

# THE PROBE



## DISSECTING EWS RESERVATIONS *with* Prof Satish Deshpande

Muffling Cries  
Behind the Cheers

Cover Story:  
In Conversation with  
Professor Satish Deshpande

The Probe Survey:  
NEP & CUET: A Step Forward?



## FROM THE EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Dear readers,

We are delighted to present the January issue of The Probe. It covers a wide array of issues ranging from the changing landscape of politics in Jammu and Kashmir and the West's geopolitical quandary to agrarian issues such as significance of the new hybrid variety of mustard seeds and Minimum support Price (MSP). We attempt to show you the muffling cries behind the cheers at the 2022 Football World Cup in Qatar. A look at centre-state relationship in the recent years echoes the age-old question of the status of federalism in the Indian democracy.

The highlight of the winter issue has to be the interaction with an expert on caste and class inequalities and a renowned sociologist, Prof Satish Deshpande on the controversy enveloping the EWS Reservations. Further, The Probe Survey is back with people's views on the introduction of CUET, a paradigm shift that has changed the admission process and has thus evoked strong opinions from students and teachers alike.

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With this, we aim to lay the foundation of a sophisticated design team which will help in creating an identity for The Probe in the longer run. In case you are someone who is currently pursuing or interested in learning designing, we welcome you to volunteer for the design team of The Probe. We hope to make this an enriching learning experience and a fruitful collaboration for both!

Kindly mail us at [theprobe20@gmail.com](mailto:theprobe20@gmail.com).

# THE PROBE

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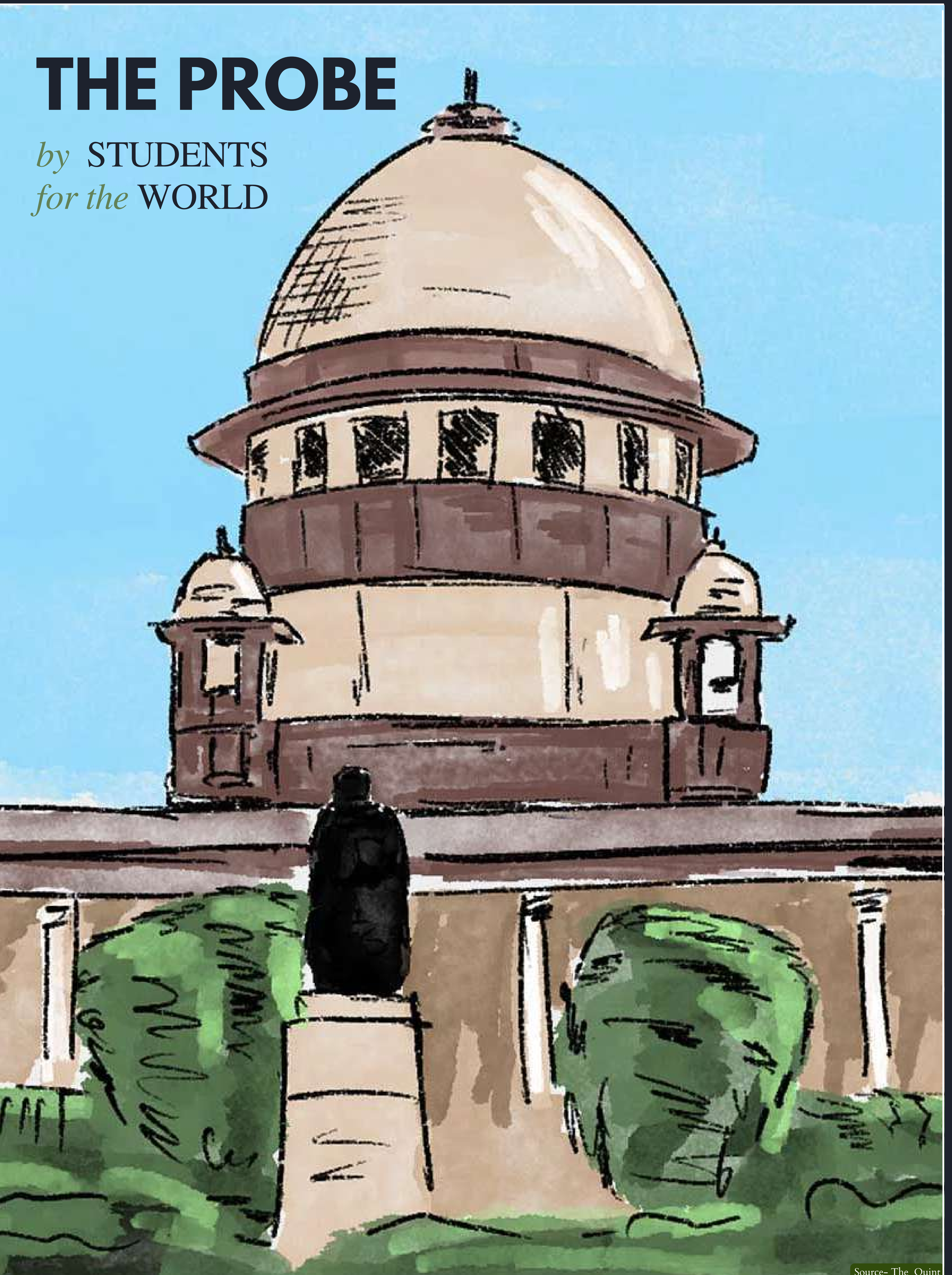
### ARTICLE

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*for the* WORLD



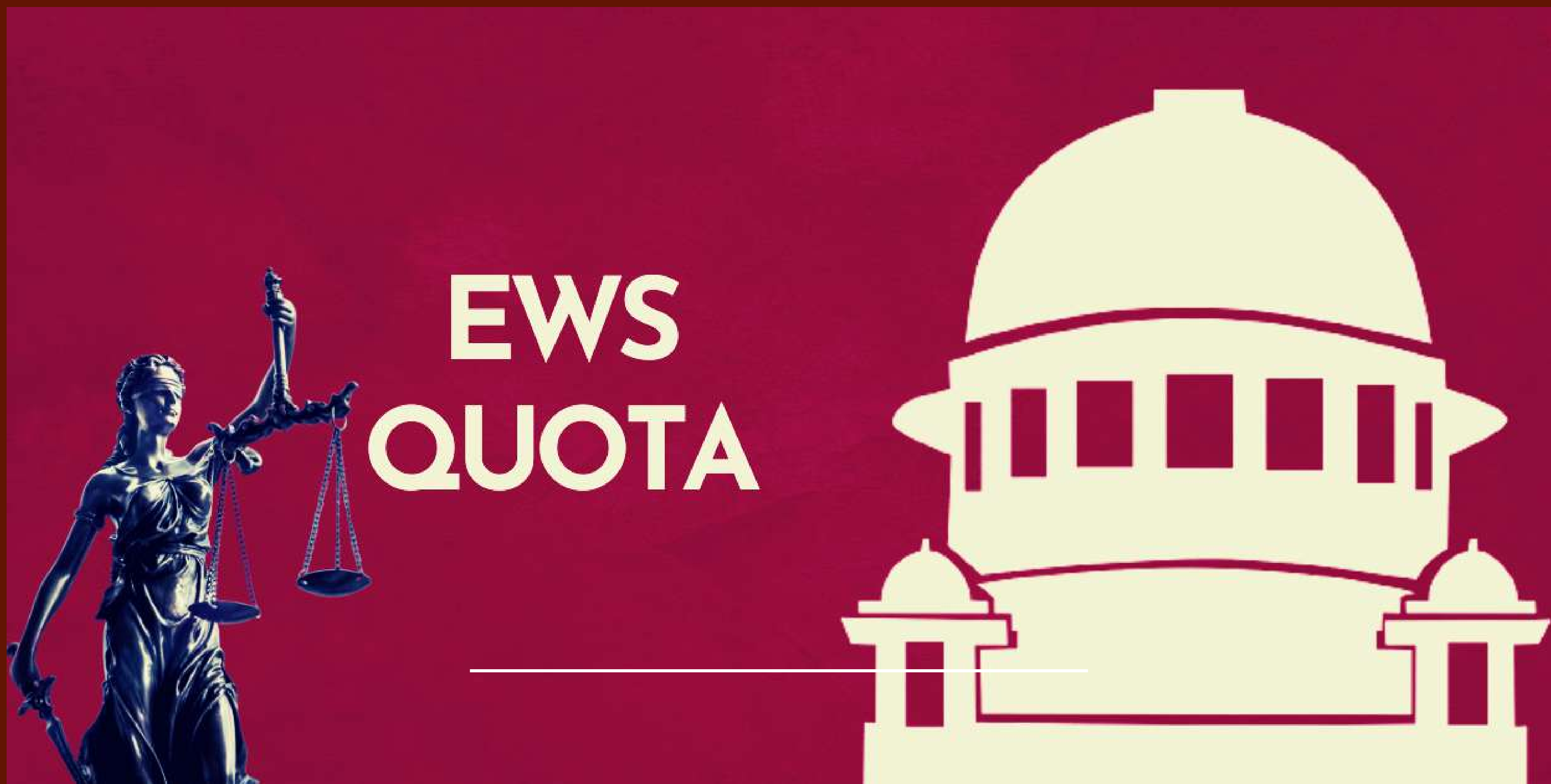
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# DISSECTING EWS RESERVATIONS

with Prof Satish Deshpande

*Interviewed by Gaurvi Saluja & Siddhant Sinha*



**Sir, discussing an issue as complex and pertinent as reservations might require some background context to be first laid down to better understand the contemporary question. Can you provide us with a history of the reservation policy in India and its underlying principles?**

Initially, the first reservations were discussed in a general way. Of course, as you all probably know, reservations were born with the Poona Pact, which itself was born out of Gandhi's decision to go for a fast unto death, in opposition to the separate electorates that were awarded to the depressed classes in 1931.

So as a result of the 1932 Poona Pact, the Government of India Act of 1935 was formed which made the schedules of castes and tribes, and then the Constitution adopted them almost verbatim. That's the prehistory in a sense.

When resolutions were first talked about in the Constituent Assembly, it's interesting, they were talked about in the context of protection for various kinds of minorities.

In the draft constitution of 1948, the same reservation provisions were there for the Muslims, the Christians, the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes. Then, due to various reasons including

the partition and the influence of the Hindu right, although not at the forefront but in the background, Hindu members of the Constituent Assembly, argued very vociferously against special rights for minorities like Muslims and Christians. The Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes, thus, became the residual part of which it was agreed that reservation is needed.

So, the explicit grounds discussed in the Constituent Assembly are based clearly on discrimination. There is no doubt that reservation for the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes is about their guaranteed representation in the legislature



and later jobs and education got added. So, at this point, it is seen as a measure for addressing the discriminatory history of the dominant community, of the upper caste essentially. This is this spirit of reservation. The kind of society we had been, where not just by custom or practice, caste inequality was practised by law. Every society has de facto equality. But we also had de jure inequality based on caste. Since we had that we could not, with a clear conscience, demand to be a modern nation, unless we address that.

Reservation was the precondition for our becoming a modern nation, which is supposed to have horizontal citizenship and that everyone is equal before law. Each citizen has an equal share in the nation. That's how reservations first came. You can understand why the demand for its expansion to the socially educationally backward, has been there from the beginning.

A special provision was made in the Constitution to have a commission to look into what we call backward classes, what later became the OBCs.

This was acted upon briefly in 1953, when the **first Backward Classes Commission** was set up. But the very Congress government who had set it up, disowned the report of the committee which came out in 1955. There was a very strong feeling against expanding reservation beyond the Scheduled Tribes and the Scheduled Castes.

The 1990s were a big watershed in the idea of reservation, because by then enormous amounts of evidence had mounted, which had not been paid attention to.

But when demands for OBC reservation started, this evidence started to be brought up that the intermediate castes were massively underrepresented, in positions of privilege, both in education and in government jobs. And they had, especially in the northern belt, a very large presence. So they mattered a lot. They had always mattered at the state level. But at the national level, they finally managed to leverage it at a time of some uncertainty at the central power structure, where there had been a succession of coalition governments and V.P. Singh agreed to the reservation policy.

Very soon, the political parties realised that it was a politically unopposable because a large plurality had a very strong case that they had been excluded, maybe not through as active and virulent discrimination as the SCs and the STs, but certainly passive discrimination. At the time that it was expanded, the same anxieties that were felt by the upper castes were voiced once again. And we had, what is called the **Mandal judgement**, which went into great detail about how and why the OBC reservations had to be allowed. Two principles were set down then. First, it said that **economic criteria alone cannot be the basis for reservation**. And secondly, **the 50% limit principle**. The **EWS decision goes against both of these**, which are decisions of a nine-judge bench of the Supreme Court itself. But more importantly, we have to consider the **political and symbolic aspects of reservation** in India. **Reservation has a symbolic aspect, a political aspect and a political-economic aspect.**

**You gave a very insightful summary of the thick history of it all. Can you explain in a bit more detail about the EWS reservation violating these principles?**

Although the EWS amendment does not mention caste, everybody knows in political terms, who it is for. There had been a perception that this was because the role of discrimination in determining eligibility was constantly being fought against. Backwardness is a much more conciliatory term to use. Backwardness can be 'kudrati', it can be natural. But for discrimination, you have to have a discriminator. So they have insisted on speaking the language of backwardness, which turns the tables by making it seem as though reservation is compensating for some shortcoming or inadequacy in the group that is benefiting from it.

Also, for almost two decades, there were vociferous demands for reservation by the dominant castes, which were struck down by the courts. Castes which were dominant, and only relatively small sections of which could claim to be backward in the sense of socially and educationally backward castes, like Marathas, Jats, Patidars etc had been demanding reservation, sometimes the courts striking them down, while in others succeeding.

The language of discrimination has been undermined and eroded. Reservation is being seen increasingly as a welfare program. If it is a welfare program, why not a welfare program for upper castes as well, forgetting the original meaning of it.



So the critique of EWS is not that something should not be done for poor upper castes. Of course, something should be done. Our entire development policy has been about the poor. The point is that reservation as such, is a very strong instrument. It deliberately violates the principle of equality. It cannot and should never be equated with a welfare program, because no other welfare program needs to violate the right to equality. For an economic problem, the solution should also be economic. Special earmarked scholarships or other types of financial assistance could be provided for them. By putting reservation for them, and that too, in not a very well-considered manner, not only the eight lakh limit, but also the 10% figure, the principle of reservation has been compromised. The EWS reservation stands out because it undermines the symbolic importance of reservation in the history of our nation. It

undermines the political logic of reservation. It is also contrary to the political economic logic that is needed to address an economic problem.

**Sir, why do you think reservation was considered as an instrument to uplift the backward classes against other policy instruments?**

Yes. Well, this is an important question. I'm glad you brought this up. It is an important question to ask in the context of caste because caste is a peculiar social institution. It's the only social institution that is all pervasive in our society, and which we wanted to abolish compared with religion for which there is only talk about reform.

But, we didn't understand what it means to abolish something that has been regulating our everyday lives for centuries. So our leaders had the vision, people like Ambedkar in particular, along with

others that programs like reservation are the only honest and durable way of annihilating caste, because you systematically do away with the exclusions, that in a circular way is both the origin of caste and the reason for its perpetuation. The purpose of reservation today is to change the composition of the unreserved category in the forthcoming years. The unreserved category by definition constitutes anyone, regardless of caste, as long as one has qualifications to avail the opportunity.

The purpose of reservation today would be to create generations with comparable social capital and other opportunities, so that over time, successive generations will enter the unreserved category. That should be our benchmark, and the composition of it has started happening.





In states like Tamil Nadu, which have had the longest run of reservation in our country, exactly one century, it has finally come to the stage where the composition of the unreserved category is very close to the composition of society. That is the goal of reservation, the true goal of reservation. And when we reach that level, we can dismantle it, we don't need reservation anymore. The goal of reservation, as originally planned, was to make caste irrelevant.

**Whenever the topic of reservation was discussed prior, we always had these huge protests against it. But this time when we see it is being talked about for the EWS, we do not see that many protests going around. What's your take?**

To be fair, it's not only EWS reservation, we have so many reservations of various kinds, which account for a significant proportion of seats. We have domicile reservations, management quota reservations, etc. Even in our own University, the largest reservation we have at the postgraduate level, is for students of our own university. It is a straightforward quota. But what is it called? It is called the merit system. Whereas in the way that it works, obviously, for the SC, ST or the OBC reserved seats, you don't take anybody from the treet, who can show that they are SC or ST. There are merit qualifications that they must meet. So why can't we call those merit as well? Was there even a day's protest? If you're the protector of merit, you must be consistent. But a quota as large as 50% invites no protest, because our eyes see differently and because our eyes are schooled

to have an upper caste perspective, no matter what our own caste might be. There are many kinds of quotas, which have been quietly accepted, and about which there is no question of any protest. EWS is the most public of them, the most 'in your face' of them. So to be fair, EWS is not the only instance, where, from the social justice point of view, undeserved quotas are rampant in our polity and in our institutions.

**Sir, you made an intriguing point about economic problems requiring economic solutions. Do you think economic problems also entail a sense of societal aspect to them? Being poor can also have some social ramifications. How do you see that?**

We have to talk specifically in the context of caste where in a paradoxical sort of way, or maybe not so paradoxical, one of the most powerful tropes in our culture is that of the poor upper caste. The poor Brahmin features in so many stories, so many folktales, right? It's not that such a person doesn't exist.

That is not my point. My point is that the ideological weight, that such an image bears is out of all proportion to its statistical prevalence. This is a fact about our culture. There is great outrage that the upper castes have filed against reservation, particularly in the early years. There were very violent protests in so many states. Those protests are coming from a sense that "but we have also struggled". And what they mean is that they have struggled against economic deprivation, which is quite true.

But to struggle against economic deprivation, and to struggle against social exclusion are two different things in our society.

Moreover, there are so many kinds of social capital available, even for poor upper castes. This has to be acknowledged. Looking at the ethnography of it, so many hostels opened, for particular castes, hardly any in the beginning for the SCs and the STs.

And apart from formal institutions, a huge array of informal institutions existed to support precisely meritorious upper caste students. My father was one of those, I'm part of a tradition where we have grown up on the idea of the poor Brahmin, that we have nothing else except our brains, which makes us blind to so many advantages we enjoy because of our connections.

I don't say connections in any pejorative sense. These are natural things that happen because of family and social networks. We don't need to have the idea of an upper caste person as an evil conspirator, who's trying to grab things for themselves. Unless you interfere with society, social capital reproduces itself naturally. It will reproduce a system of opportunity hoarding and that is exactly what caste has been in our system. It has been a giant system of opportunity hoarding, across generations, across the 70 years of our Republic.

**Sir, considering that the EWS cut off includes many more people than the below poverty line families, will the reservations, if implemented, be successful in uplifting the target population?**



Again, we need to be reasonable here. I don't feel it is reasonable to impose a poverty line-type limit for higher education. It doesn't make sense. The more prosperous sections of every community are the ones who are going to take advantage of things like higher education because it comes lower down in the sequence of things. First you find enough to eat, then you consolidate yourself in terms of steadiness of income, and so on. It's the life cycle of families.

If you take an intergenerational life cycle, it takes three to five generations to enter, stay and find a stable place in this very elastic concept called the middle class. Now, for some groups that started early, and that is the story of independent India. It is the entrenchment of the upper caste, unintentionally perhaps, because of these networks, and the structure of opportunity at that time, massive expansion both from the supply side- institutions of higher education, and the demand side with the state expanding and recruiting large numbers of people for our famous modern temples, dams and state-funded plants.

So the upper castes had an enormous historical luck, if you want to call it that, and we must acknowledge that. On the other hand, we must recognize the enormous differences that have now got entrenched, and now, don't need those structures. So that's why I feel that a realistic economic limit should be well above the poverty line, but eight lakhs is too much. It is roughly eleven times the poverty line. A reasonable limit might be half of that. We can definitely talk about what a reasonable limit should be.

I should also talk about the creamy layer of the OBCs and the ceiling for it. In the case of the OBCs, we have determined that there is a segment of our population entitled to reservation on the grounds of social and educational backwardness. Then, the Supreme Court introduces the concept of the creamy layer, there is nothing constitutional about it. Our courts are saying we must exclude a certain portion of this group. So a group, that is otherwise legally entitled, is going to be excluded. You need a norm for that. What is the thrust of that? That norm should be minimalist. It should seek to exclude as few as possible. With EWS however, you are creating an entitlement to reservation for a group that did not have such entitlement based on our prior jurisprudence and our constitutional history.

