

KASHMIR
OBSERVER

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K O V I E W

Economy In Dire Straits

Kashmir economy is battling multiple headwinds triggered by withdrawal of Article 370 in August last. The first to be hit is the tourism sector. Valley has not only been evacuated of all the tourists but the fresh arrivals also are drastically down. The image of the Valley as a deeply troubled place has stuck so much that few holiday-makers think of visiting. That too, during a winter when the Valley has received snowfall in abundance. And which should normally have been a bone for tourism.

Second, the communication clampdown that was enforced to purportedly maintain peace too has impacted the businesses hard, especially the IT sector which almost stopped functioning altogether during the five months after August 5 move. Though the Information Technology industry got some relief after the internet lease lines were restored for this sector but the overall situation of trade in Kashmir continues to be dismal. Third, the lingering shutdown in the Valley against New Delhi's move that continued almost for four months also set back the shopkeepers and public transport. Fourth, Kashmir's famed handicraft sector was left reeling and staring at an estimated 50,000-60,000 job cuts. The artisans did not get any fresh orders in the absence of communication facilities. As a result, even, the highly skilled artisans have been forced to look for odd jobs to meet their daily needs. The total loss to economy so far, could be in the range of around Rs fifteen to twenty thousand crore, according to the estimate by trading organizations.

Similarly, according to estimates, the hotel and restaurant industry has seen more than 30,000 people losing their jobs. The e-commerce sector, which includes courier services for purchases made online, has also seen 10,000 people losing their jobs. This paints a picture of a completely wrecked economy.

Winter saw a significant amount of commercial activity disappear. So, people in Kashmir are naturally upset with New Delhi for revoking Article 370 in the middle of a peak business season in summer. The prevailing despair has been heightened by the receding hope of an improvement in the situation in near future. Already people are uncertain about the upcoming spring and summer when while economic activity picks up in the Valley, the political activity does too. If the past fifteen years are any guide, all mass unrests in Kashmir have been triggered in warm season. Though the Valley has mercifully been uneasily calm over the past six months, it hardly offers guarantee of peace for the upcoming months. Here is hoping that the peace holds enabling the economy to get back on track.

O T H E R O P I N O N

A bizarre case

The grounds on which the government has invoked the draconian Public Safety Act against former chief ministers Omar Abdullah and Mehbooba Mufti read like a fake WhatsApp forward. But the Union Home Ministry, no less, has peddled this misinformation to keep the two politicians in extended detention, raising serious questions about the bona fides of decisions taken by those in charge of the country's internal security.

The material on which the two chief ministers have been charged is essentially based on statements made on and off social media, and actions taken by the two former chief ministers, plucked out of context, and presented as proof of their separatist credentials.

For instance, Abdullah's ability "to convince his electorate to vote in huge numbers" is being held against him, for the purported reason that it shows he "enjoys the support of gullible masses". Leave aside the evident contempt for people who elect politicians to power, the government seems to forget that it was the National Conference and the PDP that provided credibility to India's decision, from 1996 onward, to demonstrate to the world that it could hold elections in J&K, even those that were flawed, as a snub to separatism and the designs of Pakistan.

The case against Mufti is as, if not even more, absurd, embellished with comparisons to a medieval queen for "her dangerous and insidious machinations and usurping profile and nature". Mufti's tweets and statements, conveying to the BJP, her then willing partner in the ruling coalition, that India would be left with no friends in Kashmir if Articles 370 and 35A were revoked, have also been twisted and taken out of their political context.

It increasingly appears that the government has no plan for Kashmir that can be democratically or transparently implemented, and that it is counting on "national security", or purported threats to it, to justify all actions. The J&K High Court has as good as abdicated its role by declaring last week it was "not a proper forum to scrutinise the merits of administrative decision to detain a person". With this, the court, which even earlier quashed PSA cases only on procedural grounds, has effectively removed itself as the main remedy.

Abdullah's sister has petitioned the Supreme Court on the PSA cases against the former chief minister, but the court's track record does not offer confidence. Pleas against a peaceful protest in Delhi on the grounds of traffic problems get a quicker hearing than habeas corpus petitions and those relating to Article 370. Five months after a petitioner from J&K approached the court, the bench went so far as to acknowledge fundamental rights violations in Kashmir, but puzzlingly did not strike down as illegal the actions causing those violations. The government must urgently release all those in custody in J&K, restore the Internet, and put its actions to an accountable, political test in Kashmir. Anything less will only set a troubling precedent for the entire country.

The Indian Express

What Does Delhi Verdict Mean For India

SOUTIK BISWAS

In the early days of the campaign, BJP tried to puncture Kejriwal's claims of good governance without success. It then embarked on a coarse and polarising campaign around a controversial new citizenship law, the stripping of Kashmir's autonomy and building a grand new Hindu temple. Party leaders freely indulged in hate speech and were censured by poll authorities: a junior minister actually egged on a campaign meeting to shout slogans about "gunning down traitors", a not-so veiled reference to political rivals. BJP possibly felt this would work.

