



**A thought for today**

*For every prohibition you create, you also create an underground*

JELLO BIAFRA, US musician

# India's Ban Mania

*Cattle market prohibition illustrates how we suffer from too many restrictions*

It is commonplace to say that India suffers from poor governance. Less commonplace is to query why this should be the case. There can be worse answers than pointing at how too many laws imposed by a leviathan state are too heavy a burden on people. Forcing people to live at the margins of the law is bad for governance. One, it promotes general disrespect for the law. Two, ambiguously worded laws and red tape make it easier for authorities to harass people, incentivising corruption. Three, heavy-handed laws promote the growth of vigilantes and therefore general lawlessness in society.

When it comes to laws and regulations there can certainly be too much of a good thing; this was Prime Minister Narendra Modi's insight earlier on when he raised the slogan of "minimum government, maximum governance". Unfortunately, this is not a premise that has been realised during the years NDA has been in office – although, to be fair, opposition-ruled states or even courts have been as quick to breach this principle as BJP has (witness draconian prohibition laws introduced by the Bihar government, or the Supreme Court ban on liquor within 500 metres of highways).

We can take the situation of farmers as an illustrative example. There is no political party that doesn't cry itself hoarse about the plight of farmers, or shout from the rooftops what it is doing for their benefit. Yet, in perhaps only a step short of Soviet-style collectivisation, India places severe restrictions on farmers trading in what they produce or own. Thus, farmers can only sell their produce at licensed markets in most states, which allows middlemen to run away with most agricultural profits.

If this quixotic rule originated from the left of the ideological spectrum, now the right has come up with its own quixotic rule to match: a ban on cattle markets where animals might be sold for slaughter. To circumvent this being a state matter the ban has been implemented through the backdoor by speciously invoking a central law, the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act. Among other economic costs, the new rules mean that a large part of India's \$13 billion-a-year leather industry could migrate to Pakistan and Bangladesh. India has, after all, always suffered from a surfeit of ideology and a lack of pragmatism – even if this gives rise to poor governance and underdevelopment.



# Go One Better

*GST's ambit should cover real estate and alcohol to fight black money*

The progress of legislative activity to roll out Goods and Services Tax (GST) has been hailed – and rightly so – as an important step in India's economic transformation. It was helped by the willingness of all political parties to prioritise long-term good over expediency. Unfortunately, that is not the entire story. GST would have been better if real estate and alcohol had been included in its ambit. GST represents not just an economic reform, but also a step that will lead to formalisation of Indian economy. This is a pre-requisite to win the battle against black money.

Real estate has been identified by tax authorities as a significant repository of black money. Therefore, bringing the entire chain of real estate transactions, including sale of land, under GST is essential to provide an economic incentive to stakeholders to create an audit trail. Instead of using heavy-handed measures to fight black money, GST represents a sophisticated way to catalyse self-policing. Similarly, alcohol has for long been a source of crony socialism. State administrations impose tight controls over the business, including its distribution. This inevitably results in corruption.

It is not too late to change the situation. From the Centre's side, chief economic adviser Arvind Subramanian has repeatedly pointed out these flaws. AAP has pitched for the inclusion of real estate in GST. They need more support from India's larger political parties. Current tax architecture does not encourage transparency, which leads to attendant problems such as black money. The way out is simplification and standardisation of laws, which should not have too many loopholes. This will encourage transparency in economic transactions. GST represents a tool that can bring about this change.



# Us idiot boys

*Board exams are a test for all of us, those bright as the moon excepted*

Kannan.Somasundaram@timesgroup.com



Teenage hearts should not commit themselves to any exertion other than writing the first love poem. Out of breath but out of intellectual misery, a kid should celebrate the rhyming scheme's ascent to adolescent sentiment: "You are as bright as the moon/ I yearn to see you again soon," perhaps.

But in this season of exam results, some teenage hearts deliberately stilled themselves, unable to bear the isolation in the bright desert of grammar, math and science. The end of any young life unsettles our sense of future, like a verse cut off after a promising line.

As a survivor of the CBSE exam system, I will not claim that a student's life was more forgiving back then. I remember winning a prize for English essay in my school days. For years, the picture of that "investiture" had been preserved with Bela and Bahadur comics, and a collection of my love poems which I keep as leverage to blackmail myself should I ever dare to write another poem: "When I saw Aman Zeenat/ my heart went to jannat." Yes, I needed two languages just to find rhyme.

That picture was excavated recently for Facebook. Individuals can calibrate their gloating. But when communities – schools and families – brag, thousands are feted, which means thousands more have their decent performance cast as failure.

Today, "Students graduate" can stand only for decent performance. Thus, a school had recruited "investiture", usually reserved for ceremonies involving bishops and presidents, for a social media post. That's where I saw, for the first time, the word being used to hail high school certificates.

