



Chinese check

China's famed model of growth is under pressure due to fall in exports and investment

The Chinese economy is seeing the first signs of trouble after long years of sustained growth that rode on cheap labour and high volumes of exports. Data released by the National Bureau of Statistics on Monday revealed that the economy grew by 6.2% in the second quarter, its slowest pace in 27 years. This is in contrast to the growth rates of 6.4% and 6.6% reported for the first quarter and the full year of 2018, respectively. The faltering growth rate was due to a slump in exports in June amidst China's ongoing trade war with the United States and the downturn witnessed by sectors such as housing construction, where investor sentiments play a major role. Many economists believe that the worst may not yet be over for China and that economic growth could further worsen in the coming quarters. But just as growth seems to be faltering, the latest growth figures also showed that the retail sales and industrial output components of the growth numbers witnessed steady growth, suggesting that domestic demand may be compensating for the dropping appetite for Chinese exports weighed down by high tariffs. But with China still heavily reliant on exports and its trade war with the U.S. showing no signs of coming to an end, the pressure on growth is likely to remain for some more time. So the Chinese government, which has tried to boost the economy through measures such as tax cuts, increased public spending and a relaxation in bank reserve requirements to encourage banks to increase lending, will hope that domestic demand for its goods will hold up the economy.

China's quarterly GDP numbers, while useful in many ways, don't reveal very much about the underlying challenges facing the country. One is the need to improve the credibility of data released by the Chinese government. An even larger challenge is the urgent need to restructure the Chinese economy from one that is driven heavily by state-led investment and exports to one that is driven primarily by market forces. The high-growth years of the Chinese economy were made possible by the huge amount of liquidity provided by the Chinese state and the large and affordable workforce that helped build China into an export powerhouse. But now, with China's tried and tested growth model facing the threat of getting derailed as the export and investment boom comes to an end, the Chinese will have to build a more sustainable model, or forfeit hopes of double-digit economic growth in the future. As of now, there are no signs to suggest that the Chinese authorities are looking at implementing deep-seated structural reforms reminiscent of its early decades of liberalisation that can help fundamentally restructure the economy. There might not be a need for radical macroeconomic changes, but China's economic troubles will not go away unless the government boosts domestic consumption and reduces the reliance on exports.

One for the ages

Alongside Federer and Nadal, Djokovic is ensuring tennis is at its competitive best

No player in the last decade has so thrillingly disrupted the Roger Federer-Rafael Nadal binary quite like World No.1 Novak Djokovic. Back in 2008, when Federer and Nadal met at Wimbledon in that iconic final, the contest had a definitive feel to it – to crown that era's best. The two met again this year, eleven summers since, just to earn the right to challenge Djokovic. Such has been the Serb's excellence that in the time between the two Federer-Nadal meetings, he increased his Grand Slam count from one to 15. Sunday's pulsating five-set victory over Federer brought him his fifth Wimbledon to put him just two shy of Nadal (18) and four behind Federer (20) in the all-time list. At times, his on-court demeanour and his grinding style of tennis have detracted from the perception of his success. To not celebrate his greatness, however, would be a severe disservice. Nadal and Federer are still ranked two and three in the world and are playing at near-peak levels. But even at their best, Djokovic has left them short of breath. In fact, starting from the 2011 Australian Open – his second Major – Djokovic has triumphed at nearly every second slam he has entered (15 of 34). Federer in the same period has accumulated four and Nadal nine, of which seven have come at the French Open. Remarkably, Djokovic has vanquished either Federer or Nadal in 12 of the 16 slams he has won. Eight of those victories have come in finals.

That Federer, just three weeks shy of turning 38, came within one stroke of upstaging Djokovic is credit to the Swiss's genius. Even in a career as storied as his, it would have been more than just a normal data point if he had clinched his ninth Wimbledon by beating Nadal and Djokovic – two of his greatest rivals – back-to-back. It is a testament to Djokovic's supreme mental strength that he did not flinch, even under extreme pressure, and despite not being the better player on the day. When he started out, Djokovic was among the most emotionally fragile. Questions abounded as recently as last July when he slipped outside the top-20. But by securing four of the past five Majors, he has truly rediscovered the mind of a champion. Among women, it was the turn of Simona Halep to display similar powers, by adding Wimbledon to her 2018 French Open win. There was a feeling that following her breakthrough in Paris she had suffered a meltdown, as she had not progressed beyond the quarter-finals at any Major since then. However, the way she mowed down one formidable opponent after another at SW19, including the legendary Serena Williams in the final for the loss of just four games, was enough proof of her strong mental make-up.

