creation of the project. In the first phase, the corridor attempts to link Africa with India and countries in South-Asia including Bangladesh, Myanmar, Cambodia and Laos, say officials.

After the Modi-Abe meeting in November 2016, work on creating a vision document for AAGC was entrusted to the three think-tanks: the New Delhi-based Research and Information System for Developing Countries (RIS), linked to the Ministry of External Affairs; the Jakarta-based ERIA (Economic Research Institute for ASEAN and East Asia) and the Japanese research organisation IDE-JETRO (Institute of



Prime Minister Narendra Modi greets delegates during the inaugural function of 52nd African Development Bank annual meeting, in Gandhinagar, Gujarat. PTI file



Developing Economies-Japan External Trade Organisation).

Apart from the trio, research institutions and individuals from Africa were also invited for detailed consultations at Jakarta on April 21, 2017, at the ERIA headquarters.

### Which were the other countries consulted for the Asia Africa Growth Corridor? Was China part of the process?

Apart from India and Japan, South Africa, Mozambique, Indonesia, Singapore, and Australia sent representatives for the consultation process. Quizzed about China, Anita Prakash, Director General of ERIA, said her organisation represented the ASEAN region and six other countries including China. Moreover, she added, ERIA also has Chinese scholars working for it on this project.

### Is AAGC a counter to OBOR?

Unlike OBOR which entails development of a land corridor, AAGC will essentially be a sea corridor linking Africa with India and other countries of South-East Asia and Oceania. It is being presented as a "distinct initiative" borne out of a consultative process which would be profitable and bankable, unlike the "government-funded model" of

OBOR (One Belt One Road) project. "Firstly, we are making this process more consultative, because this was one objection India came up with when OBOR was presented. Secondly, the centrality of people in Africa needs to be brought up front, rather than excessive emphasis on trade and economic relations alone. Thirdly, Japan's ability to deliver quality infrastructure will play a major role in developing this corridor," says Professor Sachin Chaturvedi, Director General of IRS.

### Why is Africa lucrative? What kind of presence do the Chinese have across the continent?

In 2015, the five of the fastest growing economies in Africa were non-resource rich, with Ethiopia, Cote d'Ivoire and Rwanda leading the pack with GDP growth rates of 10.2 per cent, 8.8 per cent and 7.1 per cent, respectively. Similarly, in 2016, countries like Senegal clocked a growth rate of 7.5 per cent, while Ethiopia (8 per cent), Kenya (6.5 per cent) and Tanzania (7 per cent) all recorded impressive growth.

The Chinese influence on the African economy can be gauged from the 2017 African Economic Outlook, released at the AfDB summit, which showed that country

was still the major consumer of African goods, accounting for 27 per cent of Africa's total global exports. China is also a leader in greenfield investment in Africa; in 2015-16, the country invested a whopping USD 38.4 billion (24 per cent of total greenfield investment). In comparison, India during the same year, invested just USD 2.2 billion (1.3 per cent of total greenfield investments) across 64 greenfield projects. Japan investments at present are minuscule.

### What has been the initial response of African nations to the AAGC vision document?

The African Development Bank has welcomed the AAGC vision document. "Trade corridors have always existed between Africa and Asia and when PM Modi mentioned this we at AfDB welcome it. It is important because infrastructure is costly and you cannot have infrastructure everywhere. There has to be particular zones where you have to build infrastructure. We are already working on growth corridors within Africa," said AfDB president Akinwumi Adesina.

### What is the way forward for AAGC?

More studies will be undertaken to list the current demands and challenges of economic, socio-cultural and political partnership pertaining to AAGC. It will bring out the existing challenges and barriers to this project. It will also spell out the cooperation aspects of sustainable growth and development exchange of best practices. Based on all these aspects, future AAGC studies will make recommendations to the governments of India and Japan and to governments in Africa, South Asia, Southeast Asia, East Asia and Oceania on the way forward for deepening this partnership.

### Will AAGC feature in Indo-Japan talks anytime soon?

More details of how to proceed on building the AAGC corridor will be presented either when Prime Minister Narendra Modi meets Abe on the sidelines of the G20 meet at Hamburg (Germany) in July or when India hosts the Japanese Prime Minister in September, say officials.

