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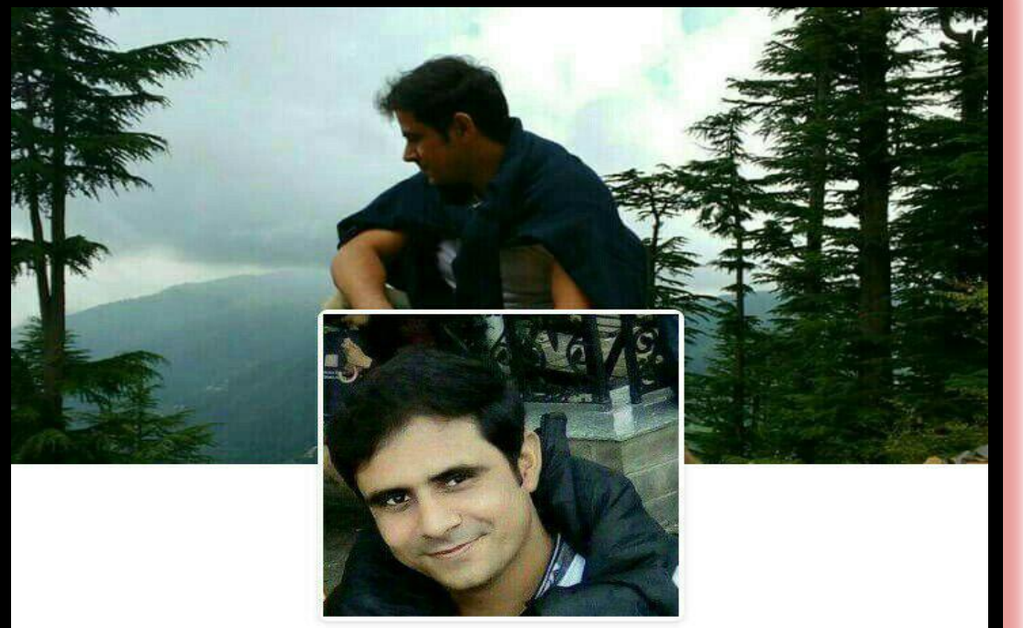
8- Prelims Focus Facts
9- Revision(Base Knowledge)
10- Maps Practice-(Q- Botswana)



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Back to Front?

The TMC and the TRS would like a third front, but it can only be a post-poll coalition

A third front is, by definition, destined for the third place. In its very formation, such a coalition concedes the dominance of the other two players. When Telangana Chief Minister K. Chandrashekar Rao mooted a non-BJP, non-Congress 'federal' front, he was already defining the alliance negatively, in terms of its opponents rather than as a coming together of like-minded parties. No wonder he found ready support from West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee, whose Trinamool Congress is fighting the Left and the Congress on one side, and the BJP on the other. A coalition put together on such a loose foundation may not find much resonance among voters nationally. Indeed, in India's political history, the only instances when non-Congress, non-BJP coalitions came to power were in the ninth and eleventh Lok Sabhas. In each case, the governments were supported from the outside by either the Congress or the BJP. While the V.P. Singh government survived on the BJP's support, the Chandra Shekhar government was at the mercy of the Congress. The two United Front governments, with H.D. Deve Gowda and I.K. Gujral as Prime Ministers, were likewise propped up by the Congress. These governments were all formed in post-poll confabulations, and not through pre-poll alliances. Political circumstances have changed and it is unclear whether the BJP and the Congress will support a grouping of smaller parties just to keep each other out of power. In any case, the third front as proposed by Mr. Rao cannot be an electoral alliance in the proper sense. The parties Mr. Rao seems to have in mind do not add to each other's vote banks: they are mostly fighting their own battles in their own areas. The Trinamool Congress and Mr. Rao's Telangana Rashtra Samiti of course have nothing in common, other than a shared antipathy to the BJP and the Congress.

After his meeting with Ms. Banerjee, Mr. Rao spoke of a political alternative with a development programme that will "depart from the routine kind of administration" provided by the BJP and the Congress. As a regional party with the Congress as its main rival, and the BJP a potential threat, the TRS is at present irrelevant outside of Telangana. A third front in whatever form is Mr. Rao's vehicle to arrive on the national stage. Both Telangana and Andhra Pradesh are scheduled to have Assembly elections along with the Lok Sabha polls in 2019, and without the pretence of being a part of a national-level alliance, the TRS will struggle to be seen as a serious player in the parliamentary election. By all accounts, Mr. Rao and Ms. Banerjee covered little common ground. Unlike Mr. Rao, Ms. Banerjee was non-committal on keeping the Congress out. For the Trinamool, the Left and the BJP remain the principal threats, and at the national level the Congress is still a partner Ms. Banerjee can do political business with. The federal front can only be a hastily formed post-poll alliance.

Accord under strain

Colombia's parliamentary vote highlights the danger to the truce with the FARC

Colombia's presidential election, due in May 2018, will have a bearing on the fragile peace accord of 2016 that ended one of the longest civil wars in history. The result of the parliamentary election held this month has framed the stiff challenge the pro-peace parties face. The accord between the Colombian security forces and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) had won President Juan Manuel Santos the Nobel Peace Prize; it is to his credit that the government managed to implement the accord in bits and pieces despite unremitting hostility from the right-wing opposition led by former President Álvaro Uribe. Now, in the March 11 parliamentary vote, Mr. Uribe's Democratic Centre Party has emerged as the largest bloc in the Senate with 19 seats. Two other right-wing parties, Radical Change and Conservative Party, finished second and third with 16 and 15 seats, respectively. In all, the anti-accord parties have 50 seats in a House of 102. They may not have a clear majority, but the popular support they have mustered is undeniable. The ruling Social Party of National Unity won just 14 seats. FARC, contesting polls for the first time, finished with less than 1% of the vote, but is assured representation in parliament thanks to the accord.

Over the last year, the record of implementation of the steps in the peace accord has been patchy, though major strides were made in the form of demilitarisation and disbanding of the FARC and its conversion into a legitimate political force. The other key aspects of the accord required Bogota to protect mainstreamed FARC leaders and to prevent right-wing militias from targeting left-wing leaders sympathetic towards the FARC. Yet, in the past year, several left-wing activists – such as leaders of teachers' unions and mining workers' unions – have been assassinated by right-wing militia groups. This has prevented the possibility of a similar peace accord with the other remaining insurgent group, the National Liberation Army (ELN), whose leadership fears reprisal by militias if they lay down their weapons. Moreover, while the FARC leadership is committed to the accord, some elements of the group are holding out in the jungles, refusing to demilitarise and instead keep fighting. The next couple of months will be crucial for the pro-accord forces, with the parliamentary vote showing how much work they have ahead of them if they want to convince a sceptical electorate – for which memories of the civil war are still quite raw – that peace deserves a chance. For this, they will have to take dedicated steps to overcome the urban-rural disconnect in Colombia. If this not done, the chances of the accord coming undone are dispiritingly high.

Separate freedoms

Why did the court extend the deadline on linking Aadhaar to various services, but refuse to grant one for welfare plans?

SUHRITH PARTHASARATHY

Last year, before a nine-judge bench of the Supreme Court in *K.S. Puttaswamy v. Union of India*, the Central government posited a frightening thesis. The Constitution, it argued, does not recognise a fundamental right to privacy. One of the main planks of this submission revolved around a notion that privacy was a purely elitist concern, that a liberty of this kind, whenever and wherever it can be promised, will always be overridden by the government's duties in a welfare state. The court, however, decidedly thought otherwise. Indeed, its categorical rejection of the government's arguments was a cause for much celebration. The court showed us, at least in theory, that it was willing to treat every citizen with equal dignity, care and respect, that the inviolability of rights was not conditional on a person's position in society.