Making sense of Karnataka's politics

Castes and communities are the key players, where gain to one's community becomes an overriding consideration



VALERIAN RODRIGUES

A distinct genre of political theatrics in which elected representatives play 'hide and seek' in plush resorts to escape poaching by their very own and rival party leaders is currently playing out in Karnataka. While the dramatic personae, the layout of the plot, the resources deployed, and the message conveyed are distinct this round, this mode of doing politics is not new to the State.

In fact, following the State elections last year, leaders of the ruling coalition enacted a similar play almost 14 months ago by shepherding the elected representatives of their respective parties to safe havens; this was done ostensibly to stop them from being poached by the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) which laid claim to power as the largest party in the House and needed a few more legislators to secure a majority.

The bare sketch

Such mimetic displays have not been rare in the past either. They make room for extended invention of sub-plots and even erasure of a few, often delving deep into the rich folklore Karnataka is known for. Analogical practices are there in other States too, although Karnataka can claim a certain expertise in this regard by now. While such theatrics may have tactical political purpose at times, the question to be asked is the purpose for which such a political tactic is employed; the bearing it has on electoral representation, and the affront such political means offer to nurture a democratic culture.

In Karnataka, there is a coal-

ition government of the Indian National Congress and the Janata Dal (Secular), or JD(S). The Chief Minister, H.D. Kumaraswamy, is from the JD(S) that has 37 members, while its majority partner, the Congress, has 78 members in the 224-member House. While there are two independents, the BJP, which is in the opposition, has 105 members. From the beginning, the relationship between the coalition partners has been very uneasy, with the media constantly abuzz with rumours of a breakdown. On its part, the BJP has made umpteen attempts to wean away a few members from the coalition, widely termed 'Operation Kamala (lotus)'. After the Lok Sabha election, and the BJP's resounding victory where it got 25 Lok Sabha seats out of 28, the rumblings within the coalition have become louder; moving to the greener side, i.e. the BJP, has become more tempting for the fence-sitters.

A few days ago, there was drama when 16 members of the Assembly, three from the JD(S) and 13 of the Congress, most of them sheltered in a luxury hotel in Mumbai, announced that they had resigned from the Assembly. Two independents, who were made ministers earlier in order to retain them within the coalition fold, resigned from the cabinet and extended support to the BJP. The Speaker of the House, however, faulted the procedure adopted by 10 legislators to tender their resignations, dragging in the Supreme Court to decide its rectitude. While receiving these resignations afresh, following the court's directive, the Speaker stood his ground on ascertaining their constitutional and legal validity.

In Parliament, the Opposition accused the ruling BJP of employing unfair means to bring down an elected government. With the Karnataka government having decided to convene the Budget session, the coalition partners issued a whip to its members to attend,



K. MURALI KUMAR

holding out the threat of disqualification for non-compliance. The Supreme Court was made to step in in order to decide the relative status of resignation and disqualification of elected members and their precedence, given their widely different political implications. On the floor of the Assembly, the Chief Minister announced that he would move a trust motion on his government, which has made the issue of status and precedence crucial to the ambitions and designs of the rebels, and also placing them in a quandary. The unfolding of these events has been laced with several subplots: lavish living, private jet-hops, invocation of divine help, political "attempts" to cajole the rebels to return to the party fold, and a roughing up of party colleagues, and each party moving its Assembly members to well-secured and lavish resorts.

Disaffection within coalition

While the coalition government and the parties supporting them have targeted the BJP for attempting to pull down the government, the first group is primarily responsible for allowing disaffection within its fold to spread for three reasons.

First, for reasons known to itself, the Congress did not include the most important leaders from Northern Karnataka in the ministry for months; a small coterie of Vokkaliga leaders in the coalition from the erstwhile Mysore region have attempted to direct the course of political developments. The Lingayat-dominated northern region, already smarting under

years of neglect and drought, has consolidated itself as a bloc to resist the encroaching dominance of its traditional rival, and has gravitated wholesale towards the BJP which has been nursing it for years. Second, the JD(S) with the Chief Minister at the helm and with the support of a section of the State Congress leadership, has systematically attempted to undercut the lucrative wheeler-dealer network that the Siddaramaiah government of the Congress (2013-18) had built – it involves mining, land, construction and transport – and which directed those resources to its henchmen. It led to interference in departments and transfers of employees which the ministers concerned regarded as their fiefdoms. It made Mr. Siddaramaiah, the pre-eminent leader of the Congress in the State, to blow hot and cold occasionally against the coalition.