# What Advani, Uma, Joshi and Kalyan are charged with

SEEMA CHISHTI looks at CBI chargesheet leading to special court framing conspiracy charges against top BJP leaders in Babri demolition case

CHARGES OF criminal conspiracy against BJP leaders L K Advani, Murli Manohar Joshi, Uma Bharti, Kalyan Singh and others in the Babri Masjid demolition case, framed by a special CBI court Tuesday, are based on the chargesheet filed by the CBI on October 8, 1993. Excerpts from wherever top BJP leaders appear by name in the 54-page chargesheet.



### Kalyan Singh

**PAGE 25:** The CBI alleges that at his swearing-in as chief minister of UP on June 24, 1991, Singh and senior BJP leader Murli Manohar Joshi visited Ayodhya along with members of his cabinet and party legislators, where they allegedly took a vow to construct the temple. The chargesheet states that Singh said that "in his tenure as Chief Minister, UP, a temple of Shri Ram will inevitably be constructed."

**PAGES 28-29:** The CBI states that a conspiracy was hatched with the people being trained by the Bajrang Dal of Gujarat. The last day of training, it adds, was on October 10, 1991. In pursuance of this, Kalyan Singh, the CBI alleges, acquired 2.77 acres of land in October 1991 "under the pretext of developing the same for tourism purposes."

**PAGE 39:** The chargesheet states "it is further evident from the investigation that Kalyan Singh in order to achieve the objectives of the criminal conspiracy as aforesaid not only failed to live up to its promises to protect the disputed structure but continued to aid and abet the criminal conspiracy to ensure its destruction." It goes on to quote from Supreme Court orders, dated December 6, 1992, on it being a "great pity" that a constitutionally elected government "could not discharge its duties in a matter of this sensitivity and magnitude."

**PAGE 41:** The CBI chargesheet says that the accused public servants and Kalyan Singh were well aware that the central para-military forces were duly equipped with riot gear and plastic and rubber bullets to avoid casualties. "Dogged refusal to deploy the said force in spite of several requests from the (Union government) shows that the failure to take these steps was a part of the conspiracy and criminal design," it adds.

**PAGE 45:** According to the chargesheet, Kalyan Singh made statements and gave public speeches which are "clearly indicative of his complicity in the demolition of the disputed structure." The chargesheet states that on May 5, 1993, Singh said at Barabanki: "Goli na chhallaney ka aadesh unke dwara hi jari kiya gaya tha aur usi wajah se prashasan ka koi adhikari doshi nahi maana jayega (The order to not fire was issued by them. And that is why, nobody from the administration is guilty.)"

On March 28, 1993, it adds that Singh said at Lucknow: "Vivadith dhanche ki suraksha na kar pane ka unhe koye afsos nahi hai, kyunki ve 464 saal purana gulami ka chihni tha (They don't regret not being able to protect the controversial structure because it was a 464-year-old symbol of slavery)."



### L K Advani

**PAGE 37:** The CBI alleged that L K Advani "vehemently asserted repeatedly" that the kar seva to be held at Ayodhya on December

6, 1992, "would not mean only bhajan and kirtan, but would also involve construction of the Shri Ram temple."

"He further asserted to Jansatta that the BJP will break the law for the construction of the Ram Janambhoomi temple at Ayodhya," the chargesheet states. It adds that the final decision to demolish the disputed structure was taken on December 5, 1992, at "a secret meeting" which was "held at the residence of Shri Vinay Katiyar and was attended by Shri L K Advani, Pawan Pandey etc."

The chargesheet further states that during the same period, "Kalyan Singh when contacted by a witness told him that rok construction per lagi hai, destruction par nahi (the stay is on construction, not on destruction)."

**PAGE 40:** According to the chargesheet, L K Advani, in a public speech on December 6, 1992, had "in the proximity of the disputed structure" and shortly before the actual demolition, said: "Aaj kar seva ka akhri din hai, kar sevaks aaj akhri kar seva karenge (Today is the last day of kar seva; kar sevaks will perform their final kar seva)."