Protecting privacy

"The refrain that the poor need no civil and political rights and are concerned only with economic well-being has been utilised through history to wreak the most egregious violations of human rights," wrote Justice D.Y. Chandrachud in his opinion on behalf of himself and three others. Privacy, he added, could never be a privilege doled out only to a select few. "Every individual in society irrespective of social class or economic status is entitled to the intimacy and autonomy which privacy protects... The pursuit of happiness is founded upon autonomy and dignity. Both are essential attributes of privacy which makes no distinction between the birth marks of individuals." Justice R.F. Nariman, in his separate opinion, was equally dismissive of the government's arguments. There can be no "antipathy whatsoever between the rich and the poor," he wrote, on the existence of a fundamental right to privacy.

In its reach, however, the judgment in *Puttaswamy* went even further. Not only did the judges see a general guarantee of privacy as foundational, and as subject only to the limits on freedom expressly provided by the Constitution's language, but, even more significantly, a clear majority on the bench also placed their faith in a system that saw fundamental rights as unassailable, in a system where an individual will not be waiving her liberties simply by accepting grants and benefits from the government. In other words, the court acknowledged that the state wasn't doing anyone a favour by providing them benefits and subsidies – these were as much an entitlement that sprang from the Constitution as the other freedoms flowing from the document's text.

Selective extension

Now, therefore, we must ask ourselves this: what brought about a volte-face in the Supreme Court's thinking, in its interim order delivered on March 13, in the ongoing battle over the validity of the Aadhaar programme? Here, the court extended the government-mandated deadline on linking Aadhaar to different services, including one's banking and mobile phone accounts, until it delivers a final judgment. But, markedly, it refused to grant a similar extension for notifications made under Section 7 of the Aadhaar (Targeted Delivery of Financial and Other Subsidies, Benefits and Services) Act, 2016. These notifications make a person's entitlement to a host of welfare schemes, including subsidy programmes, conditional on the individual possessing an Aadhaar number. Aren't citizens enrolled to receive benefits from government entitled to the same freedoms as others?

GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCKPHOTO

Originally, the state told us that by providing every Indian a unique identity number, by collecting biometric information from us, including our fingerprints and iris scans, the government can ensure an equitable distribution of benefits to the poor. But there were many problems with this vision. For one, it lacked any legislative backing, and was, therefore, clearly introduced without due process. What's more, the state displayed a complete lack of care or concern for a person's right to privacy, in commencing a project which it couldn't have even been sure would satisfy its purported objectives. After all, the government had barely conducted any disinterested study before the project was piloted to examine its costs and benefits. As a result, several petitions were filed in the Supreme Court, questioning the project's constitutional validity.

However, when these cases came up for hearing before a three-judge bench, in 2015, the government argued that the Aadhaar programme couldn't be questioned, because the Constitution, in any event, didn't guarantee any right to privacy. Faced with this astonishing claim, the court, later that year, referred the cases to a larger bench, to answer what ought to really have been a rudimentary question: does the Constitution recognise a fundamental right to privacy? While making this reference, though, the court also delivered a brief interim order.

The production of an Aadhaar card, it wrote, cannot be made mandatory for obtaining any benefits otherwise due to a citizen. Additionally, Aadhaar could only be used for a specific list of purposes, such as the enforcement of schemes under the Public Distribution System. In October that year, a bench modified this order to include certain other schemes for which Aadhaar could be used, but, at the same time, was careful to clarify that the project was entirely voluntary and that no person could be compelled to enrol in the programme.

Clause on subsidy

In the meantime, in March 2016, even as these petitions were pending before the Supreme Court, the Union government introduced in the Lok Sabha a draft legislation, in the form of a money bill, with a view to legitimising the creation of the Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI), which runs the Aadhaar programme. This law, the Aadhaar Act of 2016, describes enrolment with the UIDAI as voluntary. But, in Section 7, it authorises both the Central and State governments to make Aadhaar mandatory for anyone wishing to receive a subsidy, benefit or service, for which expenses are borne from the Consolidated Fund of India. Although this clause, at the same time, demands that the government must accept alternate proofs of identity from persons without an Aadhaar number, since the law's enactment the state has notified more than 130 schemes in which beneficiaries of different welfare measures have been mandated to enrol with the UIDAI. These programmes include schemes that affect access to the public distribution system, to mid-day meals for children, to pensions for the elderly, to public health care, to food subsidies under the National Food Security Act, to maternity benefits, and to an array of other such necessities.

Simultaneously, the government has also made a series of declarations under various different laws, directing individuals to secure an Aadhaar card and to link this number with their income tax PAN, bank accounts, financial services such as mutual and provident funds, and insurance policies, among others. Now, although the deadline for seeding Aadhaar with these services expires on March 31, much like the deadline for linking Aadhaar for the purposes of the schemes notified under Section 7, the benefit of the Supreme Court's interim order, delivered last week, will enure only to the former.

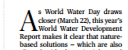
The consequences of this classification are enormous. It creates a fait accompli on Aadhaar for economically and socially deprived persons alone. Every day stories abound on denial to individuals of one benefit or another – access to rations, to food, to health care and to pensions – because of a failure in biometric authentication. Given the substantial concerns raised over the efficacy of Aadhaar-based biometric authentication, why, we might be tempted to ask, did the court separately rank notifications under Section 7?

Does the court's order tell us that rights are not sacrosanct; that individuals seeking benefits from the state exist purely at the government's mercy? Is the court reneging on the glorious promises it made last year? Regrettably, the order offers no explanation. Indeed, there can be no rationale for this classification. The court has every power to now amend its interim order. Unless it does so, the social contract, undergirding the Constitution, faces the grave threat of being reduced to rubble.

Suhrith Parthasarathy is an advocate practising at the Madras High Court

Awash in water crises

Business-as-usual approaches to water security are no longer sufficient



JAYAKUMAR RAMASAMY

As World Water Day draws closer (March 22), this year's World Water Development Report makes it clear that nature-based solutions – which are also aligned with the principles and aims of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development – can offer answers to our most pressing water-related challenges. Business-as-usual approaches to water security are no longer viable.

Nature-based solutions hold great promise in areas which also include sustainable food production, improved human settlements, access to drinking water supplies and sanitation, water-related disaster risk reduction, and helping to respond to the impact of climate change on water resources.

Water hotspots

The water-related challenges we face today are immense. The world's population is expected to increase from 7.6 billion (2017) to between 9.4 and 10.2 billion people (2050), with two-thirds of them living in cities. UN estimates are that more than half of this anticipated growth will be in Africa (1.3 billion) and Asia (0.75 billion). Therefore, those most in need of water will be in developing or emerging economies.

Climate change is also impacting the global water cycle with wetter regions generally becoming wetter and drier regions drier. An estimated 3.6 billion people now live in areas that could face water scarcity for at least a month in a year, with that number increasing to 4.8 and 5.7 billion by 2050. The International Water Management Institute estimates that total demand could increase from 680 billion cubic metres (BCM) to 833 BCM by 2025, and to 900 BCM by 2050.

By 2050, countries already facing water scarcity challenges may also be forced to cope with the decreased availability of surface water resources. India faces major threats to its water security, with most water bodies near urban centres heavily polluted. Inter-State disputes over river resources are also becoming more intense and widespread.