Arvind Kejriwal's Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) has swept back to power for a third term in a row in India's capital Delhi. But it would be misleading to read this verdict as a vote against Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Here's why.

Rather than being seen as a vote against the BJP, Mr Kejriwal's comfortable win owes more to the triumph of welfarism and effective governance - revamping state-run schools and health clinics, and providing cheap water and electricity.

The BJP has been out of power in Delhi for more than two decades, and it was up against a party which had delivered on its promises. In the early days of the campaign, it tried to puncture Mr Kejriwal's claims of good governance without success. Mr Modi's party then embarked on a coarse and polarising campaign around a controversial new citizenship law, the stripping of Kashmir's autonomy and building a grand new Hindu temple. Party leaders freely indulged in hate speech and were censured by poll authorities: a junior minister actually egged on a campaign meeting to shout slogans about "gunning down traitors", a not-so veiled reference to political rivals.

Mr Modi's party possibly felt this would work. At the very least, the take-no-prisoners campaign would prevent a debacle in Delhi - like in 2015, when the BJP won just three seats. After all, a similar hardline campaign had helped the BJP sweep all seven Delhi seats in last year's general election, and pick up more than half of the popular vote.

But that didn't work this time.

So, was the verdict a rejection of the BJP's polarising politics? The answer is perhaps more nuanced. There's ample evidence to show that fervent supporters of Mr Modi and his policies can vote for a different party in their state if they feel that party has improved their lives.

A pre-election survey by the Centre for the Study of Developing Societies (CSDS), a respected Delhi-based think tank, also found that roughly 70% of the city respondents support Mr Modi's controversial citizenship law and oppose the protests against the law. One of the protests - by women in Shaheen Bagh, a Muslim-dominated neighbourhood in Delhi - was especially targeted by the BJP's campaign, which sought to show



the protesters as "traitors". Before the general elections in 2019, when the BJP trounced Mr Kejriwal's party in Delhi, a large number of supporters who voted for Mr Modi said they preferred Mr Kejriwal as the chief minister and might vote for the AAP in the Delhi polls.

"In Delhi, people have approved of the work done by Mr Kejriwal's government. It has nothing to do with [the] citizenship law or the countrywide protests against it or policies of the BJP," political scientist Sanjay Kumar of the CSDS told me. "This is really not indicative of a national mood against Mr Modi and the BJP."

Also, research by political scientists Rahul Verma and Pranav Gupta shows that when it comes to Delhi, the BJP has always gained impressively in general elections - 46% of the popular vote in 2014 and 56% of the vote in 2019. But it then slid back to its "core base" - some 32% of the vote - in state elections. The fact that the once-dominant Congress party has been eclipsed might also have helped Mr Kejriwal's party grow.

Put simply, what is happening in India today is that voters are making a distinction between state and federal elections. Barely six months after sweeping the general elections in the eastern state of Jharkhand last year, the BJP lost the state elections, with its vote share dropping by more than 17%.

The party faced a similar predicament in Haryana and Maharashtra states, where it failed to repeat its performance in the general election, cobbling together a government in Haryana, but failing to form one in Maharashtra. Clearly, even discerning supporters of the BJP, according to political scientist Suhas Palshikar, are "willing to switch to state parties during

state elections". Yogendra Yadav of Swaraj Abhiyan, calls it "ticket splitting" - a sign, he says, of "voters' sophistication". State battles, he adds, are "not [a] substitute for taking on the Modi regime at the level of national politics".

It's also becoming increasingly clear that Mr Modi's BJP and its belligerent politics can be countered in India's states. But in order to do so, popular local governments need a credible leader who seeks votes on governance, and not by countering BJP's Hindu nationalist plank. In other words, opposition parties have begun to fear - some of the fear is possibly imagined - that fighting the BJP on its pro-Hindu agenda could invite a backlash from the majority community. In Delhi, Mr Kejriwal astutely stood his ground on his record in government and refused to engage with the BJP's ideological campaign. He even refrained from attacking Mr Modi personally.

Will the Delhi election have a larger impact and hurt the BJP's prospects?

There is no clear evidence yet. Many believe the BJP's "single-track" muscular nationalist campaign is creating a climate of anxiety, insecurity and exhaustion at a time when India is actually a secure nation. They say this brand of stridently nationalist politics draws attention away from the serious economic slowdown in the country. But what's clear is that Mr Modi remains India's most popular leader and his base is still largely intact.

What Mr Kejriwal's victory does is offer a breather to a largely divided and demoralised opposition - and it proves that good governance wins votes.