While the demolition was in progress, the chargesheet says he acknowledged that "central forces were moving from Faizabad towards Ayodhya" but added that "they were not afraid" of them and "instructed the public to block the national highway straightaway so that forces do not reach the Ram Janambhoomi."

"L K Advani also advised the CM of UP, Shri Kalyan Singh, not to tender his resignation to the governor of UP till the demolition of the disputed structure stands completed," the chargesheet adds.



### Uma Bharti

**PAGE 43:** The chargesheet says that she had "shouted" at Ram Janambhoomi Ayodhya on December 6, 1992: "Ek dhakka aur do, Babri Masjid tod do," and she had also advised the kar sevaks to demolish the disputed structure and shouted "Masjid girao, Mandor bano Babar ki aulad ko Pakistan bhagao", "Jinnah bole Jai Shri Ram" etc.

"On December 5, 1992," it adds, "she had told that kar seva will not mean only bhajan and kirtans but the start of a construction of the temple. 'Ek ek int prashad ke tor per lay jao (Take away each brick as prashad)' and 'that the Supreme Court had not told them to demolish but only to not do construction work and hence they are removing the black spot from the nation's forehead.'"

On September 30, 1993, according to the chargesheet, she had said in Silchar that the demolition of the Babri Masjid was "a part of a preconceived plan, and she was the pivot of the plan and gave the signal to break the Babri Masjid".



### Murli Manohar Joshi

**PAGE 46:** "According to the investigation, Murli Manohar Joshi had said at Mathura on December 1, 1992, on his way to Ayodhya that no force can stop construction of Ram temple and he was encouraging the kar sevaks from the manch on December 6, 1992, for the demolition of the disputed structure and was shouting provocative slogans."

# Walking aids brain function

A MODERATE-INTENSITY walking regimen may reduce symptoms of mild cognitive impairment that are linked to poor blood vessel health in the brain, a small study suggests. Participants with vascular cognitive impairment (VCI), sometimes called vascular dementia, who walked three hours per week for six months had improved reaction times and other signs of improved brain function, the Canadian team reports in *British Journal of Sports Medicine*.

Regular aerobic exercise reduces one's risk of developing chronic conditions such as high blood pressure, diabetes (type II), and high cholesterol, the study's senior author Teresa Liu-Ambrose told Reuters Health. "These chronic conditions have a negative impact on the brain," said Liu-Ambrose, a researcher with the Aging, Mobility, and Cognitive Neuroscience Lab at the University of British Columbia in Vancouver.

For the study, Liu-Ambrose and colleagues randomly assigned 38 older adults with mild VCI to one of two groups. One group followed an aerobic training program consisting of three one-hour walking classes each week for six months, while the other group continued

**PAPER CLIP**

FLAGGING INTERESTING RESEARCH

**BRAIN HEALTH**

**COGNITIVE IMPAIRMENT**

Published in *British Journal of Sports Medicine*

**AUTHOR:** Teresa Liu-Ambrose and colleagues

with their usual care.

At the end of six months those in the aerobic training group had significant improvements in their reaction times, and changes in their brain activity. The other group showed no changes. **REUTERS**

# The flamingo's secret: why it stands on one leg

New research finds flamingos more stable on one leg than two, suggests passive mechanism at work requires very little muscular effort

### KABIR FIRAQUE

FOR THOSE who wonder at the sight of a flamingo standing on one leg, the right question to ask may not be how, but why. New research suggests that a flamingo is more stable and requires less muscle effort to stand on one leg than to stand on two — whether awake, asleep, or even dead.

In a study published in *Biology Letters*, biomedical engineer Lena Ting and neuromechanist Young-Hui Chang of the Georgia Institute of Technology, Atlanta, describe experiments they conducted on juvenile Chilean flamingos as well as cadavers.