Deteriorating water quality

Along with water scarcity, there is the issue of water quality. Since the 1990s, water pollution has worsened in most rivers in Africa, Asia and Latin America, according to the UN Environment Programme (UNEP). An estimated 80% of industrial and municipal wastewater is released without any prior treatment, with detrimental impacts on human health and ecosystems. Given the transboundary nature of most river basins, regional cooperation will be critical to addressing projected water quality challenges.

GETTY IMAGES

A Central Pollution Control Board report indicates that almost half of India's inter-State rivers are polluted. Sewage from 650 cities and towns along 302 polluted river stretches in the country increased from 38,000 million litres per day (MLD) in 2009 to 62,000 MLD in 2015. It found that the untreated sewage and industrial waste was a major cause of pollution in 16 of 40 inter-State rivers in the country.

Nature-based solutions can address overall water scarcity through "supply-side management," and are recognised as the main solution to achieving sustainable water for agriculture.

Environmentally-friendly agricultural systems like those which use practices such as conservation tillage, crop diversification, legume intensification and biological pest control work as well as intensive, high-input systems. The environmental co-benefits of nature-based solutions to increasing sustainable agricultural production are substantial as there are decreased pressures on land conversion and reduced pollution, erosion and water requirements.

Constructed wetlands for wastewater treatment can also be a cost-effective, nature-based solution that provides effluent of adequate quality for several non-potable uses (irrigation) and additional benefits that include energy production. Such systems already exist in nearly every region of the world. Natural and constructed wetlands also biodegrade or immobilise a range of emerging pollutants. Recent experiments suggest that for some emerging pollutants, nature-based solutions work better than "grey" solutions, and in certain cases may be the only viable option.

Watershed management is another nature-based solution that is seen not only as a complement to built or "grey" infrastructure but also one that could also spur local economic development, job creation, biodiversity protection and climate resilience.

Nature-based solutions are closely aligned with traditional and local knowledge including those held by indigenous and tribal peoples in the context of water variability and change.

Case of Chennai

Chennai in Tamil Nadu is a textbook example of how nature is being ignored in urban development-posed challenges. Unplanned urban development and unwieldy growth with no hydrological plan are causing many problems. Earlier, when there was heavy rain in catchment areas in the Chennai region, lakes, ponds, tanks, rivers and interlinked drainage systems helped replenish groundwater, hold back some water and release the excess to the ocean. With development, a number of tanks and lakes in and around Chennai have been encroached upon by various stakeholders. Major rivers and canals such as the Cooum, Adyar and Buckingham Canal which are meant to carry excess rainwater to the Bay of Bengal now serve as the city's drainage outlets. The Pallikaranai marsh which acted as a sponge to soak up excess rainwater is now an over-run.

Nature-based solutions are crucial to achieving our Sustainable Development Goals. Adopting them will not only improve water management but also achieve water security.

Jayakumar Ramasamy is Senior Programme Specialist and Regional Hydrologist, UNESCO Regional Office for Eastern Africa, Nairobi, Kenya

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Letters emailed to letters@thehindu.co.in must carry the full postal address and the full name or the name with initials.

Work in progress

The two Chief Ministers, K. Chandrasekhar Rao and Mamata Banerjee, have at least set the ball rolling by exploring the possibility of a federal front to take on the BJP in 2019 ("Mamata, KCR move to form federal front", March 20). The principal motive behind this front should be collective leadership for a large nation with diverse cultures, religions and languages as one-party rule, which has almost been dictatorial so far, does not fit in a federal system. However, the million dollar question that arises is whether ego-centric Chief Ministers will be able to unite the flock of political parties with the sole goal of ensuring effective good governance. The federal front should not end up a non-starter like in the past after much fanfare and promises.

K.R. Srinivasan, Secunderabad

Changing course

The 2014 Lok Sabha election was a mandate for governance, but the party which was chosen by the masses for the sake of development is definitely not going in the direction of development, instead focussing on all things regressive. There is also a threat to constitutional principles. It doesn't really matter whether it is the BJP or the Congress or any other political party in power, but if there is an attempt to alter the basic structure of our Constitution it should be strongly condemned ("A stoppable juggernaut", March 19).

Karan Choudhary, Pathankot, Punjab

Party plenary

It is a pity that during the Congress plenary session in Delhi, the proceedings were punctuated with ritualistic and scathing attacks on the BJP government, by speaker after speaker (Editorial - "Towards 2019", March 20). There was no alternative blueprint or road map to revive the economy, catalyse industrial development and generate employment opportunities. Merely harping on the Sohrabuddin encounter case or the bank scam will cut no ice with the people nor improve the Congress's poll prospects. The leaders of the grand old party and its allies are guilty of grave corruption charges. With an inexperienced and immature leader such as the Congress president at the helm, the Congress is bound to face an uphill task in winning back the confidence of the people.

P.K. Varadarajan, Chennai

Adjourned for the day

Parliament is meant to take up national issues of importance and it is disturbing that every session is being washed out deliberately without transacting any business, thanks to the political agendas of various parties with an eye on the election in 2019. Parties conveniently resort to a blame game. When will there be a debate on burning issues such as the agrarian crisis, unemployment, health and growing NPAs of banks?

Kshirasagara Balaji Rao, Hyderabad

A middle path

People often lament India's poor research culture forgetting that it is like attempting a steeplechase (Editorial - "Bending the rules", March 20). There are many hindrances in the form of a multitude of government agencies and activists. The India-based Neutrino Observatory is a project way behind schedule, and a classic example of a "should we build it or not?" syndrome. We must not forget that 'development' and 'environmental change' go hand in hand.Be it mining, road construction, expanding the railway network, dams, or any other infrastructure projects, these factors go hand-in-hand. Since India is a developing country, it can't stall all projects due to environmental concerns. The key is to follow the 'middle path' – between development and environmental protection. It's also called 'sustainable development'.

Abhishek Kumar Anshu, Patna

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THE WEDNESDAY INTERVIEW | SITARAM YECHURY

'The priority is to defeat the RSS-led BJP government'

The general secretary of the CPI(M) on why the party lost in Tripura and the road map for the 2019 Lok Sabha elections

SOBHANA K. NAIR

Earlier this month, the Communist Party of India (Marxist) lost the Assembly elections in Tripura, where it held power continuously for 25 years, to the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). The result, which leaves the party ruling only in Kerala now, was "unexpected", says Sitaram Yechury, the general secretary of the CPI(M). Mr. Yechury examines the reasons for the surprise defeat; speaks of the struggles that led to the successful farmers' rally in Maharashtra that was organised by the All India Kisan Sabha, the party's peasant wing; and talks about the disagreements within the CPI(M) on what its political line should be for the 2019 Lok Sabha elections. Excerpts:

V.V. KRISHNAN

Did the CPI(M) not foresee a shift in its vote base in Tripura?

As far as we are concerned, it was an unexpected result. Tripura became the number one literate State [in 2013, ahead of Kerala]. It has a whole new crop of educated, healthy youth who were not plagued by internecine tensions, communal conflicts and moral policing that you see in the rest of the country. All these were positive achievements that were acknowledged by successive Prime Ministers.

Now, on the basis of that performance, the results were unexpected. In an election, someone wins, someone loses. This is what democracy is all about. We humbly accept the people's verdict.

What were the reasons for your defeat?