You are now creating a limit for inclusion of these people. You're saying that poverty is the ground for which you are overlooking their lack of social and educational backwardness. Nobody's denying that they lack this, nobody is denying that they are heavily over represented in jobs and higher education, that they are heavily over represented. But despite that, you want to give them a reservation. So it's the opposite logic. So here, the thrust of your threshold must be restricted. It must take the weight of ignoring social and educational backwardness. The logic of this has to be different. But I don't think it should be a poverty line level, which is unrealistic. Nobody at the poverty line has the time to think of higher education. And I think that is not a fair thing to impose. You need to come up with a

reasonable limit, where its thrust is such that it should justify the exception that is being made.

**The EWS category is already much over-represented. In higher education, they constituted around 20% prior to the implementation of the EWS reservation. Interestingly, it hasn't dropped since then. Will such a reservation have any impact on the actual numbers on ground?**

Yes, the impact of the numbers is not going to be significant since it is so well represented. Anyway, as the studies are pumping up, we should also keep in mind the symbolic and political importance of reservations which is not to be discounted. But at the same time, we must remember that for problems like caste discrimination, the issue with reservation today is not that there is too much, but that there is too little. **Reservation by itself is very miniscule**, relative to the size of the problem it faces. So we need to think of things far beyond just reservations. And speaking of reservations in an economy, by some estimates around **92% to 94% of employment is in the informal sector**, where there is no kind of protection at all. Here, reservation is a joke.

So, we are talking about 6 to 8% of jobs. And according to some estimates, even if full reservation is given in the private sector, it will account for less than 4% of jobs. This is not as small as it looks, because it is a much larger proportion of formal sector jobs, which is what the fight is for. So, broadly speaking, the political economic importance of reservation has been coming down



in the arena of neoliberalism because the entire philosophy of states, the structure of economies and most of all, the labour market, the job market has completely transformed. Today, there is **no automatic link between higher education and employment**. The most common type of job available is precarious and is opted only if people have no other option. So when precarity has become a norm speaking about reservation seems a symbolic and political thing.

**Can we see this as a way of evading the addressal of the issues of lack of quality education and job opportunities on part of the government?**

Well, in a broad sense, you can always see this argument being made wherever some concession is given that the government is trying to hide its non-performance.

So it's a generic argument, made for every government. I don't place that much importance on it.

Quality of education is a whole different question, independent of the question of reservation, and that is a very messy and complicated area and it's very hard to talk about it in a simple way.

Yes, quality is a major problem and we could see this coming. With the massification of higher education happening in the last two years, in India, and in China, more people have entered higher education than ever before in human history.

So the proportion of first-generation entrance into higher education today is higher than it has ever been.

Now, in one sense, this can be called a social revolution.

But in another sense, this massive expansion took place when at least in India, there has not been a very significant increase in the state's outlay of higher education. It can only happen with substandard institutions.

This problem of quality plagues other countries as well. So, massification has been accompanied by indifferent quality or variations in quality.

Therefore the whole of the entrenched elites has been controlling quality or has access to quality institutions.

Governments talk about improving the quality, but their statements are baseless because it requires an enormous investment of resources.

And most policy documents, including prominently the National Education policy of 2020, makes no financial commitments and without investment, these are meaningless. So we have to get into the hard world of financial backing for any kind of grand plan.

In higher education, particularly because returns are not clear visible, and they are long-delayed compared to an economic project. That's the peculiarity of higher education.

By its very nature it is a way of converting public capital into personal capital. So, the state's investment has got converted into your personal capital, credential capital. But the problem is that privatisation of public capital has happened very unequally across

social groups.

The net effect is that, to put it crudely and sharply, for some castes and some classes, the state has underwritten the dominant position that they occupy today.

**Sir, the EWS reservation claims to be caste neutral, however as we know, it is primarily for the forward caste, and that too those from the Hindu fold. You talked about how Tamil Nadu has a history of reservation and also, how the EWS reservation is a doorway to the Madras Communal Government Order of 1921. So can you shed some light on it?**

We cannot forget that what happened with the Communal Government Order of 1921, in the Madras Presidency, was under colonial rule and the colonial government had no real interest in abolishing caste or our religion. In fact, they wanted to interfere as little as possible with religious or cultural things, as long as that room was secure.

So because of the peculiar composition of the Madras Presidency and the shape of politics there, brahmins were and are by far the most numerous upper caste and though they are the vast majority of the upper castes, they are themselves a very small minority of 3% in the in the current state of Tamil Nadu and 3 to 5% in the other South Indian states.

Despite this they had a complete lock on every form of resource-land, jobs, education, accumulated wealth.



So 3% of the population roughly speaking, has everything and 97% doesn't have anything. This is tailor-made, and you have a situation where slowly democratic politics is being introduced under a colonial regime.

So you can see what would happen and politics takes off like a rocket in this kind of situation.

So born out of that situation, the colonial government said, we will distribute resources for every caste, every community that has some electoral clout.

The bottom line of a communal geo of that sort, where every community is being given reservation, discrimination is not the point at all as you're giving every community that is articulate a share. So, there is nothing like the unreserved category.

Unfortunately, I feel that the EWS reservation is going to push us in that direction, the direction of, let's say, proportionate representation.

Proportionate representation is also effectively permanent representation.

So, on the one hand, it's a great step forward, because, if we genuinely have a proportionate resolution, the share of the general caste will come down to 15 to 20%, which is their share of population.

In a broad sense this is, socially speaking, a more equal society, but on the other hand, all talk of ever abolishing caste will have to be abandoned, because then we are talking about perpetual shares for caste groups.

It is paradoxical as the popular anti reservation talk has always been in terms of dependents.

And, already in our admissions, we can see the impact of reservations on the unreserved category.

As I said in states like Tamil Nadu, the southern states in general, the unreserved category is now much more mixed than it ever was. That shows the success of reservation.

So, the success of reservation policy needs to be looked at in a multi-generational manner.

Ironically, for a policy of reservation, the unreserved category and its composition is the key indicator.

And now, the unreserved category has been made into an endangered species by EWS reservations.

And now, more and more communities are demanding reservation and leading towards the communal geo which was a recipe for the perpetuation of caste reservations, and that is a very big difference from the original intent of reservation policy and where it is headed now in the post-EWS space.



 *Sreyas Sivaanand*



**The upper caste section, of course, is overrepresented in every aspect of polity. But as we know, we haven't had any proper caste census in independent India. So, we do not know the exact proportion of the sizes of different categories. In that regard, how do you see the effort we have taken in the last seven decades with regard to reservation and the need to have a caste census?**

Yes, this is another subject which I've been writing about for a long time. We definitely need a caste

census and it will be difficult to do but it is not impossible to do. It will take a lot of effort. But the census works magic with the most complex categories like occupation.

The single most complex category that the census handles is occupation, and it is able to do a reasonably good job given the hard work that the census people put in.

Similarly, thousands of religions are written but are consolidated into around ten to eleven religions, literally, tens of thousands of languages are recorded and they are again consolidated.

It will be difficult to collect caste data, but it is possible to do it, especially given the technology we have now.

The problem lies in reversible aggregation of categories, if you have like 40,000 castes, the data would not be very useful. It is only useful if you are able to aggregate, and now with technology we can have reversible aggregation.

If you feel a mistake has been made, you can always reverse which was not possible before on the scale of the Indian census.

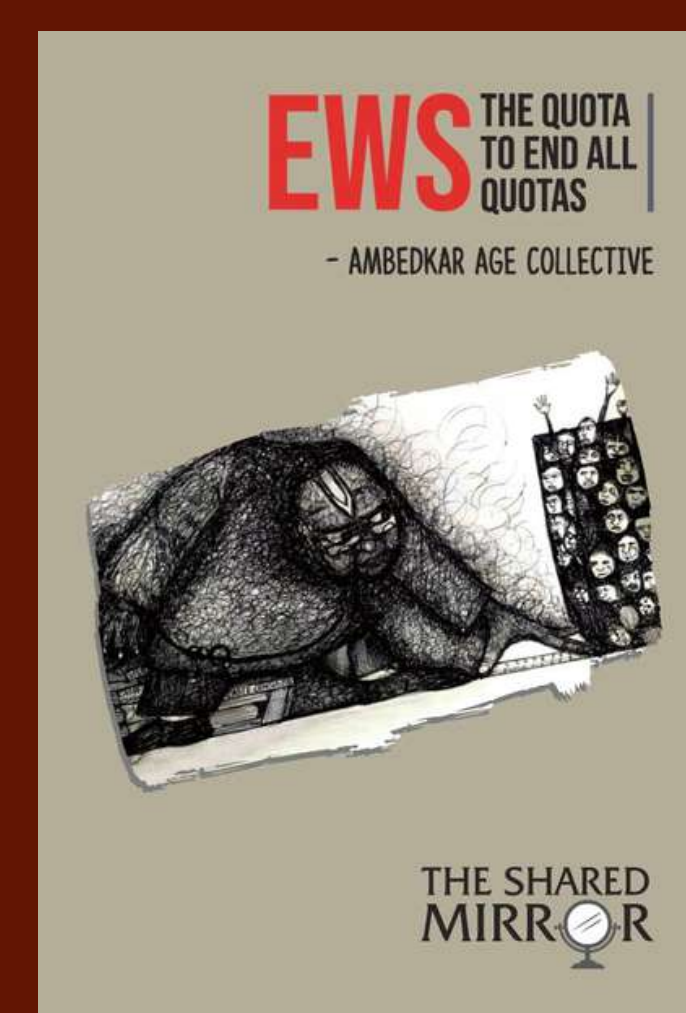
So, I feel that there is no way of avoiding this indefinitely, although successive governments have been doing it. I think it will have to be conducted sooner or later and it will have to be done as part of a regular census.

The attempt to hand it over to the Rural Development Department was a planned disaster.

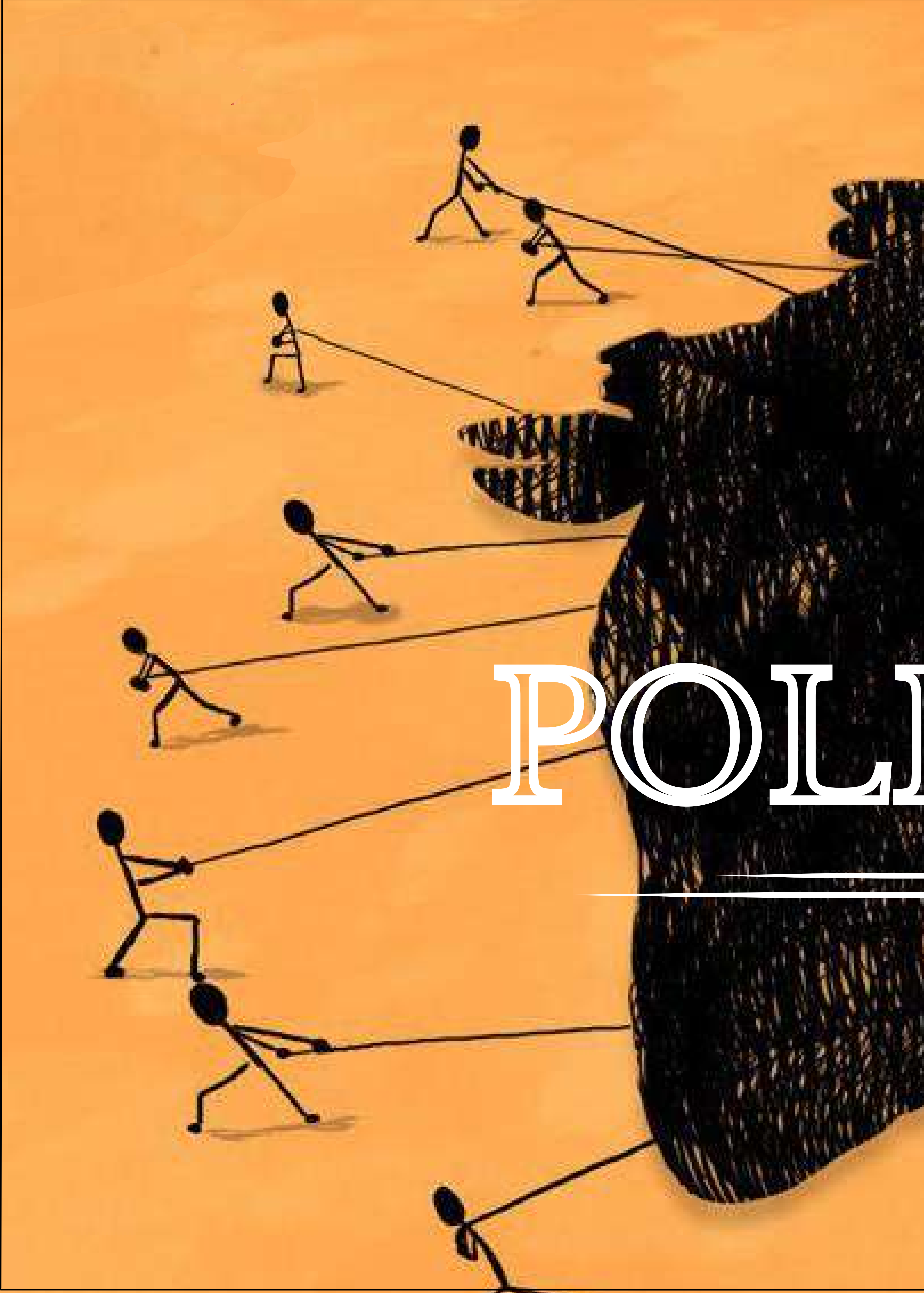
Everybody knew what would happen and they did it because they knew the reasons. Not only for reservation but for other reasons as well, a caste census is now a necessity in our country. ■



## MUST READS







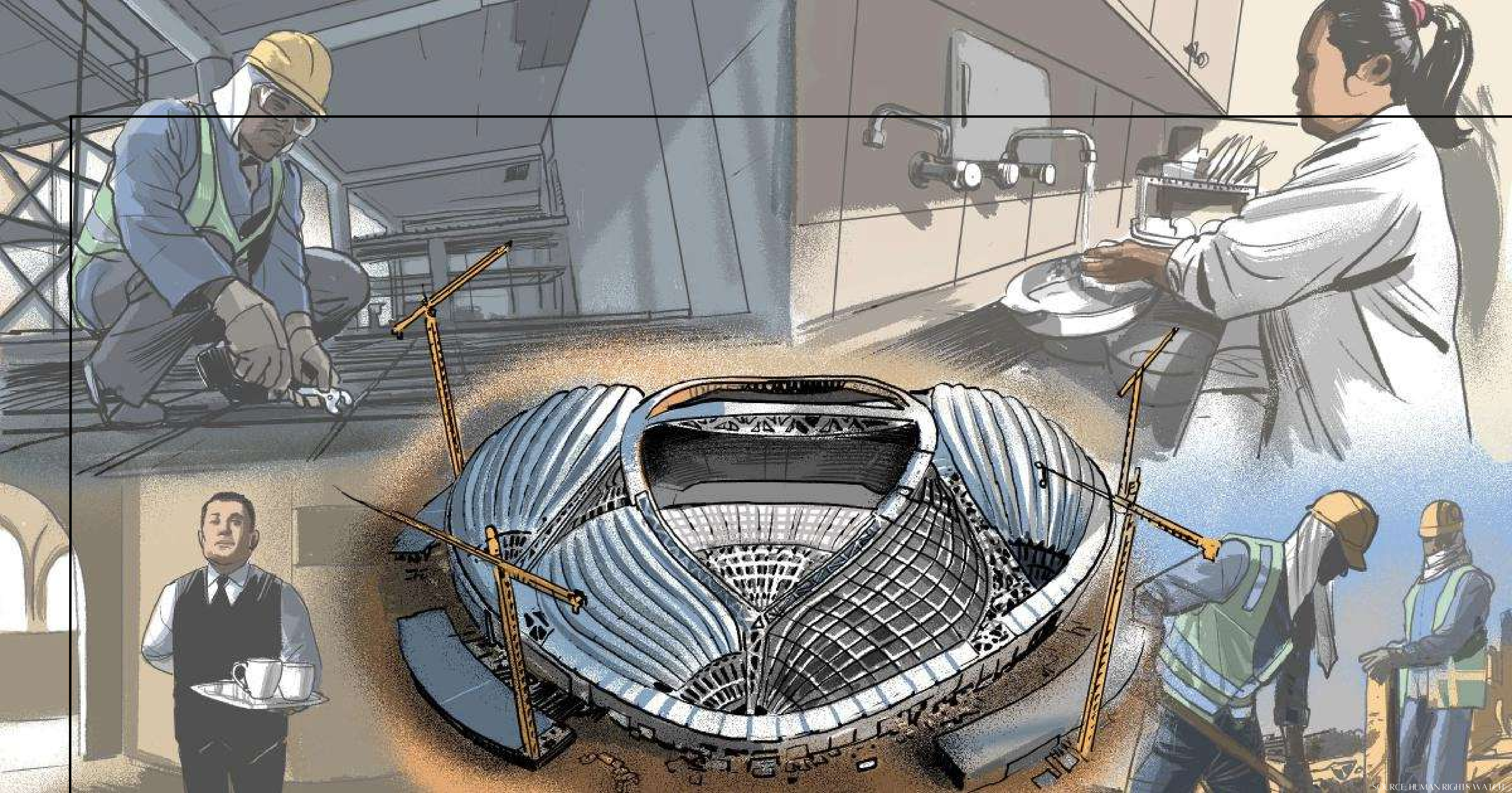
# POLI





# TICS





# MUFFLING CRIES BEHIND THE CHEERS

By Kumar Rajneekant & Aman Choudhary

"The first time he left, I was pregnant with my eldest son. I didn't want him to go, but there was no choice."

Left with no alternative, Dhan, young man from Tokha (Nepal), went to the Gulf. When he left his unborn son in the safe womb on his way to Saudi Arabia, his family had no idea what was going to happen next. He came back in a box, a white tin. He was sent embalmed, covered, and clothed. Dhan's father's heart melted with these words. He had lost his son in the golden deserts. The cheerful dancer was found lying in pain on the floor, succumbing to the unmerciful Qatar.

The Gulf nation exhilarated as the subcontinent sank in bereavement. While more than 6500 people, like Dhan, who left their loved ones to feed them, themselves became fuel for the boiling dunes, a lot more came back to be fed by their families. Many people were even denied their last rites because their families were never able to see their loved ones one last time. No autopsies were performed in what can be described as an attempt to bury the reasons with the dead. Out of all the deaths of migrant workers, only 37 were reported as deaths at World Cup construction sites and only 3 while working, with more than 70% being shown as natural deaths.

<i>Country</i>	<i>No. of Deaths</i>
India	2711
Nepal	1641
Pakistan	824
Bangladesh	1018
Sri Lanka	557

\*No. of deaths of Asian migrants in Qatar since 2010



"I used to work non-stop from 4 a.m. to 11 p.m. If we asked for a break to have some food, the boss used to say, "Did you come here to eat or to work?" says Bhupendra. "They would want me to lift stones weighing between 50 and 60 kg." "I had to tie a towel around my head and put the weight on it and transport it upstairs, and I didn't even get paid for it", mentioned Laxman Qamati, a migrant worker from Nepal who suffered a chronic back injury.

These are the workers who pay over \$4,000 to their sponsors in order to get their ticket and a job in the Middle Eastern nation. Already in debt, they leave their homes with a dream to come back in a well-to-do state. However, free men in their lands, like Africans in the 18th century, land on the blistering sands as slaves. Under the clutches of the Kafala system, migrants have to surrender to their employers, who become their virtual masters. A migrant cannot change jobs or return to his home country until his employer permits him to do so. With the control of their passports and exit visas, they act as the sole masters.

The slaughtering practises of Kafala find their pillars in the non-existent labour laws of the country. Qatari laws and practises don't even treat migrants as humans. The basic labour laws, like fixed working hours, minimum wages, humane working conditions, etc., which are ubiquitous, don't even exist in Qatar. Migrants are forced to spend their nights like horses in a stable after working for more than half of the day in fatal conditions.

As a result, while many become handicapped, some never get the chance to rest on the soil where they were raised.

The consequences were not unknown to many when Sepp Blatter declared the 2022 World Cup to be held in Qatar, a small desert peninsula with just one football stadium at their disposal. The oil-rich nation was ready to burn over 200 billion dollars to set the tone. For the next decade, Qatar had planned to build seven world-class stadiums, a new city dedicated to hosting the finale, an airport, and numerous hotels for their guests. The enormous task required massive human resources along with huge capital, which meant Qatar was hosting more than half of its population as migrants. Over 1.5 million workers from Asia and Africa contributed to the construction of these stadiums, which can be described as Qatar's attempt to do sports washing.