Third, the Congress and JD(S) are traditional political rivals in the southern region of the State and over the years, a significant section of the Vokkaligas, the pronounced social base of the JD(S), have been attracted to the Hindutva agenda. The inability of the coalition to forge an overlapping voting base is what has led to its overwhelming defeat in the very region of its strength.

The data is telling. In the Assembly elections of April 2018, the BJP, the Congress and the JD(S) secured 36.34%, 38.14% and 18.3% of the voteshare respectively, while in the Lok Sabha elections, it was 51.4%, 31.88% and 9.67%, respectively. The disaffection has led a large number of Congressmen to question the utility of the coalition on grounds of sectarian loyalties, personal interests, and future electoral prospects; some of them with large interests at stake have decided to jump ship. The hand of the BJP has always been there with the bait and offering promises.

The disaffection mentioned above has little to do with repre-

sentational logic, i.e., upholding the interests of one's constituency, striving to further the interests of the political community of the State, or even the objectives of one's own party. Due to a number of historical reasons, castes and communities are key players on the political scene in Karnataka. Hindutva has been attempting to fill this vacuum in recent years but has a very tentative hold still.

Personal gain, sectarianism

Even today, the elected representatives primarily consider themselves as members of castes and communities, and in the distribution of public resources, the gain to one's community becomes an overriding consideration. Therefore, elected representatives form a clique with a powerful leader with access to public resources, and strive to tilt the scales in their favour. Being elected as a member of the Legislature is often perceived as an entry point to seek other goodies such as a ministerial berth through which the member can channelise public resources for personal gain and to extend patronage. In the context of the weakening party leadership of coalition partners, since a representative may have to largely fend for himself or herself, the temptation to accumulate as much as possible during one's stint is seen as a mark of political common sense.

It is time Karnataka politics discovers not merely its egalitarian and pluralistic traditions and sets out to reconstruct its political architecture to reflect them. A public culture imbued by such a perspective may not eliminate all differences but there would be some yardsticks to hold elected representatives to accountability. But for the time being, it seems a mirage.

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The wheels to a low-carbon transport system

It rests on accessing public service, choosing rapid transit over car driving and supporting electric vehicle transition



SOHAIL AHMAD & FELIX CREUTZIG

Congested streets and polluted air are common experiences in India's metropolises, although the average Indian contributes only minuscule amounts of transport-related carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions to global climate change. Patterns of road transport, however, diverge wildly between cities and districts. Delhi tops the charts and emissions are more than twice as high as other Indian megacities, such as Mumbai, Bengaluru or Ahmedabad.

Studies show that India's road transport emissions are small in global comparison but increasing exponentially. In fact, the Global Carbon Project reports that India's carbon emissions are rising more than two times as fast as the global rise in 2018. Globally, the transport sector accounts for a quarter of total emissions, out of which three quarters are from road transport. Reducing CO₂ emissions of road transport leverages multiple co-benefits, for example, improving air quality and increasing physical activity, which are critical for well-being, particularly in urban areas.

Climate action also requires an understanding of how emissions vary with spatial context. In India, we find in our new study (published in *Environmental Research Letters*), that income and urbanisation are the key determinants of travel distance and travel mode choice and, therefore, commuting emissions. The way cities are built and the design of public transit are critical for low-carbon mobility systems. The study is based on the most recent results of the Indian Census in 2011.

Average commuting emissions in high-emitting districts (Delhi) are 16 times higher than low-emitting districts (most districts in Bihar and Uttar Pradesh). Average per capita commuting emissions are highest for the most affluent districts, which are predominantly urban, and that heavily use four-wheelers for commuting. This is a surprising result, as in other parts of the world such as the United States, commuting emissions are low in urban areas but high in suburban or ex-urban settings. In contrast, average per capita commuting emissions are lowest for Indian districts that are poor, and commuting distances are short and rarely use three-wheelers.

Focus on well-being

Two policy implications follow. First, mayors and town planners should organise cities around public transport and cycling, thereby improving mobility for many, while limiting car use. Uptake of



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non-motorised transport emerges as a sweet spot of sustainable development, resulting in both lower emissions and better public health in cities. According to the recent National Family Health Survey (2015-16), nearly 30% of all men are overweight or obese in South-west Delhi, but only 25% in Thiruvananthapuram and 13% in Allahabad. These data correlate with high reliance of car use in Delhi and low demand for walking.

