

BusinessLine

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The chameleon

By re-adopting the BJP in the name of fighting corruption, Nitish Kumar proves he can market secularism or corruption to suit his interest

Sound-byte reductionism of public discourse has made it easy for political parties to create false binaries to suit their aims. In the latest instance of the Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar's re-adoption of the Bharatiya Janata Party, the chief protagonists have carefully framed a facetious narrative that paints the Grand Alliance as a basically corrupt but apparently secular coalition while the BJP is synonymous with cleanliness and honesty. As is the case with political messaging in general, the reality is more complex and has less to do with principles and ideology than opportunism and personal ambitions. Nitish Kumar's aim in the move to "renounce" the chief minister's post was simple: to signal that honesty is above material considerations of power. According to his just-appointed deputy chief minister, Sushil Kumar Modi, the charges against Lalu Prasad and Tejaswi Yadav were, in fact, first exposed by the JD(U). It is thus hard to imagine that Nitish was unaware of Lalu's corruption when he rode on his back to power after shunning the BJP for allegedly failing to protect secularism.

That brings us to what seems to be the real motive behind Nitish choosing this precise moment to desert the "secular" camp and join forces with Prime Minister Narendra Modi. The astute politician clearly believes that secularism is not so marketable now that Modi is dominating popular consciousness. Some of Nitish's utterances, especially those concerning the failure of the Congress to find an alternative discourse and vision for India, almost inadvertently reflect his true belief — that the opposition alliance that he has been promoting at the national level is a non-starter. In this context, with the ruling BJP tightening its noose around all effective political opponents, Nitish chose the safer side with better future prospects. "Communalism", a charge he levelled at the BJP during the anointment of Modi as its prime ministerial candidate, is not so relevant or politically saleable in the present context. Just as "secularism" was irrelevant when he was railway minister and the boogys of the Sabarmati Express were gutted in Godhra in February, 2002. Even the statutory enquiry was not ordered by Railway Minister Nitish Kumar.

Indeed, the Bihar chief minister is a master salesman who can market secularism or corruption depending on which side he is on. That brings us to the alacrity with which the Prime Minister tweeted his approval of Nitish's decision to "join the fight against corruption" and enlisted him into the NDA. Not only does it facilitate the BJP's conquest of Bihar but it is tailored to embellish the dominant narrative that Modi is the lone political titan combating corruption in public life. With Nitish being his lieutenant in Bihar, Modi has pulled the rug from beneath the Mahagathbandhan. As is evident from his re-appointment as chief minister in less than 24 hours after he had resigned listening to his "voice of conscience", Nitish's moves have even less to do with ideology and beliefs.

Transporting goods is still a bumpy ride

Streamlining the processing and use of e-waybills and combining them smartly with the VAHAN database is a good way to go

PRITAM BANERJEE

First the good news! Post-GST, the elimination of checkposts by almost all states has resulted in a significant reduction in waiting time. Reports indicate a reduction between 3 to 7 hours leading to a 10-16 per cent increase in road transport efficiency.

But this is only the first step towards developing a national regime that governs the movement of goods in the GST environment. The differences between the State and Central governments, and between the States, on the rules and format of a national document or e-waybill to be used for declaration of movement of goods, needs to be resolved. In addition, a national IT system for generation and administration of these e-waybills needs to be put in place. The official deadline for rollout of a uniform national e-waybill and associated regulations governing the movement of cargo is October 1, 2017. In the meantime, each State follows its own system of rules and enforcement.

What are some of the concerns around rule-making for goods movement in India? And how would that potentially help or create operational challenges in the future?

Easing the way

The e-waybill would emerge as the most intensively used declaration document in India. Since all goods subject to GST that move on the road would have to potentially create an e-waybill, this would mean millions of such e-waybills being generated every day. Thus the rules and format from an 'ease of doing business' point of view is important.

Currently there are some challenges. First it requires generation of e-waybill even for intra-State movement. This means that even very short-haul movement of goods, or pick-up of shipments by courier from the door of individual shippers also fall within the ambit of the e-waybill. Since such movements were earlier exempt from the requirement in most States, it adds a layer of transaction costs that did not exist before. Imagine a courier at your door having to first prepare an e-waybill and submitting it to an IT platform before it can move with the product!