Qatar, along with other Middle Eastern countries, have been historically unpopular for their stringent conservative laws and human rights violations. The country has been exploiting workers and acting inhumanely since the 1950s, when Kafala came into practice. In addition, until recently, the Gulf was chastised for its ridiculous laws and policy of women within the walls. Therefore, an attempt to bluff the world and present a beautiful picture by hosting the world's greatest sports carnival was never a bad move. The little desert had dug deep into their pockets to give the visiting soccer fans their best ever World Cup experience. They spent over 16

times what was required to organise previous editions of the coveted FIFA World Cup. But could they succeed in hiding the true picture behind the glittering sports show?

Over a million fans visited Qatar between November 20 and December 18, but it wasn't as comfortable a visit as they would have expected. Despite building as many hotels as it could, Qatar was unable to meet even half of the required number of stay facilities. Thus, Qatar promoted camping in deserts in the name of experiencing the local culture. The larger stone unturned, however, was the contrast between western and Gulf cultures.

Amidst the warm welcome by Qatari officials, the background actions of locals became a bone of contention. A few weeks before the commencement, a Qatar-based organisation (**#Reflect\_Your\_Respect**) circulated its welcome letter via various social media platforms, which came with the Qatari regulations that needed to be kept in mind by the fans during their stay. Although it wasn't official, the way it expressed its dissatisfaction with common Western practises cultivated thoughts about fan freedom. The widespread poster included a ban on drinking alcohol and homosexual practices, among others like dating and loud music. A World Cup ambassador from Qatar, while speaking to German media, described homosexuality as a mental illness. These developments restricting the freedom of celebrations reignited the fury of fans over FIFA's



decision to give Qatar the hosting rights. Moreover, sales of alcohol were even officially banned in the vicinity of the stadiums.

Ever since Sepp Blatter, then president of FIFA, announced Qatar as the host of the 2022 edition, the association has been condemned for its decision. The consequences of FIFA's worst decision in recent memory became clearer as the tournament progressed. Apart from the huge toll of migrant deaths, human rights violations, and the curb on freedom of expression for fans, hosting the World Cup in Qatar has disturbed the balance of world football.

Football is alive and well thanks to the various national leagues that run all year. Most of them culminate by May and restart in August, leaving the summer months free. Thus, as a tradition, FIFA used to organise its events during these months in order to accommodate the leagues. However, with Qatar's summer heat taking the mercury over 50 degrees Celsius, it was impossible to play. The heat in Qatar compelled FIFA to hold its first-ever winter world cup. As a result, league schedules got tighter with over three matches per week, resulting in player injuries. Footballers who were going to get their national call-ups after years of consistent performance found their dreams shattered with injuries. The last edition's winners, i.e., the French national team, were one of the worst-hit as they lost Ballon d'Or-winning striker Karim Benzema, star midfielders Paul Pogba and N'Golo Kante, along with Cristopher Nkunku and a few



Source: Rediff.com



Source: Fox News



Source: Middle East Monitor



Source: The Brussels Times



more, due to injuries. It was many of them's last chance at a glorious world cup medal.

While FIFA can say that Qatar promised better treatment of workers or a safe world cup for the fans, they can't get away with the hot weather of Qatar. Didn't it cross their minds that it would disrupt the well-balanced world football cycle? But as the vision of the officials was focused on making money, they couldn't focus on these important aspects. An investigation report suggests that the climate in Qatar was never discussed in the association's meetings. Since FIFA, the world's governing body of football, granted Qatar the 2022 World Cup in 2010, the tournament has been bogged down in a gordian knot of debacles. This website contains accusations ranging from bribery and fraud during the tournament's tender process to claims that Qatar utilises the event to "sports wash" its transcript of human rights abuses.

The 2018 World Cup in Russia sparked outrage over FIFA's close relationship with authoritarian leaders such as Russian President Vladimir Putin, whereas the 2014 World Cup in Brazil sparked outrage over the forced removal of tens of thousands of poor and labouring Brazilians to make way for new world cup infrastructure. Since at least 1934, when Benito Mussolini's Italy hosted the second World Cup, football fans have had to learn to balance their enthusiasm for the sport with an awareness of the distasteful ideological compromises that invariably precede the worth billions of dollars freak show.

The world was taken aback when FIFA awarded the 2022 World Cup to Qatar in December 2010, with many fans expressing disbelief—and more than a little skepticism—that a desert kingdom whose football team had never even been able to qualify for a World Cup had rightfully beaten out global sporting behemoths such as the United States, Japan, and Australia. However, even before the decision was made public, football supporters had suspicions about FIFA's tender.

Just two months before FIFA was scheduled to reveal the host cities for the 2018 and 2022 tournaments, the organisation suspended two members of its 24-person executive committee—the body in charge of selecting the host cities—who were alleged to have attempted to sell their votes. (Both men were eventually issued temporary bans by FIFA.) The way executives voted for the marquee event of 2022 suggests the presence of tactical voting. Looking at the various rounds of voting, which show Qatar receiving fewer votes in the 2nd round of voting than in the 1st, raises a question mark over the fairness of the decision.

These exploratory allegations of corruption started to turn out to be merely the tip of FIFA's iceberg. The UK-based Sunday Times in 2014 reported on a treasure trove of email leaks and other documents alleging that Mohammed bin Hammam, a notable Qatari football representative and former FIFA executive committee member, had reportedly paid millions of dollars in payoffs to FIFA officials. (In 2011, FIFA imposed a lifetime ban on Bin Hammam for other corruption charges.) An inquiry report into corruption allegations led by FIFA's chief ethics interrogator and former US attorney Michael J. Garcia discovered severe discrepancies in the bidding process but provided no conclusive evidence that Qatari officials used payoffs to impact the result of the vote. However, FIFA's problems only got worse from there. Since May 2015, the US Department of Justice has publicly charged nine FIFA officials with conspiracy to commit, theft by deception, and laundering in connection with a massive conspiracy to sell tournament broadcasting rights. Soon after, Swiss officials announced a concurrent

<i>Qatar</i>	10	11	11	14
USA	3	5	6	8
South Korea	4	5	5	
Japan	3	2		
Australia	1			

\*Votes given to various countries in different rounds

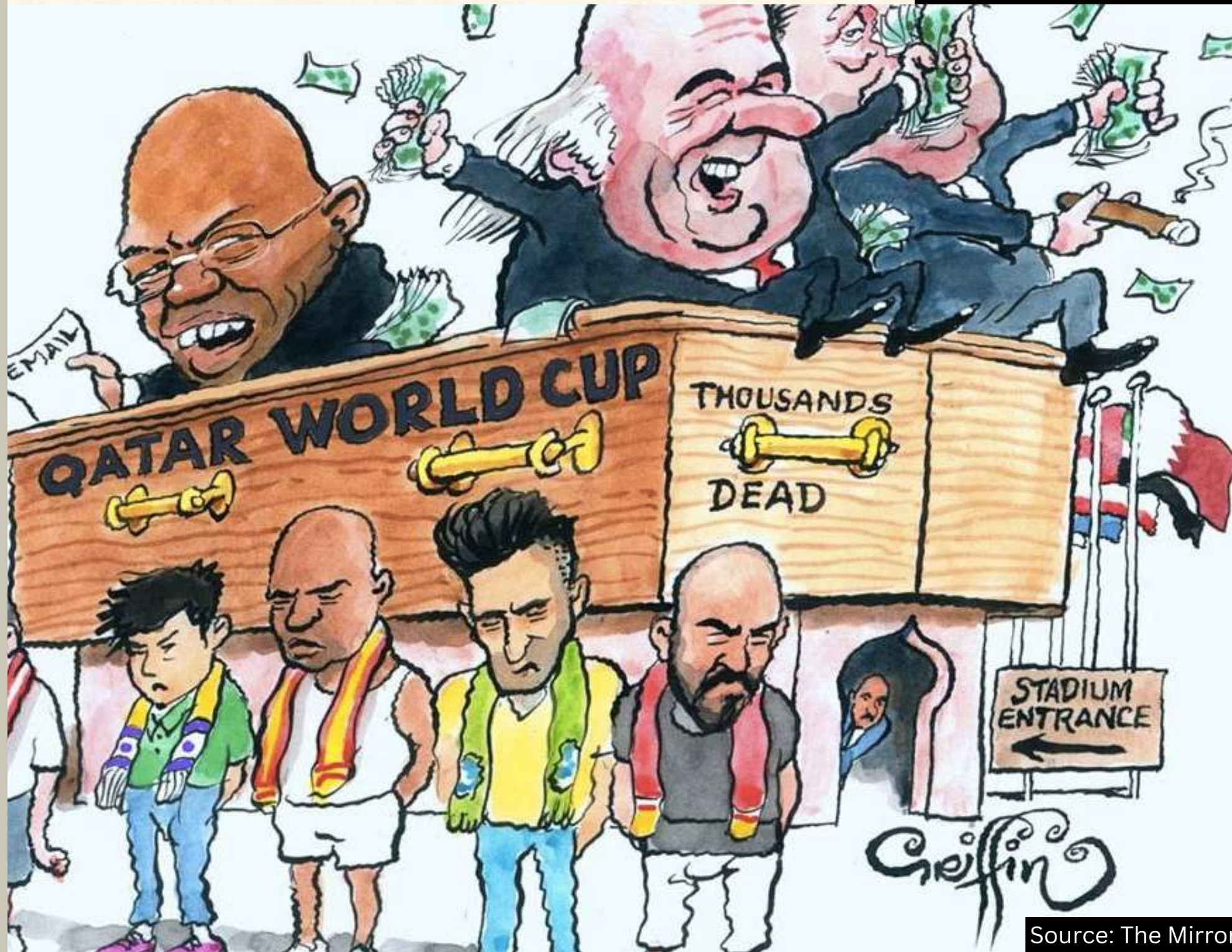




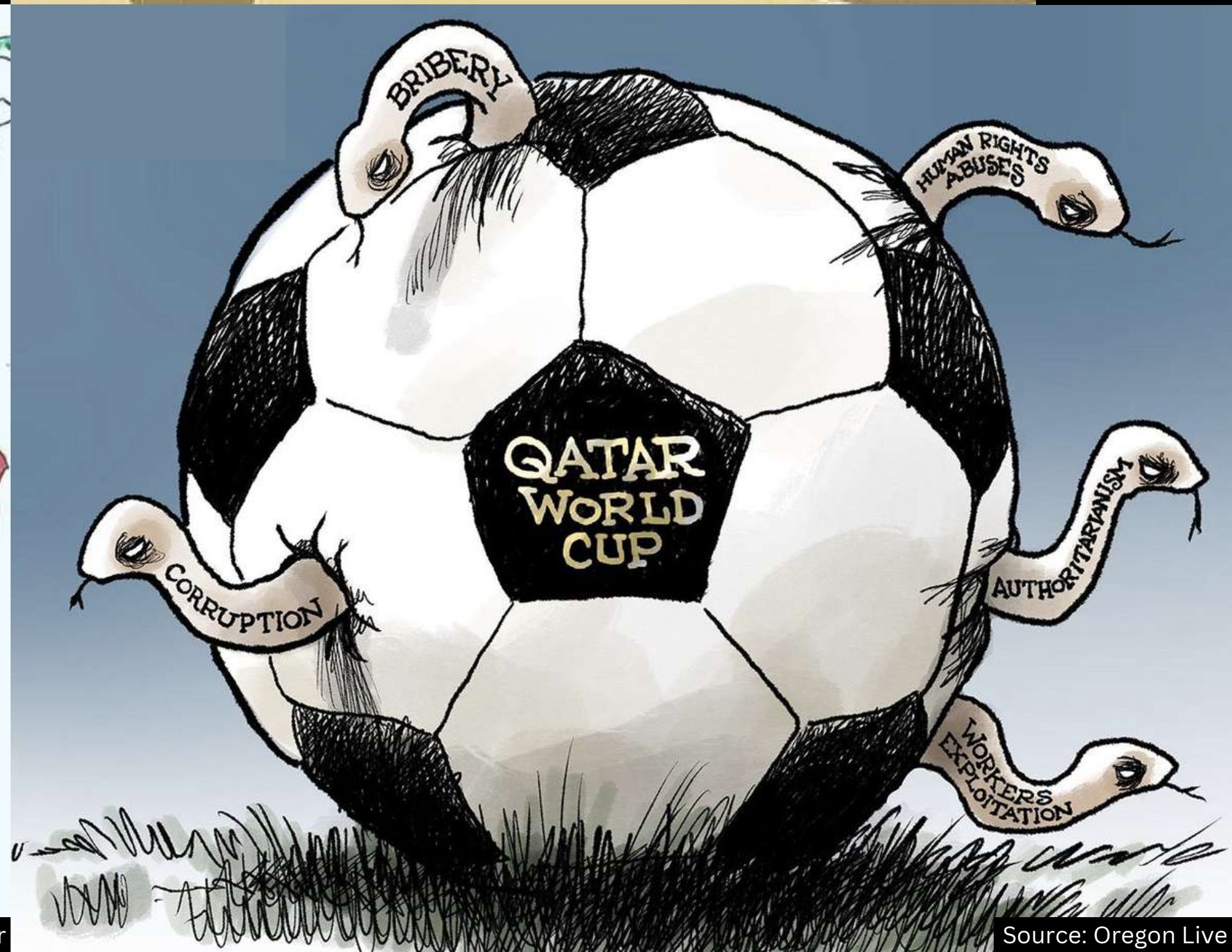
Source: Cartoon Movement



Source: Quora



Source: The Mirror



Source: Oregon Live

investigation into corruption allegations in the tender stage for both the 2018 World Cup in Russia and the 2022 World Cup in Qatar.

In the midst of the upheaval, FIFA's long-serving president, Sepp Blatter, suddenly tendered his departure just days after being re-elected to a fifth term as the ruling body's leader. (Blatter was formally charged in Switzerland with perjury, but he was exonerated in July 2022.) The Justice Department then released fresh evidence in April 2020, claiming that three FIFA representatives received money from unnamed middlemen in order to cast votes for Qatar.

The findings of these investigations have been blended. Despite widespread criminal misconduct within FIFA,

researchers have yet to find hard evidence trying to prove that Qatari officials tried to bribe FIFA authorities, and Qatari authorities have maintained their denial of any malfeasance. Whether corrupt or not, FIFA's selection of Qatar appears to be self-serving: going to host the contest in the Middle East allows FIFA to broaden its share of the market in the geographical area, and Qatar's strong oligarchs are appealing business associates for FIFA's new endeavors.

Notwithstanding, the rash of prosecutions, accusations, and inquests has severely eroded public trust in FIFA and its Qatari hosts. Even FIFA President Sepp Blatter, who resigned in 2015 and was impeached, recently stated that the choice of Qatar was a mistake. While revealing that he had voted for the United States,

he said hosting the 2022 World Cup in the US after the 2018 edition in Russia was the best option available. He also mentioned that in this case, FIFA could have balanced the geopolitics of the world. However, the committee chose the Gulf nation, and despite all the corruption reports, Qatar got away with it.

But football lives in the hearts of its players and supporters, and they didn't let everything go unnoticed. While many fan organisations held protests against FIFA for entering the World Cup, many participating teams raised their voice against human rights violations and the freedom-limiting norms of Qatar. While the German football team lined up with human rights on their jerseys at the start of their world cup qualifier match, Denmark



went into the world cup with their jerseys shadowed to show support for victims of human rights violations during stadium construction. The Australian national team released a video showing their support for the victims and raising concerns regarding the insecurities of fans. Human rights organisations around the world have appealed

to FIFA to announce a relief fund for the affected migrant workers equal to the prize money of the World Cup, i.e., \$440 million. Although a lot of fans went to the World Cup and cheered for their favourite teams, we should all have a corner of our hearts reserved for what people went through while building those miracles. While we rejoice with

the winners, there are families who are still mourning the loss of a loved one. As the probe continues over the decision, along with hoping for justice for those behind the scenes of the greatest sports carnival, let's do our bit and keep them alive in our memories. The glittering show didn't come cheap. ■



Source: Cartoon Movement



Source: RNZ





# IS THE RELATIONSHIP WORKING OUT?

*By Timothy Samuel*

"India, that is Bharat, shall be a Union of states - the magical words that give a start to Article 1(1) of the Indian constitution."

Though the terminology 'federalism' is absent from these lines, these words invoke the spirit of federalism in the nation.

Before diving deeper, it is pivotal to note that India fits into a quasi-federal structure of a government, which, as it sounds, is different from a federal government where powers are split up between the Centre and the states. This also shows that the Indian government combines features of the workings of both the federal and unitary governments.

The phrase 'union of states' is easier said than realized. Myriad instances exist to prove otherwise. Center-state relations since 1947, have been ugly enough to harass the spirit of federalism in the country. This gets more evident when there are different governments at the Centre and in the states. The Center's relationship with the State is critical to federalism, the foundation of our democracy, and what holds the country together. The law of the land, the Constitution, is the torch that lights the path the nation treads on. This subject resonates only too well with the current uncertain times when federalism is in considerable turmoil in India. More than ever now, our democracy is engulfed by problems of disharmony between the Centre

and a select few states. Lately, the friction between these two entities has only intensified owing to several reasons. Major events that created friction include-

- The imposition of Hindi.
- The GST tax system which leaves very little in the hands of the states.
- The office of the unelected Governor and its interruptions in the elected administration of the states.
- Extra-constitutional commands from Delhi and the alleged practise of authoritarianism.

## Hindi Imposition

The recent statements of national leaders about making Hindi mandatory across the country irrespective of an individual's choice and its possible use cases, set the cat among the pigeons, spurring a series of debates nationwide. Without surprise, opposition echoed from the south too, particularly the Tamils, who spearheaded one such resistance back during the framing of the Constitution.

Enraged by this affront, Tamil Nadu Finance Minister Dr. P. Thiagarajan criticised it as pure language chauvinism that made no sense. Adding that Hindi was not intrinsic even to at least 60-70% of the country, he backed himself with strong statistical and economic arguments. KT Rama Rao, IT Minister, Telangana, followed the cue and strengthened the state's disagreement with the

Center in this matter. Kerala and West Bengal also usurped their rightful entitlement.

Language is an extremely important ingredient in any culture. It was on this basis that states were divided and the method yielded perfect success. Any attempt to impose or thrust down the throat a language displays weakness and reeks of the tactic of populism. It hurts the cultural feelings of the victim and attacks their identity of which mother tongue is an important component. The diversity of our nation in every possible aspect has to be diligently protected; failing which, the fabric of society can be torn apart.

## Governors vs. States

The episodes unfolding in various states of the country have raised another set of claims over the central government's possible attempt to indirectly taste authority over a few states through the office of the governor since a firm foothold couldn't be gained through an electoral breakthrough. This again includes a large chunk of the south - Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Telangana and Puducherry. Also on this list are West Bengal and Maharashtra. Fear looms because history is not short of instances where Governors have overthrown state governments and installed new ones in their place.



Having lost 25 lives to online card games, the Tamil Nadu government was desperate to ban them though en route, the Governor stood as an obstacle, delaying the clearing of the Bill. In addition, Kerala and Telangana demand the removal of the governor from the position of Chancellor of Universities. All these stories spiral into one question - the relevance of the office of the governor in state politics.

### Financial Administration

The GST tax system, besides all the good it has done, seems to bring back less to the states. Over this story, a few states' refusal to cut taxes when the Center asked them to only fueled animosity between them. States argued that they were conferred separate administrative powers by the Constitution and didn't have to be schooled on how to run the government, especially when they delivered better economic results in comparison with the Centre.

The finance minister of Tamil Nadu said that this reminded him of the old political adage, "Where I stand depends on where I sit." He set the Prime Minister, Mr. Modi, as the perfect example for this, who advocated maximum power to himself as the Chief Minister of Gujarat, being the biggest proponent of state rights, and now finds himself contradicting it. He condemned the Centre for being extra-constitutional and authoritarian in its dealings with the states. This was a strong vilification .