They set up a cadaver in both one-legged and two-legged stances, and found that it was stable only when one foot was directly beneath the body, as in one-legged standing. "We showed that that the joints folded down into a compact and stable configuration if the leg was held at an angle similar to one-legged standing, but that the joints were not stable when the leg was held in a two-legged pose,"

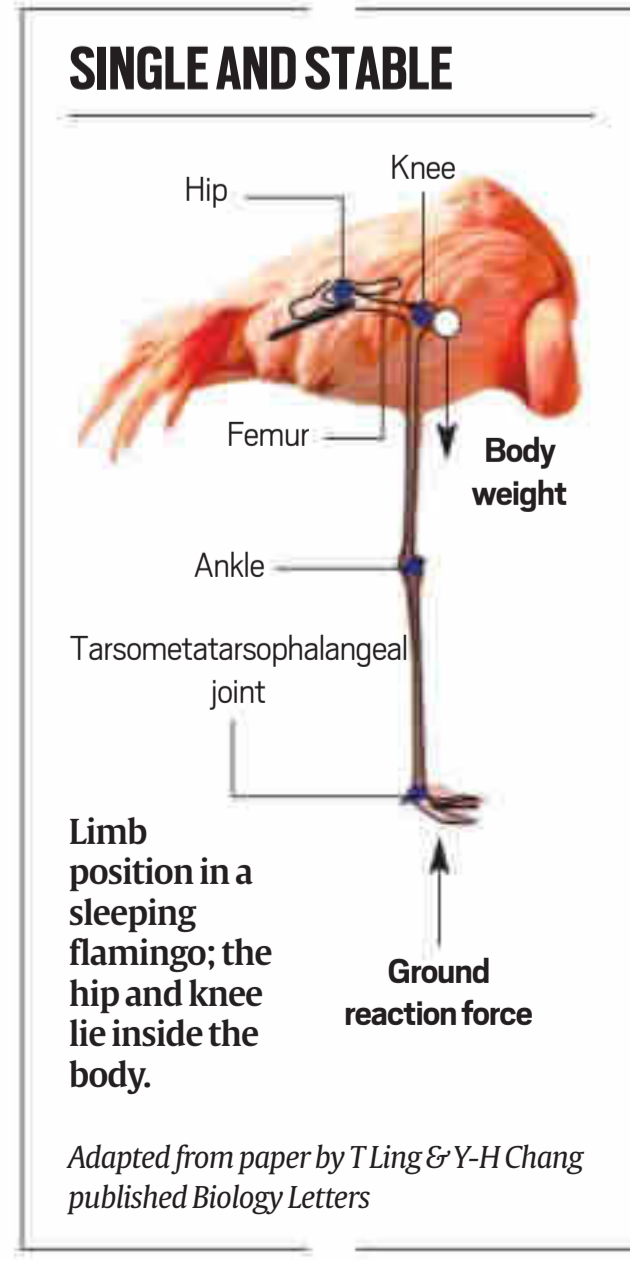
Ting told *The Indian Express*.

"One way to think about it," Chang added, "is that there is a mechanism for standing on one leg passively, which would require very little muscle effort. The birds appear to only be able to use this mechanism when they are standing on one leg."

Passive mechanisms for balance suggested themselves again during the experiments with live birds, which compared how much a flamingo's body sways when awake and when asleep. The researchers put active as well as quiescent flamingos (eyes closed) on a force plate and tracked their body movements. They found the sway several times more pronounced in birds that were active than in those that were quiescent.

"... As we did not observe large postural sway when standing on one leg, there may also be passive mechanisms for balance, which may be particularly important during sleep," Ting and Chang write in their paper.

What had drawn them to the research was largely the anatomy of flamingos. In many birds, including flamingos, the knee



is well inside the body while the joint that is visible — and bends backwards — is the ankle.

"The upper leg, or thigh, is oriented horizontally and adjacent to the main body of the flamingo. This is common in birds... and one of the main reasons we were curious about how flamingos could stand for so long with 'bent knees'," Chang told *The Indian Express* by email. "If a human were to adopt this posture, it would require great muscular effort from our thigh muscles. Flamingos are apparently able to do it with relatively little effort."

The paper mentions two hypotheses about why flamingos stand on one leg. One is that it is to reduce muscle fatigue (which would necessitate alternating from one foot to the other). The experiment with the dead birds, however, showed that they could stand on one leg with no muscular effort and that the body support mechanism is passive.

The other hypothesis is that standing on leg reduces heat loss. "Previously it may have been thought that any additional energy expended to stand on one leg was worth the heat energy that was conserved," Ting said. "Our work shows that heat loss may not be the only reason for the animals to stand on one leg."