Second, the draft rules exempt shipments below ₹50,000 from the e-waybill. However, it still requires a truck that carries shipments collectively valued at more than ₹50,000 to generate e-waybills for each of the individual shipments in the truck, even if they are valued at less than ₹50,000. This would mean shifting the responsibility of generating the e-waybill from the shipper to the transporter. While this exemption is supposed to give relief to businesses from generating e-waybills for every small transaction, shifting this burden to transporters defeats the purpose.

Another challenge is for the transporter to change the vehicle number every time the shipment changes trucks. In a hub and spoke model, where a single shipment might change trucks several times, this substantially increases the data entry requirements and could potentially lead to delays as trucks assigned for a particular route are often decided on at the last minute.

The rules conundrum

While businesses can chose to file an e-invoice (called INVI) or a physical invoice for the actual transac-



What you think is not exactly what you get. Screenshot from a video showing trucks at a checkpoint.

tion, the online e-waybill is mandatory. The logic is that the e-waybill provides an electronic trail and second check for all transactions. But this is counter-intuitive. Why not insist on only electronic invoices in first place?

If the idea behind not insisting that businesses file electronic invoices and retain the choice of generating physical invoices was to reduce the burden of online compliances, then the requirement of an online e-waybill defeats that objective, that is, businesses would still have to generate e-waybills online with the same data.

A better way forward would have been to insist on all invoices being filed online and using the online invoices as the de-facto e-waybill. A simple e-waybill would have been the truck manifest listing the electronic invoice numbers of the goods it is carrying. This would have not even required the vehicle number to be recorded, thereby eliminating the need for updating the vehicle number in the e-waybill every time shipments change trucks.

Trucks are not stopped only by tax-related check-posts. Seventeen different laws regulate the movement of goods in India. Transport-

related regulations that check for fitness of the vehicle, overloading, and a host of other transport regulations is one major reason trucks are stopped and inspected. Regulations related to the transport of hazardous goods, forest produce, commodity-specific controls and so on are some of the other reasons why trucks could be stopped or inspected.

Is there a way by which we can move towards an integrated system of checks and inspections? Given the evolution of the GST e-waybill and the development and expansion of the VAHAN database of the ministry of road transport, an integrated system is definitely possible.

VAHAN database has all the relevant data related to the vehicle: fitness certificate, registration, permits, etc. Since all 17 regulations are concerned with either the goods a vehicle is carrying or the vehicle itself, the e-waybill declaration and VAHAN together can serve as a 'comprehensive declaration'.

An integrated system

Imagine a system whereby a simplified RFID-enabled e-waybill, that is essentially a list of electronic invoices declared in the GST network,

and RFID chip-enabled number plate of the vehicle tagged to the VAHAN database approaches a modern automated check-point. The check-point does not stop all trucks; it picks 10-15 per cent of trucks on a random basis for checks. All that a truck driver does is scan the e-waybill while the number plate is automatically scanned and read.

The officer would have all the information related to the truck and the shipments on her screen. Any violation would be backed by strict and heavy penalties. In order to check for overloading, the approach to this modern automated checkpost would be equipped with weigh-in motion technology that monitors overloading as the truck passes by.

A taskforce for the seamless movement of goods has been set up by the Government to consider reforms backed by technology solutions. This would revolutionise one of the most abused and opaque aspects of law enforcement in India.

However, technology integration is just one aspect of reform. Strict norms are needed to ensure fairness and transparency of enforcement. For this the following ground rules can be considered: all physical inspection of goods to be subject to CCTV camera recording; and all challans to be issued electronically. If an officer over-rides the systems-based, risk-managed, random check, and uses discretion to stop a vehicle, this needs to be registered with full reason and final outcome of all checks and inspections. Data related to such stops should be made subject to the RTI Act. Clearly, more work is needed in these reforms.