### Conclusion

The instances recorded above should not mislead one to include that these are problems of the non-BJP-ruled states. It is only one of the reasons for the disharmony, but there are other states on the list too. Gujarat too refused to cut taxes when it was asked to. Centralization of power hurts all states equally. Our democracy awaits recovery. Broken pieces

must be reattached, and torn fragments must be knitted back together. Decentralisation of power is the need of the hour . The Constitution must be allowed to have its way. May the premises drop soon. ■



**How can Centre enjoy Veto powers? Federalism means We Two powers.**

Source- Times of India



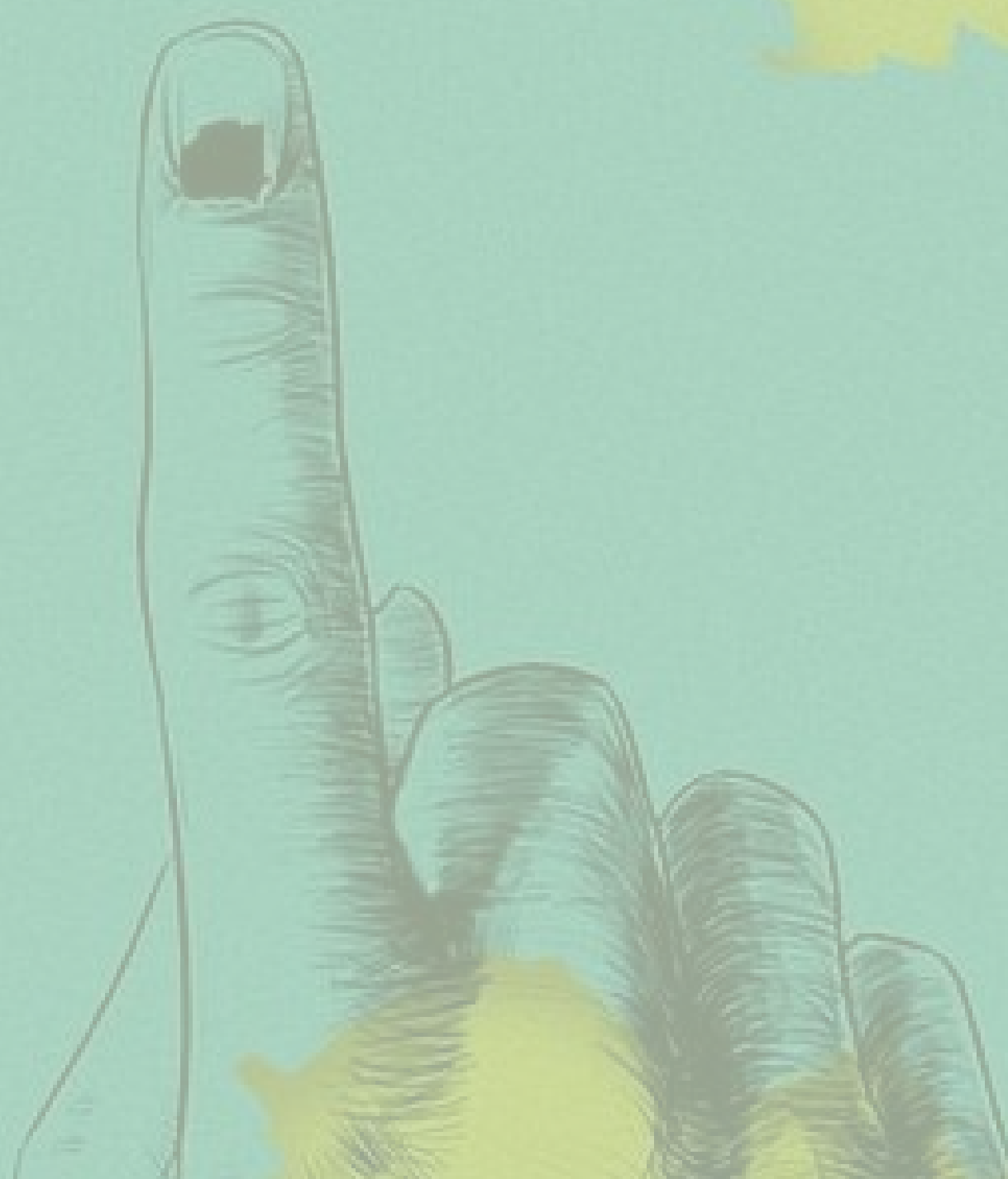
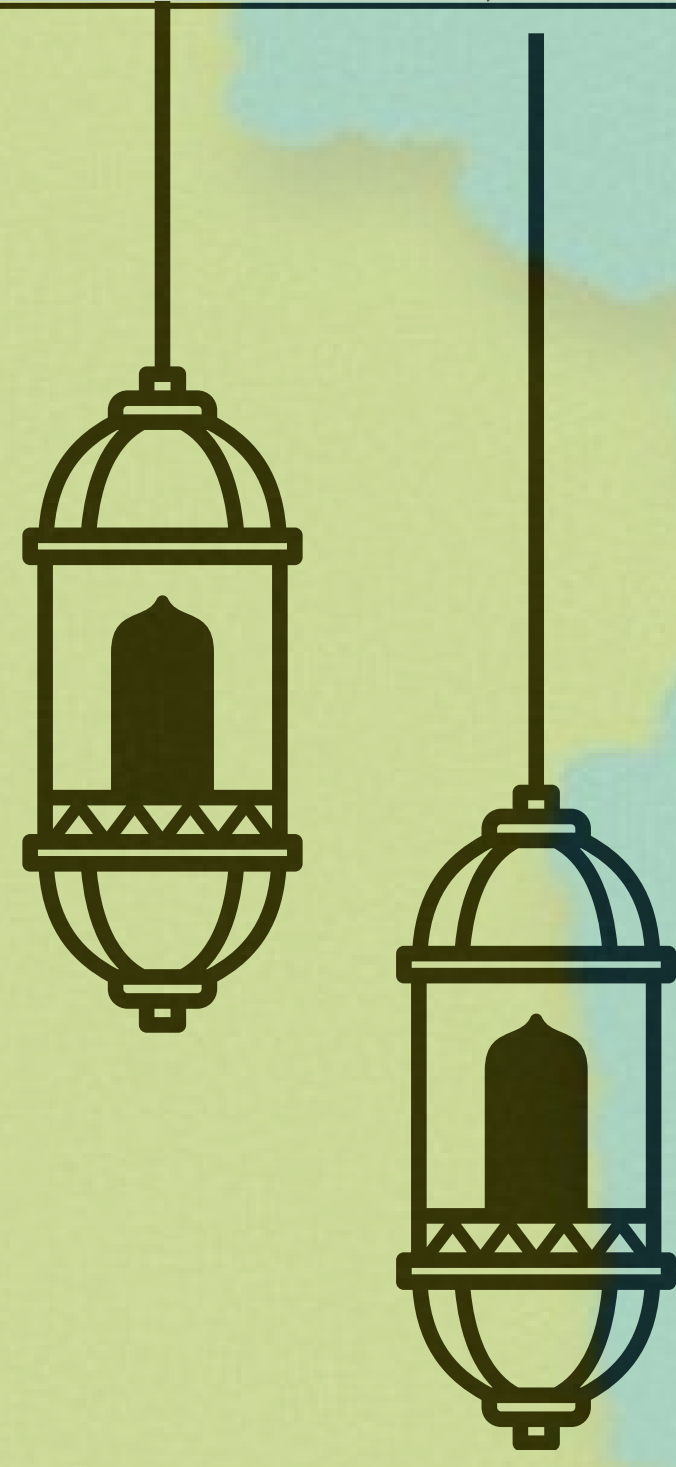


# DELIMITATION, ELECTIONS AND CHANGING POLITICS IN JAMMU & KASHMIR

*By Abhay Pratap Singh*







**T**he Jammu and Kashmir Reorganisation bill was enacted by the Council of States on August 5, 2019, bifurcating the former state of Jammu and Kashmir into two Union Territories- Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh. More than two years after the bifurcation, the Delimitation Commission established under the terms of the Jammu and Kashmir Reorganisation Act of 2019 added six new legislative seats for Jammu and one for Kashmir in its report, which drew conflicting opinions from various stakeholders in Indian politics.

The newly redrawn constituencies in the Union Territories of Jammu and Kashmir following a highly contentious delimitation procedure are being perceived as the first step toward establishing an election process in the valley.

Prior to the abrogation of Article 370, which granted J&K a special status, the Jammu and Kashmir Constitution and the Jammu and Kashmir Representation of the People Act, 1957 were used to

delimit Assembly seats. The most recent delimitation exercise in Jammu and Kashmir was in 1995, based on the 1981 Census. Thereafter, the Jammu and Kashmir Assembly approved legislation in 2001 to halt the delimitation process until 2026. Meanwhile, the delimitation of seats in Lok Sabha have been dictated by the Indian Constitution.

### *The Jammu and Kashmir Delimitation Commission*

The delimitation commission was established on March 6, 2020 and brought out its report on May 5, 2022. According to which, first, the number of seats in Jammu were increased from 37 to 43, while the number of seats in Kashmir increased from 46 to 47, which subsequently increased the overall number of assembly seats in the Union Territory from 83 to 90. Second, it suggested that at least two Kashmiri Pandits be appointed to the Legislative Assembly. Fourth, the Commission suggested that the government consider nominating displaced people from Pakistan-

occupied Jammu and Kashmir to the Assembly. In its final order, the Commission observed that the Jammu and Kashmir region will be considered as one single Union Territory and merged Rajouri and Poonch (from the erstwhile Jammu division) with the Anantnag constituency. This new constituency was renamed as Kishtwar-Rajouri. Considering the public sentiment, the Commission declared to rename 13 constituencies. The concluding order of the Delimitation Commission holds a lot of political significance.





## Disagreements and Controversies

Critics have questioned the very establishment of the commission itself. As expected, Kashmir's political parties opposed its results. Though they had raised critical queries on the commission's draft during its consultation phase, most of their concerns were not addressed. The administration argued that with the bifurcation of the state, fresh delimitation was indeed necessary, and elections could only be held under the Jammu and Kashmir Reorganisation Act, 2019.

The decision placed the Valley's regional political parties in a fix.

Four political parties of state were in the Supreme Court of India challenging the act. If they cooperated with the delimitation commission, they would be seen as tacitly watering down their court challenge. If they did not cooperate, they risked their concerns being ignored. They raised questions inquiring why even after the abrogation of the special status of Jammu and Kashmir, it is the only one to go through delimitation when the process has been frozen for the rest of the country till 2026. The central question of why Jammu has gained six Assembly seats and the Valley only one was brushed under general remarks on methodology with no explanation of how that methodology was applied.

The justification by the administration does not answer the question about the inequitable distribution of seats with Jammu Province having more seats relative to

its population than the Valley does, with a differential of as much as 20,000 people per seat.

Nor does it explain why Jammu's Muslim-majority seats now comprise less than a quarter of the province's total seats, though Muslims comprise over a third of the province's population. It is viewed as a very politically calculated move to increase BJP's foothold in the UT, by the critics. In the meantime, with the redrawn constituencies now notified, there is no reason for the Election Commission to delay announcing dates for the long overdue Assembly election in Jammu and Kashmir. However unhappy Valley political parties might be, they will have no choice but to participate. The former State desperately needs an elected leadership after having been under the administration of non-local and inimical bureaucrats for four years.



Also the proposal to nominate two Kashmiri migrants raises questions about the absence of the mention of West Pakistani refugees and the Pandits in the valley.

## Government's Justification for the Commission

The Election Commission of India and the Home Ministry have said unequivocally before the Supreme Court that redrawing the seats in Jammu and Kashmir through the official gazette following the repeal of Article 370 has acquired 'force of law.' This was in response to a petition filed by two Srinagar residents against the formation of a boundary commission on March 6, 2020.

In this case, the petitioners contended that **increasing the number of assembly seats in Jammu and Kashmir from 107 to 114 violated Indian constitutional law.** They stated that since the abrogation of article 370 was supposed to unite the Jammu and Kashmir with the Republic of India and achieve the goal of 'One Nation One Constitution', then the formation of a delimitation commission would defeat this goal, because according to article 170 the delimitation process is not to be carried out in the country until 2026. So **the delimitation of the Jammu and Kashmir constituencies would single out the state of Jammu and Kashmir from the rest of India.**

In response to these claims the Election Commission of India and Home Ministry responded that the petitioners **that the decision for the formation of the delimitation commission lies under the central government's authority to form, fix the scope and tenure of delimitation commission under section 3 of the Delimitation Act of 2002, which is a 'special legislation'.**



In regards to the increase in assembly seats the election commission of India and the government justified that the delimitation commission was already notified in the 5th May, 2022 notification, after which there were public sittings in the union territory to allow people to give suggestions to the delimitation commission, following which a delimitation order had already been brought into effect on May 20th, 2022 and once the order has gained finality by publication in the Gazette the delimitation order cannot be re-agitated in a court.

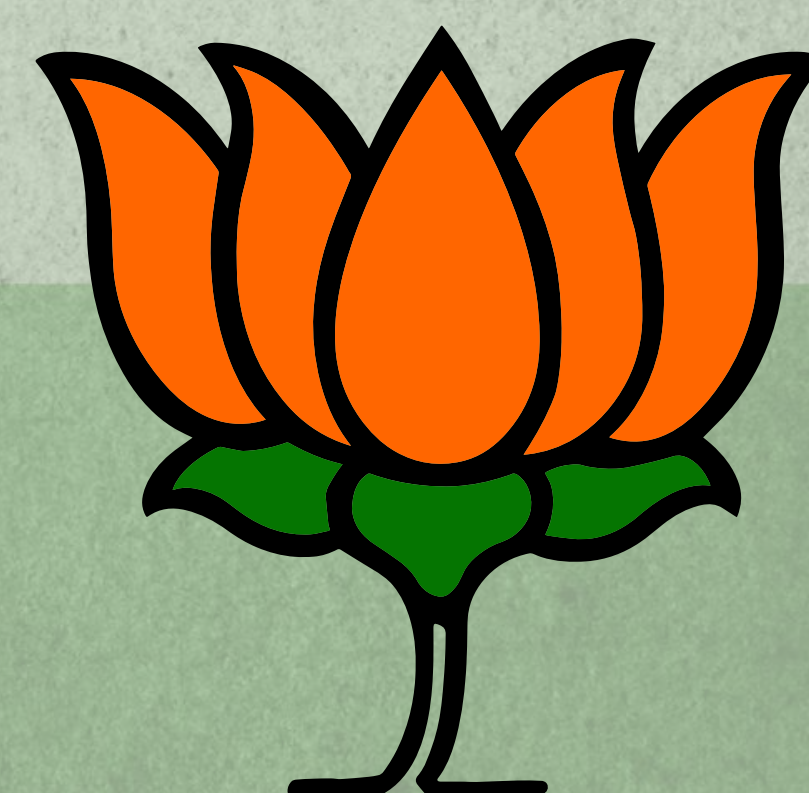
### *The revising of electoral lists*

On August 17, the J&K Chief Electoral Officer, Hirdesh Kumar, announced that anyone “who is living ordinarily in J&K” can avail the opportunity to get enlisted as a voter in the Union Territory in accordance with the provisions of the Representation of the People Act.

He also stated that a great number of people who were not enlisted in the previous elections as voters can now be included as well, an estimated 20 to 25 lakh voters would be added to the list. The senior bureaucrat also mentioned that now the **personnel of the armed forces which have been posted within the state of Jammu and Kashmir can become voters too in the new electoral list**, this though has been lauded by the nationalists as a way to provide armed forces a means of representation, on the other hand some also suggest dissatisfaction on the part of certain people which feel that the armed forces are the agents of the Indian government and not permanent residents. They feel that this might infringe upon the rights of the native residents in electing the candidate best suited for them.

### **Conclusion**

Whatever the situation, the aim is to have a peaceful Jammu and Kashmir, however, this will only happen if the state is granted its own leadership without intervention from higher authorities. The delimitation commission's findings have been strongly contested by local authorities, who, whether they accept it or not, are critical to the state's government's functioning. One reasonable solution is to organise timely and transparent elections, which, though difficult, seems the only feasible solution. But the question arises, how can it be possible without constituency delimitation? The answer to this would be to **organise elections on the basis of pre-existing constituencies and then present the commission's recommendation to the new legislature;** the recommendations of the same will be highly democratic and in favour of the citizens of the state. ■



KASHMIR



# TURNING OF THE TIDE: A GEOPOLITICAL QUANDARY FOR THE WEST

*By Ainesh Dey*

**I**t is no secret today that the world has experienced profound geopolitical implications, on the larger pretext of a drastic change in international equilibrium. Gone are the days of the Cold War, tinged with the hegemonic influence of the United States and its European allies, popularly referred to as the “West”, to rest in the annals of history for time immemorial, thereby leading to a significant strategic polarisation of world [1] [2] [3] politics as evident in the realities of contemporary international order evoking the need for broadening the concept of balancing. We argue that the international system may not be experiencing the hard balancing of yester years, but that the system exhibits several attempts at soft balancing, as well as limited hard balancing, to varying degrees. The dawn of the 21st Century witnessed a remarkable resurgence of new players, once tamed by the West, as present hallmarks of international order. Touted as the “Eastern Horizons of Power”, the Asian and African subcontinents have carved a niche for themselves in the changing political climate.

The context of the COVID-19 pandemic, which provided the premise for the pronounced role of regional giants like China being the epicentre, and the effort to resort to newer forms of diplomacy, more specifically the aspect of “vaccine diplomacy”, adopted by Asian powers like India, have shaken the very foundations of the existing notion of unipolarity. Therefore the proposition of dramatic shift of the once puissant Western sphere of influence, is highly pertinent.



## The Decline of the West :The Historical Rhetoric and Present Implications

Joseph Nye, an American intellectual, writing in 2010 stated that “ the rise and decline of nations has always played a significant role in a more historical assessment of

international relations”, hinting towards the need to understand the very subtle nuances of the twin processes of rise and fall. Taking into account this very context, it is imperative to delve into the past in order to relate to the present.

The premises of the World Wars and the Cold War, might have led to an institutionalisation of international order skewed towards the United States and the Soviet Union. However, little did one know that the very demise of the USSR in 1991, and the consequent emergence of the very notion of “Unipolarity”, was to place the West in a perilous position.

Despite instances of unsolicited Western interference during the Gulf War in the 1990s, unfolding of conflicts in Haiti, Zaire and Yugoslavia, the latter being eminent for the “Bulldozer Revolution”, that overthrew former President Milosevic, a crumbling reputation of the West and



America's notion of "Pax Americana", was to become even more evident. Moreover, failure of diplomacy, with regard to the situation in Afghanistan, that continues even to this day, especially in the context of the return of the "Taliban" regime, and the consequent consolidation of global terrorism, commencing from the 9/11 attacks in the US, raised unfavourable public uproar and the consequent diminishing of the role of the West in global politics, thereby propelling her to complete geopolitical conundrum.

### The Rise of Asia: An overview of the gradual implications

Surveys conducted by the Pew Research Centre in 2011, showed that the percentage of individuals who believed that China would replace the US as the major global power, rose from 40% to 49%. Moreover, the case otherwise, in favour of the US, fell from 44% to 36% , resembling the very foundations of a possible anti-western outlook, especially after 2011, as suggested by the researchers, given the context of the 2008 financial crisis.

However, instances of China not being the sole economic superpower, have also been manifested. Extensive research conducted, shows that public opinion in countries like Mexico, Poland and Britain is not totally skewed towards the Chinese perspective and the support of the same fell to 37% in 2013.

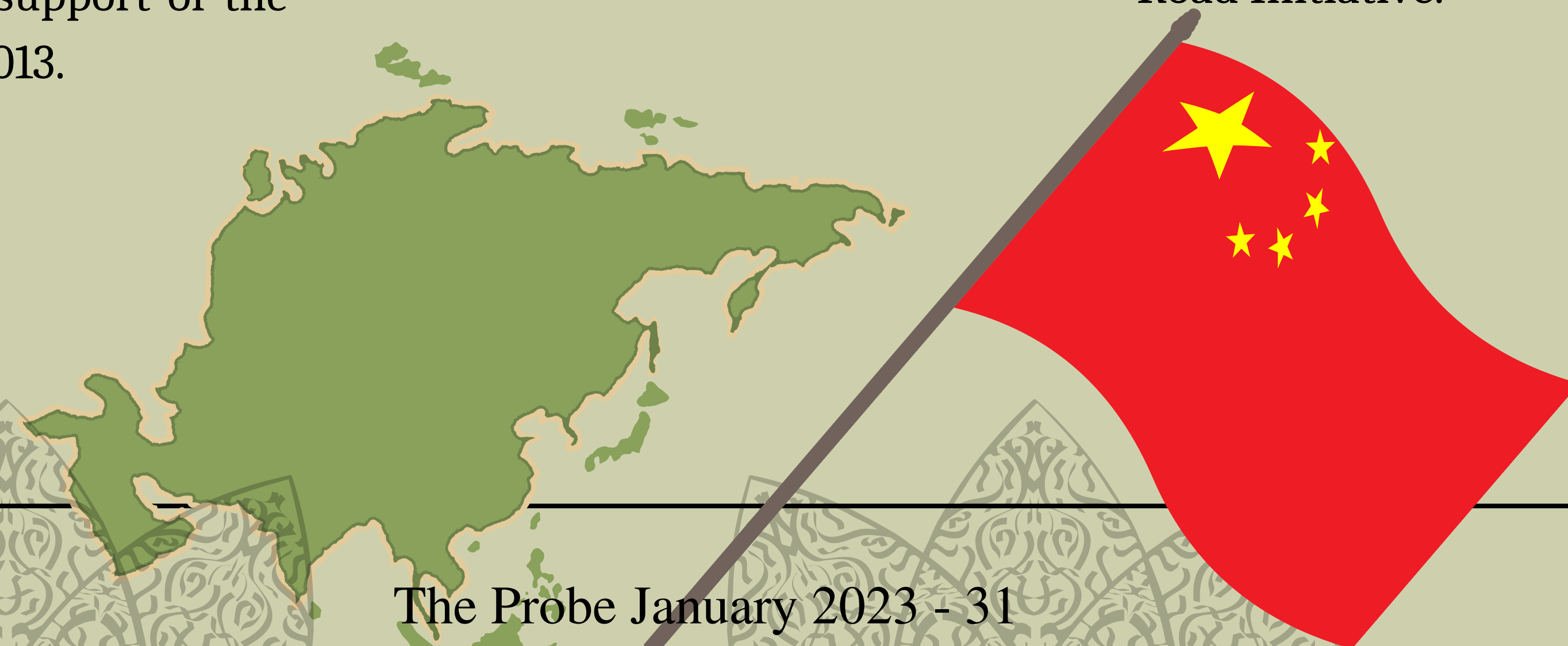
On the contrary, the emerging Asian economies of India[1], Singapore and South Korea. Furthermore, the rise of regional alliances such as the ASEAN has also portrayed a sense of multipolarity and equal division, rather than excess economic monopoly. The more recent phenomenon of politico-economic globalisation, therefore remains inclusive of trends where more and more states develop their respective sets of policies and schemes, bearing in mind the larger strategic interests.