The BJP emerged as the anti-Left pole in the State. They swallowed up all the other political parties, mainly the Congress. The BJP did a lot of social engineering. They tied up with an extremist tribal group [the Indigenous People's Front of Tripura], a group that was demanding a separate tribal State [Twipraland], initially out of India; now we don't know what their position is. These are the groups that are otherwise antithetical to the slogans that the BJP gives of Hindutva nationalism.

Another reason was the growing aspirations of voters. In a northeastern State where there are meagre resources and there is no infrastructure basis for industry to grow, large-scale employment generation is not possible. And because of its terrain, even large-scale agriculture is not possible. You had aspirations rising, and conditions to meet those expectations were not there.

And, thirdly, [voters] were looking for change.

How will this defeat impact the CPI(M) in the rest of the country, especially in Kerala?

Soon after Tripura, you had the by-elections in Uttar Pradesh where the BJP lost on the Chief Minister's own turf. In Bihar, the betrayal of Nitish Kumar of the Mahagatbandhan was resoundingly rejected by the people. Prior to that, in Rajasthan, they lost two of their own seats. In Madhya Pradesh, they could not unseat the opposition. You have to see other developments as well. The impact will be balanced.

In a speech at the Kerala State Conference, you said that the CPI(M) does not stand for the Communist Party of Kerala (Marxist) but for the Communist Party of India (Marxist). Is this myopic view hurting the party?

I did not say that. What I said is that I am the general secretary of the Communist Party of India (Marxist). The media, the Kerala media particularly, interpreted it in their own way. The CPI(M) is a centralised, pan-India party, and the decisions on what the party's line should be are taken by the party committees. And whatever the Central Committee finally approves is the understanding of the party as a whole.

The political-tactical line approved by the Central Committee says that "appropriate electoral tactics to maximise the pooling of the anti-BJP votes" will be done. Should we presume that to stall the BJP government in a post-poll scenario, you could ally with the Congress?

We have said that an appropriate electoral tactic will be worked out to ensure maximisation of anti-BJP votes in accordance with our political line. Our political line says that the priority is to defeat the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh-led BJP government. But that is not to be done with an understanding or alliance with the Congress. That is a decision we will take then. All this is speculation right now.

> In our country, for the Left to advance, it has to be on the basis of the strength of people's movements, on the basis of an alternative policy direction.

Do you feel that the Tripura results vindicate the position you have taken to keep the door open?

In Tripura, the conditions were entirely different. The polarisation was Left and anti-Left. Any other possibility just doesn't exist in Tripura.

There were allegations levelled by some Central Committee members that the majority view is soft on the BJP, and the Kerala unit is working under pressure from investigating agencies to take such a view.

Well, these are absolute speculations, and their own interpretations. This is not the reality. We take our positions on the basis of our understanding and assessment of ground realities. There were no extraneous factors.

The Maharashtra Kisan rally was a great success. There is a view that the CPI(M) should concentrate more on such mass movements rather than look for electoral victories.

The Maharashtra rally is not an overnight development; this is something for which three-year-long preparations went on. It was in October 2015 that our party State committee in Maharashtra [decided that] protests against that must be mounted. On the basis of that preparation, in March 2016, Nashik was gheraoed and more than one lakh farmers came demanding loan waiver, remunerative prices, and the implementation of the forest tribal land law, which is being violated with impunity in the State. The Chief Minister called for talks; the government asked for six months of time. We had said that if the government betrays [the farmers], then the next city to be blockaded will be Mumbai. That is why this march was from Nashik to Mumbai. In 2017, there was a farmers' strike, a unique event. They refused to sell their produce to the city; instead they fed the slum children. That evoked a lot of public sympathy. The government said that more than ₹30,000 crore of loans will be waived, but what did the Budget show? Only ₹13,000 crore of loans were waived.

The primary emphasis of the party is in building and strengthening people's movements and struggles. Through that we aim to increase our support base among the people and move towards changing the political correlation. It is not a trade-off between electoral tactics and mass movements.

There are allegations against you that your push to align with the Congress may bring temporary electoral benefits but will affect your party's ideology in the longer run.

These are all opinions and speculations that have very little to do with our decisions inside the party. The point is, the best way we can achieve our objective, on which we are clear, is defeating the RSS-led BJP government.

We are very clear that in our country, for the Left to advance, it has to be on the basis of the strength of people's movements, on the basis of an alternative policy direction. That is why I always say, *'Desh ko neta nahi, niti chaiye'* [The country doesn't need a politician, it needs policy]'.

How hopeful are you that party delegates will take a more sympathetic view of your political line?

It is not a question of a degree of hopefulness. The draft has now gone to the party rank and file. In our party we have a very vibrant inner-party democracy. Every party member has the right to send in amendments and has the right to give opinions. All those will be considered. A report of those amendments will be presented to the party congress. It is only after that will the resolution be cleared. It is a very rigorous process and it will be followed. Let us see what will be the outcome.

But if your line is defeated, can you still continue in the position of general secretary?

All this is in anticipation of what is likely to happen. This is not the first time that you are having discussions and voting also. The then general secretary's opinion was not carried on the issue of Jyoti Basu being the Prime Minister. This is purely our inner party matter and we highly value our inner-party democracy.

The BJP has been aiming for a Communist-mukt Bharat. The CPI(M) faced a similar threat during Indira Gandhi's time. Between the two, who do you think poses greater danger?

Whichever party acts against the people's interests is more dangerous. At one point it was the Congress, now it is the BJP. Both these parties are ruling class parties. For the ruling class, Communists are the basic enemy. It is more so for the BJP. They have publicly declared that three internal forces who are stopping their march towards converting India to a Hindu Rashtra are Muslims, Christians and the Communists. They find us to be the most ideological, most consistent and organised opponents. That is why Prime Minister Narendra Modi said that even though Tripura has only two [Lok Sabha] seats, the Assembly win was significant because of [the BJP's] ideological victory.

Do you see disparate political parties coming together before the 2019 Lok Sabha polls?

In Indian politics, a lot of water will flow in all our rivers. There will be many alignments and realignments. Six months ago, who would have thought of [Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister] Chandrababu Naidu exiting the NDA [National Democratic Alliance], who would have thought of a Dravidian party allying with the BJP, or who would have thought of the SP [Samajwadi Party] and the BSP [Bahujan Samaj Party] coming together? Or, for that matter, who would have thought that Nitish Kumar, after leading the Mahagatbandhan, will walk out of it, only to be rejected by the voters?

Can the Modi government be defeated in 2019?

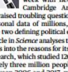
I am seeing a parallel to the 2004 general election. After having won some State Assembly elections, the then BJP government decided to advance the elections thinking that they would sweep them. What was the atmosphere we were subjected to then? 'Shining India', a 'feel-good' factor, the opposition in a disarray... therefore, everyone thought that Atal Bihari Vajpayee would come back with a two-thirds majority. Nobody thought that the BJP would be defeated. We have faith in the Indian people and they will decide in the best interest of our country.

SINGLE FILE

When truth loses

How to reduce the spread of fake news

SHUBASHREE DESIKAN



GETTY IMAGES/ ISTOCK

Fake news, also known as false news, has been a much-discussed phenomenon since the epochal Brexit referendum and the election of Donald Trump as U.S. President, yet has resurfaced in a major way in the past week with news of the Facebook-Cambridge Analytica data crisis. This crisis has raised troubling questions about the harvesting of the personal data of millions, and their use in influencing those two defining political events of 2016.