The writer is a senior director for Corporate Public Policy, responsible for South Asia region, Deutsche Post DHL Group. The views are personal



Mantriji, monetary policy and tomatoes

He would give anything to get the Mumbai Privileged Committee on his side, if only that were possible



RAGHUVIR SRINIVASAN

Mantriji looked up from the clutter of financial dailies spread over his large mahogany desk as the Mukhya Aarthik Salahkar strode into his chamber. His face was grave and the samosa and jalebi lay on the table untouched.

The MAS's excellent rapport with Mantriji was legendary and the whole of North Block knew that he could walk into the latter's chamber any time with no more than a knock on the door. Late evening meetings, such as this one, based on impromptu summons from Mantriji were rare. And when they did happen, it meant that something troubled him deeply.

"So, do you think he'll cut?" Mantriji dived straight into the subject, worry writ large on his face. "The financial dailies are unanimous that he's going to stay pat. BusinessLine's editorial argues convincingly

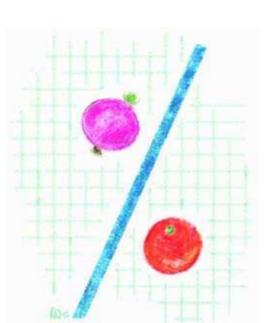
that it's high time he drops rates but it also points out that he's unlikely to do so."

"Ah, so that's what it is," the MAS thought to himself, "now, how do I break it to him gently that Bhaisaab and his committee of learned men in Mumbai are not likely to oblige?"

"Sir, you know that when the last month's inflation print came out, I released a note on Twitter pointing out how there's been a paradigm shift to low inflation in the economy and that the last time we had a similar reading was 18 years ago..." the MAS began but Mantriji cut him short: "Haan, I do remember that note which was all but addressed as 'Dear Bhaisaab', but it seems to have had no effect."

"I'm at my wit's end and dread the appointment in the PMO tomorrow," Mantriji confessed with a sad look in his eyes. "God knows I've tried every trick in the book. To ensure no one man could hold an entire North Block to ransom we formed the Mumbai Privileged Committee (MPC) but Bhaisaab and his institution seem to have captured the MPC as well!"

"I agree," the MAS commiserated with his boss. "I do remember how we strategised to ensure that no



one from the south of the Vindhya would get into that chair now occupied by Bhaisaab after our experience with the last three occupants." He chuckled quietly as he was a curd rice eater himself.

"Haan, yaad hai na aapko, but how did Bhaisaab also become like his three predecessors?" Mantriji asked with bewilderment. That brought a smile to the MAS's face though he hid it quickly. He recalled how North Block had used its soft power in Bhaisaab's office canteen in Mumbai by overhauling the menu, dropping all dishes from the south,

especially curd rice, pesarattu and avakkai, and introducing super soft dhokla, khandvi and thepla. They had even replaced paanagam with chaas, and offered aamras made from the choicest Ratnagiri Alphonso.

Yet, the culinary changes had no impact.

The MAS realised that Mantriji was getting emotional and he had to bring some realpolitik to the discussion. Mantriji was known to be a no-nonsense person and his take-down of pesky media fellows during conferences was to be seen to be believed. The only thing that could turn the man into jelly was, well, monetary policy. And understandably so. How could he run the economy if his partner in Mumbai refused to play ball?

"I checked with some insiders in the Mumbai complex," the MAS replied, "I believe Bhaisaab and his friends in the MPC are concerned about the rising prices of tomato in Tiruchirapalli, pyaaj in Patiala and coriander in Kannur. They feel that inflationary expectations among vegetable consumers is rising and today's BusinessLine has also not helped matters with its screaming front page story saying that tomato

prices will not fall until end of August. Bhaisaab is also of the view that the easing of inflation excluding food and fuel may be transient in view of its underlying stickiness in a situation of rising rural wage growth and strong consumption demand..."

"Oh, please, you sound like an MPC member," Mantriji admonished the MAS.

"So, Bhaisaab plans to hold rates to make tomato and pyaaj cheaper? What happens if aloo prices in Ahmedabad, God forbid, rise or baingan prices go up in Bengaluru next? Will rates never fall in this country?" Mantriji asked plaintively.

The MAS decided to go in for the kill: "That, Sir, is what is most likely. So let's import tomatoes, aloo, bhendi, baingan, pyaaj and any other vegetable we can think of."