In light of a new political order, there is a demand for a blend of international welfare and new models of supranational government and coordination of the overall global processes placed on the pedestal of ideological pluralism, as pointed out by eminent political scientist Nikitas Kostantinidis in his research paper entitled "The effects on supranational government on system polarisation", when he states that " Advanced liberal democracies have entered a period of political turbulence where the processes of "ideological" pluralism and supranational integration are affecting the core of domestic government and politics by creating deep fissures in cabinets, parties, and society at large. Japan isn't an emerging economy. Moreover, it has been stagnant for the last 3 decades. Also, it has been a close ally of the US since WW2, so how does it pose a threat to the Western hegemony?

### Pronounced Chinese Hegemony and Prospective Public Opinion

The post-Cold War international system, dominated by the United States, has been shaken by the relative downturn of the US economy and the simultaneous rise of China. China is rapidly emerging as a serious contender for America's dominance of the Indo-Pacific. What is noticeable is the absence of an intense balance of power politics in the form of formal military alliances among the states in the region, unlike state behaviour during the Cold War era. Countries are still hedging as their strategic responses towards each other evolve.

We argue that the key factor explaining the absence of intense hard balancing is the dearth of existential threat that either China or its potential adversaries feel up till now. The presence of two related critical factors largely precludes existential threats, and thus hard balancing military coalitions, formed by or against China. The first is the deepened economic interdependence. China has built with the potential balancers, in particular, the United States, Japan and India, in the globalisation era. The second is the grand strategy of China, in particular, the peaceful rise/development and infrastructure-oriented Belt and Road Initiative.





Any radical changes in these two conditions leading to existential threats by the key states could propel the emergence of hard-balancing coalitions.

More interesting still is the relative rise of China yet absence so far of a hard balancing military alliance against it like that during the Cold War era that the the Soviet Union experienced from the West, and vice versa. We argue that there are two main reasons why the powers affected by China's rise are not pushing in the hard-balancing direction.

The opinion of China in the US and other advanced economies has "turned precipitously more negative" since President Xi Jinping took office in 2013 and global attitudes towards the Chinese leader have become increasingly negative in recent years, according to a new analysis by Pew Research Center.



The spring of 2014, about a year after Xi Jinping took office, attitudes were "already quite negative", with people in most places surveyed by Pew feeling more negatively than positively about the new president. "Views of the Chinese president turned more negative between 2019 and 2020. By 2022, majorities in all but two advanced economies surveyed had little to no confidence in his approach to world affairs," Pew said.

Among the key findings of the analysis are that there is a "widespread and long-held sense that China's power and influence on the world stage is growing", widespread concerns remain about China's military, and the global perception that China does not respect human rights, is at or near historic highs in many places studied in 2021.

As of 2022, a median of 66% across 19 countries say China's influence around the world has recently been getting stronger, including seven-in-ten or more in Australia, Italy, Israel, Greece and the Netherlands. Alongside its growing influence, there is a sense that China is a "growing threat".

A median of 72% across 19 countries surveyed described China's military power as a "serious problem", including 37% that call it a "very serious problem" for their country.

## The Present Day Scenario:

The year 2022, has witnessed a greater sequence of events that has led to a significant change in strategic perception. Against the backdrop of the pandemic, the subsequent unfolding of the Russo - Ukrainian and most importantly, the Taliban takeover of Afghanistan, eyebrows have been raised, and incidents of political blame game have surfaced.

Certainly with the renewed tensions and the relative prevalence of an atmosphere of a "Second Cold War", the geopolitical landscape has seen a pronounced disbalance in the geopolitical equilibrium. Today, a new power structure of international law is emerging with some basic characteristics. First, power is diffused—a relatively large number of states are amassing significant power and lastly, power is disaggregated—different states have relative advantages in different types of power (military power, economic power, and soft power) that have variable effectiveness in different areas of law.

The re-emergence of great-power competition has made balancing a significant foreign policy initiative for all the major powers in the Indo-Pacific. According to Stephen Walt, there are two types of balancing that states conduct:

- balancing with internal effort
- balancing with external effort.





The concept of internal balancing refers to increasing the relative power of a state by increasing its own military capabilities, enhancing economic growth, and focusing on policies that will increase its relative power. External balancing, on the other hand, increases the relative power by forging alliances against the targeted nation.

With the anarchic nature of world politics, the security of a nation should be guaranteed by itself, given that today's ally might be tomorrow's competitor. Therefore, this leads nations to take a more dynamic approach in mixing internal and external balancing to safeguard their security.

With India surpassing the United Kingdom on certain economic parameters and the continued influence of China and Japan along with the broader levels of dialogue at regional organisations such as the SCO, BIMSTEC and the aforementioned ASEAN and MERCOSUR, it could be said that the 21st Century is steadily moving towards decreased significance of Western interests, and in a nutshell, a policy of de-Westernisation, altogether. ■





## Book Review

# ELECTIONS IN INDIA: AN OVERVIEW BY SANJAY KUMAR

Published on December 28, 2021 by Routledge India

*By Mili Dhiman*



**T**his book is written by Sanjay Kumar. He is Professor at the Centre for the Study of Developing Societies [CSDS] New Delhi, India. This book examines the patterns and trends of voting in Indian elections since 1952, the year of the country's first free and fair elections. It participates in discussions about the nature of India's multi-party electoral system and how it affects how Indian voters cast their ballots. The book analyses the history and evolution of the nation's electoral institutions as

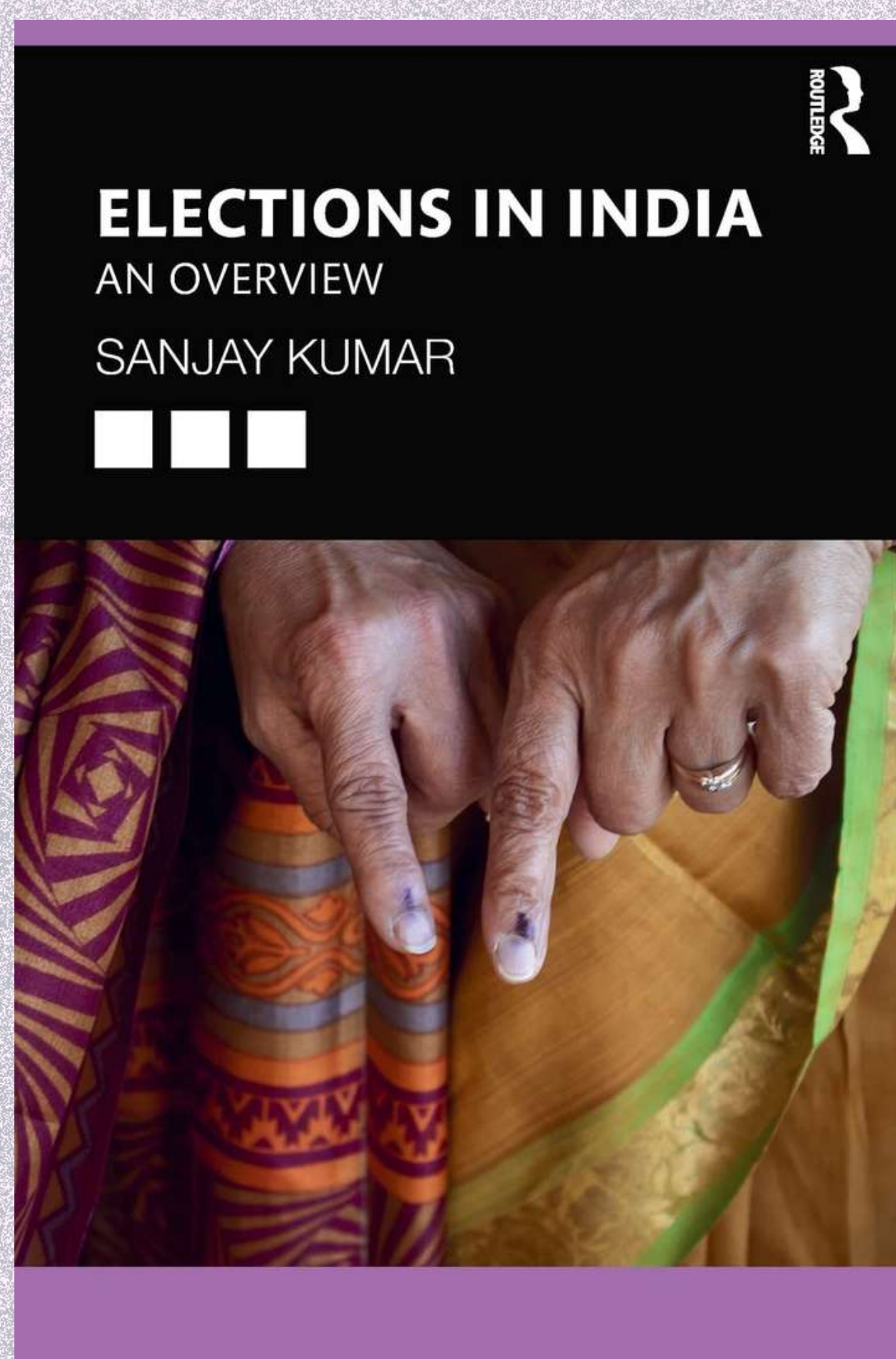
well as the difficulties and safeguards for holding fair elections in the greatest democracy in the world using comprehensive empirical data from the state and national elections. The relationship between election results and trends in voter turnout for local and federal elections is examined by the author.

He examines voting trends over the past seven decades, patterns of involvement by disadvantaged groups, and trends among the younger population and the

decreasing disparity in women's voting participation. The role of money, the criminalization of electoral politics, and its impact on Indian elections are all topics covered in the book. It also focuses on the problem of erroneous electoral constituency delineation and how it affects political representation. This book will be a required read for academics and researchers working in the fields of political studies, political sociology, public administration and governance, and South Asian studies because it is timely and thorough. Journalists



and think tanks interested in the discussions surrounding India's elections will also find it informative. It could also be used as a manual for individuals who are interested in the specifics of Indian elections. Any functioning democracy relies on regular elections to function. India has successfully staged multiple elections in various states to elect state governments as well as 17 elections to choose the national government since gaining independence. Although there may have been some concerns regarding the fairness and freedom of these elections among some voters, overall, most of these elections were run by the Election Commission of India. The fact that elections over the past seven decades have led to multiple changes in government at the national and state levels without much opposition is a key proof that elections are seen as free and fair. The book introduces the readers to the Indian electoral system and the functioning of the ECI, which is an independent body responsible for holding elections in India. The seven-decade long journey of Indian elections has witnessed a participatory upsurge, turnout having increased both at the national level and in state assembly elections. There are debates about the impact of turnout on the electoral outcome and victory margins. While these are some of the current issues that Indian voters, legislators, and analysts are concerned about, there are some other issues that are of more importance, namely the growing influence of money and the criminalization of elections in India.



This book makes an effort to evaluate each of these trends using data collected throughout time. A suggestion to hold the Lok Sabha and state assembly elections simultaneously is one of the concerns that will soon be addressed. The topic of fresh delimitation, which is anticipated to come up shortly after 2026, may be very divisive; it is already being discussed in relation to the current delimitation being done in Jammu and Kashmir. Many concerns were left unresolved during the previous delimitation, and all of them are likely to come back to haunt the delimitation panel in the coming years. A few chapters in the book attempt to shed some light on these pressing concerns using empirical evidence. India is consistently referred to as the largest democracy in the world on maps of all democratic nations. India is sometimes referred to as having the biggest democracy in the world because of the size and scope of its electorate, which casts ballots to choose its representatives at the national, state, and municipal levels. Elections at these three levels to

to choose the government's representatives involve a tremendous amount of work. Despite the fact that India is still a developing nation, electoral democracy has not only survived but also become stronger over time. The Election Commission of India, the organisation in charge of conducting elections in India, deserves praise for holding free and fair elections. With the use of its authority over the last few decades, the ECI has been able to hold elections that were somewhat free and fair.

Additionally, it has made sure that the election-related regulations outlined in the Representation of the People Act, 1951, are followed.

It is true that India has painted a picture of a successfully operating democracy during the past few decades, yet this functioning of democracy occasionally meets different difficulties. Given the vast number of voters who did not show up to cast their ballots on election day and some of them who were not even registered to vote, there have been discussions on whether India truly represents a vibrant representative democracy. Rural India may not have a problem with voter registration, but there is underrepresentation among the immigrant groups, particularly the immigrants from lower socioeconomic backgrounds. Due to frequent voter movement within cities or between cities for a variety of reasons work and marriage being the most prevalent urban India, particularly large metropolitan cities, also struggles with the issue of a significant





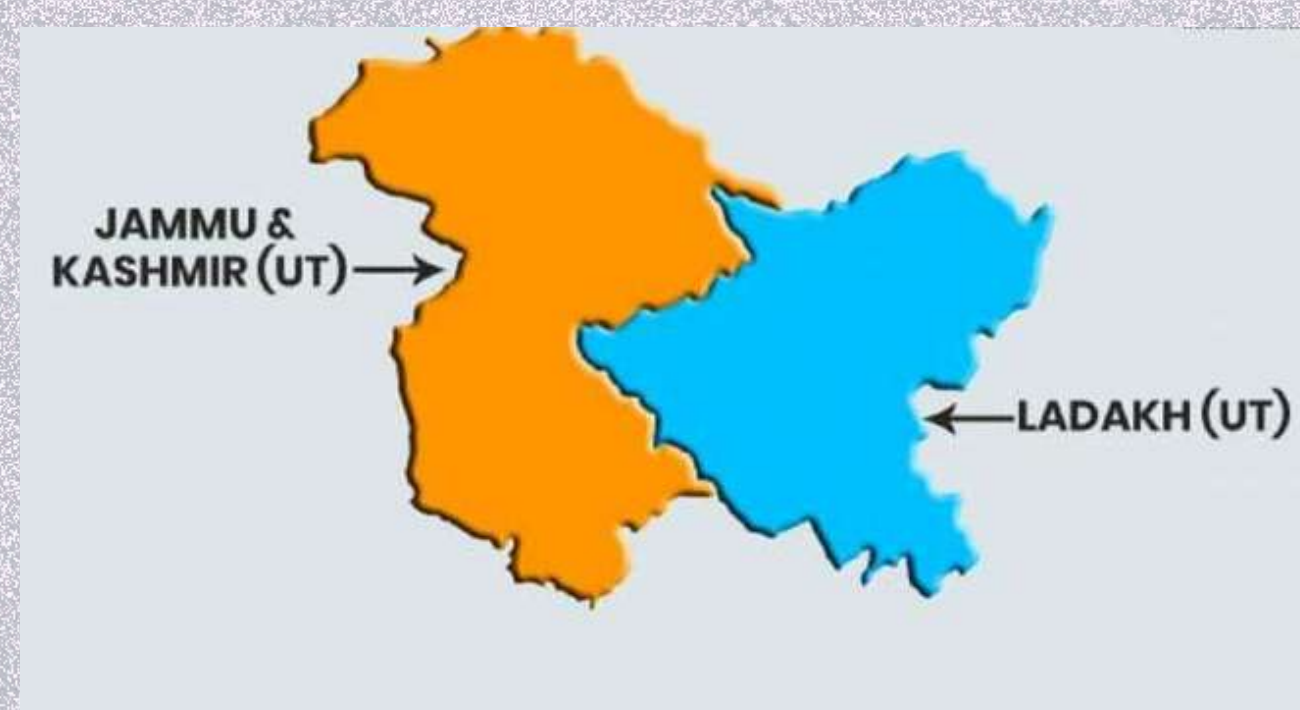
“No proof is necessary; what should matter is simply public opinion.”

number of "ghost votes."

It is remarkable that during the past ten years, voter turnout in Indian elections at all levels Lok Sabha, state assemblies, and elections for local bodies has increased, despite problems with voter registration and the lack of an easy solution to this issue. Election turnout has historically been greater at lower levels of government, with local body elections seeing a higher turnout than state assembly elections. The voter turnout increased significantly in both the Lok Sabha elections of 2014 and 2019, with the 2014 election seeing an increase of nearly 8% over the previous Lok Sabha election. The turnout for the 2019 Lok Sabha election was the highest in the history of all Lok Sabha elections held in India, only slightly higher than the turnout in 2014. These two Lok Sabha elections saw a very significant increase in the number of women and young people who turned out to vote compared to the previous Lok Sabha elections. In addition to Lok Sabha.

The subject of constituency delimitation has come up for discussion in the public sphere

even though the plan to have simultaneous elections for the Lok Sabha and the state assembly is still being discussed. The government has begun the process of a new delimitation in the recently trifurcated Union Territories of Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh, bringing the issue of delimitation into the spotlight even before the 2026 deadline for the nationwide delimitation, which in and of itself would be a difficult task with numerous claims and counter claims and lots of contestations. There is growing worry about what will happen when the delimitation panel is established to redraw the electoral boundaries for Jammu, Srinagar, and Ladakh. Redrawing the assembly constituency boundaries should follow certain guidelines. The majority of these topics are now being discussed without any compelling evidence, as if these discussions adhere to the tenet that



This book, *Elections in India: An Overview*, makes an effort to engage in these discussions on how elections have been conducted in India in the past, the difficulties that currently face Indian elections, and the potential difficulties that may arise in the near future. These evidences originate from the examination of sizable data sets, as well as the outcomes of several Lok Sabha and state assembly elections held in India over the course of several decades collected over the course of two decades by the Centre for the Study of Developing Societies (CSDS) through extensive surveys referred to as "National Election Studies." This book's chapters each feature a story built on data analysis with the intention of entwining one of these debates. While one might be able to find a connection between some of the chapters primarily focusing on electoral participation and its impact on the electoral outcome.