As for my own investiture, I collected my prize for the Best English essay and settled down with my father in the audience. On the stage, a classmate was trapped in a vicious loop of success: he accepted the prize for physics, excited, and entered stage right again to take the chemistry crown. "Look at that idiot-boy," my father said. "He is moving up and down the stage 16 times. Poda! Look at my son, he got one prize and is now relaxing like a maharaja."

I loved my father's sarcasm. I suppose I was not hurt because there was no way he could "share" that with the world. "Appa, that guy got only 97%," I said. "The girl in the opposite building, who walks for hours on the terrace with several books in her hand, got 97.6%." Appa said: "Sorry my maharaja, we live on the first floor and have no terrace. I failed you."

# Seventy Years Together: Russia And India

*We have achieved much as partners and will achieve more in future*

Vladimir Putin



This year, we are celebrating the anniversary of a truly historic event. Seventy years ago – on April 13, 1947 – the governments of the USSR and India announced their decision to establish official missions in Delhi and Moscow. This step on our part logically followed up on our course for assisting India on its way to national liberation and contributed to strengthening its independence.

In the decades that have followed, our bilateral partnership has further intensified and strengthened, and has never been subject to expediency. Equal and mutually beneficial relations of the two States have steadily developed. This is quite natural. Our peoples have always had mutual sympathy and respect for each other's spiritual values and culture.

Today, we can take pride in what we have achieved. With Russia's technical and financial assistance, the pioneers of Indian industrialisation came into existence: metallurgical complexes in Bhilai, Visakhapatnam and Bokaro, the mining equipment plant in Durgapur, the thermal power station in Neyveli, the electromechanical enterprise in Korba, antibiotics plants in Rishikesh and the pharmaceutical plant in Hyderabad.

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Soviet and, later on, Russian scientists and academics participated in the establishment of research and education centres in India. These include the Indian Institute of Technology in Bombay, research institutes of petroleum industry in Dehradun and Ahmedabad.

We are proud our specialists helped develop India's space programme. Thanks to this fruitful bilateral cooperation, in 1975 India's first satellite, Aryabhata, was launched, and Indian citizen Rakesh Sharma travelled into space in 1984 as a crew member of Soyuz T-11.

In August 1971, our countries signed the Treaty of Peace, Friendship and Cooperation, which set forth the fundamental principles of bilateral relations, such as respect for the sovereignty and each other's interests, good neighbourliness, and peaceful coexistence. In 1993, the Russian Federation and the Republic of India confirmed the inviolability of these basic principles in the new Treaty of Peace, Friendship and Cooperation. The Declaration on Strategic Partner-



ship signed in 2000 provides for close coordination of approaches to ensuring international peace and security and resolving pressing global and regional issues. Annual summits have become an established practice in the Indian-Russian bilateral relations allowing us to discuss in a timely manner the efforts taken to accomplish our objectives and set long-term goals. In early June, we will have another summit with Prime Minister Narendra Modi in St Petersburg. He is expected to attend the St Petersburg International Economic Forum, in which India will for the first time participate as a partner country.

The legal framework comprising more than 250 documents is being updated on a regular basis. Effective work is carried out within intergovernmental commissions on cooperation in trade and economy, science and technology, as well as culture and military-technical field. Ministries of foreign affairs, security council offices and line ministries maintain continuous dialogue. The interparliamentary and interregional ties, as well as business and humanitarian contacts are actively developing. Military cooperation is also being enhanced: joint land and naval exercises are conducted regularly.

Cooperation in peaceful uses of atomic energy is one of the fundamental components of the relationship between India and Russia. The construction of the Kudankulam Nuclear Power Plant with our assistance is a flagship project in this field. In 2013, the first nuclear power unit was put into operation. In October 2016, the second unit was transferred to the Indian side, and construction of the third and fourth power units began. All of this contributes to the implementation of the plans to develop nuclear energy in India involving the construction of at least 12 power units in its territory by 2020. These goals are stipulated in a joint document – the

Strategic Vision for Strengthening India-Russia Cooperation in Peaceful Uses of Atomic Energy. We intend to further share best practices in this important industry with India and contribute to enhancing its energy security.

Collaboration in the traditional energy sector is successfully developing. The purchase of a block of shares in the Russian company "Vankorneft" made by the Indian consortium of companies has become the biggest bilateral deal in the oil industry. The possibilities for the participation of Indian companies in joint hydrocarbons exploration and production projects in the Russian Arctic shelf are currently under consideration. There are also good prospects for cooperation in the solar energy field, modernisation of the existing power plants and construction of new ones in the territory of India.

**Our countries closely coordinate positions on such complex issues as settling the situation in Syria and ensuring stability in the Middle East and North Africa. They significantly contribute to the national reconciliation process in Afghanistan**

Large-scale projects are carried out in mechanical engineering, chemical and mining industries, aircraft construction, pharmaceuticals and medicine.