"Good idea," Mantriji replied, "but tell me, how long will I have to walk alone to revive the economy?"

"Sir, remember the choice otherwise is to have six learned men from the MPC walking along with you," the MAS said with a wicked smile.

"Good Lord, no!" Mantriji pushed back his chair. "I'll go to Lodhi Gardens all by myself. Now."

FROM THE VIEWROOM

The yield trick

It's simple: just based on the wrong formula

Many deposit-taking companies are pulling a fast one about the 'yields' they offer in order to attract investors. For instance, DHFL which offers an interest rate of 8 per cent per annum on 120-month cumulative deposits compounded half-yearly, claims that the yield is 11.91 per cent, when it's actually 8.16 per cent. Others such as Shriram Transport Finance Company, Mahindra Finance, PNB Housing Finance and Sundaram BNP Paribas Home Finance also claim higher yields. What gives?

They calculate the yields using the simple interest formula. But that's the wrong way to arrive at the number. Yield, going by Finance 101, should be calculated using the formula for compound interest. In a cumulative deposit, interest earned is reinvested and, in turn, earns interest in the subsequent period. These periodic additions to the capital need to be considered while calculating yield. The compound interest formula does that, the simple interest one does not. Not just that, there are companies such as SREI Equipment Finance that advertise yields even on non-cumulative deposits where interest is being paid at regular intervals. This goes against the concept of yield which is typically associated only with cumulative investments that benefit from compounding.

Advertising inflated yields or yields on non-cumulative investments is mis-selling, especially in a low-interest environment, when fixed income investors are desperately searching for safe investments and good returns. It's time the RBI and SEBI cracked the whip and specified the when and how of calculating yields, ensured that deposit-takers toed the line and withdrew misleading claims. Until then, it is 'buyer beware'. Check and calculate if the number is right with the help of online calculators or the financial functions in MS-Excel.

Anand Kalyanaraman Senior Assistant Editor

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Send your letters by email to bleditor@thehindu.co.in or by post to 'Letters to the Editor', The Hindu Business Line, Kasturi Buildings, 859-860, Anna Salai, Chennai 600002.

Candid address

In his last televised address, President Pranab Mukherjee said that the soul of India resides in pluralism and tolerance. He said it carries with it a history of ideas, philosophy, intellect, industrial genius, craft innovation and experience. India is a sovereign, socialist, secular, democratic republic. It guarantees freedom of expression so long as it is used constructively.

India is now faced with huge challenges and threats. These need to be tackled with foresight, determination, and purpose. The new incumbent is known for his knowledge, humility and simplicity. He has a tough job on his hands to uphold the spirit of India.

Srinivasan Umashankar
Nagpur

Blundering in Bihar

As expected the Nitish-Lalu honeymoon did not last. However, Nitish

Kumar is one of the few leaders with a clean record devoid of corruption charges. He brought good governance to Bihar. But breaking away from the BJP was a blunder. Nitish and Narendra Modi are like two sides of the same coin. While Modi could gauge the people's mood, Nitish could not. Fed up

The second blunder was joining hands with Lalu Prasad Yadav, who is famous for caste politics and misrule in Bihar. The biggest blunder was making Jitan Manjhi chief minister to woo dalit votes. Nitish should realise that India's youth want jobs, economic growth and development and are not interested in politics based on religion and caste.

Veena Shenoy
Thane, Maharashtra

Nitish Kumar's volte-face has dealt a big blow to Opposition unity at the national level. As a man who put Bihar on the trajec-

tory of rapid economic development and earned respect for his unflinching commitment to providing corruption-free governance, Nitish was left with no option but to take the high moral ground following the emergence of corruption allegations against his deputy Tejaswi Yadav of the RJD and his blatant refusal to put in his papers.

M Jeyaram
Sholavandan, Tamil Nadu

Welcome decision

The decision of Anna University to do away with the system of arrears from the current academic year is welcome. This will ensure discipline from students. Students must understand that they enter into the portals of colleges after paying considerable fees. Hence, it is imperative they reap maximum returns in the form of knowledge.