If the analysis offered in the various chapters is limited to just past electoral trends and current emerging patterns, the book would in a sense be incomplete. Discussions regarding various recommendations for what ought to be done or what adjustments appear desired for the Indian elections are still going on. The



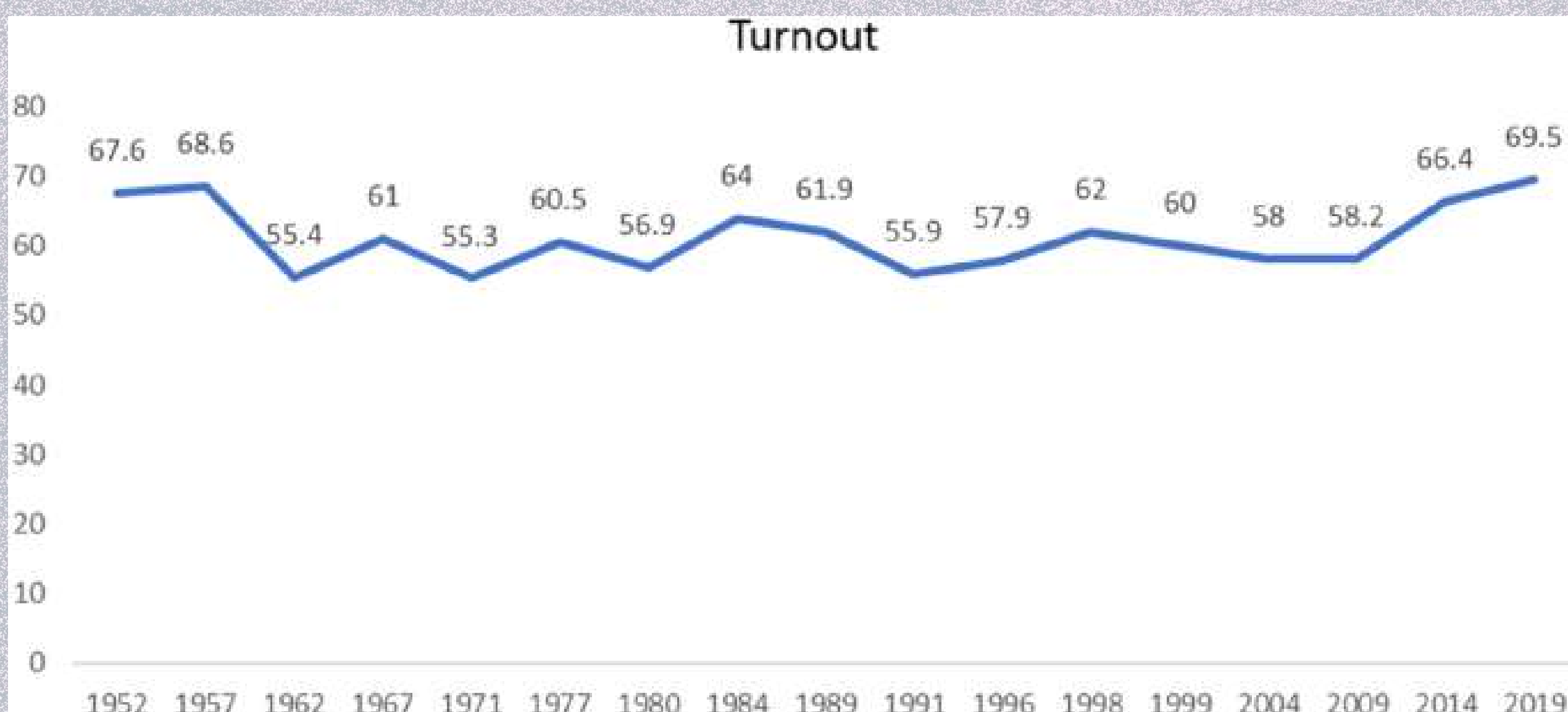
examination of these growing difficulties is covered in a few chapters of the book, and it makes an effort to go beyond generalisations by offering data. One such notion that is currently up for discussion is whether India should move toward hosting simultaneous elections. Those who support holding elections concurrently make the case that doing so will save money. The final chapter of the book is titled "Delimitation," and it addresses a topic that has received attention recently as a result of the government's creation of a commission to redraft the electoral boundaries in Jammu, Srinagar, and Ladakh. The conversation about boundary-related topics has not been very common since delimitation, which should have been done every 10 years after the release of the most recent census data, has not been done regularly because of a number of problems that make delimitation more difficult. Just before the 2009 Lok Sabha elections, the most recent delimitation, which was finished in 2008, was dogged by numerous disputes. Even before the delimitation process started, there were many problems, such as an equal population-to-seat ratio across the nation, with exceptions made for smaller states and states with



hills. The topic of justification and the guiding principles of delimitation has come up again with the creation of a delimitation commission to redrew the borders of the assembly seat in Jammu and Kashmir following the state's partition following the repeal of Article 370. The debate over delimitation may just be just getting started because the next delimitation is scheduled for 2026 and a number of topics that could have caused controversy have been put on hold or tabled until then. When a new delimitation commission is established in 2026 in accordance with current laws, many issues will merge. This chapter makes an effort to examine the problems that are developing from the most recent effort of

arrying out delimitation for Jammu, Kashmir, and Ladakh while also delving deeply into more general concerns about the process of carrying out delimitation and other problems that would undoubtedly surface once the new delimitation commission is established.

On the conclusion I want to say that author gave the very relevant points and arguments towards the election system of india and also gave very brief analysis of recent development in the election system briefly by focusing on 2014 election and he defined the electoral processes has been changed since 1952. Even he discusses the different challenges which has been faced by india but on the contrary he didn't gave any alternative towards the issue, even he didn't give point which make that issue more influential which I think is more relevant in the current world. Although this book is very authentic and knowledgeable to the people who is more inclined towards data and statistics. I want to recommend this book to read. ■





# SCIENCE AND





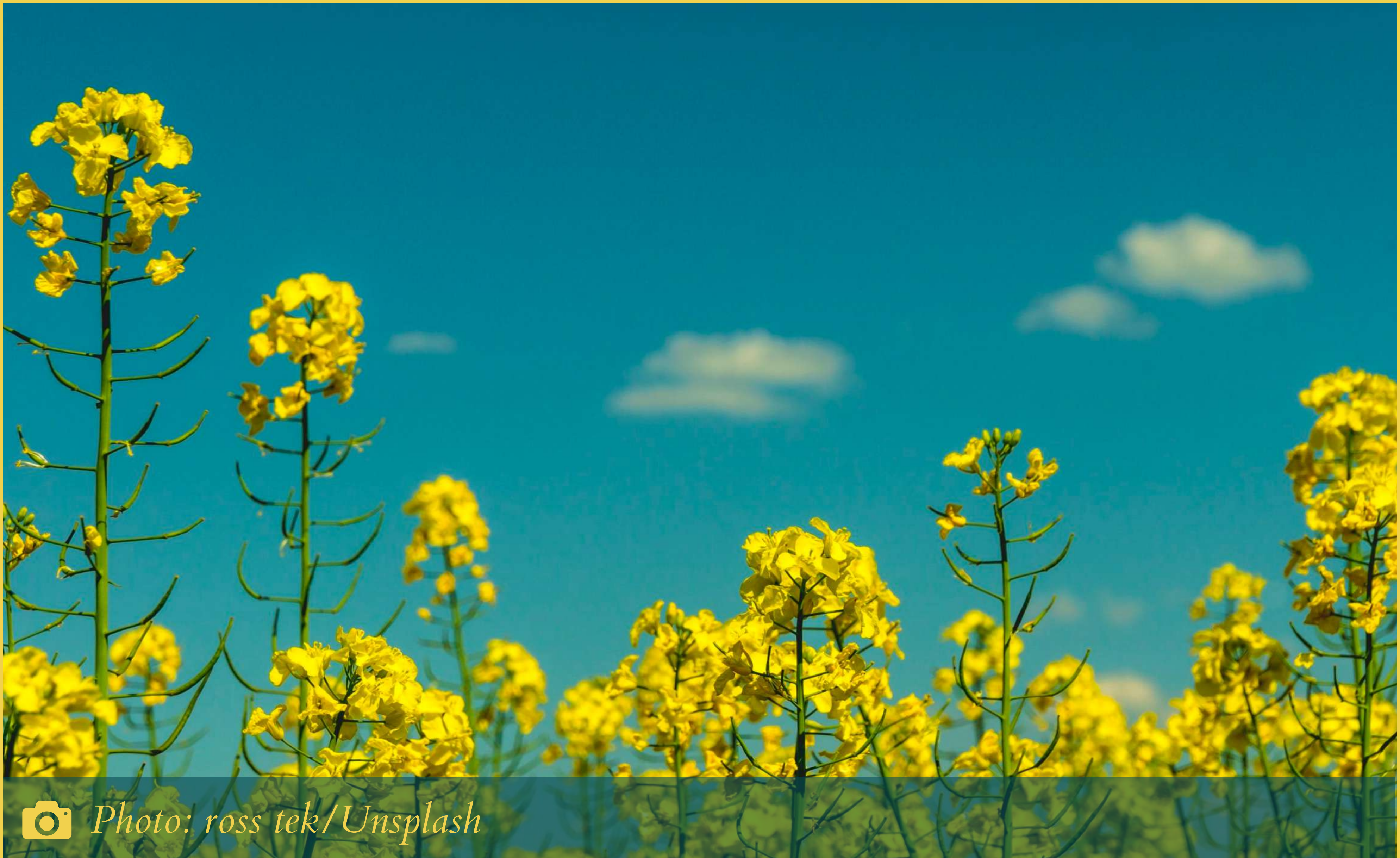
# TECHNOLOGY





# DMH-11 – FROM LAB TO LAND AND EVERYTHING IN BETWEEN

*By Vagmi Singh*



📷 *Photo: ross tek/Unsplash*

**R**ecently, Dhara Mustard Hybrid-11, approved by the Genetic Engineering Appraisal Committee (GEAC), has attracted attention from various stakeholders, i.e., scientists, intellectuals, bureaucrats, environmental activists, NGOs, and political representatives. After facing staunch opposition from multiple organizations, activist Aruna Rodrigues has knocked on the judicial doors.

Taking the plea into consideration, the Supreme Court bench of Justice Dinesh Maheshwari and Justice Sudhanshu Dhaulia asked the Government of India to put a hold on the commercial production of the crop until the final judgment by the court.

Advocate Prashant Bhushan, representing the petitioners, staunchly opposes the government's move. According to Live Law, the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate

Change has submitted an affidavit, stating that the issue lies “within the domain of the executive, aided by scientific and other technical experts” as it is a technical issue.

Moreover, the ministry said that the SC is not competent to inquire into the grant of its environment clearance and the issue lies beyond the limited question of whether an adequate regulatory mechanism governing this field exists and if it does, then whether the government has complied with it.



While we await the judiciary's final judgment, one must critically examine the significance of genetically modified crops, mainly mustard, from a panoramic perspective. Furthermore, how can transgenic technology transform our agricultural sector in the coming years?

After the approval for environmental release from GEAC, which comes under the ambit of the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, the team was set to begin its field trials during the ongoing Rabi season as per the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) guidelines. However, it will inevitably be delayed, considering the current political climate.

The man behind this, Deepak Pental, is a professor in genetics and former vice-chancellor of Delhi University. He has worked with his team for over 11 years on this project.

The hybrid mustard was developed at the Centre for Genetic Manipulation of Crop Plants (CGMCP), South Campus, University of Delhi. The transgenic mustard hybrid DMH-11 uses a barnase and barstar system.

## What are Genetically Modified Crops?

Genetically modified organisms (GMOs) result from recombinant DNA technology that allows for DNA to be transferred from one organism to another (transgenesis) without the genetic transfer limits of species-to-species barriers and with a successful expression of transferred genes in the receiving organism (Gary, 2001).

In simpler words, GM crops are 'biologically engineered' and are commercially made available to fulfill specific purposes, increasing the output manifolds at the forefront. DMH-11 is the first food crop and second genetically modified crop approved by the Government of India in 20 years, Bt cotton being the first GM cash crop in 2002.

In 2017, efforts were made to cultivate GM mustard commercially; however, the ministry and the committee vetoed and recommended restructuring of the regulatory framework for unbiased assessment of GM mustard. The challenge India faces is a dependency on edible oils, which is increasingly in demand.

India, therefore, needs to replicate the benefits it gained by introducing HYV seeds, part of a larger project - the Green Revolution in the 1960s.

The need to introduce a genetically modified crop stems from the food crises, agriculture-related problems such as frequent droughts, primitive irrigation systems, and expensive imports that a country may have to resort to due to a lack of self-sufficiency in the sector.

High levels of hunger, poverty, and malnutrition also affect the same. In recent times, India's rank in Global Hunger Index dropped down from 100th in 2017 to 107th in 2022.

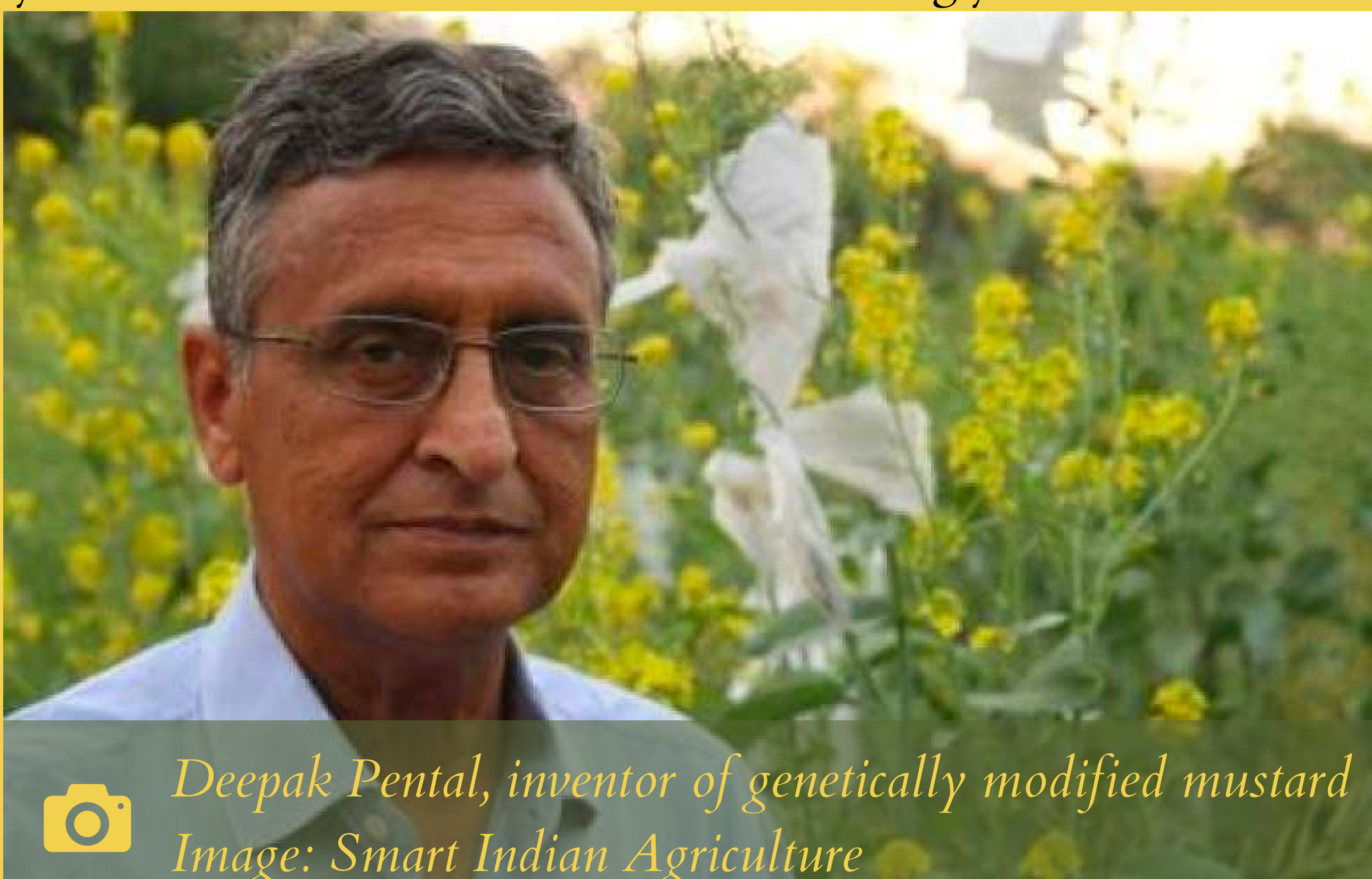
Moreover, over 33 lakh children in India are malnourished as per the data given by the Ministry of Women and Child Development.

## How would its introduction bring in a change?

The mustard seeds produce mustard oil, a product found in most North Indian household.

To meet the demand, India imports around 130 lakh tons from countries across the globe, being dependent on Ukraine and Russia for 70% and 20% of the total import, respectively.

Due to factors like the pandemic and the Russia-Ukraine conflict, its sense of edible oil, including mustard oil, saw a soar to Rs 1.17 lakh crore in the 2020-21 marketing year (November to October) from nearly Rs 72,000 crore in the previous year due to a sharp rise in global prices.



*Deepak Pental, inventor of genetically modified mustard*  
*Image: Smart Indian Agriculture*



While the prices are increasing, it is pragmatic for the government to introduce cost-effective technology, which would help increase production and cater to the demand of billions.

If GM Mustard is given a green signal from the court, it could bring transformational change, particularly in economic growth. Rajasthan is the largest producer of mustard seeds in India, producing 35 lakh tons during the Rabi season of 2021-22, while 85 lakh tons was the country's total production.

The central oil industry and trade organization has forecast a 29% increase in the ongoing Rabi season. However, even after the predicted increase in production, India would still need to rely on imports to meet its demand.

After the introduction of GM mustard, India's output would increase manifolds by 30-35%, said Deepak Pental.

This would also help India to take a plunge and move towards self-reliance, in line with the current objective of Atmanirbhar Bharat. The herbicide-tolerant GM Mustard also comes with greater disease resistance, thereby increasing food security in the much-needed agricultural sector.

Scientists also believe this could be a viable replacement for staple food grains, rice, and wheat, which do not offer weather resistance, the weather being one of the primary and unpredictable factors in the agricultural sector. Apart from these, the biologically engineered mustard has nutritional benefits that the base plant does not provide, which could help India fight hunger and malnutrition.

However, on the downside, the crop has yet to be tested for its impact on honeybees. There is clarity as to whether Bees or other pollinators will visit GM mustard flowers in India.

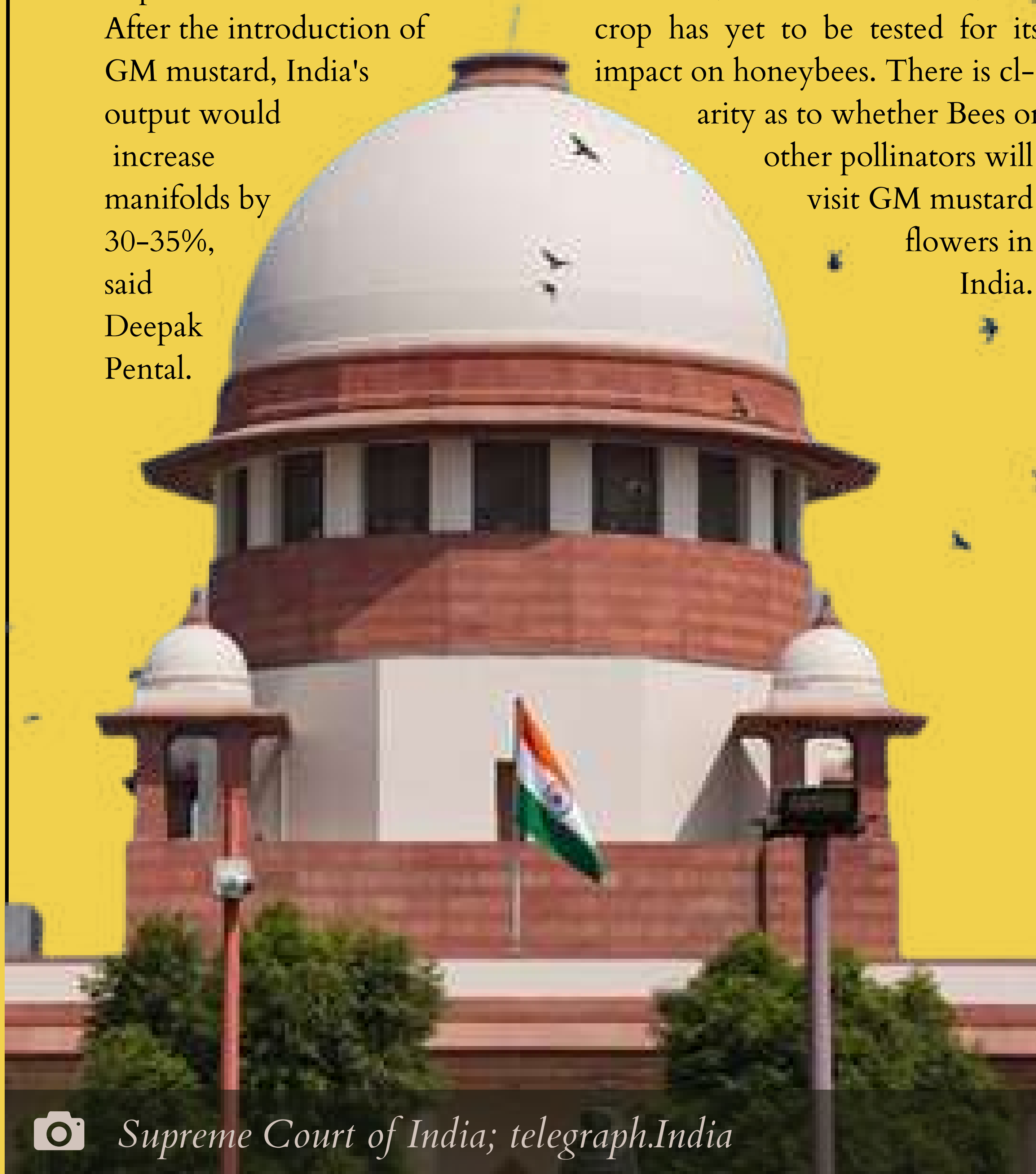
Instead of taking preventive studies, the committee has approved the crop on the condition that its effects on honeybees and other pollinators be undertaken post-release to gather scientific evidence under Indian agro-climatic conditions.