One of the priorities is to boost the trade turnover and improve its structure, as well as stimulate economic activity of our business communities. I am referring to enhancing industrial cooperation and increasing supplies of high-tech products, creating a better

business and investment environment, and using systems of payments in national currencies.

The decision to start negotiations on a free trade area agreement between the Eurasian Economic Union and India adopted in December 2016 is of particular importance. The possibilities of creating the International North South Transport Corridor are being explored. All these factors should promote the development of our bilateral and regional cooperation.

To encourage reciprocal capital inflow, a working group on priority investment projects was established under the Inter-Governmental Commission on Trade, Economic, Scientific, Technological and Cultural Cooperation. 19 most promising projects have already been selected. Russia is committed to long-term participation in the "Make in India" programme initiated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

Our countries cooperate intensively in the production of multipurpose weapons and military equipment. Co-production of a unique supersonic cruise missile "BrahMos" is our special pride. Since 1960, the overall value of contracts within the framework of military and technical cooperation has amounted to over \$65 billion, while the portfolio of orders in 2012-2016 exceeded \$46 billion.

India and Russia are equal partners in international affairs. Our countries support the establishment of a multipolar democratic system of international relations based on strict compliance with the principles of law and resting upon the UN central role. We are willing to further jointly counter challenges and threats of the 21st century, promote the unifying agenda and contribute to maintaining global and regional security.

We effectively interact within BRICS – an association that thanks to our collective efforts is increasing its weight and influence. This June, India will become a full member of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation. It will considerably enhance the potential of the SCO. India and Russia also work together within the G20 and other international formats.

I would also like to note that our countries closely coordinate positions on such complex issues as settling the situation in Syria and ensuring stability in the Middle East and North Africa region. They significantly contribute to the national reconciliation process in Afghanistan.

I am convinced that the enormous potential of cooperation between the two great powers will be further explored for the benefit of the peoples of India and Russia and the international community in general. We have everything necessary to achieve this – political will of the sides, economic viability and shared global priorities. All this is based on the glorious history of the Indian Russian friendship.

Taking this opportunity, I would like to convey the kindest regards to all the citizens of friendly India.

*The writer is President of the Russian Federation*

## theysaidit

**India and Germany are made for each other**

- Narendra Modi

**Let's not forget that a state government, like the Centre, is elected ... Nothing remains if a government bulldozes states and destroys the federal structure**

- Mamata Banerjee

**The real issue in our nation is education. Quality improvement in government schools is the solution**

- Manish Sisodia

## dilbert



# Dealing With Criticism That Comes From Ego

Sant Rajinder Singh

The way of the world is to find fault with others. The world is dominated by mind, which is motivated by ego. The nature of mind is to entwine us in ego. We think we are superior to all others. This egoistic thinking leads us to criticise others. Throughout the day it is hard to escape criticism of others. Whether at home, during one's commute, at work, at social gatherings, during leisure activity or while playing sports, or even shopping, someone is bound to come along and criticise us.

There may be a mild sarcastic comment, a put-down, someone commenting that what we are doing is wrong and there is a way to do something better or an outright verbal fight. Even if we try to stay alone for an entire day, our thoughts are besieged by memories of words spoken

by others who criticise us. These thoughts may replay in our heads over and over again. And we react.

We may accept what others may say and then feel bad about it. At times we become critical of our own self. Then, we take steps to change what we are doing even if we are right. These critical remarks may upset us and lower our self-esteem. Or, we may try to prove them wrong. We may fly into a rage and then think of ways to take revenge on them. The anger may escalate into verbal abuse or physical violence. If we do so, we are not only wasting our life's breaths, but we are creating more karma for which we have to pay. We will also face health problems.

Worse, we may become angry and want to take it out on others. There is

no good ending for retaliation and revenge. We just add fuel to fire. Instead, we want to put out the fire.

One way to do this is to ignore the criticism of others. At first, we can politely listen and ask, "Is there any truth to what they are saying? If I listen to their remarks can I improve?" If so, we can take a good hard look at ourselves and make necessary changes so we can become better.

However, if we find that there is no truth in what is being said, we can graciously thank them and ignore their remarks. It is not worth getting upset over the comments of others when they have no validity. The key to ignore the invalid criticism of others is to forgive. If there is no truth in what people say, we should forgive

them for being ignorant of the true situation, and move on with our lives. When life is so short and the journey back to God must be completed within our lifetime for us to have spiritual success, we do not want to waste time dealing with the criticism of others.

When we face criticism we can meditate to calm our minds from the reactions we may otherwise face. If we want to reunite our soul with God, we need to calm our mind to meditate. Meditation puts our attention on the bliss and intoxication inside. We are focused on the spiritual divinity within and not on the outer world. We are so intoxicated that we do not notice other people along the way.

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## Sacredspace

Keep Learning

*We have to continue to learn. We have to be open. And we have to be ready to release our knowledge in order to come to a higher understanding of reality.*

Thich Nhat Hanh