S Ramakrishnasayee
Ranipet, Tamil Nadu

Think before speaking

This refers to 'Kejriwal fined ₹10,000 by court for not responding to notice' (July 27). It is a lesson to the political class to be circumspect and weigh their words before levelling charges against political rivals without evidence. The Delhi chief minister and his party spokespersons have an irrefutable penchant for making unsubstantiated accusations thinking they can come out unscathed.

HP Murali
Bengaluru

Wake up, TRAI

The editorial, 'Inflection Point' (July 27) is a timely reminder to the Centre and TRAI to revisit and overhaul the telecom policy. The inspiration to serve maximum customers and optimise scale of economies is understandable but Rjio should not try to monopolise the domain. Rjio's moves must be appropriately moderated and the

right of the customer to join or opt out must be vested only with them. Otherwise, the big fishes will subsume the small fishes and the telecom turf will be controlled by hidden systems and tricky tariffs.

Small operators are only licenses. They are authorised to operate and not to make deals. The policy responses in this direction must be initiated forthwith to preclude cartelisation. The licensed operators must play within their stipulated conditions irrespective of their operational band-width and business volume and hence Bharti Airtel should also be restrained. The monopolistic tendencies of certain operators are confusing customers because of the mixed signals they send. TRAI must wake up and do the needful before customers are led further astray by the murky deals.

B Rajasekaran
Bengaluru

Power play

Shed no tears for internal combustion engines

CHRIS BRYANT

The UK has joined France in promising to ban sales of petrol and diesel vehicles from 2040 in a drive to improve air quality and cut planet-warming emissions. When two of Europe's largest economies pledge to abolish technology that's sustained the car industry for more than a century, it's only natural that investors might fear this poses existential challenges for the industry.

But while the switch from combustion engines to electric motors will entail some near-term financial pain for carmakers (and some of their suppliers), in the long term it might actually be beneficial for profits. And Europe's manufacturers are more resilient than you think.

Today fully electric vehicles account for less than 1 per cent of new car sales in the EU. Getting that figure near 100 per cent within two decades will of course require billions of euros of investment. The electric spending taps have already been turned on: figures showed Daimler AG's research and development spending jumped 19 per cent in the first half of 2017 compared to the same period a year ago.



Regulators have put the industry in a bind because they're forcing investment to make existing combustion engines more efficient. Daimler only recent spent €3 billion on a new family of diesel engines. Yet this technology could become obsolete if carmakers lose a public relations battle to rescue diesel's reputation.

Good for the price
An inflection point could come around 2025, when Bloomberg New Energy Finance thinks electric vehicles will start to become price competitive with combustion engine cars. Due to lower operating costs, sales of electric vehicles should then start to accelerate rapidly. This could start to impact the resale value of petrol

and diesel vehicles long before any government sales ban comes into force.

Berenberg analysts say a 20 per cent drop in combustion engine vehicles' residual values is conceivable, which would threaten automakers' leasing businesses, currently a rich source of profits. Daimler's finance unit generated a stonking 19 per cent return on equity in the latest quarter. So where's that silver lining? Firstly, carmakers aren't nearly as weak as their share prices might have you believe. Buoyant demand helped Daimler generate €3 billion of free cash flow in the first six months of the year, while rival PSA Group Ltd boasted more than €13 billion of cash and equivalents at the end of June. It also achieved a 7.3 per cent operating margin, a pretty extraordinary feat for a mass-market manufacturer. These are very decent buffers to have, given the high expenditure that'll be required in the coming years.

And once they've gotten past the initial investment hump, electric vehicles should start to cost less to produce than a combustion engine car: battery costs are dropping fast, there's far less mechanical content required in an electric car and probably fewer workers will be needed to make it. Exane BNP Paribas analyst Stuart Pearson says electric vehicles could achieve an operating return on sales of more than 10 per cent as soon as 2025 — better than the profitability of a typical combustion engine car.