This could prove to be fatal as the destruction would have been done before the community would be able to recognise the problem.

Many including the informal coalition called GM-free India hold resentment towards the crop due to the biohazard dangers that may arise.

Apart from environmental concerns, the commercialisation of the agricultural sector looms large, especially after the farm laws chaos and the widespread distrust of farmers by the government. Therefore, it would be essential for the government to gain farmers' trust before taking a step further.

## WHY HAS THE NEWLY APPROVED DMH-11 BECOME CONTENTIOUS AMONG ITS STAKE-HOLDERS?



Supreme Court of India; telegraph.India



## Conclusion

In the last few years, during his speeches, PM Narendra Modi has reiterated slogans like 'vocal for local' and 'local goes global'. This may be the right opportunity to make them a reality by giving GM mustard seed manufacturing tenders to smaller Indian companies rather than big corporate tycoons.

Before rolling the crop out, a comprehensive policy should be formulated to reduce regional inequality in the agricultural sector across India, reduce production costs, and, most importantly, make the seed affordable to poor farmers by rolling out subsidies in a phased manner. Moreover, there is a pressing need for stringent regulation when it comes to environmental protection.

If the impact on the environment outweighs the profit, then, in the long run, it may cost India more than the current imports. Moreover, smaller clusters could be formed for a nationwide rollout, wherein the administration can keep closer track of its impact on the environment and act accordingly. These smaller clusters can then, in turn, collaborate among themselves to solve problems efficaciously.

It is an excellent opportunity for India to become self-reliant, significantly reduce the gap between the poor and the affluent farmers, and improve administrative management. However, this could happen only when execution is done with utmost sincerity. ■

## MUST READS

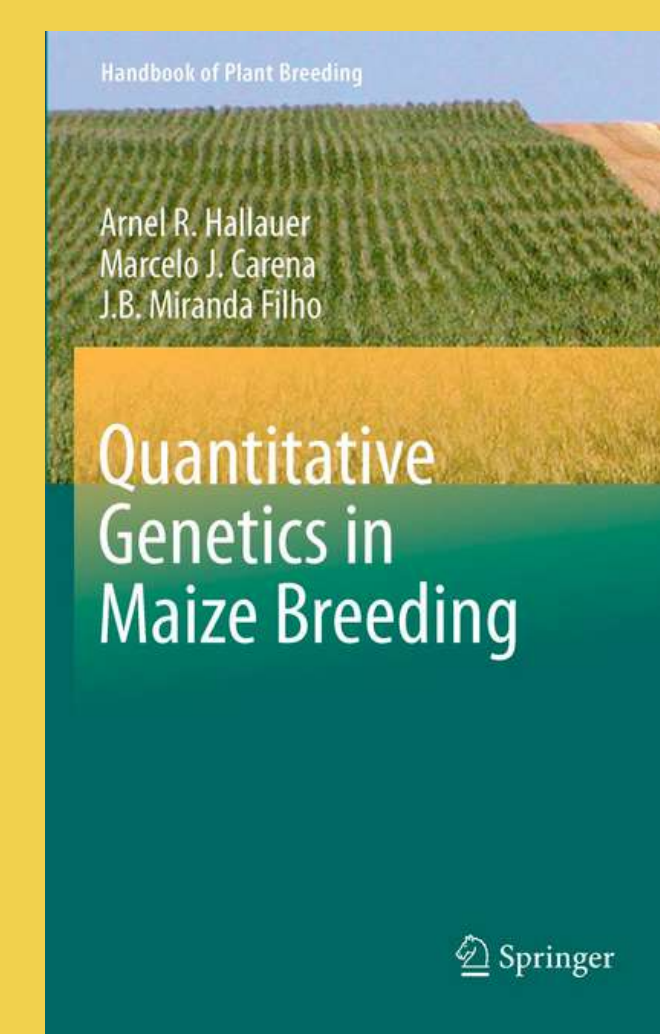
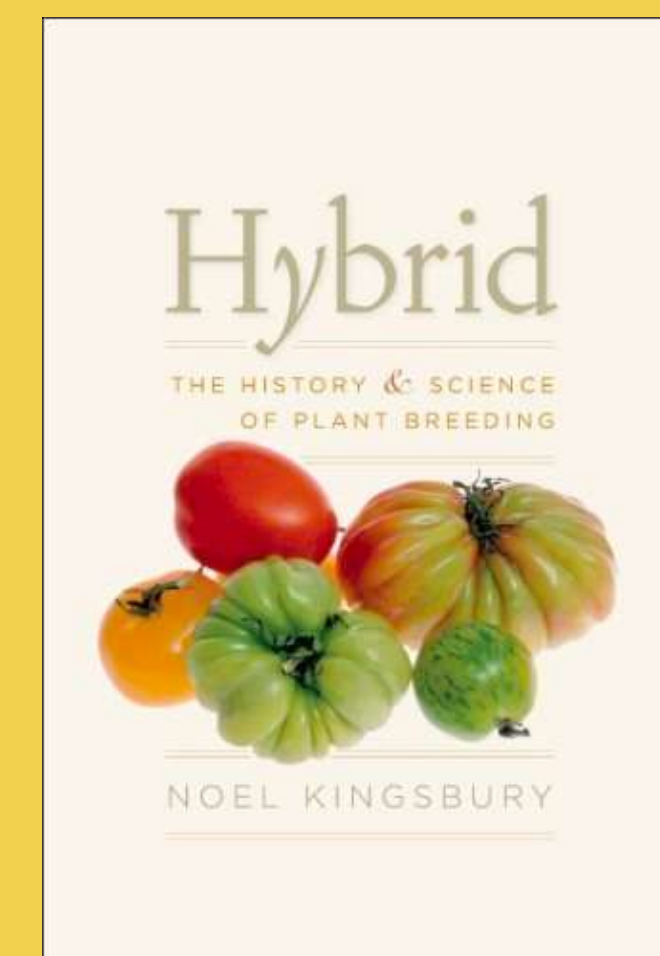


 Photo: ross tek/Unsplash





**ECON**





# ECONOMY



# MSP AND BEYOND: REFORMING INDIA'S AGRARIAN ECONOMY

*By Shikhar Nathani*



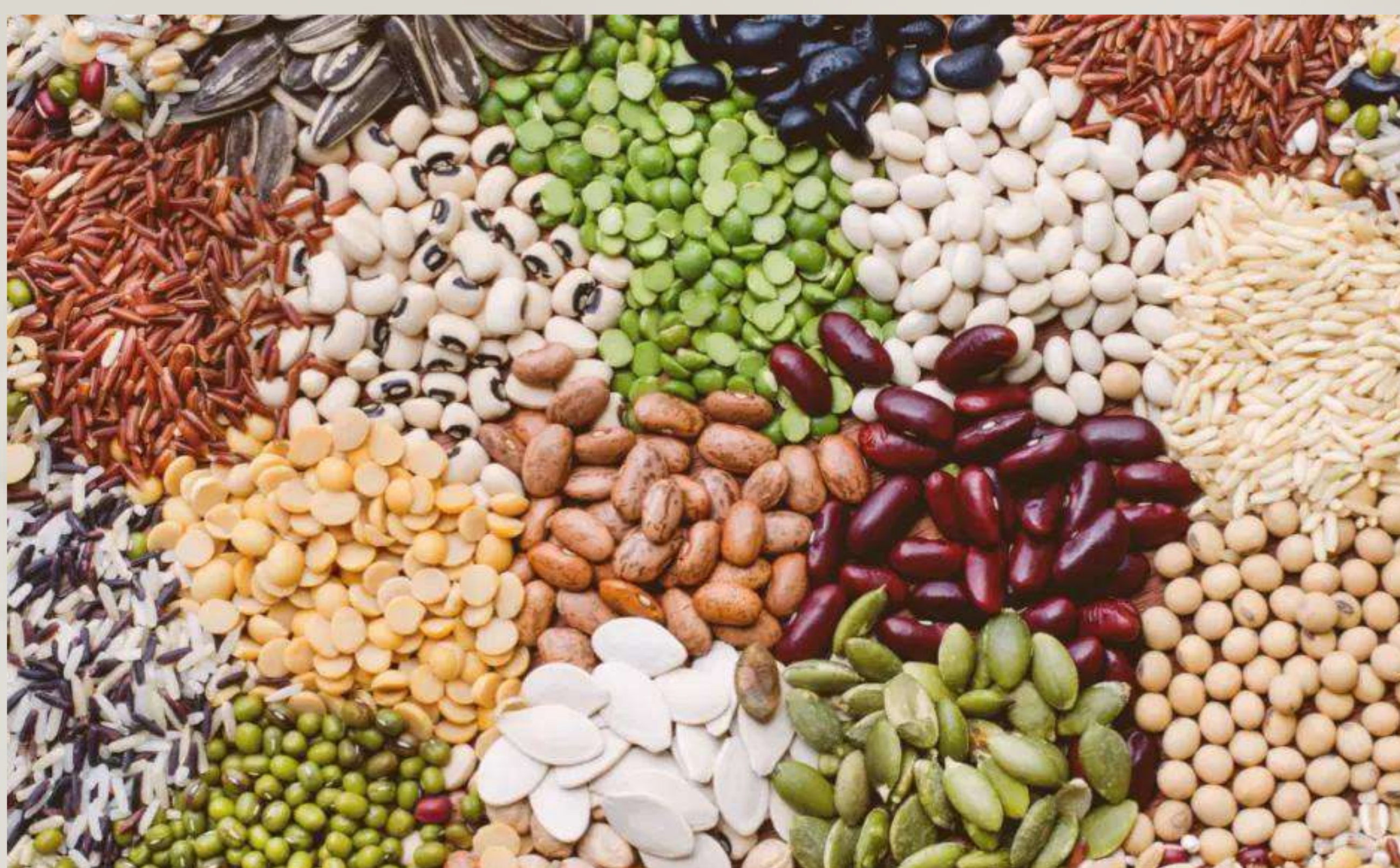


**O**n the eve of independence, the Indian economy was dependent on agriculture, which generated 70% of income and supported 85% of the population residing in villages, directly and indirectly.

The dismal features of Indian agriculture were - (i) Low productivity, (ii) High vulnerability and (iii) Stagnancy. These characteristics stemmed from dependence on natural sources for irrigation, fragmented land holding, technological dependence and backwardness.

### *A dire need for MSP*

Despite an agricultural growth rate of 2.5%, we were dependent on food imports and faced a situation of “ship to mouth” in turbulent times during the first three five-year plans. The failure of the monsoon in 1965 and 1966 increased dependence on the external food aid ‘PL-480’ programme. During the 1965 Indo-Pak war, the US threatened to stop food aid under PL-480.



This initiated public policy focus towards achieving food security.

C. Subramaniam, the then agricultural minister, adopted a new strategy to boost agricultural production accompanied by a remunerative price support scheme (MSP) for farmers. In January 1965, the Agricultural Price Commission was set up to recommend Minimum Support Price (MSP). India introduced high-yielding varieties of seed from Mexico in Punjab, Haryana and Western UP, where public investment in irrigation under Britishers had paid rich dividends. By 1971-72 India became self-sufficient. The introduction of HYV seeds was successful because of public

investment in fertilisers, credit, irrigation and power.

Apart from achieving food security, MSP policy ensures that farmers do not face the wrath of international price fluctuations. It also ensures food grain supplies under the National Food Security Act (NFSA) and Targeted Public Distribution Scheme (TPDS) programme, covering about two-thirds of the total population. India’s food exports have reached a new milestone by crossing \$50 billion in the financial year 2022. It also increases farmers’ disposable income, which can be used for adopting new technology and in achieving the government’s target of doubling farmers’ income by 2022.



MSP was launched to act as a cushion and protect farmers against the backdrop of adopting HYV technology and encourage them to adopt new HYV technology. Today about 2% of GDP is spent on farm subsidies, leading to the obvious question - Has MSP lived beyond its years after the initial objectives have been fulfilled?





### *How far is the destination?*

A blunt knife does not make a great weapon. As per International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) returns from public expenditure are highest on R&D and least on fertiliser subsidies, irrespective of this overall farm subsidies account for about 2-2.25% of GDP whereas R&D's share is about 0.6% of GDP. Fertiliser subsidies stood at Rs. 1,62,132 crores in 2021-22.

Procurement efforts have been encouraging in the case of cereals like wheat and rice 'only'. This has led to serious imbalances and distortions in production. Estimates show that 40% of the total geographical area is degraded due to intensive multi-cropping around the clock. As a result, to keep productivity at the same levels, there is an increased use of fertilisers, increasing pressure on the government

budget, as Indian farmers enjoy fertilisers at low prices, thanks to farm subsidies.

Increased use of fertilisers requires sufficient amounts of water to dissolve nutrients into the soil. This has caused increased incidences of water scarcity. As per the Minister of State for Jal Shakti, 78% of blocks in Punjab are overexploited and facing serious water issues. The procurement in states like Punjab, Haryana, MP, and UP far exceeds the buffer stock limits, to be distributed under NFSA and



TPDS, set by the government, diverting food grain from the market. Export of grains by the Food Corporation Of India (FCI) at price lower than the reserve price (the minimum price seller would be willing to accept, during the absence of subsidies) would imply an export subsidy and will expose India to disputes in multilateral trade.

India imports about 60% of its consumption of edible oils and about 50% of pulses. Although MSP has been increased considerably for both these goods, still farmers aren't motivated for production due to fewer procurement efforts and as they are not a part of the PDS.

As per the 70th round of NSSO, only 23.72% of rural households are aware of MSP and its benefits are accrued to about 20-25% of 'rich' farmers only.





In India, MSP is dependent on the cost of production and is recommended by the Commission for Agriculture Cost and Prices (CACP). MSP boosts land rental value, labour and management cost, leading to higher cost of production and therefore MSP, like a wage-price spiral. MSP is also used by the government for political gains. Between 1995-2001, the government set the MSP higher than recommended by CACP for 4 out of 7 times for rice and 5 out of 7 times for wheat.

As per the High-Level Committee on restructuring FCI, the centre should not accept grains from

states in the central pool, who are giving bonuses on top of MSP and the government should offer better price support and administrative machinery for procuring pulses and oilseeds. by the state of Sikkim.



The government should offer direct cash subsidies to farmers

(Rs. 7000/hectare) to avoid leakages and deregulate the fertiliser industry. Farmers should also make a move towards organic farming, as achieved

### Conclusion

India is in an exceptional situation, where on one hand we are self-sufficient in food grain production and on the other facing high food inflation due to the government being the largest buyer to provide for NFSA and TPDS. FCI is suffering from diseconomies of scale.

A toddler is spoon-fed up to a certain age only. Although MSP provides immense support to 'some' farmers, it might be high time to move towards avenues of investment which provide a higher return on investment. A gradual, rather than a radical shift, will help every stakeholder to adjust to changing needs of the time. More importantly, it is high time for our policymakers to move away from populist policies. ■







# THE PROBE SURVEY



# NEP & CUET: A STEP FORWARD ?



## **Survey by**

Vagmi Singh

Anirudh Mehta

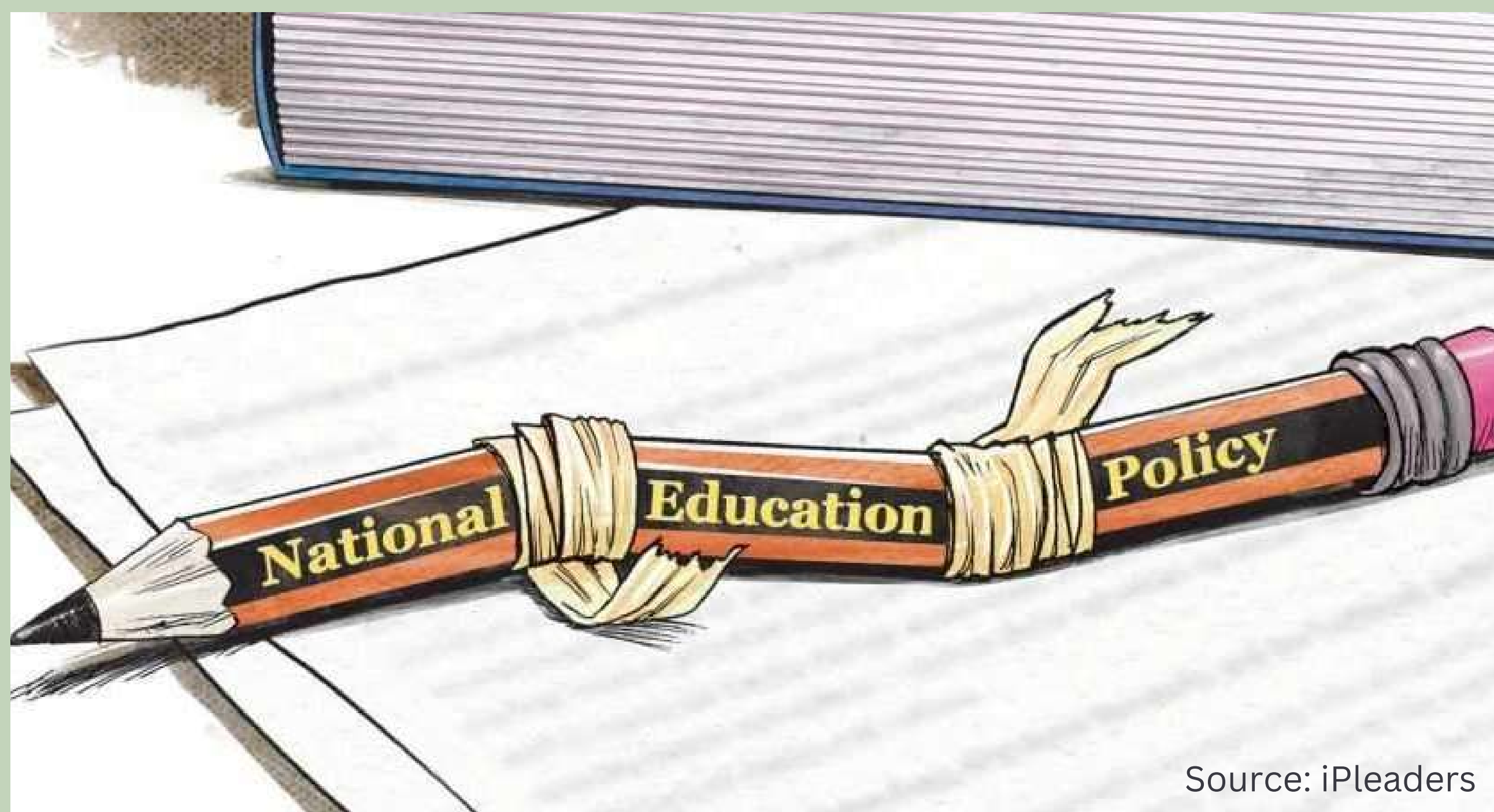
Hemandeep Singh



“The Indian education system, like the Indian bureaucratic

system, is Victorian and still in the 19th century. Our schools are still in the 19th century . Our schools are still designed to produce clerks for an Empire that does not exist anymore”

- Sugata Mitra (2012)



Source: iPleaders

Our education system has the self embodying image of a rat race that produces clerks at the end of it. In pursuit of changing that image 2020 will be considered a landmark year. This year has led to the introduction of the NEP 2020 and also led to the start of deliberations on what was to become a common entrance exam for all Central universities in this country (CUET).

The New Education Policy (NEP) 2020 is a further development on the NEP 1986/92 and the RCFCE act 2009. It aims at producing engaged, productive and contributing citizens for building an equitable, inclusive and plural society as Envisaged by our constitution.

It seeks to promote Multidisciplinary Education with no hard separations between Arts and sciences , Vocational and Academic streams. With its roots firmly in the Ancient Indian tradition it aims to equip people with important life skills and career progressive knowledge. The policy changes the current 10+2+3 education system to 5+3+3+4 system.

Some other notable features of this policy are :-

- Setting up of state school standard authorities (SSSA's)

- Vocational education in school system
- Establishment of Academic bank of credit
- Internationalisation of education with IIT's being set up in countries like the UAE under the CEPA free trade agreement.

The policy also envisioned conducting an entrance exam for the admission into higher education institutions. It came into effect with the CUET 2022 conducted by NTA for admissions into central universities of the country.. The govt. had already been contemplating such an exam even before the introduction of the NEP but the excessive inflation of marks by nearly all the boards across the states in 2020 and 2021 acted as the catalyst. CUET is the common entrance test for admissions into 52 central universities (except JMI and AMU till now) along with some state and private universities. CUET is compulsory for both UG and PG courses and will act as a single window of opportunity for all candidates aspiring to take admission in these universities. There were a lot of discussions and concerns in the intellectual circles, in the media and among the government officials on how these

massive changes in the education system would affect the students , both current and future. How much difference will there be in principle and practice?