Another of our studies that investigates data from the India Human Development Survey shows that a 10% increase in cycling could lower chronic diseases such as diabetes and cardiovascular diseases for 0.3 million people, while also abating emissions. Car use, in contrast, correlates with higher rates of diabetes. Therefore, fuel price increases, congestion charges or parking management could be a strategy that improves the well-being of individuals living in urban areas. In contrast, fuel price increases would be detrimental in poorer rural areas, impairing mo-

bility where there is a lack of alternatives.

Technology transition

Second, India should double down in its strategy to transition to electric two and three-wheelers. India is the third-largest market for automobiles; about 25 million internal combustion engines were sold in 2017, including about 20 million two-wheelers. A recent study reports that India has 1.5 million battery-powered three-wheeler rickshaw (over 300,000 e-rickshaws sold in 2018). In the coming years, experts judge that the electric three-wheeler market is expected to grow by at least 10% per year. In 2019, nearly 10,000 electric two-wheelers were also sold, and the annual growth rate may be above 40% per year.

The current statistics even suggest that electric three-wheelers and electric two-wheelers, rather than electric cars, will drive the electric vehicle market in India. Electric car sales are minuscule and even falling (dropping from 2,000 in 2017 to 1,200 in 2018). Consumers realise the practical advantages of lighter in weight two- and three-wheelers that require much smaller and less powerful batteries and are easily plugged in at home.

India is one of the world's largest producers and consumers in two- and three-wheelers and Indian companies can take a leading role in switching to electric vehicles. This will also help in trans-

forming India's vision of 'Make in India'.

Compact cities improve accessibility and reduce emissions from transport and even the building sector. Most Indian cities are already very dense, with few benefits expected by further high-rise. City managers should ensure that existing urban areas provide short routes and fast access to schools, hospitals and jobs, otherwise, residents would be required to travel long distances. To achieve this aim, mayors and decision-makers need to rethink how to deliver basic services such as education and health. Building schools and hospitals matters especially for informal settlements and are critical in achieving low carbon development as well as improving the quality of life.

Providing access to public service, choosing rapid transit over car driving in cities and supporting the rise of electric two and three-wheelers will help drive India to a modern and low-carbon transport system fit for the 21st century.

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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

103rd amendment

In *M.R. Balaji* (AIR 1963 SC 649), the Supreme Court made a significant observation by saying, "social backwardness is, in the ultimate analysis, the result of poverty". For the writer (Editorial page, "A test of law and justice", July 16) "to say that there cannot be reservation for the economically weaker sections of society unless they are socially backward" may not be wholly right. To say that reservation for the economically weaker sections goes against the basic structure of the Constitution is to ignore/dilute the significance of Article 14. The very purpose of reservation is to achieve

equality as envisaged under Article 14. However, if the process of reservation gets over-heated so as to deprive the economically weaker sections a more proportionate share in the administration and access to opportunities, then it would be a violation of their fundamental rights. One has to see how reservation has worked to the detriment of economically weaker sections so that they don't become socially backward also.

N.G.R. PRASAD,
K.K. RAM SIDDHARTHA,
Chennai

In court

The resolution moved by the Rajasthan High Court

advising advocates to refrain from addressing its judges as "My Lord" and "Your Lordship" must be encouraged across the judiciary. There were directions over a decade ago, to settle for "Your Honour", "Honourable Court" and "Sir", but it does not seem to have caught on. In fact, a little more is required to be done to maintain gender equality especially when female judges hold court as a single bench. Besides this, it would also be more appropriate if the use of archaic and colonial terms in law suits is also amended. For instance any petition filed in courts or judicial tribunals often

resorts to the use of phrases such as "the petitioner/applicant most humbly sheweth that..."

S.K. KHOSLA,
Chandigarh

Final outcome

New Zealand's Kane Williamson was all grace while fielding questions from the media. As the underdogs, the Kiwis deserve accolades and empathy for the way they handled the post-match situation, despite losing the final match to England and the unconvincing runs. It is heart-breaking to lose due to some extraneous reasons. The composure shown by Ben Stokes after reaching his 50 was in quiet

contrast to the sword celebration by Ravindra Jadeja in the semi-finals. Players should realise that wild gestures sometimes take away the focus from the main target of winning a game. Finally, one hopes that with its victory, England is able to rejuvenate the game.

V. SUBRAMANIAN,
Chennai

True fans of cricket will never accept the result of the ICC World Cup. Apart from

CORRECTIONS & CLARIFICATIONS:

A Sports page report headlined "DPR Korea downs Tajikistan" (some editions, July 16, 2019) erroneously said both Tajikistan and DPR Korea had six points from two wins and a draw. Actually it should be two wins and a loss for each team.

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