So there's reason to think carmakers should survive the demise of combustion. But will workers? Although the UK government was relieved when BMW AG promised to produce an electric version of the Mini in Oxford, the car's electric drive system will be built in Germany. Banning combustion petrol and diesel car sales is one thing, ensuring Britain secures the jobs created by the car industry's electric revolution is quite another. BLOOMBERG

Keeping the soil healthy is a challenge

It's not just farmers and policymakers who are responsible, the agrochemical industry too must rise to the occasion

RAJESH AGGARWAL

Increasing penetration of agricultural inputs has helped Indian farmers achieve record food grain production year after year. For the record, the Government estimates an all-time high total foodgrain production of 272 million tonnes in 2016-17. However, this does not automatically imply that all is hunky dory on India's agricultural front.

India's land area is about 2.5 per cent of the global land area, and it supports more than 16 per cent of the total human population along with around 20 per cent of the global livestock population.

Clearly, the pressures of constantly increasing production have in turn resulted in a persistent decline in soil fertility — a major challenge that Indian agriculture is currently facing.

With rising population, limited availability of agricultural land, small land holdings and declining soil fertility, India is under serious threat of losing its food surplus status in the near future. According to estimates, the demand for foodgrain is expected to increase from 192 million tonnes in 2000 to 355 million tonnes in 2030.

But, is our 'fatigued' soil healthy enough to meet these targets?

Excessive tillage takes a toll
Over the years, increasing pressure on limited agricultural land in India has resulted in overuse of chemical fertilisers on soil, excessive tillage, jettisoning of age-old organic soil revival practices and lack of appropriate crop rotation. This has resulted in soil degradation and loss of fertility, which are emerging as major challenges for Indian farmers.

Soil degradation is estimated to be severely impacting the 147 million hectares of cultivable land in India, causing a successive deterioration in its productive capacity. In recent years, experts have witnessed a worrying sign of declin-

ing total factor productivity and compound growth rates of major crops.

In several agricultural regions across the country, there has been observed a gap between nutrient demand and supply including decline in organic matter status, deficiencies of micronutrients in soil, soil acidity, salinisation and sodification.

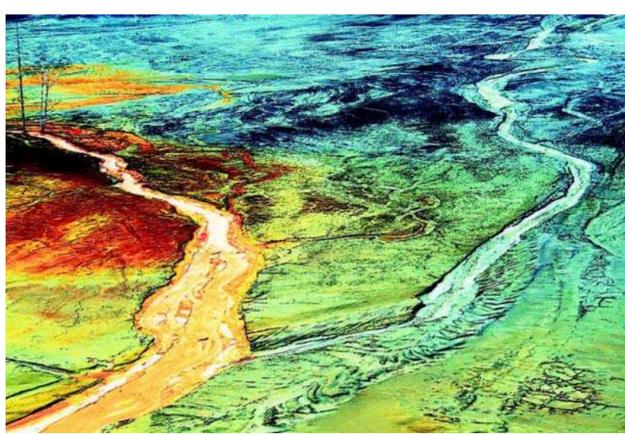
If we do not take this disturbing trend into account and start acting now, our country might be saddled with vast swathes of land rendered infertile by lack of sagaciousness and long-term thinking.

Experts say one of the main ways forward is to make agriculture more sustainable and revive the age-old practices of soil regeneration, while balancing the same with judicious use of agrochemicals. The agrochemical industry must also rise to the occasion and invest in producing organic biological products that help improve the health of Indian soil.

What causes soil fertility loss?

Apart from natural factors such as floods, volcanoes and earthquakes, a number of human-induced factors such as deforestation, ill management of industrial wastes, overgrazing by cattle, and urban expansion, are also responsible for the loss of soil's productive capacity. Widespread land degradation caused by inappropriate agricultural practices has a direct and adverse impact on the food and livelihood security of farmers. Inappropriate agricultural practices that contribute to this include excessive tillage, frequent cropping, poor irrigation and water management, and unscientific rotation of crops. Decline in soil organic matter causes limited soil life and poor soil structure.

According to a document pre-



It's not pretty The sight of sickening soil MIKADUN/SHUTTERSTOCK.COM

ately twice the amount of carbon in the atmosphere and in vegetation. If more carbon is stored in the soil as organic carbon, it will reduce the amount present in the atmosphere, and therefore help to alleviate the problem of global warming and climate change.