A recent article in *Science* analyses the prevalence of false news and delves into the reasons for its proliferation. The results of the research, which studied 126,000 stories tweeted by approximately three million people more than 4.5 million times between 2006 and 2017, might leave cynics unsurprised: The MIT researchers found that false news spreads "farther, faster, deeper, and more widely" than true news. Yet what might surprise even cynics is that this difference was not due to bots and automatons, but to the efforts of human tweeters. The persons tweeting false stories typically have fewer followers, follow fewer people, and have been on Twitter for a relatively short time. The study also found that false news diffused to between 100 and 100,000 people routinely, whereas truth only reached up to 1,000 people. Many more people retweeted false news than truth. True news took six times as long as falsehood to reach just 1,500 people. They also found that falsehood was 70% more likely to be retweeted. The key reasons behind this, according to the authors, are the emotions inspired by the two types of news. While they found that false news inspired surprise and disgust, truth caused sadness, anticipation, joy and trust. Evidently, the former set is more powerful. Perhaps not coincidentally, psychological analysis was extensively employed by Cambridge Analytica, the data company that exploited the personal data of social media users to target certain demographics with political messaging designed to influence their voting behaviour.

In the same issue, *Science* published another study which discusses the role of bots and deliberate amplification of fake news. In an email to *The Hindu*, author Fillipo Menczer of Indiana University, clarified, "The MIT study focusses on one of these factors, namely the novelty of false news. Other factors include cognitive, social, and algorithmic biases that make people vulnerable to manipulation – engagement-based ranking, limited attention, selective exposure, confirmation bias, echo chambers..." Mr. Menczer highlighted the supplementary materials section of the MIT work which shows that when the contribution of bots is factored out, the spread of false news is suppressed more than that of true news. Therefore, while humans do have an active role in spreading false news, the role of bots as an amplifying factor cannot be discounted.

What these studies suggest is that understanding how and why false news spreads, establishing fact-checking sites and spreading awareness among people not to get taken in by "novelty" value when retweeting or spreading stories could be the key to reducing the spread of false news.

CONCEPTUAL

Front running

FINANCE

Also known as tailgating, this refers to the practice of buying or selling a financial security like a stock or a bond just before a huge buy or sell order hits the market. Front runners generally possess information, which is not fully public yet, about an impending order that is likely to influence the price of a security significantly and try to profit from it. A stockbroker with prior information about a big investor wanting to buy shares of a particular company, for instance, might try to purchase some shares for his personal account. He can later sell those shares at a higher price once the huge buy order hits the market. Front running is considered an illegal practice.

MORE ON THE WEB

Explained: Why are flights being cancelled?

http://bit.ly/flightcanTH

NOTEBOOK

The reports that never get written

On the sidelines of assignments lie many untold stories

OMAR RASHID

It is not uncommon for reporters to return from the field with incomplete stories. These may be accidental encounters or mundane everyday occurrences that don't fit into the narrative of the main story you're working on, but add value to your understanding of that society and the daily lives of those interviewed. However, due to deadline pressures or other set story ideas, these stories never take shape. I encountered two such stories recently.

Located 20 km from Allahabad city, Jaitwardih is a typical Uttar Pradesh village with bad roads, overflowing drains, unemployed youth and electricity woes. In 2015, this village acquired political value as it was adopted to be developed as a "model village" by Keshav Prasad Maurya, who is today the Deputy Chief Minister of U.P.

It was in that village that I came across a primary school wall splattered with slogans discouraging people from open defecation, and with messages on incentives provided by the government for constructing toilets.

But what caught my attention was a curious "public notice" put up by the village head. "Every other day, thieves break the locks and steal bags of rice, wheat and gas cylinders from the school. Therefore, I humbly inform you all that anybody found loitering around the school compound after the day's session will be held answerable and legal action taken against them," read the notice. Sounds like a story idea worth exploring, doesn't it? However, as I was in Jaitwardih to report on the Phulpur bypoll and was focussing on the caste alignments there, this story remains in the form of photos on my phone.

The other such story was in rural Gorakhpur. While visiting Dalit families there, I reached a village where a 15-year-old boy had drowned in the local pond just a few minutes before my arrival. He had been on a boat with two friends. The three of them had jumped out of the boat to dodge the electric wires that were spread above the pond. Two of them had survived. The police was quick to arrive at the spot but the body was not found for several hours. The villagers were fuming and a big crowd had gathered at the site. They held the local electricity department responsible for the dangling wires.

The incident reflected the perils of daily life in rural U.P. where administrative apathy leads to the loss of innocent lives. But, like before, I was sadly forced to move to the next village to pursue the story for which I had gone.

FROM The Hindu. ARCHIVES

FIFTY YEARS AGO MARCH 21, 1968

Centre working on plan on State's loan dues

The Central Government has turned down requests from some State Governments for rescheduling payment of loans taken by them from the Centre. The States which had made the request were: Andhra, Assam, Bihar, Haryana, Madras, Punjab, Orissa and West Bengal. The States were informed that these repayments had been taken into account in working out the Centre's resources and any deferment of the recovery would affect the capacity of the Centre to finance plan schemes and Central assistance to States.

A HUNDRED YEARS AGO MARCH 21, 1918.

Cotton Prices Scare: Brokers' Meeting.

An extraordinary general meeting of the Cotton Brokers Association was held this noon [March 20] in the rooms of the Bombay Cotton Trades Association at Colaba when the question of the rise in cotton price was discussed. Mr. T.D. Moore of the Cotton Trades Association presided. The meeting was well attended by those dealing in cotton. Mr. Moore said that he represented the Bombay Cotton Trades Association and he would submit any resolution that would be passed at the meeting before a meeting of the Directors of his Association which was to be held later on in the afternoon.

DATA POINT

Lower intensity, higher casualties

Incidents related to left-wing extremism (LWE) have declined in the last three years, but casualties, both civilians and security forces, have increased in some States

LWE INCIDENTS

State	2015	2016	2017
Andhra Pradesh	35	17	26
Bihar	110	129	99
Chhattisgarh	466	395	373
Jharkhand	310	323	251
Madhya Pradesh	0	12	3
Maharashtra	55	73	69
Odisha	92	86	81
Telangana	11	7	5

CASUALTIES

State	2015	2016	2017
Andhra Pradesh	8	6	7
Bihar	17	28	22
Chhattisgarh	101	107	130
Jharkhand	56	85	56
Madhya Pradesh	0	2	1
Maharashtra	18	23	16
Odisha	28	27	29
Telangana	2	0	2

In the most affected State, Chhattisgarh, there were 130 casualties in 2017, the highest in the last three years — though there were only 373 incidents, the lowest in the same period

Incidents are defined as violent acts carried out by left-wing extremists

SOURCE: LOK SABHA Q&A

- Presidential election, due in May 2018
- Fragile peace accord-Ended longest civil wars
- accord between the Colombian security force s and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Col ombia (FARC) had won President Juan Manu el Santos the Nobel Peace Prize-2016
- In all, the anti-accord parties have 50 seats in a House of 102- Senate Election
- Ruling Social Party of National Unity won just 14 seats
- Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (F ARC)- finished with less than 1% of the vote , but is assured representation in parliament thanks to the accord
- The next couple of months will be crucial for the pro-accord forces