We at CAUCUS felt the need to examine the effect of CUET and NEP, and what could be better than to ask the stakeholders. So, we conducted a survey among the students who got admitted to the institution this year and tried to know their experience and opinion over the same. This is what people felt...



Source: The Indian Express



Source: Business Today

## 1. Harsh Dokania - BA Programme , Hindu College

Firstly, talking about CUET, it was a step much required and should



have been taken earlier but anyways better late than never. As we are aware, the difference in marking standards of different examination boards did not provide students with a level playing field to get into reputed central Universities, most prominently, DU because it based all its admission process on XII board results. But now, since CUET is there as a common entrance gateway for all the central Universities, it has two implications, (i) The level playing field for admissions. (ii) The confusions regarding forms and applications for various universities are over. But there are issues with implementations such as Delays & uncertainties during the exams which caused it to stretch for almost 2 months, which needs to be addressed. Coming on NEP, A step was taken to broaden the term 'Education'. Targeted mainly on the promotion of technical & skilled education, imparting in students the values of our tradition, and promotion of Indian languages consists of Gandhian beliefs on education to some extent e.g., multilingualism, skill enhancement courses etc., with the implementation, cannot say much because this is only the first academic year the concerned policy has been implemented, therefore will have to wait for few academic years to talk about the implementations, I believe.

## **2. Harshika- Economics Honours (1st year), Hindu College**

In my opinion, NEP will bring out the student's capabilities and help them to grow and acquire new skills as nowadays placements are

skill-oriented and not merit-oriented. It will bring a positive change in the unemployment of graduated students. CUET is a bit complex due to lengthy and hectic procedures so it should be made simple for everyone to understand it.

## **3. Suruchi Singh - English Honours (1st year), Hindu College**

In my opinion, CUET is a good idea but it has been executed in a rush this year. That is what I feel. If NTA executes it properly next year, it might help in diversifying the crowd on campus. The focus on skill enhancement in NEP is good but might overburden the students. Also, the course is now 4 years, This seems a little lengthy.

## **4. Deepanshu Raj - History Honours (1st year), Hindu College**

I think that yes CUET does ensure a level playing field. But those studying NCERT textbooks are at a clear advantage over those who have different syllabi of their respective boards, this puts the state boards students in an unfair position. Maybe there would need to be brought uniformity in the syllabus of all boards of the country, NEP does look appealing, providing varied subject options and enhancement courses. But it could become a case of being able to focus less on the majors. Many things about how CUET and NEP will span out will be revealed as everything unfolds and as I am a part of the first CUET-NEP batch (The experimentation batch), let

us see how things unfold.

## **5. Aishwarya- Sociology Honours (1st year), Hindu College**

While I detest the implicit imposition going on inside the campus when it comes to language, I am satisfied by various other clauses and provisions of the NEP., we needed a common entrance test to provide an equal ground to students seeking admission. How effective CUET has been in this can be debated for sure. I would believe that even though CUET would need some changes and so would NTA but they are important. Since it was the first time CUET was conducted, there were quite many delays that caused significant levels of inconvenience. However, I would not say that this becomes a ground to do away with it. While I also feel some provisions of the NEP need to be rethought about, I do not stand for it being altogether repealed.

## **6. Chetna Rani-BA (Hons) Pol Science (1st year), Hindu College**

Yes, I think CUET is a commendable initiative. It has reduced the disparity students of different Boards experience as now, a single, national-level agency, NTA prepares the test papers for all the eligible students. By introducing a myriad of courses like SEC, AEC, and VAC, the NEP has broadened the scope for studies in graduation and will hopefully, ensure the all-round holistic development of students.

## **7. Sudhans Gurjar-BA Programme 1st year, Hindu College**



It really seems as something that the government is actually focused on, the way they have done some fundamental changes in the academic pattern. There were endless issues with merit-based systems such as different evaluation methods by different boards and low scores never able to make it to such colleges. Though this solution is not completely excellent it has its own problems such as giving an unfortunate boost to coaching institutes and make it another cut throat exam so it will not have much effect on the percentages that we used to see earlier. Such High competition will be same as before.

### 8. Himanshu Kumar- History Honours (1st year), Hindu College

I think these are good reform by govt but need some modification and better management team because this year many students have faced lot of technical problems in CUET and as well in CSAS too.

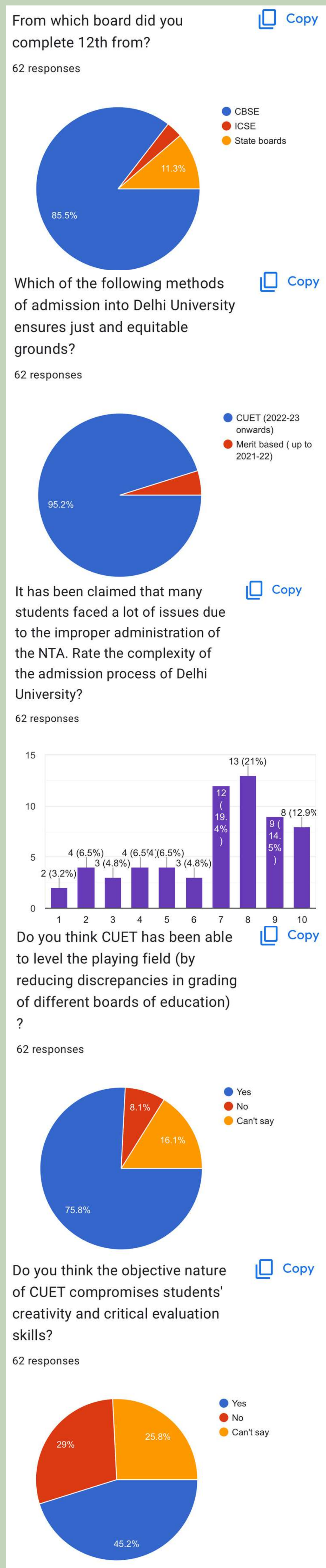
### 9. Mohd Sahil - Physical Science with Chemistry, Hindu College

NEP is perfectly fine according to me. But there was a serious problem in CUET, it was very easy to score marks in arts subject but it was very difficult to score marks in science so those students who wanted to switch stream were not able to do that. There was no parity between the arts and science stream.

### 10. Krish Maheshwari- BMS (1st year), SSCBS

Mixed opinions. Because yes, there are some major changes like the 4+1 system and research-oriented syllabus, but still, it will increase the academic pressure on the students, thus limiting their opportunities to look beyond academics and focus on personality, communication, etc.

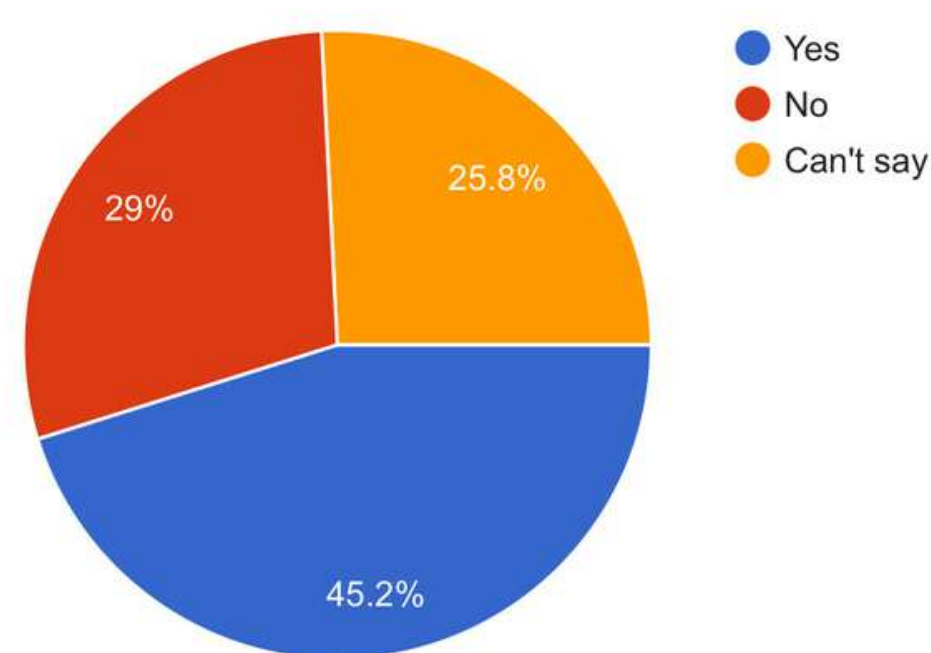
With the diversity of respondents spread across different departments in Hindu colleges; an overwhelming majority of 85% belonged to the CBSE board, followed by state boards and then ICSE. A whopping 96.7% believed that CUET ensured just and equitable grounds to get admissions. To add to this, 75% think that CUET provides a level playing field by reducing discrepancies between different grading systems followed by different national and state boards. 80% of the respondents believed that CUET ensured diversity. However, students had mixed responses regarding CUET's evaluation of creative skills. About 53.3% still believed that the 12th mark sheet would be relevant even after introducing the entrance exam. Moreover, 85% are majoring in a subject that they had in 11th and 12th standard. The 4+1 method for higher education was slightly preferred over the conventional 3+2. 68.3% found the admission process through the CSAS portal to be complex and faced difficulty during applying for admissions. According to the survey, more than 80% believed that the new curriculum would help students in their research endeavours. The same percentage





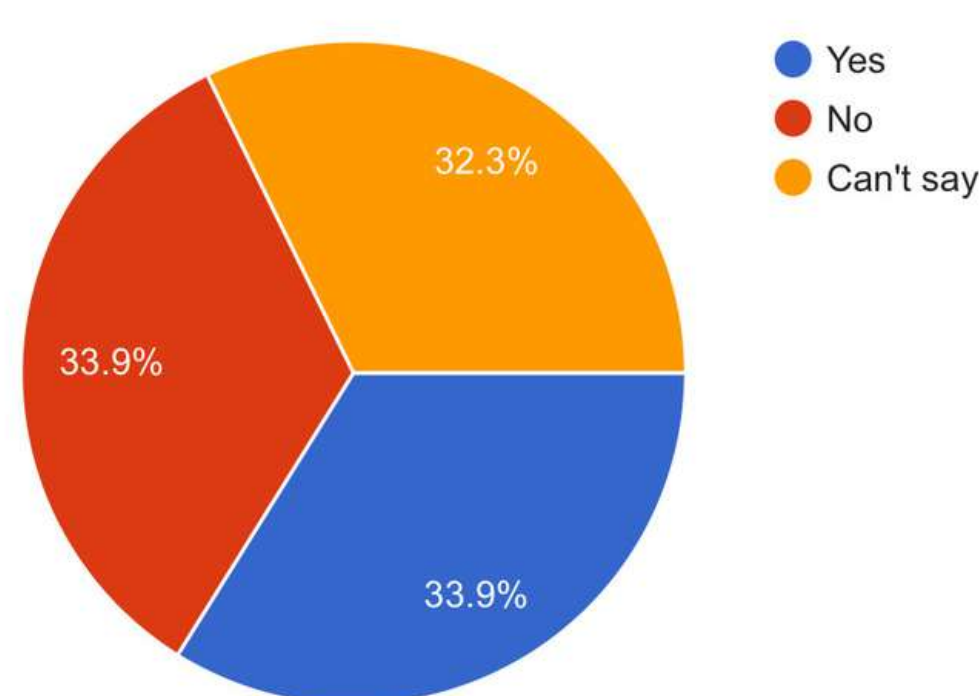
Do you think the objective nature of CUET compromises students' creativity and critical evaluation skills?

62 responses



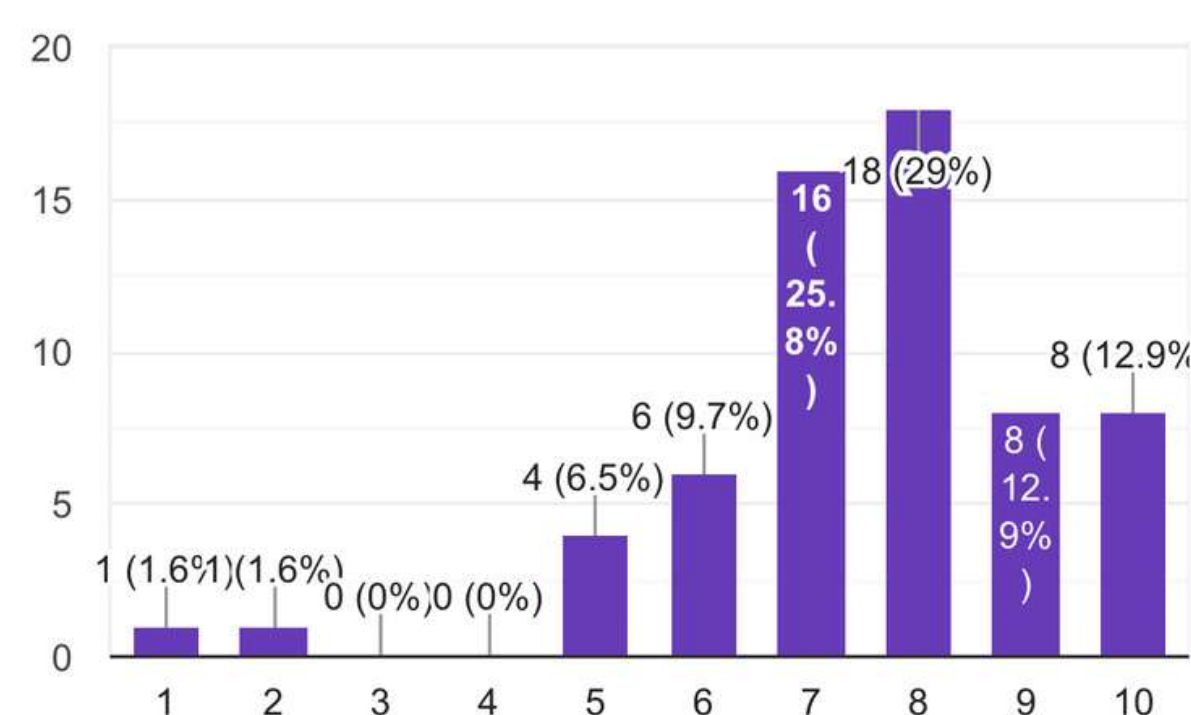
NEP allows for multiple entry and exit, bringing flexibility in the graduation program. Do you think it could lead to an increased number of dropouts?

52 responses



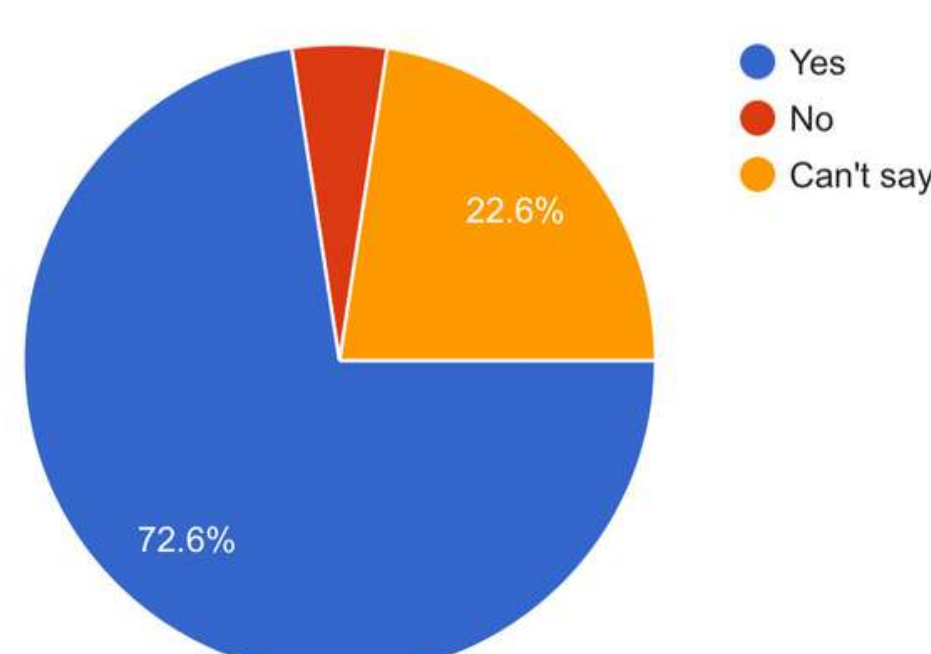
How do you rate the research oriented syllabus under NEP and its ability to transform students into thinking academicians?

62 responses



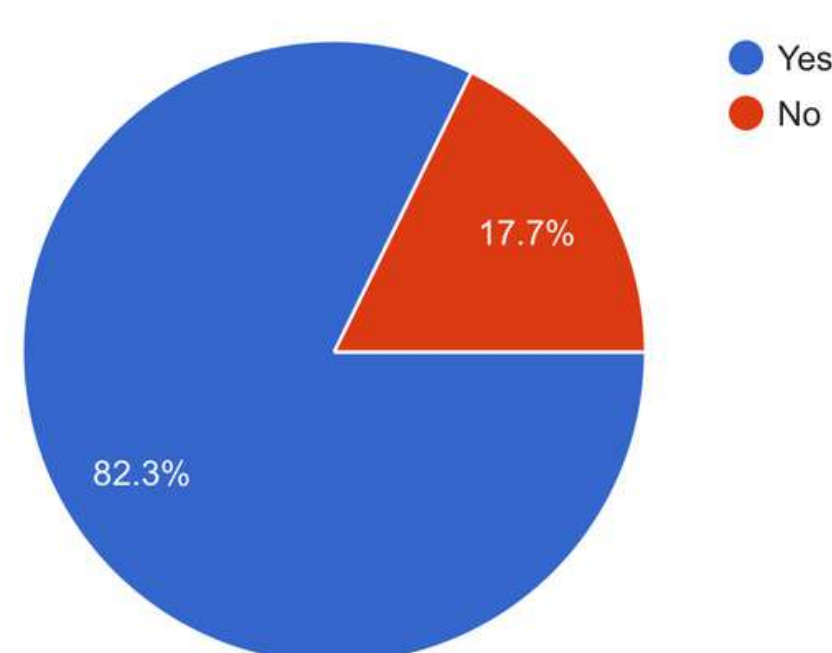
With CUET, aspirants might look up to coaching institutes for preparations. Can this result in another string of Coaching Mafias?

62 responses



Did you have your major subject in grade 12th?

62 responses



of respondents think that it will also be beneficial for them to get placement offers as the curriculum offers myriad skill enhancement courses. However, only 43.3% believe that removing English from AECC would help promote regional languages. On the downside, 73.3% believed that CUET may result in mushrooming of coaching centres. A mixed response was seen when asked about the increase in dropout rates due to the flexibility that the new curriculum provides, the majority of them (35%) believe that it would, but 33.3% were not sure about it and 31.7% believed that it won't.

**"Educating the mind without educating the heart is no education at all." - Aristotle**

Education plays a quintessential role in developing an equitable and inclusive society. In congruence with principles enshrined in our constitution and SDG4, the introduction of CUET and a new curriculum under NEP2020 has transformed the landscape for higher education. It has provided flexibility with multiple exits and entry points, offers skill enhancement courses, and sets the research-based orientation of varied subjects, a welcomed move by many who took part in the survey. Moreover, there is widespread acceptance of CUET, which helped build an equitable ground for admissions; removing discrepancies between different grading systems followed by National and State Boards to some extent. However, many believed that it may lead to mushrooming of coaching centres, thereby decreasing accessibility to higher education. In contrast,

many hold the opinion that it leads to more diversity in the student community joining the colleges. The world is changing rapidly, thereby, it is essential to constantly adapt and transform the higher education landscape for the better. Technological advancement, especially the rise of Artificial Intelligence and Machine Learning, poses a danger to unskilled labour. Therefore, it is essential to bring in value-added courses and provide a platform to students for up-skilling so that they will be better equipped to enter the employment sector and navigate efficaciously in the career path they choose. Moving away from rote learning to more experience and skill-based learning, the curriculum, to an extent, ensures critical thinking, innovation, problem-solving, and holistic personality development. To conclude, the changes now focus more on an inquiry-driven approach and developing discovery orientation towards education. ■



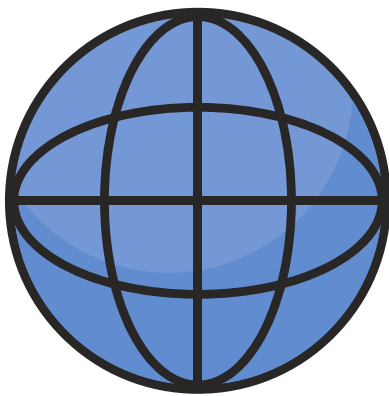
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