Going organic

All this brings us to the vital question of how we can ensure that India's growing foodgrain needs are met while at the same time soil health and fertility are nurtured and improved.

And the answer lies in turning the focus on biological products to improve soil health, propagating the judicious use of agrochemicals, reducing excessive dependence on fertilisers and pesticides while also reviving practices such as intelligent crop rotation.

Enhancing sustainable food production through improved soil health is not just the job of the Government and cultivators. The agrochemical industry also has a responsibility to invest with renewed vigour in biological products that can rejuvenate soil health organically.

At the same time the need of the hour is to educate farmers about what they can do to improve the health of their nutrient-depleted soil by following practices such as crop rotation, and using organic manure boosters such as cow dung and dried leaves.

It is also pertinent to educate them about the judicious use of agrochemicals and attain a fine balance between chemical and organic products — both of which are critical to India's food sustainability goals.

The writer is the MD of Insecticides India Ltd

5 THINGS to WATCH OUT for TODAY

■ **SEBI will** auction a property owned by Sahara in Uttarakhand. The reserve price for the 82.93 acre land parcels has been set at a little over ₹223 crore. The sale is part of the process of recovering funds from the beleaguered group. Many corporates, including Tatas, Godrej, Adani and Patanjali, have shown interest in buying Sahara group's properties.

■ **Season five** of the Pro Kabaddi League begins. This season will see a dozen teams competing for ₹8 crore. The first contest is between Telugu Titans and Tamil Thalaivas, played in Hyderabad. Super-Playoffs have been introduced.

■ **Tesla will** start the first batch of deliveries of the much-awaited Model 3 electric car. The company has taken deposits on more than 300,000 Model 3s, starting at \$35,000 a vehicle. The craze for Model 3 stands out as major US automakers face a downturn. The Model 3 marks a turning point for Tesla as it transitions to a mass producer.

■ **The Soyuz** rocket will launch three new crew members to the ISS from the launchpad in Kazakhstan. The trio will take a six-hour, 19-minute ride from Earth to the station's Rassvet module. The Expedition 52 crew will spend more than four months aboard the orbital complex.

■ **Congress vice-president** Rahul Gandhi is on a two-day visit to Chhattisgarh. He will attend a number of programmes in Bastar district besides chairing a meeting of the party's senior leaders and office-bearers. He will also address a rally to protest against the proposed disinvestment of the NMDC's steel plant coming up in Nagarnar area of Bastar.

AARATI KRISHNAN
STATISTALK

Not down and out

Wondering what's been happening to housing markets in the last one year? Tune into the newly relaunched NHB Residex. It shows that some segments are still going strong

Features of the new NHB Residex

- Data across 50 State capitals, Smart Cities
- Base year 2012-13
- Data from lenders, market survey
- Three home sizes - < 60 sqm, 60-110 sqm and > 110 sqm
- Plans to add Building Materials Index, Land Price Index and Rental Index

Home prices have diverged sharply in four years

Absolute change in index

The hottest markets (in %)

City	Change (%)
Meghalay	68
Kannpur	61
Vizag	53
Vijayawada	52
Pune	44
Mumbai	41
Ludhiana	41
Bengaluru	37

Lukewarm ones (in %)

City	Change (%)
Delhi	4
Chandigarh	3
Coimbatore	7
Bhopal	9
Gandhinagar	-12
Raichuri	7
Dehradun	9
Almedabad	-12

Change in housing price index from 2012-13 till March quarter 2017, Lender's Assessment

Demonetisation had a fleeting impact
Price trends between Q4 2016 and Q1 2017

- 50 Cities tracked
- 27 Cities with gains
- 14 Cities unchanged
- 9 Cities with falls

Source: National Housing Bank

Larger homes have gained more in one year
Change in residential home prices, March 2016 - March 2017, Lender's Assessment

City	< 60 sqm	60-110 sqm	> 110 sqm
Mumbai	10	15	25
Chennai	5	10	20
Delhi	10	15	25
Kolkata	5	10	20
Pune	10	15	25

Graphic: Visveswaran V

BusinessLine
TWENTY YEARS AGO TODAY
JULY 28, 1997

Multi-layer monitoring of Navaratnas planned
The Government has granted the Navaratnas — the nine PSUs selected for globalisation — wide-ranging powers for internal restructuring, including the power to create and wind up all posts up to those of non-board level directors (NBLDs). This would also include the NBLDs with the same pay scales as board-level directors. In a communication the Department of Public Enterprises has said that "all appointments up to this level would be in the powers of the boards and would include the powers to effect internal transfers and redesignation of posts".