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India
States and Union Territories
State Capital
Union Territory Capital
Jammu and Kashmir
Srinagar
Jammu
Himachal Pradesh
Shimla
Chandigarh
Punjab
Chandigarh
Dehradun
Uttarakhand
Haryana
Delhi
New Delhi
Rajasthan
Jaipur
Lucknow
Uttar Pradesh
Bihar
Patna
Sikkim
Gangtok
Arunachal Pradesh
Itanagar
Dispur
Assam
Kohima
Nagaland
Shillong
Meghalaya
Imphal
Manipur
Agartala
Tripura
Aizawl
Mizoram
Jharkhand
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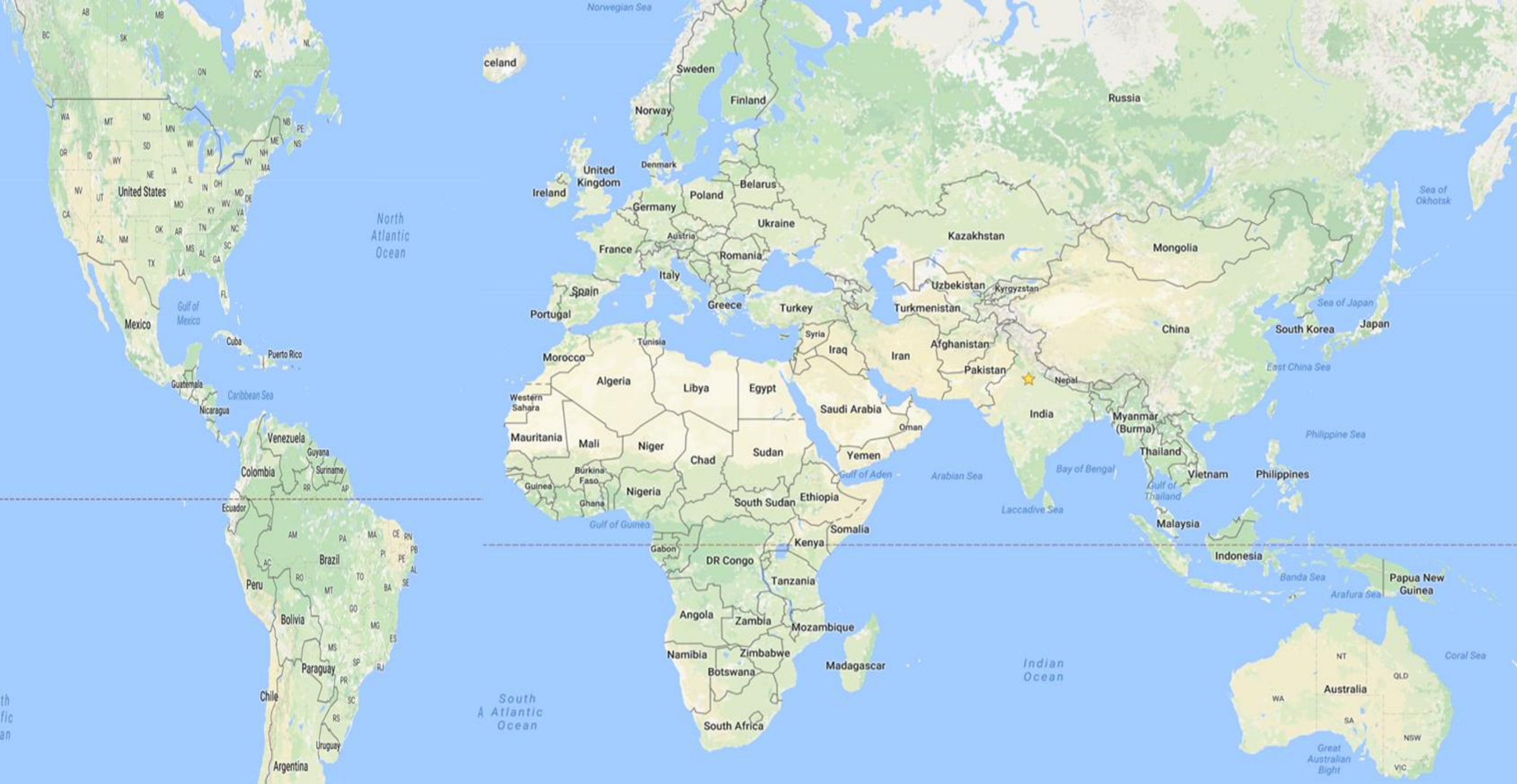
Kolkata
Gandhinagar
Gujarat
Bhopal
Madhya Pradesh
Chhattisgarh
Raipur
Odisha
Bhubaneshwar
Daman and Diu
Diu (DD)
Daman
Dadra and Nagar Haveli
Silvassa
Mumbai
Maharashtra
Telangana
Hyderabad
Amaravati
Yanam (PY)
Panaji
Goa
Karnataka
Andhra Pradesh
Arabian Sea
Bay of Bengal
Bengaluru
Chennai
Pondicherry
Puducherry
Karaikal (PY)
Mahé (PY)
Tamil Nadu
Kerala
Kavaratti
Lakshadweep
Thiruvananthapuram
Port Blair
Andaman and Nicobar Islands
Indian Ocean

Punjab
Himalayas
Thar Desert
Aravalli
Garo
Khasi
Vindhyas
Chota Nagpur
Rann of Kutch
Satpuras
Deccan Plateau
Sundarbans
Western Ghats
Eastern Ghats
Lakshadweep Is.
Nilgiris
Cardamom Hills
Andaman and Nicobar Is.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Turkey
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Uzbekistan
Kyrgyzstan
Turkmenistan
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Nepal
China
India
Sea of Okhotsk
Sea of Japan
South Korea
Japan
East China Sea
Philippine Sea
Myanmar (Burma)
Thailand
Vietnam
Philippines
Gulf of Thailand
Malaysia
Indonesia
Banda Sea
Arafura Sea
Papua New Guinea
Coral Sea
Australia
NT
QLD
WA
SA
NSW
VIC
Great Australian Bight
Indian Ocean
Arabian Sea
Laccadive Sea
Bay of Bengal
Saudi Arabia
Oman
Yemen
Gulf of Aden
Ethiopia
Somalia
Kenya
South Sudan
Sudan
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South Africa
South Atlantic Ocean
North Atlantic Ocean
United States
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Guatemala
Nicaragua
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Venezuela
Guyana
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Colombia
Ecuador
Peru
Brazil
Bolivia
Paraguay
Chile
Uruguay
Argentina

Separate freedoms

- Why did the court extend the deadline on linking Aadhaar to various services, but refuse to grant one for welfare plans?
- Last year- 9-judge bench of Supreme Court in **K.S. Puttaswamy v. Union of India**
- Central government Said- fundamental right to privacy- **Elitist concern**
- Government's **duties in a welfare state**
- SC- Rejection of the government's arguments was a **cause for much celebration.**
- Court showed us, at least in theory, that it was willing to treat every citizen with equal dignity, care and respect
- "Refrain that the poor need no civil and political rights and are concerned only with economic well-being has been utilised through history to wreak the most **egregious(प्रबल) violations of human rights**,"
- **Privacy could never be a privilege** doled out only to a select few

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Continue

- "Every individual in society irrespective of social class or economic status is entitled to the intimacy and autonomy which privacy protects…
- The pursuit of happiness is founded upon autonomy and dignity
- What brought about a volte-face in the Supreme Court's thinking, in its interim order delivered on March 13, in the ongoing battle over the validity of the Aadhaar programme?
- Here, the court extended the government-mandated deadline on linking Aadhaar different services, including one's banking and mobile phone accounts, until it delivers a final judgment.
- But, markedly, it refused to grant a similar extension for notifications made under Section 7 of the Aadhaar (Targeted Delivery of Financial and Other Subsidies, Benefits and Services) Act, 2016.