BBC NEWS

While playing basketball, Damon Tweedy injured his knees. When the swelling didn't go down, he went to an urgent care clinic for treatment. It was his day off, and he was dressed in a T-shirt and sweatpants.

"The doctor never looked at me," he remembered. "He just had me stand up, looked at my knees and then said, 'You'll be OK. Take it easy.'"

He never even asked what kind of job he had. His job could be strenuous; making him prone to serious injuries. In a way, the information about his profession was important, as Damon Tweedy was a doctor himself. Everything changed when Tweedy made it clear to the doctor who was treating him. The doctor made eye contact and started asking him questions. He even took Tweedy to get an X-ray.

"So it was an example of two different levels of care. I was two different persons. The first time, I was Damon Tweedy, a random black guy, not to be taken seriously. In the second case I was Damon Tweedy, M.D., and worthy of the same care as anyone else," he said.

Tweedy told his story at the Decatur Book Festival in Georgia in September and has written a book that is part memoir and part discussion of bias in medicine called "Black Man in a White Coat."

The medical profession aspires for equal treatment of all patients irrespective of race, gender or other biases and disparities in health care.

The medical profession aspires for equal treatment of all patients irrespective of race, gender or other biases and disparities in health care. We are all susceptible to biases, including physicians. But nobody likes to be labelled as biased. Once people

How Do Doctors' Biases Affect Your Health Care?

DR HASAN ABBAS DR HASAN ABBAS

acquire a bias, it becomes very hard to dislodge it. Instead of changing them, most people will make a lot of effort to preserve their bias; often dismissing disconcerting evidence.

With explicit or overt bias, individuals are aware of their biases and attitudes towards a certain person or a group. The person is very clear about his or her feelings and attitudes, and related behaviours are conducted with intent. This type of bias is processed neurologically at a conscious level. It is less common, but it is easy to overcome with logic and reasoning. Explicit bias can be expressed through physical and verbal harassment or more subtle means like exclusion. Overt racism and racist comments are examples of explicit biases.

Implicit biases are processed at the subconscious level, so the holder is unaware of their existence, even when they are contrary to one's conscious or espoused beliefs. Research suggests that the amygdala (considered the "emotional" centre of the brain) and the prefrontal cortex are involved in unconscious bias. A doctor may claim not to be biased towards a certain group, but his actions indicate that he is acting against his declared beliefs. For example, few physicians espouse racially discriminatory views, yet they tend to recommend less pain medication for black patients than for white patients with an identical injury.

A doctor's implicit bias may be conveyed by his body language. He is less likely to touch sympathetically

and stand close to his patient. His vocal tone, posture, and facial and body movements also reveal his bias. The use of favourable body language is a significant tool for establishing provider-patient trust and rapport. According to an article in the US News and World Report, doctors were asked to give the news to critically ill patients, who were portrayed by both black and white actors. While most doctors said the same words to each "patient," their body language differed depending on the patient's race. The use of negative stereotypes may lead to missed diagnoses, trust deficit, and delay in seeking curative and preventive treatment, such as flu shot. At the beginning of the Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) epidemic, the high prevalence of HIV among gay men led to initial beliefs that the disease could not be transmitted beyond the gay community.

This association hampered the recognition of the disease in women, children, heterosexual men, and blood donor recipients.

Studies have demonstrated implicit bias against racial groups, genders, and other marginalized groups. Research suggests that implicit bias may contribute to healthcare disparities by shaping physician behaviour and producing differences in medical treatment along the lines of race, ethnicity, gender or other characteristics. Implicit bias can interfere with clinical assessment, decision-making, and provider-patient relationships such that the health goals that

the provider and patient are seeking are compromised. Disparities in healthcare may lead to increased morbidity and mortality.

In Pakistan, studies have not been conducted to determine the effects of doctor's biases in healthcare. Research is needed to understand the impact of biases in health care and to what degree these biases affect treatment choices and patient outcomes. However, it has been observed that the paying capacity of the patient, his education, language, race, and social class can influence the way a doctor prescribes treatment. Poor and illiterate patients, who generally visit public-sector hospitals, suffer the most, as, if they require stents, their names are placed on the waiting list.

Overcoming bias

Implicit bias in healthcare can be reduced if doctors are made aware of the biases they hold. Once recognised, it becomes easier to overcome them. The study by Green and associates provides an example of how simply increasing physicians' awareness of their susceptibility to implicit bias changes behaviour. Sharing interests and activities, and spending time with members of a group also can reduce unconscious negative bias towards that particular group. Instead of stereotyping their patients, the doctors should be trained to individualise them. The doctors should have a basic understanding of the cultures from which their patients come. To make them aware of the effects of bias in healthcare, the subject of bias may be included in the curriculum of medical colleges. Doctors may be encouraged to attend online courses designed to teach strategies to reduce implicit biases or at least the impact of such biases.

Daily Times