Exporters to raise contribution to basmati fund
Rice exporters have decided to increase their contribution to the Basmati Development Fund from Rs. 20 to Rs. 50 a tonne, following India's decision to file half a dozen law suits against foreign firms attempting to encroach on basmati's unique brand equity. Resources from the fund were utilised to pay the lawyers' remuneration when India won an international law suit against the US commodity firm, Rice Tech Inc, which had sought registration of the Texmati, Kasmati and Jasmati trademarks on rice varieties claimed to be analogous to basmati varieties.

'Money laundering' definition proving hurdle
The draft Money Laundering Prevention Act has got stuck following the failure of the inter-ministerial task force to arrive at an acceptable definition of the term 'money laundering'. The definition will now be reviewed by the Committee of Secretaries constituted to evolve a consensus on the draft Act.

EASY

ACROSS

- Theatre device producing blast of air (4-7)
- Credit, fame prestige (5)
- Make one go without (7)
- Glazed coloured earthenware (7)
- Long-legged wading-bird (5)
- Ignites (6)
- Chit-chat (6)
- Pay (5)
- Exact copy (7)
- Greek jar (7)
- Heathen (5)
- Girl flock-minder (11)

DOWN

- Not sleepy (7)
- Showing assent (7)
- Stone craftsman (5)
- One who sponges (6)
- Heavy application of oil paints (7)
- OT priest (Books of Samuel) (3)
- Fracture (5)
- Fawn-coloured silk fabric (7)
- Coarse gravel (7)
- Statements of grievance (7)
- Deliver sermon (6)
- Uses clothing (5)
- Bagpipe player (5)
- Fluid of suppuration (3)

SOLUTION: BL Two-way Crossword 902

ACROSS 1. Bogus 4. Stopper 8. Experimenting 10. Clear 11. Ogle 12. Mere 16. Evert 17. Authoritative 19. Gadgets 20. Taped
DOWN 1. Breakdown gang 2. Gap 3. Spruce 4. Summer 5. Owners 6. Prisoners 7. Right Reverend 9. Collected 13. Remove 14. Remiss 15. Strait 18. Imp

BL TWO-WAY CROSSWORD 903

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8			9			
10				11		
12		13		14		15
16			17			18
19			20			
21	22			23		
	24					

NOT SO EASY

ACROSS

- Blow this contraption on stage! (4-7)
- Praise of the French return in knock-outs (5)
- Make one go without chopped snake, having half made a start (7)
- Decorative wear that's first class may be taken in by receiver (7)
- The first flying baby-carriage? (5)
- According to one's these is one switched-on or not? (6)
- 'Sometimes lurk I in a —'s bowl' (AMND) (6)
- Pay the comics for including last pantomime (5)
- It's made exactly like one sort of parcel (7)
- It's jug for speed rating, or admittance to motoring club (7)
- Father brings horseback, being heathen (5)
- Girl who goes crooked at work perhaps (11)

DOWN

- Alert and almost complete, after the night watch (7)
- Giving a sign that one is about to drop off (7)
- Mother and her boy who's in the building trade (5)
- Might care about him, please God, being a sponge (6)
- The little devil — Cockney has to lay it on thick (7)
- Biblical priest gives the Spanish one (3)
- Intermission up, go off for the holidays (5)
- United States ship tore about in a material way (7)
- A gritty sort of hairstyle it may be (7)
- One is surrounded by growing things heard in court (7)
- It's right to have fruit around and give a sermon (6)
- Goes about in clothes as one shows signs of age (5)
- Didn't he give a blow for his son Tom? (5)
- The matter that causes a cat to be Manx (3)