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- This law, the Aadhaar Act of 2016, describes enrolment with the UIDAI as voluntary.
- But, in Section 7, it authorises both the Central and State governments to make Aadhaar mandatory for anyone wishing to receive a subsidy, benefit or service, for which expenses are borne from the Consolidated Fund of India
- Although this clause, at the same time, demands that the government must accept alternate proofs of identity from persons without an Aadhaar number
- Programmes include schemes that **affect access to public distribution** system, to midday meals for children, to pensions for the elderly, to public health care, to food subsidies under the National Food Security Act, to maternity benefits, and to an array of other such necessities
- Every day stories abound on denial to individuals of one benefit or another access to rations, to food, to health care- because of a failure in biometric authentication.

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- Does the court's order tell us that rights are not sacrosanct; that individuals seeking benefits from the state exist purely at the government's mercy?
- The court has every power to now amend its interim order.
- Unless it does so, the **social contract,** undergirding the Constitution, faces the grave threat of being reduced to rubble.

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WILL SMITH
thePURSUIT of
HAPPYNESS

Awash in water crises

- World Water Day draws closer (March 22),
- This year's World Water Development Report makes it clear that naturebased solutions which are also aligned with principles and aims of 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development can offer answers to our most pressing water-related challenges.
- Businessas-usual approaches to water security are no longer viable.
- Nature-based solutions hold great promise in areas which also include sustainable food production, improved human settlements, access to drinkin g water supplies and sanitation, water-related disaster risk reduction, and helping to respond to the impact of climate change on water resources.

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SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

17 GOALS TO TRANSFORM OUR WORLD

1 NO POVERTY

2 ZERO HUNGER

3 GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

4 QUALITY EDUCATION

5 GENDER EQUALITY

6 CLEAN WATER AND SANITATION

7 AFFORDABLE AND CLEAN ENERGY

8 DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH

9 INDUSTRY, INNOVATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE

10 REDUCED INEQUALITIES

11 SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES

12 RESPONSIBLE CONSUMPTION AND PRODUCTION

13 CLIMATE ACTION

14 LIFE BELOW WATER

15 LIFE ON LAND

16 PEACE, JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS

17 PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE GOALS

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

Continue

- World's population is expected to increase from 7.6 billion (2017) to between 9.4 and 10.2 billion people (2050), with 2/3 of them living in cities
- UN estimates- more than half of this anticipated growth will be in Africa (1.3 billion) and Asia (0.75 billion).
- Therefore, those most in need of water will be in developing
- Climate change is also impacting the global water cycle
- Estimated 3.6 billion people now live in areas that could face water scarcity for at least a month in a year, with that number increasing to 4.8 and 5.7 billion by 2050

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- India faces major threats to its water security, with most water bodies near urban centres heavily polluted.
- Inter State disputes over river resources are also becoming more intense and widespread.
- Along with water scarcity, there is the issue of water quality.
- Since the 1990s, water pollution has worsened in most rivers in Africa, Asia and Latin America, according to the UN Environment Programme (UNEP)
- An estimated 80% of industrial and municipal wastewater is released without any prior treatment, with detrimental impacts on human health and ecosystems
- Central Pollution Control Board report indicates that almost half of India's inter-State rivers are polluted.
- It found that the untreated sewage and industrial waste was a major cause of pollution in 16 of 40 inter-State rivers in the country.

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Continue

- **Nature-based solutions can address overall water scarcity**
- Environmentally-friendly agricultural systems
- Watershed management is another nature-based solution
- Constructed wetlands for wastewater treatment can also be a cost-effective
- Unplanned urban development and unwieldy growth with no hydrological plan are causing many problems.
- Heavy rain in catchment areas- heavy rain in catchment areas
- Nature-based solutions are crucial to achieving our Sustainable Development Goals.
- Adopting them will not only improve water management but also achieve water security.

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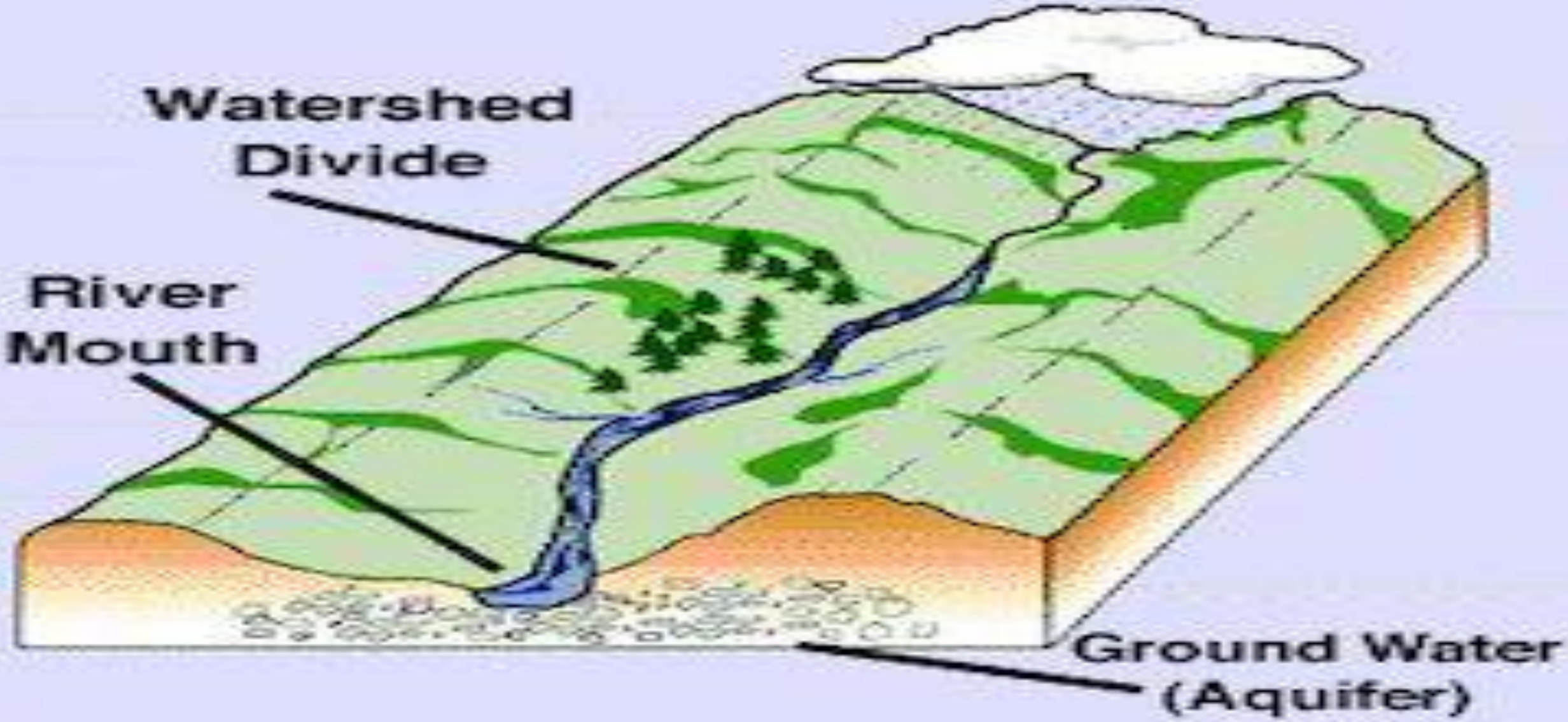
A Watershed



Today- Question- 150-250 words

- Nature-based solutions are crucial to achieving our Sustainable Development Goals. Adopting them will not only improve water management but also achieve water security. Comment

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ETHIOPIA
SOMALIA
KENYA
DEMOCRATIC REP. OF THE CONGO
TANZANIA
ANGOLA
NAMIBIA
BOTSWANA
MOZAMBIQUE
SOUTH AFRICA
MADAGASCAR
PHILIPPINES
INDONESIA
AUSTRALIA
NEW ZEALAND

Map Practice

Namibia

Country in Southern Africa

Currencies: Namibian dollar, South African rand

Capital: Windhoek

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- **Page-1-** 39 Indians, abducted by IS in Iraq, are dead: Sushma
- External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj on Tuesday informed Rajya Sabha that the 39 Indians, who had been abducted in Iraq in 2014, are dead.

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Prelims Focus Facts-News Analysis

- **Page-1-** SC/ST Act being used for blackmail, says top court
- Issues guidelines against arbitrary arrests of employees
- Anti-atrocities law, which protects Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes from casteist slurs and discrimination, has become instrument to "blackmail" innocent citizens and public servants,Supreme Court observed in a judgment
- Issuing a slew of guidelines to protect public servants and private employees from arbitrary arrests under the Atrocities Act, the court directed that public servants can only be arrested with the written permission of their appointing authority
- In the case of private employees, the Senior Superintendent of Police concerned should allow it

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Prelims Focus Facts-News Analysis

- **Page-1-** More autonomy for JNU, Hyderabad university
- HRD Minister Prakash Javadekar announces new scheme for quality institutions in the country
- Jawaharlal Nehru University and University of Hyderabad are two Central institutions that will be granted highest autonomy as Category-1 institutions under the new scheme of higher autonomy for quality institutions.
- Banaras Hindu University, Aligarh Muslim University and the English and Foreign Languages University,Telangana, are in Category-2, which too enjoys high autonomy
- Announced Minister of Human Resource Development Prakash Javadeka

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Prelims Focus Facts-News Analysis

- U.P. says no to new engineering colleges
- 62% vacant seats in existing institutions

- India joins Europe's satellite data sharing pool- called Copernicus.
- Can exchange earth observation information
- Return get to access free data from Europe's six Sentinel satellites and those of other space agencies that are part of the programme, at their cost.

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Prelims Focus Facts-News Analysis

- Centre wants 'humane' AFSPA
- Minister, however, says there is no plan to withdraw the Act in Kashmir
- Operationally effective and humane

Possible changes: The Act may continue in the same form in Jammu and Kashmir. ▪ NISSAR AHMAD

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- Xi flags nationalism to begin his second term in office

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Last Day- Q's- Answers…

- ✓ AYUSH Ministry was founded on 9th of November, 2014.
- ✓ Earlier it was known a the Department of Indian System of Medicine & Homeopathy (ISM & H) which was created in March 1995- It operated under the "Ministry of Health & Family Welfare."
- ✓ AYUSH stands for Ayurveda, Yoga & Naturopathy, Unani, Siddha & Homeopathy.

- ✓ World Trade Organisation (WTO)
- ✓ It established on 1st Of January, 1995. Headquartered in Geneva, Switzerland.
- ✓ It's purpose is regulating world's trade.
- ✓ Earlier it was known a "General Agreement on Traffic and Trade (GATT).

Stockholm International Peace Research Institute

Formation	6 May 1966
Purpose	Provides data, analysis and recommendations, based on open sources, to policymakers, researchers, media and the interested public
Website	www.sipri.org

- ✓ **Stockholm** International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) Founder- Government of Sweden
- ✓ The World's highest armed exporting countries
- ✓ United States of America
- ✓ Russia
- ✓ Freedom of Religion kept under the "Article 25 - 28," of FR.

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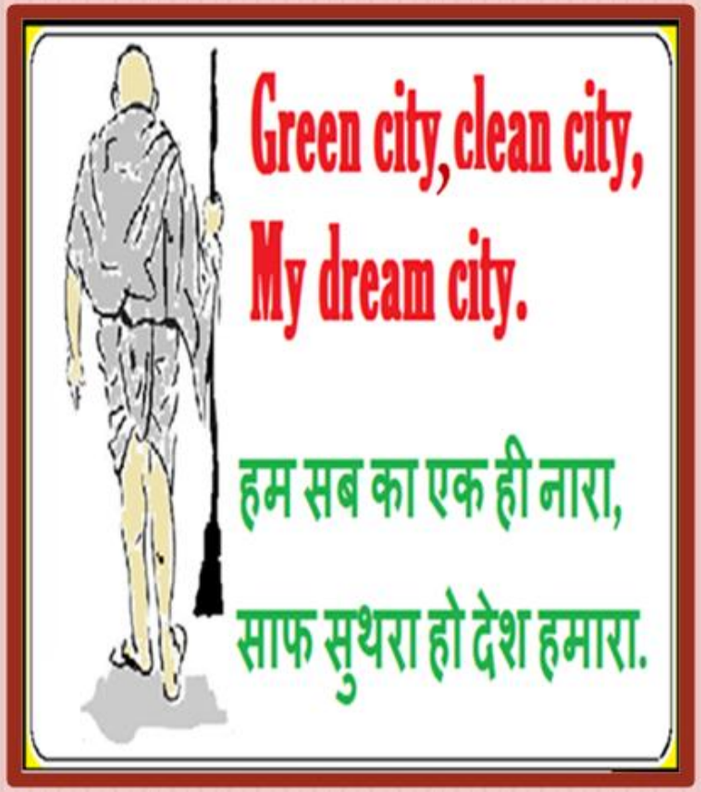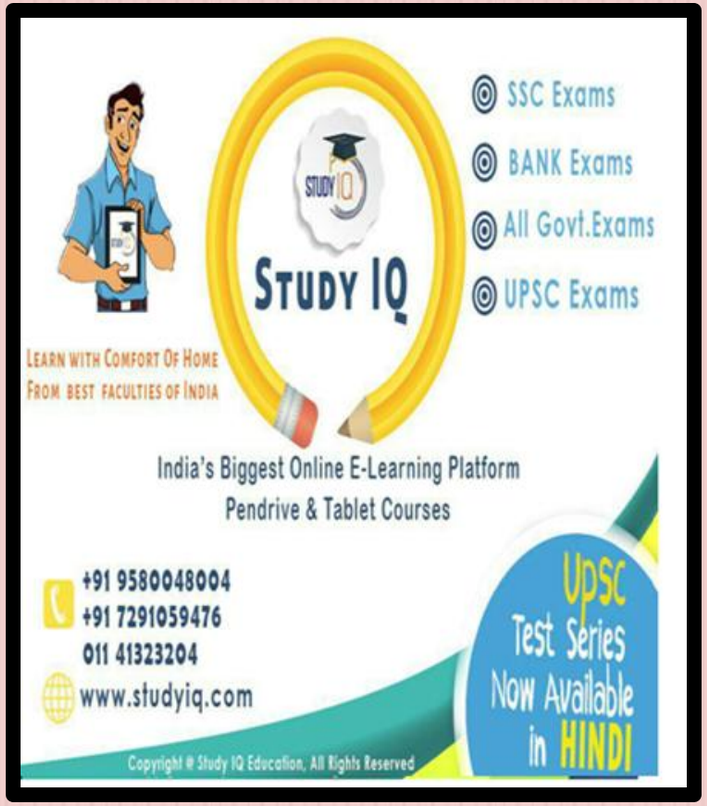
" A candle loses nothing by lighting another candle"